Catherine Flynn, Berkeley Book Chats, March 4, 2020

Timothy Hampton: Welcome to Berkeley Book Chats. I'm Timothy Hampton, director of the Townsend Center for the Humanities. Book Chats showcase Berkeley faculty authors engaged in public conversation about their own recently completed books. This popular series highlights the richness of Berkeley's academic community.

Today's conversation features Catherine Flynn of the English Department discussing her 2019 book, James Joyce and the Matter of Paris.

She is joined by Michael Lucey of the Comparative Literature and French Departments.

Speaker 1: I'm happy to turn, I'm delighted to turn the floor over to Catherine Flynn and Michael Lucey to talk about Catherine's new book.

Michael Lucey: So the title of Catherine's new book is James Joyce and the Matter of Paris. And I've really enjoyed or I've been enjoying or I am still learning from this book. So it's one of those things that you know if you are a person who studies literature that Joyce was in Paris in the 1920s writing some of Ulysses and then that Ulysses was published in Paris in the 1920s. But your book starts from a different place. That's one of the exciting things about it. It starts from a very short period of time that a much younger Joyce's spent in Paris in 1903 and 1904, just a few months.

Michael Lucey: And so the first part of your book you spend showing how endlessly fruitful what happened during those few months was for the rest of Joyce's literary career. And that one of the fascinating things is your ability to show how even when he was working on Finnegans Wake still what he experienced in those four, it was four months in Paris? In 1903 was still something that he was, its implications were still unfolding in his writing. So that's kind of an amazing trajectory across the book.

Michael Lucey: And then one of the other great things about the book was that it made me think, since I'm always thinking about courses you can teach about French literature, that choice is a part of French literature. That's one of the things that your book really shows and that it would be possible to teach a course in which the early Joyce or some of early Joyce's writings would be put into a dialogue with a Baudelaire in Berlin and then portrait of the artist would be put into dialogue with Rimbaud. Maybe we'll talk about how you do that.

Michael Lucey: And then certain parts of Ulysses could be put into dialogue with a book that almost no one reads anymore. And you make sound much more interesting The [inaudible 00:02:13] book. And then that then the Big Searcy episode of Ulysses could be put into contact with [FloBear 00:02:22] and Voyelle Rimbaud in really interesting ways. And then suddenly towards the fifth chapter of the book, it pivots and instead of French literature, his influence on Joyce, it becomes Joyce's influence on French literature. So then you'd be able to suddenly understand Aragon goes to[inaudible 00:02:38]in a new way because he had absorbed say, the CRC section of Ulysses.

Michael Lucey: And then in the final chapter you come back to say the importance of somebody like [inaudible 00:02:49] for Finnegans Wake . So it's really fascinating to think about Joyce as a part of the French literary [inaudible 00:02:59] in the way that you show them to be. And it is interesting too, one of the ways maybe we can come to this when we get to the second half of the book that you show that in a certain way I had to go home Baudelaire came to [O'Hagan 00:03:12] through Joyce, that there was a way in which the transmission of French literature even passed through Joyce from earlier French writers to later French writers.

Michael Lucey: That's a really great insight and I think maybe one of the things that we can talk a little bit about when there's an Irishman in the French literature field and the French literature is being transmitted through him, what happens? So to me that's one of the fascinating things that we get to at the end of your book. What happens to say about Baudelaire when Aragon has to read him through somebody like Joyce. So let's see if we can get to there, but maybe we should start back at the beginning about what happens to Joyce in those amazingly productive few months that started in December 1902. Is that 1902 and into 1903.

Catherine Flynn: Yes.

Michael Lucey: Because you say there are three things. You divided it up into three things. One, he commits himself even more deeply to his reading of French literature. Two, he experiences Paris as the urban and urban center full of commodity culture. And three, he experiences Paris as a strange kind of overwhelming sensory experience. And it's the three things together?

Catherine Flynn: Yeah. So thank you for those questions and for your interest in the book and your very close engagement with it. It's really an honor to be here talking with you about and to be invited by team to talk here and thank you all for coming. So yeah, to go back to the beginning of what you said, one of the fundamental aims of this book is to reshape how we understand Joyce. And Paris really unlocks a different Joyce and I think maybe the true Joyce. So people think of Joyce moving to Paris in 1920 as a fully formed writer.

Catherine Flynn: Someone who's already a master, he's written poetry, he's written Dubliners. He's written a bunch of our big section of Ulysses. And then maybe he writes Finnegans Wake in Paris, people think, and it's Paris is really a place he goes drinking. That's kind of how people see Joyce and Paris as an expat. With even less engagement than say Hemingway, who was really a part of Gertrude's [inaudible 00:05:30] salon. Joyce hung out with really minor figures and avoided all of the greats.

Catherine Flynn: But what I discovered in looking at his earliest writings was that Joyce was oriented towards Paris as very young man. Even before he went there in December 1902, he was translating for Len. He was voicing Baudelaire. So he was kind of plagiarizing Baudelaire in conversation with Yates when he was announcing his ambitions as a writer. And he was deeply invested in this project of a new kind of poetic prose that would give expression to experience in the big city.

Catherine Flynn: So Paris offered for Joyce an alternative to Dublin, Ireland under the boot of the British in sort of now enthroned to cultural nationalism, which was invested in reawakening mythological images from the past. The Irish language. Joyce really wants to look to the future and all of his student writings are about Europe, about excitements of new discoveries, about littering and artistic innovations.

Catherine Flynn: So going to Paris for him was allying himself with the avant-garde as he saw it. And the writers he'd been reading, they're all dead or they've moved on. Mostly they were dead, but he was going to one of the most vibrant centers of artistic innovation in Paris in, sorry, in Europe. And then when he got there, I think all of his writings allude to or suggest that this was a huge shock to him. That it was absolutely overwhelming in sensory terms. He was very poor. He really struggled. He was very hungry.

Catherine Flynn: And so that combination of hunger really being an outsider in this center of consumption, the Paris of 1902 was this kind of glittering showcase of commodity culture. But also from people who write about Paris at the time, everything was on sale there. There was a feeling that you could buy anyone in a way as well as this whole culture, prostitution that was in circulation, every level of society.

Catherine Flynn: And so Joyce had been visiting prostitutes in Dublin. You might know that. And so he supposedly did go with streetwalkers in Paris, but this generated for him or around this, he generated some really interesting writing about what art is. So I think the impact of Paris on him posed the question of what art can be in this incredibly overwhelming environment, this really powerful place where the desires are worked on super fondly. What role does art have? Does it have any role at all?

Catherine Flynn: And so the first theory he comes up with is that art has to be placed with refuge from powerful effects like desire and loathing. It's ecstatic place where you contemplate the beautiful, it's very intellectual for him, but very quickly in Paris over these four months, he goes through an evolution and realizes that art is something actually much more dynamic and much more based in the senses and an interaction.

Catherine Flynn: So he writes this account of women on the Boulevard that's very ambiguous. You don't know if they're prostitutes or not. And the speaker wants to frame them as a certain type. But his sensory encounter with them, he smells their bodies undoes any kind of objective separation. He would like to claim and instead creates this presence of human engagement. And unreliability subtlety and experiential quality that alludes transactional relations. When I read this piece with these questions in mind, I thought, Oh my God, this is Joyce.

Catherine Flynn: This is Joyce appearing to us as we now know him. And so the discoveries he makes in Paris and the problem fundamentally that he's confronted with and this scene of interaction between people that occurs in a space where things are really mapped in transactional terms, but the encounter is mediated through the approximate senses, through smell, taste and touch through these senses where you can't really have a distance. You're taking the person in, the boundaries are being eroded. This encounter becomes a really important aesthetic scene for Joyce.

Catherine Flynn: And he rewrites that encounter over the course of his whole career. Thinking about new ways to cast it, new literary forms to present it in new ways of developing it. And I become a question and answer to the question of what art is and involving answer. And an answer that is also a retort to the deformations of experience under capitalism. Especially erotic relations. So yeah, I'd love to talk through the various cases then that you brought up.

Michael Lucey: Yeah. Well maybe we could just talk a little bit more about, so the terms that you start using in the first chapter where you're talking about his time in Paris are

that he finds himself in an immersive environment and then one of their key terms in your book is sentient thinking. So this idea that thought happens in the body rather than in the mind. And that that produces a desire for an embodied aesthetic practice.

Michael Lucey: And one of the things you say is that this produces a thinking that evades the conscious intentions of the subject as it occurs through material and involuntary processes. And so that's to me, one of the fascinating things I was trying to think through is as I read through your examples. So if you as a writer are coming to a writerly practice that is dealing with sensation thinking, which is supposed to be below the level of conscious intention, then what is the artistic practice that is related to that?

Catherine Flynn: Yeah. This is a great question. Very meaty question. Teasing out Joyce's relation to Baudelaire and to the pros point. So Baudelaire wanted to, he announced a new genre but declared his failure to write in that genre over poetic prose that would respond to experience in the city. There would be musical but without rhythm and rhyme. And in his prose poems, his Paris prose poems, his collection, he thinks of failures, but they're extremely interesting vignettes, experiential vignettes in Paris.

Catherine Flynn: And in one of them, the confession of the artist, he says that he fails. He's in a duel with beauty and he fails. And he says things think through me or I through them. And the me quickly disappears. And so there is within this context of Paris, what Baudelaire is saying, I argue is that standard cognition doesn't really work in the street of the modern city. When you're being bombarded with sensory appeals with various demands, when you're registering various desires.

Catherine Flynn: This isn't a space of contemplation. It's not a space of philosophical argumentation. So still Baudelaire or even says syllogisms deductions. They don't work they no longer work. And so what is this new way of thinking? What could it be? And so things think through me or I through them. I think that for Joyce, this becomes, Joyce develops the stream of consciousness as this mode which registers how the world impacts on you and how you're thinking in small fragments during those impacts or in between those sensory events.

Catherine Flynn: And that this kind of thinking isn't, as you say, organized consciously. It's not controlled consciously. It's not ordered in the way that thought classically is sought to be. Instead, it's in a process of evolution that's almost haphazard depending on what it encounters. So it's kind of associational, if you think of Blooms, if you're familiar at all with them. Ulysses Bloom is constantly bouncing off his thoughts are bouncing off what he's noticing and what he's remembering. And this becomes a kind of... a successful way of negotiating the urban environment of eking out some kind of autonomy, not as some separate subjects but in the kind of immersed situation.

Catherine Flynn: And so in some ways Joyce is a kind of philosopher, but he's he philosophizes through art. So art becomes the way of conceiving of a new kind of cognition. So if we typically separate thinking and sensing that separation doesn't work anymore in this new environment and sentient thinking is my coinage and is a kind of thinking that happens amidst this bombardment and through it actually so that the mind no longer needs to be separated. In fact, it is triggered by in a positive way prompted by kind of fed by stimulus.

Catherine Flynn: So Joyce writes in the Lester Gouldians chapter, episode eight Bloom thinks, never know whose thoughts are thinking, which is really a sign of how porous

we are. The notion of the kind of secluded philosopher is no longer relevant to the modern urban individual. And this is what Baudelaire was talking about in proposing the form of the genre of what a prose. He talked about the innumerable encounters of the big city. And so this desire to create an art that would respond to this. So in my book, I argue that Joyce comes this slowly build it up gradually piece by piece. And that stream consciousness is midway.

Catherine Flynn: So he starts off with this strange sensory encounter on the Boulevard later it's a kind of sentience thought that Stephen Douglas notices that he's saying things that he's not in conscious control over. He says one thing that is actually really interesting blend of two poets John Nash and who's writing during the time of plagues, listening in the time of plagues. And Rimbaud Voyelles.

Catherine Flynn: So the point that starts off black goes through the vowels and the signs them pretty arbitrarily different colors. Stephen weds these two lines of poetry without thinking and explains them in response to this woman who walks by him, a woman who he's kind of in love with it but really desires. It's a very complicated relationship and the meeting of the center of her body and it's a very bodily, it's a smell, but a beautiful smell. Like it's not artificial like a perfume. It's the product of her body.

Catherine Flynn: This [inaudible 00:17:00] is the phrase meets this line that he did claims or he responds. And it's like the words and the centered air meet. And this is aesthetic event. Stephen borates himself, he says something like, I can't trust my minds or I can't trust my thinking. And it's true, but you know what? That's overrated. And that this process of interaction is actually much more meaningful. Because it gives them some way out actually of the transactional impasse that they've been in where Stephen wants to sleep with Emma and Emma can't sleep with Stephen because it'll destroy her value on the marriage market.

Catherine Flynn: And even though she really wants him so that they're at loggerheads. But this moment is a moment of pleasure and a moment of beauty. And it's this joyful... the possibility of joy that is spontaneous, that is experiential, that's collaborative, that really interests Joyce. And is that the kind of center of his aesthetic exploration and right through and in some ways culminates in Finnegans Wake. But the joy then happens between readers and the book. This is my argument at the end that this is no longer about witnessing in artistic event as represented in literature, but instead about having some kind of aesthetic encounter with a set of readers through this book where that offers you so much.

Catherine Flynn: And so much that seems a little bit like gobbledygook. There's massive amount of stimuli that you have to kind of work to process. But you're also working to process the responses of other people too. So it forms aesthetic collectivity kind of sociality around reading. But that's at the end. So the book is very... it really has a chronological narrative and it really shows... another big thing that are to come back to my first point that we see people say, Joyce is this kind of genius. We don't know how, we don't understand. It's intimidating. I have to let go of, I just don't want to even engage.

Catherine Flynn: But to see Joyce struggle and come up with sequentially more and more interesting responses to this problem is to see him as someone who's really kind of... he's struggling. He's really working hard and it does a huge amount of dedication that you see in this project. And this is something I think that it's endearing and impressive in a different way. It's not like he just woke up the age of 18 and started hammering out masterpieces. There's a lot of suffering in the earlier period, but then there's just a lot of thinking. A lot of struggling. Yeah.

Michael Lucey: Can we spend a little more time on that scene that you talk about in a portrait of the artist? Because you say there that Joyce is using [Hambolt 00:20:05] portrait in conceiving of Stephen's sematic art.

Catherine Flynn: Yeah.

Michael Lucey: And the sematic art is something that Stephen almost engages in, as you just said unwittingly. Emma walks by, the smell happens and somehow the smell is the cause of a little prose poem that happens on the page, but also somehow in his mind in which Nash and Rimbaud are blended together. And then you say that Stephen realizes that he has been involved in a bilateral aesthetic exchange, which is a really interesting formulation. And so it just seems like there's, Joyce is there, Stephen is there and also Emma is there.

Michael Lucey: I was curious what if you could talk about that, but also, what is Emma's part in aesthetic exchange?

Catherine Flynn: Yeah. Because you could say, Oh, she's just the body and he's mind or something. But in some ways that would imply or assume that the mind is superior to the body. And Emma's part is actually fundamental because Emma's body is capable of distilling something to create this odor and you that he smells in the air. He's actually involved in an aesthetic process. So in Paris, the later definition that Joyce came out with for art is the intellectual or I can't remember, hang on, I have to look up, but it's the physical or intellectual. It's both physical and intellectual.

Catherine Flynn: Yeah, art is the human disposition of sensible or intelligible matter. So sensible or intelligible. So he's taking his terms from cons actually. Or from Hagle where Hagle says that art is the sensible deployment of intelligible matter. It's scent of truth embodied in semblance. This is Hagle's understanding what art is. But Joyce puts sensible and intelligible together as alternatives. And so Emma is an artist according to Joyce's own definition. And her artistry is what triggers Stephen. So Stephen's is dependent on her.

Catherine Flynn: So in some ways it's a kind of it's like a happening in a way an art happening. But the way that Emma's body is performing actually is in some ways or very similar to one of the lines in Rimbaud Voyelles poem, which is Black is The buzzing of flies around cruel stenches, gulfs of shadow this is very weird. It's a very strange poem. It's a really radical poem in that it rejects many of the central values of aesthetics. Cruel stenches. How is that beautiful? It's doesn't explain itself in any way. It's really an arbitrary deployment of very strange sensations that force the reader to repeat it over and over.

Catherine Flynn: This is kind of buzzing becomes in some ways enacted by the reader is they're like, wow, could this be, what is this black, so that this buzzing of flies of black flies around cruel stenches gulfs of shadow. What did it say in such a sing song way? I think it's cause it's like, so it's kind of filthy it's what Stephen does in response to Emma's body actually. So his line, he says, darkness falls in the air and he realizes that it should be darkness falls, it should be brightness falls from the air.

Catherine Flynn: This is the line from Nash. Brightness falls from the hair actually is John Nash's original line. And so Stephen changes brightness, falls from the hair to darkness falls from the air, and then he breaks himself about this black vow. And how it bothers him, this black vowel that he sounds. So it's a very interesting reenactment of the poem Voyelle. And Joyce is extremely good at taking iconic

moment in a previous great writer's work and re-imagining it, reinhabiting is repurposing it. And this comes back to your earlier points or a question about teaching a course.

Catherine Flynn: That you could really see Joyce as... you could teach him as someone who's really taking up a whole set of off of French writers also, European writers, but also writers who themselves are taking up other writers. So, for example, just to shift to another example, he brought up his relationship to Nerval. So Nerval was 19th century visionary writer who died in an insane asylum and he's writing's extremely powerful and was itself very influential in French writing and was re-imagined by Rimbaud and Joyce then read both of them.

Catherine Flynn: But Nerval himself is reconfiguring things from Gerta and also Dante, the divine comedy. So this journey through purgatory or hell, purgatory in heaven cause re-imagined by Nerval [inaudible 00:25:31] in this like heaven and hell of [inaudible 00:25:38] that the underworld of Paris. And it then becomes reimagined by Rimbaud Une Saison en Enfer Season in Hell. And then Joyce himself turned writes the Searcy episode, which is a descent into the underworld where everything gets inverted and where the hallucinations that both Nerval and Rimbaud are so interested in and devise new means to represent also feature.

Catherine Flynn: And so this very strange chapter of Ulysses, the longest chapter by far, the Searcy episode set in the night town area is very closely related to French visionary literature and to the literature that's exploring the modern city 19th century Paris as a place in which political hope has died and which progressive energies have been redirected into spectacle. And there's a kind of sense of the material promise of the world, but something that is foreclosed by new capitalist relations that have taken over and have supplanted the Republican values of the revolution.

Michael Lucey: Yeah. So I'm just being mindful of the time and week. So maybe I'll just ask one or one and a half more questions. The Searcy episode is the pivot of the book in a certain way because as you just so nicely explained incredibly intertextual in its relationship to European literature. But then its reception within Paris as you show extremely important. And so one of the key concepts of your book that comes out of your reading of the Searcy episode is the idea of an exploding vision. And the way that exploding vision relates to what's called an image body space.

Michael Lucey: And this is for you, really important for the way that Joyce impacts somebody like Louis O'Hagan and then through Louis O'Hagan some, somebody like Benjamin. So do you want to talk a little bit about exploding vision in relation to [inaudible 00:27:50]?

Catherine Flynn: Yes. So this is Joyce's own term exploding visions, to describe the technique of the Searcy episode. So the episode is written in the form of a play script, and it involves a weird scenario in night town, the Red Light district of Dublin, which was quite extensive, and had many, many prostitutes for various reasons. But and so every now and then Bloom I some kind of elucidation or waking dream is triggered by something that someone says or something he touches or sees or feels. And these elucidations can go on and on.

Catherine Flynn: And then he comes back out of them and returns to the world of the Red Light district to the brothel. And so this spectacular form or this visionary form is derived from Nerval and Rimbaud. But Joyce really explicitly or more explicitly relates it to the way that capitalism, structures relations. So prostitution is the

most extreme form of capitalist distortion of erotic relations. So nighttime for Joyce in Searcy is a place where the productive and reproductive powers of human beings are harnessed for profit and they're possessed, they're exploited and even desire is instrumentalized.

Catherine Flynn: And so Bloom goes in there in some ways, the answer of the stream of consciousness is a really nice one, but stream of consciousness maybe isn't enough for such an intense scenario. And these waking dreams become in a way a kind of explosion of the stream of consciousness where associations don't just lead onto a thought, but actually balloon into whole fantasies, these waking dreams. But the and then are ended again by another kind of sensory encounter.

Catherine Flynn: But this place becomes a place of experimentation for Bloom where instead of just going along with things like a normal guy as you're supposed to under the rules of night town where you're supposed to want to have sex with women, you are supposed to want to rent their bodies. And also blazers boil and figures as someone who wants to plow Molly to use her body in a productive way. Bloom instead is involved in all kinds of non reproductive sexual activities, masturbation, voyeurism, spanking, dressing up, just coprophilia. And what all of these relate to in the end is some kind of curiosity about pleasure and joy. And the joy of the other, to explore the joys we each enjoy. He says at one point.

Catherine Flynn: And so in this intense environment of exploitation, Bloom embodies a whole set of alternative values actually, which are about empathy, but also about a focus on transient emotions and positive ones and also ephemeral sensations. So something that can't be bought can be accumulated. And so our God, so Joyce writes the Searcy chapter in Paris in 1920 and it blooms out of any kind of normal shape or size for the novel. And largely because I argued this return to Paris, reinserts him in the, in the scene that prompted his whole project in the first place.

Catherine Flynn: And all of the characters of Ulysses are appear again in Searcy in strange dream like form. In a way he's, he's sort of reexamining everything he's already written through this new, more intense lens. But when he writes... so in Paris in the early 20s, Joyce is already becoming famous and literary circles. And so there are readings. The book is published, as you said in 1922 by Sylvia Beach imprint Shakespeare and Company touch the bookstore and people are start to read it. And one of them is Louis Aragon.

Catherine Flynn: And one of the earliest realists and my dissertation, I was like, Oh, it's funny that they're so similar, but I didn't put it together. Like Louis Aragon actually visited Shakespeare and Company. He's English was excellent. He also was a huge fan of Joyce. And his novel, Paris Peasant, Le Paysan de Paris is extremely similar to Searcy and revisits all of those terms in a slightly shifted mode. So Aragon narrator is more interested in the prostitutes experience and in how their eroticism, their interest in sensuality act as some kind of buffer to just the traffic of commerce.

Catherine Flynn: It's a sort of blocking point. And this is how he imagines the waking dreams. He reimagines them. Walter Benjamin then moves to Paris, moves in the same circles. It gets to know Louis Aragon and is supposed to write about surrealism for German journals and is prompted by his book to begin the arcades project. So he literally says he has to put the book down because it makes his heart beat really quickly. And when he's trying to read it in bed, and this was the beginning of the whole of the arcades project.

Catherine Flynn: And so Benjamin then begins to think of the prostitute as a figure who's positioned at the threshold of dream energies and the surrealist artist as well as a similar figure and someone who's capable of accessing the potential in society, this transformative potential. He changes his mind in various ways and he turns against them, but he turns this kind of physical encounter, this erotic encounter into something in the surrealism essay that he describes as an image body space where consciousness is no longer present at all. And where the collective is shaped like matter by these sensory experience so that it becomes like just physical matter to be shaped.

Catherine Flynn: So the problem of the individual, the kind of [inaudible 00:34:17] individual is evacuated in this scene where people lose their individual consciousnesses and are acted on like say, the work of art essay, the workings of the rhythms of film on an audience. It's kind of similar idea. So in some ways it's problematic, because the total evacuation of any kind of agency or consciousness. And Benjamin then moves on to thinking about the arcades as a place of encounter with objects that spark sensations and ideas and transformative energies both for individuals but also for the reader in the form of an OFM, the arcades project, this very accretive and well, It's not an organized like an encyclopedia, but it's a kind of massive collection of objects.

Catherine Flynn: So it's hard to summarize this lineage in a couple of minutes. But Joyce here is really a nexus for French literature and for critical theory and one of its crucial moments. And it's really interesting to see him as a thinker, as someone who's producing ideas and producing little reforms that act as machines for thinking to use virtual breaths phrase that he said to Val de Benjamin when they were in dialogue that "I like this choice. He produces machines for thinking and they're saleable" he said, which is funny. So this Is a very dynamic, this is another element of how dynamic this misery scene is.

Michael Lucey: So I think we should take some questions now. There is one more stage in your process which gets you to Finnegans Wake, but maybe somebody will ask a question where you can talk about Finnegans Wake.

Catherine Flynn: Okay. That's the half question there. Yeah. Oh, you're supposed to wait. Oh, it's on a cable.

Speaker 4: So, I'm used to thinking of the huge inflation out of reality and then deflation back down and back again that's so uncontrollable in Searcy is being a lot like a floberry temptation of Saint Anthony. And I can guess at some reasons why you might want to correct that particular narrative. I'd love to hear your take on it.

Catherine Flynn: Thanks for that question. So FloBerry actually. Ooh. Ooh. Well it could have been spilled. And so funnily enough, floBerry does in fact feature in this RC chapter and the temptation of St. Anthony and because that is also a novel written in the form of a play script and it features waking dreams. It features a series of, as you say, these hallucinatory experiences. And I think there's a really crucial moment for Joyce in that novel and Flo Berry novel where there's an opposition between this free floating matter that the devil gives St. Anthony. This image of the world is just this shifting place where everything can be anything.

Catherine Flynn: And then God intervenes at the last minute. The face of Jesus appears in the sun, in the disc of the sun, and testifies to divinely ordained essences that the world is nameable. There are souls, there are identifiable things. And Anthony is like, okay, he's saved from this, like this place, like loss of himself. You don't know in the end, like whether this is kind of another funny moment in both in FloBerry

novelty. Because the novel itself it's crazy. It's very hard to take that seriously. Nothing else. You don't know what to take seriously.

Catherine Flynn: But what Joyce does is take that image of Jesus in the disc of the sun and turn it into an image of commerce. So Bloom in Searcy looks up and sees the face of a pharmacist who he's bought a bar of soap from in the disc of the sun. And the pharmacist looks down and tells him the price of the soap. And so this is a new world now, a world where instead of divinely ordained essences, we have prices that are dictated by shopkeepers and yeah. Yeah. But It is a crucial tax for him. Yeah.

Catherine Flynn: Oh, you're closer frenzy. Yeah. Yes.

Speaker 5: Do you want [inaudible 00:39:28].

Catherine Flynn: You have it. Oh, did you want to ask a question? Okay, go ahead.

Speaker 5: Oh, thank you. Where does your consideration of modernity fit into this? Because this idea of the central that you're presenting, which I subscribed to that and that's great. I think of [Zimmel 00:39:48] I would give a space between Zimmel and Benjamin. And I think about the intensity of the modern. That's running not only through Joyce, but everything he must be running into in Paris at this time.

Catherine Flynn: Absolutely. They're all dealing with this a similar challenge, actually the same challenge in a way of how to recuperate human experience in the modern city under the pressures of capitalism. And Zimmel has an idea of encounters between people as I'm very fleeting, Zimmel. It's really about looking, and kind of visual negotiation between, I'm really gesturing as coincidentally it's a space of kind of visual negotiation. Whereas for Joyce, he understands it differently in that the modern city is a place of spectacle, of looking and admiring and desiring.

Catherine Flynn: But it's also a place where the other senses are activated and they're activated in positive and negative terms. So smell can actually be an incredible lure, like an overpowering lure to consumption. But if you start thinking about encounters between people, it becomes something different. I think that it really is about this problem of modernity as say, enforcing a kind of [rats 00:41:24] on people that all of their thoughts will be governed by instrumentality, instrumentalization, calculation ramification. These are very critical theory terms, the late Frankfurt school terms.

Catherine Flynn: All about counting and looking. Looking and you can really count when you look, when you smell, it becomes quite difficult. And so it's about quantification of experience. And this is the dilemma that a lot of the Frankfurt school thinkers are grappling with. And Benjamin is very different in that he thinks about erotic connections and desire and sensations that evade cognitive control. And in this I think he really gets this from Joyce. This alternative approach to the problems of the city. Looking at it through a different lens of a much more kind of sensual embodied sense. Yeah.

Michael Lucey: Maybe I can slip something in here and then we can take further question. So it's interesting the way that you talk about venue mean in chapter five, and then in chapter six, you move on to Finnegans Wake. And it's interesting to think how you might think about Finnegans Wake as a different realization of something like what the passage Burke was supposed to be. The theme that's been running

throughout the book is that comes up, especially in the Finnegans Wake chapter isn't about the sense of smell, but it's about digestion, the metaphor ingestion.

Michael Lucey: And in fact, the things that were so interesting to me about that last chapter were the collage nature of the text, what you call deformative, heterogeneous deformative and superimposed collage in the text. And the result is that as you say, I love this passage. The text becomes a digestive tract in which we as readers are active responding to it with associations, puns and Sonic transformation. So maybe you could talk about that a little bit.

Catherine Flynn: Yes. So through the book, various processes are happening in Bloom's body. He is digesting like never know whose thoughts you're thinking. The mind becomes a stomach, but also the digestive system is active and impinging on various experiences. Sending thinking is a kind of digestion. And he thinks about microbes to how microbes cross boundaries between people. And all of those troops I think are re-imagined again in Finnegans Wake where the book itself forces us to become like the cheese mites that Bloom thinks about in the lunchtime episode.

Catherine Flynn: The gift cheese, its flavor, cheese and mighty cheese. He says, eats all but itself. And so Finnegans Wake is extremely difficult book. It refuses synopsis or any synopsis is just ridiculously productive. And so we're kind of plunged into this overwhelming verbal environment that is also referenced as referring to all kinds of physical facts and a events. And so this is something that requires us to activate it.

Catherine Flynn: So that is the matter that we are bringing to life. So it's a very different relationship to a text. It's a much more active immersed one that in which there's no outside or the outside doesn't make sense. Just as the kind of digestive tract is this processional series of events where it's not a narrative or any kind of clear single event. Yeah. [Harsha 00:45:30]

Speaker 6: Thank you. Do I need to move? So my question is about what is universal and what is particular about the Paris in your story? And in that sense it's building a little bit on Francine's question. So you focus primarily on Paris as a kind of urban sensorium. With productive of certain kinds of sensory stimuli and certain modes of sociability. And you also suggested these are modes of sociability and forms of stimulate that could essentially be found under conditions of advanced capitalism in any number of major metropolitan centers.

Speaker 6: And that makes me think about what Paris brings to someone like Joyce that could not be experienced elsewhere. And one factor that that came to mind, which I think is true for many provincial or peripheral intellectuals is not only Paris as a place to overcome the perceived provincialism of their native land, but also as a place by which to bypass the more obvious choice of the Imperial Metropole, which would be London in Joyce's case or Madrid or Vienna or some [inaudible 00:46:50] for other intellectuals.

Speaker 6: But I want to push it a little further. I'm interested in the question of what particular history literary history is what you've really focused on today, but also urban history or Paris makes available. When one thinks of the story of Parisian modernity, it's generally about a series of restructurings of the built environment and the position of the artist as [Flenner 00:47:16] in hesitating between a kind of complicity in these transformations but also witnessing and in fact ultimately seeking a place to resist these transformations.

Speaker 6: That seems to be in some ways that according to at least venue ministry of Parisian modernity were donated from Benjamin to Aragon. And so my question is, Joyce, is someone radically in some ways external to this story, but who's inserting himself into it? Is there a sense in which Paris is a kind of deterritorialized space in which a certain kind of urban fantasy can be experienced, which is not specific to time and place or is it really part of this story of rootedness and a particular series of restructurings that got back to Osman [inaudible 00:48:03]?

Catherine Flynn: Okay. Another very meaty question. I've got about like minus 30 seconds to answer. So, yes. Paris is not London, and it's not an Imperial center for Joyce. And it's importantly, I think for an Irishman, a center of Republican values, something that Irish people were striving for a long time and which and it was a historical Mecca for Irish people and often a place of flight for them. It's a city that bears the history of a series of social political transformations as well, even though some of those are erased by Houseman's transformation of the city. The new Boulevard structure or the monumentalization of the city that's spectacularization of social life that goes along with it.

Catherine Flynn: And that is unique to Paris at that moment. London would have also been a place of commodity consumption. That was very powerful. However, it wasn't designed as a stage for that as a display case for that. Stages in a better way of putting it where social life in Paris became extremely extroverted. It became very much about appearing and encountering on the street and about reading people on the street. And so the whole culture of prostitution, for example, there was a spectrum of prostitutes to circulation on the street and some of them pastors, normal women until you know that the right moment occurred.

Catherine Flynn: And so there's a whole set of encounters on the street that are extremely important in Paris and diffused throughout the city instead of being in like East end or in the Red Light area of Dublin. So that's also extremely important. I think unique. Paris is unique in that way. But Paris is also as I kind of, well not hyperbolic, but an extreme instantiation of commodity consumption. It's something that teaches Joyce how to recognize it in other places. So when Joyce goes back to Paris, he reuses the description of the women on the Boulevard to describe one of the main fashionable streets in Dublin.

Catherine Flynn: So Paris allows him to see in Dublin what is relatively underdeveloped but actually insidious. So it becomes a kind of place of learning for Joyce. And then Joyce goes on to be able to recognize that at anywhere. And so when he uses, say [Do Jordan's 00:50:45] novel. Well, it's a novel that invents the stream of consciousness, but it's quite boring and tedious and kind of silly because the guy is so caught up in every single thing. Should I order the chicken? This wine looks good. It's this really kind of low level consumer thinking.

Catherine Flynn: Joyce is able to really transplant that into Dublin of Ulysses without it seeming jarring at all. Because this is the lifestyle a person of means can have in any of these European cities.

Michael Lucey: I think we're out of time.