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10 / MISS FLUTTERBY

FLORINE STETTHEIMER'S
DISPASSIONATE FLÂNEUSE AND
SUBVERSIVE URBAN CONSUMER

Then back to New York
And skytowers had begun to grow
And front stoop houses started to go
And life became quite different
And it was as tho' someone had planted seeds
And people sprouted like common weeds
And seemed unaware of accepted things
And did all sorts of unheard of things
And out of it grew an amusing thing
Which I think is America having its fling
And what I should like is to paint this thing.

—Florine Stettheimer, "Then Back to New York"¹

In her poem "Then Back to New York," Florine Stettheimer conveys the ever-changing dynamics of Manhattan's urban development and the cultural shifts of the early twentieth century. Returning to New York after a long absence, the speaker witnesses scenes of the new as it overwrites the old: sky towers have replaced front-stoop houses; newcomers have diversified the

city's inhabitants and augmented its numbers to 5 million by 1920;² and the poem's formerly "unheard of things" such as flappers, jazz, and various consumer goods have conquered the propriety of "accepted things." Roaming the streets, the speaker's gaze is that of an artist-documentarian driven to paint this new city and record the vibrant life on its thoroughfares. "Then Back to New York" is a poetic exemplar of Stettheimer's innovative rendering of the aesthetically constructed city; she (en)genders a specifically feminized interaction with the street through women's urban walking, claiming flânerie for women through visual urban consumption, including sightseeing and shopping. Moreover, her modern urban literacy interweaves the mood and dynamism of New York City with her ironic perception as an artist.

Through the figure of the flâneuse, this essay explores the theme of street-walking in Stettheimer's paintings and poetry. After the artist returned to New York in 1915 (having spent sixteen years in Europe), she remained in the city until her death in 1944 and engaged with the evolving urban landscape, her work directly addressing women's participatory roles in public urban life. Stettheimer's art contemplates urban modernity, visuality, mobility, and consumption: themes that intimately represent women's experience in the city street. As we shall see, if the flâneur celebrates the autonomy of observing and documenting, Stettheimer's flâneuse asserts experiential subjectivity and turns the city into an aesthetic experiment. In doing so, the avant-garde poet and painter (en)genders a feminized city through the experience of the flâneuse, defying a long tradition in Western culture that has rendered urban street-walking a masculine enterprise.

From the Baudelairean streets of Paris, where the flâneur strolls aimlessly through the city, anonymously observing the crowds and activities,³ to Walter Benjamin's shopping arcades,

where the flâneur engages with modern commercial space, shop displays, and attractive commodities,⁴ *le flâneur* is indeed always a male. Sociologist Janet Wolff draws attention to the long bias in research on the city, noting that studies of urban literature and visual culture have ignored women's public presence and cultural engagement. As Wolff writes with deliberate provocation, "the central figure of the flâneur in the literature of modernity can only be male."⁵ Likewise, art historian Griselda Pollock argues that the female flâneur, the flâneuse, could hardly exist in public, as urban modernity withholds the city experience from women, and their access to the street is often restrained or denied.⁶ Admittedly, walking alone on modern streets was not a respectable activity for Western European women during the Victorian and even Edwardian eras.⁷ However, more recent feminist scholars such as Susan Buck-Morss, Anne Friedberg, and Elizabeth Wilson have advanced a revisionist account of women's experience in consuming urban space.⁸ For Buck-Morss, there are alternative, vicarious ways women roam the street and practise flânerie, such as reading fashion magazines and listening to the radio as a metaphorical way of wandering the city. Even more radically, arguing that "prostitution was indeed the female version of flânerie," Buck-Morss writes:

Yet sexual difference makes visible the privileged position of males within public space. I mean this: the flâneur was simply the name of a man who loitered; but all women who loitered risked being seen as whores, as the term "street-walker," or "tramp" applied to women makes clear... The politics of this close connection between the debasement of women sexually and their presence in public space, the fact that it functioned to deny women power, is clear, at least to us.⁹

Whereas Buck-Morss questions the inequalities of the positioning and accessibility afforded men and women in the public space, Wilson reminds us that such a debate is largely "unresolvable" since "the disagreements between feminists stem from divergent philosophical and/or political positions."¹⁰ It is certainly critical to recognize the limitations imposed on women wandering the urban street and asserting public identities, but to deny the material history of women's presence on the street and their participation in the tradition of city walking, as the scholarly literature dedicated to the flâneur has done, is theoretically and practically unproductive. Indeed, the examples of women writers and artists who embraced the streets for themselves and their subjects—such as Dada artist Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who performed herself on the streets of New York; Virginia Woolf, whose essay *Street Haunting* (1927) imagines strangers' lives from the perspective of city walking; and Florine Stettheimer, who painted the female walkers on the streets of New York—points to the need for a theorizing of modernist women's flânerie.¹¹

The mature work of Stettheimer is characterized by extravagant street scenes that stage the production and consumption of the urban spectacles that constitute the dispassionate tourist gaze in the modernist urban space. Sociologist John Urry explains that the tourist gaze is a constellation of expectations inherent in the perspective with which mass tourists view the places they visit, and in return those sites are converted to cultural commodities for material and visual consumption. He explains: "The [tourist] gaze therefore presupposes a system of social activities and signs which located the particular tourist practices, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics, but through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practices, particularly those based within the home and paid work."¹² In

Stettheimer's creative works, viewers are invited to behold the urban spectacles, such as nighttime entertainment and extravagant street weddings, that incorporate everyday urban elements and produce a new visual feast. As a painter and poet focused on the thematic of street-walking, Stettheimer intentionally constructs the signs that govern what Urry calls the tourist gaze: assembling her paintings and poems with diverse urban elements like billboards and building signs to compose a vibrant image of the city for visual consumption.

In scholarly literature, Stettheimer is viewed as an icon of domestic and decorative art as she hosted exclusive soirées at her uptown homes.¹³ Yet, as I argue, she develops a keen eye for the street crowd, constructing urban spectacles through her written and painted work. Her art is focused on street scenes that celebrate the cultural and spatial practice of *flânerie* to both encourage and parody distinctive forms of urban consumption and street-walking. Most generally, the examination of Stettheimer's creative works helps diversify the discussion about the *flâneuse*, moving beyond the tired and futile debate of whether or not the *flâneuse* exists. More specifically, this study explores Stettheimer's cognizance of the power of the female urban walker in reconfiguring marginalized women's role in the modernist city, enabling the reconstruction and reimagination of urban subjectivity.

STETTMEIER'S FLÂNEUSE AND URBAN MOBILITY

Walter Benjamin interprets the *flâneur* as an urban historian for whom the non-linear fragments and debris constellate the image of the city. In his unfinished and posthumously published study *The Arcades Project* (2002), Benjamin reminds us that "the anamnestic intoxication in which the *flâneur* goes about the city not only feeds on the sensory data taking shape before his eyes but often possesses itself of abstract knowl-

edge—indeed, of dead facts—as something experienced and lived through."¹⁴ Tourist and leisure environments encourage the practice of *flânerie* through observation and documentation of the street. Stettheimer's paintings present visually appealing streets laden with a myriad of consumerist elements. Indeed, the experience of these consumerist signs is mobilized through the act of looking, as the artist animates her work with a mobile gaze that invites the viewer to become a *flâneuse*.

Consider, for example, Stettheimer's 1921 oil painting *Spring Sale at Bendel's* (see figure 1.1), which transports viewers to New York's most upscale fashion house on Fifth Avenue, Henri Bendel,¹⁵ the first American retailer to sell Coco Chanel and other European designs in the early twentieth century, and where Andy Warhol was an in-house illustrator during the 1960s.¹⁶ As a quasi-public space, the store serves as a safe and protected site for women to meander and shop. In this painting, all shoppers are women, dressed in high-fashion garments, displaying their bodies in front of mirrors, and, more hilariously, fighting over discounted merchandise. Stettheimer subverts the social stereotype of women as irrational customers and reveals shopping to be a carnival, with crowds of women engaged with colourful fabric and with each other; standing at close proximity, many of them look as if they might be dancing. Stettheimer's *flâneuse* evokes urban sociologist Rob Shields's description of shopping mall visitors when he writes: "Their wandering footsteps, the modes of their crowd practice constitute that certain urban ambience: a continuous reassertion of the rights and freedoms of the marketplace, the *communitas* of the carnival."¹⁷ *Spring Sale at Bendel's* draws attention to women's moving legs, as the women are seen striding, stepping, hopping, stretching, and bounding; even the legs of women sitting down and lounging are dramatically angled and in movement. Mimicking the shoppers, the

viewer's gaze also meanders from group to group, and the painting itself invites the viewer's strolling observation that propels the mobilized gaze through these shoppers. Of course, carnival itself conveys a temporary freedom for the flâneuse since she does not have the same freedom to stroll the streets as her male counterpart, as we shall see below in the *Cathedrals* paintings.

In *Spring Sale at Bendel's*, with its many loosely assembled groups, Stettheimer does not configure the shopper-flâneuse as a passive subject in the capitalist consumption of urban spectacles. Unlike Benjamin's flâneur, who is often window-shopping through commercial areas to fulfill his desire of visual consumption, Stettheimer's flâneuse is a shopper moving freely through the department store and consumes not only the visual elements of the commercial space but also the material commodities—in this case, the colourful fabric. By doing so, Stettheimer exploits the possibilities of the urban space for her own purposes of cultural documentation and social critique. In the process, she contradicts and transforms the learned discourses on urban space, as her creative works unapologetically reclaim women's presence in the public sphere and their roles in generating the urban spectacles through the tourist's gaze. In her poem "Miss Butterfly," the narrator says,

My name does me belie
I shall change it to Flutterby
For I love the air
And to flutter
And I do not care
For butter¹⁸

The poet's use of the word "flutter" is particularly poignant as a concrete illustration of hovering by flapping the wings

quickly and lightly. Miss Flutterby is Stettheimer's emblem of the flâneuse who flutters about the street, conveying agitation and vibration, aimlessness and gentleness.

Stettheimer's poems display the primary traits of flânerie: an attachment to the city as well as the detachment from the ordinary social world. Stettheimer's dispassionate flâneuse is not a sensualist who is unable to resist temptations. Her New York poems reverberate with the same quick vibrations as her street paintings; they create multiple modes of sightseeing through cultural tourism, and an engagement with the city, specifically the lifestyle of its people, their art, architecture, and ways of being. Among Stettheimer's multiple poems titled "New York," one of them reads,

At last grown young
with noise
and color
and light
and jazz
dance marathons and poultry shows
soulsavings and rodeos
gabfeasts and beauty contests
sky towers and bridal bowers
speakeasy bars and motor cars
columnists and movie stars¹⁹

Here, the city is presented as a collage of consumable parts, from the visual feast of sky towers and sport shows, to the cultural appreciation of music and dance, to material consumption of goods in "speakeasy bars and motor cars." The city is perceived as a gestalt, an organized entity that is seen and consumed as more than the sum of its fragmented elements. The speaker lists

various new and exciting elements of the city, leaving the reader (or the visitor) to choose the most alluring attraction or to consume them all. The speaker's gaze upon the city is thus dispassionate. In a companion poem, "Which—," the speaker is similarly impartial, revealing a vast array of sights, sounds, and modes of engagement that the city has to offer. The poem reads:

Which—
 How can I choose
 So many
 So much
 New York's make up
 Sky towers
 May parties
 Summer Beaches
 Beauty contests
 Broadway's lights
 Movie Cathedrals
 Dance Marathons
 And Rodeos
 Shriners Parades
 Soul Savers
 And Horse Shows²⁰

As the opening line "Which—" suggests, there are many things to see and consume in the public space, and the city offers the freedom of choice and sometimes even a surplus of choice. Which, indeed? The speaker is an ambassador of the city, endorsing the plethora of leisure and entertainment sites tourists can enjoy. Bombarded by limitless options, a long catalogue of pleasures and distractions, the speaker's orientation signifies the aimlessness and capriciousness of city life. New

architectural transformation affords new experience of urban streets; new cultural experience and activities provide new choices of lifestyle; and new urban residents develop new modes of negotiating these landscapes. With its choices and freedom, the modern city is a sequence of images, real or imaginary.

These two poems construct the image of the city as the space for seekers of experience and pleasures. The poems perform an invitation for the reader to experience the modern city at the street level by participating in sky-tower living and May parties. The speaker of both poems is like a kind of collector, amassing the city's signs, reminding us of Urry's insistence that "the [tourist] gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs."²¹ Even Stettmeier's paratactic style, dispensing of all conjunctions, relishes the additive, compressed experience. Diverse occurrences come rushing toward the reader all at once, without a hierarchy for processing what is essential or unessential. The structure of the poems mimics the rhythm and sensory experience of roaming in the city—from one place to another in rapid succession—and thereby the walker becomes the tourist seeking pleasures on the street as New York is just "so many" and "so much." Within these delights, the flâneuse encounters "Broadway's lights / Movie Cathedrals," which would become a focal point for Stettmeier from the late 1920s on.

STETTMEIER'S CATHEDRALS OF CONSUMERISM

In 1929, as America entered the Great Depression and citizens escaped into the world of movies, sports, and entertainment, Stettmeier painted *The Cathedrals of Broadway* (figure 10.1), an elaborate and monumental oil painting that turns the metropolis into a theatrical stage, an explosive neon-bright world of theatre and entertainment. Compositionally much like her New York poems, the work exhibits a parataxis of vignettes



10.1 Florine Stettheimer, *The Cathedrals of Broadway*. 1929, oil on canvas, 152.7 × 127.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ettie Stettheimer, 1953 (53.24.3). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

that usher the viewer (literally, with a uniformed usher pointing the way) past the ticket booth to purchase entry into this magical world of escapism. In the lower left corner, Stettheimer herself arrives on the scene with her sister Stella and brother Walter. As well-to-do patrons in fashionable clothing, they are enthralled by the riveting spectacle in front of them. The Amer-

ican flags flying high above the glamour of the city testify to the fact that America's economic despair does not penetrate this glittering world of make-believe. The word "SILENCE" spelled out in the immediate foreground carries a double meaning: it connotes both the command to be quiet and to listen to the show that unfolds with the emergence of the new sound films,²² but also, more satirically, the temporary hushing of unemployment, inflation, and inequity in America. Under a tall golden arch, New York mayor James Walker makes a cameo on a billboard, holding a baseball that might double as a Big Apple (the nickname for New York City, popularized by sports journalist and editor John J. Fitz Gerald in the 1920s). During his tenure as mayor (1926–32), Walker was known for his flamboyant personality as well as his many extramarital affairs and municipal corruptions, which were often headlined in the gossip columns and scandal pages of newspapers; he was also a frequent patron of Broadway theatre and the upper-scale speakeasy bars. However, the salient photographic realism aesthetic of Walker's portrait ironically reminds the viewer of his controversial public persona represented on newspapers.

Not only does this painting exemplify Stettheimer's artistic engagement with Broadway's new entertainment popular culture and urban politics, but she named this work *The Cathedrals of Broadway*, invoking a metaphor of modern consumerism as religion, in which, as media scholar John Fiske writes, "commodities become the icons of worship and rituals of exchanging money for goods become a secular equivalent of holy communion."²³ Indeed, within a decade, Stettheimer created three more paintings depicting New York's highly commercialized street scenes and urban spectacles, whereby Fifth Avenue, Wall Street, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art create an interconnected series with a focus on the collection of sights. While they appear to represent

a range of disparate elements, the selected images are linked, displaying, as Urry says about urban cultural tourism, “a coherent relationship between the built environment and the presumed atmosphere or character of the place being developed for the tourist gaze.”²⁴ This is not to say that Stettheimer simply replicates a tourist gaze; rather, she subversively plays with it in each painting and implants a critical tension through irony and wit. A savvy consumer, Stettheimer gazes upon urban spectacles and remains comfortably distant from them to enable critical observation, just as she typically inserts herself in the corner of her paintings and avoids locating herself as the centrality of the gaze.

Indeed, in her 1931 *The Cathedrals of Fifth Avenue* (figure 10.2), she turns her gaze to New York’s high-fashion district, observing the carnival of shoppers and visitors amidst a street-wedding scene replete with flower girls and photographer. The crowded composition visually performs the paratactic cataloguing of her earlier poems, illuminating her integrative aesthetics: there are shops galore with TIFFANY’S jewellery store spelled out in variegated jewels; ALTMAN’S department store shaped from stylish furniture with an aesthetic of monogrammed linens; and upscale fine-dining restaurant Maillard’s displayed on a delicate glass plate. In the foreground, her usual space of subversive self-staging, Stettheimer elegantly disembarks a Rolls-Royce accompanied by her two fashionable sisters. The large stylized initials FS of her signature on the car’s front visually doubles as a dollar sign (\$). The Stettheimer logo also uses the same graphic technique of partially overlapping letters as found in the Rolls-Royce logo. The irony here points back to Stettheimer herself: her initials ostentatiously demonstrate her wealth and economic advantage. Her choice of the Rolls-Royce, a commodity icon of European luxury, plays with the stereotype of the rich American pervasive among Europeans in the early



10.2 Florine Stettheimer, *The Cathedrals of Fifth Avenue*, 1931, oil on canvas, 152.4 × 127 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ettie Stettheimer, 1953 (53.24.4). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

twentieth century. By doing so, she appropriates commercial signs and status symbols to channel her American identity by openly admitting her socio-economic class. From the visible American flags to her self-representation in the paintings, Stettheimer depicts the public crowd as a convivial gathering for American-style pageantry and celebrations.



10.3 Florine Stettheimer, *The Cathedrals of Wall Street*, 1939, oil on canvas, 152.4 × 127 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

These points are further amplified in her 1939 *The Cathedrals of Wall Street* (figure 10.3). In this painting, Stettheimer brings a critical tension to the major financial district: on one hand, she suggests the close relationship between politics and business by pairing Franklin D. Roosevelt with financiers such as Bernard Baruch, John D. Rockefeller, and J. P. Morgan (on the facade of the New York Stock Exchange building); on the

other hand, the charitable organization of the Salvation Army appears in the painting to demonstrate Stettheimer's concern with the underbelly of economic and political power, as well as modern consumer culture. Once again, Stettheimer includes female subjects including herself in the public space—on the lower right corner, she holds a bouquet of colourful flowers with a ribbon reading, "TO GEORGE WASHINGTON FROM FLORINE." Stettheimer was inspired by American independence and adored George Washington as her hero.²⁵ The year 1939, when this painting was created, marked the 150th anniversary of Washington's presidency; that same year, Washington's presidential inauguration at Federal Hall in New York City was celebrated with a three-cent postage stamp. This timely engagement with political and cultural events not only shows that the flâneuse's mobility in the public sphere enables active citizen participation, but also demonstrates her proud nationalist identity as an American.

Through the repetitive self-representation in this series, we can see Stettheimer as not simply a figure focused on domesticity and interiority, but also as a paragon of women occupying public space under the flâneur's guise. Indeed, she seems to insist on the power of being, in the words of Charles Baudelaire, "at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world."²⁶ Such is precisely the condition of the flâneuse in Stettheimer's New York City. She is an avid observer of urban life through the gilded streets and theatrical aesthetics of the new city, amidst the visual spectacles of the commodities and cultural activities newly available for mass consumption. By doing so, Stettheimer's paintings not only suggest the possibility of the participatory role of women in public life, but also reclaims women's rights in seeking pleasurable experiences in urban space through the mobilized tourist gaze.



10.4 Florine Stettheimer, *The Cathedrals of Art*, 1942, oil on canvas, 153 × 127.6 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ettie Stettheimer, 1953 (53.24.1). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

These motifs culminate in the final *Cathedral* painting, *The Cathedrals of Art* (figure 10.4), which she began in 1942 and continued working on until her death in 1944. As the title suggests, this work has a particularly personal resonance for Stettheimer, who was then contemplating her legacy as an artist. Here, a central red carpeted grand staircase leads up the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with the Museum of Modern Art to the upper

left and the Whitney Museum of American Art to the upper right. Stettheimer herself appears in the right foreground, underneath an open-air gilded canopy of white lace (recalling the design of her bedroom), holding a bouquet of flowers. Stettheimer inserts her friends from her artistic circle and assigns the figures their associated roles. Art critic Henry McBride is positioned on Stettheimer's immediate right, holding the signs GO and STOP—signalling his cultural authority in deciding whose art would be appreciated through his critical eyes and whose art is permitted to enter the museum collections. Well-dressed stage designer Robert Locher stands at the lower left corner; a ribbon surrounds him, with an inscription reading "COMPERE."²⁷ Stettheimer places him in the front of the painting, where he acts as the host of the event (literally a *compère*). In this, she hails Locher for his applied and decorative arts, since she herself was also keen on decorative and performing arts.

Art museum administrator Juliana Force, then the director of the relatively new and still peripheral Whitney Museum, is positioned at the upper right corner.²⁸ Force was the first female director of major art museums in New York. Stettheimer locates her alone in the distant background and separates her from the crowd, signalling both Force's profession as an art institution administrator to oversee the grand event and the palpable scarcity of women's representation and participatory roles in the mainstream art industry. The other two male directors, Francis Henry Taylor (director of the Met) and Alfred H. Barr Jr. (director of MoMA), are portrayed in relaxed and domestic poses: Taylor holds a child's hand, leading toward the museum's Old World art collection (signalled by an Egyptian sculpture and a Frans Hals portrait), and Barr languidly reclines on a modern chaise longue designed by French-Swiss architect and designer Le Corbusier. Stettheimer inscribes her own initials right next

to Picasso's name above Picasso's paintings in the upper left corner, suggesting the gendered dichotomy of modern art and artmaking in the mainstream art industry. Aligning herself with Picasso, Stettheimer underscores how significantly female artists lack both public recognition and representation in the collections of major art institutions in New York City. While the parallel, then, explicitly draws attention to the gendered contrast, it is also worth noting that this series of *Cathedral* paintings is displayed in the Met today, and the painter's work is also finally being recognized (after long being neglected) and reinserted into the canon of modernist art.

As in the other *Cathedral* paintings, Stettheimer presents a kaleidoscopic assemblage of the urban public space and propels the viewer to become the spectator, gazing upon the phantasmagorias of streets, art, events, and cultural institutions. Her visual and textual representations contribute to the production of modernist urban spectacles and subjects as well as the consumption of urban space through the tourist gaze. These paintings demonstrate Stettheimer's skilful arrangement of space and her dexterity with creating signs and documenting symbols, intentionally making each street a site for the urban walker's immersive articulation of a spatial rhetoric through engagement with modern consumer culture. The *Cathedral* paintings reconfigure the sites of urban activities and events, such as weddings, nightlife, entertainment, and shopping, and comically coalesce them into one exaggerated carnivalesque public crowd. The tone is playfully subversive.

In her *Cathedral* series, Stettheimer paints vivid images of "America having its fling," as the speaker says in her earlier poem. The aesthetics of the streets in this series resonate with Benjamin's arcade architecture, where "both sides of these passageways, which are lighted from above, are lined with the most elegant

shops, so that such an arcade is a city, even a world, in miniature."²⁹ In turn, this arcade-like architecture, where the flâneuse moves freely, maximizes the potential for cultural and visual consumption. In these paintings, Stettheimer uses soft and playful shapes and lines, characterizing the streets and crowds as welcoming and inclusive spaces and dynamic communities. There are no sharp angles or harsh geometric lines. The streets are depicted as pristine, ornate spaces that are not only visually pleasing but are also opposed to the reality of modern industrial cities, especially New York City, as chaotic and polluted dystopias during the modernist era. The colour palettes are warm and bright, and the figures are willowy and gentle—the aggressive facial expression or cold emotions typically associated with modern urbanites are absent. As exemplified in her *Cathedral* series, Stettheimer's urban scene possesses a quality and provision of an American modernist city, where the metropolitan life is embedded in modern consumer culture and urban dwellers mingle in active street life and also join in active citizenship.

CONCLUSION

Directing its lens on the street scenes in Stettheimer's paintings and poetry, this essay has argued for a shift in our approach to Florine Stettheimer's work, which has long fixated on the domestic and yet must also be examined through the multimodality of public engagement with city life. Art historian Cécile Whiting argues that Stettheimer's street paintings have some aesthetic resonance with her paintings about interior space or ornamental portraits, noting her iconic overtly feminine and domestic style. While it is true that Stettheimer appropriates the public crowd and consumerism-saturated streets, transforming them into a familiar community by inserting her family and friends in her paintings, Stettheimer's public

sphere is more than the extension of her domestic space. She consciously curates the street scenes that construct the viewers' practice of looking in the form of urban consumption. Indeed, Stettheimer's public space is more than a collection of sensory data derived from the modern city. Her sensory stimulation creates a mobilized tourist gaze, yielding an aesthetically constructed space, the glamorous fantasia of the city in which new experience is celebrated and new memories are created through a multimodal aesthetic.

In taking a critical gendered perspective on urban walking, I have argued that throughout Stettheimer's creative works, the city becomes a tactically crucial geographical arena in which individual subjectivity is forced to both react upon and resist the hegemonic discourse of the public sphere. These considerations lead to a conceptualization of modern urbanism as catalysts of a creative disruption of the consumerist space at multiple aesthetic scales. For Stettheimer, the dispassionate gaze, an engagement with urban public life through safe tourist space, enables women's mobility in the city. Moreover, the example of Stettheimer's work shows that the current critical discussion about the flâneuse must transcend the question of whether the flâneuse exists as a literary or historical figure; it must instead accommodate the dynamic and diversified feminine relationship to urban walking. With her own distinctive avant-garde spirit, Stettheimer created art from subaltern positions and forms of aesthetic subjectivity that draw on multimodal experiences to project the possibilities of aesthetics of resistance in the modernist city. Unlike her modernist avant-garde contemporaries, especially the New York Dada artist Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who generated a radical walking to confront the masculinist cityscape with her self-fashioned queer performance, Stettheimer deployed a more conceptual,

but no less sensual, way of aesthetically reconstructing the city to both recreate and challenge the public sphere as a tourist space for women to creatively shape the street and the city.

In the end, Stettheimer's poems and paintings yield an important reconsideration of female cultural exploration and experimentation, requiring a shift away from the scholarly focus on the interior and the domestic and towards her dynamic engagement with the cultural, spatial, and visual consumption of the city. In doing so, her work also challenges the status quo of women's presence and participation in the public spaces under modern urbanism. Stettheimer's flâneuse contemplates the city from a safe and comfortable distance, a distance that encourages her to participate in public cultural life and modern urban consumption—as a hovering Miss Flutterby—poised gracefully to take it all in without ever being swallowed by the city.

- 9 Stephen Muecke, "Journey Through the World(s)," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 12 July 2016; accessed online 20 January 2019, lareviewofbooks.org/article/journey-through-the-worlds/.
- 10 Muecke, "n.p."
- 11 Florine Stettheimer, "Oh Horrors," *Crystal Flowers*, 93.
- 12 Stephen Brown and Georgiana Uhlyarik, *Florine Stettheimer: Painting Poetry*, 23.
- 13 Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*, 1901, Secession Building, Vienna, Austria. See Peter Vergo, "Gustav Klimt's Beethoven Frieze," *Burlington Magazine* 115, no. 839 (1973): 109–13.
- 14 Gustave Moreau, *Orphée [Orpheus]*, 1865, oil on wood, 155 × 99.5 cm, RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski.
- 15 Florine Stettheimer, "Paris—Living in the Latin Quarter," *Crystal Flowers*, 129.
- 16 Florine Stettheimer, *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts, or, The Revellers of the 4 Arts Ball*, in *Crystal Flowers*, 135–39.
- 17 Stettheimer, *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, 137.
- 18 Stettheimer, *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, 137.
- 19 Florine Stettheimer, *Orpheus/Nijinsky*, costume design for *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, c. 1912, gouache and pencil on paper, 38.4 × 23.3 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Several maquettes are reproduced in the exhibition catalogue by Stephen Brown and Georgiana Uhlyarik, ed., *Florine Stettheimer: Painting Poetry*, 26.
- 20 Florine Stettheimer, *Blue Male Figure*, maquette for costume design for *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, c. 1912. Modelling putty and pigmented, shellac-based paint on wire armature with fabric, beads, and wood, height 26.7 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Reproduced in Brown and Uhlyarik, *Florine Stettheimer*, 27.
- 21 Florine Stettheimer, costume design for Adolph Bolm as Mars in *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, c. 1912, gouache and pencil on paper, 38.4 × 23.2 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Reproduced in Brown and Uhlyarik, *Florine Stettheimer*, 81.
- 22 Stettheimer, *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, 139.
- 23 Stettheimer, *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, 138.
- 24 Stettheimer, *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, 138.
- 25 Florine Stettheimer, *Euridice and Her Snake, Two Tango Dancers, and Saint Francis*, costume designs for *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, c. 1912, gouache, watercolour, metallic paint, and pencil on paper, 23.2 × 38.4 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 26 Florine Stettheimer, *Faun*, maquette for *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, c. 1912, modelling putty and pigmented, shellac-based paint on wire armature with brass sheet, 30.5 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York; reproduced in Brown and Uhlyarik, *Florine Stettheimer*, 87. See also the brief reference to the faun in the libretto; Stettheimer, *Orphée of the Quat-z-arts*, 137.
- 27 Florine Stettheimer, *Self-Portrait with Palette (Painter and Faun)*, c. 1915, oil on canvas, 152.4 × 182.6 cm, Art Properties, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University in the City of New York, gift of the Estate of Ettie Stettheimer, 1967.
- 28 Florine Stettheimer, *Sunday Afternoon in the Country* (1917), oil on canvas, 128 × 92.5 cm (unframed), Cleveland Museum of Art.
- 29 The names are all identified in a 1946 press clipping from *Harper's Bazaar*, October 1946, Florine Stettheimer Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York. The clipping is reproduced in Brown and Uhlyarik, *Florine Stettheimer*, 104.
- 30 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). Said sees such expressions of Orientalism as subtle forms of racism.
- 31 Bloemink, *Life and Art*, 103.
- 32 For more on this reading, see Bloemink, *Life and Art*, 104–05.
- 33 My translation; the original reads: "pour instruments de musique précis (piano mécanique, orgues mécaniques, ou autres instruments nouveaux pour lesquels l'intermédiaire virtuose est supprimé)." Marcel Duchamp, *Duchamp Du Signe: Ecrits*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (Paris: Flammarion, 1976), 53. See also Sophie Stévanec, "Les opérations musicales mentales de Duchamp. De la 'musique en creux,'" *Images Re-vues* 7 (2009), journals.openedition.org/imagesrevues/375.
- 34 For more on this topic, see Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound. Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993).
- 35 Carl Van Vechten, in *The Reviewer*, February 1922, quoted in Henry McBride, 53.
- 36 Alfred Appel quoted in David Chinitz, review of *Jazz Modernism: From Ellington and Armstrong to Matisse and Joyce* by Alfred Appel (New York: Knopf, 2002), *Common Knowledge* 11, no. 3 (Fall 2005), 500.
- 37 Florine Stettheimer, "Asbury Park," *Crystal Flowers*, 85.
- 38 Gammel and Zelazo, "Wrapped in Cellophane," 19.
- 39 Stettheimer, "Oh Horrors," *Crystal Flowers*, 93–94.
- 40 See Matthew Guerrieri's book on the topic: *The First Four Notes: Beethoven's Fifth and the Human Imagination* (New York: Knopf, 2012).
- 41 Marsden Hartley, "The Paintings of Florine Stettheimer," *Creative Art* (July 1931): 19.

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- 1 Florine Stettheimer, "Then Back to New York," *Crystal Flowers*, 131.
- 2 New York City, New York. Department of City Planning. 1920—*Total Population by Census Tract* under the "Historical Population Information." [New York City], 1920, www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/nyc-population/historical-population.page.
- 3 Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (New York: Routledge, 2004), 37–42.
- 4 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002), *passim*.
- 5 Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse. Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Theory, Culture & Society* 2.3 (1985): 37.

- 6 See details in Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (London: Psychology Press, 2003), 70–127.
 - 7 There are enormous cultural, religious, ethnic, and historical differences regarding women's presence and strolling in public spaces. This study confines itself to Stettheimer and the Euro-American context of urban walking.
 - 8 See details in Elizabeth Wilson, *The Contradictions of Culture: Cities, Culture, Women* (London: Sage, 2001), 72–94; Susan Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering," *New German Critique* 39 (1986): 99–140; Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1994), 15–46.
 - 9 Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, The Sandwichman and The Whore," 119.
 - 10 Wilson, *Contradictions of Culture*, 92.
 - 11 See Virginia Woolf, *Street Haunting* (San Francisco: The Westgate Press, [1927] 1930). For studies on modernist women's flânerie, see also Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* (London: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 39–68; Irene Gammel, "The City's Eye of Power: Panopticism and Specular Prostitution in Dreiser's New York and Grove's Berlin," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 22.2 (September 1991): 211–28; and Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 168–233.
 - 12 John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage, 2002), 2.
 - 13 See the investigation of Stettheimer's association with domestic space in Whiting, 25–49; and Linda Nochlin, "Florine Stettheimer," *Art in America*, 64–83.
 - 14 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 417.
 - 15 Art historian Heather Hole points out that while Bendel's was an exclusive upscale fashion store, "by 1921 it increasingly attracted a wider range of women shopping discounted or ready-to-wear fashion," and she argues that in this painting, "Stettheimer drew on a variety of modernist and commercial styles to map this increasing diversity, organizing the composition into specific spaces defined by class and gender." See details in Heather Hole, "Florine Stettheimer, the Department Store, and the Spaces of Display, New York 1916–1926," *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2017), journalpanorama.org/florine-stettheimer/.
 - 16 Andy Warhol claimed that Florine Stettheimer was his "favorite artist"; in Mark Lancaster, *Burlington Magazine* 131.1032 (1989): 200.
 - 17 Rob Shields, "Social Spatialization and the Built Environment: The West Edmonton Mall," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 7, no. 2 (1989): 161.
 - 18 Stettheimer, "Miss Butterfly," *Crystal Flowers*, 45–46.
 - 19 Stettheimer, "New York," *Crystal Flowers*, 132.
 - 20 Stettheimer, "Which—," *Crystal Flowers*, 133.
 - 21 Urry, 3.
 - 22 The years between 1894 and 1929 are usually marked as the silent film era; sound films started at the end of 1920s and the beginning of 1930s.
 - 23 John Fiske, "Shopping for Pleasure: Malls, Power, and Resistance," *Consumer Society Reader*, Douglas B. Holt, eds. (New York: The New Press, 2011), 306.
 - 24 Urry, 108.
 - 25 Linda Nochlin, "Florine Stettheimer," *Art in America*, 64–83.
 - 26 Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, 39.
 - 27 The "comperé" is also a reference to Stettheimer's involvement in the production of Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson's opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*.
 - 28 The Whitney Museum of American Art was founded in 1931 by art patron and collector Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, for whom Juliana Force worked as an assistant. Whitney established the Whitney Museum after the Metropolitan Museum of Art declined her donation of over five hundred works of American art since both the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art preferred European works instead of American ones. A golden statue of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney is positioned behind Juliana Force in *The Cathedrals of Art*.
 - 29 Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1973), 36–37.
- 11 / "AN OPERA TO BE SUNG"
- 1 Gertrude Stein, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, in *Operas and Plays* (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1987), 18.
 - 2 Gertrude Stein, "Plays" in *Lectures in America* (Boston: Beacon Hill, 1957), 131.
 - 3 See Steven Watson's lively and impressively researched book *Prepare for Saints: Gertrude Stein, Virgil Thomson, and the Mainstreaming of American Modernism* (New York: Random House, 1998).
 - 4 Eva Jessye, qtd. in Steven Watson, "The Visitable Past: Four Saints in Three Acts Remembered," in *4 Saints in 3 Acts: A Snapshot of the American Avant-garde in the 1930s*, ed. Patricia Allmer and John Sears (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2017), 140.
 - 5 Klaus-Dieter Gross, "Four Saints in Three Acts: V. Thomson's, G. Stein's, and F. Stettheimer's Portraits of Each Other," *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 29.2 (2004): 202.
 - 6 Juergen Mueller, translated and quoted in Henk Oosterling, "Sens(a)ble Intermediality and Interesse: Towards an Ontology of the In-Between," *Intermedialités* 1 (Spring 2003): 36.
 - 7 Oosterling, "Sens(a)ble Intermediality," 34.
 - 8 Oosterling, "Sens(a)ble Intermediality," 41–42.
 - 9 Quoted in Watson, *Prepare for Saints*, 164.
 - 10 Florine Stettheimer, "V.T.," *Crystal Flowers*, 106. The poem is undated but its content unequivocally relates to the making of the opera; see also Watson, *Prepare for Saints*, 169.
 - 11 "Wood Thrush Sounds," The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Wood_Thrush/sounds. See also Henry D. Thoreau, *Notes on New England Birds*, ed. Francis H. Allen (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910), 379.
 - 12 The manuscript page (see figure 11.2) reveals a second sentence struck out by Florine—"You have been singing for days"—the page illustrated with her