

“The Stone City:” New York in Joyce Johnson’s *Come and Join the Dance*

Andreea COSMA
Ovidius University of Constanța

Abstract: *Joyce Johnson’s Come and Join the Dance (1961) presents the Beat context in New York, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, through a roman à clef style. While Susan, the main character, goes through different stages in her development, her perspective on the city seems to change as well. The mental maps depicted in the text offer the reader the impression that New York doesn’t only serve as the place of the action but also contributes to the storyline as a character. Joyce Johnson portrays New York as a Beat epicenter, from the perspective of both the writer and the activist. The novel outlines the image of the Beat community and focuses on women’s status in the metropolis during the post-war period. The novel offers a voice to many others that may relate to Susan’s experience as a struggling young female writer, while facing the societal norms at the time. This paper follows spaces and places used in the text, that create a map of protest of Johnson’s New York City.*

Keywords: cartography, New York, Beat, women, activism, place, space.

Introduction

Joyce Johnson’s *Come and Join the Dance* (1961) is considered to be the first Beat novel written by a female author. While Beat women such as Anne Waldman, Diane di Prima, Hettie Jones and Joanne Kyger found more space in the field of poetry, Joyce Johnson is one of the few Beat novelists to narrate about the female experience of “coming of age” in 1950s New York. Johnson raises some important questions about women’s status in the society of the time and challenges the expectations set by societal norms for young women. Space is tightly linked to protest, as certain places can influence, imply or foster social demonstrations or subversivism. For this reason, I call “meta-manifest places” the descriptions of locations and the mappings found in literary works that the author creates to raise awareness of a certain problem, a fact that places the author in the shoes of the activist. An analysis of meta-manifest places found in Johnson’s novel offers a different perspective of New York at the middle of the twentieth century, by emphasizing the relation between place and experience from a young woman’s view. This paper follows Johnson’s representations of the city, disguised as meta-manifest places, as seen by the main character, Susan.

Come and Join the Dance displays various similarities with Johnson’s memoir *Minor Characters* (1983), in which she relates most of Susan’s

experiences; these had actually happened to her in the company of the Beats, especially of Jack Kerouac, with whom Johnson had been involved romantically. Ann Douglas mentions in her introduction to *Minor Characters* that “Johnson met Kerouac much later, in early 1957, when she was twenty-one and he thirty-four, nine months before the publication of his best-selling novel, *On the Road* (1957)” (11). In the novel, Susan’s age seems to be around the same, as she is first presented during an important moment in any young individual’s life, the final examination in college.

Soft and Hard City Maps

The novel opens with the struggle of identity that most young adults face. Susan leaves the exam early, before finishing, although she has studied for it. She finds exams only a formality, and she feels that her future is not linked to that final evaluation. The identity crisis is related to Susan’s wish to feel unique, as “people have no right to exist if they’re replaceable” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 7), and to feel special: “she would recognize it [her own face] immediately, even though she had never seen it, and would accept its beauty or ugliness. But it would not be bland” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 9). Her other fear is revealed in the second chapter: “What if you lived your entire life completely without urgency?” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 11). Susan fears living a life of routine, the kind of lifestyle that meets the criteria of wifehood and which involves settling down and following the traditional gender roles. She feels that her freedom is linked to the city in which she lives. While she felt confined in Cedarhurst, her hometown, she hopes to find freedom in New York. Later, she wishes that graduating will free her from New York, and that she will live the life she wants in Paris.

In his chapter “Creativity and Place,” Michael Dear discusses the intersections of concepts, such as soft city, hard city and memory: “The syncopated texts bleed into one another, echoing and fusing, making tangible the elusive workings of memory in our lives” (6). Memory is very much linked to one’s projection of the city. Place and experience have a deep relation that influence the way a place appears to be for an individual. The first encounter with the city may place more emphasis on the “hard city,” that is experiencing the city objectively. However, when memory and experience get involved in the perception of a place, a new map of the city is produced, that is the “soft city.” New York is illustrated through Susan’s eyes, as she saw the city at the beginning and at the end of college:

She hadn’t known that her New York would be even smaller than Cedarhurst—six blocks that had no scenic interest. Susan remembered seeing them for the first time—a grayness of drugstores, butcher shops, luncheonettes, bars, laundries—it had hardly seemed worth the effort

to learn her way through them. But the streets had since taken on color, had slowly accumulated layers of significance. By now they even had an odd glamour. Susan wondered what she would find if she ever came back—perhaps there would only be grayness again, as though Broadway had faded. (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 11)

The text presents Susan's hard and soft city maps. The hard city map is created during her first encounters with the city and it is described as gray, small and dull. As she starts making memories in different places, the city is slowly gaining color and thus, meaning. Her image of New York is slowly changing, and she cannot but wonder if the metal map she created will always remain the same. The metropolis is shown from all its façades, one of them presenting its vanity and hedonistic ways, due to the many lights, mirrors and shiny storefronts on Broadway, reflecting Susan's image everywhere in the city: "hovering in the windshields of cars, appearing transparent, ghostlike, in the glass doors of Henry's Pharmacy, blue and elongated in the chrome façade of the Riverside Café" (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 8). New York becomes a meta-manifest place through Johnson's descriptions, as the city seems to constantly remind her about who she was through its mirror-like surfaces. The fact that she is about to move from New York makes her feel unrooted, as if she and the city can only coexist together: "Now she felt replaceable as well—she was somehow no longer living anywhere" (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 7). Susan's attachment to the city is also seen through the meta-manifest places built in the text, which show her willingness to protect the city: "No one from the college ever went down to the river [...], now and then, bums came to sun themselves on the strip of dirty grass that the park provided as a riverbank and tried to catch the polluted fish" (6). Johnson's concern with pollution is in line with the Beats' activism for environmental protection.

Chapter Two introduces Peter, the name that Joyce Johnson uses in her novel for Jack Kerouac. Susan seems excited by the encounter she has with Peter and spends some time with him around the city. Chapters Three and Four present Susan's relationship with Jerry, to which she puts an end, as she feels that the relation was "as all so easy, so swift and antiseptic—dead" (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 28). The city seems to mirror Susan's mood and feelings, as when she is with Jerry the city map conveys a state of desolation: "It was seven o'clock when they got off the Fifth Avenue bus at 57th Street—a soft evening. The city seemed deserted, except for a few couples strolling languidly down the avenue" (21). When Susan leaves Jerry, she feels that the city is hers, despite its imposing, built environment: "The stone city was luminous around her, promising, and she was in her taxi in the center of it all—for the time being it was hers" (29). Jerry is the embodiment of conformity for

Susan, as continuing the relationship with him meant a life of predictability, that lacked spontaneity and risk. Susan seems to be attracted to those that break societal norms, as the lifestyles of Peter and Kay are appealing to her. Peter is living out of his suitcase, traveling the world, living with little or no money. He has been working on his thesis for five years and he is still a student in his thirties. Similarly, Jack Kerouac was working on *On the Road* when he met Joyce Johnson (Joyce Glassman before marriage). Johnson had been supporting Kerouac before as well as after he started being popular, as he coped with fame through vice. As Christopher Gair mentions in his *The Beat Generation* (2008), Beatniks and reporters showed up in big numbers at Joyce Johnson's door during her relationship with Kerouac (124). However, fans found a Jack Kerouac who was much older and more unbalanced than they expected, as he used alcohol to escape the pressure caused by fame (124). Gair further notes that while fame was revolving around authors such as Kerouac, Ginsberg and Burroughs, it is female Beat writers like Johnson that complete the Beat image and offer a full understanding of the Beat group dynamics and how they worked (126). Elise Cowen is another Beat woman that had a significant role in supporting Beat culture. In her *Women of the Beat Generation* (1996), Brenda Knight emphasizes the strong friendship between Johnson and Cowen, and how Cowen had been dedicated to those around her until her early death:

Elise Cowen [...] is in many ways more tangible than many of the other Beat women. She is alive in the pages of Joyce Johnson's *Minor Characters* and in the memories of many of the survivors of the Beat Generation whom she marked forever with her generous friendship. (141)

Kay is the name Johnson uses in *Come and Join the Dance* for Elise Cowen, who was Allen Ginsberg's girlfriend during his "straight" years. She remains an example of women's fate during the fifties, for those who did not go by the social norms, as she committed suicide after being institutionalized by her parents. Most of her poetry was destroyed by her mother, who did not approve of her becoming a poet. While Johnson managed to cope with social and parental pressures, Elise Cowen's suicide shows how severe and traumatic the consequences of social authority may become. Brenda Knight further mentions that Joyce Johnson and Elise Cowen "fled respectable homes and parental expectations:" "To be unmarried, a poet, an artist, to bear biracial children, to go on the road was doubly shocking for a woman, and social condemnation was high" (4). Chapter Five of the novel presents Kay's nightmare which recalls the actual events of Cowen's life: "my parents were planning to lock me up in some kind of home for girls—sort of an army camp or prison—and

running around trying to find out the rules of the place” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 30). Another allusion to Cowen’s suicidal attempts is portrayed by Johnson through a dialogue between Peter and Kay:

“Kay, Kay ... don’t be dull. Don’t be a self-conscious liberal.”

“I am what I am,” Kay said sadly.

“Christ! If I thought that, I’d kill myself.” The car screeched around a corner. (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 54)

What Peter tells Kay is a hint that behind Kay’s drive to be independent and her strong personality, she was struggling with her inner thoughts. Elise Cowen’s depression led her to end her own life in 1962, a year after *Come and Join the Dance* was first published.

The struggles of the characters are portrayed through the representations of the city in the novel, as New York becomes a character built through meta-manifest places. The novel shifts from public spaces such as the outdoors, cafés and parks, to private spaces, such as apartments, rooms and cars. Susan’s state of mind is illustrated by the way her dorm room looks: “Now her pictures were taken down, and even most of her clothes were packed. It was too late to stop herself from moving” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 7). She is ready to move on and to change her lifestyle and her surroundings. When she goes to Kay’s room at the Southwick Arms Hotel, she feels envious of Kay’s freedom which is portrayed by the way she arranged the place:

The books of Blake, Rimbaud propped up on the dresser, and the three prints she had tacked on the wall opposite her bed—a little nun, a pale courtier in a black doublet, and a Japanese girl with a face white as paper—all three austere, fleshless, staring down unmoved upon disorder. (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 32)

Susan does not only envy Kay’s room but also the fact that she seems to have found her identity, what she wants and likes. Susan, on the other hand, is still building courage to break free into the world, to take risks and manifest female agency despite the social norms. Peter’s apartment is similar to Kay’s room; it seems that there is a sense of freedom, individuality and, at the same time, disorder in the way the space is arranged:

But maybe Kay’s room and Peter’s living room and all the other rooms in the world that had been assembled defiantly just for the time being and then neglected, because after all the arrangement was temporary, were rooms in the same endless apartment, apartment, connected by miles and miles of dark hallways and worn linoleum, furnished with

the massive, imperishable castoffs that parents whose children had left home gave to the Salvation Army. (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 37)

The mise en scene of the rooms seems to be an important detail for Susan, who contemplates the way in which the rooms are decorated. While she finds these rooms messy, old and soiled, she is attracted by their mysteriousness. She has a similar attitude toward Peter and Anthony; despite their chaotic behavior and poor financial situation, she likes their spontaneity and the risky situations in which they put her. Susan imagines that being in a room with Peter “would be in the warm, blind-drawn dimness of the bedroom, the closed door shutting them in together” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 40). However, when she goes to the same apartment accompanied by Anthony, she perceives space differently: “she followed him into the courtyard dreariness of the apartment” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 56). It seems that the representation of places is closely linked to Susan’s mood and the events happening to her.

Another private space is Peter’s car. Kay, Peter, Anthony and Susan ride together through New York, mapping the city:

They drove twice through Central Park, then all the way down to the Battery, passing gray office buildings, processions of gray people down avenues—“You’re too serious!” Anthony shouted at them through the window. By four o’clock, they were uptown again, passing 116th Street, the red buildings of the college somewhere behind the apartment houses. (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 52)

The car ride describes Manhattan through the eyes of the Beats. They find the passers-by “too serious” and the buildings “gray,” as they feel the city is too conventional, the buildings lack art and creativity and the people forgot to have fun. The meta-manifest place they paint of Manhattan aims at drawing attention over the Beat vision of what cities should look and feel like. During the same car ride, both the soft and hard city maps of Manhattan are illustrated:

They left the West Side Highway and began to drive through Washington Heights, through endless streets of blond brick apartment houses and stores with names like “Foam Rubber City” and “Food-O-Thon” and women wheeling baby carriages home from the supermarkets. Edgecombe Avenue, Fort Washington Avenue—“There are too goddamn many avenues here.” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 53)

Besides the hard city, that is the official names of the built environment, creating the map of the city, Susan notices the soft city as well, which illustrates a home-town-like neighborhood, with supermarkets and mothers walking by with strollers. The area seems to be characterized by light, due to the “blond brick apartment houses and stores,” which paint a bright image of the city.

The tour ends with Susan and Anthony going back to the apartment together. Although Susan decides to lose her virginity to Anthony, it seems that her feelings are still directed toward Peter and she acts rather cold to Anthony. After the time spent together, Anthony promises to Susan, with great excitement, to take her to visit places in New York, as if he felt like offering her the city: “Have you ever seen shipyards at night? Have you ever seen white steam coming out of smokestacks with the sky pitch dark? It’s terrific! Tomorrow night we’ll go to the Brooklyn Navy Yard!” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 62). He continues saying: “We’ll go back and forth on the Staten Island Ferry and eat hot dogs. Would you like that?” (62). Ali Madanipour discusses in his *Public and Private Spaces of the City* (2003) the relation between public and private spaces and activities:

Private space is a part of space that belongs to, or is controlled by, an individual, for that individual’s exclusive use, keeping the public out. Much of the private sphere unfolds in private spaces, although it can also go on outside private territories, such as in a public library or in a park, which is part of private life played out in a public space. (41)

In this respect, Anthony shares time with Susan in a private space, the apartment. However, his insistence to take Susan out in the city can represent his way of telling Susan that he would like to commit to her, to let the world know that they are together. Susan feels overwhelmed by the idea of spending time with Anthony in public spaces and finds herself rejecting him: “‘I don’t love you, you know,’ she said in desperation, ‘I don’t love anybody’” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 63). Her rejection of Anthony is actually projected on the fact that Susan sees private and public spaces as well delimited in what concerns his presence next to her.

Space and Empowerment

Susan’s anxiety of public places increases after the fight she has with Anthony. She feels both drawn to and terrified by the outside world. She finds a way of coping with her feelings: being part of the public space, while staying in a private one, by watching the city from a higher point:

She found a window on the top floor of the dorms from which she could see all of Broadway. First, the two blocks nearest the college where

nothing ever happened, then 113th, 112th in miniature, a reduced Schulte's and Riverside Café and the anonymous figures that skittered in and out of them and could have been anybody. (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 69)

In his *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), Michel de Certeau mentions that the panoptic view empowers the viewer to feel safe: “an Icarus flying above these waters, he can ignore the devices of Daedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths far below. His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance” (92). Susan's feelings of confusion and guilt make her prefer the view from the top-floor, rather than going into the city as a walker, because it feels as if she distances herself in this way from taking decisions, chaos and reality. Susan's description of her view portrays a meta-manifest place, as she wishes that things were different, by emphasizing a sense of awe and regret. The fact that she looks over the hangout places, where she used to go and see “anonymous figures,” shows that she wishes she were invisible, so she can stroll around those places, unrecognizable for others, as the people seen from high above are for her. She feels the need to remember this view and she thinks about it as a photograph and what it would represent. She identifies with the view, as it does not only show what is seen – the people and places from above – but also other people like her, who watch it for a reason, that is feeling desolate and distant:

If you had a photograph, she thought, the photograph would contain everything really—not only the people you glimpsed in the streets, but people you couldn't see, people containing invisible thoughts behind walls and other windows. (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 70)

Susan continues by saying that the photograph would never “watch you cry” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 70), which may refer to the fact that she prefers to choose this view to feel some connection to the public space, rather than actually be in the public space and risk being vulnerable in front of people.

Before graduation, Susan decides to face her fears and goes to take her mail and to see Kay. While Susan used to envy Kay for staying at a hotel and living an independent life, during this meeting she sees the hotel differently. Susan learns from her mail that she failed gym and for this reason, she cannot graduate. Her plans of meeting her parents at the graduation and then packing her bags and going to Paris seem to have taken a turn and for the first time she sees the Southwick Arms Hotel as a possibility in her near future, and not just as a hypothetical fantasy of freedom. The way Susan sees the hotel this time describes a meta-manifest place, as it portrays the real image of Kay's freedom and not the romanticized one that Susan pictured until then:

The Southwick Arms Hotel was much too quiet, too much a hotel of the imagination. Today the corridors had a deathly smell of disinfectant and all the locked doors with their shiny brown paint looked exactly alike, as if the rooms behind them were exactly alike, too. A pile of tangled, grayish sheets lay at the end of each corridor; it must have been the day they changed the linen. Kay once had said: “They change the linen once a week and that’s how the inmates mark time.” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 77)

The hotel serves as a meta-manifest place that reveals the consequences of a young girl’s refusal to follow society’s norms and rules about what the course of one’s life should be. It feels for Susan as if Kay escaped the pressure of parents, school and society to be a struggling prisoner who lives in hostile conditions and fails to get by with her job and rent.

Susan fails to confess to her parents about flunking gym and lets them come to the graduation ceremony. The conflict between Susan and her parents, which arises because of her not graduating, shows the kind of pressure young girls received from their parents at the time. The fact that Susan’s father decides to take her and Susan’s mother to a French restaurant and pretend, as if she had actually graduated, portrays his incapability to even imagine that his daughter would not behave as expected. The reaction that the mother has at the restaurant, seeing how women dress up in the city, shows the difference in mentality between the country (Cerdarhurst) and the city of New York:

So they went to La Lune d’Argent and were ushered to one of the ridiculous little tables—“For midgets,” her father commented, loudly enough for the waiter to hear, and her mother stared, fascinated, at all the bare backs and bare shoulders of the ladies—“They wear a lot of black in the city, don’t they?” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 96)

Susan’s inner conflicts seem to be caused by the right versus wrong behavior controversy in her mind. She is constantly struggling with taking decisions because of the dissonance between what she wants to do and what is expected of her to do. At the dinner table, she tries to play along while her father acts as if nothing happened: “She listened to them, smiling, nodding occasionally, trying to oblige them, to be the daughter they should have had, docile, innocent, respectful” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 97). The last chapters of the novel show how Susan continues to shift between what she is supposed to do, that is going to Paris, and what she desires, that is meeting Peter.

Susan refuses to go back home with her parents after dinner, and prefers to take a train the next day, so she can try to see Peter. She does find him at the

Riverside Café with Kay. After Kay falls asleep in the booth, Susan and Peter spend some time alone at the bar, drinking and talking. Kay wakes up and storms out of the bar. Susan notices and they go after her to take her back to the hotel and to make sure she is all right. After that, Peter asks Susan if she would like to go somewhere with him. She accepts and they go for a drive: “The night had transfigured the road—the highway her parents had traveled a few hours ago—now, for her, a road without end, without even landmarks” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 111). The road represents a meta-manifest in this case, as the same road can mean different paths for Susan, depending on the time of travel and on the company that she has. Susan chooses to follow her wishes over her parents’ by taking this road with Peter. In his *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), Michael Bakhtin discusses “the road” as a very important chronotope in literature. Besides the social aspect of the road – as the place where one meets other people, the road chosen in a story is very much linked to the future of the character and it even alludes to adventure: “The choice of a real itinerary equals the choice of ‘the path of life’” (120). Bakhtin further notes that “road markers are indicators of his fate” (120). The fact that Susan mentions that there are no landmarks shows the fact that she is deeply confused about what she is supposed to do the next day, that is to remain in New York, be with Peter and live a life similar to Kay’s or go to Paris, as her parents expect her to do.

The car breaks down at the beginning of chapter nineteen. Susan is again in the position of choosing: she could either take a train back to the city and prepare her suitcases to catch the other train to Cedarhurst, or take her chances and spend some more time with Peter while he is trying to sell the car. She decides to stay with Peter and take her chances. Peter is offered five dollars for the car and he accepts it after trying a few places where he is refused. Susan feels sad for Peter and for the car, as if Peter would lose a part of him: “Peter could drive the car to the other side of the bridge and then abandon it” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 118). Getting from the Bronx back to Manhattan seems to be an emotional journey filled with obstacles for both Susan and Peter, each one of them trying to face their demons. Susan takes any occasion to prolong her departure, while Peter leaves behind his beloved car, a symbol of his passion for traveling. They both seem to be trying to “stay,” in one way or another, in New York through the spontaneous choices that they make.

Susan and Peter finally walk to the bridge and take a taxi that costs Peter the five dollars he had just received for the car. They first stop at Susan’s dorm, but Susan is once again compelled to delay her leave and stay just a bit longer with Peter:

The taxi went on, west through Harlem, then all the way downtown. When it stopped on 116th Street in front of the dorms, she sat very still.

Peter looked at her a long time. “Are you getting out?” he said. “No,” she said softly. “Not here.” (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 119)

Susan goes to Peter’s apartment for the last time and it seems that after being together, she finally has some clarity. She mentions that she feels sad for him but not for herself:

But just as she was leaving, he cried out, “Susan! You don’t regret it, do you?”

She looked at Peter for the last time and didn’t answer.

“You know,” he said, “you must never regret any thing.”

“I know,” she said.

And then she went. (Johnson, *Come and Join the Dance* 123)

Susan finally decides to leave after what seems like a journey in which she gets to know herself better. Susan’s experiences are always related to the space around her, transforming New York into a character that takes part in her process of coming of age. Each meta-manifest place that Johnson builds in the novel helps Susan to become more confident with the people around her and less anxious about her future. In her chapter in *Girls Who Wore Black: Women Writing the Beat Generation* (2002), Ronna C. Johnson discusses Susan’s final departure from Peter’s apartment and her decision to still go to Paris: “Susan becomes protagonist of her own quest narrative, dropping out bohemia as well as college. Refusing to be the chick. Susan renounces her assigned role in Beat discourse and authors her own subjectivity” (“And There She Went” 92). Susan’s attitude toward men through the novel is one of honesty and empathy. She has a drive to comfort all the three men she had been with, Jerry, Anthony and Peter, before thinking about her own feelings. However, her discourse remains real and honest when she is in their company, which makes her differentiate herself from the “chick” type of girl that the male Beats were usually dating. Her sincerity, such as deciding to still go to Paris after being with Peter, or telling Jerry and Anthony that she does not love them, builds Susan as the Beat female protagonist, the opposite of a minor character. Ann Douglas further discusses the male-female tensions during the post-war era in what concerns Beat culture:

The Beat movement was an intensely charismatic effort to transform and masculinize American cultural expression just after World War II. That in the process the Beats dismantled conventional ideas of masculinity, disavowing the roles of breadwinner, husband, and father and incorporating homosexual, even “feminine” traits into the

masculine ideal, has seemed to many feminist critics less important than their sometimes openly misogynist ethos. (Douglas 12)

Susan presents all three men from her feminine perspective and how they interact with her in both private and public spaces. While in public they seem to want to keep a more reserved attitude; it is in the private spaces, such as the car and the apartment, that they show their vulnerable and emotional side. In the case of Beat men, this discrepancy may have been caused by the clash between the social post-war pressure of men, taking back their territory at work and in society, while being surrounded by diversity inside the Beat group and by following an alternative lifestyle.

Conclusion

Johnson manages to map New York through Susan's eyes, a version of Johnson's younger self. The city becomes a character in the novel through the relationship that Susan builds with its spaces. These representations are often expressed through the use of meta-manifest places that emphasize that the city serves many roles for Susan: her consciousness and sense of freedom, which reminds her about who she is. Her behavior, state of mind and attitude toward the other characters and toward the city itself represent other roles that the city takes on in the novel. These roles also change depending on whether she is in a private or public place. Susan's New York is also symbolic for the Beat philosophy of urban life, portrayed through her descriptions of what the city feels like when she is driving through it with Peter.

The meta-manifest places used also convey a sense of that period's social norms and rules. Descriptions of confinement, grayness and rigidity characterize certain places in the novel, such as The Southwick Arms Hotel, in order to point out certain aspects of social class, gender and racial tensions at the time. Through these meta-manifest places, Johnson builds Susan's hard and soft city-maps of New York. Through these cartographies, the reader can experience the city both objectively, as a map of streets and buildings in the 1950s, and subjectively, from the eyes of a young woman, coming of age, who is on a journey of self-discovery. The meta-manifest places that create this map reveal the challenges of women's assertion into the social sphere at a time of conventionalism and patriarchal ruling. Moreover, they raise awareness about the complexity of the female experience and sexual awakening, as Susan struggles to learn about herself and about womanhood, while being under the social and parental pressures that influence her decision making.

Works Cited

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: Texas University Press, 1981.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.
- Dear, Michael J. “Creativity and Place.” *GeoHumanities: Art, History, Text at the Edge of Place*. Ed. Michael Dear. New York: Routledge, 2011. 9-18.
- Douglas, Ann. “Strange Lives, Chosen Lives: The Beat Art of Joyce Johnson.” *Minor Characters*. London: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Gair, Christopher. *The Beat Generation*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008.
- Johnson, C. Ronna. “‘And There She Went:’ Beat Departures and Feminine Transgressions in Joyce Johnson’s *Come and Join the Dance*.” *Girls Who Wore Black: Women Writing the Beat Generation*. Eds. Ronna C. Johnson and Nancy McCampbell. London: Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- Johnson, Joyce. *Minor Characters*. London: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Johnson, Joyce. *Come and Join the Dance*. New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2014.
- Knight, Brenda. *Women of the Beat Generation: The Writers, Artists and Muses at the Heart of a Revolution*. Berkley: Conari Press, 1996.
- Madanipour, Ali. *Public and Private Spaces of the City*. New York: Routledge, 2003.