

Cities in Motion: Flanery and the Aesthetics of Metropolitan Flux

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Abstract

Protean and multiparadigmatic as they are, the flâneur(se), as a literary trope and hermeneutic construct is of viable structural and ontological expediency in probing the thematic of mobility in Charles Baudelaire' and Paul Auster's psychogeographical cityscapes. Entangled in the metropolitan aporetic world, with its surfeit of unanchored referents and abundance of urban ephemera, the mindless amblings of the flâneur in Charles Baudelaire's Paris and Paul Auster's New York modulate into phantasmagoric city rhetorics and performative spatial practices. Consigned to an unrelenting vacillation between flux and fixity, reality and fantasy, the centre and the interstices, the flâneur, this intriguing epicurean figure and avid connoisseur of the urban texturology, stands as a denizen of a limbo world, a dweller of a phantasmagoric, mercurial cityscape where mutability and mobility are the only constants. More than a mere pleasure seeking idler or an escapist artist abjectly yearning for a muse, the flâneur rises as an unlocatable "wandersmänner" and an insatiable practitioner of everyday life. It is through the flâneur's meanderings that inane urban ephemera assume an aesthetic value and static spaces veer into heterotopias, hyper real phenomena extending beyond the threshold of visibility.

Keywords: flâneur, cityscape, uncanny, objective correlative, cartographical allegories, flux, mobility.

Introduction

The aim of this critical endeavour is to bring to the fore the thematic and structural nexus between the flâneur's ghastly imaginings of the metropolis and anguished reconfiguration of the urban space on the one hand, and the aestheticization of loss and trauma, on the other hand. Engrossed in his mindless amblings and aimless solipsistic wanderings through New York's 'enigma-city', Paul Auster's amnesic flâneur grapples with a defunct, traumatized memory hopelessly striving to salvage his sense of selfhood and restore some rationality to his chaotic, nightmarish life. The adrift walking body of the flâneur in Paul Auster's book is axiomatic to gauge the thematic depth and the aesthetic sophistication of trauma as a leitmotif in the work in its entirety. At various narrative junctures in the book, Trauma, Amnesia, and Loss gradually and significantly accrue a protean aesthetic dimension and an intriguing hermeneutic potential as anguished mental visions veer into pathological and phantasmagoric projections onto the labyrinthine urban cityscape. In *The New York Trilogy*, Trauma is clad in a host of tantalizing, albeit uncanny, spatial metaphors, cartographical allegories, and urban constructs. In Auster's labyrinthine world, unconsumed desire, pervert passions, and hallucinatory visions are architecturally configured through the lifeless, macabre streets, the haunting/haunted rooms, and ghostly attics.

Unanchored and free floating as he is, Paul Auster's wanderer, transmutes the metropolitan cityscape into an "objective correlative" of distress, moral disintegration, and emotional hollowness, whereby Trauma is kaleidoscopically refracted through a welter of spatial allegories and discursive constructs.

In *Just Gaming*, the French postmodern theorist, Jean Francois Lyotard, defines classicism as "a situation in which an author can write while putting himself at the position of the reader, being able to substitute himself for his own reader, judge and sort out what he has accomplished from the point of view of the reader" (Lyotard, 1985, p. 9). Yet, this idea of the all-knowing writer, preaching wisdom has failed to hold in the highly chaotic, contingent and ambivalent modern and postmodern world. Skeptical, cynical and disenchanting as they are, modern and postmodern writers have attempted to sidestep these pitfalls by refraining from arrogating to themselves the right of placing their readers under their tutelage and foisting their values upon them as immutable absolutes.

In fact, the advent of modernity and postmodernity, with its attending relativistic and skeptical frames of references has cast a pall over these long-standing neoclassicist dicta ruling that linearity, clarity, unity and formal symmetry are the sole aesthetic yardsticks of a literary text.

At a further juncture of the article, Lyotard likens modernist experimentation to an act of "casting bottles to the sea", a trope that amply condenses unrelenting flux and uncurbed motion inherent to modern and postmodern literary cityscapes (Slade, 2007, p. 42). In fact, the modern and postmodern world has been customarily depicted as a floating one *par excellence*, where everything ebbs and flows, tantalizingly teasing readers out of anchored meanings and clear-cut answers. Thematically aligned to Lyotard's portrayal of modernism as a repository aporetic permutations and improvisatory freeplay miscellaneous objects is Foucault's reworking of spatiality as hospitable, and accommodating site of dis-location, dis-placement, "de-territorisation", to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's words. Yet, the theoretical lineage of this mobile thrust that has been woven into the fabrics of modern and postmodern cityscapes reaches back to the overarching and far-reaching spatial turn that whereby the space of emplacement has morphed into a space of dis-placement. Within the same vein, Foucault asserts that "starting with Galileo and the seventeenth century, extension was substituted for localization", making allowance for unrestrained mobility of perceptions, subjectivities, and identities" (Foucault, 1986, p. 23). Drawing upon Foucauldian heterotopology, spatiality is no longer a graspable, fixed anchored/anchoring chronotopic marker, it is rather a receptacle of uncharted vertiginous motion between disparate elements and polymorphous entities:

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our times, and our history occurs. The space that claws and gnaws at us, is also in itself, a heterogeneous place. Not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (Foucault, 1986, p. 3)

Yet, the stakes of conjoining modernism and postmodernism artistically and welding its attendant aesthetics into a shared frame of reference may be substantial. Some critics promulgate the idea that postmodernism is more hermeneutically rewarding as a literary form than the critically exhausted and aesthetically drained modernism. Indeed, modern and postmodern urban texts paint a nomadic world constantly on the move, where both the city flâneur and the text flâneur are thrust into an aporetically mutating whirl of significations that eludes any containment and fixation. In fact, with its relentless motion, the modern and postmodern cityscape transmute into a visual chimera, a limbo world whose denizens attest to a propensity for loosening all moorings with chronotopic or psychological anchoring points. Bring to the fore this dislocating motion inherent to modern and postmodern cities, Paul Virilio accounts for the ontological, thematic, and hermeneutic implications of the irruption of agents, and discourses of mobility into the human experience.

"From the esthetics of the appearance of a stable image present as an aspect of its static nature, to the esthetics of the disappearance of an unstable image ... we have witnessed a transmutation of representation" (Virilio, 1991, p. 25). A specimen of this paradigmatic shift in the construal and allocation of role to spatiality can be inferred from the systemic undermining of pictorial reificatory logics and taxonomic configuration of cityscapes in modern and postmodern urban narratives. In his seminal work entitled "Of Other Spaces," Foucault expounds the modernist and postmodernist proclivity towards the eschewal of fixity through the substitution of "space of emplacement" for "space of displacement" (Foucault, 1986, p. 2). Indeed, Tillyard's Elizabethan world picture with its divinely

ordained chain of beings and reified social ranks glaringly contrasts with the postmodern free play and incongruity whereby all demarcation lines are blurred and reifying logics are thwarted.

Within the metropolitan mesh, “the modern city is constantly fluctuating, constantly under negotiation, always decentralized and structured by alternating simulations” (Middelton and Woods, 2000, p. 227). Part and parcel of this relentless mobility that imbues modern and postmodern cityscapes is the curious and recurrent use of city walking as a thematic, aesthetic and structural paradigm. In the course of their city strolls, modern and postmodern city flâneurs seem prone to bring to the fore the intriguing non-representability of the urban world and the challenging indeterminacy, openness, and indecipherability of the modern text, world, and body.

Historically, the ontological, philosophical, and literary lineage of the city flâneurie as a literary archetypal motif reaches back to the 16th and 17th century. From that time onwards, city flâneurie, as a literary trope has been re-appropriated cross-generically through a welter of disparate tropes and aesthetics. Kaleidoscopic as it is, the city flâneur, as an aesthetic artifact and heuristic construct, has taken on a variety of forms: the romantic solipsistic solitary wanderer, the realistic pedestrian man and the dandical loungeur, or the dreamy, rebellious, invisible flâneuse. Yet, the modern and postmodern city flâneur tends to be inimical to containment, cynically goading the reader into taking part in a hide-and seek play of meaning.

The city flâneur in modern and postmodern texts seem to indulge pleasurably in a perpetual game of self-mirroring, whose sole rationale is that of continuous procrastination, where real and tangible bodies seem as slippery as refractions and shadowy projections. However, this ever-shifting world is perpetually harnessing an illicit aesthetic power, that of non-representability which can be hailed as a redemptive, energizing, and emancipating aesthetic potential.

In fact, non-representability in modern and postmodern urban world is no longer deemed as a state of intellectual nihilism, emotional hollowness and spiritual vacuity. Non-representability is championed as a sanctuary where human creativity and resourcefulness are lodged allowing human beings every latitude to ‘fashion’ themselves anew.

The Protean Nature of the Flâneur and the Genesis of Urban Phantasmagoria

The earliest accounts about city walking can be tracked down to Aristotle’s philosophical journeys into the city, where he would conduct discussions with his disciples while strolling along the alleyways of the Leceum of ancient Athens. Yet, it was the 19th century that inaugurated the era of city flâneurie and gave it prominence as a literary and scholastic subject. In its first dictionary entry, the term flâneur designates “a stroller or a loungeur who aimlessly whiles away the time”, an image that resonates with a myriad of 19th century urban texts. This emblematic figure pertaining to urban literature has elicited glaringly opposed literary and critical responses. Arts for art’s partisans deemed the flâneur as a bohemian artist, an acclaimed connoisseur of high brow culture whose refined taste would allow him to revel in the intriguing beauty of the city. Unencumbered by any sense of urgency, the pleasure-seeker city flâneur would stroll idly, hunting intellectual and visual material to ingratiate his artistic sensibility. Intoxicated as he/she are by the thrilling uncanniness of the metropolitan world, the flâneur is likened to a “kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness,” perpetually conjuring up a plethora of moving cityscapes (Benjamin, 1973, p. 328). In Paul Auster’s *City of Glass*, the city flâneur, assuming the role of a fictional detective, Mr Quinn finds in Mrs. Stillman’s incessant movements and frantic gesticulations an inspirational material for his much cherished red notebook. A more idyllic and romanticized image emanates from Baudelaire’s “The Painter of Modern Life”, where he paints the city flâneur as follows:

The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world - impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. (Baudelaire, 1964, p. 37)

Drawing on Baudelaire’s portrayal of the flâneur as a roving soul adrift in the crowd, wistfully longing for his muse, Benjamin Walter wrote a critical review entitled *Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in The Era of Capitalism*, where he re-appropriates the image of the dandical, indolent pleasure seeker to the new economic and social sensibilities of the capitalist society at that time.

Benjamin Walter conceives of Baudelaire's dreamy flâneur as out of joint with the profit-driven capitalist society at that time. In his *Arcades Project*, Benjamin Walter expounds the correlation between the architectural change that Paris underwent at the incipit of the 19th century and the rise of city flanery as an existential mode and literary theme. In fact, the 19th century was marked by the sprawling of arcades as architectural edifices, which brought to the fore those interior -exterior spaces devised for mercantile purposes.

Akin to these ambivalent spatial designs where the exterior intersects with interior, is the flâneur's indeterminate state, as he is both the introspective ponderous thinker and the detached, uninvolved observer. It is in these liminal spaces, the arcades that partake of interiority and exteriority alike, that the intellectual sensibilities of the flâneur are thought to thrive. Yet, at a further juncture of his work, Benjamin Walter paints the city flâneur as "a strolling commodity" whose existence was heavily predicated upon the social and economic realities of the urban world at that time. With the advent of the Arcades project and its attending reconfigured architectural edifices, the city flâneur turned into an obsolete figure and fell, overtime, into disuse because of the gradual disappearance of the commercial world and its exterior -interior architectural designs which he deemed germane to the flourishing of city flanery. Keeping up with Benjamin Walter's Marxist rationale, the advent of capitalism with its ruthless mercantile agenda heralded the demise of the city flâneur as a social and literary archetype, as he amply puts it in his *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, "if in the beginning, the street had become an interior for him, (the flâneur), now this interior turned into a street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of merchandise as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city" (Benjamin, 1983, p. 54). Keeping up with the same conceptual framework, the flâneur is viewed as a social aberration, an economic burden, utterly devoid of any intellectual or cultural import, a misfit utterly disempowered by the harshly mercantile urban life. Yet, the considerably contested nature of the city flâneur does not reside solely in the roles allotted to them within their urban enclave, but also in their puzzlingly ambivalent relationship with the crowds that float in their vicinity. However, artistically disparate, Charles Baudelaire and Charles Dickens concede that they cannot forego the importance of the crowd to buttress their self-awareness, individuality and autonomy.

In *Dombey and Son*, Dickens confesses, "I cannot express how much I want those streets, as if they supplied something to my brain which I cannot bear, when busy, to lose," a view that resonates with Baudelaire's assertion that "figures seem disposed to stagnate without crowds about them" (Walter, 1999, p. 426, 28). Hence both motion and flux become axiomatic to the flâneur's genesis of a sense of self assertion and autonomy. Yet, counter to Benjamin Walter's vindictive assertion that the flâneur is an outmoded figure; a relic from the past lost beyond restoration, the city walker has resurged in a host of modern and postmodern writings clad in various fictitious and meta-fictional garments. The modernist and postmodernist appropriation of the concept of the city flâneur is far from being a dull replication of the 19th century stock image of a romantic, solitary wanderer or that of a dandical pleasure seeker. In *City of Glass*, "a place of wordless things and thingless words" (Auster, p. 72). Paul Auster renders his flâneur through the image of a hallow husk, an empty shell devoid of any substantiating core nullifying him into a chimerical nonentity: "Auster was no more than a name to him, a husk without content. To be Auster meant being a man with no interior" (Auster, p. 61). Yet, the protean nature of the narrating/narrated persona posits itself as an artistic and aesthetic artifice opening up vistas of dialogic interactions with the text. Patently enough, Auster's baffling and baffled city walker aligns himself with James Joyce's Stephan Dedalus in both *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* painted as "wandering up and down day after day as if he sought something that eluded him" (Joyce, p.75). Engrossed in their mindless amblings, modern and postmodern city flâneurs assume the role of an optical viewfinder who filters, reframes and repositions the plethora of the urban props and artifice floating around them. From this standpoint, the urban text becomes liable to transcend its mere descriptiveness only to posit itself as a fertile site of scholarly interest and a parking lot of ever shifting triadic power negotiations between the flâneur, crowd, and urban space.

The Flâneur and the Pedagogics of Self-Empowerment in the Peripatetic World

The privileged position of the immaculate gazer, the well-versed mind reader, eloquent and versatile storyteller who reduces the uncontrollable flux of modern, hyper reality to manageable proportions and condenses the overwhelming multifariousness of the metropolis into an eligible "readerly" and "writerly" text, borrowing Roland Barthes's terms. The literally anchored image of the god-like observer, who, by virtue of his/her intellectual prowess, can resuscitate grace and heroism in the bustling and stultifying modern world, proves to be a reductionist, say anachronistic conception. In his monumental essay entitled *The Practice of Everyday Life*, the

French critic, Michel de Certeau undertakes the critical enterprise of dissolving this axiomatic conceptualization of the city as a coherently and cohesively narrated text, and of the flâneur as an articulate narrating mediator. In fact, modern and postmodern appropriation and re-contextualization of city flânerie as a literary archetypal motif has heralded the advent of a subversive aesthetic apparatus favoring “inauthenticity” over “authenticity” and ambivalence over lucidity and intelligibility. At this juncture, the question remains: By positing invisibility, abstraction and unintelligibility as an empowering aesthetic does the urban flâneur open the text as a hospitable, accommodating heterotopia or does he/she banish the reader from his/her perceptual scope? In fact, Paul Auster’s, James Joyce’s, Virginia Woolf’s protagonists seem to be enmeshed in a perpetual quest of authority and autonomy, constantly fluctuating between intimacy and aloofness, exposure and concealment, progress and regress. The psychological cityscapes that transpire from Joyce’s Dublin tend to be hybrid, dialogic say polyphonic in nature emerging as the outcome of this ongoing discursive intercourse between the various subjectivities at work in the text. So is Paul Auster’s text, a parking lot of intersubjective negotiations of power and whose stark rawness and uncanny spontaneity seem inimical to capture and representation. In the aforementioned texts, urban flânerie is posited as an aesthetic of resistance, that is a way of maintaining paradox and incongruity as creative and energizing power and as a means of walking the tightrope between non representativity as an autonomous aesthetic enterprise and non representativity as a self-annihilating signifying system. Part and Parcel of this inauthentic aesthetic enterprise is the concept of “omnitopia”, introduced by the German critic, Klaus R. Scherpe, in “Modern and Postmodern Transformations of the Metropolitan Narrative”. Omnitopia, which is a hybrid spatial category, partaking of “utopia”, which etymologically means “non place”, and “Heterotopia”, a concept elaborated by Michel Foucault to refer to “spaces that are simultaneously physical and mental” (Foucault, p. 3), stands as an ambivalent and slippery concept that may take part in foregrounding non-representability as an aesthetic matrix of power negotiation in the modern and postmodern urban text. Here, the narratorial subjectivity emanating from the texts at hand rises as an “omnitopia”, a limbo world, a liminal position partaking of both physicality and abstraction.

From the metropolitan hyper reality and out of its intriguing phantasmagoric cityscapes, is conjured a Kaleidoscopic figure, that of the flâneur with its multitudinous aesthetic refractions: At times, he/she stands as a “man/woman of the crowd”, who draws his/her *raison d’être* from his incognito position within the metropolitan hub. At other times, the flâneur/flâneuse harbors an illicit aversion to the crowd, projecting onto it his/her grotesque phantasms and smothered erotic yearnings, or he/she would stand an avid artist “botanizing on the asphalt” for materials to feed his/her covetous inspective I/eye (Benjamin, 1983, p. 46). In Paul Auster, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf’s cityscapes, and in the midst of its baffling “hyper realities” where fakery and authenticity become equally illusory, to borrow Baudrillard’s term, the flâneur/flâneuse emerges as the pinnacle of the aporetic cosmopolitan consciousness, positing himself/herself as an adamant practitioner of city walking, a self-conscious peripatetic figure vouched for improvisatory street meandering and perpetually vacillating between flux and fixity. Engrossed in their mindless amblings, Joyce’s Stephan Dedalus, Paul Auster’s private detective and Virginia Woolf’s Clarissa tend to be embroiled in a network of ever shifting power relations. At times, they would arrogate to themselves the privileged status of a centrifugal kaleidoscope, reciprocating a unidirectional, patronizing gaze, an omnipresent overseer to whose panoptican visual power all subjects are subdued. Yet, the flâneur, at some junctures, forfeits his/her panoramic perspective as he/she regresses into a centripetal urbanite figure, an objectified onlooker onto whom passers-by phantasms are projected.

At this point, the phantasmagoric urban panorama that transpires from Auster, Joyce and Woolf’s works glosses over a constantly fluctuating power relation where the flâneur as an object and the flâneur as a subject are intriguingly interchangeable. Upon a closer examination of the flâneur’s “walking rhetoric,” sauntering the hooks and the crooks of the metropolitan cityscapes becomes a constant act of deferral, whereby city walking can be deemed as an aesthetic of resistance, as a retaliatory tactic through which the free floating flâneurs’ bodies would relish in conquering the off zones of urban cityscapes, makes forays into the visually occluded parts of the city, and subdue the metropolis’ towering edifices and overarching buildings to their hegemonic, patronizing gaze (De Certeau, p. 156). Yet, the metropolitan spectatorship that can be gleaned from Victorian, modernist, and postmodernist literature underlies a proclivity to relegate female city walkers to the fringe of urban experience and eclipse their role as real connoisseurs of city life. For the most part, flânerie has been deemed as an exclusively uncontested male vocation, a psychological and physical disposition heavily predicated upon men’s sexual prowess.

From the incipit, early intimations of city walkers were patently anchored in an uncompromising patriarchal tradition, and enmeshed with sexist, masculine visions: “The only, the true sovereign of Paris, I will name for you, is the flâneur,” asserts Bazin in *L'Époque Sans Nom* (p. 122).

In fact, female city walkers were customarily excluded from the voyeuristic and fetishistic metropolitan space where women are held to be unable to fend for themselves and emerge unscathed from their unchaperoned urban experience. Women were conceived as lacking in physical prowess, unable to come to terms with urbanite peripatetic, and ward off male's will to conquer. In “The Flâneur, Sandwich man, and the Whore”, Buck-Morss inveighs against the systemic occlusion of female walkers from Victorian and modern cityscapes: “The flâneur was simply the name of man who loitered, but all women who loitered risked being seen as whores” (p. 102). Within a similar vein, Elizabeth Wilson brings to the fore the stakes that female city walkers may run when they venture to quit their conventional domestic enclave and contest masculine hegemony over the metropolitan space: “The prostitute was a ‘public woman’: The very presence of unattended, unowned women constituted a threat to male power and male frailty” (Buck-Morss, p. 105). From this vantage point, women's city sauntering become transgressive acts that may put male's dominion at jeopardy and hallow their predatory, erotic gaze. It is in the pursuit of “the erotics of knowledge,” to borrow Michel de Certeau's term, that female flaneuse wrench themselves free from their smothering domestic enclave (De Certeau, 1994, p. 92). Through their improvisatory walking trajectories, female flâneurs such as, Clarissa, in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, steps out of their conventional feminized domestic space. Questing self-assertion, female city walkers would adamantly eschew the tedious, uneventful life inside their cloistered domestic realm only to indulge in the tantalizingly throbbing metropolitan life, with its constant ebb and flow and highly precarious power balances and counterbalances. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa loosens the spatial moorings of her domestic realm and redraws the borderlines of her public and private sphere as she dallies with gender divides and spatial markers. The wandering female protagonist wriggles herself off the role of the malleable, static female character only to venture into the beguiling metropolitan space, a space of sexual exchanges, as Geiselda Pollock puts it in “Modernity, and the Spaces of Feminity” (p. 54).

In Virginia Woolf's book, Clarissa embraces flanery as a resistive strategy to undermine the deeply ingrained construal of women as malleable and complacent beings. Through her mindless amblings across London's streets and her unchaperoned strolls along the city's alleys, Clarissa seeks to unmake male's configuration of urban space by nullifying the obtrusive gender divide. In fact, within the masculine dominated space, the female body goes beyond mere instrumentality to veer into an expedient agency of resistance whereby the flaneuse, from her privileged centrifugal position, is well disposed to reciprocate male's objectifying gaze and contest their hegemony through venturing into those off limits, undomesticated zones of urbanity. Beside, gender tension another underlying pattern of power negotiation can be gleaned from the flâneur's visual and psychological maneuvering of spatiality and temporality. The sprawling of metropolitan spaces has made it incumbent upon the individual to ward off urban life's constant encroachment upon their much cherished privacy and spatial intimacy by enhancing the saliency of his/ her adrift body within the metropolitan cityscape. Undeniably, the metropolitan city, with its towering architectural edifices and overarching apparatuses bears testimony to the individual's success at conquering space, ravishing its tantalizing openness, and transmuting it into manageable proportions. Yet, those awe-inspiring towering edifices ominously harbor Frankensteinian hubris, a potential threat to reduce the individual into unlocatable, stray subjects perpetually entrapped within a vortex of “hyper real” sensory stimuli where authenticity and fakery, reality and simulacrum are mere refractions of a hectically mobile realm.

Conclusion

Postulating that the flâneur is a relic, a hedonistic wanderer from the past lost beyond recuperation, an anachronistic peripatetic figure consigned to the archived annals of history is highly debatable. Each age conjures up its own flâneurs, summons its passionate city connoisseurs, and each cityscape generates its proper spectatorship, structures of seeing, and power networks. However disparate those re-appropriated versions of city walkers may be, urban flâneurie remains a retaliatory tactic, a bulwark against the ruthless incursion of the metropolitan space into the individual's private sphere. The flâneur is no longer the same indolent, aimless, exotic, and picturesque city walker who seeks to reconfigure the urban space through his/her visual prowess.

'The Return of the Flâneur', to borrow Benjamin Walter's words, has brought along a newly devised set of urban aesthetics and spatial poetics, whereby a brand new city walker starts to haunt the metropolis' streets, cafés, theatres.

This newly emergent street wanderer is protean in nature, yet sharing some standardized peripatetic traits: We may encounter the flâneur as a roaming tourist in the Parisian Quartier Latin, or some remote, exotic Caribbean island, a curious visitor intent on unraveling the "enigma-city" of his/her surroundings, or even as a fervent militant parading through the metropolis 'street, transmuting its unrelenting motion into stasis as it is the case with the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Flânerie, however culturally and spatially disparate, remains a resistive bodily expression, a way of self-assertion within the towering urban space, a strategy to reaffirm mastery over metropolitan spatiality and its attending "psychogeography" through transmuting the metropolis into a mere projection of the flâneur's untempered narcissistic phantasms.

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