

# Flâneur and the Modern City: Studying Baudelaire and Benjamin

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## Abstract

Though most readers knew flâneur as a Parisian stroller, few thought about the subtleties of his art. The present paper endeavoured to explain the flâneur – also reinvented as the artistic flâneur – as theorised and practised by Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin. While we might understand the theoretical notion of flânerie with the help of ideas scattered in the works by the above thinkers, the art of flânerie as practised by the two celebrated practitioners had been quite elusive. Flâneur was not a theoretical concept alone, neither was it an unthought-of practice. The paper, therefore, tried to explain the theory and practice of flânerie with respect to Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life* amongst other works by thinkers including Walter Benjamin with reference to the act of walking and thinking that existed before them. The history of walking and thinking goes back to ancient Greece when philosophy was a way of living in addition to being a mode of thinking. It has been concluded that Baudelaire and Benjamin drew on the popular culture of flânerie in Paris to fashion the aesthetic notion of artistic flâneur as the interpreter of modern city life.

**Keywords:** Artistic flâneur; City; Experiential memory; Flânerie; Modernity; Thinking while walking.

## Introduction

The word “walking,” with roots in Anglo-Saxon English, means “to roll about and toss” as if floating on water, hinting that organic life emerged from the sea. Over the ages, walking has been undertaken as a means of locomotion from one place to another. Human walking is usually regarded as an ordinary activity. But it may not be so. Though walking seems to be a monotonous action of putting one foot in front of the other to move

\* See Oxford English Dictionary.

forward, it may be quite a creative act. If we carefully note how we walk, with one foot dangling in the air to be placed on the ground ahead, and the other one holding balance under the erect leg to avert falling before the first foot positions firmly on the ground. During this time the foot on the ground shifts the load from the heel to the toe while balancing the body on one leg. And, almost immediately the same action is alternated in the next step. We have not only mastered walking but have also, to a large extent, automated it, i.e. we can walk without much conscious attention. If we calculate how many years the unconscious has taken to master it, we would be surprised – millions. And, we are the only kind of species on the planet to have developed such a unique ability to walk upright. The amount of evolutionary time and expertise taken to achieve such a feat may be guessed from the carefully chiselled anatomy of the human foot – soft arched sole wedged between hard solid heel and flat bony toes. The entire ensemble of bones is nicely packed and cushioned to achieve an easy walking movement. Not only the ability to walk erect but the walking rhythm also matters a lot. For example, while walking at a relaxed pace, if we try slowing down by degrees, we will have to become conscious lest we should lose our balance and fall. And if we try to walk faster, we will again have to put in more effort consciously to speed up. In both cases, we will be missing the unconscious rhythm of walking at which we are most relaxed, free and most alive to ourselves and our surroundings. This is the rhythm and style of walking that is our concern in our discussion of flâneur.

Bill Livant argues that our walking body should be the starting point of our thinking – not a sedentary body (414). However, before we start thinking from the reference point of our walking body, should we not first understand the walking body itself? This is what Rousseau's *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* seem to suggest. Interestingly, Rousseau is credited with establishing the modern practice of walking and *thinking about walking* (italics mine), even though the tradition of walking and thinking dates back to the Greek philosophers. However, walking was not the subject of Greek philosophy; rather, the Greek philosophers walked and pondered over deep philosophical issues. Nevertheless, walking was a common activity in ancient Greece. Greek architecture included walking as a fundamental aspect of everyday life, in addition to its recognition as a background activity for philosophical discussions (Kissin). Many Greek philosophical schools, including the Peripatetics, the Stoics, and the Sophists, considered walking to be an essential precondition for thinking because the practice of thinking while walking was part of their culture. Rousseau's *Reveries* can be considered as an early treatise on the relationship between walking and

thinking. During his long walking and thinking sessions, Rousseau gained access to previously unreachable parts of his inner self. Walking appeared to have placed Rousseau in a position of self-awareness, allowing him to think and write with both feet steadily walking on the ground (Solnit 21). "I walk, therefore I am," could have been a quote from Rousseau. For philosophers like Plato, Nietzsche, Thoreau, Emerson, and others, strolling has always been a natural companion for contemplating philosophical concepts. Thus, walking as a practice allows one to achieve a higher level of awareness of oneself vis-à-vis one's environment.

## Approach

There are writers who have employed walking as a mode of understanding the world and, also, as a creative trope in their writings. Some of them have attempted to study walking as a historical and cultural practice also. For example, Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* deals with the history of walking as a cultural act. She looks at walking in the contemporary age as a response to the disembodied experience brought about by modernity. She rightly observes that this disembodied experience forms the basis of contemporary theory. Joseph Amato's *On Foot: A History of Walking* follows the course of walking from being a compulsory activity in the past to a choice and pastime in some countries now. He looks at walking as practised by certain famous writers and thinkers such as Rousseau, Thoreau and Wordsworth. He also dwells on the cultural representation and meaning of the practice of walking in different ages. Frederic Gros's *A Philosophy of Walking* is different from the above two in terms of its dealing not with the history, nor culture but the philosophy of walking. For Gros, walking is more of a spiritual quest than a practical activity undertaken to cover a distance between two points; it is a way to commune with the sublime in nature. Gros's walker leaves civilization far behind. Geoff Nicholson in *The Lost Art of Walking: The History, Science, Philosophy, and Literature of Pedestrianism* touches upon some significant aspects of walking such as walking and human evolution and the Greek tradition of walking and philosophising.

Citing clinical evidence on foetuses which start making walking motions even when their cortex is not fully formed, Nicholson argues that walking is a brainless activity. Further, he introduces Psychogeography as an emerging area of study; it combines the act of walking with the insights of psychology and geography to study the effects of the geographic environment on the human mind. Merlin Coverley's *The Art of Wandering: The Writer as Walker* is the latest of all previous accounts of walking. Coverley

corrals writers not as per the genre or historical period but according to their walking preferences. He says that the literature of walking is assuming the form of a “pedestrian canon”, (14). His way of organising walkers in subsets, such as walker as a writer, walker as a philosopher, walker as a pilgrim, walker as a vagrant, walker vis-à-vis the natural world, walker as a visionary, the *flâneur* and so on is indeed innovative. Coverley, in this book, discusses the entire gamut of cultural representations of walking in literature down the ages.

Not only has walking played a key role in the rise of hominids, it has hidden in it the rarest secrets about the human evolutionary journey as well. The ability to walking once identified humans amongst non-walking species. The ability to walk seems to have acted as a precondition for developing the competence for speech. The rhythms of walking might have led to the making of accompanying sounds which eventually assumed the form of language and song. Amato quotes Robert Provine who speculates that “hominids had to walk before they could talk” (21). He further observes, significantly, that perhaps this song and rhyme evolved not only to sustain them on their long walks across landscapes but also allowed them to weave narratives about the places they visited. Bipedal locomotion seems to have produced the conditions for humans to develop the capacity to walk and talk at the same time and also for the creation of song and story (22).

Walking on two feet might have necessitated an erect posture which reshaped the human pelvis and limbs. The freed hands and the raised head led to exploration of surroundings and holding, examining and using objects as tools. The anatomy shaped by bipedalism not only set hominids apart from other species in terms of posture but also allowed them “to make a fuller use of their breath and vocal chords (sic), enabling them to issue more complex and diverse sounds than their sniffing and panting cousins...” (21). Placing one foot ahead of another to move forward is the simplest, commonest and oldest of all human activities. Yet this ordinary and neglected act of walking marked a watershed in the history of human evolution when our ancestors walked their way from their fellow species to become the masters of the planet. Unwritten anywhere in history books, the hi(story) of walking writes itself on human anatomy.

Since then it has accompanied humankind in their journey down the millennia to the present. It was but obvious for such an important human act to have played some kind of role in one of the greatest human aesthetic achievements – literature. As readers what we receive is the finished

product of literature, be that a novel, a short story, a drama, a poem or an epic. The common reader hardly ever inquires into the conditions of its making. However, it is here that walking often plays an anonymous but vital role; walking has usually been an activity behind the scenes, with barely any presence visible clearly in the text. Of course, certain works of literature have also represented walking in so prominent a way that walking not only appears in the text as such but also becomes a structure, a motif and a conduit, so much so that there emerges a pattern that deserves in-depth study. Representations of the experience of walking in the world as well as the way the world is experienced while walking, have undergone dramatic transformations down the ages.

Walking as movement on foot is different from travel as one can travel around the world yet not move at all. What the movement on foot can give, travelling in a vehicle cannot give at all. It is the body-propelled locomotion and the sights, scents and scenes as well as the people one meets on the way that make the movement experientially special. Solnit says that in this way walking becomes ambivalent and enormously creative and, in a sense, the walker arrives as soon as he takes the first step. Walking through sights and scenes allows the mind to connect the internal and abstract with the external and concrete, to join the unfamiliar with the new to form new thought compounds. Hence walking has been an indispensable activity for thinkers through the ages. And so the history of walking is inextricably associated with the history of thinking and writing. So, on the basis of the above texts, it is proposed to develop an understanding of flâneur in the modern city as propounded in Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life*, and Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*. In doing so, an interpretative approach has been followed, in which a reference has been made to any text or critical theory only if the text under study so demanded.

### **The Painter of Modern Life**

Baudelaire writes with a painter's brush. He captures impressions and sketches them through the medium of words. His works like *The Flowers of Evil* (1993) can be better understood in relation to painting, especially that of Constantin Guys on whom Baudelaire models the notion of flâneur in the essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863). Though flâneur registered his presence – as a leisurely walker in the city of Paris – in the French culture quite early, the notion of artist flâneur (Castigliano ch. 4) was first imagined in Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life* in 1863. Those who presume that a few classical geniuses who portray “the general beauty,” observes Baudelaire, embody the whole truth (1) of the history of literature commit a

grave critical error (emphasis original). To correct it, we should accord an equally prominent place to the artists depicting the immediate beauty in the present. Baudelaire further notes that progress towards remedying the error has already begun. As a result, previously lesser-known but talented artists are keenly studied.

This period of transition, according to Baudelaire, is ideal for introducing a rational and historical theory of beauty against the academic theory of a unique and absolute notion of beauty (3). Aesthetic beauty, according to Baudelaire, consists of two elements: "the *general* beauty" which is expressed by the classical poets, and "the *particular* beauty, i.e. the beauty in the present time and the portrayal of manners. According to Baudelaire, the depiction of beauty in the present is as important as the representation of beauty in its eternal and universal aspect. It is the fleeting manifestation of beauty in the present what Baudelaire calls modernity. Thus, every artist may have their own modernity, but the eternal aspect of beauty remains constant for all artists across the ages. We define modern as "relating to the present or recent times as opposed to the remote past." "However, Baudelaire's modernity seems more akin to the future. By modern, Baudelaire suggests the quality of being ahead of one's times. The eye of the flâneur is trained to catch the flashes of modernity in a crowd. For example, someone's dress may appear, through subtle touches, ahead of the contemporary style of fashion; someone, by virtue of their thinking and writing, may sound out of tune with the contemporary ideology, yet their ideas may prove path-breaking in the times to come and so on, the flâneur would be swift to notice it and depict it in the works of art. Modernity, thus, might peep through a subtle gesture, through an instance of mannerism, or a cut or crease in someone's dress might cause ripples in the mind of the flâneur. In other words, when an artistic flâneur witnesses an image of the future lurking in the present, he wastes no time in capturing and painting it on the canvas. An artistic flâneur thus strives to offer a glimpse of the eternal to the reader/spectator through the depiction of manners at a particular time. Such an artist is a "man of the crowd" and loves traveling and blending with the crowd incognito. A flâneur can be an:

observer, philosopher, flâneur – call him what you will; but whatever words you use in trying to define his kind of artist, you will certainly be led to bestow upon him some adjective which you could not apply to the painter of eternal, or at least more lasting things, of heroic or religious subjects. Sometimes he is a poet; more often he comes closer to the novelist or the moralist; he is

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\*\* See: *Oxford Dictionary of English*, Third Edition, 2010.

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the painter of the passing moment and of all the suggestions of eternity that it contains. (Baudelaire 4)

Flâneur thus is a descriptive term applied to artists, painters, poets, novelists and moralists belonging to diverse cultures and predilections, yet they are kindred spirits and have a similar approach towards their craft. Though there are instances of flâneurs delineating lower strata of society too, the world that a flâneur lives in and portrays in the works of art is the bourgeoisie fashionable world of the modern city (Castigliano, ch. 4).

In the essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), Baudelaire selects an artist, namely Constantin Guys, whom he regards as the “perfect flâneur” (9) and analyses his works in terms of the peculiarities of his art. However, at the same time, due to Constantin Guys’ request for anonymity, Baudelaire decides to treat him as an imaginative character in the essay. With one stroke, Baudelaire transforms the individual Constantin Guys into a quintessential model of artistic flâneur in the essay. Baudelaire, however, does not mention his name in his essay. What kind of anonymity is it? Baudelaire granted Constantin Guys the anonymity of a different kind by describing a “type,” an imaginary character with inputs from Guys’ life and, also, from other flâneurs including Baudelaire’s own experience as a flâneur. To put it differently, Baudelaire makes use of the skeleton of Constantin Guys’ life to creatively flesh out the theory of the artistic flâneur and, also, to reimagine the theory of beauty based on the study of many such artists, novelists, painters, moralists and poets. Thus, whatever Baudelaire writes about Constantin Guys is true for any artist whose methodology is similar to that of Constantin Guys. The group includes Benjamin, Baudelaire and many others. Remarkably, *The Flowers of Evil* and *Paris Spleen* are the works by Baudelaire as an artistic flâneur. The poems are a creative record of what strikes “the ambulatory gaze” (Friedberg 420) that Baudelaire (in the guise of a flâneur) casts on the contemporary Parisian cityscape. The narratorial voice in the pictorial poems walks from thought to thought, scene to scene, from sketch to sketch. The narrator even steps into the characters’ shoes and portrays them through the medium of poetic language.

Constantin Guys, the ideal flâneur, possesses many eccentricities (Baudelaire 9). He is so shy of fame that he does not even sign his paintings, which are so strikingly original in craft and execution that they are immediately identified. Baudelaire describes Monsieur G. as an old man who has discovered his hidden talents at a later age. In his forties, says Baudelaire, Monsieur G. became restless with a flood of images rushing through his mind. He had to give them an outlet to keep his sanity. Baudelaire

further notes that while depicting them on canvas, Monsieur G. would gesture savagely, and, work wildly with the paint and brush as if he were amid a raging battle. Sometimes, he would behave like a child annoyed at not being able to manoeuvre his fingers as he wished. At this sentence, the editor of the essay puts a footnote: "Baudelaire must be mistaken here" (6) because, the editor asserts, Guys at that time was already an accomplished painter so cannot work clumsily. The editor commits the error of considering Monsieur G., who is supposedly being described in the essay, as a particular individual. On the contrary, Baudelaire is writing about a "type," not an "individual" Monsieur G.

Baudelaire further states that, unlike an ordinary artist who is limited to his area of interest, Monsieur G. feels at home everywhere. He is an avid walker and a "cosmopolitan" who has left his home to make everywhere his home. Since he not only belongs to the entire world but also has a spiritual connection with the universe (6-7), he wants to know, understand and appreciate everything that happens not only in the world but also in the universe. Originality is the hallmark of his art. The force behind his creativity is curiosity. He is passionately drawn towards the crowd and connects with it spiritually. He possesses the ability to become a "child" who experiences everything with a child-like wonder. Yet he has the power of self-expression of a mature artist. As a result, he can transmit that sense of amazement that he experiences to others through his art. He is so ravished by the beauty in the city that he dedicates his life to study it. He finds the contours of buildings, collage of faces in the crowd, and spectacle of fashion as myriad manifestations of beauty. He empties himself of identity to drink on beauty ceaselessly. When he sits at his table for depicting what he had gulped down during the daywalking in the city, the expression gets tempered with the signature of his soul. Baudelaire states that Monsieur G does not sign his works because his inimitable originality flashes through them (5).

By virtue of his extraordinary abilities, he can put to order an inordinate mass of mental stuff accumulated since childhood. He casts his intoxicated gaze (8) on the objects and people around him and notices even minute details missed by an ordinary eye. The flâneur's walking (Singh) movement leads to an enhanced sensual receptivity in the mind, transforming abstract phenomena into felt experiences. Benjamin notes in *The Arcades Project*, "...[t]hat anamnestic" (sic) intoxication in which the flâneur goes

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\*\*\* Benjamin uses the word "anamnestic" (that he wrongly spells as "ananmestic") derived from the noun "anamnesis," which means a heightened ability to recall the past events that a walker achieves by walking while thinking and seeing their world.



about the city not only feeds on the sensory data taking shape before his eyes but often possesses itself of abstract knowledge – indeed, of dead facts—as something experienced and lived through” (417). Baudelaire observes a flâneur masters the ability to attain child-like wonder at will so that we can term him “man-child,” (8). His genius thus lies in the ability to recover childhood at will, so he has the ability to erase at will all the cognitive conditioning received since childhood to rediscover the ecstatic plenitude that a child lives in. Thus, it is Benjamin, not Baudelaire, who considers the walking movement as the catalyst for a flâneur to develop heightened sensibilities to view his world. We can argue that the flâneur remains in that state for so long as he is on his feet. When he stops walking, he relapses to his previous state of mind, but he can always recollect the felt impressions when he was in an excited state of being. Baudelaire observes that a flâneur as a “child” is “always drunk” and finds the world forever new (8).

The flâneur has an acute sensitivity towards things sublime. In him, this hypersensitivity manifests itself as a kind of nervous shock at the sight of something sublime; the shock is conveyed to the central regions of the brain where, by degrees, it is illumined into a “diadem of dazzling clarity” (*The Flowers of Evil*, “Benediction,” Baudelaire 15) which finally leads to an artistic expression. Thus, the flâneur has the task cut out for him: to extract poetry from history and to sift eternal truths from the mundane reality (12). Without the artistic ability to distil and express this “transitory, fugitive element” in the present the beauty of the eternal is indeterminable (13). Baudelaire wanted to describe Monsieur Guys as an artist without pretensions but found him to be more than that. He cannot be termed as dandy because unlike a dandy, he possesses a strong urge for perceiving the world (9). Since it is hard to describe him by existing terms, Baudelaire finally decides to describe him as “a pure pictorial moralist” (9).

The experience of the nervous shock is significant for understanding Baudelaire’s artistic work (*Illuminations*, “Some Motifs,” Benjamin 163). The shock that the flâneur receives from the crowd feels as if one is exposed to a reservoir of electric energy. A shock can be described as the

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See, “Anamnesis.” *Collins English Dictionary*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/anamnesis>, Accessed on 02-02-2022 at 11.41 pm.

Also, see, Singh, Satvir. “A Philosopher Walks to Think: Reading Henry David Thoreau’s Walking.” *Dialog: A Bi-Annual Peer-Reviewed Journal*, Issue No. 35, Spring 2020. <https://dialog.puchd.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/18.-Satvir-Singh-A-Philosopher-Walks-to-Think-Reading-Henry-David-Thoreaus-Walking-converted-converted.pdf>, Accessed on 14-09-21 at 1.53 pm.

passage of more current through the network of nerves than it can endure. A shock throws the working of the "circuit of nerves" out of balance for some time. How much time the circuit of nerves takes to recover depends on the intensity of the shock and the network's preparedness to bear such shocks because of similar experiences in the past. The person endowed with such sensibilities, observes Baudelaire, is like a "kaleidoscope equipped with consciousness" (175). As a result, the electric energy that benumbs the crowd charges the flâneur. So much so that sometimes the flâneur acts wildly with the artistic tools at the table as if a battle is being fought. Constantin Guys, notes Baudelaire, stabs, jolts and gestures savagely; spurts ink on the paper and even splashes colours on the roof and the walls of his room while striving to catch up with the rush of images before his mind's eye, lest he should miss even one of them. It can be understood through an analogy: a flâneur is an overdeveloped circuit of nerves in terms of more developed consciousness; he needs a charge, which he gets from the crowd, to activate the circuit. In the crowd, it is lying unused because they do not have the "circuit" to run it. Thus, the phrase "crowd is flâneur's element" can be rewritten as that flâneur is the element (in the sense of a circuit), and that crowd gives him the power to activate it. Thus, the flâneur is conscious even of those experiences that are lying buried in the collective unconscious. Thus, any artist, novelist, poet, painter, philosopher, or moralist who possesses such awareness and makes use of it in his art is an artistic flâneur.

### *The Arcades Project*

Walter Benjamin took the idea of flâneur from Baudelaire's collection of poems *The Flowers of Evil* and recast him in the role of "a detective of the street life" (Shields 61). In *The Arcades Project*, not only does Benjamin write about the flâneur and write it as a flâneur (Seal) but also his way of researching and collecting the material, i.e. observing the contemporary life and taking down notes, is like a flâneur (emphasis added). So in *The Arcades Project*, a practising flâneur was, in fact, theorising his craft. In *The Arcades Project*, while dwelling on the psychological effect that the overwhelming sensory stimuli have on its citizens, Benjamin enunciates two concepts: *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. The former refers to the sensory numbness produced by the shock caused by the quick succession of sights, sounds and smells; the latter refers to the moments when the shock was effectively countered by the defence mechanisms of the mind ("Some Motifs," Benjamin 163). *Erlebnis* thus means those experiences that failed to enter into consciousness due to excessive shock. And *Erfahrung* refers to those experiences which the consciousness was able to register, and, therefore, can be

regarded as lived moments (163). Benjamin notes that due to the failure to feel the experiences, the masses in the modern city are condemned to confusion and alienation. The faster the kaleidoscope of images and sounds flows into the consciousness, and the more alert the consciousness has to be to register it, the less they enter into the experience and memory (*Illuminations*, "Some Motifs," Benjamin 163). Therefore, the slowing down of movement, and the leisurely lingering over the scenes and places assume more importance. The slowing down of the movement is a challenge to the fast-moving life of a city, and with the slowed-down movement, the eye can see the contradictions and find the hidden connections/fissures between the apparent diversity/unity of the modern city. The flâneur can spend as much time over a sight or scene as he wishes to and thereby form an experience and express it in art. A flâneur imagines the modern scene in a subversive way because he gives a free run to his imagination to savour the dream-like reality which Benjamin terms "phantasmagoria" (*The Arcades Project*, Benjamin). By walking in a fast-moving city, a flâneur interprets modernity. Though born and fashioned out of the modern city, a flâneur challenges the founding logic of it. He walks against the tempo of life dictated by the modern city. He is attracted to modernity and his attraction is not submissive but defiant. The slowing down of movement to the pace of walking is opposite to the founding logic of modernity that eulogises speed. Therefore, a flâneur walks doubly, i.e. into modernity and away from it spatially as well as temporally. To quote, "[t]he flâneur's movement creates anachrony: he travels urban space, the space of modernity, but is forever looking to the past" (Seale). In other words, he is detached despite being in the thick of modern city life, and therefore, he can look beneath "the construct" called modernity (Bacal). Benjamin observes a flâneur is always "out of place" (*Illuminations*, "Some Motifs," Benjamin 172).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the flâneur emerges as a distinctive figure, navigating the bustling urban landscape with a combination of keen observation and defiant resistance to the tempo of the modern city. The analysis of flânerie by Baudelaire and Benjamin unveils a profound engagement with the complexities of modernity. Baudelaire's vision of the flâneur, epitomized in the character of Constantin Guys, encapsulates the artistic pursuit of capturing the fleeting beauty of the present. The flâneur, as a "pure pictorial moralist," becomes a conduit for distilling the essence of modernity, transforming ordinary experiences into extraordinary artistic expressions. The act of walking becomes a means to achieve heightened sensibility al-

lowing the flâneur to access the sublime and weave it into the tapestry of his creations.

Benjamin, building upon Baudelaire's foundations, introduces the flâneur as a "detective of the street life" in the urban labyrinth. The dichotomy of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* underscores the challenges posed by the overwhelming sensory stimuli of the modern city. The flâneur's deliberate slowing down of movement in the face of rapid urban life becomes an act of defiance, a rebellious stroll against the founding logic of modernity that champions speed. The numbing speed of the modern city stops the senses from experiencing a moment and forming a memory, which creates an alienating effect. The flâneur walks against the modern city to experience it sensuously before reaching an understanding of its diverse phenomena and its effects on the city dweller. Thus, flâneur's infatuation with the modern city, and his refusal to abandon it for the forest like a hermit, necessitates a living fraught with the problematic interface between the self and the city.

Baudelaire and Benjamin provide complementary perspectives on the flâneur's engagement with modernity. Baudelaire's focus on the artistic expression of the present complements Benjamin's emphasis on the subversive interpretation of modernity through the act of walking. Both thinkers contribute to our understanding of the flâneur as a nuanced figure, navigating the complexities of the modern cityscape with a unique blend of sensitivity, imagination, and a rebellious spirit. Thus, it becomes evident that the flâneur, whether in the realm of art or philosophy, continues to offer a distinctive prism through which to comprehend the evolving dynamics of modern urban experience. The legacy of flânerie endures as a testament to the enigma of the modern city, inviting future scholars and thinkers to tread the streets of contemplation and unravel the mysteries hidden within the ever-changing landscape of modernity.

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