

## PICTURING CHANGE: AT HOME WITH THE LEISURE CLASS IN NEW YORK CITY, 1870s TO 1910s

Douglas Tallack

The private citizen ... required of the interior that it should support him in his illusions . . . From this sprang the phantasmagorias of the interior. This represented the universe for the private citizen. In it he assembled the distant in space and in time. His drawing-room was a box in the world-theatre.

Walter Benjamin, "Louis-Philippe or the Interior".

The pursuit of elegance, sometimes jarring with a passion for eclecticism, characterized the display of wealth by the great New York families between the 1870s and World War One. Three palatial mansions for different members of the Vanderbilt family went up in the early 1880s within a few blocks of each other on Fifth Avenue, while the Morgan, Astor, Carnegie, Pulitzer, and Whitney families made equally striking moves to remodel parts of New York, sometimes a block at a time. Peter Simmons, the curator of the exhibition, *Gotham Comes of Age: New York Through the Lens of the Byron Company* (1999), instances W. C. Whitney, who spent over \$1,000,000 renovating his house on Fifth Avenue and 68th Street and, with the expertise of Stanford White, created "one of New York's most sumptuous Gilded Age interiors."<sup>1</sup>

The names of the great families indicate that the leisure class was an unstable mix of old and new money. Had it not been so then the leisure class would have kept itself more to itself, even allowing for the cultural vocation which some members of the class owned up to; in which case, the representation of leisure through elements of a mass, as well as a more select, media would not then have become such an issue. But with more heterogeneity in the leisure class than the phrase suggests, the need to display, in order to differentiate oneself from one's peers, fed the general proliferation of images which, along with an expanding population and geography, marked New York's growth as a metropolis. In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen acknowledges the challenge facing those who sought to display the intangible attribute of being at leisure, not least because of the awkward requirement that someone should be present to bear witness to one doing little or nothing; perhaps even resting or sleeping during the day. Moreover, ideally, this someone should be less at leisure than the object of attention but, none the less, capable of discerning the considerable effort involved in being at leisure. Consumption of goods was a better solution to this troubling challenge, particularly consumption of household goods which offered more scope for making often subtle distinctions than did exteriors. Yet lavishing attention, discrimination and, of course, money upon domestic interiors was still insufficient; these places had to be seen by more people than could possibly visit them, whereas the exterior of one's mansion on Fifth Avenue was easily displayed. The answer lay in photographic commissions. A generation of professional photographers were delighted to be paid to depict leisure-class interiors, which became, by this circuitous route, an important sub-genre of New York's visual discourse and an aspect, albeit a contradictory aspect, of the city's Modernist culture. Skyline and street scenes captured by painters, photographers and film-makers have had the greatest impact in defining our view of New York, whereas images of interiors have been categorized as part of a late-Victorian cultural drag on modernity – a not entirely accurate interpretation, as we shall see.

Leisure-class interiors were a speciality of the Byron Company, the most successful New York photographic enterprise, for instance, when working to a 1894 commission from P. F. Collier, the publisher of *Once a Week*, to concentrate on the houses of New York's Four Hundred. Byron's and others' images of opulent interiors were published in the society pages of New York daily papers, in Sunday supplements, and in *Harper's Weekly*, *Ladies Home Journal*, the *New York World*, *Vogue*, and *Once a Week*. In addition, there were more specialized publications, such as *The Art Amateur: Devoted to the Cultivation of the Art of the Household* (1879 to 1903); *The Decorator and Furnisher* (1882–1898); Maria Richards Oakey Dewing's *Beauty in the Household* (1882); *Artistic Houses, Being a Series of Interior Views of a Number of the Most Beautiful and Celebrated Homes in the United States* (1883); and the lavishly illustrated ten volumes of Earl Shinn's *Mr Vanderbilt's House and Collection* (1883–84).<sup>2</sup> All helped to spread the tastes of the leisure class which, accordingly, were no longer a world apart but were consumed within the public culture of the city: vicariously consumed by most, but registered in more subtle and penetrating ways within the circles of the leisure class itself. However, close analysis of the photographs and also of a few paintings reveals that these images were more than a vehicle for spreading news about leisure-class lifestyles. Byron, above all rivals, helped to create an interior visuality which reflected macro-changes, though much less directly than external views of New York's phenomenal external vertical and horizontal growth. This relationship between visual representation and material developments – the picturing of change – deserves more attention because it encompasses a mix of Modernist and conservative impulses.



While not as numerically significant as photographs, paintings by American Impressionists William Merritt Chase and Childe Hassam are also a part of the visual discourse of leisure class interiors; perhaps more than simply a part, because Chase's paintings of his studio in the Tenth Street Building in New York helped to shape the image of the domestic interior in both painting and photography. His studio was a domestic-looking interior to which the public was invited and which was then presented publicly through such paintings as *In the Studio* (ca 1880) and *The Tenth Street Studio* (ca 1889–1905), both of which strategically position well-dressed women engaged in perusing cultural materials. When we come to interpret Childe Hassam's paintings of interiors in his *Windows* and *Flag* series, there will be something to be gained by stretching the boundary of the leisure class to include women of the rising middle class but depicted at leisure.



In a photograph from 1894 of the parlor in the home of Mrs Leoni, drapes adorn the windows – naturally enough – but also, and presumably at the direction of Mrs Leoni, the two-tiered mantelpiece, the lamps, and the piano. As Maureen Montgomery has shown, leisure-class women capitalized on the greater visual awareness promoted by economic opportunities and new technologies of representation and display to refine a familiar vocation, notwithstanding its domestic sphere. “Women in turn-of-the-century New York,” she notes, ‘worked’ at signifying leisure,” the point, in the end, being Veblen’s that leisure and consumption were driving forces and signs of status, even in a society in which few men and women could afford not to work (12). Middle- and upper-class women consumed leisure and commodities on behalf of their men and also took on the role of displaying such consumption. Interestingly, though, Mrs Leoni’s gingham dress renders her one of the least significant elements of the scene. She merges into the décor of the room. This is a characteristic, also, of Chase’s studio paintings in which the artist and any visitors give way to the room as an expression of the artist’s aesthetic.

Mrs Leoni’s interior scheme emphasizes pattern. From an 1896 photograph, we can see that pattern is more exaggerated, still, in the reception room of the Hall house on West 45th Street.<sup>3</sup> (When images are not reproduced, a published source for a reproduction is given in parentheses.) This room is accurately described by Clay Lancaster in his Introduction to a selection of Byron photographs of New York interiors at the turn of the century:

It gives the impression of a tent . . . Except for window stanchions, no hard architectural lines are in view. Ceiling, fenestration, doorway, chimney breast, walls to each side are all draped in billows of patterned textiles. The floor is completely covered with carpeting . . . Cushions, small tables and tea service are handy for one's comfort and refreshment. It is a room in which to luxuriate, heedless of particulars. Here one's eye can roam passively from one color, one intricacy, one sheen . . . to the next. The room is an artful achievement conducive to complete complacency. (Byron, xviii)

The photographer is positioned so that the effect described by Lancaster is total, suggesting that the intention behind the room and its portrayal was to give relief from the outside world by creating an alternative sphere for display. In an 1893 photograph of one corner of the Picture Gallery in the Havemeyer house on Madison at 38th Street (Byron, plate 4), palms intercede between the viewer and the window, rendering faint and indistinct what little we can see through the window, namely, the house opposite and a facing window. When windows are central, as in a photograph of the drawing room in the Whitney house (1899–1900) (Byron, plate 27), it is still impossible to see out of them. They are, in effect, an opaque wall, facing that occupied by the photographer but offering at least some scope for decorative furnishing through curtains and large plants. And when the absence of an outside view is compensated for in photographs which include a view beyond the immediate room – for example a photograph of the stairhall in the Blakely Hall house (Byron, plate 12) – we see into an equally over-furnished room. Other photographs make much of rooms which give on to conservatories, where giant plants effectively bring the outside inside and help to create interior vistas. In a photograph of the hall of the Edward Lauterbach house (Byron, plate 28) and the dining room in the same house (Byron, plate 29) which were presumably taken on the same visit in 1899, the interior vistas are reversed and we see one from the other, so that the space is further enclosed, dramatically reinforcing the impression of a complete picture even as some visual expansiveness is offered. The photographer of the Havemeyer picture gallery is careful to present the paintings on the walls, while the mirrors in a photograph of a drawing room in Mrs Leoni's house (1894) (Byron, plate 9) increase the complexity of planes and representations by reflecting a Japanese landscape painting. Japanese prints, often on screens, figure prominently in the Byron photographs and have the interesting effect of countering the illusion of depth, which photography so capably introduces into methods of representation, by bringing the background towards us, not simply because there is little depth in the Japanese images themselves but because the screens frequently block access to the recesses of a room or stand directly in front of a door, as in a photograph of the dining room in the home of Mrs Mayer (1896) (Byron, plate 4). Paintings on the walls in the many Byron photographs are a mixture of society-, landscape- and classical-scenes. There is almost too much to look at, but it is within a complex interior circuit which the photographer takes care to complete.

From time to time in the Byron collection, we are reminded that these are photographed interiors and made aware of a tension between an apparent turning of one's back upon the world and a seeming compulsion to display the results of such seclusion. A 1900 photograph of the parlor in the Home of Frederick Wallingford Whitredge, 16 East 11th Street organizes itself around an elongated mirror on the opposite wall of yet another luxurious room.



In the mirror we can see, framed by the doorway to this room, the reflection of the Byron photographer. The photographer's right hand is operating the invisible camera and his left hand, above his head, seems to be occupied with the flashlight, with the edge of the flash just visible. We, as viewers, are implicated along with the photographer because we are brought into this supposedly private space and positioned between the mirror and the photographer and his camera. Everyone and everything is within the photographed room.

In many respects, the Byron camera follows the painter's brush – especially William Merritt Chase's brush – and co-operates with the interior designer's campaign to re-conceptualize interior space in order that it bear little relationship to external reality. Careful composition of the "picture" seems to mask the reality. In eschewing the impression of depth, most of the photographs of New York interiors in the 1890s and 1900s differ from photographs and – more commonly – drawings and paintings of the interiors of houses from earlier in the nineteenth century, which have more in common with paintings of sparse Colonial New England interiors or deep-focus photographs of the Modernist houses of Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier. Space, in these very different interiors, is organized around depth of vision, with (usually) a key piece of furniture centred and other furniture along the walls contributing to the narrowing perspective, as though the image was actually structured around a moral perspective. This conclusion applies as much to programmatic Modernists as to Puritans and Victorians. The effect of a Byron photograph is also different from that in the many contemporary stereographs of the same over-stocked interiors. Stereographs, as Jonathan Crary explains, were most effective in conveying the "experience" of "an object-filled space". He adds that that "there are endless quantities of stereo cards showing interiors crammed with bric-a-brac," the difference being that in Byron's photographs we lack the (admittedly illusionist) sense of a "realistic" order of this in front of that, that behind this, which the stereograph so uncannily imports.<sup>4</sup> The perspective most commonly adopted by the Byron photographer tends to bring everything to the surface, emphasizing the baroque quality of the interiors and making it difficult to identify a point from which everything could be seen all at once.

In one of the key essays within the field of visual culture, Martin Jay helps us to understand a baroque visual regime and what is going on in the Byron photographs.<sup>5</sup> Attention concentrates momentarily on a surface detail in such a regime, before moving to another detail, a tendency which a culture of commodities strongly reinforces. For instance, at the centre of Byron's photograph of actress Lillian Russell's Turkish den at her West 57th Street home (1904) is a sofa whose plumped up and carefully placed cushions leave little space for sitting (Simmons, 78). The heavy drapes hanging from the ceiling resemble a curtained stage on which the functionality of objects is put in abeyance. While the sofa is at the centre of the photograph, the patterns on the drapes and rugs, and inlaid designs on the large pieces of furniture, along with the frieze of framed silhouettes and cartoons, constantly distract the viewer's gaze laterally – and sometimes idiosyncratically as well. Aside from a glimpse of the stairway through an open door in the left background, this Byron photograph gives no respite from the onslaught of elaborated detail, from sheer surface eclecticism in which everything is significant and there is no apparent common denominator. It all fails to add up, this being the kind of devastating understatement which Henry James patented in his novels of American social manners of the same period. The repeated message in Byron is of Old New York interiors, based on New New York money, creating a self-referential space which insulates their occupants from the external world.

Although this seems to be the story which James and also Edith Wharton tell in their New York stories and novels, something usually betrays the efforts made by their leisure-class characters – and particularly, it may be proposed, by Wharton's characters – to keep the outside world at bay. This could also suggest that to interpret the sheer fullness of any of the interior views by Byron and others as merely a self-contained "picture" and not as a "diagram" of the larger urban society and the changes it was undergoing, is only to see part of the picture. It is Peter Conrad, in *The Art of the City*, who introduces this distinction, contrasting the indoor New York of James and Wharton with the streets of Stephen Crane by categorizing the former as a picture and the latter as a diagram, which somehow gives access to the informing causes, the infrastructure, one might say, of the image.<sup>6</sup> Yet James and Wharton, and, in different ways, the Byron photographers do offer access to the compelling but often bizarre interior visual logic which Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* explores in an, at the time, unorthodox theorizing of the surfaces of life and their relationship with "reality". Instead of making sense by reference to the common-sense function of a sofa or a window or by reference to the realities of an outside world, these photographs of material excess make sense according to an internal order in which giant plants relate to winding, carved balustrades, and windows and doorways relate to painted or photographed views. The profusion of material goods signifies the commercial trade which brought them together in such an apparently peculiar set of internal relationships. In the 1904 photograph of Lillian Russell's West 57th Street home, for example, we see the results of trading links in the fabrics and furniture of her Turkish den. The foreign and exotic were an antidote to the crassness of economic expansionism on the streets outside, and entered leisure-class interiors through many sources, artists' studios being one.

William Merritt Chase's studio became a collector's store and *In the Studio* and *The Tenth Street Studio* convey the impression that the artist follows the trader in bringing back items from abroad to embellish a house and inspire an art. In these two paintings, we can make out a Persian carpet, a potted palm, and – hung as ornaments on a wall – a Japanese hat, a lute, and a stuffed swan. But the paintings and photographs reveal more than just the source of goods. The point is that the interior views show capital assuming indirect and often contradictory images, comparable, for example in the apparent un-relatedness of a Persian rug and a Japanese landscape, to the contiguities being encountered in the new department stores, and the succession of world's exhibitions, "in which [in Georg Simmel's words] the most heterogeneous industrial products are crowded together in close proximity."<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin has written similarly on world's exhibitions and, in his *Paris – the Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, uses the concept of phantasmagoria to associate them with interiors in the reign of Louis-Philippe:

For the private citizen, for the first time the living-space became distinguished from the place of work. The former constituted itself as the interior. The office was its complement. The private citizen who in the office took reality into account, required of the interior that it should support him in his illusions . . . From this sprang the phantasmagorias of the interior. This represented the universe for the private citizen. In it he assembled the distant in space and in time. His drawing-room was a box in the world-theatre.<sup>8</sup>

There is, of course, a relationship to change and externality in these interiors, even as both seem to be kept not so much at arm's length but actually out of sight or vaguely intimated through the barely transparent glass of a window. The sheer over-filling of interior space with objects and its presentation as an image signifies infrastructural processes; or, rather, as Veblen helps us to understand, the over-filled spaces tell us that infrastructural processes have become all but invisible in a period when the sights of consumption, and the currency of exchange value within a world of accepted conventions of worth, were assuming a less supplementary relationship to production.

Byron's photographs of New York's Four Hundred bear a revealing relationship to the outside, public world, just as Old New York and New New York were linked in a decipherable historical process and not marooned on either side of a cultural rupture. To some extent, there is a diagram in the picture, to revert to Peter Conrad's terms. The photographs convey a broader social perception, one which the concept of hegemony helps us usefully to theorize but which is also about the substitution of spatial for temporal relations. All of the objects depicted fill space, space which has its logic of relations but which might otherwise be filled by people. When – rather rarely – people are featured in the Byron photographs of leisure-class interiors they are all but camouflaged. Quite simply, people are not needed when things are visually so much in evidence. The leisure-class is both *what* it owns and *how* it displays what it owns. The image of the photographer in the Whitridge parlor has the effect of making us aware of the picture and therefore of someone looking at this over-stuffed interior. That is to say, the Byron photographer doubles as the proprietor of the scene, telling us that these images were made to be seen.

Every now and again, Byron's photographs reveal another dimension of the relationship between interiors and exteriors, one which amends Veblen's basic thesis. A photograph from 1897, captioned *Relaxing in the Parlor* (Byron, plate 16), uses a model to depict a young leisure-class woman surrounded by the usual accoutrements and with an open book on her lap, but staring vacantly across the room. The photograph catches the sense of visual overload, just one element in what Jonathan Crary terms a "crisis of attentiveness" as "the changing configurations of capitalism continually push attention and distraction to new limits and thresholds, with an endless sequence of new products, sources of stimulation, and streams of information" (Crary, 14). There is little contextual information available to help us with this photograph, but more can be said about a similar photograph of Elsie de Wolfe, in her East 17th Street home.

The Byron Company's work photographing the homes of the wealthy overlapped with a commission on the homes of the theatre stars whom its photographers had captured on stage. While the photograph of actress Lillian Russell's Turkish den at her West 57th Street home, which we commented on earlier, conforms to the dominant impression of a self-contained world, even re-creating a theatrical arch through the use of drapes, it is more difficult conclusively to decipher the 1896 photograph of the sitting-room of Elsie de Wolfe, also an actress, in the home which she shared with Elisabeth Marbury.



As in the photograph of Lillian Russell's home, there is the strong hint of a stage in the tasseled arch over the sofa in the "Cosy Corner" on which de Wolfe reclines. The usual accompaniments are visible: large indoor plants; barely a floor-space without cushions or other furniture; or a wall-space without a painting or drawing. The wallpaper, too, is full of detail, as if in answer to Clarence Cook's *What Shall We Do With Our Walls?* (1881). What is interesting about this photograph, though, is the vacant expression on de Wolfe's face as she lies propped up on the sofa. She, like the model in *Relaxing in the Parlor*, is a picture of inactivity, apparently an adornment to the room, except that her facial expression does not suggest contentment. The suggestion of vacancy hints at dissatisfaction with this form of enclosure. In 1896 de Wolfe had recently given up her career as a professional actress and was in the process of becoming an interior decorator through her work for Stanford White on the Colony Club at 120 Madison Avenue. While still a truly Gilded Age interior, the Colony Club was a social club for women and, to a degree, took leisure-class women out of their homes and involved them in cultural and social activities. De Wolfe, herself, took part in a march on 5th Avenue in 1912 in support of women's suffrage, and also interested herself in the promotion of apartment houses as secure home-bases for single, middle-class women looking to the city for careers. Byron's photograph, probably unwittingly, catches Elsie de Wolfe's blank resistance at fitting in with an image of life at home when so many changes were underway in her own life and in those of women generally. But the suggestion of an unwillingness to fit in might also be interpreted as a comment on the "package" of house and interior photography (for the purposes of public display) which figured so often in society magazines. It is the difference between Edith Wharton's May Welland in *The Age of Innocence* (1920) who is comfortable in her husband's family's house, and Ellen Olenska who lives in a man's house but temporarily decorates it as she thinks fit – to the considerable confusion of Newland Archer. At the end of the novel she is firmly in her own apartment in Paris, into which Archer is unwilling, finally, to enter (thanks to Maria Balshaw for this line of thinking). Interestingly, de Wolfe had opted for a Modernist, light and hard-edged style when she remodelled her dining room a few years earlier. This room was also photographed by Byron (Byron, plate 19) and it may well reflect the preferences of a woman who set out on a career as an interior decorator and set up home with another woman.

As we have seen, when windows are included within Byron's leisure-class domestic interiors, they are barely visible or are rendered uninteresting in comparison with the excess within. But there is a transitional group of paintings, which, in their focus upon the window as a boundary, comment interestingly upon the question of how to picture change. In the period when Old New York was giving way to New New York, this sub-genre was virtually monopolized by Childe Hassam, for while Chase, Frank Benson, and Edmund Tarbell painted many domestic interiors, the city did not feature in any marked way. City windows do appear to some import in the work of Ashcan artists, but they painted windows from the street and either depicted people looking into shop-windows or painted people eagerly looking out of windows.<sup>9</sup> However, Hassam picked up on a noticeable demographic development in New York, the occupancy by women of Manhattan apartment houses and hotels, and he set out to depict women from within fairly confined city rooms and in ambiguous relations with windows and the city beyond.



Between 1907 and 1922 Hassam's *Windows* series reveals a tension between genteel, domestic values and the impact of the changing city of New York. In the same year that Hassam was finishing *The Breakfast Room, Winter Morning* (1911). George Santayana delivered his memorial lecture to William James, better known as "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy," in which the skyscraper, as the symbol of the new, masculine, urban-industrial America, is juxtaposed with the interior of a Colonial mansion, complete with modern conveniences and inhabited by a woman.<sup>10</sup> Hassam's painting seems, quite nicely, to illustrate a comparable turning away from the city with its depiction of a woman sequestered or even genteely imprisoned in a room dominated by the veiled window, to which the woman has turned her back. On the other hand, we can still make out the image of the skyline which had been figuring for some fifteen years in magazines, on postcards, and in early films as *the* visual icon for the city, and which was about to become a favoured image in American visual Modernism. In a particularly intriguing painting from the *Windows* series, entitled *Tanagra: The Builders, New York* (1918), more of the city is visible. We can see the vertical grid of a steel-frame skyscraper through the window, with another tall building behind. Yet, the city is still kept at a distance.<sup>11</sup> Hassam concentrates upon interior elaboration: the woman's dress, the curtains, the expanse of canvas devoted to the screen and its intricate pattern; and upon rival verticals: the woman, the figurine and the tall plant. Hassam seems, then, to be intent upon reducing, screening out, mythologizing, even naturalizing, the city, and such artistic choices are revealing of the relationship between visuality, historical change and (in his *Windows* paintings) gender as well. The view of the city and of change is mediated through the solitary woman, the furnishings and drapes of her room, the occasional painting or design, and a window through which light enters, as in a *camera obscura*. It is as though the outside world is not to be known by the apparently simple act of looking out of the window. Thus the woman in *Easter Morning (Portrait at a New York Window)* (1921) is barely looking out of the window; her eyes seem to be turned inward (Fort, 1993, plate 36). Rather, if the city outside is to be known it is as an image in the room, perhaps suggested by a male bust on the window-sill in *Easter Morning* looking back into the woman's room. To this extent, Hassam anticipates Edward Hopper, a very different painter of solitary, urban women.

In spite of the polished surface of the table in *The East Window* (1913) (Fort, 1993, plate 29), we do not find an image of the city reproduced in the room, this being the purpose of the aperture in a camera obscura. Instead, we are prompted to look for an allegory of the city to be deciphered through the interior signs. The furnishings, even in *Tanagra*, are not excessive, as they are in the Byron photographs where there is little temptation to look outside. On the other hand, the city is too indistinct to be a fully satisfying visual alternative. And so the picture, like the woman at the centre of the pictorial narrative, remains on the boundary, fully comfortable with neither interior nor exterior view. *Tanagra* suggests the woman is indifferent to the city and at least momentarily preoccupied with the interior details as she holds the figurine and partially merges with the pattern on the screen. On the other hand, the viewer is permitted to see past her to what is probably the most typical scene of change then and now: a building site.

A reasonable interpretation of the *New York Windows* series is that while Hassam never quite came to artistic terms with New York, he had, none the less, acknowledged that its form of urban life pressed more insistently upon interior views than seems to have been the case in his other American city, Boston. In the work of Benson, Tarbell and other members of the Boston School of painters, interiors can sometimes be tense but either no relationship with the city is evident or it is very muted. As the sub-title to *Tanagra* confirms, this is not so with Hassam. Moreover, Elizabeth Hawes' study of the apartment house in New York City, 1869 to 1930, helps to situate Hassam's *Windows* series. Apartment houses represented a break with tradition, as one male commentator noted: "For family life there is still, I know, a lingering feeling against a flat because it is flat, or on the ground that it is not on the ground."<sup>12</sup> Apartments were also taken up by feminists. Elsie de Wolfe did not herself live in an apartment but helped to design and promote them: "This is the age of the apartment . . . Modern women demand simplified living, and the apartment reduces the mechanical business of living to its lowest terms" (Hawes, 213). Women felt safer in an apartment house than in a private house in a city. There is insufficient visual evidence to link Hassam's women to the lifestyle outlined by de Wolfe but they are poised between it and that portrayed by Benson, Tarbell, Chase, and the photographers of leisure-class interiors.

This conclusion is reinforced by an overlap between the *Windows* series and Hassam's more famous *Flag* series from the period of World War One, consisting of patriotic paintings of the flags of the United States and its Allies strung out in different New York locations. Three of the twenty-four paintings exhibited at the Durand–Ruel Gallery in New York in 1918 as "A Series of Paintings of the Avenue of the Allies" are of women at windows. All three have been lost but, in *The Flag Paintings of Childe Hassam*, Susan Ilene Fort includes black and white reproductions of two of them and a photograph of the third on display at the Durand–Ruel Gallery. With the help of Fort's commentary we can suggest, by way of a none-too-dramatic winding up, that the parades and the flying of the flags attract the women to the public urban world to a greater extent than in the other *Windows* paintings. In *The Flag Outside Her Window, April 1918* (1918), also known as *Boys Marching By*, a seated woman in an off-the-shoulder garment, pulls the curtain slightly back and peeps out. In *March, 1917* (1919), also known as *The Fifty-Seventh Street Window*, a different seated woman pulls her curtain fully back to gaze at buildings and an American flag. While in *The High Balcony* (1917), a woman stands looking out through an open window without curtains (Fort, 108–10).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Peter Simmons, *Gotham Comes of Age: New York Through the Lens of the Byron Company, 1892–1942* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1999), 82. See also Eric Homberger, *Mrs Astor's New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> See Maureen E. Montgomery, *Displaying Women: Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York* (London: Routledge, 1998) and Dianne H. Pilgrim, "Decorative Art: The Domestic Environment", in *The American Renaissance, 1876–1917* (Exhibition Catalogue) (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Byron, *Photographs of New York Interiors at the Turn of the Century*, text by Clay Lancaster (New York: Dover, 1976), plate 13.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT), 125.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity", in Hal Foster, ed., *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 3–27.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Conrad, Peter, *The Art of the City: Views and Versions of New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 66.

<sup>7</sup> David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 94.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans., Harry Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), 167–68.

<sup>9</sup> See Rebecca Zurier, Robert W. Snyder, and Virginia M. Mecklenburg, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and their New York* (New York: Norton, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> George Santayana, "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy", in *Santayana on America: Essays, Notes, and Letters on American Life, Literature, and Philosophy*, ed., Richard Colton Lyon (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 36–72.

<sup>11</sup> See Susan Ilene Fort, *Childe Hassam's New York* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1993), plate 27.

---

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Elizabeth Hawes, *New York, New York: How the Apartment House Transformed the Life of the City, 1896–1930* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 213.