

The Flaneur, the Flaneuse, and the Hostess:¹ Virginia Woolf's (Un)Domesticating Flanerie in *Mrs. Dalloway*

Ching-fang Tseng
National Taiwan Normal University

Abstract

This paper argues that Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* challenges modernism's traditional disengagement with the domestic due to its elitist self-proclamation of universality, and that, by appropriating the trope of the flaneur, the novel presents a simultaneously *domesticating* and *un-domesticating* portrayal of the modern city which contests and redraws the reified boundaries of the city and the home. Famous for his rootless and peripatetic qualities, the flaneur has been considered the hero of modernism and an emblem of modernity; he embodies the expansive metropolitan consciousness, which nevertheless occludes the correlation of the feminine experience of domesticity and urbanity. The novel not merely undercuts the modernist flaneur's cosmopolitanism based in the metropolis, but inscribes women's experience in domestic space and incipient presence in the city streets. Moreover, it reconfigures the home as an inclusive, hospitable social space for all city-dwellers whose acts of flanerie transgress the systematic order of the city.

Keywords

Virginia Woolf, flaneur, flaneuse, flanerie, middle-class domesticity,
modernism, modernity, the modern city, cosmopolitanism

¹ Throughout this paper, the words "flaneur," "flaneuse," and "flanerie" appear without the diacritical mark. They are, however, spelled in the original French mode in all the quotations where they appear as such.

“I love walking in London,” said Mrs. Dalloway.

—Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 7

But it was her street, this, Clarissa’s; cabs were rushing round the corner, like water round the piers of a bridge, drawn together, it seemed to him because they bore people going to her party, Clarissa’s party.

—Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 250

Modernism has long been associated with the modern city or, more precisely, **with** the European metropolis whose economic, political, and cultural forces often cut across national borders. As Raymond Williams writes, “there are decisive links between the practices and ideas of the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century and the specific conditions and relationships of the twentieth-century metropolis” (*Politics* 37). Fashioned by the artists “breaking from their national or provincial cultures,” “Modernism” comes into being in the diversified cultural milieu of the metropolis (45). Specifically, Williams is more concerned with the location of the city than the city as theme or aesthetics. For the critic, “it is not the general themes of response to the city and its modernity which compose anything that can be properly called Modernism”; instead, what typifies the modernist movement is “the new and specific location of the artists and intellectuals,” namely, “the changing cultural milieu of the metropolis” (44). Malcolm Bradbury in *Modernism 1890-1930* similarly declares: “Modernism is a metropolitan art” (101). With experiences of “emigration or exile,” practitioners and participants of modernism constitute the “membership” of “the modern country of the arts” (101). Likewise, Hugh Kenner regards the cosmopolitan character of the metropolis as the sole measure of modernism and calls the modernist canon of his own making “a story of capitals” (“Modernist Canon” 373). While exalting such masterpieces as *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, and *The Cantos*, Kenner’s canonizing endeavor glorifies “supranational” “International Modernism” (367).

Such accentuation on metropolitan cosmopolitanism has played a principal role in the androcentric Eurocentric canonization of modernism. While Bradbury and Williams find the metropolis populated by immigrants and expatriates as well as endowed with the “cosmopolitan access” to “subordinate cultures” to be the breeding ground of modernism (Williams, *Politics* 44), Kenner extols the cosmopolitan intelligence and cultivation of a select group of mostly male modernists. His modernist canon disqualifies such writers as William Faulkner, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, and Virginia Woolf, who are designated

as belonging respectively to “the American” and “the English province” (“Modernist Canon” 371). Lacking urbane sophistication and innovation, the provincial and the homely are denied a seat in the modernist pantheon. Kenner makes disparaging comments on Woolf’s inconsequentiality, seeing it as a result of the insularity of the Bloomsbury group. Her coterie does not seem to really inhabit “the great London” but merely a district within the city; it is an enclave rather like “a village,” if one “with a fine library” (*A Sinking Island* 164). Woolf’s writing is considered parochial and idiosyncratically “feminine,” and its fluid impressionistic style “unequivocally” “a woman’s” (169). The major critic of modernism thereby pronounces his verdict: Woolf is no “modernist” but a “classic English novelist of manners” (175). In other words, she is not counted part of “International Modernism.” And unlike the other diminished modernist writers, the gendered experiences or style central to Woolf’s work in particular vindicate the critic’s exclusion of her from the transcendent, forward-looking “International Modernism.”

As the significant hallmark of modernism, the emphasis on the cosmopolitan character of the metropolitan city customarily involves a derogation of the feminine or feminized attributes such as conventionality, sentimentality, and domesticity. Bradbury and James McFarlane, for instance, believe that there is an artistic deficiency in Woolf that derives from the limited feminine nature of her work. As their biographical entry on her states, “Mrs. Woolf’s can seem in some respects a domesticated Modernism” (639). According to Christopher Reed, modernism has long held “antagonism” against things associated with *the domestic* (15). Modernist or avant-garde artists are characteristically inclined to “assert their accomplishments through contrast with domesticity” (7), and yet this tendency is nonetheless in itself “a specifically modern phenomenon,” one that marks the convergence of market capitalism, modern technological advancements and the Enlightenment idea of self (8). Reed contends that the home space, invisible in the ideally infinitely stretched horizons of modernism, has always been “a crucial site of anxiety and subversion” (7), a “specter” “perpetually invoked in order to be denied” (16). Paying little heed to “the mundane details of home life and house-keeping,” modernism traditionally values “a heroic odyssey on the high seas of consciousness” (15). Associated either geographically or thematically with the metropolitan city, modernism presupposes a heroic transcendence of the feminine constraints of domesticity.

With London as its setting and subject, *Mrs. Dalloway* is the clearest example of how Woolf as a woman modernist engages with the modern city. Significantly, it is a novel which presents London from a deliberately “feminine” perspective. In contrast to the classic modernist writings, it unabashedly centers on the domestic

scene rather than takes flight from it. Despite many of its animated portrayals of the metropolis, the novel does not occlude the mundane activities within the domestic confines, especially the feminine experience of home life. Though the narrative of *Mrs. Dalloway* unfolds mainly through the characters' wandering in post-WWI London, interior scenes of domestic space persistently remain in view. Further, despite the centrality of the movements in the city, the novel has Clarissa Dalloway, the perfect avatar of bourgeois domesticity, as the protagonist and the sustained focal point of the narrative. Kenner asserts that "there'd not have been a *Mrs. Dalloway* but for *Ulysses*," yet a feminine perspective on the modern city by no means typifies to him modernism's characteristic supranational metropolitan sophistication (*A Sinking Island* 176).² The belief that only the universalist metropolitan perception, with its cosmopolitan refinement and limitless itinerancy, characterizes modernism makes "Mrs. Dalloway's London," a city which is intimately tied up with domestic life, appear to suggest a bogus modernism, or indeed, a "domesticated" modernism.³

This paper argues that Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* challenges modernism's traditional disengagement with the domestic due to its elitist self-proclamation of universality. By appropriating the trope of the flaneur, the novel presents a

² Many critics have argued that there are echoes of *Ulysses* in *Mrs. Dalloway* in terms of both theme and narrative device. Describing Woolf's modernist innovation largely as "a feminine phenomenon after all," Wyndham Lewis believes that *Mrs. Dalloway* is nothing more than a "local" spurious masterpiece copying Joyce's *Ulysses*, especially in the famous parallel scene of the prestigious figure's progress through the city—"a sort of undergraduate imitation of the [latter], winding up with a smoke-writing in the sky, a pathetic crib of the firework display and the rocket that is the culmination of Mr. Bloom's beach-ecstasy" (168). From a feminist perspective, more recent criticism, such as that of Elizabeth Abel, argues that Woolf's novel "offers a female counterpart to Joyce's adaptation of an epic form," with the "domestic plot [that] unfolds precisely in shops and drawing rooms rather than on battle fields, and substitutes for epic quest and conquest the traditionally feminine project of giving a party" (164-65). For discussions on the resemblance of the two novels, see also Suzette A. Henke; Maria Dibattista; and Avrom Fleishman.

³ Certainly, critics who have underscored the novel's urban character would not endorse the charge of Woolf's less than "modernist" insularity or provincialism. For instance, Dorothy Brewster asserts, "*Mrs. Dalloway* is a London book" (17). David Daiches considers this novel "the London novel" (79). Deborah Nord argues that Woolf is a twentieth-century "female urbanist" who "creates a number of different textual possibilities for navigating the streets of London" (244). For Avrom Fleishman, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "London becomes as powerfully charged a system of space as it is for more overtly urban novelists" (71). Susan Squier, in her full-length study of the representations of London in Woolf, accentuates "the city's central position" in her work (7). Susan Stanford Friedman, furthermore, argues that the emphasis Woolf's modernism places on the domestic is not necessarily "domesticated," but instead could very well have an "international" dimension (118).

simultaneously *domesticating* and *un-domesticating* portrayal of the modern city which contests and redraws the reified boundaries of the city and the home. Famous for his seemingly unlocated cosmopolitanism, the flaneur—the observant walker in the metropolitan city—has long been considered the hero of modernism and an emblem of modernity. The figure traditionally embodies the borderless and expansive metropolitan consciousness, which necessarily occludes the correlation of the feminine experience of domesticity and the modern city. The novel undercuts the modernist flaneur’s cosmopolitan outlook located in the metropolitan city, and at the same time inscribes women’s emancipation from domestic space and their incipient presence in the public city spaces. It attests to the early-twentieth-century flaneuse’s uncertain and yet excited initial steps of city walking, and her refusal to replicate the flaneur’s elitism and peremptory epistemology. Moreover, while purposely foregrounding the privatized domestic sphere, the essential but often obscured constituent of modern life, Woolf’s writing reconfigures it as less the secluded feminine space indicative of hegemonic class power than an inclusive, hospitable social space for all the city-dwellers whose acts of flanerrie transgress the systematic order of the city.

The Paradoxes of the Flaneur: Voyeur and Wanderer

To be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world.
—Charles Baudelaire,
“The Painter of Modern Life” 400

On April 8, 1920, Virginia Woolf reviewed for the *Times Literary Supplement* Henry James’s newly published collection of letters. She took particular interest in his thoughts on London. James confessed in his correspondence: “I am attracted to London in spite of the long list of reasons why I should not be; I think it, on the whole, the best point of view in the world” (qtd. in *Essays* 200). Noting James’s extensive traveling experience, Woolf remarked that he “had neither roots nor soil,” and that as an arch-cosmopolitan he belonged to “the tribe of wanderers and aliens; a winged visitant, ceaselessly circling and seeking, unattached, uncommitted, ranging hither and thither at his own free will” (200). An “aloof” yet “alert” “spectator,” James the citizen of the world was always “interested,” always “observant” (201). This free-spirited wanderer observes the world with a keen eye, having all the ills and merits of the metropolis in full view. Woolf went on, while

James made “his headquarters in the metropolis without shutting his eyes to her faults,” he “succumbed” to “a continuous double pressure of attraction and repulsion” London “exercised” (200). Musing on his idiosyncratic perspicacity and itinerancy, Woolf could not help wondering: “If London is primarily a point of view, if the whole field of human activity is only a prospect and a pageant, then . . . as the store of impressions heaps itself up, what is the aim of the spectator, what is the purpose of his hoard ?” (200-01).

The James described by Woolf nicely exemplifies the time-honored figure of the *flâneur*, a recurrent image and theme in the representations of modern life since the nineteenth century. Five years after her comments on James, Woolf’s musings on the wandering city spectator again appear in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The figure of the flâneur presents the image of a well-traveled gentleman clinging to “a point of view” of the city but nonetheless also full of ambivalent feelings. Judith Walkowitz, in her historical study of Victorian London, also uses the case of James to illustrate what she calls the “urban spectatorship” in the nineteenth century. The flâneur represents the “traditional prerogatives of the privileged urban spectator” intent on leisurely or reformist exploration of the metropolitan city; he embodies “an informing feature of nineteenth-century bourgeois male subjectivity” (16). As Williams in *The Country and the City* notes, the image of “a man walking, as if alone, in its streets” emblemizes the story of the modern city since the eighteenth century (233). Although it now has often been taken as a rather elastic analytical trope in discourses of urbanity and visuality, the flâneur as a distinct historical figure emerges around the early nineteenth century and clearly denotes gender and class privileges.⁴ Walking and observing freely in the city, the flâneur has been seen for over two centuries as a significant emblem of modernity.

⁴ Chris Jenks proposes that the flâneur “provides a viable and useful metaphor/methodological role for the analysis of urban culture”; it is “an analytical form, a narrative device, an attitude towards knowledge and its social context” (146, 148). Anne Friedberg, likewise, sees the flâneur as a “paradigm of modernity,” which also indicates “the experience of spatial and temporal displacement” in the “everyday life” and “mass culture” of “postmodernity” (420). Historically, on the other hand, the figure epitomizes, as Rachel Bowlby notes, “a distinctive nineteenth-century conception of the writer as walker, a sort of man about town with ample leisure and money to roam the city and look about him” (“Walking, Women, and Writing” 194). To trace the historical origins of the flâneur, Priscilla P. Ferguson points out that though today the flâneur “walks abroad in many guises and in many texts,” “he took his first steps in the streets of Paris early in the nineteenth century” (22). More importantly, to isolate the flâneur “from the time, the place and the texts in and from which this urban personage emerged” is nothing less than “turn[ing] the figure into an analytical category that, by definition, lies outside history” (22).

The figure of the flaneur has its inherent paradoxes and ambiguities, though. As Deborah Parsons puts it succinctly, “Is the *flâneur* bourgeois or vagrant, authoritative or marginal, within or detached from the city crowd . . .?” (4). Despite the baffling plethora of its many guises such as artist, dandy, detective, journalist, reformer, gentleman urban spectator, or rag-picker, the flaneur figure is always associated with the public city spaces. Yet the primary ambiguity of the figure lies in its oscillation between the rationalist order of the city and a deviant, resistant marginality. The following discussions will center on the paradoxes of the flaneur, a figure on the one hand embodying the authoritative urban spectatorship, and on the other associated with people living on the margins of society.

As the authoritative urban spectator, the flaneur possesses the gaze that is not merely totalizing but voyeuristic. This gaze further corresponds to the unitary rational subject of scientific discourse, universal progress, and the modern urbanist project. Yet the flaneur also has the “propensity for fantasy,” constantly transforming “the city into a landscape of strangers and secrets” (Walkowitz 16). On the one hand, the flaneur personifies what Michel de Certeau calls the “voyeur-god” of the systematically organized city. As if positioned at the summit of a modern skyscraper, his elevated gaze suggests a complete mastery of the extensive, sprawling urban space, turning all that is in sight into “the Concept city” or “the panorama-city” (93, 95). This commanding urban vision has the “pleasure of ‘seeing the whole,’” but the seer remains unseen (92). It signifies a fixed panoptic gaze, a detached sovereign reader and planner of the City as text or “the fiction of knowledge,” making it “a viewpoint and nothing more” (92). Under the flaneur’s gaze, as Woolf’s comments on James have already shown, the city becomes “primarily a point of view” and nothing more (*Essays* 200). On the other hand, the flaneur also belongs to, to quote again Woolf’s words, “the tribe of wanderers and aliens . . . ceaselessly circling and seeking, unattached, uncommitted, ranging hither and thither at his own free will” (*Essays* 200). Even though he epitomizes the “novel forms of public experiences” of modernity, the flaneur’s gaze is somehow “both covetous and erotic” (Pollock 67). Paradoxically, the panoptic urban spectator is also an unattached wanderer on a quest seeking to resist the currents of modernity; in brief, he is “extolling an anti-modernism at the core of his modernism” (Mazlish 48).

Charles Baudelaire or the persona of his work has been seen as the *ur*-flaneur, the modern artist roaming the streets for the sake of art, who thrives on the city spectacles of mid-nineteenth-century Paris. As Marshall Berman in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* suggests, “If we had to nominate a first modernist, Baudelaire would

surely be the man” (133). Baudelaire’s artist of the modern city should be distinguished from what Georg Simmel famously calls the “metropolitan type.” Simmel’s figure embodies a city consciousness guarded against the rapid shifts of urbanization and industrialization in the nineteenth century. His classic article “The Metropolis and Mental Life” discusses the stimuli of the metropolis inflicted upon the individual, overwhelmed by the circulation of goods and traffic and the fleeting and multitudinous impressions in the city. The individual comes to have nostalgic feelings towards the pre-industrial society. To buffer the sense of loss and disturbance, the modern mind “creates a protective organ for itself” (70), that is, the well-known “blasé outlook” on the modern way of life (73). This “blasé attitude” seeks to counteract the emotional turmoil as a result of the encounter with the ephemeral, bustling nature of the city; it is “a rational manner” adopted to achieve “a mental predominance through the intensification of consciousness” (70). The flaneur has a similarly intensified consciousness; it is like a protective armor of objectivity adopted to create order and meaning out of the tumult of modern life. Yet, unlike Simmel’s callous “metropolitan type,” the flaneur consciously feels like a stranger in the city and, more importantly, is susceptible to the mesmerizing impressions the modern city provides. As Rob Shields writes, the flaneur “personifies the ideal-type of the citizen except that he is not fully self-controlled and indulges therefore in non-rational pleasures” (64). Although clothed in the guises of gentility and intellect, the flaneur incarnates “a new, urban form of masculine passion” (64).

In Baudelaire’s “The Painter of Modern Life,” published in 1859, the flaneur appears as “the man of the crowd,” who fritters his hours away by observing and recording the sights of Paris. In expressly paradoxical terms, Baudelaire’s modern artist defines his vocation or existence as “[t]he aim . . . to extract from fashion the poetry that resides in its historical envelope, to distil the eternal from the transitory” (109). As the hero of the modern world, the flaneur is determined to seek that which is termed “modernity”—“*the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and immovable*” (107). Contemplating the transitory and also the timeless, the modern hero is at once the chronicler and the poet of modernity. Though he observes the spectacles in the metropolitan city with irony, he cannot help being its intoxicated reveler. The flaneur’s art or the way he defines modernity is contradictory. Moreover, the various roles he assumes or identifies with, such as the detective, the journalist, the dandy, the criminal, the rag-picker, and the prostitute, are nothing if not conflicting. Despite the multiple personas and the ambiguity of identity, the flaneur

continuously engages in acts of flânerie, the idle strolling and sovereign looking in the city streets. According to Keith Tester, flânerie “is the *doing* through and thanks to which the *flâneur* hopes and believes he will be able to find the truth of his *being*” (7). The flaneur *is* the observant spectator only because of the tireless roaming in the urban landscape. Yet he is nonetheless ambivalent towards the surroundings.

The flaneur is hesitant as to whether he should take part in or keep aloof from life in the modern city. And it is in particular his relationship with the urban crowds that typifies this ambivalence. As Walter Benjamin notes, Baudelaire “singled out his having been jostled by the crowd as the decisive, unique experience” (154). In Baudelaire’s own words, the urban spectator’s “passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd”—“For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng” (Baudelaire, “Painter” 105). However, the flaneur is also “*a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes*” (105), namely, a sovereign observer self-consciously keeping a distance from the crowd. Yet this distinctive sense of individuality paradoxically pivots on his peripatetic observations of the fleeting but alluring spectacles of the city. The Baudelairean flaneur wants “to see the world, to be at the very center of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world” (105). As the phrase “to establish his dwelling in the throng” intimates, the flaneur’s continual efforts to take control of the alienating reality, to create meaning out of the befuddling but fascinating urban scenes, however delusional they may be, constitute what is essential of his existence. As Tester quips, the flaneur as the hero of modernity “is the centre of an order of things of his own making even though, to others, he appears to be just one constituent part of the metropolitan flux” (3). The flaneur is thereby not so much “the man *in* the crowd” as “the man *of* the crowd” (3). His feeling out of place in the urban crowds, his profound sense of estrangement, is ironically constitutive of his self-identity. As Priscilla P. Ferguson writes, this is “a paradoxical situation” in which the flaneur is enmeshed—“*[f]lânerie* requires the city and its crowds, yet the *flâneur* remains aloof from both” (27).

According to Benjamin, the flaneur’s striving to maintain a detached, objective perspective on the world he not only eulogizes but also takes delight in represents a heroic rebellion against bourgeois modernity. Although the flaneur “admires the eternal beauty and the astonishing harmony of life in the capital cities” (“Painter” 105), he masquerades as an outsider in order to retain his autonomy. Deliberately assuming the alienated role of an onlooker in the city, the flaneur seeks to oppose the “‘unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest’ by filling the

hollow space created in him by such isolation, with the borrowed—and fictitious— isolations of strangers” (Benjamin 69). Appearing nonchalant towards his surroundings, he plays a dandy in the fashion of a leisured gentleman wandering in the streets. The flaneur “goes botanizing on the asphalt” (36), Benjamin famously writes. Such contrived idleness seeks to withstand the inexorable currents of industrial modernity:

There was the pedestrian who wedged himself into the crowd, but there was also the *flâneur* who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forego the life of a gentleman of leisure. His leisurely appearance as a personality is his protest against the division of labor which makes people into specialists. It is also his protest against their industriousness. Around 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades. The *flâneurs* liked to have the turtles set the pace for them. (Benjamin 54)

Even though the city appears like a labyrinth or a forest to him, the flaneur slowly makes his way through the hustling, bustling crowds, squandering his idling hours like an aristocrat. He is a native of the city but has determinedly chosen to be a stranger in the city. The flaneur “indulge[s] in the perambulations” only because he feels “out of place” in the city (129). Though undoubtedly a member of the world he opposes, he “stood at the margin, of the great city as of the bourgeois class”; “[n]either of them had yet overwhelmed him” and “[i]n neither of them was he at home” (170). The flaneur’s heroism, in Benjamin’s view, thus consists in his defiant aloofness in the modern world.

Yet the flaneur’s irreverence of the logic and tempo of modern life indicates an indulgent concentration on looking. The flaneur’s “joy of watching is triumphant”; he is “the amateur detective” who enjoys “observation” (Benjamin 69). The gaze of the flaneur belongs to the detective, the journalist, and the writer of the *feuilleton*, and all these figures flourish upon the arising public spheres of nineteenth-century Paris. The flaneur’s observation or cognitive mapping of the urban landscape employs the technique of “panorama literature” (36), the “artistic device of the physiologies,” which translates what he sees into a series of scenes and events of human drama (37).

Metaphorically, Benjamin associates the flaneur’s observant gaze with “the arcades,” which like the former cease to really exist with the advent of industrial modernity. In nineteenth-century Paris it is in the arcades that flânerie usually takes

place; as Benjamin writes, “[s]trolling could hardly have assumed the importance it did without the arcades” (36). If the arcades connect the streets and the interior, the flaneur’s gaze similarly mediates and delimits internal and external realities: “The arcades were a cross between a street and an *intérieur*” (37). According to Benjamin, the flaneur’s gaze is essential to maintain the valued objective distance from the urban crowds. It involves a dialectic of externality and interiority, a continual attempt of “privatiz[ing] social space,” to borrow Susan Buck-Morss’s phrase (103). Analogous to the function of the arcades, the flaneur’s gaze transforms the unfamiliarity of the streets into the familiarity of one’s own room—“the arcade is the classical form of the *intérieur*, which is how the *flâneur* sees the street” (Benjamin 54). This spatialized psychic dialectic epitomizes the urban spectator’s ambivalent relationship with the modern city. The decline of the arcades symbolizes for Benjamin the loss of the flaneur’s critical observant gaze. It signifies the flaneur’s ultimate surrender to the merchandise in the department stores, the place which represents “the form of the *intérieur*’s decay” (54) and “the flaneur’s final coup” (170).

Until his eventual descent into the bourgeois multitudes in the city, the flaneur has prided himself on his rootlessness and “cosmopolitan” nature (Baudelaire, “Painter” 104). The flaneur is a “great traveler” with cultivated wit and a comprehensive worldview and seeks “to be away from home and yet to feel at home everywhere” (104, 105). He is not just the gentleman spectator wandering in the city, but truly “*the man of the world*” (104). As a cosmopolitan, he is impressively knowledgeable and refined. In Baudelaire’s own phrase, he is “*the spiritual citizen of the universe*” (104). Belonging unequivocally to the elite class, the nineteenth-century flaneur is endowed with privileges of leisure and traveling and comes to own the renowned extraordinary perceptiveness. As Baudelaire writes, the flaneur’s urban spectatorship “is not given to every man to take a bath of multitude” (*Paris Spleen* 20).

Even though the flaneur chooses to occupy a marginal position in society while identifying with the outcast, the vagrant, the criminal, or the prostitute, he is without doubt an intellectual aristocrat unengaged in the quotidian activities in the city. More than a staging of fashion, the flaneur’s dandyism represents “*a kind of cult of the ego which can still survive the pursuit of that form of happiness to be found in others*” (Baudelaire, “Painter” 108). It is thus “*the aristocratic superiority of his mind*,” together with his melancholy and feelings of nostalgia, that epitomizes his rebellious intent “*to combat and destroy triviality*” of the modern world (108). To counter petty, dreary bourgeois life and the deadening moral and behavioral

codes, the flaneur takes delight in being a rootless cosmopolitan, a world traveler. The modernist hero's solitary travels in the modern world are paradoxically driven by his anti-modern sentiments. The flaneur's cosmopolitanism bespeaks both willful self-exile and status privilege.

Despite his privileged position and perception, the flaneur is a figure full of contradictions and ambivalence. He is epitomic of a heroic modernism, rebelling against bourgeois capitalism and industrial urbanization. And yet his flanerie is anything but heroic, for he eventually surrenders to the enchanting world of glittering commodities in the city. The flaneur is unquestionably of a superior social standing, but he desires to live an unconventional life while identifying with people living on the margins of society. His homelessness ironically results partly from the universalizing attempt to objectively observe and map the modern world, and his uncommitted, autonomous existence is possible only within the surroundings he savors but also detests. As Mazlish notes, the "circumstances of the *flâneur*'s life are the very condition of his being a *flâneur*—who then rebels against his circumstances" (49). The flaneur wanders solitarily in the urban landscapes, and his extensive journeys traverse social and even racial boundaries.⁵ However, although adept at the cognitive mapping of the spaces he travels and explores, the flaneur can barely maintain the objective detachment as an observer; despite the constant desire to escape it, he is in effect a part of the world under his own observation. As Parsons writes, "this paradox of the scopically authoritative yet wandering and placeless *flâneur* . . . result[s] from a mixture of reaction against, dependency on, and anxiety in, bourgeois culture" (19). And intrinsic to all the paradoxes is "the *flâneur*'s modernist fantasy" (50). The observing but unobserved urban spectator, the alienated world traveler, is in reality nothing less than "a kind of perambulating Panopticon" (50). However, his seemingly all-seeing eye does not tell the whole story of modern life and modernity.

Not at Home: Modernity of the City and the Gender of Flanerie

⁵ As Shields argues, the wandering of the flaneur could very well represent "a movement when the city is more than *urbs* but is also *orbs*, that is, it becomes a cosmopolis, where the world (read European empire) is every place co-present" (72).

Women are not flaneuses in the nineteenth century, and for reasons which cut to the heart of the lived and imposed distinctions of their daily social world from that of men.

—Rachel Bowlby,
“Walking, Women, and Writing” 194

As already noted, Woolf’s comments on James as city spectator and cosmopolitan traveler underscore his “free will” and also the barrenness of his “point of view” as it is blind to “the whole field of human activity” (*Essays* 200). It is certain that the London under the scrutiny of James differs from that perceived by Woolf. In her portrayal of the life of the Pargiter family in 1880 in *The Pargiters*, Woolf emphasizes the Victorian family’s “street love” as distinct from “the different loves of the drawing room” (36). The young ladies of the family particularly do not see the world outside the home in the same way as their brothers do. Woolf writes: “[t]his love [of the street] affected the lives of the girls far more strongly than it affected the lives of their brothers” (36-37). In late-nineteenth-century England the Pargiter sisters do not have the anonymous freedom of walking in the public spaces of London; even if they had, they would have run the risk of inviting real danger or of disgracing themselves. Living the insulated life as middle-class women, the sisters are prohibited from roaming the city: “For any of them to walk in the West End even by day was out of question. Bond Street was as impassable, save with their mother, as any swamp alive with crocodiles. To be seen alone in Piccadilly was equivalent to walking up Abercorn Terrace in a dressing gown carrying a bath sponge” (37). Woolf shows in this passage the constraints imposed on women’s mobility in the era immediately prior to hers. In the 1920s and 1930s, the postwar English society witnessed adult women’s newly granted entry into the public sphere and their first experience of the diversity and energy of urban life. The flaneur, as we have seen, has long been emblematic of elite metropolitan subjectivity and the privileged freedom of roaming the public spaces. But for the majority of women, during the 1880s and even later during the interwar years, their “street love” merely suggests a longing, an aspiration, or tentative explorations.

Although the flaneur is a familiar figure in contemporary discourses of modernity, historically he makes his first appearance in the nineteenth-century European metropolis. And insofar as the historical flaneur lives in a world saturated with the ideology of separate spheres, the middle-class home is the concealed backdrop against which he undertakes journeys to have a panoramic view of the world. In other words, the figure of the flaneur implies first and foremost a male privilege in addition to advantaged social status. And to consider whether there has

been the female version of the flaneur, as many critics have attempted to do, entails a series of vexed questions concerning women's mobility and spectatorship in the city and their claim to modernity. And all these questions in turn lead to the controversy over whether it is possible to have a definitive notion of the flaneur and flanerrie without contextualizing it with the ideology of separate spheres.

According to Janet Wolff and Griselda Pollock, the classic narratives of modernity only represent men's experiences in the public spheres, of which the shocking encounter in the nineteenth-century metropolis is representative. Wolff calls attention to the male-centeredness of discourses of modernity, as they are concerned exclusively "with the public world of work, politics and city life" (37). She contends: "The literature of modernity describes the experience of men," since it is essentially "about transformations in the public world and in its associated consciousness" (37). Similarly Pollock notes: "as a nineteenth-century phenomenon," modernity "is a product of the city" (66). She describes the mainstream account of modernity merely centered on the city experience as "a response in a mythic or ideological form to the new complexities of a social existence passed amongst strangers in an atmosphere of intensified nervous and psychic stimulation, in a world ruled by money and commodity exchange, stressed by competition and formative of an intensified individuality" (66). To discuss modernity only through these scenarios makes the figure of the flaneur the emblem and embodiment of modern subjectivity. The flaneur's individualist view on the modern city comes to exemplify a definitive experience of modernity. Further, the classic scenario of grappling with the alienating circumstances in the city only represents the view of the men of the upper classes. The nineteenth-century women artists or writers, long denied the freedom of roaming the city, for example, have not had the opportunity to engage in flanerrie. The dissatisfaction with the fact that women's experiences rarely figure in the canonic discussions of modernity, therefore, inspires feminist scholars to challenge the masculinist formulation of modernity. As Wolff contends, women's modernity is "invisible" and there is "no question of inventing the *flâneuse*" (44).

Centered on the division of the separate spheres, feminist interrogation of the androcentric account of modernity highlights the gendered differences of the *spatial* experiences of modernity. Denied access to the public urban spaces, the women at home play the roles of virtuous mother and dutiful wife. The home space functions literally and symbolically as a haven sheltered from the tumult and competitiveness of the city; it is a world of "[r]est, peace and comfort" indicative of "civilized privacy" (Wilson, *Sphinx* 45). On the other hand, while the middle-class home as a

whole suggests a feminized space of retreat and intimacy, the drawing rooms are significantly a semi-public place for dinner parties and balls, serving the important social function of “bourgeois recreation, display and those social rituals which constituted polite society, or Society” (Pollock 56). Importantly, in contrast to the women confined within the space of home, the men move freely across the divide between the public world and the private home. They are at once citizens in the public sphere and husband and father in the domestic sphere. Pollock hence maintains: “the spaces of modernity” have been synonymous with “spaces of masculinity” (84), since the public spaces that make the central stage of modernity are off-limits zones to women. Whereas men enact the role of the flaneur as “an exclusively masculine type” enjoying the freedom of roaming and sightseeing in the city (67), middle-class women are constrained to occupy the feminine domestic realm, “the negative” of the exciting, disturbing urban world (70).

Despite his authoritative, objective observation, the flaneur’s wandering eyes are also “covetous” savoring the city spectacles, and, more importantly, they are “erotic” as the women in the public streets become object of desire under his gaze (Pollock 67). While normative femininity does not register bodily desire, the public spaces outside of the home are for the flaneur an exciting locus for erotic fantasy and sexual adventure. Baudelaire’s “A une passante” in *Les Fleurs du mal* is a well-known depiction of the flaneur’s projection of desire on women in the public streets. As Benjamin writes, this poem “deals with the function of the crowd not in the life of the citizen but in the life of the erotic person” (45). According to Pollock, the flaneur represents a “gender-specific gaze” (84), which “articulates and produces a masculine sexuality” (79), activated in the public world now turned into “the spaces of sexual exchange” (70). Accordingly, women in the public constitute part of the city spectacles. As Buck-Morss writes, whereas the flaneur simply suggests a man who observes and strolls alone in the streets, “all women who loitered risked being seen as whores”; prostitution thereby becomes nothing less than the “female version of flanerie” (119).

The activity of flanerie thus implies a spectatorship entailing masculine desire. Consequently, the flaneur’s characteristic sexualizing gaze on women in the city streets suggests the impossibility of the female flaneur or flaneuse. The female version of the urban spectator could not have existed because women in general cannot be subject of the masculine form of desire like the flaneur. Although Baudelaire regards the lesbian as the “heroine” of modernism (Wolff 42), she, together with the other female figures in his metropolitan landscape such as the passante, the widow, the old lady, the murder victim, does not encounter the flaneur

as a fellow spectator in the city but rather constitutes one of the alluring sights under his gaze. Moreover, unlike the sexualized women in the public spaces, the women in the domestic confines do not appear at all in the flaneur's artistic canvas. The impossibility of the flaneuse bespeaks not only the masculine desire underlying urban spectatorship, but also the prohibition on the homebound women from making excursions into the city to enjoy unfettered walking and watching. The suppression of alternative female urban spectatorship exemplifies the male monopoly on the experiences of modernity.

However, the overemphasis on the male predominance in the public spaces may obscure the flaneur's covert anxiety to escape domestic life, a significant sign of his alienation from his own class. Celebrating the flaneur as the "man of the crowd," Baudelaire associates the modern artist's love of wandering with an inherent antipathy of domesticity: "in his cradle, a fairy has bestowed the love of masks and masquerading, *the hate of home*, and the passion for roaming" (*Paris Spleen* 20; emphasis added). The flaneur would lose autonomy and individuality only enabled in the city spaces, if he remains within the bounds of stifling domestic space. Since the flaneur aims to "be away from home and yet to feel at home everywhere," his flanerie suggests an intrinsic repudiation of domesticity and conventional bourgeois life. As Tester writes, he is "the man who is only at home existentially when he is not at home physically," for "the private world of domestic life is dull and possibly even a cause for the feelings of crisis" (2). Although the flaneur embodies the metropolitan consciousness echoing de Certeau's "voyeur-god," he epitomizes the crisis of bourgeois masculinity as his anxious warding-off of domestic life demonstrates.

In her article entitled "The Invisible *Flâneur*," Elizabeth Wilson calls into question the feminist presupposition of the flaneur's masculine supremacy. Instead, she emphasizes the flaneur's unspoken anxiety and his inevitable failure in combating the menacing modern world. As Benjamin writes, the flaneur "battled the crowd," only "with the impotent rage of someone fighting the rain or the wind" (154). For Wilson, the flaneur's "heroism" consists in his unflinching confrontation with his ineluctable "defeat" and "impotence" in the face of modernity ("Invisible *Flâneur*" 110). The flaneur signifies "masculinity as unstable, caught up in the violent dislocations that characterized urbanization" (109). He "represented not the triumph of masculine power" but instead "its attenuation" (109). Despite his authoritative perception and cosmopolitan wit, the flaneur as the restless "[w]anderer," actually "embodies the Oedipal under the threat" (109). Wilson challenges the unquestioning acceptance of the doctrine of the gender division,

which for her “overemphasize[s]” “the passivity and victimization of women” (105). Parsons, likewise, problematizes the ideology of the separate spheres, believing that the argument of the invisibility of the flaneuse disregards the “deviant” or “rare” forms of “female freedom in the city streets” (40), such as the prostitute or the cross-dressing female artist.

If considered in view of the rise of consumerism, the question of the flaneuse further provokes another set of debates among feminist critics. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the historic invention of the department store helped to legitimize middle-class women’s unchaperoned presence in public spaces. It accordingly marks women’s incipient emancipation from the constraints of domesticity. Since middle-class women were its primary practitioners, consumerism in its early stages in the West was considered a feminine activity, one often associated with negative or subversive feminine attributes.⁶ Shopping, as Bowlby notes, “did take [middle-class women] out of the house to downtown areas formerly out of bounds” (*Just Looking* 22). Walking in the public city spaces, the female shoppers savored the phantasmagoric spectacles in the same way as the flaneur did.

Nevertheless, it is debatable whether the female shopper can be taken as analogous to the flaneur struggling against the enticement of the commodities and spectacles in the city, and whether one may really see the housewife shopping in the stores as the flaneuse. According to Ferguson, shopping poses a “threat” to the flaneur who values objective observation and autonomy, and hence “the female shoppers . . . are . . . unfit for *flânerie*” (27). Similarly, Wolff does not associate the flaneur’s “fleeting, anonymous encounters” and “purposeless strolling” in the city with the female consumer’s activities in the public spaces (44), which only signify her husband’s economic power. Yet, for the critics holding the opposite view, it is only with the rise of consumerism that the flaneuse becomes possible. As Wilson asserts, “it provided the pleasures of looking, socializing and simply strolling—in the department store, a woman, too, could become a *flâneur*” (“Invisible Flaneur” 101). Taking issue with Benjamin’s account of the flaneur, Anne Friedberg similarly concurs that the stores “may have been the *flâneur*’s last coup, but they were the *flâneuse*’s first” (421). In the words of Mica Nava, the department stores “provided a spectacular environment in which to stroll aimlessly, to be a *flâneuse*”; it is “a context which legitimized the desire of women to look as well as be looked

⁶ Andrew Huyssen has made the well-known point that in the late nineteenth century mass culture was gendered as feminine and inferior, under the prejudiced dichotomous view held by the elite practitioners of the masculinist culture of modernism. See also Martin Pumphrey’s study of the early-twentieth-century images of the housewife and the flapper.

at—it enabled them to be both subject and object of the gaze, to appropriate, at one go, the pleasure/power of both the voyeur and the narcissist” (72).

In any case, the flaneuse possesses the freedom of strolling and looking in the city; she is a seeing and desiring female subject, rather than the passive object seen and desired. Undoubtedly the female shopper has stepped out of domestic space and like the flaneur walks freely in the public spaces. However, it is important to note that the female shopper’s gaze only ambiguously parallels the flaneur’s. For the flaneur as leisured artist and detached observer does not really participate in bourgeois life until the advent of the department store.⁷ Moreover, unlike the nineteenth-century female consumer’s, the flaneur’s gaze bespeaks an undomesticated and active sexuality, since he savors less implicitly the sight of the women on the loose in the city streets than that of the merchandize in the department stores. The blurring of the divide between home and city with the rise of consumerism, therefore, does not necessarily guarantee the emergence of the flaneuse. Rather, the flaneuse becomes truly visible only when the flaneur ceases to signify at once the freedom of city roaming and the privileges of the public spaces, and only when the feminine domestic sphere no longer serves as the vital but nonetheless obscured constituent of modern life.

Concerned with the feminine experience of domesticity, Woolf in *The Years* chronicles the life of an English family from the 1880s to the 1930s, during which period gender roles in England are changing drastically along with the social and political upheavals. Shortly after WWI, as the majority of women are beginning to take up new opportunities of education and employment, the public spaces gradually become no longer taboo territories for them. At this historical juncture, Woolf witnesses women’s early city experiences without the terror of harassment and the need of masquerading or company of escorts. The city is now a place where most women can engage in adventures and explorations, forgetting the past suppression of their “street love.” Women’s presence in the city hence does not

⁷ On the relationship between the flaneur and shopping, Ferguson writes: “Shopping poses such a threat because it severely undermines the posture of independence that affords the *flâneur* his occupation and his *raison d’être*” (27). In the second half of the nineteenth century, it is in particular the rise of the department stores that heralds the incipience of modern consumerism. As Bowlby notes, “within a very short period, department stores had been established as one of the outstanding institutions in the economic and social life of the late nineteenth century; and together with advertising, which was also expanding rapidly, they marked the beginning of present-day consumer society” (*Just Looking* 3). It is in the department stores that the flaneur, as Benjamin remarks, “roamed through the labyrinth of merchandise as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city” (54); this is also the very place where the figure had his “final coup” (170).

suggest prostitution any longer; rather, it may help to redefine femininity and bring about the changes of the meanings of home.

It seems to me that to pursue the question of the flaneuse, either concerning her invisibility in accounts of modernity or her alternative existences, without grounding it in discussions of the ideology of separate spheres, would deprive this essentially derivative figure of its cultural meanings. The initial attempt to identify and define the female counterpart of the flaneur is itself conditioned by that very ideological framework. Only after women's presence and participation in the public world are unequivocally legitimate can the flaneur become simply an aesthetic or theoretical metaphor unaligned with the traditional masculinist power. Accordingly, debates over the flaneuse or female flanerie that are not historically situated become somewhat misplaced. Contesting the view of the flaneuse's historical invisibility, Parsons emphasizes the fluidity of the concept of the flaneur: "the post-Benjamin *flâneur* is more influentially a conceptual metaphor for urban observation and walking that extends even to the present day and the *flâneur* of de Certeau's postmodern city" (41). Albeit cogent in some sense, this view fails to see that the transformation of the traditional elite flaneur into the dynamic, border-crossing postmodern flaneur is itself a matter of historical contingency. Without the blurring of the rigid divide of the gender spheres and hence the de-privileging of the flaneur, there would not have been, I think, the coming into being of the celebration of the emancipatory postmodern wandering in urban space without fixed identity and a mastering gaze. Woolf lives through the times when women's presence, increasingly involved in public affairs rather than simply shopping, is starting to become a normal sight in the city. And *Mrs. Dalloway* is the writer's artistic response to this epochal phenomenon, as it perceives and imagines the city landscape of London from the emergent feminine perspective.

Mrs. Dalloway's City: The Flaneur, the Flaneuse, and Flanerie

[I]n spite of the inequality of its citizens' positions and profits, there is only a pullulation of passer-by, a network of residences temporarily appropriated by pedestrian traffic, a shuffling among pretenses of the proper, a universe of rented spaces haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of places.

—Michel de Certeau,
The Practice of Everyday Life 103

We are no longer quite ourselves. As we step out of the house on a fine evening between four and six, we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room.

—Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting" 20-21

Before its publication in 1925, *Mrs. Dalloway* had been under a number of titles clearly suggestive of its themes and concerns. Two years before, Woolf still referred to the novel by the title of "The Hours," and at its even earlier stages it could have been called "At Home: or The Party" or "The Prime Minister."⁸ The several working titles of the novel similarly imply the polarized public and domestic spheres: whereas "The Hours" and "The Prime Minister" hint at the synchronic order of the modern city and the icon of state power, "At Home" and "The Party" suggest the feminine domestic space of retreat and its public-inflected social function for polite society. A novel thoroughly centered in London, *Mrs. Dalloway* echoes the male modernists' works that embody in various ways the elite metropolitan consciousness central to modernism. While the modernist city often serves as the exhilarating locale for street wandering and supranational itinerancy, the hardly focalized feminine space of home signifies comfort, privacy, and upper-class cultivation. Woolf's novel, however, represents a "feminine" perspective on the city, seeing it as decidedly reliant upon and imbricated with "the domestic." Appropriating the classic figure of the city spectator and wanderer, the novel not just mocks his advantaged lifestyle and masculinist gaze and egotism, but foregrounds the occluded correlation and interdependence of the city and the home. Woolf's representation of London subversively fractures the elitist metropolitan subjectivity of modernism and highlights the flaneuse's perception and the hitherto obscured scenes of domestic space.

Moreover, the domestic space of Woolf's rendering does not replicate but rather challenges and negotiates bourgeois domesticity underpinning the civil order of the city. Clarissa Dalloway is a paragon of the Victorian "angel of the house," as mother, wife, and party hostess. But when she is walking in the city streets as a flaneuse, her perspective on the city departs from that of the privileged middle-class

⁸ In her journal entry for 19 June 1923, Woolf wrote: "But now what do I feel about my writing?—this book, that is, *The Hours*, if that's its name?" (*A Writer's Diary* 56). Earlier she had thought of other titles for the book she was working on. She noted in her journal entry for 6 October 1922: "Thought upon beginning a book to be called, perhaps, *At Home: or The Party*" (*A Writer's Diary* 15). But two months earlier on 28 August 1922, the writer already planned to devote a whole chapter of the book to be called "The Prime Minister" (Dick 316).

male participants of city life. And unlike her mother who walks in the city streets merely to buy flowers for her dinner party, Elizabeth Dalloway epitomizes the flaneuse of the future generations, who ambitiously explores the formerly taboo zones of London, where she begins to envision for herself a career in public service. More importantly, the novel in the end reconfigures domestic space as a public-inflected locale for the upper-class parties into a meeting place of a utopian communality free of reified social stratification.⁹ It highlights and also reinvents the role of the party hostess who helps realize what Woolf calls “the party consciousness,” in order to counter the traditionally solipsistic and panoramic metropolitan consciousness of the flaneur.¹⁰

The party in the novel suggests a paradoxically “housed” culmination of the collective flanerie on the June day. The gathering of the everyday city dwellers at Clarissa’s house enacts a reconfigured domestic space that allows blurring of identity boundaries and multiplicity and contemporaneousness of perspectives. De Certeau once proposes a transgressive postmodern flanerie indifferent to the rationalist order of the modern city (103). He describes it as “a pullulation of passer-by,” the “pedestrian traffic” which “temporarily” appropriates “a network of residences”; such postmodern flanerie makes possible “a shuffling among pretenses of the proper, a universe of rented spaces haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of places” (103). De Certeau’s notion of postmodern flanerie echoes Woolf’s characterization of rambling in the city as improvisatory border-crossings of identity and status. In “Street Haunting,” she famously writes: “As we step out of the house . . . , we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers” (20); “[t]he shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house ourselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken . . .” (21-22). For Woolf, wandering in the city is akin to transgressing the rigidly designated social roles one acts out dutifully. Moreover, while she steps out of the house in the evening simply to buy herself some pencils, the act of writing itself is metaphorically associated with such truant meandering outside of the routinely occupied spaces. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the fluid, non-

⁹ As Squier writes, Woolf’s “parties are at once conventional and subversive” (99).

¹⁰ Woolf in her lifetime always enjoys parties, where people relax, converse, and intermingle. Leonard Woolf recalls the importance of parties for his wife in his biography: “The idea of a party always excited her” (98). After *Mrs. Dalloway* was published, Woolf in her diary entry for 27 April 1925 talked about what she called “the party consciousness”: it is a state “where people secrete an envelope which connects them and protect them from others. . . . You must not break it. It is something real. You must keep it up—conspire together”; what a party could momentarily create is then a precious sense of sharing and togetherness (*A Writer’s Diary* 74).

individualist flanerier of the city-dwellers is distinctly distinguished from the wandering of the elite flaneur. Clarissa's party transforms the private sphere of domesticity into an exteriorized feminine space of community and identity displacement. In the end, the domestic space does not signify so much the superiority and power of the upper classes as the vitality of the everyday city life, oblivious to the imposed urban social order the flaneur unwittingly endorses. Linking the masculine public and the feminine private, Woolf's narrative wanders across delimited architectural and conceptualized spaces, and ultimately arrives at an alternative view of life in the city that is kaleidoscopic and purposely *situated* within the home space.

If the flaneur has traditionally taken the solitary street sauntering as the requisite for writing, then, as mentioned above, Woolf conversely "tends to think of writing itself as like walking" (Bowlby, "Walking, Women and Writing" 199). The wandering text of *Mrs. Dalloway*, or we may say the novel's textual flanerier, persistently "domesticates" the city by foregrounding the feminine spaces of the home, while the characters' respective activities of flanerier constantly signify the liberating "un-domestication" of women. The novel registers the historic emergence of the flaneuse and the withering of the elite power and worldview the flaneur has emblemized. It celebrates at the same time the multitudinous, mobile, and diverse routes and perspectives of London-dwellers as quotidian city-walkers. And Clarissa's party displaces the collective flanerier into domestic space in order to enact an interiorized transgressiveness of everyday city life. Foregrounding, fracturing, and eventually reinscribing the boundaries of city and home, Woolf's writing maps out "a poetic geography" of London, turning it into a "*migrational*" and "metaphorical" city "slip[ping] into the clear text of the planned and readable city" (de Certeau 105, 93).

In a passage from an early version of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf refers to Westminster, the political center of London where Clarissa Dalloway resides, as the "seat of time":

It might have been the seat of time itself, this island of Westminster, the forge where the hours are made, and sent out, in various tones and tempers, to glide into the lives of the foot passengers, of studious workmen[,] desultory women within doors, who coming to the window looked up at the sky as the clock struck, as if to say, What? Or Why? They had their choices of answers. (qtd. in DiBattista, "Virginia Woolf's Memento Mori" 43)

Here “the seat of time” or “the hours” suggests the efficient systematization of modern life in the city. This synchronous order, manifestly punctuated by Big Ben’s strokes, organizes the city’s innumerable lives and activities into an imagined organism. Forged in Westminster the solemn seat of state power, this official temporality epitomizes the so-called “Concept-city” (de Certeau 95), the commensurate order of the time-space of the city. The ubiquitous strokes of Big Ben are analogous to the recurrent state symbols such as the flag, the Queen, the Buckingham Palace, Union Jack, the British imperial dominions and the Prime Minister. Together, they signify the official social and political order imposed on the city dwellers of London. As Fleishman writes, the “cumulative effect of such repeated notations and images is to establish a systematic network of social elements” and “a vision of modern life on a national scale” (76).

Though ultimately expunged from the published version of the novel, the passage quoted above implies the oppressive saturation of state power, which rules over not only “the lives of the foot passengers” and “studious workmen” in the streets, but also the “desultory women within doors.” It resonates with the point Woolf persistently makes that the activities in the masculine public and feminine private sphere equally constitute the significant facets of modern life. The passage ends with the individuals’ wondering about the “hours,” about the official collective time’s meaning and significance. It is clear that Woolf decides they all “had their choices of answers.” This insisted autonomy of the people under the rule of state power corresponds with the depiction of energetic everyday city life in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Despite the urbanist organization and stratified social system, the multitudes of the city-dwellers live their lives as if oblivious to the official temporality of the civil order. Specifically, it is the hegemonic culture of the English middle class that embodies the values of the ruling power, whose decorum and morality significantly hinge upon the Victorian gender codes and the natural veneration for class status and royalty.

The famous scene of the motorcar in Oxford Street nicely exemplifies the novel’s contestation of hegemonic power. Temporarily stalled, the motorcar suggests to the people standing along the street that “greatness was seated within,” who must be “the majesty of England,” “the enduring symbol of the state” (*Mrs. Dalloway* [henceforth *M*] 23). Sitting inside the car with its curtain drawn might be the Queen, the Prince of Wales, or the Prime Minister, but whoever it is seems less important than the fact that the subjects staring at the motorcar all stand still respectfully, as if “ready to attend their Sovereign” (*M* 26). And Clarissa Dalloway,

the wife of a member of the Parliament, also stands among the crowds watching the motorcar with awe and admiration. A lady in her fifties who is refined and fashionably dressed, Clarissa believes there must be the Queen inside the motorcar. It occurs to her that she invites guests to her parties just as the Queen does in Buckingham Palace. In a significant way, the two women's lives mirror one another because both their husbands are "the gentlemen of England" (*M* 25). Acting out the role of the party hostess, the housewives of the upper classes fulfill their responsibility to arrange and enliven the social events. If the unknown figure in the motorcar exerts an almost omnipotent symbolic power over the people, such power pivots on the gender codes and the system of values that the ruling classes routinely ritualize.

Gazing at the symbol of the sovereign power, the poor gathering at the gates of Buckingham Palace, the well-to-do shoppers who have just looked into the shop windows on Bond Street for a good pair of gloves, and a Sir John Buckhurst in his car with a chauffeur all share the same patriotic sense of pride and dignity. The mysterious figure of sovereignty in the car represents, to borrow de Certeau's term, the "solar Eye" or the systematic order governing the metropolis (92). Like the ubiquitous presence of Big Ben, the recurrent image of the sun with its indiscriminating oppressive heat symbolizes the state power efficiently ruling the lives of the people in the city. It is thus particularly suggestive that the sun "became extraordinary hot" (*M* 20), when people are uniformly and reverently looking at the motorcar. No less meaningful is also the fact that Septimus Smith makes his appointment at "precisely twelve o'clock" with the doctor Sir William Bradshaw (*M* 142), whose worship of "proportion" and "conversion" underlying the collective systematic order directly contributes to his death (*M* 150, 151). Whereas the people in the street feel honored and excited standing in the proximity of the motorcar, Septimus as the social misfit is the only person who meanwhile feels utterly alienated, believing that "[i]t is I who am blocking the way" of the majesty of England (*M* 21).

While the totalizing state power effectively organizes the subjects' daily lives, it relentlessly ostracizes people like Septimus. Ironically, it is metaphorized as the "curious pattern like a tree" painted on the "drawn blinds" of the motorcar (*M* 21). Septimus used to be an aspiring young man struggling to work his way up the social ladder, but later unfortunately becomes a shell-shocked veteran of WWI. With the miseries in the past, he finds his society unbearable and oppressive, fearing irrationally he would soon experience "falling . . . down, down into the flames" (*M* 216). He does not feel belonging to the collective "life" of the city, to the crowds

willingly following the rule of the hegemonic power. When Septimus eventually jumps out of his window, the narrative voice remarks dryly, “Life was good. The sun hot” (*M* 226). While it unflinchingly depicts the scapegoat under the callous social system, the narrative nonetheless also suggests the possibility of the people’s resistance to the systematic collective order. The accidental shift of attention of the onlookers in Oxford Street intimates the inevitable failure of the tyrannical systematic rule. The unexpected occlusion of the motorcar’s glory by the aeroplane’s illegible but immensely attractive skywriting suggests democracy will eventually supersede the established social order. The novel, therefore, ponders the question of life and death less at the level of universals than that of ideological totality. It argues that despite the tragic sacrifice of the social outcast, the ordered city does not succeed in dominating the lively and incommensurable everyday lives of the city-dwellers.

As a number of critics have noted, the returned colonial Peter Walsh is Woolf’s rendition of the flaneur, a gentleman who never has a home due to his dislike of the middle-class lifestyle, and who wanders alone in London throughout the day.¹¹ The flaneur in *Mrs. Dalloway* is a perpetual traveler rebelling against the mainstream values, and also a metropolitan spectator concerned with the affairs of the world. He is not merely a gentleman, but a colonial official in charge of extensive tracts of foreign land. Above all, he is a romantic who has cultivated wit and taste. A man of knowledge and leisure no doubt, Peter regards himself highly as “the perfect gentleman, the fascinating, the distinguished” (*M* 239). And yet he also has considered himself an outsider to the British middle-classes in defiance of its stifling conventionality and domesticity. Nonetheless, unlike those involuntarily marginalized members of society, Peter in effect endorses the elite metropolitan worldview and the hegemonic middle-class culture underlying the power of imperial England. Unlike Septimus and Lucrecia Smith, the social outcast and the foreigner, and unlike Sally Seton and Doris Kilman, the New Woman and the lower-middle-class spinster, Peter appears to defy mainstream culture but in reality unknowingly subscribes to it. In playing the adopted but somehow also resented role of outsider, he achieves partial success in rejecting London’s polite society and codes of respectability. However ambivalently, Peter as the flaneur belongs to the world that Clarissa as “the perfect hostess” embodies (*M* 93), to the ruling class in charge of the London synonymous with affluence, orderliness, and civilization.

As *the* perpetual traveler, Peter is nothing less than a cosmopolitan. Of the numerous city walkers in the novel, Fleishman observes, Peter engages in “the most

¹¹ See in particular Parsons 72-74; Bowlby “Walking, Women and Writing” 204-06.

extensive exploration” of the city (72). Throughout the day he maintains an existential homelessness as “the odd man out, who has not returned to his hotel by the end of the text” (72). The figure of the flaneur, as many have noted, traditionally represents elite cosmopolitanism and the privileged “right” to the authoritative and exploratory mapping of city space (Walkowitz 16). His confident perception of the city, a unitary comprehension of the multifarious facets of urban life, suggests “a bourgeois male pleasure” unavailable to women and members of the lower classes (16). Born into an upper-middle-class Anglo-Indian family, Peter is a gourmet; though an Oxford dropout, he is bookish and knowledgeable and has always planned to be a writer. He admires such eminent eighteenth-century men of letters as Pope and Addison for their keen observation and common sense. Not surprisingly, then, it is “the state of the world that interested him” (*M* 9). The flaneur’s sophisticated metropolitan outlook implies a commanding and totalizing epistemology, as is manifest in his faith in the knowability of the world and his own unquestionable capacity to grasp it. As Peter asserts, “[w]e know everything” (*M* 294) and moreover it is he himself who “knew better than any one” “what people were like, what things meant” (*M* 192).

Walking in the London streets upon his return from India, Peter observes the city scenes with not only excitement but also a regained sense of familiarity. He enjoys his “moments of pride in England” (*M* 82). Further, what unfolds under his eyes is nothing less than marvelous and strikes him as “civilization”: “That was civilization. It struck him coming back from the East—the efficiency, the organization, the communal spirit of London” (*M* 229). Having lived in the colonies for a long period of time, he now sees the London in view to be a “splendid achievement in its own way,” and it “seemed dear to him as *a personal possession*” (*M* 82; emphasis added). It is thus exceedingly ironic when seeing the running ambulance carrying Septimus’s dead body, Peter is deeply touched and hails it as “[o]ne of the triumphs of civilization” (*M* 229). Such glorious metropolitan perception is vital to the civilization’s imperial ambition and confidence to extend infinitely its influences across the world. Looking at his own image “reflected in the plate-glass window of a motor-car manufacturer in Victoria Street,” Peter thinks he has been a “fortunate man” as a British colonial official, for “[a]ll India lay behind him; plains, mountains; epidemics of cholera; a district twice as big as Ireland; decisions he had come to alone” (*M* 72). Woolf’s narrative, however, clearly undercuts the complacency of the smug, self-absorbed metropolitan consciousness. It presents Peter’s perception as not just partial but ludicrously egocentric, being pitted constantly against the diverse views of other inhabitants of the city. The

novel's portrayal of the flaneur as a colonial official obviously mocks imperial England's narcissistic worldview based in metropolitan London.

Peter's self-image as a nonconformist eventually turns out to be a mere fantasy of the man of the advantaged class. He has perceived himself as an incarnation of the heroic "solitary traveler" (*M* 86), possessing the will power to journey as if standing always "at the opening of endless avenues" (*M* 78). His own travels represent to him a passionate heroism opposed to the conventional and stagnant middle-class way of life:

he was an adventurer, reckless, he thought, swift, daring, indeed . . . a romantic buccaneer, careless of all these damned proprieties, yellow dressing gowns, pipes, fishing rods, in the shop windows; and respectability and evening parties and spruce old men wearing white slips beneath their waistcoats. He was a buccaneer. (*M* 80)

It is Clarissa's life and everything it represents that he detests, even though unknowingly he is not really distanced from it any more than he has forgotten his love for her. To Peter, the circle of the Dalloways is a microcosm of the British middle-classes with its hypocrisy and corruption, and the very name Dalloway suggests to his dislike "a great deal of the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit" (*M* 116). He resents the fact that Clarissa belongs to the world of the "perfect gentlemen" of England like Hugh Whitbread and Richard Dalloway, and believes that they "make a mere hostess of her" (*M* 114). However, despite himself, Peter remains very much part of the cream of society. His return to England suggests to Clarissa's upper-class friends a sailing back to "their secure shores" (*M* 162). Peter thinks "he cared not a straw" "what they said of him—the Dalloways, the Whitbreads, and their set" (*M* 75), and yet in fact he cannot help feeling himself a "failure" in their eyes (*M* 64). He also realizes that he would have to talk to Richard Dalloway to see whether he "couldn't help him to some job" (*M* 75).

It is significant that the great extent to which the flaneur depends emotionally on women barely surfaces in his consciousness. In the novel, the flaneur's perennial anxiety is underscored explicitly. His fluctuations of emotions and "susceptibility to impressions" clearly contradict his scopic power and intellectual objectivity (*M* 107). For thirty years Peter has been shutting and opening his large pocket-knife, whenever feeling ill at ease or sensing the need of a confidence boost. He savors the glittering spectacles in the city, and often falls into a sentimental mood while

wandering alone in the city. He could feel “happiness from a pretty face” or “downright misery at the sight of a frump” (*M* 107). He finds “the fashions” of the metropolis “so becoming” “to his eye,” enjoying the sights of “the long black cloaks; the slimness; the elegance,” of “the delicious and apparently universal habit of paint” (*M* 107). London thus means to the flaneur not just the magnificent metropolis, the center of civilization, but “a little glow of pleasure, a sort of lust too over the visual impression” (*M* 229). And Peter’s pleasure of strolling in the streets becomes especially heightened when he encounters an attractive woman passing by and projects his own desire onto her. The encounter with the “passante,” which is alternately exciting and frustrating, makes the primary source of pleasure for the flaneur proud of his freedom of wandering.¹² However, when Peter secretly follows the woman home as if taking a fun impromptu adventure, he seems to hear Clarissa’s voice ringing in his ears, and like men of his class he cannot help noticing traces of “vague impropriety” from the “hanging flower-baskets” in front of the woman’s house (*M* 81). Peter has resented Clarissa over the years for her insouciance to his “passion,” as he believes “[o]nly one person in the world could be as he was, in love” (*M* 72). Yet his erotic fantasy in the public spaces, as is typical of the flaneur, only makes clear that Peter’s all too conventional masculinity belies his rebellious break with the constraints of bourgeois morality.

In sum, Peter’s feelings toward the mainstream society are ambivalent, and they exemplify a series of paradoxes characteristic of the traditional figure of the flaneur. Unattached and uncommitted, he wanders alone in the London streets just as he does in the world. Unwittingly, however, he identifies with the universalizing metropolitan worldview, celebrating the efficiency of the modern facilities and the glory and humanity of his civilization which ironically helps to propel imperialist expansion. Peter refuses to assume the domestic roles of husband and father essential to the way of life he abhors, and yet his masculine desire is typically at work when fantasizing about the woman passing by in the public streets. Although the flaneur prides himself on his autonomy and nonconformity, he is in effect complicit with the values he repudiates. Significantly, Woolf’s depiction of the flaneur as an embodiment of the dominant middle-class male subjectivity highlights not only his elitism and egocentrism but also his existential crisis. It anticipates the contemporary critics’ view that although the flaneur represents the “traditional

¹² Parsons provides in her book a detailed account of the famous Baudelairean figure and its appropriation in the early-twentieth-century city writings by women; in her article “Walking, Women and Writing,” Bowlby gives a seminal reading of Woolf’s character Peter Walsh in light of his masculinist fantasy of the woman in the public streets.

prerogatives of the privileged urban spectator” (Walkowitz 16), his characteristic anxiety is symptomatic of the “attenuation” of that very “masculine power” (Wilson, “Invisible *Flâneur*” 109).

Without doubt the female characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* also engage in flânerie, but they represent new modes of subjectivity and spectatorship distinct from that of the flâneur. While satirizing the traditional figure of the flâneur, Woolf also presents in her work portrayals of the flâneuse, who makes her first appearances in the early twentieth century. Clarissa embodies a female flânerie that registers women’s incipient legitimate presence in the public spaces, significantly bereft of the flâneur’s sovereign gaze and his leisured and exploratory steps. Clarissa’s multiple domestic responsibilities as wife, mother, household mistress, and party hostess are part and parcel of the collective order symbolically punctuated by Big Ben. Yet the sheltered, elegant lifestyle of the upper-middle-class lady is sustained at the costs of her independence and expressions of sexuality. Like a good husband defined by his society, Richard Dalloway half coaxes and half forces her to retreat into a private spare room in the house during the day “because a doctor had ordered it once” (*M* 181) so that she may “sleep undisturbed” and have “[a]n hour’s complete rest after luncheon” (*M* 46). When the public activities in the streets are in full swing, the lady “[a]t midday . . . must disrobe” and lie down alone in the small room (*M* 45). The home is the only domain where Clarissa’s presence is truly legitimate. She is responsible for supervising the servants in the household; she fully discerns “the very moment, the very temper” of the house (*M* 56). If the sun is hot on the vigorous crowds in the streets on the June day, Clarissa’s house is by contrast “cool as a vault,” where she “felt like a nun who has left the world,” inescapably encircled by “the familiar veils” and “old devotions” that are “her life” (*M* 42).

It is therefore not insignificant that Woolf opens her portrayal of the hours in London with the scene of Clarissa’s walking in Bond Street, and the famous line “Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself” (*M* 3). In the early decades of the twentieth century, shopping has come to betoken for middle-class women the recently legitimized freedom of walking in the public spaces. However joyful and relaxed, though, Clarissa’s momentary participation in the liveliness of the streets serves a specific domestic purpose, namely, to buy flowers for her party. Having long passed the prime of life, she does not directly benefit from the historic change of women’s status in the way younger women do. Diffident and demure, Clarissa still incarnates the orthodox femininity of the earlier century. Walking and looking freely in the city streets, she has the “oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen;

unknown,” conscious of being some middle-aged woman living in Westminster, “being Mrs. Richard Dalloway” (*M* 4).

Nevertheless, the restrictive gender role does not hinder Clarissa from engaging in flanerie in a way notably different from Peter’s. Moving amidst the fleeting and lively city spectacles, she finds “all this,” all what she sees is “absolutely absorbing” (*M* 11). Her mode of perception does not replicate Peter’s as is based on an egocentric drive to know oneself and the others—“she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that” (*M* 11). For her insular domesticity and insufficient learning, Clarissa somehow senses that her involvement in the street life in the city brings about a dispersed sense of self, as it stretches infinitely beyond the normal bounds of her life and ultimately becomes a fluid and by no means self-aggrandizing empathy with the fascinating crowds and activities in the streets: “somehow in the streets of London, . . . she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there . . . part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself” (*M* 12).

Whereas Clarissa as a flaneuse epitomizes the epochal social and cultural shifts of the gender codes, her daughter Elizabeth’s walking in the city heralds the younger women’s independence unrestricted by normative femininity and their initial entry into the traditionally male-dominated public spheres. Representing the emerging future flaneuse, Elizabeth embarks unexpectedly on an adventure in the Strand, after having just left the “stuffy” stores where petticoats are bought and afternoon tea had with Miss Kilman (*M* 205). Though a young lady from Westminster, Elizabeth becomes “a pioneer, a stray, venturing, trusting” by walking in the streets of the Strand, all the while forgetting the scruples that her mother “would not like her to be wandering off alone like this” and “no Dalloways came down the Strand daily” (*M* 210, 208). The adventure in the hustle and bustle of the Strand kindles her desire to have a serious career. Inspired by the animated street scenes “so serious . . . so busy,” Elizabeth begins to have aspirations to “have a profession”: she imagines ambitiously she might “become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament, if she found it necessarily” (*M* 207). It is “all because of the Strand” that her wish to participate in the activities of the public world in the future should arise (*M* 207). To Elizabeth, the noisy, mobile crowds in the city are exhilarating and inspirational. She likes their “geniality, sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood” (*M* 209) and feels a sense of belonging when moving amidst the crowds.

Elizabeth's walking in the Strand obviously parodies the flaneur's, the observant gentleman "at home in the city" traversing the unknown territory as if on a heroic ride. Unlike the male counterpart, though, Elizabeth the future flaneuse hopes to become part of the city landscape rather than merely the observer of it. Also, she cannot help walking "shyly, like some one penetrating on tiptoe, exploring a strange house by night with a candle, on edge" (*M* 208). Tentative and timid, the emergent presence of the flaneuse, though desirable, does not yet suggest women's complete emancipation from the restriction of the old social mores. This is especially true when we consider that Elizabeth's nascent womanhood is customarily marked by her objectification by the masculine gaze: "Every man fell in love with her" (*M* 204), and "[p]eople were beginning to compare her to poplar trees, early dawn, hyacinths, fawns, running water, and garden lilies; and it made her life a burden to her" (*M* 205). Even so, Elizabeth is more fortunate than her mother, for she is entitled to participation in the public world and walking freely in the city streets without necessarily a specific purpose. She even feels somewhat indifferent to the attention she is beginning to receive, which simply makes her "really awfully bored" (*M* 205).

Just as the city used to signify mobility and progress in the rapidly changing times of industrialization and urbanization, the flaneur has been taken as a symbol of rebellion against middle-class conformity since the mid-nineteenth century. In contrast, the emergence of the flaneuse in the early twentieth century mainly indicates women's emancipation from the constraints of domesticity. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the figures of the flaneur and the flaneuse are respectively emblematic of the inherent conflicts and serious disruption of the established social order. Interestingly, however, it is the "Angel in the House" that serves as the primary focal point of the narrative and provides the momentum for its unfolding. Because of her obligation as the hostess, Clarissa throughout the day is making arrangements for the evening party and wishing all the invited guests would eventually show up.

The Hostess and the Party

The significant role the party hostess plays serves to occasion not just a regular dinner party, but an enacted space of community where the otherwise socially divided city-dwellers can converse and intermingle. As it momentarily materializes such a communal space, Clarissa's party also brings to the fore the correlation of domestic space with the everyday life in the city. As the common *end* of the city-walkers' disparate routes of flanerier, the party ritualizes a transgression

of the class and gender boundaries domestic space signifies, and thereby of social stratification. Ultimately, the domestic space in the novel signifies not so much the bourgeois feminine sphere of home as a utopian site of communality and hospitality. It recreates the meanings of the home by externalizing the privatized gender space so as to transform it into an un-delimited space of hospitality for all the ordinary walkers in the city. Although located within the sheltered domestic realm, the party turns out to epitomize a celebration of the autonomous and heterogeneous urban life.

Seen as the haven and fortress in the tumult of modern urban life, the middle-class home is predicated on the ordering of a woman's life; at the same time, it symbolizes class power and serves as the public-inflected locale for the evening parties of polite society. The domestic roles Clarissa acts out include mother, wife, mistress of the household, and party hostess. Peter's detestation of the middle-class values most often emerges in his repudiation of Clarissa's obligation and enjoyment in giving parties. The conflict between Clarissa and Peter since their youthful days constantly manifests itself in the divergent roles of the free-spirited flaneur and the glamorous, socially dutiful party hostess. Whenever he criticizes her for being snobbish and sentimental, Peter's unjust judgment makes Clarissa self-conscious. She thus believes: "[s]he owed him words: 'sentimental,' 'civilized'; they started up every day of her life as if he guarded her" (*M* 53-54). In the eyes of the self-proclaimed rebel against the mainstream culture, she "cared too much for rank and society and getting on in the world" (*M* 115). Seeing her as "the perfect hostess" in an unfavorable light, Peter dislikes Clarissa's "social instinct" of fostering the "network of visiting, leaving cards, being kind to people," "all that interminable traffic that women of her sort keep up" (*M* 93, 117). And he is hesitant throughout the day about whether he should go to Clarissa's party or not because of his own ambivalent feelings towards the society to which she seems to fully belong. To Peter, Clarissa's circle is all about class snobbery and hypocrisy, and he has for many years rejected it with his disloyal, indifferent wandering in the world.

However, beyond the flaneur's comprehension, Clarissa's party, the hostess's dinner party honored by the Prime Minister's presence, signifies more than the hegemonic power and culture ruling the city. Unlike Lady Bruton's lunch party, the party Clarissa hosts embraces the diversities and differences of the party guests, endeavoring to include the citizens saluting the motorcar in Bond Street and living the hours of Big Ben, as well as those sinking into the dark chasm under the glossy orderliness of the city. When walking in the street, Clarissa begins to muse on "life" after hearing the strokes of Big Ben: "she felt positive" that it "can't be dealt with" "by Acts of Parliament," "[f]or Heaven only knows why one loves it so" (*M* 5). The

life in London she loves is like “the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead” (*M* 5). The life in the city streets continuously carries on, just like the undirected flow of the city-walkers with blind looks to the panoptic order of the city. And it is Clarissa’s party that marks the culmination of this triumph of the animated city life, which the city-walkers’ meandering steps both testify and symbolize. With the presence of the party guests, the home becomes an *un*-domesticated space that reverses the subsuming masculinist civic order and celebrates the liveliness and heterogeneity of everyday city life.

The party thus does not so much endorse as subvert the official order ruling the city. Under the gaze of the shabbily dressed Ellie Henderson, the Prime Minister, the “symbol” of “English society” appears to be merely an “ordinary” “poor chap” one might see behind a counter buying biscuits (*M* 262, 261). And Sally Seton and Peter, whose long-time friendship used to be founded on their common rebelliousness against the British middle-classes, think the eminent Bradshaws who embody the morality of the hegemonic culture are simply “damnable humbugs” (*M* 294). It is significant that Clarissa’s party takes place only after darkness has submerged the city, after the city’s civilized spatializations yield to the slackening festiveness of the evening. It carries on in the hours unregulated by the unrelenting temporal order of Big Ben, when “the whole of London were embarking in little boats moored to the bank, tossing on the waters, as if the whole place were floating off in carnival” (*M* 249). Such are the moments eluding the official order of the city, as the home space in the evening ceases to be merely the locale for the upper-class party but rather becomes a communal space seeking to include every city-dweller. Momentarily stripped of denotations of class and gender power, the domestic space with the gathering of the party guests challenges the disciplining logic of the city and occasions unscripted modes of communication and interaction.

Clarissa’s party brings about a momentary intermingling of disparate groups of people and initiates flows of conversations allowing divergence and discordance of views. Contrary to the flaneur’s heroic, adventurous solitary travels, the hostess’s party suggests the “plain sailing” of a communal life (*M* 184). Whereas Peter’s journey has meant a solipsistic and often sexual quest for “love,” Clarissa hosts the party for the reason of “life,” presenting it as a “gift,” as simply “[a]n offering for the sake of offering” (*M* 184, 185). As it constantly shifts its focalization on the party guests present and imagined, Woolf’s narrative envisions an ideal community which includes both the insider and the outsider, the powerful and the marginalized, the living and the dead. The party’s kaleidoscopic juxtaposition of perceptions signals rupture of class and gender boundaries, and the middle-class home becomes

no longer a privatized domestic space but an unbounded social space embracing the pedestrian everyday life in the city. It anticipates what Henri Lefebvre calls “differential space,” or “a space that is *other*,” which counteracts abstract, totalizing spatializations by “accentuat[ing] differences” and making space “liable to be eroticized and restored to ambiguity, to the common birthplace of needs and desires” (52, 391). Symbolized by the living room’s intermittently blowing-out curtain “with its flight of birds of Paradise,” Clarissa’s party gestures toward an unbounded social space (*M* 258).¹³ With warmth and hospitality, the hostess anticipates and welcomes the differences of the city-dwellers and the incommensurability of their views. The upper-class dinner party is hence divested of its usual functions of taste display and exclusive socializing, and instead performs a utopian space-time of all-encompassing communality.

While it enacts a social space of heterogeneous differences, Clarissa’s party also contemplates death as the hidden center of this imagined Utopian community. Despite its glamour and festivity, the party is given as an endeavor to approach the other irrevocably subjugated by the order of “Proportion” Sir William Bradshaw as “the priest of science” worships (*M* 150, 142). As the covert climax of the party, the arrival of the news of Septimus’s death is precious for the hostess who gives the party as a loving offering of a gift. Feeling “very like him” (*M* 283), Clarissa ponders Septimus’s death: the dead now seems no longer the scapegoat of society, no longer the one unable to survive the “intolerable” life regulated by the homogeneous temporal order (*M* 281). She imagines that the young man has plunged into darkness “holding his treasure” (*M* 281). And this very gift of death somehow transforms into the gift of life Clarissa’s party seeks to offer. To the hostess who has determinedly chosen to embrace life, the death is a necessary “disgrace” and “punishment” (*M* 282). The social outcast’s death, his ultimate gesture of “defiance” and “attempt to communicate” (*M* 280), needs to be recognized by the hospitable hostess, who gives the party as an offering of a gift of life rather than death.

The recurrent Shakespearean refrain “Fear no more the heat o’ the sun” in the novel links the two moments of Clarissa’s contemplation of life and death. One occurs during her flanerie in the street, while the other upon hearing of Septimus’s suicide in the middle of her party. The efficient operation of the city hinges upon

¹³ I here employ the term “social space” in a sense looser than is defined by Henri Lefebvre. As he describes it, social space is characterized by “hypercomplexity,” which embraces “individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements, and flows and waves—some interpenetrating, others in conflict” (88).

the delimitation of the public spaces and the privatized space of home, and this spatial order suppresses the energy and vitality of everyday city life. Yet, just as the autonomous, multidirectional flow of the “pedestrian traffic” always implies a mockery of the conceptualized city, so the home may cease to betoken the hegemonic power and instead enacts a social space of spontaneity and differences. Woolf’s textual flanermeanders across the boundaries of the feminine private and the masculine public, disrupts the reified social order of the city, and reinscribes the home space as an extended and in-between space of understanding, transgression, and compassion. It casts a fearless defiant look on the blinding power of “the sun,” on the unseen figure in the motorcar.

Conclusion

As the hero of modernism, the flaneur has traditionally represented a complacent cosmopolitan worldview and an authoritative, egocentric subjectivity based in the metropolis. The perception, situations, or aesthetics of the flaneur have exemplified the “universalizing account” or the “international style” of modernism associated with cultural and artistic superiority (Huyssen 56; Bhabha, “Unpacking My Library” 208). The flaneur also epitomizes the romantic image of the wanderer in addition to civility of modern society, as that which encapsulates his unconformity is an anxious rejection of domestic life. The formation of civil society, as many critics have pointed out, necessarily involves an obscured and naturalized exclusion of women from the public world, while the gendered division of spheres is nonetheless central to the hegemonic culture of bourgeois social order.¹⁴ As Carole Pateman argues, “ascriptive domestic life” is structurally “forgotten” in the theorizations of political theory (4), as women relegated to the feminine private sphere are “part of civil society and yet . . . separated from the public world of the freedom and equality, rights, contract, interests and citizenship” (122). Premised on the denial of feminine domesticity, the traveling flaneur’s cosmopolitanism implies not only the elitism of metropolitan subjectivity, but also the occlusion of gender-based exclusion and prejudices. By appropriating the classic figure of the flaneur, Woolf’s representation of the metropolis undercuts the authority of traditional elite

¹⁴ According to Nancy Fraser, “the elaboration of a distinctive culture of civil society and of an associated public sphere was implicated in the process of bourgeois class formation,” and moreover, such “hegemonic” bourgeois culture of civil society entails “new gender norms enjoining feminine domesticity and a sharp separation of public and private spheres functioned as key signifiers of bourgeois difference from both higher and lower social strata” (60).

flanerrie and brings to the fore the presence of the flaneuse in the city and life in domestic space, and thereby challenges canonic modernism's complacent claim of universality.

As Marianne DeKoven has argued, *Mrs. Dalloway* is the clearest example of how Woolfian fiction presents "reinvention of feminine privacy" and reconfiguration of "feminine interiority" (238, 235). The novel highlights the homebound women's daily activities and routine responsibilities, and their exhilaration and ambition over the newly granted entry into the public spaces. It valorizes the domestic sphere and inscribes women's emerging presence in the public, and furthermore makes "this public . . . recontained and transformed as the private" (235). Ultimately, the novel offers an *exteriorized* domestic space, alternatively perceived with redrawn boundaries and reimagined constitution. Clarissa's party serves to transform the bourgeois domestic interior into a social space of communality and transgression for the ordinary city-dwellers. It satirizes the importance of the upper-class guests at the party, relativizes every presented perspective, and at the same time centralizes the absent presence of the social outcast. The party held at the angel's house is reminiscent of what Homi Bhabha terms "the community of the unhomey," as it reverses and intermixes the stratified social positions and subversively makes the one who is deprived, oppressed and silenced become the symbolic climax of the event ("The World and the Home" 453).¹⁵ While the supranational unlocatedness of the flaneur exemplifies the privileges and biases of elite metropolitan subjectivity, the envisioned communality of homelessness enacted within the feminine space of home signifies a compassionate universalism of provisional non-exclusionary inclusion. Woolf's modernism politicizes women's invisibility in the public spaces and celebrates the trivialized experience of domesticity, and it proposes the presence of the world right within the home, with extended and performative bounds.

¹⁵ In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha has argued that the structural "forgetting" of domestic life in Western civilization "creates an uncertainty at the heart of the generalizing subject of civil society, compromising the 'individual' that is the support for its universalist aspiration," and the significance of "making visible the forgetting of the 'unhomey' moment in civil society" lies in laying bare its "patriarchal, gendered" nature (10-11). The feminist contestation of this "'unhomey' moment" at the center of Western civil life also leads to "redrawing the domestic space as the space of the normalizing, pastoralizing, and individuating techniques of modern power and police: the personal-*is*-the political; the world-*in*-the home" (11).

Works Cited

- Abel, Elizabeth. "Narrative Structure(s) and Female Development: The Case of *Mrs. Dalloway*." *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*. Ed. Elizabeth Abel, et al. London: UP of London, 1983. 161-83.
- Baudelaire, Charles. "The Painter of Modern Life." *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*. Trans. and ed. P. E. Charvet. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972. 102-08.
- . *Paris Spleen*. Trans. and intro. Louise Varese. New York: New Directions, 1947.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. Trans. Harry Zohn. London: Verso, 1983.
- Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . "The World and the Home." *Dangerous Liaisons*. Ed. Anne McClintock, et al. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. 445-55.
- . "Unpacking My Library . . . Again." *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. Ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti. London: Routledge, 1996. 199-211.
- Bowlby, Rachel. *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola*. London: Methuen, 1985.
- . "Walking, Women and Writing." *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997. 191-219.
- Bradbury, Malcolm, and James McFarlane, eds. *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*. New York: Penguin, 1976.
- Brewster, Dorothy. *Virginia Woolf's London*. New York: New York UP, 1960.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. "The Flaneur, the Sandwichman, and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering." *New German Critique* 39 (Fall 1986): 99-140.
- Daiches, David. *Virginia Woolf*. New York: New Directions, 1963.
- De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984.
- DeKoven, Marianne. "The Community of Audience: Woolf's Drama of Public Woman." *Virginia Woolf and Communities*. Ed. Jeanette McVicker and Laura Davis. New York: Race UP, 1999. 234-51.
- DiBattista, Maria. "Joyce, Woolf and the Modern Mind." *Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays*. Ed. Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundry. London: Vision and Barnes & Nobel, 1983. 96-114.
- . "Virginia Woolf's Memento Mori." *Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*. Ed and intro. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1988. 37-68.

- Dick, Susan. "Notes and Appendices." *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1985. 293-346.
- Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst. "The *Flâneur* on and off the Streets of Paris." *The Flâneur*. Ed. Keith Tester. New York: Routledge, 1994. 22-42.
- Fleishman, Avrom. *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1975.
- Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80.
- Friedberg, Anne. "Les Flâneurs du Mal(1): Cinema and the Postmodern Condition." *PMLA* 106.3 (May 1991): 419-31.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998.
- Henke, Suzette A. "Virginia Woolf Reads James Joyce." *James Joyce: The Centennial symposium*. Ed. Morris Beja, et al. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1986. 39-42.
- Huysen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Post-modernism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986.
- Jenks, Chris. "Watching Your Step." *Visual Culture*. Ed. Chris Jenks. London: Routledge, 1994. 142-60.
- Kenner, Hugh. "The Making of the Modernist Canon." *Chicago Review* 34.2 (Spring 1984): 49-61.
- . *A Sinking Island: The Modern English Writers*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.
- Lewis, Wyndham. *Men without Art*. New York: Russell and Russell, 1934.
- Mazlish, Bruce. "The *Flâneur*: From Spectator to Representation." *The Flâneur*. Ed. Keith Tester. New York: Routledge, 1994. 43-60.
- Nava, Mica. "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City and the Department Store." *The Shopping Experience*. Ed. Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell. London: Sage, 1997. 56-91.
- Nord, Deborah. *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995.
- Parsons, Deborah. *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity*. London: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Pateman, Carole. *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989.

- Pollock, Griselda. *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Pumphrey, Martin. "The Flapper, the Housewife and the Making of Modernity." *Cultural Studies*. 1.2 (May 1987): 179-94.
- Reed, Christopher. "Introduction." *Not at Home: Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*. Ed. and intro. Christopher Reed. London: Thames and Hudson, 1996. 7-17.
- Shields, Rob. "Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin's Notes on *Flânerie*." *The Flâneur*. Ed. Keith Tester. New York: Routledge, 1994. 61-80.
- Simmel, Georg. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Culture Theory*. Ed. Neil Leach. London: Routledge, 1997. 65-79.
- Squier, Susan. *Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1985.
- Tester, Keith. "Introduction." *The Flâneur*. Ed. Keith Tester. London: Routledge, 1994. 1-21.
- Walkowitz, Judith. *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.
- . *The Politics of Modernism*. London: Verso, 1989.
- Wilson, Elizabeth. "The Invisible *Flâneur*." *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 90-110.
- . *The Sphinx in the City*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1992.
- Wolff, Janet. "The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity." *Theory, Culture and Society* 2.3 (1985): 37-46.
- Woolf, Leonard. *Downhill All the Way*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967.
- Woolf, Virginia. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Vol. III: 1919-1924*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. London: Hogarth, 1988.
- . *Mrs. Dalloway*. London: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1925.
- . *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1978.
- . "Street Haunting." *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1942. 20-36.
- . *A Writer's Diary*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1953.

About the Author

Ching-fang Tseng is Assistant Professor of English at National Taiwan Normal University, where she teaches courses in British literature and modernism. She received her Ph.D. degree in English from University of Wisconsin at Madison in 2003. Her dissertation, entitled *The Imperial Garden: Englishness and Domestic Space in Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing, and Tayeb Salih*, explores representations of Englishness in the texts of English and post-colonial writers and argues that the formation of the imperial national identity pivots upon the cultural constructs of gentility, gender, and race. Her current research interests include early twentieth-century modernist culture and literature, colonial/post-colonial studies, and gender studies.

[Received 5 September 2005; accepted 6 January 2006; revised 8 February 2006]