

[연구논문]

Female Ramblers and the Reconstruction of Private Space in *Jane Eyre*, *Passing* and *Girls*

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“The prostitute epitomizes the fleeting nature of urban relations, the lack of permanent connection. In her sexuality she marks ‘the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent,’ those very qualities that Baudelaire associates with modernity. The young prostitute Ann in De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, which Baudelaire translated and emended as *Un mangeur d’opium* in the 1850s, appears miraculously to save his life, becomes his close companion, and then disappears into the crowd never to be found again.”

—Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets* (5)

I. Introduction: A Memory of Ann

“The young prostitute Ann”, where has she gone now? As the excerpt from Deborah Epstein Nord’s introduction to *Walking the*

Victorian Streets dramatically captures, the prostitute was not a liberal subject who could ramble about the Victorian streets with her own whimsical moods, but was rather one of the commodities on which the gaze of male ramblers “fleetingly” rested and upon which the male ramblers projected their own sense of isolation in the crowd on the Victorian streets. She was often subject to the commercial transactions decided on the basis of her exchange value. This young prostitute displayed as a commodity seems to be a graphic representative of the public image of the female ramblers on the Victorian streets who have been deprived of active agency, which has been granted only to the male spectators. The prostitute wavers between the crowd and her brothel. She has to wait to be acknowledged, sold and caressed. Then she finally recedes into the crowd. Compared to a male streetwalker who could define and “delineate” each district of the public sphere while he takes on grand tours of London on foot, a female street-walker, identified as a prostitute by Nord, assumes the role of “a social surplus, a trash and a disposable commodity”(6). The female ramblers on the Victorian streets who are not supposed to be out in the first place share the sense of disposability and superfluous-ness observed in the young prostitute. The female streetwalkers are exposed to the public gossip and are likely to be denounced as an offender of the proper decorum.¹⁾ Taking a walk on

1) Notice how Mr. Rochester addresses Jane when he first met her on his journey home: “I should think you ought to be at home yourself”, said he, ‘if you have a home in this neighbourhood. Where do you come from?’” The following answer of Jane signifies her subversive potentiality as a female bourgeois: “From just below; and I am not at all afraid of being out late when it is moonlight” (134). Also looking at the suggestion Woolf’s narrator makes for Mary Carmichael in *A Room of One’s Own* helps us to imagine the strict

the Victorian streets can even mean taking a risk of being seen as an avowed target of sexual assaults. Considering the atmosphere of early Victorian London where prostitutes on the streets were categorized as the same social group with “ballad singers, chimney sweeps, dustmen, and pickpockets”, risking becoming a female street Rambler for a bourgeois woman could even be interpreted as a gesture of intentionally corrupting public morals (Nord, “The City as Theatre”, 164). As shown from the excerpt, Ann’s body and its sexuality are already stamped with the markers extracted from discourse of modernity written from the perspective of male modernists. Here, the act of female street walking seems to be already marked with oppressive sexual connotations and social clichés. Where has Ann’s sexual desire, her subjective sense of sexuality, disappeared? Could we say that the trace and memory of this young prostitute has survived and still survives in the postmodern era? How might we reshape the lost sense of female sexuality from the perspective of Ann? In other words, what might be a proper way of talking about the female sexuality exiled to the margins of the streets? What are the relationships between female sexuality, spatiality, and the act of rambling? This paper starts from my attempts to find a trace of disappeared Ann and her sisters.

In this paper, while I intensely look at the moments where female

division of space assigned to women and the difficulty of liberal rambling for female subjects: “She will not need to limit herself any longer to the respectable houses of the upper middle classes, She will go without kindness or condescension, but in the spirit of fellowship into those small, scented rooms where sit the courtesan, the harlot and the lady with the pug dog. There they still sit in the rough and ready-made clothes that the male writer has had perforce to clap upon their shoulders” (133).

ramblers mark significant movements in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929), and Lena Dunham's *Girls* (2012), I propose to investigate the way the act of female rambling questions the constraint on female bodies and inversely helps the female bodies break out of the sexual objectification inflicted upon them and contributes to the discovery of their own sexual pleasure and finally the way the outdoor activity of female rambling contributes to the reconstruction of private space where a female achieves a fresh sense of agency. Reading three different texts from the mid Victorian era, from Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s of American literature, and in our own era of post-feminism, I intend to focus on hitherto unacknowledged significance of the movements of female ramblers. What do their movements have to do with discovering and demonstrating their sexual desire? And how might their movements reorient our sense of female sexuality? This paper refers to Walter Benjamin's monumental conceptualization of the flâneur as a starting point to discuss female ramblers and yet is more interested in critically revising it, while creatively developing the perspective of Virginia Woolf's narrator in *A Room of One's Own* where she emphasizes a female writer's capability to perform an imaginary rambling and to restore "the unrecorded life" of the female bodies on the side of the streets. According to Woolf, the act of rambling becomes a mental exercise that a female writer should learn to do and perform. Woolf's emphasis on the notion of active mental rambling endows a female writer's room with a newly avowed agency. Further, Woolf's notion of a female Rambler rewrites the politics of gaze allusively claimed by Benjamin in a more active way. This

paper intends to suggest that the movements of female ramblers in the above texts share and concretely embody the potentiality embedded in Woolf's imaginary rambling and that their rambling journeys lead to the reconstruction of private space as a place where female desire is promised to be gratified.

II. The Birth of Female Ramblers

Walter Benjamin's conceptualization of flâneur puts emphasis on its relative lack of substantial political powers. Benjamin's figure of flâneur willingly surrenders to the allure of the big city and his agency seems to lie only in his power of gaze²⁾:

It is the gaze of the flâneur, whose way of life still conceals behind a mitigating nimbus the coming desolation of the big-city dweller. The flâneur still stands on the threshold—of the metropolis as of the middle class. Neither has him in its power yet. In neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd. Early contributions to a physiognomics of the crowd are found in Engels and Poe. The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city beckons to the flâneur as phantasmagoria—now a landscape, now a room. (198)

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- 2) Referring to Steve Pile's notion of the male flâneur helps us to more explicitly understand this rather ambivalent status of a flâneur in terms of power: "Despite the flâneur's constitutive insecurity and despite not placing himself amongst the powerful, this man still occupies sites of authority. These sites are simultaneously close and far— a play of proximity and distance"(230). According to Pile's analysis, the flâneur's sense of deliberately measured distance endows him with a certain sense of power to establish him as an individuated being: "The spectator marks himself out from the spectacle, never becoming a spectacle himself: he is in the streets, but not of the streets; he is in the crowd, but never of the crowd" (230). A male flâneur, as a giver of meaning and significance to the newly found objects on the streets, still controls the scenes of the city.

The flâneur portrayed by Benjamin is basically a male figure who still seeks to discover and perform his political power somewhere between the crowd on the streets, the crowded arcades, and his home in a newly configured metropolis, Paris. Indulging mostly in optic pleasures, Benjamin's flâneur inherits, if unconsciously, the characteristic gaze of the London male spectator in the early nineteenth century. Nord discovers the exemplary figure of the London spectator in "The Tea Garden" by Cyrus Redding. In this brief piece, the Rambler encounters "a solitary figure" during his journey for enjoying the "panoramic views of London" from Primrose Hill ("The City as Theater", 161). As Nord points out in the article, the London spectator fails to recognize a significant solitary figure as an independent subject with its own voice but just regards him as one element of the spectacle and as a meaningful object helping his education in an episodic "revelatory" scene.³⁾ Similarly, for Benjamin's flâneur, the crowd collectively functions as a "veil"/vessel through which he sensually enjoys observing and engages with the city.

The figure of female flâneur proposed by the narrator of Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* seems to be more engaging and embracing in the sense that she should attempt at exploring beyond the surface level of her optical impressions:

3) One of the most famous examples of this "revelatory" scene embedded in a journey of a male Rambler appears in William Wordsworth's poem, "The Solitary Reaper". In this poem, the poetic narrator sees a solitary female reaper who sings a melancholy song while reaping in the field. The narrator beholds and observes her keeping a distance. The narrator finally leaves the scene and keeps her song in his heart. Arguably, the female reaper seems to be mobilized for the male Rambler's moment of epiphany.

All these infinitely obscure lives remain to be recorded, I said, addressing Mary Carmichael as if she were present; and went on in thought through the streets of London feeling in imagination the pressure of dumbness, the accumulation of unrecorded life, whether from the women at the street corners with their arms akimbo, and the rings embedded in their fat swollen fingers, talking with a gesticulation like the swing of Shakespeare's words; or from the violet-sellers and match-sellers and old crones stationed under doorways; or from drifting girls whose faces, like waves in sun and cloud, signal the coming of men and women and the flickering lights of shop windows. All that you will have to explore, I said to Mary Carmichael, holding your torch firm in your hand. (134)

It is also noteworthy that all the details of the streets in the passage are a product of the narrator's active imagination captured in the phrase, "the eye of the imagination" (134). Woolf's narrator proposes to get out of the safe porch assigned to the spectators and to commingle with the individual figures on the streets, giving free play to one's tactile imagination.⁴⁾ In the text, the narrator's "imaginary eyes" freely yet attentively move from the plural objects and groups of people to the singular figure such as "the girl behind the counter" (134). The female flâneur evoked by Woolf's narrator deliberately subverts the crudely all-encompassing vision proposed by the London spectator. Noticeably, Woolf's feminist interest in the "true history" of each "girl behind the counter," a marginalized

4) Woolf proposes to tease out the mysterious signs reflected on the "drifting girls" and to explore them. Unlike a vision of male flâneur, who projects his "excitements", "pleasures", and "fears" onto the "blank screens" of the faces he meets during the streetwalking, Woolf's vision of a female Rambler is someone who is willing to lose her own bodies in the midst of the beings encountered in the streets (Pile, 231). Woolf advises her to go beyond the performative display of voyeurism.

female subject allegedly deprived of mobile agency, is in line with the feminist agendas proposed by the scholars currently majoring in the discourse of Feminism and Geography, who attempt to overcome a familiar masculinist gaze and to practically embody the experiences in the marginal sectors of the city where female subjects used to occupy.

In the same vein with Virginia Woolf, Aušra Burns, a feminist geographer, arguing that it is necessary to find out a new geographical design to fully realize the potentiality of the city to give each different individual a sense of freedom and autonomy, points out the limit of the view employed by the urban male street walker: “From the viewpoint of feminist geographers, the gaze of the urban drifter, as presented in literature concerned with issues of urban experience, often is accepted as universal, and is, in fact, a *masculinist* gaze embodying a relationship of an active onlooker and a passive object” (74). Teasing out the gendered gaze embedded in an apparently universalized viewpoint, Burns goes on to ask from a geographical feminist’s perspective: “Where, then, is this marginality of the city embodied? How can we ‘excavate’ this experience of the ‘other’?” (75). Keeping in mind both Woolf’s vision of a female flâneur and Burns’ practical question of opening up a way for the embodiment of experiences of others, let me first pay attention to an image cut from *Girls*, which would be useful in getting an insight into a reversed politics of gaze achieved by the female rambles throughout the feminist journey, that will be dealt with in depth later in this paper.⁵⁾

A daring posture of Ann’s postmodern sisters provokes my

curiosity. One of the representative images that a fan of HBO's "Girls" can easily get access to as a decorative wall paper is the one in which the four heroines sit together on a street bench in one of those shabby residential areas in New York City. It seems as though the four girls posed for the picture while they had been wandering New York City and just found a cozy spot in a corner to take a rest. The girls were supposedly rambling about the streets together showing off their characteristic costumes and looks. They, a group of female ramblers, gaze at us, the potential spectators, from the picture for promoting the show. Sitting just anywhere in the city as a female group, stopping their random journey at any random place, and observing the other ramblers while being pleasantly exposed to the streetwalkers' gazes, gossiping about their exes, dates, and sexes, the four girls make the act of female rambling itself a festival. Then, now how might we possibly interpret their now static gaze from the image? Can a female gaze achieve a sense of agency when it comes from a perspective of 'always already' commodified position of cultural objects? As the "girls" in the picture are represented as a group, a female Rambler is not a rare figure in our postmodern times. At the same time, the quotidian figure of a female Rambler as one version of the neo-liberal subject in postmodern era should not be

5) In terms of "a reversed politics of gaze", the aforementioned Woolf's text shines with further implications. The narrator in Woolf's text suggests a female writer should imaginatively be a female Rambler and the suggestion interestingly puts female writers as ramblers in equal terms with drifting girls on the streets. According to the logic of Woolf's configuration, the politics of gaze, which has not really overcome the active voyeurism of male spectators and the passive objectification of female subjects, gets at a new dimension where the mingling of gazes happens based on equal terms.

rendered as an unrealistic character which popped up with the culture of fast consumption. It has a dense history behind its jaunty appearance. What has happened between the era of the “fugitive” prostitutes such as Ann and the postmodern era of “fashionable” girls? Are the four assertive “girls” a triumphant reversal of the “ephemeral” Ann? Or are they still another version of the commodified Ann? Or are they cleverly using the commodified position inherited from Ann and subversively achieving their sexual desires? Trying to find answers for these critical questions, this paper now looks at Jane Eyre’s rambling journey as a radical rewriting of the established understanding of Victorian female bodies’ relationship with the public and private sphere.

III. Jane Eyre’s Rambling and Sexual Awakening

The feminist critics have been passionately excavating Jane Eyre’s strong voice as a liberal individual whose pursuit of a moral integrity seeks out a social order free from rigid hierarchy based on the inherited economic or political status. In line with the critics who are interested in regarding Jane as a feminist forerunner, Sandra Gilbert and Gayatri Spivak’s groundbreaking critical works have further focused on *Jane Eyre*’s potential as a postcolonial text and attempted to excavate the hitherto unheard voices of Jane’s sisters on the margins such as Bertha Mason’s and Grace Poole’s. Critical debates on *Jane Eyre* have been particularly severe regarding the tone and implications of the ending of the novel where Jane, a heroine of

feminist individualism, seems to surprisingly succumb to the conventional role of a domesticated wife and a wise mother. Following the critical voices that regard Jane as a powerful feminist figure yet shifting the critical focus from postcolonial discourse to the dialogic relations between body, sexuality and spatial experience, this paper suggests that we read the ending not as Jane's passive domestication but as a result of her active re-achievement of a satisfying private space where her own sexual pleasure can be nurtured and gratified according to her own taste and directed by her sexual agency. The act of homeless rambling in the field, and the following deconstruction of her physical and emotional integrity, sparks Jane's desire to get an agency over her own body's longing. Jane's rambling journey contributes to her minute understanding of her own body as an ever-moving incomplete space and it results in arranging a suitable domestic ground for it. In the process, establishing a sense of objective distance from her own body is a must for Jane. Reading *Jane Eyre* as a female Rambler, we could perceive how her journey on the streets allows her first to look into her own body's sexual longing and then to inspire her with an active desire for a private sphere exclusively designed to satisfy its inhabitants' affective, bodily and sexual needs.

Isolated, Jane is attracted to the observation of her own body. Jane's body is separated from other beings from the start in a domestic setting. Jane's body, which has long been accustomed to domestic violence and physical abuse in Gateshead, fluctuates between the painful lack of physical energy and the uncontainable amount of anger in it towards harassing relatives. The violent tension between

physical pain on it and unmanageable anger inside it that Jane's body experiences culminate in the scene where Jane is locked in a red room by Mrs. Reed after she retorted against John who cursed and threw a book at Jane without any reasonable cause. Feeling abandoned, Jane looks at herself from the perspective of others in the looking-glass and faces a little strange being, the inhumanely objectified specter of her own body. However, a minute after she looks into the mirror, she also feels that her blood is still warm in her and the "vigour" of an angry slave rolls inside her body (18). In the following passage, Jane repeatedly calls herself with a nametag of 'thing':

I was a discord in Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there; I had nothing in harmony with Mrs Reed or her children, or her chosen vassalage. If they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them. They were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathise with one amongst them; a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in propensities; a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest, or adding to their pleasure; a noxious thing, cherishing the germs of indignation at their treatment, of contempt of their judgment. (19)

The repetitive use of the word, "a thing," rather paradoxically betrays Jane's indignation towards the word and disavowal of its connotation. Jane actually holds their opinions in contempt. By applying the insulting term she reveals her critical ability to take an analyzing distance from her body under oppression. The analyzing distance Jane takes from her own body keeps functioning throughout the text.

Jane's rambling journey intensively happens surrounding her

experience in the Thornfield hall. Jane, distinguished from other female ramblers of my concern, runs away from an oppressive domestic experiences and walks in the hills and in the rough forest of English countryside, each time seeing almost nobody and yet severely encountering her own body's longing to belong to somewhere, be caressed and be useful to somebody. Jane Eyre's rambling journey marks her already exhausted body with a sense of uselessness and an acute sense of alienation and is performed while she experiences severe emotional trials, particularly in such case as when it was caused by a voluntary loss of dear Mr. Rochester. My focus is on the high moment when Jane just gets out of Thornfield at night. After Jane discovers the fact that Mr. Rochester concealed his bride, Bertha, in the loft of Thornfield and still intended to marry her, Jane decides to leave him and starts her random journey on foot. Jane's journey on foot is a solitary journey in the English countryside and her gaze does not distinguish any pictorial details of the scenery of the countryside. Jane can only feel her agony derived from the fact that she is far from Rochester's dear body, from his sense of presence and from being able to give him any comfort. Jane noticeably compares herself to a condemned criminal:

He who is taken out to pass through a fair scene to the scaffold, thinks not of the flowers that smile on his road, but of the block and axe-edge; of the disseverment of bone and vein; of the grave gaping at the end: and I thought of drear flight and homeless wandering –and oh! With agony I thought of what I left. I could not help it. I thought of him now –in his room– watching the sunrise; hoping I should soon come to say I would stay with him and be his. I longed to be his; I panted to return: it was not too late; I could yet spare him the bitter pang of bereavement (369).

Intriguingly, in the passage, Jane's comparison of herself to a condemned criminal destined to the scaffold metaphorically emphasizes her physical suffering in double sense: suffering caused by her benumbed weak body and suffering due to her panting desire to unite with Rochester. In Jane's mind, her homeless journey is juxtaposed with the condemned criminal's impending physical pain of "disseverment of bone and vein". Jane's grief torments her from the inside and affects her whole body and overwhelms her rambling journey.

Walking through wilder and more desolate environment compared to other female ramblers, Jane's special feature as a female Rambler is that she keeps recording the energy level of her body. She perceives her pervaded sense of weakness: "A weakness, beginning inwardly, extending to the limbs, seized me, and I fell: I lay on the ground some minutes, pressing my face to the wet turf" (370). Acknowledging her physical frailty, Jane's white bourgeois body seems to reconfirm its desire to be securely ensconced in a roof of a safe domestic sphere. However, the agony⁶⁾ is deeper and it cannot be easily fit into a familiar bourgeois logic. Jane's honest encounter with her own body's frailty without a firm domestic ground and its

6) Jane's agony is especially mediated to the readers by her physical reaction, wild weeping. Notice that Jane names her own body as an evil weapon for her lover in the following passage: "Gentle reader, may you never feel what I then felt! May your eyes never shed such stormy, scalding, heart-wrung tears as poured from mine. May you never appeal to Heaven in prayers so hopeless and so agonized as in that hour left my lips; for never you may, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love" (370). Jane's record of harsh rambling ends with her passionate confession of relentless love for Mr. Rochester. Shedding of "scalding" tears, bodily longing amount to death, and self-abhorrence are components of Jane's awakening to her body's imperfection and fragility.

uncontrollable sexual desire in the midst of the wilderness awakens Jane into a sense of eagerness as an individual who are supposed to design and keep her own manageable space.

Physical awakening caused by outdoor walking strongly defines Jane as a liberal individual. Indeed, *Jane Eyre* famously opens with Jane's mingled sense of frustration and relief resulting from the blocking of the planned outdoor walking: "There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so somber, and a rain so penetrating, that further outdoor exercise was now out of the question" (9). It is noteworthy that the novel begins with the cold acknowledgement of the impossibility of walking outside. However, a close inspection of the passage reveals that they (including young Jane) had already been taking a walk outside and thus any "further" walking is impossible. This tiny moment in the beginning of the novel exposes at a micro level the distinct pattern of movement repeated throughout the novel: an attempted outdoor adventure and a following longing to be subsumed under a safe domestic roof and to be filled with a sense of enclosure. Jane repeatedly puts her body into a manageable small space as illustrated in the early moment where she hides behind the window curtain: "I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement" (10). We can observe that now Jane enjoys the sense that she can control her own body in this particularly intimate space. She can move her

body smoothly as she mounts the window-seat, gathers her feet and crosses her legs. It seems as though these are her familiar gestures in her ordinary private space. Moving her own body is a part of ritualistic play performed in her own privatized realm.

Jane's desire of getting a sense of enclosure and serving as a useful body in a stable setting becomes more complicated upon considering the fact that rambling does also arouse excitement rather than exhaustion. Consider the moment when Jane first met Mr. Rochester on the way to the post office. After helping hurt Mr. Rochester to remount his horse, Jane feels "pleased to have done something". She records the exceptional joy of using her bodily energy in the moment: "transitory though the deed was, it was yet an active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive" (136). It is intriguing that the agitation of the moment is metaphorically compared to the makeover of the interior space. As observed in the following passage, mediated through Jane's mental space, the experience in the public streets is embedded in the domestic realm: "The new face, too, was like a new picture introduced to the gallery of memory, and it was dissimilar to all the others hanging there: firstly, because it was masculine; and, secondly, because it was dark, strong, and stern. I had it still before me when I entered Hay, and slipped the letter into the post-office; I saw it as I walked fast downhill all the way home" (136). The moment documents the transformation Jane's relationship with the Thornfield hall goes through. Jane realizes that one should actively achieve the tranquil satisfaction coming from the fact that one fits into the domestic realm by rambling experiment.⁷⁾

The ending of the novel, where Jane eventually achieves a firm domestic sphere, resonates with her proud sense of triumph. Jane's declaration of domestic triumph demonstrates her strong sexual contentment conveyed through the mediation of biblical language as follows: "No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" (519). The tension Jane's body experiences between the domestic space and outside explains the paradox of *Jane Eyre's* somewhat conventional ending. The point of importance lies in the sensational physical memories gathered in the outdoor adventures that Jane's body remembers and not in the fact that Jane is finally satisfied under the protective domestic roof. Unlike St John Rivers' journey to India where he nourishes his sense of self pursuing "the path he had marked for himself" and where he toils looking at his heavenly home, Jane's rambling journey contributes to the healthy acknowledgement of her physical limits and the wise spatial configuration in relation with her sensed bodily desire. If Jane's sexually awakened body throughout the rambling journey discovers its satisfying ground under a domestic roof, in *Passing*, Clare Kendry's passing black body threatens the bourgeois domestic sphere.

7) Jane's rather theatrical speech demonstrates her realization: "What good it would have done me at that time to have been tossed in the storms of an uncertain struggling life, and to have been taught by rough and bitter experience to long for the calm amidst which I now repined!" (137). Noticeably, Jane's new insight still directs towards the rekindling of the domestic sphere.

IV. Irene's Imaginary Adventure and Endangered Domesticity

Clare Kendry has a dazzling body. Her body is in display through the mediation of Irene's narrative eyes in *Passing*. Clare is in the center of public attention in the city and yet, she is not eligible as "the ideal dinner-party guest". Clare "still remained someone apart, a little mysterious and strange, someone to wonder about and to admire and to pity" (209). According to Irene's observation, Clare's body is strangely separated from other beings as an aesthetically valuable one. What type of body does Clare have, exactly? We might refer to another set of modifiers attached to Clare's body: "The soft white face, the bright hair, the disturbing scarlet mouth, the dreaming eyes, the caressing smile, the whole torturing loveliness that had been Clare Kendry" (239). These are impressive sketches that remain after Clare Kendry has "gone"! (239). She died, mysteriously in the closure of the novel. Even in the last tragic scene, the novel narrates Irene's shocking sensation from an impressionist perspective rather than from an affective engagement: "Irene wasn't sorry. She was amazed, incredulous almost" (239). What is at stake in holding on to rather superficial impressionist depiction? What needs to be concealed? Or is it just an empty spot that needs to be concealed with surface impressions?

Clare Kendry's body is clearly an admired aesthetic object on display in both public and domestic realm. However, a sense of tension seems to wrap Clare's body, isolating and separating it from other bodies and signaling the body's incredible vulnerability. The white face, bright hair and rather too much distinct scarlet mouth

sum up Clare Kendry, and these bodily impressions collected from Irene's narrative eyes are just gone abruptly in the end of the novel. Clare's body, which can pass as a white body, is a deliberately concealed black body, that can be an easy target of sexual violence on the streets in the early twentieth century United States. Then, Clare as a rambling female subject is always accompanied by a potential danger. The surface of Clare's body is an unstable space where doubtful, admiring, longing, and desiring gazes gather up and complicate every movement. As a passing body, Clare's black body rambles around Harlem in New York City ignoring Irene's premonition of danger.

Walking in the Harlem streets exposes a "passing" black body to a danger in that the passing body can be shown with other black bodies and be finally detected as a black body. Proximity with other black bodies endangers a passing black body. It is as though blackness is contagious. Judith Butler points out the constructed nature and the moveable characteristic of blackness as follows: "If he (Bellew) associates with her, she cannot be black. But if she associates with blacks, she becomes black, where the sign of blackness is contracted, as it were, through proximity, where 'race' itself is figured as a contagion transmissible through proximity" (965). Clare's body itself seems to epitomize this view of blackness as a kind of social contract. Bellew, Clare's white husband, blindly plays with the notion of blackness as a distant object of disgust while he looks at Clare who gets darker and darker. Bellew's deceived sense of safety finally fuels his anger in the final chapter of the novel where he finds out Clare's true racial identity.

Clare and her body on public display externalize the fear Irene Redfield has as a passable black female. Clare dares to marry a white man who abhors any black people. Irene chooses to marry a colored man Brian as a relatively secure alternative. Irene, who might also be able to pass as a white body if needs to be, forms a colored family and respects black people's decorum and rules of community. Irene's fear of being exposed to any racial violence and physical conquest represents a more generalized consciousness of black females as Butler notes: "What becomes psychically repressed in *Passing* is linked to the specificity of the social constraints on black women's sexuality that inform Larsen's text. If, as Carby insists, the prospect of black women's sexual freedom at the time of Larsen's writing rendered them vulnerable to public violations, including rape, because their bodies continued to be sites of conquest within white racism, then the psychic resistance to homosexuality and to a sexual life outside the parameters of the family must be read in part as a resistance to an endangering public exposure" (969). In the same vein, Butler's keen critic eyes are most right when she points out that Irene seeks to sustain the black family "to avert the position for black women outside the family, that of being sexually degraded and endangered by the very terms of white masculinism that Bellew represents" (971). However, it is doubtful whether Irene's attempt to establish a firm sense of black family and to remain in the enclosed community of black people really has been successful.

Irene Redfield certainly does not experience the troubles Jane Eyre goes through as a poor female rambler since she has definitely establishes herself as a black bourgeois individual. The trouble

happens to her when she precariously rambles on the allegedly inhibited grounds in such cases as when she enters the Drayton's tearoom in Chicago or when she goes downtown arms in arms with Felise Freeland, who is an apparent black female. In those cases, Irene has been detected a passable black body once by Clare and once by Bellew, respectively. Such moments complicate the discourse of potential dangers because Irene does not really suggest that she should go to the Drayton's in Chicago; rather, the taxi driver who perceives her exhausted mode takes her to the place and going downtown to shop is not a strictly banned thing in the period. It seems as though Irene can always be endangered regardless of her own intention just because she possesses a "passable" yet not "always passable" black body. For Irene, it is more crucial to obtain a passable state of mind that stabilizes her life as a peaceful bourgeois one. McLendon argues as thus: "With the characterization of Irene, Larsen postulates the notion that passing is as much a state of mind as a physical act, imparting a parodic thrust to the received social meaning. The title, then, is ambiguous in that it refers both to Clare's actions, retaining the usual meaning of the word, and to Irene's actions, implying psychological passing or escapism" (158). If *Jane Eyre* strives to achieve a sense of security by building up a firm field of concrete domestic space with Rochester, Irene Redfield tries hard to establish a psychological sphere in her mind where she might safely keep her identity as a passable bourgeois black female who only exert her power of being passed in a safer realm and where she might also project herself to dazzling Clare and indulge in all the imaginary sexual pleasures, from which she deliberately

precludes herself in reality. Irene's rambling unconsciously trespasses the constructed life of Irene Redfield. As McLenden contends, in her persistent adherence to bourgeois ideological codes, Irene "strives to mask any feelings or behavior that appears to be uncivilized or unladylike, measures herself by white standards, and lives in constant imitation of whites" (158). Irene, as a rambler, momentarily peeps at the possibility of being an admired yet pitied queer object as Clare. Compared to Jane, who gets at her own domestic sexual pleasure after struggling journeys of rambling, Irene, cautiously and consciously intends to protect herself from the dangerous act of rambling and yet unconsciously risks mental rambling and finds her sexual pleasure in the very act of trespass.

V. Girl's Queer Mingling and Queer Separating

In the "Bad Friend" episode of Lena Dunham's *Girls*, Hannah Horvath, a full-time freelance writer attempts at an experimental rambling journey with her gay pal Elijah Krantz on the New York streets and queer places in order to write a fascinating blog post about snorting "coke". Hannah wears a rather ridiculous costume, which daringly exposes her irregular body form and later she even exchanges that queer fashion item with queer cut clothing in the club where she continues to dance for hours. Hannah and Elijah's rambling journey through New York public ends up concluding with a rather unexpected encounter with Laird, an old solitary guy who lives downstairs of Hannah's apartment and who was supposed to be a

“junkie”. Surprisingly, during the whole journey of Hannah, Laird secretly follows Hannah with the intention of protecting her from any possible street dangers caused by blind coke drinking. In the episode, as the title might suggest, Hannah discovers the fact that Elijah, her ex-boy friend, and Marnie, her best friend slept together and have concealed the fact from her. The coke drinking that was expected to bring her to a fantastic different world actually sends Hannah back to the most hateful truth about her friends. However, in lieu of the best yet unreliable friends, Hannah discovers an unexpectedly sincere friendship of Laird. The guy who seemed to be the queerest outsider of New York City shines in front of Hannah as an angelic saver and a newly found friend. In the end of the Season two, Laird appears again as a reliable friend to whom Hannah could ask freely to cut her hair during her most depressed time. As the episode depicts, Lena Dunham’s *Girls* dramatizes the possibility of a surprising commingling with eccentric other bodies that might happen during a female Rambler’s journey through the New York City.

In “One Man’s Trash” episode of *Girls*, Hannah unexpectedly meets Joshua, a married yet separated doctor while she comes to see him in order to apologize about the trouble over his trash cans. The episode emphasizes how an unconscious behavior of Hannah triggered by her sense of rebellion towards Ray and her unconscious fascination with Joshua’s apartment can lead to a significant encounter with a strange body and also how that abrupt mingling can also be suddenly stopped. Hannah and Joshua’s mid summer night’s dream staged in the midst of Brooklyn, New York, ends with Hannah’s painful recognition of her own materialistic and immature desire and with

her discovery of deep rooted sense of loneliness. A sudden encounter with a stranger's body awakens Hannah to honestly look at an empty hole in her own inner self. Lena Dunham shows how a neo liberal female subject can critically engage with her act of rambling and take a distance from the enchanting narrative the act of rambling creates.

In the episode titled "Video Games", Jessa Johansson, a declared female bohemian who basically rambles everywhere without any definite purposes in mind, and Hannah travel together to Jessa's notorious father's house. This episode shows us a curiously shabby domestic setting from which Jessa attempts to run away. Jessa oscillates between her father's domestic sphere and her own rambling space of New York City after she just divorces herself from a husband who treats her like a jaded whore and yet, finally she frees herself from any domestic ground of suffocation by leaving with a piece of note. The act of rambling seems to question, give nuances and even define the girls' life style in the fashionable city.

In *Girls*, the whole sets of rambling journeys of each girl can be subsumed under Hannah's self-fashioning journey as a female writer. The entire episodes of *Girls* start from Hannah's ambitious wish to become at least "a voice" of her generation. Hannah, as a liberal individual who is believed to dream of representing a part of the post-feminist era in the episodes, experiments the posture of a female Rambler, discovers and demonstrates her sexual desire, and gets discouraged by her aerial desire. Hannah's journey and her friends' journeys with which Hannah sympathizes resonate with the newly discovered energy and Hannah's self-consciousness as a female writer

inherits Woolf's insights that have urged an active imaginary mingling with other female beings.

VI. Conclusion: Remains of Female Rambling and Reconstruction of Female Space

What distinguishes the girls' aggressive act of rambling from Jane Eyre's final choice of bourgeois life style with her husband and children and from *Passing's* deliberate depiction of the sense of precariousness penetrating Irene's hard-won domesticity exactly? If Jane and Irene engage with the bourgeois private sphere in a rather ideological way and demonstrate their spirit of resistance respectively to Victorian domestic decorum and modernist racial ideology at the same time while indulging in their own pursuit of sexual pleasure either physically and mentally, Hannah and her friends in *Girls* reconstruct their private space in a much more material way. Alongside of its graphic emphasis on the significance of the girls' act of rambling everywhere and encountering everybody, *Girls* also seems to put the importance of privately nuanced space and of personally marked objects on the table. The rambling of girls as an everyday exercise has a stable ground to return: their cozy New York apartments and personally endeared objects. Michel de Certeau writes about the dearest personalized place: "It seems necessary for this personal place to become denser, materially and emotionally, in order to become the territory in which the familial microcosm is rooted, the most private and dearest place, the one to which one enjoys

coming back at night, after work, at back-to-school time after vacation, after a stay in a hospital or the military” (147). The next step in the exploration of the issue of female rambling will be to closely look at the particular relationships the girls maintain with their respective apartments and collection of objects.

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Abstract

Female Ramblers and the Reconstruction of Private Space in *Jane Eyre*, *Passing* and *Girls*

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In this paper, focusing on the moments where female ramblers make significant movements in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929), and Lena Dunham's *Girls* (2012), I explore the way the texts question the constraint on female bodies through the window of female rambling and the texts deal with the dynamics embedded in the reconstruction of private space where a female achieves a fresh sense of agency through her experience of rambling or her imaginary rambling. This paper refers to Walter Benjamin's notion of the flâneur while revising it, while accepting the view of Virginia Woolf's narrator in *A Room of One's Own* where she urges a female writer to do an imaginary rambling to restore the unrecorded histories on the streets. This paper suggests that the movements of female ramblers in the above texts dramatically embody and explore the potentiality embedded in Woolf's notion of imaginary rambling.

Key Words

the act of female rambling, the reconstruction of private space, female bodies, sexuality, agency