Adapting Parisian *physiologies* to the Streets of London:
Albert Smith's Social Zoology

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Abstract

Adapting the widely popular urban genre of the French *physiologies*, medically-trained journalist, novelist, and public lecturer Albert Richard Smith (1816-1860) introduced a series of "natural histories" or "social zoologies" of society to 1840s London. His humorous accounts of modern English character types, such as "the gent", "the ballet-girl", and "the idler", followed the format and content of their French models and achieved similar success. In his observations of social life, Smith combined satirical, yet detailed descriptions of London types, institutions, and neighborhoods with a mock-scientific style of zoological classification for comic and descriptive effect. Following Smith's development of a popular "social zoology", this article elaborates the specific mid-nineteenth century interest in social types of urbanizing societies and the trend of "physiological" cultural analysis along the Paris-London axis. By analyzing the volumes *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847) and *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town* (1848), I discuss how Smith produced social knowledge less as "guides proper" for the new masses of the metropolises, but rather by providing space for critical self-reflection for his broad middle-class readership.

Introduction

> Our lively neighbours on the opposite side of the Pas de Calais […], have lately shot off a flight of small, literary rockets about Paris, which have exploded joyously in every direction, producing all sorts of fun and merriment, termed Les Physiologies—a series of graphic sketches, embodying various everyday types of characters moving in the French capital. In the same spirit we beg to

> bring forward the following papers, with the hope that they will meet with an equally favourable reception. (Smith 1841: 142)

Thusly Albert Richard Smith (1816-1860) introduces his series "Physiology of the London Medical Student", the first of multiple snapshots of daily life of 1840s London. In tone and format, Smith's detailed and humorous descriptions follow the distinctively Parisian genre of the *physiologies*—pocket-sized, cheap, and profusely illustrated booklets on urban social types—which were hugely popular in the 1840s. Early in the decade, Smith first adapted the French model to the streets of London in his articles for *Punch*, a newly established satirical magazine launched by journalist Henry Mayhew and illustrator Ebenezer Landells. Later in the decade, he expanded on his physiological writing in a series of books advertising a "social zoology" of English metropolitan archetypes, including titles such as *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847) and *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town* (1848). Realizing Smith's ambitions as described in the above quote, his "natural histories" proved successful and sold widely, demonstrating the widespread interest in types of industrialization and urbanization processes and the *en vogue* physiological style of social analysis along the Paris-London axis.

In line with the positivistic-materialistic spirit of the Enlightenment, the *physiologies*, not unlike the emerging social sciences, borrowed terminology (already present in their titles), empirical methods, and analytical approaches from the natural sciences and applied them to the study of social life. As a commercial and lay reader-oriented genre, this served descriptive *and* comic effects, visible in not only the often biting satire of the middle-class types depicted, but also in the parody of the lofty scientific approaches the authors imitated. While the Parisian *physiologies* have been deemed "innocuous" (Benjamin 1983: 36) attempts to make fast-changing urban environments more legible and thus penetrable to their readers, this article follows recent scholarship promoting a more complex view of the literary and proto-sociological value of the genre (see, for example, Stiénon 2012; Lauster 2007; Lyon-Caen 2004; Preiss 1999). Given that society was predominantly described and analyzed within literary production in the first half of the nineteenth century (see Heilbron 2004; Lepenies 1985), this article aims to explore Smith's "social zoology" as an early urban genre of sociographic[1] (self-)observation. How did

1 For a critical discussion of the term, see the introduction to this volume by Christiane Schwab.

Smith adapt the French genre of the *physiologies* to examine the societal transformation processes of the English metropolis? How did he depict, describe, and analyze, often with sharp satire, social phenomena of daily life? How did his series draw on concepts and empirical methods from the natural sciences to depict and classify social types? Finally, how did he combine elements of social research and entertainment to meet the interests of his broad middle-class readership?

By focusing on their English adaptations, I aim to add to an existing body of research which has primarily focused on the French *physiologies*, with some notable exceptions.[2] This article begins by contextualizing the genre within the wide-reaching transformations in the French capital after the July Revolution (1830). It goes on to consider Smith's own time spent in 1830s Paris and his early journalism, including his physiological writings for *Punch*. The article proceeds to discuss his immensely successful series of natural histories of social types and offers a close reading and in-depth analysis of the content, representational strategies, and stylistic elements of two volumes: *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847) and *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town* (1848). The selection is based on both the "gent" and the "idler" being particularly illustrative of the mid-nineteenth-century transformations of the English metropolis. As examples of lower-middle-class upward social mobility, they are furthermore emblematic of a broader theme of the series. While not accessible to most, upward social mobility was nevertheless a constant preoccupation in the mid-nineteenth century (see Wechsler 1982), and English literary scholar Elisabeth Jay (2016: 217) notes that the style of the French *physiologies* "readily translated into satire of middle-class English pretensions". The article concludes by assessing Smith's series of physiologies and natural histories as early formats of social knowledge production which worked not so much as "literary guidebooks" (Ferguson 1994: 55) to the city, but as a space for introspection and self-examination for a wide audience.

2 See, in particular, Margaret Rose's (2007: 24-45) introduction to her reproduction of Louis Huart's *Physiology du flânuer* and Smith's *Natural History of the Idler upon Town*; see also Lauster 2007: 257-260.

Satirical chroniclers of the modern metropolis: Paris *physiologies* as a genre of urban observation

Literary scholar Martina Lauster (2007: 1) highlights that serial publications of typological literature developed across Europe between 1830 and 1850, and proceeds to encapsulate all literary and journalistic sketches which take "the visible world as its point of departure for the categorization of types" under the term "physiologies". This article, however, does not make use of the term in this broad sense, but rather to delineate the subgenre of (French) sketch writing which, according to Lhéritier (1957), Preiss (1999), and Stiénon (2012), is defined through its uniform and fixed format. Its elements included: a small and highly portable size, length of about a 100 to 120 pages, multitude of illustrations, and the relatively inexpensive price of one *franc*. These monographs on urban types, such as the *flâneur* or the *grisette*, deal with a broad range of middle-class life according to profession, age, and gender, and were hugely popular in mid-century Paris. During their zenith from 1840-1842, an estimated 120 different physiologies were issued with approximately 500.000 copies sold for a population of just over one million (Sieburth 1984: 163). Eminent writers, obscure novices, and leading draughtsmen of the time developed the *physiologies* into an independent semi-journalistic genre. This occurred most notably under the publishing house *Maison Aubert*, which serialized some physiologies as articles in journals such as *Le Charivari* before issuing them as paperbound volumes.

These emerging forms of journalistic writing were made possible due to technological advances in printing and marketing techniques as well as the rise of a new mass readership (Mainardi 2017). They were also spurred on by the continuous social, political, and topographical transformations of the French capital following the July Revolution, from unprecedented urban growth, to thorough reconstruction of the city's environment, to persistent political unrest (see Jay 2016: 35-36). As art historian Judith Wechsler (1982) demonstrates, writers and draughtsmen often focused on the portrayal of "modern life" using Parisian types to make sense of the burgeoning and evolving city to its inhabitants (see also Lyon-Caen 2004). Such a "metropolitan ethnology" (Waters 2013: 28) was popular with contemporaneous readers, made evident by the marketability of other forms of panoramic literature such as the larger, more expensive, multi-volume national type collections *Paris ou le livre de cent-et-un* (1831-1834) and *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1840-1842) (see Kuijk 2018). By comparing adverts for the

tableaux and *physiologies* in her book *Mastering the Marketplace: Popular Literature in Nineteenth-Century France*, French scholar Anne O'Neil Henry (2017: 23-26) highlights that these two genres had a common set of illustrators, authors, and themes, but were packaged differently, sold at significantly disparate prices, and seemed to target distinct audiences by way of their publisher's marketing strategies (see also Preiss 1999; Sieburth 1984).

As the title suggests, the genre of the *physiologies* borrowed from the natural sciences in terminology and approach, particularly applying natural historians' methods of observation and taxonomical categorization to the humorous description of social life. This correlates with a broad-scale "empirization" of social thought in the eighteenth century (Heilbron 1995), when the study of social life was moving away from theological and metaphysical speculation and towards the positivistic-materialistic spirit of the Enlightenment (see also Vermeulen 2015; Moravia 1973). This is represented in the widespread medical literature explaining psychological and moral dimensions of human existence through its physical conditions, such as Pierre-Jean-George Cabanis' (1757-1808) *Traité du physique et du moral de l'homme* (1798/99). Similarly, the emulation of natural science principles was central for the emerging social sciences in the nineteenth century, and early practitioners of anthropology and ethnology were commonly educated in medicine, natural history, or zoology (Sera-Shriar 2016). This zeitgeist is also pervasive in mid-nineteenth-century popular culture, where physiognomic and phrenological approaches—reading character from people's outer appearances, particularly the form of the skull in the latter case—found widespread application. While the *physiologies* can also be characterized as a "description of people from without" (Wechsler 1982: 13), they were less concerned with bodily clues, but portrayed urban types chiefly through their habits and customs, showing, among other things, where people lived, how they dressed, and how they talked. Accordingly, they were described as "études de mœurs", i.e. studies of social behavior and interactions, by some of the authors themselves (see, for example, Huart 1841a: 31; see also Biesbrock 1978: 9-12).

Louis Huart's (1813-1865) *Physiologie du flâneur* (1841), published by *Maison Aubert* at the height of the genre's success, is an illustrative example of the mock-scientific approach of these humorous "studies of mores". The monograph describes different social types in their daily appearance from the author's self-humorous perspective who presents himself as an expert. In the introduction, Huart (1841b: 8) parodies the works of philosophers, natural historians, and popular physiognomists who saw people defined though certain

traits and gives a new definition of "man" as "[a]n animal with two legs, without feathers, in an overcoat, smoking and strolling [flanant]"[3]. Starting from this general characterization, the book progresses to classify the behaviors of the species *flâneur,* describing "the perfect flâneur" ("le parfait flaneur") (53-59), but also various species and sub-species of the type found in the streets and arcades of Paris. Chiefly, Huart distinguishes multiple "false" *flâneurs*, such as "the foreign onlooker" ("le badaud étranger") (39-45) or "the pavement beater" ("le batteur de pave") (46-52) and even offers advice to novice *flâneurs* (113-126). Drawing on the rhetoric of natural history, Huart transformed daily Parisian life into a zoological exhibition of different "strolling" or "idling" human species, and by contrasting these types he made a variety of satirical observations of the daily life of the metropolis and its inhabitants.

Due to their lighthearted tone and commercial appeal, seminal works on the *physiologies* in the twentieth century have chiefly characterized them as a "petit bourgeois genre virtually devoid of genuine social insight" (Benjamin 1983: 170). Recent scholarship, however, has foregrounded them as more ambiguous and dynamic, demonstrating their literary as well as proto-sociological value. In particular, critics have highlighted how the "mises en types" (Lyon-Caen 2004: 319) strove to describe, classify, and understand the vast and rapid transformations of the city. Sieburth (1984) has affirmed the idea that *physiologies* made the urban environment more legible and transparent, and thus controllable to their readers. More recently, Miranda Gill (2009: 73) has expanded this argument by stressing that the genre was "capable of registering the novel and the ephemeral in city culture" and thus functioned both to "reassure[…] and orient[…] city dwellers". However, following the work of Nathalie Preiss (1999), critics such as literary scholar Margaret Rose (2007) have argued that these views fail to account for the irony and satire which permeates throughout the genre (see also Lauster 2007). Indeed, rather than reassuring readers of the familiarity with their environment and the people around them, the genre shows "how irony, parody, satire and caricature grew in the nineteenth century both as popular genres and as antidotes to what have been described as the unhappy tribulations of the increasingly 'velocifer-ic' and apparently unreflexive life of the large metropolis" (Rose 2007: 73). With the genre's oscillation between empirical observation and entertaining hyperbole, irony, and satire in mind, the article goes on to explore how Smith

3 "[…] un animal à deux pieds, sans plumes, à paletot, fumant et flanant"; all translations from French are my own unless stated otherwise.

developed his "physiological" style of social analysis, beginning with his early journalism.

Sketches of Paris: Smith's early journalism

Smith was one of the most prominent writers of his time and an important figure on the literary market, even though today, he "is the most famous Victorian nobody has ever heard of" (McNee 2015: 7). Born in Chertsey, Surrey, in 1816, Smith first followed in his father's footsteps before abandoning his medical career for a literary one. He was one of the first regular contributors to the satirical journal *Punch*, published in a multitude of other periodicals, such as *Bentley's Miscellany* (1836-1868), and wrote plays, songs, and novels. The novels were often serialized in periodicals before being published as books, and fellow journalist and writer John Hollingshead (1895: 142) described them as "admirable mixtures of Bulwer and Dickens". Smith edited several periodicals over the course of his lifetime, including the *Punch* rival *The Man in the Moon* (1847-1849) together with Angus B. Reach. Ultimately, he would become best known for his entertaining performances about his travels in the Middle East and his ascent of Mont Blanc in the early 1850s (McNee 2015; Fitzsimons 1967), which Lauster (2007: 256) considers a theatrical continuation of his journalistic sketch writing of the 1840s.

Like many British writers of the time, Smith started his journalistic career in Paris while pursuing studies in an altogether different area of expertise. After his medical education at Middlesex Hospital in London, Smith continued his training at the *Hôpital Hôtel-Dieu* in Paris in 1838. The French capital not only offered Europe's finest medical education at the time, but training at many of the clinics was also free for foreigners already enrolled at a home institution (Jay 2016: 170). As the main accident and emergency hospital for Paris, the *Hôtel-Dieu* was a popular venue for the education of young doctors, not least because it tended to receive patients with unusual ailments (McNee 2015: 22-23). By 1835, it is estimated that about 300 British medical students a year could be found in Paris (Jay 2016: 170). At the *Punch* table alone, Smith would be part of a trio of former medical professionals who studied in Paris, which included his friend and illustrator John Leech. In Smith's early writing, he gives hints about his possible motivations for choosing the uncertain life of a journalist over that of a doctor, stating sarcastically: "Next to imprisonment for debt there are few positions in life more cheerfully exhilarating than that

of house-surgeon to a hospital" (Smith 1842a: 145). In any respect, "[a]s both a former medical student familiar with serious medical physiologies and reader of the ironic physiologies", Rose (2007: 26) notes that "Smith was well placed to introduce the latter genre to the English-speaking reader".

Before he left for Paris, Smith wrote his very first publication, a pamphlet criticizing the pseudo-science of phrenology. Probably not incidentally, it was favorably reviewed by the same periodical that would go on to publish his first series of journalistic sketches which he sent back to London from Paris. *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* (1822-1849) was a popular two-penny weekly which, as the title suggests, aimed to provide a mixture of entertaining and educational content. Smith's series titled "Sketches of Paris",[4] published under the rubric "Manners and Customs", fulfilled this aim by providing detailed descriptive and humorous accounts of customs, institutions, and places in the French metropolis. As was common in periodical journalism of the time, articles in the *Mirror* were authored anonymously, and Smith signed his short sketches with "Knips". Smith's early series of sketches show how he honed his craft, meticulously describing people and customs of the French metropolis based on (seemingly) direct observation. They also include early attempts to classify social types, many of which reappeared in later works, such as the medical student, the *grisette*, and the *flâneur.*

In his first article, Smith describes the "travelling English" who go to see Paris with the help of *Galignani's Paris Guide or Stranger's Companion through the French Metropolis*, concluding that "there is much more behind the curtain that has escaped their observation" (Smith 1839a: 23). Smith sets out to deliver "sketches of life and manners, and not of bricks and mortar" (Smith 1839a: 23) and authentic accounts of life in the French capital that are often unnoticed by an English visitor. The educational, but entertaining spirit of the periodical in mind, Smith assured his readers that "[w]e shall not worry you with statistics or dates", but instead, "we will strive to show you how our fellow-creatures move and act in the gayest capital in the world" (1839a: 23). To affirm

4 The series "Sketches of Paris" in *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* includes the following articles: "Our Avant-propos" (12.1.1839: 22-23), "A Féte" (19.1.1839: 36-38), "The Omnibuses" (26.1.1839: 52-53), "The Quartier Latin" (2.2.1839: 71-72), "An Execution" (9.2.1839: 88-89), "A French School" (16.2.1839: 100-102), "The Morgue" (23.2.1839: 118-119), "The Gardens of the Tuileries" (9.3.1839: 151-152), "A Masked Ball" (16.3.1839: 167-168), "A Stroll in the Champs Elysées" (30.3.1839: 197-198), "The Theatres" (27.4.1839: 260-262), and "Musard's" (18.5.1839: 308-309).

his accounts of Parisian manners and customs as factual and credible, he states that "we are not writing from imagination, neither are they penned in a carpeted room, with a coal fire in our own country" (Smith 1839a: 23). Instead, he establishes the authenticity of his personal narrative—central to the travel report and other social sketch writing of the time as well as sociographic and ethnographic writing today—as a means of producing reliability. He does so by referencing his direct environment: "we date them from our *apartement* [sic!] *meublé*, in the Rue de Vaugirard, with a tiled floor, three logs of wet wood sulkily burning on the hearth, […] and a fine view of the towers of St. Sulpice, crowned with their telegraphs, and surrounded by innumerable chimney-pots, from the windows" (Smith 1839a: 23).

After establishing this claim on true-to-life observations and descriptions, Smith proceeds to lead the readers through Paris in the eleven subsequent articles, strolling down streets and boulevards, visiting theatres and cafés, and spending time in the city's gardens, among other things, giving insight not only into Parisian life, but also into the character of the English capital in contrast to France's (see, for example, Smith 1839b on the difference between French *fêtes* and English fairs). The employed method of first-hand observations of whatever the narrator encounters on his city strolls is common in much social sketch writing of the time, and Smith directly acknowledges Charles Dickens' *Sketches by Boz* (1836), a collection of essays on London and its inhabitants, as a direct model for his own series (see Smith 1839a: 23). In a similar fashion as his model narrator Boz, Smith asks the reader "to take our arm" (Smith 1839c: 197) and accompany him on his strolls through the French metropolis.

Interestingly, Smith locates the Parisian *flâneur* on the same promenades that Huart (1841b: 100-112) will identify as the type's favorite haunts in his *physiologie* published two years later. Walking through Tuileries Garden, for instance, he instructs his readers to observe the Parisian fondness for "walking about" and "loitering" (Smith 1839d: 151), depicting various people and leisure activities at different times of day. Foreshadowing the classifying approach central to his physiological writing, he already delineates Parisian loiterers as "a certain class of society in Paris which had made the Tuileries its theatre—its world" (Smith 1839d: 152). Walking on the Champs Elysées, Smith proceeds to guide the reader: "We will seat ourselves, if you please, on the rails at the entrance, and see what is going on around us, for the Champs Elysées is the grand resort of all the street exhibitions of Paris" (Smith 1839c: 197). Here, Smith observes a multitude of types of people who frequent the boulevard and

also reencounters the class of the "loungers" (1839c: 198), this time sitting in cafés which he describes in passing. In his last sketch on the Musard's promenade concerts, Smith writes again of the *flâneurs*, whose habits of strolling about in fine weather, frugality with money, and choice of clothes he depicts as character traits of the whole social "class" (Smith 1839e: 308).

In his last installment of the series, he thanks readers for their attention to an "unknown contributor to a London periodical" (Smith 1839e: 308-309) and signs the article with his name, breaking with the convention of journalistic anonymity of the time. This might be read as representative of his "tireless self-promotion" (McNee 2015: 8) and the fact that he viewed "journalism as a trade rather than a gentlemanly pursuit" (Jay 2016: 223), a point I will return to later. He also referred to himself "as the student of the Quartier Latin" (Smith 1839e: 309), thereby making specific reference to his actual area of residence in Paris. Providing this location is meaningful not least because some of the most famous French writers and draughtsmen, such as Gavarni, were "sketching" social types including the student, the artist, the *grisette*, and the beggar in the Quartier Latin before Smith (see Fitzsimmons 1967: 24). He concludes the series by announcing his imminent return to England: "We began to write our sketches in the heart of Paris—we finish them in 'Merry England'" and ensures the reader that "we have returned with an English heart and English feelings, unbiassed by prejudice or comparisons, to appreciate the unequalled liberality, comfort, and civilization, of our own fair land" (Smith 1839e: 309).

Adapting a French genre to the streets of London: *Physiologies* in Punch

After returning from Paris and setting up his own medical practice as a dentist-surgeon in London, Smith maintained his medical profession while further venturing into journalistic writing before abandoning the former for a full-time literary career. He penned a series of humorous articles dealing with his professional experiences for the *Medical Times* titled "The Confessions of Jasper Buddle, a Dissecting Room Porter"[5], and signed it as "Rocket". His se-

5 The series "The Confessions of Jasper Buddle, a Dissecting Room Porter" appears in the *Medical Times* Volume 1 of 1840 (135-136, 159-160, 171-172, 195-196, 207-208, 219-220, 243-245, 266); Volume 2 of 1840 (7, 19-20, 43-44, 55-56, 67-68, 79-80); Volume 3 of 1840 (31-32, 43-44, 55-56, 69-70, 80-81, 103-104, 116-117, 128-129, 151-153, 214-215, 236-237,

ries "Physiology of the London Medical Student"[6] was published anonymously in the very first volume of *Punch, or The London Charivari*. It is in this series that Smith first applied a humorous, "physiological" analysis, inspired by the metropolitan taxonomy he saw displayed in the Parisian press and which he knew how to adapt. The style of the *physiologies* was particularly well suited for the new satirical magazine "[w]ith its eclectic mixes of jokes, puns, parodies, cartoons and social and political commentary" (Leary 2014: n.p.). Indeed, in referring to *Le Charivari* in its subtitle, *Punch* acknowledges as its model the very Parisian magazine where many of the French *physiologies* were serialized before being reprinted in their characteristic booklet format. Smith's series also directly recognizes the French genre it builds on by a reference to the *physiologies*, as quoted at the beginning of this article, and boasts a pioneering position in adapting the genre to an English-speaking audience (Smith 1841a: 142).

In his first series for *Punch*, Smith gives an account of the varieties, behaviors, and habits of the London medical student, clearly drawing from his own life. Putting his professional knowledge to humorous use, the series is replete with scientific terms, inventions, and theories applied to the study of seemingly mundane details of the everyday life of the type. Smith (1841a: 142) presents his series as a course in physiology, but not of "the human race generally", as one would find in medical books, but "of one species in particular". The introduction reassures the reader of the text's reliability and authenticity, stating that it exhibits "a truth to nature only exceeded by the artificial man of the same material in the Museum of King's College" (Smith 1841a: 142). Similar to his "Sketches of Paris", Smith (1841a: 142) emphasizes the immediacy of his account, noting that "PUNCH has entered as a pupil at a medical school (he is not at liberty to say which)" to investigate the type's "propensities", and appeals to the medical students directly "to look upon him as one of your own lot". The subsequent eleven articles follow medical student "Joseph Muff", presented as the author of the series, who offers an account of the "class" or "species" of the London medical student, and the numerous "instincts and different phases, under which this interesting race appears"

271-272, 282-283, 295-296, and 308-309); and Volume 4 of 1841 (15, 27, 39-40, 48-50, 63-64, 75-76, 99-100, 111-112, 135-136, 156-158, 184-185, 204-206, 231-233, 252).

6 The series "Physiology of the London Medical Student" appears in *Punch, or the London Charivari* Volume 1 of 1841 (142, 154, 165, 177, 185, 201, 214-215, 225, 229, 244, 253, and 265).

(Smith 1841a: 142). The series places him[7] in the lecture and dissecting halls, but is primarily concerned with his leisurely activities and pastimes, "displaying a wonderful intimacy with the rough and noisy world with which it dealt" (Spielmann 1895: 306). The articles recall a natural historian's account of a butterfly and chronicle the "entomological stages of his [the medical student's] being" (Smith 1841b: 265) until his Latin Examination, where "the economy of our friend undergoes a complete transformation, but in an inverse entomological progression—changing from butterfly into the chrysalis" (Smith 1841c: 213).

Smith's 1842 series "Curiosities of Medical Experience"[8] reintroduces Joseph Muff having graduated from medical student to medical practitioner. Smith not only draws on his own time as a medical student and practitioner, but also begins to scrutinize other social types of the metropolis, particularly those he can easily satirize for their middle-class pretensions. The same year, he continues his physiological writings in *Punch* with a new series titled "Physiology of London Evening Parties",[9] for which he reuses the pseudonym "Rocket". The twelve articles describe the lengthy and meticulous preparations for, and execution of, a typical evening party, which Smith uses as fodder to concoct a humorous study of "modern" society. From the point of view of an objective narrator, using the impersonal plural form ("we see", "we observe", "we know"), the series introduces various social types, such as "The Belle of The Evening", "The Uninteresting Young Lady", and "The Old Young Lady", observing and describing their clothes, mannerisms, and interactions. At the same time, it follows certain individuals, such as "Mr. Ledbury", who reappears in Smith's novel *The Adventures of Mr Ledbury* serialized in *Bentley's Miscellany* the same year. As a lawyer's clerk with greater aspirations in life, Ledbury fittingly represents the middling classes and their preoccupation with upward social mobility, and also appears as an acting individual by way of dialogues and anecdotes. Oscillating between classification and

7 The gendering is intentional: "fair girls" are only acknowledged as readers of the series, "whose brothers were following the same path we have travelled", in the conclusion to the series (Smith 1841b: 265).

8 The series "Curiosities of Medical Experience" appears in *Punch, or the London Charivari* Volume 2 of 1842 (145-146, 155-156, 165-166, 187-188, 197-198, 207, 217-218, 227, 237-238, 247-248, and 257).

9 The series "Physiology of London Evening Parties" appears in *Punch, or the London Charivari* Volume 2 of 1842 (14, 24-25, 35-36, 43, 54-55, 75-76, 85-86, 95-96, 105-106, 115-116, and 125-126).

individualization, Smith applies a common strategy of sketch writers of the time (see, for example, Waters 2013), one which he would implement again in later descriptions of social life.

His sometimes scathing narratives of flouting contemporary social groups ignite in his "mock anthropology" (Rose 2007: 40; see also Young 1999: 67) "Physiology of the London Idler",[10] which was ultimately his last series for *Punch* before he was ousted from the journal at the end of 1843. The reasons for his dismissal are not entirely clear, but there were claims that he showed printer's proofs of future *Punch* numbers to drinking companions and rumors of plagiarizing French pieces (Altick 1997: 50-51). His series of articles on the various types of London idlers are admittedly based on Huart's *Physiologie du flâneur* (1841) as discussed in a previous section, but are not a direct translation of the French work. Rather, they apply Huart's method of dissecting Parisian society to the streets of London, displaying the English metropolis' contemporary urban spaces, leisure activities, and social customs (see also Briggs 2014; Rose 2007). In the series, Smith himself adopts the role of the "idler", loitering on the city's streets to observe the urban type in his[11] daily appearance. Given that Smith went on to use his *Punch* series as the basis for his books *The Natural History of the Gent* and *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town* published later in the decade, I will discuss the stylistic elements Smith uses to describe and classify London idlers in detail in the next sections.

Natural histories of human specimens: Towards a social zoology of 1840s London

After his time at *Punch* ended in 1843, Smith continued to contribute to periodicals, authored an expansive amount of plays and novels, and edited the *Punch* rival *The Man in the Moon*, together with Angus B. Reach. He resumed metropolitan taxonomy in his journalistic writing, such as the "Popular Zo-

10 The series "Physiology of the London Idler" appears in *Punch, or the London Charivari* Volume 3 of 1842 (4-5, 13, 14-15, 24-25, 37, 60-61, 70, 82-83, 96-97, 102-103, 110, and 123-124).

11 Again, the gendering is intentional, as the nineteenth century *flâneur* was commonly considered a masculine role, and Smith does not explicitly consider any women to be idlers.

ology"[12] series for *Bentley's Miscellany*, and in 1847 released a series of "natural history" books advertised as a "social zoology"[13] by his publisher David Bogue, well known for importing French lithographs. Pocket-sized, profusely illustrated, and inexpensively priced at a shilling each, these booklets were a precise imitation of the French *physiologies* in all but name. Smith claimed the need to shed the word "physiology" from his articles' titles in 1842:

> For the first time since we have been permitted to supply continuous papers to the columns of PUNCH, we have discarded the term physiology, from the head of our articles. It is true we borrowed it from France, and as long as we kept it to ourselves in England, it was all very well; but a crowd of imitators—professors of the sincerest flattery—have scrambled after us, including a contributor to the New Monthly. (Smith 1842b: 198)

While he omits the word "physiology" from his new series, Smith replaces it with a similar term and publishes a series of "natural histories" of urban types, which comprises five volumes in total: *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847), *The Natural History of the Ballet Girl* (1847), *The Natural History of 'Stuck-Up' People* (1847), *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town* (1848), and *The Natural History of the Flirt* (1848).

Whether intentionally or not, Smith's titles align him with the emergent disciplines of anthropology and ethnology: before these terms became widespread in the 1850s and 1860s, early practitioners commonly described their field of research as a branch of natural history (see Sera-Shriar 2016; Vermeulen 2015). Three years before the publication of Smith's series, the surgeon Richard King delivered his first-anniversary address to the *Ethnological Society of London*, where he defined the young scientific field as "the natural history of man" (King 1850: 9). A year before that, ethnologist James Cowles Prichard published *The Natural History of Man* (1843), in which he drew from his medical training to build his methodology for studying human diversity utilizing observational practices and classificatory frameworks from naturalists like Linnaeus (Sera-Shriar 2016). In the second half of the century, the accepted founding father of British anthropology, Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917), presented anthropology as a natural history of human culture, arguing

12 The series "Popular Zoology" appears in *Bentley's Miscellany* Volume 19 (316-322, 404-412, 512-519, and 574-581) and 20 (76-82) of 1846.

13 See, for example, the advertisement in the *The Examiner*, September 25 issue of 1847, p. 624; see also Rose 2007: 204.

> […] that the history of mankind is part and parcel of the history of nature, that our thoughts and wills, and actions accord with laws as definite as these which govern the motion of waves, the combination of acids and bases, and the growth of plants and animals. (Tylor 1891 [1871]: 2)

Accordingly, anthropology's comparative method follows well-established guiding principles: "A first step in the study of civilization is to dissect it into details, and to classify these in their proper groups" (Tylor 1891 [1871]: 7). Thus, the anthropologist or ethnographer must act as an impartial observer who classifies human diversity after having empirically identified and codified the observed phenomena.

Smith similarly, if ironically, presents his series of natural histories in line with the works of prominent naturalists as attempts to compensate for the absence of human variety in their writings, as demonstrated by the following quote:

> After the unceasing labours of Cuvier, Linnæus, Buffon, Shaw, and other animal-fanciers on a large scale, had surmounted the apparently impossible task of marshalling all the earth's living curiosities into literary rank and file […] we follow with this our Social Zoology, after more elaborate essays on different varieties of the human race. (Smith 1847a: 7-8)

Works of natural history are parodied throughout this series (see also Smith 1848b: 14-17), for instance, when Smith directly mocks the *Penny Magazine*'s (1832-1845) regular printing of illustrated zoological texts and bemoans the absence of social types such as "the flirt" (Smith 1848a: 14-17). Regular comparisons of certain types of society with animals in both text and illustrations are also prevalent throughout the five volumes. *The Natural History of 'Stuck-Up' People*, for instance, shows an archetypal "stuck-up" person posturing as a peacock on its title page. With this depiction, Smith follows a long-standing tradition of animal-human amalgams used as an analogy for human character as well as for comedic effect (see Gill 2009). Following his *Punch* series, the volume on "'stuck-up' people" resumed Smith's endeavor to malign social climbers, following an exemplary "stuck-up" family in their daily life. The theme is also central to his volumes on "the gent" and "the idler", discussed in detail in the following two sections, which demonstrate Smith's approach of "typecasting" of the lower-middle-classes inspired by Huart's *Physiologie du flâneur*.

The Natural History of the Gent (1847)

Smith begins his series with the immensely popular *The Natural History of the Gent* in April 1847. Based on Huart's *Physiologie du flâneur* (1841), these articles on the various types of London idlers are largely an extension of two chapters of the "Physiology of the London Idler" in *Punch*.[14] Notably, there is no figure like the gent in the French model, and indeed, Smith (1847b: 99) goes on to insist that he is a thoroughly English phenomenon: "We believe, with sorrow, that this offensive race of individuals is peculiar to our own country: we know of no foreign type answering to them." As Jo Briggs (2016: 16) argues, the gent was "a lightning rod for a number of tensions that characterize the mid nineteenth century", chiefly by acting as a "lower-class male type [who] epitomized vulgar and potentially unruly popular consumerism at mid century" (see also Gill 2009). Whereas in Smith's 1842 series, the gent is one among many London street loungers, later in the decade, he deemed him significant enough to expand on in articles for *Bentley's Miscellany* (Smith 1846a, b) and his series of natural histories. The reception of Smith's *The Natural History of the Gent* confirms a widespread fascination with the type, selling 10.000 copies in a short period of time (Vizetelly 1893: 136).

Smith met the demand for "knowing" the gent by elaborating on his nature and defining his clothes, haunts, habits, and manners precisely. In the first chapter, "What the gent is generally", Smith declares this social type a distinctively "modern" phenomenon and of such recent emergence that one was hard-pressed to find any descriptions of him:

> The Gent is of comparatively late creation. […] After much diligent investigation, we find no mention made of the Gent in the writings of authors who flourished antecedent to the last ten years. […] He is evidently the result of a variety of our present condition of society—that constant struggle to appear something more than we in reality are, which now characterizes every body, both in their public and private phases. (Smith 1847b: 3)

To unveil the gent's pretensions, Smith first distinguishes some general attributes of the type. Through the narrator's descriptions of three gents he met on the roof of an omnibus, in the streets, and in the theatres, respectively, specific common "gentish" characteristics start to emerge. First and

14 Smith acknowledges his previous writings on the gent in the preface to *The Natural History of the Gent* (see Smith 1847b: vii).

foremost, they dress in flamboyant clothes, with bright colors and loud patterns; wear shiny accessories; carry a cane in most instances; and all smoke cigars. These shared features are caricatured in the many wood-engraved illustrations, which depict the gent in exaggerated "fashionable" silhouettes and accessories, sometimes to clownish or grotesque proportions. The illustrations are instrumental in rendering the gent an easily recognizable type and, as Smith (1847b: 21) himself signals, are there to help his contemporaries see the gent and distinguish him from other individuals encountered in the city.

Having observed these first shared characteristics, Smith (1847b: 10) concludes with some irony that the "the Gents must be a race by themselves, which social naturalists had overlooked, deserving some attention", which the publication aims to give by "studying their habits". The gent is chiefly defined through his characteristic display of cheaply acquired fashion where crowds gather, giving him an audience for his imitation of aristocratic style and leisure. Accordingly, Smith proceeds to classify the type into many subtypes who can be found at the theatres, tobacco shops, public dancehalls, seaside, horse races, and steam and rowing boats on the Thames. In the subsequent chapters on the different sub-types, Smith never describes individuals, but rather depicts the gent's behavior as such, i.e., the type "gent". The narrator reports in an impersonal and distant manner along the lines of "the gent does" and "the gent says". Similarly, Smith's monograph has no continuous narrative plot but displays him in a side by side of scenes and typical situations. These provide exemplary demonstrations of his traits and behaviors that Smith designates as characteristic for the whole "class", a stylistic element he first applied in his "Sketches of Paris". These demonstrations also help Smith fix the gent within specific spaces of urban leisure and consumption in 1840s London, providing a physiology not only of his type, but also the streets, buildings, and urban places where one can find him.

One such place is the *Lowther Arcade*, an indoor shopping street that Smith (1847b: 35) identifies as a popular whereabouts of the gent due to certain kinds of clothing and accessories, which, he claims, can only be found there. As Briggs (2016) notes, the *Lowther Arcade* offered spaces of leisure and consumption that mirrored aristocratic styles and was thus part of an attempt to "bourgeoisify" the West Strand in the 1830s. Describing its glittering stores and crowded aisles, Smith (1847b: 36-38) takes the *Lowther Arcade* as another place of social observation, following the various gents and "seedy foreigners" as well as "batteurs de pave", referencing Huart's "pavement beater", he finds there, commenting on their clothes, manners, and habit of loitering around,

smoking cigars. Oscillating between entertaining satire and empirical study, Smith's (1847b: 36) observations lead him to argue that, by 1847, the *Lowther Arcade* had become "a frontier between the two hemispheres of London life", highlighting the ambiguous definitions of current social status. At mid-century, the *Lowther Arcade* offered not only a number of shops, well known for their widely displayed, cheap knickknacks, but also the *Royal Adelaide Gallery*, which originally offered didactic exhibitions of practical science, but was converted into one of the first dance halls aimed at a middle-class clientele, the *Laurent's Casino*, in 1846 (McWilliam 2019). A frequent visitor of the lounge, the gent type can be read as a destabilizing boundary figure drawing attention to how class is performed. He did so both through his clothing, and also through his membership among a relatively recent emergence of lower-middle-class men who worked as clerks or shop-assistants, allowing more free time for leisure activities: "The majority of them have evidently occupations, which keep them somewhere until four or five o'clock, and so they never come out in their full force until dusk, except on holidays" (Smith 1847b: 33-34).

Like Huart, who concludes his *physiologie* by giving advice for new *flâneurs*, Smith ironically presents his volume on the gent as a guidebook, but devises general rules about dealing with the type and demands society to shun the gents sufficiently to lead to their extinction. Envisioning an undetermined point in the future, Smith notes in the last chapter of the volume:

> We trust the day will come—albeit we feel it will not be in our time—when the Gent will be an extinct species; his 'effigies,' as the old illustrated books have it, being alone preserved in museums. And then this treatise may be regarded as those zoological papers are now which treat of the Dodo […] and possibly will give rise to as much discussion and investigation as the ibises and scarabæi in the Egyptian Room of the British Museum. (Smith 1847b: 104)

Despite his polemic against the gent, Smith also shows ambivalence toward the type he is describing. While the exact definition and classification of the gent's habits and haunts seem to allow his respectable middle-class readers, who "enjoy recognizing their neighbors (but not themselves)" (O'Neil-Henry 2017: 34) to distance themselves from the type, Smith also blurs the boundaries between his subject, on the one hand, and the reader and himself on the other. While his meticulous classifications of the gent aim to construct him as a separate and distinct "species", in the very first quote given at the beginning of this chapter, he argues that the disposition of the gent "characterizes every

body" (Smith 1847b: 3). By drawing self-mocking relations between the sort of entertainment the gent enjoys and his own work, Smith further blurs the lines between his readers and the type. For instance, describing the gent at the *Laurent's Casino*, Smith (1847b: 67-68) notes: "When we first heard that M. Laurent was going to start a shilling concert and dance we were much disquieted; for we knew at what a rampant pitch Gentism would arrive there." The price for this relatively cheap form of entertainment, which ostensibly lures the gent in, is exactly the same price paid for the booklet the readers bought. Here, Smith displays the same kind of ironic self-parody also used by Huart when derisively acknowledging his *physiologie*'s appeal for the *flâneur*.

Indeed, both Smith himself and the type of publication that he uses to inform his readers of the gent were often considered vulgar. Like the *physiologies* in France, the series of social zoologies were an inexpensive, commercialized form of literature, later collectively described by their printer, and rival publisher to Bogue, Henry Vizetelly (1983: 316), as "wretched little books". There was general antipathy towards Smith himself from some of his fellow journalists, including William Thackeray who filled his seat at the *Punch* table. This stemmed from his "noisy self-assertion" (McNee 2015: 49), his disregard for high art and literature (regularly claiming that his own work was better than Shakespeare's), and his loud, crude character (see also McNee 2015: 46-56; Leary 2010: 19), linking him with the gent he scathingly satirizes.[15] However, Smith's relatively modest social origins and proximity to the lower-middle-classes might have also offered him an advantage as a chronicler of mid-nineteenth-century London life. As a reviewer of a reprint of the "social zoology" series in the 1880s states, "Thackeray was too much of all time, Dickens too much of no time at all, to reflect the Middle-class Age with perfect fidelity" (Anonymous 1886: 465). The reviewer advises "the judicious historian of the future" to look to Smith's series instead, concluding that "few more faithful or pleasant memorials than these little books remain of days […] when England was still exceedingly English" (Anonymous 1886: 465).

The Natural History of the Idler upon Town (1848)

The Natural History of the Idler upon Town, which constituted the fourth volume of Smith's series, brings into focus another "modern" type of the En-

15 In 1850, despite his mordant critique of the gent in the 1840s, Smith made the gent the hero of his book *Novelty Fair*.

glish lower-middle-class, based on the *Punch* series "Physiology of the London Idler". Smith (1848b: 6) describes the idler as a "listless bachelor of small independence—that unfortunate medium, which debars him from indulging in the most available luxuries, whilst it gives him a distaste for any exertion". Like his characterization of the gent, Smith thus illustrates that his lower-middle-class job affords the idler expanded time for leisure but a lack of money. The gent does not appear in this volume except to delineate the idler from the former and warn the reader not to conflate the two (see, for example, Smith 1848b: 13). Like Huart's *Physiologie du flâneur*, Smith's natural history of the idler provides contemporary and comic descriptions of the strolling types found in the arcades, exhibitions, and parks of London, where they visit the spectacles and events of the city they can observe and attend for free. While the figure of the idler, based on the French *flâneur*, has long been considered a distinctively Parisian phenomenon, recent scholarship has highlighted the mixed origins of the type (see, for example, Conlin 2013; Rose 2007). Similarly, Smith's idlers can be seen both as London versions of Huart's *flâneurs* and as extensions of his sketches of Paris in *The Mirror* and his earlier physiological writing for *Punch*. Interestingly, while he foregoes any mention of the word "flâneur" in his articles on the type in *Punch*, some "loungers" become "flâneurs" in his 1848 book (see Smith 1848b: 6, 87).

Echoing the introductory article to his "Sketches of Paris", the preface to the volume presents the streets of London as a laboratory of urban study, defying what many of Smith's (1848b: 5) "fellow-men" regard them as: mere "bricks and mortar". Instead, the narrator exclaims, "[w]e adore the streets" and approaches them "as cheap exhibitions—*al fresco*—national galleries of the most interesting kind, furnishing ever-varying pictures of character or incident" (Smith 1848b: 5). Here, Smith not only defies the idea of the author-as-genius, who is only drawing from within, but also aligns himself with the social observer and the stroller-type he is about to describe. In ironic fashion, he depicts himself "loiter[ing] on the pavements" of the London streets, aiming to "draw our likenesses from the every-day life and every-day people we may there encounter" (Smith 1848b: 5-6). He also addresses his readers directly as "loitering *flâneurs*" and warns them that "a chiel's [young man, lad] amang ye takin' notes" (Smith 1848b: 6). Akin to his "Physiology of the London Medical Student", Smith thus presents the study of the idler to have been executed "from within" and warns the class he is about to describe about his note-taking presence. Relating himself even more to the figure of a metropolitan ethnographer, Smith (1848b: 6) further assures the readers that "we will not

keep exclusively to the streets; if occasion requires it, we will follow the idlers of this great metropolis to their different haunts".

A central element of the natural history of the idler, like Huart's *physiologie* and Smith's previous monograph on the gent, is the fastidious description and categorization of the "class" into different types and sub-types. The list of contents given at the beginning of the booklet already scrupulously and carefully categorizes the idler into various sub-types, and breaks down the study into individual parts. The idler is defined relatively throughout the volume, according to his different habits, customs, and outward appearance. Like Huart's distinction of "the perfect flâneur" from a series of "false" flâneurs, Smith (1848b: 13) contrasts the idler with other figures of the metropolis, such as the gent, with whom he shares a few characteristics, but is distinguished by his "quiet and unobtrusive" manner. Chapters on "The Exhibition Lounger" and "The Park Idler" find the types strolling in urban spaces of leisure similar to Huart's *flâneur* (and Smith's description of the type in his "Sketches of Paris"), juxtaposing, however, London's popular contemporary leisure spaces with references to particular places and attractions. Articles on "The West End Lounger" and "The Regent Street Lounger" similarly place the types in the centers of fashion of the English metropolis at mid-century, for instance, depicting them strolling around *Burlington Arcade* (a space for luxury shopping, contrasted with the *Lowther Arcade* described in his account of the gent). "The Visitor to London", "The Mooner", and "The Street Boy" resemble Huart's types of "le badaud étranger", "le musard", and "le gamin" respectively, but are all transferred to the streets of London, cataloging their attire, ways of speaking, and manners of idling at paradigmatic places of the city.

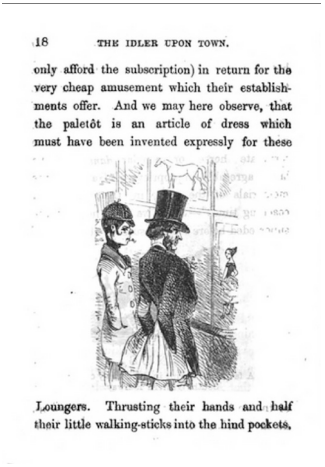
After giving brief descriptions of the types' defining traits, the narrator conveys typical situations from their everyday lives through direct observations. Similar to *The Natural History of the Gent*, the narrator analyzes the different types of idlers in a detached and impersonal manner. However, the narration is not consistently distanced, and the scientific classification of the type is sometimes interrupted by anecdotes or stories. In the third chapter, "Of their haunts", for instance, Smith (1848b: 15) inserts a dialogue between the lounger and a waiter at a café, through which he mocks the former's *franglais*, summoning the waiter by calling "Garsong!". Here, the idler is no longer just an anonymous type but appears as an acting individual, even though the scene is interpreted as a pattern for the behavior of the type as a whole and retains a paradigmatic function. The stylistic choice of letting the idler speak with his English accent and incorrect French grammar fits the

claim on true-to-life depictions, but the scientific ideals of truthfulness are subverted for entertaining effect through an intentional comic escalation.

Throughout the monograph on the idler, like in Smith's early series "Sketches of Paris", the reader is being led through the city by the strolling narrator, who keeps meeting different kinds of idlers at the urban places they like to circulate regularly. For instance, the narrator follows the idler on his strolls through the *Lowther Arcade*, reintroducing one of the gent's favorite haunts. According to the pace of the leisurely strolling idler, in this volume, the narrator describes the "architectural avalanche" that is the *Lowther Arcade* in detail, noting "the labyrinth of goods on every side" of the way and "the delicate arrangements of [the merchant's] wares" (Smith 1848b: 72-73). In a chapter on "the mooner", the narrator decides to accompany the type and "walk beside him" (Smith 1848b: 58) from Piccadilly to Lincoln's Inn, giving his account from the perspective of the "half absent, half contemplative" stroller (Smith 1848b: 47). After determining that no entry for the type exists in the dictionary "we generally rush to for information concerning any word" (Smith 1848b: 46), the narrator sets out to give a definition based on his careful observations. Ironically referring to the mooner as a member of the species "*Ruminantia*" (Smith 1848b: 47), a taxon of grazing or browsing mammals, he describes him as an incredibly slow type who delights in events "which the Regent Street Idler, or even the Gent, would pass in contempt" (Smith 1848b: 47). The accompanying illustrations complement and emphasize the narrator's claim by depicting the mooner watching a group of children playing at the opening of a burst water pipe.

The documentary character of both text and illustrations is also found in Smith's many descriptions of the idler's characteristic double character, who can be both the subject and the object of observation. In familiar deriding fashion, he writes: "Many of the Loungers, like the Gents, have a prevalent idea that wherever they may be, they themselves form the chief points of attraction" (Smith 1848b: 25-26). At the zoological gardens, for instance, the loungers "do not care a straw whether or not the animals are hungry; but the act of feeding elevates them for a time above the throng of lookers-on" (Smith 1848b: 29). *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town* also continues the tradition of self-parody from Huart's *physiologie* on the *flâneur* and his own monograph on the gent by depicting the loitering idler reading about himself in Smith's work in a shop window (Smith 1848b: 18-19, 43-44). The accompanying image on page 18 is a direct reference to the illustration on page 30 of Huart's *Physiologie du flâneur*, where the type is depicted looking upon himself

in a window of the publisher Aubert. Similar to the self-mocking comparison of Smith's monograph on the gent to the cheap entertainments attracting the type, these illustrations are particularly amusing because the reader is effectively observing the idler observing himself being observed (see, also, Rose 2007: 6, 44).


18 THE IDLER UPON TOWN.

only afford the subscription) in return for the very cheap amusement which their establishments offer. And we may here observe, that the paletôt is an article of dress which must have been invented expressly for these

Loungers. Thrusting their hands and half their little walking-sticks into the hind pockets.

Fig. 1: Untitled wood engraving from an unknown wood engraver, after a drawing by Archibald Henning, 1848.
The Natural History of the Idler upon Town. London: Bogue, 18.

Finally, Smith does not conclude his volume with advice for novice or future idlers, like Huart's work, but, based on his observations of the type, offers advice to his readers on how to deal with the various idlers they might meet in their shared urban environment throughout the book's chapters. For example, based on the conviction that the loungers are "men-about-town", meaning they "make themselves conspicuous everywhere but in private society", the narrator warns his readers to "not get too intimate" with people who appear amusing in public, but whom they have not yet met "in respectable private circles" (Smith 1848b: 26). Here, like the gent, the idler appears as a liminal figure, again drawing attention to how class is performed. If the readers meet a mooner, the narrator cautions them to not enter into conversation with him, or even just "mention a word", as the type "possesses that diverting property […] of totally losing the point of any anecdote he relates; and strolls and wanders just as much in his conversations as he does in his peregrinations" (Smith 1848b: 51).

Conclusion

This article set out to explore Albert Smith's social zoologies of 1840s London as an early urban genre of sociographic (self-)observation. After contextualizing the French *physiologies* upon which his work was built within the wide-reaching transformations of Paris after the July Monarchy, this article traced his early journalism including his humorous sketches for *Punch* which he later expanded for his series of natural histories or social zoologies of London character types. The article proceeded with an analysis of the two examples *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847) and *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town* (1848), asking in particular how Smith adapted the French genre to examine the societal transformation processes of the English metropolis. Both examples drew from the series "Physiology of the London Idler" published earlier in the decade in *Punch* (1842), which, in turn, was inspired by Louis Huart's *Physiologie du flâneur* (1841). While Smith directly imitates some textual aspects and illustrations from Huart, he re-organizes his accounts of the different "classes" of London idlers according to specific social, cultural, and political conditions of the English metropolis. The gent, for instance, does not appear in Huart's taxonomy of Parisian *flâneurs* and is delineated by Smith as a distinctively English phenomenon. He not only contextualizes the "species" in paradigmatic places and newly developing institutions of mid-nineteenth-

century London, but also relationally contrasts it with other (French and English) types of "loungers".

By discussing the representational strategies and stylistic elements employed in the two volumes, the article focused on the scientific elements in Smith's entertaining descriptions of social life. The series' connection to the leading sciences of physiology, natural history, and zoology is apparent not only in its volume's titles, but also in its frequent comparisons of society with the animal kingdom (in both text and illustrations) and form of presentation. The last encompasses multiple elements: methods of direct observation of social phenomena which claim true-to-life representations of reality; typifying descriptions of social characters by first discussing general characteristics and proceeding to categorize them into different classes or sub-species; and their further contextualization through numerous descriptions of scenes from everyday life, which act as exemplary demonstrations and sometimes allow for the formulation of general rules. His approach also allows Smith to comment on current transformations of the urban institutions, popular culture, and social *mores* of the English capital. Combining these methods of social description and analysis with self-mocking humor and often biting satire of the social types in question, Smith put them into both descriptive and comic effect, simultaneously mimicking and mocking natural science discourses, methods, and approaches to "rationalize" man.

Accordingly, the article inquired into how Smith's social zoology merged elements of social research and entertainment to meet the interests of his wide middle-class readership. It is clear that scientific terminology, methods, and classifications were a vital instrument for amusing and entertaining readers, particularly in their ironic and overly meticulous usage. However, his use of scientific methods allowed Smith to reflect on topical issues of the changing metropolis while providing entertaining accounts thereof in the context of a market-oriented print culture. As a reviewer of Smith's natural history "brochures" wrote in 1848, these were "pigmy volumes that will do no harm", providing the reader with "a half-hour's unmistakable laughter" but also presented London society with "a literary mirror of unquestionable accuracy" which "has but to be read to be admitted as truth" (Anonymous 1848: 353). Oscillating between detailed empirical observation and entertaining satire, Smith's series of natural histories produced social knowledge less in the form of "literary guidebooks" (Ferguson 1994: 55) to the fast-changing city, like Benjamin and others would label it. Rather, my discussion of *The Natural History of the Gent* and *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town* supports their

characterization as "dialogic texts for city dwellers" (Zevin 2005: n.p.), which gave their middle-class readership space for introspection, and therefore considers Smith's social zoology as a genre that helped popularize an early form of social self-observation.

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