

## Surveillance and Liberty in Céline's New York, the City That Doesn't Sleep (Around)

Jennifer Willging  
*Ohio State University*

Pour une surprise, c'en fut une. . . . Figurez-vous qu'elle était debout leur ville, absolument droite. New York c'est une ville debout. On en avait déjà vu nous des villes bien sûr, et des belles encore, et des ports et des fameux même. Mais chez nous, n'est-ce pas, elles sont couchées les villes, au bord de la mer ou sur les fleuves, elles s'allongent sur le paysage, elles attendent le voyageur, tandis que celle-là l'Américaine, elle ne se pâmait pas, non, elle se tenait bien raide, là, pas baisante du tout, raide à faire peur. (Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* 184)

Talk of surprises! . . . Just imagine, that city was standing absolutely erect. New York was a standing city. Of course we'd seen cities, fine ones too, and magnificent seaports. But in our part of the world cities lie along the seacoast or on rivers, they recline on the landscape, awaiting the traveler, while this American city had nothing languid about her, she stood there as stiff as a board, not seductive at all, terrifyingly stiff. (*Journey to the End of the Night* 159)<sup>1</sup>

Such is Ferdinand Bardamu's first vision of New York, an imperious city-woman who not only never sleeps but never lies down, neither before nor with her dispossessed and desirous male visitor. During his stay in what turns out to be a rather sour Big Apple, Bardamu finds himself surrounded by the most beautiful women he has ever seen—*les Américaines*—but is crushed as if by an urban earthquake to discover that they are every bit as vertical and impenetrable as the stone and glass of their mother city. With their long, muscular legs “à de magnifiques hauteurs de soie” ‘encased in magnificent heights of silk’ (196; 170), New York's daughters seem

to have been erected out of the same steely beams that make the city's imposing skyline possible (Solomon 135). The beauty, wealth, and gleaming cleanliness of Manhattan during the golden age of capitalism and rationalized production (the 1910s and '20s) are all embodied in these women, who can be seen everywhere (curiously segregated from their male counterparts) but touched nowhere. Like Balzac's Rastignac, Bardamu is aware that the key to urban success is cut in the shape of a woman, but unlike the *Parisiennes*, these *New-Yorkaises* appear to be locked up as tightly as the riches to which they can apparently give access. Even Lola, the American "nurse" who becomes Bardamu's mistress in France during the war and who has since returned to New York to make her fortune through, he presumes, "la petite mine d'or du pauvre, le cul" 'the poor woman's little gold mine, the ass' (211; 182) has now become, like most everything and everyone else in the city, too expensive for his likes.

In their reception of him, Lola and the other *New-Yorkaises* would seem to have little in common with New York's most famous Lady, the Statue of Liberty, whose reputation among foreigners at the time was generally that of a welcoming and nurturing mother. And in fact, Bardamu never mentions Liberty in his detailed description of New York harbor as seen from the ship that brings him and his malaria from Africa. Nor does he mention her at any other time during his stay in New York, even though the young foreigner spends six months on Ellis Island (less than a mile from and within plain view of her glowing torch) and at least several more weeks in Manhattan. Yet despite Liberty's status as a symbol of America's reputed (and disputed) openness and acceptance, even a cursory glance at her confirms that she does in fact resemble, in the most striking of ways, Bardamu's *New-Yorkaises*, for she is a muscular, androgynous, even phallic sort of woman who greets new arrivals with a stern, unsmiling gaze.<sup>2</sup> In this essay, in part, I will explore this rather surprising absence of reference to Lady Liberty in a text that continually figures New York City as a statue-like woman, and I will suggest that it is Bardamu's ultimately negative assessment of the city and of American society in general that not only explains but in fact demands Liberty's erasure from the New York skyline he describes in *Voyage*.<sup>3</sup>

The root of Bardamu's negative appraisal of America lies, I will

further argue, in his suspicion that while there, he is under subtle yet constant surveillance. In "Writing and Resistance in Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Féerie pour une autre fois I*" (a 1952 semi-fictionalized account of Céline's eighteen-month imprisonment in Denmark from 1945 to 1947 for charges of collaboration [Vitoux 417]), Rosemarie Scullion analyzes Céline's description of the prison regime to which he was subjected in light of Michel Foucault's theories about the disciplinary nature not only of prison but of post-Revolutionary western society at large. Scullion interprets *Féerie* as a form of "discursive resistance," "an imaginative mode of countervailing the overwhelming force the modern disciplinary State [was] exerting over his physical person" (37). "Physically constrained by the bars and the walls of his cell," she writes, "*Féerie*'s narrator unfetters his sensorial and imaginative powers, unleashing a verbal delirium in opposition to the normative judgment of which he had become the object both within the prison and in the purge-preoccupied outside world" (36). If, as Scullion argues, *Féerie* mounts a verbal attack against the relentless and dehumanizing disciplinary regime of both the modern prison and the legal system that put its author there, then the earlier *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, I will argue, anticipates *Féerie*'s subject matter (indeed anticipates its author's fate, in a sense) in that it exposes modern urban society, American urban society in particular, as a space in which prison-like techniques of surveillance and discipline are relentlessly practiced upon its inhabitants. I will furthermore suggest that Bardamu most often associates the unobtrusive and therefore all the more effective surveillance he perceives throughout his American adventure with women—with the imposing city-woman who "greet[s]" him in New York Harbor and the *Américaines* she has birthed.

Several of Bardamu's first experiences in New York demonstrate the degree to which he and his shipmates are under surveillance from the moment they sail into New York Harbor. Upon its arrival, the ship is immediately placed under quarantine in a bay two miles to the east of New York, where Bardamu and the rest of the crew remain "*en observation pendant des semaines et des semaines*" "under observation for weeks and weeks" (185; 160 my emphasis). When he attempts an escape from this floating prison, he is immediately "*repéré et puis coincé entre deux escouades bien résolues à m'identifier*"

'spotted and cornered between two squads of sailors determined to identify me' (188; 162), and only avoids being thrown back into the sea from which he had first emerged by losing consciousness. He is then threatened with real imprisonment but manages to avoid this fate through an appeal to his American interrogators' love of statistics, by offering his services as a skilled flea-counter. Flea-counting, he assures his captors, "C'est un facteur de civilisation parce que le dénombrement est à la base d'un matériel de statistique des plus précieux! . . . Un pays progressiste," he reminds these patriots, "doit connaître le nombre de ses puces, divisées par sexe, groupe d'âges, années et saisons . . ." 'It's a civilizing factor, because enumeration is the basis of the most invaluable statistical data! . . . A progressive country must know the number of its fleas, broken down according to sex, age group, year and season . . . ' (188; 162). In a Foucauldian world view, statistics provide the basis of most all modern "knowledges," as well as of the power that the guardians of these knowledges inevitably hold. This pledge of allegiance to "progressive" America's mania for accounting, classification, and regulation thus earns Bardamu job as the official flea-counter of Ellis Island (if we are to believe his delirium-induced narrative), until he manages, several months later, to flee his fleas and discover Manhattan at last (191; 165).<sup>4</sup>

During his stay in the city, Bardamu is constantly reminded, more or less subtly, of the power structures in place in the land of "justice and liberty for some."<sup>5</sup> Falling upon a kind of clearing in the jungle that is Lower Manhattan, he discovers Federal Hall, one of the cradles of the American government with whose stern efficiency he had already become so familiar while under quarantine.<sup>6</sup> He stops to rest on a bench, but after a time a "policeman" (he uses the English word to emphasize the officer's distinct American-ness) begins to watch him and to suspect this sickly and most certainly foreign bench-sitter of harboring "des drôles de projets" 'sinister intentions' (195; 168). To the Americans, Bardamu notes, foreigners are "tous des anarchistes" 'all anarchists' (185; 159), a damning indictment indeed in this highly organized and watchful state whose intricate apparatuses of control become more and more apparent to him throughout his stay. During his American adventure, he makes several other references to the American police, whose omnipres-

ence and tyranny Céline's contemporary Paul Morand had already noted in his *New York* (1930), echoes of which can be heard, as critics have long recognized, throughout *Voyage*. "Autant notre petit sergent de ville fort en gueule et gesticulateur se fait peu respecter," Morand writes of the French *flic*, "et, dans les faubourgs, lorsqu'il essaye d'arrêter quelqu'un, risque d'être lynché, autant à New York, le grand *cop* irlandais est craint" "The extent to which our little constable, expert at yelling and gesticulating, is disdained and risks getting lynched when he tries to arrest someone in the rough part of town, that is the extent to which, in New York, the big Irish cop is feared' (238). In *Voyage's* Detroit episode, for example, the police regularly raid the brothel in which Molly works when the baseball players who frequent it feel the urge to brawl (228; 196). Also, when Bardamu goes to the French consulate there to inquire if they have heard of a Léon Robinson, he is informed that indeed they have, and that the police were now on the hunt for the scoundrel (231; 199). When Bardamu does finally cross paths with Robinson in Detroit, this latter's uncharacteristically haggard and defeated appearance reveals that he is aware that he is a tracked animal. Of the American cops, he says, "j'en ai trop vu" 'I've seen enough' (234; 201).

Related to these references to the police are several allusions (some literal and others metaphorical) to prison, model par excellence of the Foucauldian disciplinary society. After fainting upon his capture by immigration authorities and being taken to a hospital, Bardamu at first feels that he is treated with sympathy; "[m]ais aucune indulgence ne dure en ce monde et dès le lendemain les hommes se remirent à me reparler de prison" 'but no benevolence ever lasts in this world, and the next day the men started talking prison to me again' (188; 162). While he manages to avert such a consequence in this instance, he is never certain of being able to do so definitively in America. Passing before the one-hundred American women, "les déesses" 'the goddesses' seated in series the length of his hotel lobby, Bardamu dreams of approaching one of them, "[m]ais j'avais peur," he confesses, "de me faire arrêter. Complications. Presque tous les désirs du pauvre sont punis de prison" '[b]ut I was afraid of being arrested. Complications. Nearly all a poor bastard's desires are punishable by jail' (200; 173). Despite the brothel-like sumptuousness of the surroundings, these women's long, rigid, and stubbornly crossed

legs (“la rangée des jambes croisées” ‘the row of crossed legs’ [196; 170]) call to mind so many prison bars that separate Bardamu from the objects of his desire. The mesh of the silk stockings that veil but do not hide the women’s legs also evokes, if not the bars, then the *grilles* (mesh screens) that the young man sees everywhere in the city, guarding here feminine virtue, there “Dieu Dollar.” While wandering through Manhattan’s Financial District, Bardamu peeks in a bank and watches its clients as they “parlent à Dollar en lui murmurant des choses à travers un petit grillage” ‘murmur words to Dollar through a little grill’ (193; 166). The metaphor he creates here is that of the teller’s window as confessional, but this *grillage* can also be seen as yet another example of the ubiquitous barriers that keep the poor, especially the immigrant poor, from realizing their American dreams. Interestingly, in these examples and in others, such bars (whether metaphorical or literal) serve not to keep Bardamu *in* (as in a prison), but rather to keep him *out* (out of the women’s bodies, out of the bank vaults). Their presence continually confirms his status as alien, as outsider to this highly insular and codified society.

Yet Bardamu’s position on the outside does not always put him at a disadvantage. When, in order to earn a few tightly guarded dollars, he briefly considers getting a job in one of Manhattan’s thousands of office buildings, the cell-like quality of their interiors (in both the biological and the carceral senses of the word) discourages any further efforts in this direction:

Peut-être qu’aux habitués ça ne leur faisait pas du tout le même effet qu’à moi ces entassements de matière et d’alvéoles commerciales? Ces organisations de membrures à l’infini? Pour eux c’était la sécurité peut-être tout ce déluge en suspens tandis que pour moi ce n’était rien qu’un abominable système de contraintes, en briques, en couloirs, en verrous, en guichets, une torture architecturale gigantesque, inexpiable.

Maybe those vast accretions of matter, those commercial honeycombs [cells], those endless figments of brick and steel didn’t affect the habitués the way they did me. To them perhaps that suspended deluge meant security, while to me it was simply an abominable system of constraints, of corridors, locks and wickets, a gigantic, inexpiable architectural crime. (205-06; 177)

Once again, Bardamu is on the outside of the “bars” or cells looking in, but here he imagines what it would be like to be imprisoned within them and speculates that inclusion in this society would be even less desirable than exclusion from it. This metaphor also upholds Foucault’s thesis that the modern prison regime and sometimes even its physical structures (“une torture architecturale gigantesque”) find their analogue within most all institutions of western society. These honey-comb prototypes of the modern corporate cubicle strike Bardamu as no more inviting and no less restrictive than the hundreds of identical cells found in any penitentiary. In Detroit also, Bardamu sees the Ford factory, first from the outside and then from the inside, as a series of “cages à mouches sans fin, dans lesquelles on discernait des hommes à remuer, mais remuer à peine, comme s’ils ne se débattaient plus que faiblement contre je ne sais quoi d’impossible” ‘fly cages without end, in which one could make out men moving, but barely moving, as if they were struggling feebly against something—who knows what—impossible’ (223; 192). These caged men are prisoners of a system, rationalized production, in which they endure the torture of repeating the same mindless gestures, day in and day out, until they drop, it would seem, like flies. “Despite Foucault’s assertion that the eighteenth century ushered in a new prison regime and a ‘douceur des peines’ [gentleness in punishments],” Scullion writes in her analysis of *Féerie*, a novel in which the narrator finds himself in a real prison, “for Céline the harsh material conditions and brutal treatment persist in making imprisonment the most wretched of human conditions” (33). Here in New York it is as if Bardamu foresees and duly fears the imprisonment that his later incarnation (in *Féerie*), as well as his creator, will eventually endure.

In *Surveiller et punir* Foucault argues that the panopticon, Bentham’s eighteenth-century design for a new kind of prison, can be seen as both a model for and a symptom of modern disciplinary technology. The panopticon is a ring-shaped building with a tower in the interior courtyard from which authorities can watch (or be presumed to be watching) without barrier or interruption the inhabitants of the divided spaces in the circular building surrounding it. Foucault maintains that throughout the modern period, the concept of the panopticon (if not always its actual structure) has insinuated itself

into multiple societal institutions and spaces, such as the hospital, the school, the office building, the factory (and now the shopping mall and the internet), and that the modern individual is therefore subjected to constant observation under which he is rigorously analyzed, evaluated, and classed. Essential to the effectiveness of these functions of the disciplinary system (analysis and classification) are the strict isolation and individuation of the persons subjected to it; the panopticon's gaze is therefore always "une observation individualisante" 'an individualizing observation' (*Surveiller* 205), a force which divides, so to speak, in order to conquer.<sup>8</sup> Also essential is that the newly created "individual" be constantly aware of the surveillance of which he is the object, and that he therefore internalize its regulatory gaze, thereby learning to discipline *himself*, without or with minimal "real" external intervention or violence. The objective of this omnipresent disciplinary system, according to Foucault, is to increase not only the docility of the individuals in a given society but also their productivity, and it is therefore no surprise that this system developed in tandem with the modern, capitalist economy of mass-production and consumption (*Surveiller* 209).

While, as we have seen, Bardamu encounters several disciplinary machines during his American adventure, some of these systems, such as the cellular office buildings, employ actual elements of panoptic architecture. One particularly "panoptic" system with which he grapples is the self-serve restaurant in Manhattan where he goes to satisfy if not his psychological, then at least his physiological hunger. This restaurant, he observes, is "l'un de ces réfectoires publics rationalisés où le service est réduit au minimum et le rite alimentaire simplifié à l'exacte mesure du besoin naturel. . . . Des serveuses, genre infirmières, se tenaient derrière les nouilles, le riz, la compote. A chacune sa spécialité" 'one of those rationalized public refectories, where the service is reduced to a minimum and the alimentary rite is cut down to the exact measure of nature's requirements. . . . Waitresses dressed like nurses stood behind the noodles, rice, and stewed fruit. Each had her specialty' (206-07; 177). These descriptions prefigure Bardamu's portrait of the Ford factory in Detroit (223-26; 192-95), where each worker also has his own "specialty," which has been reduced by the technocrats of Taylorism to the simplest and most efficient of gestures so as to ensure the

greatest possibility of repetition and therefore production. Like the auto workers, most of these “waitresses” are immobile; they stand in a row behind their assigned dish as if chained to it, their movement restricted to the modest lifting and lowering of ladles and serving forks. In this modern culinary “factory,” the workers do not move (for were they allowed to, they would take a more active and therefore more powerful role in production), rather it is the “products”—not the food but the satiated and hence more docile customers—that advance along the line, like so many Model Ts. One of the ways in which Ford’s industrial genius manifested itself was in the fact that his workers served him in two capacities. They were both producers and consumers of his goods, for he encouraged them and paid them enough to buy their own automobile, which resulted, of course, in their returning to him a large part of the salary he had given them. In the New York restaurant-factory, whose real products once again are not meals but more disciplined members of society, there is a similar hyper-efficient doubling of duties going on. Here, however, the workers do not double as customers, rather the products do. In both cases, production is a self-feeding (literally, in the case of the restaurant), ever-expanding loop: the more cars Ford paid his workers to produce, the more cars they were able to buy; the more docile subjects the restaurant “produces” (by submitting them to its disciplinary protocol in exchange for nourishment), the greater number of customers willing to follow its protocol it serves.

As in the panopticon (and the factory), the strict enforcement of protocol in Céline’s restaurant is made possible in part by its physical structure. The properties that first strike Bardamu upon entry are its extreme cleanliness and its brilliant illumination: “Ce réfectoire était si net, si bien éclairé, qu’on se sentait comme porté à la surface de sa mosaïque tel qu’une mouche sur du lait” “That restaurant was so clean and well lighted that, skimming its mosaic floor, I felt like a fly on milk” (206; 178). The French word “net” means not only “clean” or “tidy” but also “clear,” in both the spatial (uncluttered) and visual (not blurry) senses of the word. Because of the restaurant’s physical openness, as well as because of its bright illumination, the objects and people in it can be clearly viewed from any point within. Everything can be clearly seen from the exterior as well, for the front wall of the restaurant is made entirely of glass: “de

l'autre côté de la devanture," Bardamu notes, "nous étions observés par les gens en fil que nous venions de quitter dans la rue. Ils attendaient que nous eussions fini, nous, de bouffer, pour venir s'attabler à leur tour" 'we were being watched through the window by the line of people we had just left in the street. They were waiting for us to finish eating so they could come and take our tables' (207; 178). In its fish-bowl effect, Céline's cafeteria evokes the glass-enclosed, brilliantly illuminated diner depicted in Edward Hopper's 1942 study of urban isolation, *Nighthawks*, in which four emotionless figures appear "as separate and remote from the viewer as they are from one another."<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Bardamu does note feeling even more isolated in this crowded restaurant than he had alone in his hotel room. He also feels manipulated, as he suspects that the visual effect of the place upon observers on the street is not an accident but has been carefully orchestrated: "C'est . . . pour les tenir en appétit," he surmises, "que nous nous trouvions nous si bien éclairés et mis en valeur, à titre de publicité vivante" 'It was . . . to keep up their appetite that we were so well lit and displayed so prominently; we were living advertisements, so to speak' (207; 178). With the addition of this last role, those who frequent the restaurant perform then a triple rather than double function within it, serving as advertisement as well as product and customer. Bardamu's descriptions of the restaurant are especially interesting, however, for the literal way in which they underscore the essential role light plays in a panoptic system. Upon entering the restaurant, one is "baigné d'un seul coup dans des torrents d'allumage" 'suddenly bathed in torrents of light' (207; 178), and Bardamu, anticipating Foucault's vocabulary, even goes so far as to describe the restaurant's excessive and methodically directed lighting as a "lumière disciplinée" 'disciplined light' (208; 178). By using light and transparency as tools in the efficient operation of the prison and other disciplinary institutions, "on inverse," Foucault contends, "le principe du cachot. . . . La pleine lumière et le regard d'un surveillant captent mieux que l'ombre, qui finalement protégeait. La visibilité est un piège" 'the principle of the dungeon is reversed. . . . Bright light and the gaze of a guard capture [the prisoners' movements] better than darkness, which served, in the end, as protection. Visibility is a trap' (*Surveiller* 202). Indeed, Bardamu speculates, "si on nous arrosait ainsi clients de tant de lumière profuse, si on nous extirpait pendant

un moment de la nuit habituelle à notre condition, cela faisait partie d'un plan" 'if they showered us customers with so much light, if they lifted us for a moment from the habitual darkness of our condition, it was part of a plan' (207; 178). This plan is the production of disciplined, docile, and in their turn, productive subjects.

Well in character, however, Bardamu decides that he does not want to adopt the role expected of him. Having managed to catch the curious but cold eye of a pretty blond waitress, he makes a fatal decision:

[U]n peu titubant, au lieu de suivre le chemin bien net qui menait vers la sortie, tout droit, j'ai pris de l'audace et laissant de côté l'homme à la caisse qui nous attendait tous avec notre pognon, je me suis dirigé vers elle la blonde, me détachant, tout à fait insolite, parmi les flots de la lumière disciplinée.

Les vingt-cinq serveuses à leur poste derrière les choses mijotantes, me firent signe toutes en même temps que je me trompais de chemin, que je m'égarais. Je perçus un grand remous de formes dans la vitrine des gens en attente et ceux qui devaient se mettre à bouffer derrière moi en hésitèrent à s'asseoir. Je venais de rompre l'ordre des choses.

Reeling slightly, instead of taking the obvious way to the exit, I braced myself and circled around the man at the cash register who was waiting for all of us and our money. Sticking out like a sore thumb in the bright, disciplined light, I headed for the blonde.

The twenty-five waitresses at their posts behind the simmering dishes all signaled to me in unison that I was mistaken, headed the wrong way. In the plate-glass window I saw a great stir among the people waiting, and the people behind me, who were supposed to start eating, hesitated to sit down. I had disrupted the foreordained order of things. (208; 179)

Not only do the twenty-five servers, as if in a chorus line, all make the same gesture to stop the rogue in his tracks, so, it seems, do all the restaurant's customers. But such is the efficacy and economy of the disciplinary system in that its power is effectuated not only by recognized authorities but also and more importantly by the very subjects it aims to discipline. Bardamu's deviance is instantly recognized as such and is immediately censured by all those who have been indoctrinated into the system, which is everyone except him. The result of his deviance from this Foucauldian "ordre des choses"

is a firm but gentle (in keeping with modern disciplinary *douceur*) expulsion from the premises, and even this is carried out “régulièrement” ‘according to procedure’ (208; 179).

When shortly after the restaurant episode Bardamu reluctantly seeks out Lola in order to extract from her some much-needed cash, she asks him what he thinks of “her” America. “Je lui ai confié,” he notes:

que j’en étais arrivé à ce point de débilité et d’angoisse où presque n’importe qui et n’importe quoi vous devient redoutable et quant à son pays il m’épouvantait tout bonnement plus que tout l’ensemble de menaces directes, occultes et imprévisibles que j’y trouvais, surtout par l’énorme indifférence à mon égard qui le résumait à mon sens.

I confided in her that I’d become so weakened, so terror-stricken, that almost everyone and almost everything frightened me, and that her country as such terrified me more than all the direct, occult, and unforeseeable menaces I found in it, chiefly because of the enormous indifference toward me which to my way of thinking was its very essence.’ (213; 183)

In this paradoxical assessment of what it is about America that terrifies him, Bardamu contends that at one and the same time he feels perpetually threatened and thoroughly ignored. His virtual invisibility in New York is confirmed by the fact that, though he gazes at them for hours, the thousands of American beauties he observes on the street don’t seem to acknowledge his existence (194; 167-68). When he cries for help from his window at the Laugh Calvin “rien que pour voir si ça leur [les Américains] ferait quelque chose” ‘just to see if that would get a reaction out of [the Americans],’ what he discovers, simply, is that “[r]ien que ça leur faisait” ‘nothing is what it got out of them’ (209; 180). Yet through the episode of the panoptic restaurant, Bardamu’s suspicion that he is under assiduous surveillance even while ostensibly being ignored is definitively confirmed. One of the qualities of the panoptic system, precisely, is that it produces an unobtrusive, even invisible, scrutiny, “une surveillance permanente, exhaustive, omniprésente, capable de tout rendre visible, mais à la condition de se rendre elle-même invisible” ‘a permanent, exhaustive, and omnipresent surveillance capable of rendering everything visible, but on the condition that it be able to

make itself invisible' (*Surveiller* 215). It is "un regard sans visage" 'a gaze without a face' (215), the gaze of the detective hidden behind a one-way mirror. While it is essential to the system that the subject of surveillance know he can be watched (for it is this knowledge that deters deviance), it is also essential that he not know for certain when he *is* watched. This uncertainty is key to the economic efficiency of the panoptic system, in which constant (and costly) surveillance is replaced with intermittent surveillance, or even, at its optimum, by no real surveillance at all. Under the blinding lights of the restaurant, Bardamu has an instinctual sense of his condition, of being "a fly on milk." Yet this foreigner is only truly initiated into the system (as the Americans around him already are) when his deviance forces the prevailing authority (in the form of "un géant de garde" 'a giant of a guard' in this instance [208; 179]) to reveal itself and exercise its physical (rather than just psychological) power. Because of Bardamu's foreignness ("C'est encore un étranger au moins!" 'At least it's just another foreigner!' [208; 179]), his "soul" (in the Foucauldian sense) has not been fabricated by the American system.<sup>10</sup> That is, he has not yet internalized the disciplinary structure, he has not yet himself become a more vigilant and intractable warden of his own body than any external force could ever be. Bardamu's alienation, while oppressive, also affords him a certain psychic freedom that the Americans do not enjoy, and his exercise of this freedom makes that the system does not function at its peak here; were it doing so, there would arise no deviance to repress. Thus even though Bardamu is ejected from the restaurant, he nevertheless manages to disrupt its system by forcing it to flex muscles it would rather hide and expend energy it would rather conserve.

Along with traces of Morand's *New York*, critics have also noted in Bardamu's American experience echoes of Georges Duhamel's *Scènes de la vie future* (1930), a scathing and at times fantastically paranoid critique of American society in the 1920s, in which Duhamel sees portents of Europe's woeful future. In Scene IV of the book, "Petit dialogue sur le sentiment de la liberté" 'Short dialogue on the sentiment of liberty,' one of the narrator's American hosts poses nearly the same question Lola poses to Bardamu. To this man's "[Q]ue pensez-vous des Américains?" 'What do you think of Americans?', the narrator ("Duhamel") responds that he hasn't yet

seen the Americans, because “America” has been hiding them from him (66):

La fourmilière m’empêche de voir les fourmis, c’est comme j’ai l’honneur de vous le dire. Entre les citoyens américains et moi, s’élève je ne sais quel monstrueux fantôme, un ensemble de lois, d’institutions, de préjugées et même de mythes, un appareil social sans égal dans le monde et sans analogue dans l’histoire. Plutôt qu’un peuple, je vois un système.

The antheap prevents me from seeing the ants, if I may say so. Between the American citizens and me rises I don’t know what kind of a monstrous phantom, a collection of laws, institutions, prejudices and even myths, a social apparatus without equal in the world and without model in history. Rather than a people, I see a system. (67)

When his interlocutor, shocked to hear him speak this way of “la libre Amérique” ‘free America’ (67), reminds him of the alarming multiplication of dictatorships throughout 1920s Europe, Duhamel counters that an evident and centralized power structure is a less formidable opponent than an anonymous and diffuse one, one that takes cover under the name of “civilization” (69). In a strikingly Foucauldian assessment, Duhamel tells his host, “vous êtes esclave . . . de vos moralistes, de vos légistes, de vos hygiénistes, de vos médecins, de vos urbanistes, et même des vos esthéticiens. De vos policiers, de vos publicistes . . . que sais-je encore?” ‘you are a slave . . . of your moralists, of your legislators, of your hygienists, of your doctors, of your urban planners, and even of your estheticians. Of your policemen, of your publicists . . . I don’t even know what else’ (69). Yet if the American is a slave, Duhamel contends, it is largely through his own doing: “Le citoyen, vous disais-je, astreint à tant de contrôles, d’investigations, d’inquisitions, de censures, n’est pas seulement la proie des bureaucrates: il accepte lui-même de seconder ses tourmenteurs et d’accomplir une forte partie de leur besogne” ‘the citizen, I was telling you, constrained by so many controls, investigations, inquisitions, by so much censorship, is not just the prey of bureaucrats: he himself accepts to back up his tormentors and to accomplish a large part of their task’ (71). The American “esprit de discipline” ‘disciplinary mindset’ (72), at first imposed but then internalized, negates the liberty that so ostentatiously (and ironically, according to Duhamel) appears to reign over the country.

If, according to Foucault, it was “[l]es ‘Lumières’ qui ont découvert les libertés” the Enlightenment that discovered human liberties,<sup>9</sup> it was also they (“les lumières”), with the faith in reason, science, and progress they generally stood for, “[qui] ont inventé les disciplines” ‘that invented discipline/the disciplines’ (*Surveiller* 224). As noted at the beginning of this essay, the most ostentatious symbol of American liberty is of course the Statue of Liberty—“Liberty Enlightening the World.” Liberty was a second gift of light made by the French (in 1886) after their original gift of the Enlightenment ideals that had inspired the writers of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution. Liberty’s absence from Bardamu’s description of the city’s skyline is perhaps less puzzling when we consider how little liberty Bardamu seems to enjoy in America. Still, Bardamu’s deliberate personification of New York as a stiff (“bien raide”) and vertical (“debout”) woman (she is “l’Américaine,” the capital “a” transforming the word from an adjective to a substantive, more specifically to a person) cannot fail to call to mind the conspicuously missing Lady. In what follows I would like to suggest that this steely, muscular giantess, with her unblinking gaze and her glowing torch that “enlightens” the world, might be seen from a Foucauldian perspective as a kind of colossal panoptic tower from which emanates a great disciplinary force all the more effective precisely because it is hidden (à la Duhamel) behind the facade of liberty.<sup>11</sup>

Emma Lazarus’s poem “The New Colossus,” whose last five lines (“Give me your tired and your poor . . .”) were inscribed on the pedestal in 1903, compares Liberty to the Colossus of Rhodes, a statue of the sun god Helios built in 282 BC to celebrate the unity of three city-states on the island of Rhodes.<sup>12</sup> Bartholdi, the sculptor of Liberty, had indeed used drawings of the long-gone Colossus as inspiration for his statue. Thus Liberty was to evoke Ancient Greek and Roman democracy, which had served as models, of course, for the great American experiment (“Statue of Liberty Facts”). Had Bardamu stopped to contemplate Liberty in her classical garb, she would have confirmed his impression that a new Greece was being born by the looks of the innumerable “déesses” who flood the streets of Manhattan at lunch time (“Est-ce peut-être, pensais-je, la Grèce qui recommence?” “Is it perhaps Greece reborn, I wondered” [194; 167]).<sup>13</sup> In the lesser-known first stanza of the poem (which

was included in a new inscription above the main entrance to the statue in 1945) Lazarus calls Liberty a "mighty woman," and underscores this might by naming her the "New Colossus." Lazarus also describes the flame in Liberty's torch as "imprisoned lightening," an image which calls to mind (along with prison, in the context of this essay) the Greek god Zeus, a male instead of a female god, and the most powerful deity of all at that. Though Lazarus qualifies Liberty's rather stern eyes as "mild," they nonetheless "command" the harbor that lies before them. And though to Lazarus in 1883 the statue's torch signaled "world-wide welcome," by 1921, with the passage of the National Origins Act, that welcome had become much less world-wide and much more narrowly Northwest European.<sup>14</sup> Even to the privileged, bourgeois traveler Paul Morand, "D'en bas et de tout près," he writes, "la figure verte et abstraite me terrifia" 'From underneath and close up, the green, abstract face terrified me.' And from the inside, he adds (most appropriately for the thesis of the present essay), "Rien ne ressemble plus à cette Liberté qu'une prison" 'Nothing resembled that Liberty more than a prison' (213).

In her article analyzing Céline's depiction of American women in *Voyage*, Jennifer Forrest suggests that Lola resembles Liberty in that she is to Bardamu what Liberty is to the immigrants who arrive upon her shores: a harbinger of the message of a New World, a healthy, vibrant world that is the antithesis of a rotting Europe (129). Since Liberty is missing from the pages of *Voyage*, it could in fact be said that Lola *replaces* the absent Lady in this capacity. I would further argue that, in the role of implacable watch-guard over this "healthy" but constantly menaced nation (menaced especially by its "anarchist" immigrants), Liberty is incarnated not only in Lola but in many of the other American women Bardamu encounters along his journey. While Bardamu comments extensively on their exquisite bodies, he also pays attention to their faces and eyes, which unfailingly project, he finds, either an indifferent or a hostile gaze. The faces of the women seated in rows in his hotel lobby, for example, are "délicates" but also "sévères" (200; 173), and the men who pass by them do so "à une certaine distance d'elles, curieux et *crainitifs*" 'at a certain distance from them, curious and *fearful*' (my emphasis 196; 170). Lola has "une tête menue, mignonne" but also "un peu cruelle à cause des yeux bleu grisaille qui lui remontaient

d'un tantinet vers les angles, tels ceux des chats sauvages. . . . Des yeux durs en résumé" 'a wee little face that was adorable and just a bit cruel because of the gray-blue eyes that slanted slightly upward at the corners like a wildcat's. . . . Hard eyes, overall' (54; 44). (The blond waitress also has cat-like eyes, in which Bardamu sees "[d]e la cruauté en somme" 'cruetly, in short' [207; 179]). Adding further to the severity of Lola's face and body, Bardamu notes that during the war in France Lola wore a uniform (from the Red Cross) with a "menu bonnet de police" 'a tiny police-like cap' (49; 40), an accouterment which situates her firmly on the side of the authorities, those, at that moment in the story, who resolutely desire to send the wounded Bardamu back to the front as soon as possible or earlier. Furthermore, in noting her combative attitude about the war (she is "courageuse pour les autres" 'courageous for others' [54; 45]) and in comparing her to Jeanne d'Arc (50; 41), Bardamu underscores not only Lola's severity but also her (Liberty-like) androgyny.

While a soldier in France, Bardamu had already had a preview of the kind of surveillance he would encounter in the extreme in America, and he had also already noted a particular talent and even taste for this kind of surveillance in *European* women as well. After his mental breakdown while on leave in Paris, he says, "Il fut . . . décidé par les autorités de me mettre en observation pendant un temps" 'The authorities decided to put me under observation for a time' (61; 50). In the make-shift hospital for "blessés troubles" 'the befogged wounded' where he is sent:

On ne nous traitait pas absolument mal, mais on se sentait tout le temps, tout de même, guetté par un personnel d'infirmiers silencieux et dotés d'énormes oreilles. . . . Après quelque temps de soumission à cette surveillance on sortait discrètement pour s'en aller, soit vers l'asile d'aliénés, soit au front, soit encore assez souvent au poteau.

They didn't treat us terribly poorly, but we nevertheless felt we were being watched all the time by a staff of silent nurses endowed with enormous ears. . . . After being subjected to that surveillance for a certain period of time, we'd be quietly sent away to an insane asylum, the front, or, not infrequently, the firing squad.' (62; 50)

While here Bardamu uses the gender-neutral "infirmiers," at the time, of course, the profession was overwhelmingly female (and still

is), and in fact the only kind of nurses we see him encounter in the two hospitals in which he stays are female. “Les infirmières, ces garces,” he complains while in the second, “ne le partageaient pas, elles, notre destin, elles ne pensaient par contraste, qu’à vivre longtemps. . . . A l’abri de chacun de leurs mots et de leur sollicitude, il fallait dès maintenant comprendre : ‘Tu vas crever, gentil militaire. . . Tu vas crever’” “The nurses, those bitches, they didn’t share with us our destinies, on the contrary, they only thought about living for a very long time. . . . Hidden beneath each of their words and their solicitude, you had to understand as soon as possible the message, “You’re going to die, nice little soldier boy, you’re going to die” (88; 73). If the role of these women is to care for wounded soldiers, it is principally, Bardamu believes, so that they may make them just fit enough to be sent back to the front as cannon fodder (perhaps this time with more success). It is also, however, so that they may act as spies of sorts for the male doctors and military authorities, by discovering and reporting the men who are faking mental illness in order to avoid their grisly fate.

Such spying is also apparently carried out by the female concierge (paragon of the gossip-monger in French literature) of the first hospital where Bardamu is sent. This particular concierge sells lollipops, oranges, and pleasure to the wounded men, but she is also liable to sell them—at least those who talk too much—to the military command. “Il semblait bien prouvé,” Bardamu remarks of her, “qu’elle avait ainsi fait fusiller, à coups de confidences, un brigadier de Spahis qui n’avait pas vingt ans, plus un réserviste du Génie qui avait avalé des clous pour se donner mal à l’estomac et puis encore un autre hystérique, celui qui lui avait raconté comment il préparait ses crises de paralysie au front. . . . En somme, c’était une vicieuse” “It was well established that she’d had a corporal of Spahis, a youngster still in his teens, shot for his confidences, as well as a reservist in the corps of engineers, who had swallowed nails to give himself a stomach ache, and also a hysteric, who had described his method of staging a paralytic seizure at the front. . . . In short, she was a snake’ (62; 51). An inveterate business woman, she also tries to sell Bardamu the identity card of a deceased father of six (which would presumably serve him as a get-out-of-war-free card), both for the money he would give her for it plus the few extra francs the authorities would

throw in for providing them with more target practice (62; 51). This concierge is the “patriotic” counterpart of the fabled female spy against whom governments on both sides mounted so much propaganda during both World Wars.<sup>15</sup> This propaganda capitalized on negative stereotypes of women as sexually voracious, garrulous, cunning, greedy, and disloyal (to the man spilling the beans if not to her homeland) in order to warn lonely soldiers of the dangers of pillow talk. Yet at the same time, political and military authorities were more than willing, as *Voyage*’s lollipop-vending concierge demonstrates, to use female spies for their own purposes, whether against the enemy or against their own men.

Significantly, one of the major differences Bardamu notes between Paris and New York is the lack of concierges in this latter city. Before entering Lola’s sumptuous apartment building, he dreams of the marvelous things a concierge could tell him about her. He is disappointed to learn, however, that she doesn’t have one. “Une ville sans concierges,” he exclaims in a Duhamelian-inspired harangue against American blandness, “ça n’a pas d’histoire, pas de goût, c’est insipide, telle une soupe sans poivre ni sel, une ratatouille informe” ‘A city without concierges has no history, no savor, it’s as insipid as a soup without pepper and salt, nondescript slop’ (211; 182). “Nos concierges à nous,” he continues,

fournissent bon ou mal an, convenons-en, à ceux qui savent la prendre et la réchauffer, bien près du cœur, de la haine à tout faire et pour rien, assez pour faire sauter un monde. A New York on se trouve atrocement dépourvu de ce piment vital, bien mesquin et vivant, irréfutable, sans lequel l’esprit étouffe et se condamne à plus médire que vaguement, et bafouiller de pâles calomnies.

Year in and year out, we may as well admit, our concierges in France provide anyone who knows how to take it and coddle it close to his heart with a free-gratis supply of all-purpose hatred, enough to blow up the world. In New York, they’re cruelly lacking in this vital spice, so sordid and irrefutably alive, without which the spirit is stifled, condemned to vague slanders and pallid bumbled calumnies. (212; 182)

Without the concierge, the American apartment dweller risks both boredom and a kind of constipation of enmity, for there is no reliable repository of gossip, no central magnet upon which random

calumnies can collect in order to be then more rapidly and widely disseminated. In at least one kind of commerce, then—that of gossip exchange—France seems to enjoy a distinct advantage over America in *Voyage*. Yet the absence of concierges in New York is not surprising when one considers that this lack of a centralized, identifiable source of gossip also means that there is no centralized, identifiable figure who carries out the primary activity necessary to generate that gossip; this activity is spying, or *surveillance*. Whereas in Bentham's panopticon the source of surveillance (the tower) is both centralized and recognizable, the panoptic technology it inspired, Foucault maintains, has most often insinuated itself into modern society in much more surreptitious and diffuse ways. The normalizing gaze emanates from so many disparate sources (law enforcement, school administration, healthcare, social "services," now software and marketing companies) that its essential "facelessness"—assured in the panoptic tower by such crude material means as blinds and angled dividing walls (*Surveiller* 203)—is instead assured simply by its very ubiquity. In the context of *Voyage*, when one knows that one's concierge spies, one can attempt (admittedly with difficulty) to avoid her prying eyes. But when no one yet everyone is a "concierge," one's only means of escape is to go, whether literally or figuratively, underground.

It is precisely this, as Bardamu ascertains, that the men of Manhattan have learned to do. In the public toilets he finds buried beneath Federal Square, he is stunned to discover a hidden underworld where men, shielded from female censure, can delight in defecation. There is a common urinal, and though the stalls have doors, they hang open on their half-broken hinges as the men "f[ont] leurs besoins":

Entre hommes, comme ça, sans façons, aux rires de tous ceux qui étaient autour, accompagnés des encouragements qu'ils se donnaient comme au football. . . . Autant là-haut sur le trottoir ils se tenaient bien les hommes et strictement, tristement même, autant la perspective d'avoir à se vider les tripes en compagnie tumultueuse paraissait les libérer et les réjouir intimement.

Between men, like that, without pretense, among the laughs of those around them, accompanied by the encouragement they gave each other,

like at a football game. . . . The morose aloofness of the men on the street above was equaled only by the air of liberation and rejoicing that came over them at the prospect of emptying their bowels in tumultuous company. (195; 169)

It is only underground (sheltered from Lady Liberty's gaze?) and outside the presence of women that these men can truly "liberate" themselves, abandon their "strict" carriage for a time and defy the verticality of the "ville debout" by taking a seat in her underbelly. The men's joyous celebration of these few minutes of total separation from the opposite sex (a more radical division than that which seems to occur spontaneously on the street above [194; 168]) suggests that they do indeed associate women with some kind of surveillance or control. Historically, women have always been expected to play the role of moral bulwark in society, having to monitor firstly and most importantly their own behavior, then their children's, and finally that of the grown men around them.<sup>16</sup> Of course, the *Américaines* Bardamu actually meets are in no way paragons of virtue: Bardamu suspects Lola (as he suspects all women) of prostituting herself, and Molly is a prostitute by profession. The four female visitors who drop by Lola's apartment are sexually aggressive and vulgar, and they drink illegal liqueurs and talk of shady underdealings (213-15; 184-86).<sup>17</sup> Yet it has always been so that an individual's own conduct has little effect on his or her ability to be or to be perceived as watchdogs over, if not the moral, then at least the social conduct of others, and Lola readily takes on this role, both in France, when she condemns Bardamu's avowed cowardice (65; 53), and in her apartment in New York, when she sternly censors his untoward curiosity about her visitors. "Elle me dévisageait assez durement" 'she stared at me pretty sternly,' Bardamu remarks of Lola's reaction to the questions he poses to the ladies. "Les hommes qu'elle connaissait ici, Lola, les Américains," who unlike Bardamu know their place with their female counterparts, "ne péchaient pas eux comme moi par curiosité, jamais" "The men Lola knew here, the Americans, never committed, like me, the sin of curiosity. Never" (215; 185). Yet like these men, he quickly learns to stay, to whatever extent possible, "à la limite de sa surveillance" 'just outside her surveillance' (215; 185).

In addition to the underground toilets, Bardamu is able to discover another, surely sweeter smelling haven from the femi-

nine disciplinary gaze he encounters in New York: this haven is the cinema. Though frequented, of course, by both men and women, mainstream cinema, according to Laura Mulvey's well-known thesis, has historically offered itself up as spectacle especially, even exclusively, for the objectifying male gaze. On screen, Mulvey argues, the threat of castration that woman represents (in that she herself is already "castrated") is neutralized by the gaze of both the male protagonist and the male spectator who identifies with him. This gaze can either 1) investigate, expose, demystify, and often finally punish the female character (for the "crime" of her own castration), or 2) fetishize her—that is, turn her body or a part of her body into a reassuring, substitute phallus (840). Bardamu's first description of New York as, as Michael Tilby puts it, "a castratory being ('raide à faire peur') depriving the male observer of his virility (and reproductive capacity)" (179), suggests that the young traveler needs help reclaiming his manhood, and he seems to find such help, at least temporarily, at the cinema.<sup>18</sup> Although Mulvey's contention that since Hollywood's early domination of the industry the vast majority of films, even those with female protagonists, address themselves to the male gaze has been challenged since its original publication in 1975, the films Bardamu sees in both New York and Detroit, with their scantily clad screen sirens ("[Q]uelles cuisses ! Messieurs ! Lourdes ! Amples ! Précises !" 'What thighs! Boyohboy! Heavy! Ample! Shapely!' [201; 173]), certainly seem to confirm it.<sup>19</sup> Unlike in the panoptic restaurant, in the movie theaters Bardamu visits, light ("la lumière qui bouge" 'the moving light' [201; 173]) is directed *away* from customers. Bathed in darkness, they "plonge[nt] en plein dans le pardon tiède. On aurait eu qu'à se laisser aller," Bardamu notes, "pour penser que le monde peut-être, venait enfin de se convertir à l'indulgence" 'are plunged deep into warm forgiveness. We had only to let ourselves go in order to think that the world had finally become indulgent toward us' (201;174). Displayed on screen are women who are just as beautiful as those seated in series in the Laugh Calvin lobby, but they lack these latter's hardness and inviolability. Instead they are softness, mist and light, and so can be penetrated and mastered by Bardamu's male gaze (Forrest 124).<sup>20</sup> Perhaps even more importantly, their own gaze is blind; it is clearly seen but cannot itself see, and it is thus the reverse of the Foucaul-

dian disciplinary gaze. The indulgence Bardamu fleetingly experiences in the darkened movie theater is the blinking, so to speak, of the panoptic (and often female) New York eye, and it is therefore not an indulgence he will enjoy often in the city that doesn't sleep.

In *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, the Statue of Liberty is absent from Bardamu's description of New York, then, because liberty is absent from the society he encounters there. Although Bardamu expects to be able to conquer, to penetrate New York upon his arrival, just as he had a more accommodating Lola during the war, he is sorely disappointed by the end of his stay there (Solomon 131; Forrest 135). Although a more horizontal city, Detroit, with the gigantic disciplinary machine of its Ford factory, proves itself hardly less intolerable. Though while in Detroit Bardamu meets Molly, a "fallen" (no longer vertical) American woman who therefore poses no threat to him, he still cannot stay in America. He cannot stay, in the end, because as the novel's title makes clear, he seeks night and the darkness it brings, and in America, if Liberty can be found nowhere, the light from her torch nevertheless shines everywhere. In order to escape this light, in Detroit Bardamu takes to riding the city streetcars late at night. When he runs into the shady Robinson this way (*au bout de la nuit*, in a sense, for he encounters him at the streetcar's terminus [232; 200]), he learns that Robinson has also taken refuge in the night, for he has been earning a living cleaning offices, like most of the other nocturnal streetcar passengers, long after their occupants have gone home. He and his fellow workers, Robinson says, constitute a "légion étrangère de la nuit" 'a nocturnal Foreign Legion' (233; 201), a hoard of blurry-eyed foreigners who nevertheless strike Bardamu as "moins inquiets que nous autres, gens de la journée" 'less worried than we day-people' (232; 200), hidden, as they are, from the disciplinary light of the American day.

Yet in order to find a more certain, a more permanent night, Bardamu and Robinson must go back to Europe. There Bardamu finds a "petite nuit" 'little night' in the death of Bébert (291; 250), then a much greater one in the sordid affair of Robinson, Madelon, and the Henrouilles, in which he embroils himself more and more deeply, compelled, as he is, to reach this one's end ("Où nous en étions . . . on ne pouvait plus reculer" [340; 294]). Even though in Europe as well, "Leur sale justice avec des Lois était partout, au coin

de chaque couloir” (340; 294), these hallways do not seem to be nearly as well lit as in America; in France, after all, Mme Henrouille, Robinson, and Madelon all get away, literally, with murder (and though Robinson will pay for his crimes later, it will not be at the hands of the authorities). In the France of the Purge, however, when these characters’ creator is himself indirectly accused of murder, he will not be quite so lucky as they. Although he will be spared the firing squad (unlike fellow writer Robert Brasillach), he will nevertheless become intimately acquainted with the disciplinary institution, the ultimate, that his fictional surrogate so feared.

### Notes

1 I have based most of the translations of passages from *Voyage* on Ralph Manheim’s 1983 English translation, but I have modified many of Manheim’s translations in order to provide a more literal rendering of the original. I include page numbers from this English edition even when I have made substantial modifications or given a translation that is entirely my own. All English translations of other authors’ works in this essay are my own.

2 Emma Lazarus, author of “The New Colossus,” the poem inscribed in Liberty’s pedestal, famously qualifies Liberty’s gaze as mild, but I am not the only observer who disagrees with this assessment (see my discussion of Paul Moran’s *New York* below). I will return to Lazarus’s poem below.

3 For other critical readings of Bardamu’s representation of New York/America as an androgynous woman, see, for example, Forrest, Loselle, Solomon, and Tilby. None of these critics remark on the absence of Liberty in Bardamu’s description of the New York skyline, though Forrest does briefly compare Lola to the statue. I will discuss her comparison below.

4 The “Progressive Era” in American history spanned the 1880s to the 1930s. It was a period of sweeping governmental reforms prompted by “the sentiment that government should be responsive to and responsible for the quality of life of all citizens” (Blomberg and Lucken 63). This sentiment grew as a response to the exacerbation of social problems such as poverty, disease, and crime caused by increased immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. The term “progressive” puts a positive spin on social reforms that were indeed in large part successful in their objectives, but on the nega-

tive side these reforms brought more and more governmental intervention into and control over the everyday lives of American citizens.

5 This is the title of Scott Christianson's book on the history of imprisonment in America, which I will cite further below.

6 The Federal Hall in front of which Bardamu spends his first idle hours in Manhattan dates from 1842, but the original building on the site (26 Wall St.) was built in 1700 as City Hall. This early building became Federal Hall when the First Congress met and George Washington was inaugurated there. As the birthplace of both the legislative and the executive branches of the U.S. government, then, the Hall can be seen as symbolizing the American Law and Authority that Bardamu, as well as Robinson, come to detest. Moreover, the 1842 building served as a U.S. Sub-Treasury, housing millions of dollars worth of gold and silver, until 1920 ("Federal Hall"). It therefore also serves in the novel as a symbol of American Capitalism, an institution even more repugnant to the two characters than American government.

7 Seated deep within their easy-chairs, these women are also figured as jewels embedded in their cases (196; 170), an image that evokes yet another physical barrier preventing the outsider from obtaining the object of his desire.

8 Exactly one century before *Voyage's* publication, two of Céline's fellow countrymen, Tocqueville and Beaumont, were sent by the French government to tour and learn about the American penitentiary system, just as, in 1925, Céline was sent by the League of Nations to tour American factories to learn about the health care being offered there. During a visit to Sing-Sing, New York State's and perhaps the nation's most infamous prison, Tocqueville and Beaumont were surprised to see great numbers of inmates working in open areas, with no chains and only a few guards surrounding them. Beaumont later gave a very Foucauldian assessment of how this extraordinary control had been achieved: "if [the prisoners] are materially the stronger, have they the same moral force as the small number of individuals charged with watching them? No, because they are isolated, one from the other. All strength is born of association; and 30 individuals united through perpetual communication, by ideas, by plans in common, by concerted schemes, have more real power than 900 whose isolation makes them weak" (Pierson 101, cited in Christianson 123). In *Voyage* Bardamu describes a very similar kind of separation and isolation, that to which he and his fellow recruits are subjected as they are introduced into the Ford factory's assembly line: "A mesure qu'on avançait, on les perdait

les compagnons. On leur faisait un petit sourire à ceux-là en les quittant comme si tout ce qui se passait était bien gentil. On ne pouvait plus ni se parler ni s'entendre" "The farther we advanced along the line, the more of our companions we lost. In leaving them we gave them bright little smiles, as if all this were just lovely. We could no longer speak to nor hear one another' (225; 194). While waiting in line at the cinema in Manhattan, the lonely traveler had already noted how isolated each man truly is among the crowds of modern urban society: "C'est désespérant quand on y pense, combien c'est défendu les hommes les uns contre les autres, comme autant de maisons" 'It's heartbreaking to think how people shut themselves off from one another, like so many houses' (201; 173).

9 I am grateful to Antony Shuttleworth for bringing to my attention the similarity between Hopper's (visual) and Céline's (verbal) restaurants.

10 The Foucauldian soul ("âme") is "une pièce dans la maîtrise que le pouvoir exerce sur le corps. L'âme, effet et instrument d'une anatomie politique; l'âme, prison du corps" 'a tool in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul, product as well as instrument of a political anatomy; the soul, the body's prison' (*Surveiller* 34). It is, one might say, a sort of super-ego that the disciplinary regime cultivates within the individual and that makes of him a docile subject that in ideal circumstances needs no further external regulation. Because circumstances are never ideal, however, there is always the possibility (and indeed the reality) of resistance even among the indoctrinated, Foucault insists. For a sympathetic discussion of Foucault's assertions that the disciplinary system permits and even invites resistance, see chapter 2 in John Ransom's *Foucault's Discipline*.

11 At the end of *La volonté de savoir*, Foucault speaks of a similar irony, that of the twentieth-century's obsession with eliminating taboos about sex (211). While movements to expose, describe, and categorize sexual practices (what, where, when, how, with whom, etc.) have been carried out in the name of human liberation, their effect, Foucault contends, has been to make human beings slaves of this new sexual *savoir*. That is, this knowledge has become a *savior-pouvoir* ("knowledge-power") that forces individuals to compare obsessively their own practices against endless statistics about what is "normal" (read acceptable or moral) and what is "abnormal" (unacceptable or immoral). I am grateful to Karlis Racevskis, in particular for pointing out to me Foucault's discussion of the "soul" in *Volonté*, and in general for his most helpful comments on a draft of this essay.

12 "The New Colossus"

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
 With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
 A mighty woman with a torch whose flame  
 Is imprisoned lightning, and her name  
 Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
 Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
 The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

“Keep ancient lands your storied pomp!” cries she with silent lips.

Give me your tired your poor,  
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Emma Lazarus (1849-1887)

13 Classical Greece is also alluded to in this passage in that when Bardamu witnesses this avalanche of *déeses*, he is seated, as noted above, in front of Federal Hall, whose architecture is Greek Revival (“Federal Hall”).

14 The National Origins Act, along with several other similarly discriminatory immigration laws passed in the 1910s and ‘20s, severely restricted the number of immigrants the U.S. would accept from regions other than those from which “traditional” Americans had come (principally Britain, Scandinavia, and Germany) (“Ellis Island”).

15 In her analysis of the misogyny present in much of the propaganda and literature of World War II in particular, Susan Gubar reproduces and comments on several wartime posters (both Allied and Axis) that portray women as either spies or careless talkers who risk compromising homeland security. One such poster depicts a sexy blond surrounded by several British officers and warns the male viewer, “Keep mum, she’s not so dumb!” (243).

16 One prime example of American women’s adoption of this role was the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the most influential organization in the passage, right around the time of Bardamu’s visit to New York, of Prohibition (1919). In *Scènes de la vie future*, Duhamel cites Prohibition as an illustration of American disciplinary practice at its very worst and accuses the American government of playing not only moral police but

God Himself (77-87). The eighteenth amendment was not repealed until 1933, and therefore the New York Céline himself visited for the first time (in 1925) was officially (if never in reality) dry. Unlike Duhamel, however, Céline was a notorious teetotaler, which most likely explains why Prohibition escapes satire in *Voyage*. There is, however, one allusion to it in the novel, and it reinforces the image of America that I have argued is created there: when Bardamu runs into Robinson in Detroit, Robinson confides in him that he had been offered a place in a bootlegging business run by a French deserter like himself (this man's foreignness confirming, incidentally, the American authorities' assumptions about the lawlessness of immigrants). Uncharacteristically, Robinson declines the seedy offer. Having already witnessed the extraordinary efficacy of the American disciplinary machine at work, "je sens qu'au premier flic qui me travaille," he admits, "je me dégonfle" 'at the first cop who works me over, I know I'll chicken out' (234; 201).

17 In particular, they talk, according to Bardamu, about "de[s] mariages très spéciaux, ce devait être même d[es] unions entre très jeunes sujets, entre enfants sur lesquels elles touchaient des commissions" 'very special marriages, probably even unions between very young people, between children, and for which the women earned a commission' (215; 185). This rather bizarre charge is developed no further and could in fact be attributed to the particularly fierce bout of malarial fever that strikes Bardamu while at Lola's.

18 Along with Tilby, Solomon (134) and Forrest (137) also point out passages in the text that suggest that New York's verticality has a marked "deflationary" effect on Bardamu's and his shipmates' manhood (*Voyage* 184, 187, and 205; 159, 161, and 177).

19 For discussions of refinements and critiques of Mulvey's analysis, see Judith Mayne's "Feminist Film Theory and Criticism" and the first chapter in her *The Woman at the Keyhole*.

20 Citing Bram Dijkstra's discussion of the "floating woman" imagery in late-nineteenth-century art (Dijkstra 87-9), Forrest holds that, "The mistiness surrounding these women in early cinematography creates the impression that they are but atomized particles about to evaporate into thin air. Their volatility further reinforces in the male viewer a sense of his own corporeal solidity and of his ability to exert power over the viewed feminine object without actually advancing to direct physical contact" (124).

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