

ON THE CONTOURS OF PUBLIC SPACE: A TALE OF THREE WOMEN

Liz Bondi* and Mona Domosh**

When Sophie Hall visited New York City in 1879, she kept meticulous accounts of her daily travels in her diary. She spent the majority of her time shopping, but she also visited the city's museums and parks and attended lectures and musical events. She never went out alone, nor did she stay out much past four o'clock unless accompanied by a man. The downtown streets afforded her access to many of the marvels that nineteenth-century New York had to offer, but they did not allow her the freedom to venture where and when she might want. The doctrine called "separate spheres" allowed white, middle-class women like Sophie to venture out of their prescribed space, the home, and into the public spaces of the city only if those activities followed the values and norms considered feminine—caring and nurturing activities, such as visiting the sick or infirm, or, increasingly throughout the nineteenth century, activities associated with consumption such as food and clothing shopping. Visiting museums and attending concerts were also deemed appropriately feminine. But the presence of women on the streets, of the feminine within the masculine sphere, was attended by social anxiety and therefore was allowed only under prescribed regulations. A woman seen out alone after a certain time of night—or on the "wrong" street—was immediately marked as an outsider to society's norms, that is, as some form of social outcast. The doctrine of separate spheres was therefore both spatial and ideological. Home was a woman's space, but feminine activities could take place in public sites. As Linda Nicholson states (1986:43):

*Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland; e-mail: eab@geo.ed.ac.uk

**Department of Geography, Florida Atlantic University, Davie, Florida; e-mail: domosh@acc.fau.edu

The spatial division separating the inner sphere of the home from the outside world had, however, a symbolic significance that did not correspond precisely with the spatial division. Certain out-of-home activities, such as visiting with or ministering to the needs of kin or community or taking part in the affairs of church or charitable organizations, were also permitted to women. Thus the separation is more adequately understood as a separation between two worlds governed by different norms and values.

Whether they occupied the city streets or the residential hallways, women like Sophie Hall were associated with, and symbolized, a prescribed set of norms.

In this article we suggest that there are significant but neglected connections between the regulation of public space to which Sophie Hall was subjected and the exclusionary effects associated with the regulation of public spaces in western cities in the late-twentieth century to which several commentators have drawn attention (for example, Davis, 1990; Marcuse, 1995; Mitchell, 1995; Shields, 1989; Smith, 1996; Sorkin, 1992). We offer a feminist perspective on these connections through an exploration of the historical and ideological unfolding and reshaping of the dichotomy between public and private. We will draw particular attention to the changing contours of the relationship between gender divisions and distinctions between public and private spaces (compare Duncan, 1996; Riddick, 1996; Staeheli, 1996). In so doing, we suggest that some recent discussions about the relative decline of public space in western cities have tended to assume too great a fixity of meanings and as a consequence of this have sometimes unwittingly replicated essentialist versions of public and private (compare Berman, 1986; Fraser, 1991, 1992; Goss, 1996). What we want to suggest here is that a historical analysis will allow us to see how and why these terms have been constructed in particular ways at certain key moments in the past and that this understanding can illuminate what is at stake in contemporary constructions. Our argument follows loosely the discussion provided by Linda Nicholson in her important book *Gender and History*, in which she persuasively demonstrates the importance of historical and ideological analysis in understanding the separation of private and public spheres. We plan to draw out the spatial implications of her arguments and so to highlight the interwoven nature of gender, class, and space in the historical constructions of private and public.

To provide some historical specificity to our analysis, we will outline scenarios of particular women's lives in three different time periods, focusing on spatial qualities of the accounts we explore. We make no claims as to the representativeness of these women's lives, but we do think the insights gained from these "stories" are useful in creating a historical

framework for understanding contemporary debates about private and public spaces. We also appreciate that none of these women's lives has been presented to us naively or transparently. Our sources of information range from poetry to diaries to interviews, in which we look for traces of class and gender relations that help us understand the experiences portrayed. As Joan Scott (1992:26) reminds us, "It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience." In other words, we hope to begin to uncover the conditions, "the workings of the ideological system" (Scott, 1992:25), in which the experiences of these women were being constructed (see also Domosh, 1997). Through attending to the meanings attributed to and associated with particular spaces, we can illuminate something of the "shaping" of distinctions between public and private, lived through particular gender and class relations (compare Kaplan, 1996; Kirby, 1996).

We explore first the gendered construction of public and private space that developed in the early modern period by examining a poem written by the English poet John Skelton (1460?–1529) about the brewer Elinour Rumming. This poem illustrates with particular clarity the ideological underpinnings of the alignment of masculinity with public space and of femininity with private space. It also points to the critical relationship between gender and class that is integral to this separation and that continues to the present day, although its specific contours change. We continue to explore those contours through the stories of Sophie Hall, who visited New York City in the 1870s, and Moira MacDonald,¹ a resident of present-day Edinburgh.

"The Tunning of Elinour Rumming": Gender and Class in the Separation of Public and Private in Early Modern England

Historiography situates the period now called the early modern as a transition between feudalism and capitalism, between the medieval and the modern, between the decline of the power of the aristocracy and the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie (Braudel, 1992; Harvey, 1989; Toulmin, 1990). This time period, lying somewhere between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, is therefore of vital importance in interpretations of the origins of modern social organization. It is also the time period in which most scholars agree that the private and public spheres became separate, if not actually, then at least ideologically.²

"The Tunning of Elinour Rumming," written by John Skelton, a popular English poet of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, reveals much about this moment.³ "The Tunning of Elinour Rumming" is a derisive and comical portrayal of a woman brewer in Surrey who is visited in her barnyard by many other women looking for drink, women who bring with them all sorts of objects to barter for the beer. The scene Skelton

describes is a space of lewd behavior and uncontrolled activity, with animals and beer and women commingled:

And this comely dame,
 I understand, her name
 Is Elinour Rumming,
 At home in her wonning [dwelling];
 And as men say
 She dwelt in Sothray,
 In a certain stead
 Byside Lederhead.
 She is a tonnish gib [beer-brewing old cat];
 The devil and she be sib.
 But to make up my tale,
 She breweth noppay [foaming, strong, heady] ale
 And maketh thereof port-sale [public sale to the highest bidder]
 To travelers, to tinkers,
 To sweaters, to swinkers [laborers],
 And all good ale drinkers . . . (lines 90–105)

Elinour Rumming is brewing and trading beer in her yard, a fairly common practice for medieval peasants hoping to supplement their small incomes and a job, that, like weaving and spinning, was usually assigned to women. But Skelton writes this poem neither to celebrate peasant culture as a part of the English national identity that was being constructed at the time, nor to amuse, as in a Chaucerian picturesque scene of the lower classes. Rather, he presents an exposé of the lower classes, of the tattered lives and unsanitary ways of Elinour and her friends:

Some look strawry [as if from straw],
 Some cawry mawry [coarse, rough material];
 Full untidy tegs [hogs],
 Like rotten eggs.
 Such a lewd sort
 To Elinour resort
 From tide to tide.
 Abide, abide,
 And to you shall be told
 How her ale is sold
 To Mawt and to Mold. (lines 148–158)

Why was Skelton so keen on exposing the vulgarities of such places and such people? Historical geographers tell us that someone like Elinour, residing in the countryside not far outside of London in the early-sixteenth century, lived in spaces undifferentiated by what we think of

today as “private” and “public,” whether those terms refer to the differences between the domestic and the economic, between the individual and the communal, or between the intimate and the formal (Vance, 1971; compare Squires, 1994). But massive changes were occurring in the English landscape just at and after the time of Elinour Ruming, changes in ways of thinking about land and money and individuals and society, and such changes led to the segregation of different land uses so that farming activities were separated from other forms of production, with brewing one of those activities that was removed from the homestead. And it is often assumed that it is this separation of home and place of production that led to a decline in the relative power of women, as the “important” places of production were physically removed from the spaces of women. Feminist historian Linda Nicholson (1986) has urged us to examine carefully the historical roots of the purported separation of private from public so that we can decipher the very interrelated nature of such modern conceptions as the family, the state, and the economy. Using the story of Elinour Ruming, a lower-class peasant woman and brewer, we provide a very brief introduction to the historical geography of this separation of private from public as spaces and as practices, asking all the while why Skelton would write a poem alerting all to the vulgarities of brewing women and their spaces.

What we today consider private space—those areas that we individually or as a family have sovereignty over, in other words, our homes⁴—was hardly private for Elinour Ruming. Her yard is the site of both beer production and beer consumption, as well as the barnyard and social center. Private space, in the sense of individual land ownership, was quite a foreign concept in medieval times (Mumford, 1966; Vance, 1971). But we know that soon after the time of Elinour Ruming, brewing production and consumption began to occur in locations physically separate from domestic space, as brewing became capitalized and centralized and hence more profitable. We also know that it became a male activity (Amt, 1993). As historian Judith Bennett (1994:59) points out: “In 1300 many villages boasted numerous female brewers who supplemented their households’ income by selling ale to friends and neighbours; in 1700, those same villages hosted only a handful of male brewers.” We don’t mean to suggest here that there was some “golden age” for women during the medieval period, for assuredly that is not the case, only that private space in a modern sense was not particularly applicable. Domestic spaces included a large range of economic and social activities and were not gendered in any decided manner.

The spatial differentiation of the brewing industry that occurred in the early modern period is not unique; throughout this time, a large range of productive activities were increasingly removed from domestic space. And coincident with this process was the redefining of domestic space into the space of what was to become the bourgeois family. Elinour

Rumming's beeryard was meant to become her "front" yard. By 1700, women like her were no longer the producers and retailers of beer. The dwelling was to be a homogenous space, a home to the "modern" family that would include a wife, her husband, and their children. It is interesting to note that in Skelton's poem, written in the early 1500s, no "modern" families are present, only women. Nor is Elinour's space home to any of the values we usually associate with the modern family, that is, intimacy, affection, and mutual care. Instead, her yard is a space of lewd and uncontrolled activity, of telling tales and swapping swine.

What are we to make of this ideological change, as private and public space come to be defined in distinction to each other? Why does John Skelton portray Elinour Rumming's spatially undifferentiated yard as a space of ridicule? According to Linda Nicholson (1986), the modern bourgeois state and economy that emerged in this period required the assertion of certain values to distinguish itself from feudalism and the aristocracy, values such as individualism, utilitarianism, and egalitarianism.⁵ These values came to characterize the new economy and body politic—and therefore the new public spaces, which included separate places of production and of consumption. In our brewing example, this means that the newly emerging and centralized brewing centers where beer was produced and the alehouses and taverns where it was sold and consumed embodied values such as individualism and egalitarianism. Interestingly, as Habermas (1989) reminds us, many of those alehouses and taverns figured prominently as the spaces in the early modern city identified with the emergence of the public sphere.

At the same time, the domestic became the seat of power for men where some of the values of the aristocratic world continued—that is, where the new bourgeois male could assert power by virtue not of economic power but of kinship. According to Habermas (1989:47), "The independence of the property owner in the market and in his own business was complemented by the dependence of the wife and children on the male head of the family; private autonomy in the former realm was transformed into authority in the latter and made any pretended freedom of individuals illusory" (see also Pateman, 1988). Habermas points out that the construction of these two realms in the early modern period—that of the private bourgeois family and the public economic and political sphere—was completely interrelated. Yet ideologically it was important to keep these two sets of values separate; it was important to see the bourgeois order as entirely removed from the previous feudal order in which kinship was the major organizing principle of society. The increasing association of women with private space and men with public space enabled society to legitimize the new state on grounds of equality and instrumentalism, while maintaining traditional forms of patriarchy within the domestic realm. In this way, the new public spaces could be uncontaminated by those values of a previous order: such

values as intimacy and mutual care were physically removed to the private space of the home. It is important to remember that we are speaking here at the level of ideology—in reality, the two spaces and values were, as Habermas reminds us, deeply interwoven. If the new bourgeois male would have to compete in an egalitarian and instrumental way in the public sphere, in the private space of his home he could be a master by virtue of his kinship position.

Thus, we can think of Skelton's poem as part of an emerging literature that served to create, define, and legitimize a new world order in which land uses (both rural and urban) were to be segregated into private and public.⁶ It did so by highlighting the evils of a spatial and social order that, if Skelton could have anything to do with it, would soon be a thing of the past. Skelton, a learned man who was named laureate by both Oxford and Cambridge and who became the tutor of the future Henry VIII, was a member of the emergent bourgeois class. (Skelton was a member of the royal court, but was not one of the nobility. His professional status as tutor and then clergyman, combined with his considerable education, positions him as a man of both worlds—partly aristocratic, partly modern bourgeois.) As such, he writes about Elinour Rummung with disdain—not only because she is a woman, but because her ale-making is completely unsanitary, being brewed in the same place where the barn animals roam: "The hens run in the mash-fat; / For they go to roost / Straight over the ale-joust, / And dung, whan it comes, / In the ale tuns" (lines 188–192). He is also shocked by what the women are willing to barter for the beer—not having money, they will forgo anything for ale, since they are not the thrifty and sober housewives Skelton finds familiar:

Instead of coin and money
 Some bring her a cony [rabbit],
 And some a pot of honey,
 Some a sale, and some a spoon,
 Some their hose, some their shoon;
 Some ran a good trot
 With a skillet or a pot;
 Some fill their pot full
 Of good Lemster wool:
 An huswife of trust
 Whan she is a-thrust [thirst]
 Such a web can spin;
 Her thrift is full thin. (lines 242–254)

Only when the beer-making is removed to its own place and its commercial potential regularized by capital will it be safe to drink. Only then will Elinour Rummung's yard become a proper, private home, where men can

assert their kinship authority. And only then will Elinour Rumming become an appropriate bourgeois woman.

By following the story of Elinour Rumming, whose home is anything but private, we can trace how new class and gender identities and new constructions of space began to emerge through struggles over the location of social practices. We can also see what was at stake in those struggles: the status and power of the new bourgeois man. With the economic power of men like John Skelton being tested in the public marketplace, it became more important that their patriarchal power could be assured and maintained at home. The public spaces of the emerging mercantile and capitalist system were defined in direct distinction to the private realm of hearth and home.

This understanding of the particular circumstances in which private and public space came to be defined in distinction underlines why feminists of all hues disagree with the notion that urban public space has ever been "democratic." From the early modern period onward, the definition of public spaces has depended on who is included in the "public." Working-class, racialized men, together with women from all classes and racial groups, were excluded at the moment when modern forms of public and private space emerged and have, in varying ways, struggled for inclusion ever since.

The example of Elinour Rumming also shows the ideological importance of aligning gender roles with the separation of public and private spaces and practices. The legitimization of the new bourgeois classes required the maintenance of two dichotomous value systems—one system, the home and family, joined together by kinship, governed by deference, tempered by "love," and reproduced through the labor of nurturance; the other, the state and economy, joined together by fraternity, governed by laws, tempered by egalitarianism, and reproduced through individual labor. These two opposing systems could both be maintained by aligning the first with the world of women and the second with the world of men. In this new bourgeois ideology, men were thought of as essentially equal; therefore the burden of maintaining dichotomous value systems was displaced from class to gender. Sexual difference bore the ideological weight necessary to the new bourgeois order—since sexual difference was "natural," so too were the differences between the values of family and the values that now governed the state and economy. And these two became mutually reinforcing: if different value systems adhered to different sexes, then certainly it was true that different sexes were essentially dissimilar. This "naturalization" of essential differences between men and women—and therefore between two different sets of values operating in two different types of spaces—became more clearly defined throughout the early modern period. The ramifications of it reached ultimate expression with the industrialization of the nineteenth century.

Sophie Hall Visits New York: Gender and Access to Public Space in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

We want to turn now from Elinour in the early modern period to consider the world of Sophie Hall, who lived in the mid-nineteenth century, a time when the full forces of modernity were taking shape and transforming social and material worlds. Mass industrialization served to attenuate the distinctions in value systems we outlined in the previous section. By the mid-nineteenth century, almost all productive activities had been removed from the home, and homes themselves, especially those of the middle classes, were increasingly located in areas distant from the centers of production (Davidoff and Hall, 1987; Mackenzie and Rose, 1983). The doctrine of separate spheres came to dominate almost all aspects of middle-class life. As Catherine Hall (1992:106) notes about mid-nineteenth century Birmingham, "The separation between the sexes was marked out at every level within the society—in manufacturing, the retail trades and the professions, in public life of all kinds, in the churches, in the press and in the home."

The activities of Sophie Hall in New York City give us some historical and geographical specificity with which to illuminate the delineation of public and private spaces integral to these processes. We don't know much about the context of Sophie Hall's life, only that she was a white woman who lived in Wilmington, Delaware, and who visited New York City in 1879 with her husband, an Episcopal minister (Abelson, 1989; Leach, 1993). She stayed at a boarding house and kept a detailed diary of her daily activities.⁷ As a visitor to the city, she was not constrained by her domestic duties and spent most of her days touring different sights in the city, shopping, and visiting with friends. The account of her activities during her three-month visit, therefore, is not indicative of the daily life of a typical middle-class woman living in the city, whose activities would be much more mundane. We have chosen to focus on Sophie, however, precisely because she affords us a view of the experiences that the new public spaces of New York could offer to a relatively unconstrained middle-class woman.

An account of the first week of her visit indicates the range of activities that characterize the rest of her stay. On Friday, January 31, her first day, she gains a sense of the extent of the city by visiting Central Park at the northern end and then traveling to the Battery at the southern tip. On Monday morning, she and Miss Payne go shopping on Ladies' Mile, the district centered on Broadway and Sixth Avenue between Tenth and Twenty-Third Streets, which was the city's new consumer showpiece. They visit Macy's, King's, and Altman's, but do not buy anything. In the afternoon, they visit the Museum of Art, which is located just on the edge of Ladies' Mile. Tuesday afternoon finds them on a "promenade down Broadway" to attend a lecture by a missionary at a church on University

Place. They then walk to Fourteenth Street, in the Ladies' Mile district, to shop at Tiffany's, Madame Demerest's Bazaar, Smith's Bazaar, and a piano store. That night she and friends attend a lecture "just for women" called "A Night on the Acropolis." The following day, she and Miss Frazier start out at nine o'clock and spend the entire day shopping, both "downtown" (the "old" retailing area south of Houston Street) and then, after taking the streetcars, on the Ladies' Mile, particularly at Stewart's department store. When they return home at ten minutes past four o'clock, they are told that "Mr. Hall and Professor MacNeill were quite alarmed about us."

Sophie spent the rest of her visit in a similar manner—shopping, visiting museums, strolling on Broadway, listening to lectures and concerts, attending church. She never went out alone, nor did she stay out past dark (four o'clock) unless accompanied by her husband. She was not meant to be seen eating or drinking in public. Her activities were all sanctioned by Victorian standards as appropriately feminine. And the locations and settings of these activities in New York had been patterned to make them safe and appropriate for women (Domosh, 1996). The new identity of the nineteenth-century middle-class woman, as consumer and upholder of cultural and religious norms, was inscribed into the physical fabric of the city, and that physical form reinforced the identity.

An entire genre of urban guidebooks for visitors to New York City, guidebooks meant for middle-class men, shows how a masculine visit to the city would include quite different activities.⁸ Stores, museums, and churches are barely mentioned; instead, lengthy descriptions are given of areas of "ill repute" where men ate and drank, went dancing, gambled, and met women of dubious character (Blumin, 1990; McCabe, 1872; Smith, 1868). And many of these activities took place very close to the Ladies' Mile, but at night. This also indicates that working-class women moved about and experienced the city in very different ways from middle-class women (Smith-Rosenberg, 1985; Stansell, 1987; Wilson, 1991). In certain respects they moved through urban space with greater "freedom" than middle-class women, but their lives were tightly circumscribed by their economic circumstances and social status.

The public spaces of the city, then, were both gendered and classed, and they prescribed appropriate behavior for middle-class women. Found in the wrong place or at the wrong time, such women were at risk of jeopardizing their middle-class, feminine identity. Although technically the streets and parks of nineteenth-century New York were public in the sense of not being controlled by private interests, the definition of that public space was exclusionary and gendered in very specific ways. Certain spaces were meant for certain types of behavior.⁹

Sophie Hall's account of her days in New York also illustrates the growing importance of a middle-class culture of consumption and the significance of women as society's consumers (Blumin, 1989; Douglas, 1977). The development of a consumer culture through the nineteenth century

and its close association with women and the feminine have particular significance here for two reasons: first, because they illustrate the changing spatial form of the bourgeois value system that we outlined in the previous section and, second, because this “feminized” consumer culture itself influenced the reshaping of nineteenth-century cities.

To elaborate: the late-nineteenth-century industrial order required on the one hand a societal commitment to the values of production, such as hard work and utilitarianism, and, on the other hand, a commitment to the values of consumption, such as self-indulgence and playfulness. These seemingly contradictory values could be maintained by aligning the first with the world of men and the second with the world of women. Women could be self-indulgent and act as society’s consumers, while their husbands worked hard in the offices and factories. The contradictions became complementary when so aligned. This ideological development followed the contours begun in Elinour Rummings’s time, but incorporated the new consumer culture within it. However, in terms of actual space, this development could be potentially disruptive, since it required women, the bearers of “feminine” values, to enter the masculine spaces of the city to act as consumers. As one of us has recently shown (Domosh, 1996), this potentially disruptive act was neutralized by the development in the nineteenth century of “feminized” consumer spaces within the city—if women had to be on the streets of the masculine city, then those streets and stores had to be designed as “feminine” (also see Blomley, 1996). This became a mutually reinforcing development: as portions of cities now accessible to women became associated with bourgeois definitions of femininity, women’s bourgeois identities could be determined by their locations within the city. Definitions of femininity became interwoven with delineations of certain spaces within the city.

The story of Elinour Rummings told of the creation of a public sphere removed from the domestic and defined by certain values, such as utilitarianism, that distinguished it from the private. As a middle-class woman, Sophie Hall could enjoy some of the facets of that public sphere as it was articulated in the nineteenth-century city, but she could do so only under very limited circumstances. The freedoms that the city streets afforded her were limited to behaviors dictated by the norms of late-nineteenth-century class and gender ideology. She was allowed into public spaces to attend to “feminine” activities—leisure activities or shopping. To assuage the anxieties caused by this potential transgression of value systems (the values of “family” taking place within spaces of economy and the state), many of those spaces were themselves transformed. Department stores, for example, were designed to be as much cultural and ornamental spaces as commercial spaces, with elegant lounges, displays, and architectural details (Domosh, 1996). Again, we see here the interwovenness of gender, class, and space in thinking about the separation of private and public. The new economic system required the maintenance

of dichotomous value systems (those of production and of consumption, those of work and family), and those systems were maintained by aligning them with the masculine and the feminine. So, even though the nineteenth-century economic and political order allowed women into the "public" spaces of the city, that happened not by diminishing the ideological differences between men and women or between the private and the public, but instead simply by shifting the boundaries (spatial and ideological) of those differences. Consumer spaces became "feminine," and "feminine" duties included that of consumption.

Towards Equality?: Gender, Class, and Urban Space in the Late-Twentieth Century

How have women's experiences of urban public space changed since Sophie Hall's lifetime? As we have noted, many commentators argue that the "public" qualities of urban space have been eroded in recent years. Certainly, a good deal of urban space has been privatized, whether through transfers from the state to the private sector or through "public" regulations that exclude particular groups of people such as homeless people, youths, and others (see, for example, Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Fyfe and Bannister, 1996; Johnston, 1995; Mitchell, 1995; Shields, 1989; Thornley, 1991). There is plenty of evidence to demonstrate how this is associated with a widening of economic inequalities (Davis, 1990; Harvey, 1989, 1996; Marcuse, 1995; Merrifield and Swyngedouw, 1996; Smith, 1996; Sorkin, 1992). Alongside these changes, middle-class women have been making some advances in certain aspects of public life, including participation in the formal political sphere and state bureaucracy (see, for example, Eisenstein, 1991; Watson, 1990) and in professional employment (Crompton, 1994; Savage et al., 1992). Within the urban middle classes, women have also become more prominent actors within housing markets, especially in the context of gentrification (Bondi, 1999; Mills, 1988; Rose, 1989; Smith, 1996; Warde, 1991). Consequently, to cast late-twentieth-century urban public spaces as uniformly less "democratic" than their nineteenth-century counterparts may be premature and may implicitly devalue issues of gender relative to those of class (compare Ruddick, 1996).

To explore this further, we focus on another woman, one who would appear to be well placed to take full advantage of what urban public spaces in the late-twentieth century have to offer. Moira MacDonald was interviewed in 1991 in the context of a project concerned with gender and gentrification in Edinburgh.¹⁰ A white woman from a Scottish middle-class background, she was in her early thirties, in a well-paid job, and living in her own owner-occupied apartment in a relatively affluent neighborhood very close to the center of Edinburgh. While her

experiences are likely to be quite different from those of the majority of women living in the city, we have selected her precisely because of her privileged position.

At the time of the interview, Moira was employed by an advertising agency, where she managed a portfolio of clients. Employed in a senior position in a sector of the economy that has expanded substantially in recent years and in which an increasing number of women have secured posts in management (Crompton, 1994), she appears to be a beneficiary of an equalizing of access to the public sphere. In practice, her path to a managerial level was not entirely straightforward, and her account conveys a tension between her belief in (the possibility of) gender equality in the workplace and her awareness of covert gender biases:

I was very keen to get out of the secretarial role and do the account handling function . . . I think that the policy was not to promote out of one function into another, which is totally counter-productive in my opinion. I don't think the company was a terribly pro-women company. . . . I left . . . and joined [another firm] at another level in a new job.

In her domestic life, too, Moira was very clear about her belief in gender equality, her emphasis suggesting that she senses resistance in this sphere also:

I'm of the opinion that there is no such thing as a woman's role and a man's role. A man is just as capable of pushing a Hoover round the room as a woman and a man is just as good a cook as a woman is and just as capable of taking children to school—there is no such thing, in my opinion, as something that is a woman's role.

Thus, for Moira, gender should have nothing to do with rights and responsibilities in any spaces, whether construed as public or private, and insofar as gender inequalities persist, she believes that they should be challenged. She implicitly invokes a principle of "sameness"—the overriding similarity between women and men—in support of her egalitarianism (see Bacchi, 1990; Snitow, 1990).

Moira married in her early twenties, initially moving into the apartment her husband owned, which they then transferred to joint names. She and her husband traded up soon afterward, but a few years later the marriage dissolved. They had no children. Moira moved back to stay with her parents for a few months and then bought her current home, a small apartment in a gentrified neighborhood very close to the center of Edinburgh.¹¹ Moira is, therefore, well placed to enjoy urban public space. Talking about her choice of neighborhood, she says:

I was keen to live in [the neighborhood] as a possibility because . . . I think it's a nice part of town; it's almost on the cusp of the New Town [another neighborhood] but doesn't have New Town prices; . . . it's very central for work, . . . a good shopping area, . . . a middle-class, acceptable, reasonably desirable residential area.

And yet she does not feel free to move about urban space at will. While she describes her own neighborhood as "reasonably safe" (also see Bondi, 1998), she is still acutely aware of her personal safety in local streets at night:

[I]f I'm not driving, I get a taxi, or someone else gives me a lift, and if I'm walking, I'm walking in the company of other people. . . . If I were walking up that lane [near her home] . . . [and] if there was a single man or more than one man walking together, I would be happier [to be] inside my front door. . . . [There have been] too many attacks on women especially in the most unlikely parts of town, areas that are considered "safe."

Two things are clear from this comment. On the one hand, Moira experiences urban spaces beyond "her front door" as qualitatively different from the space of her home. Her descriptions of urban space indicate a keenly felt distinction between public and private spaces and provide no hint of any erosion in the anonymous and unsurveilled attributes of public space (compare Duncan, 1996). The impact of this distinction persists despite her ability to use her privileges—including, for example, car ownership, whiteness, able-bodiedness—to mitigate many of its effects. Second, Moira's fears in dark, unmonitored public spaces are articulated in starkly gendered terms: she describes such spaces in terms of an ubiquitous, hostile masculinity.¹²

Moira's experience is typical of women of her social class: despite gaining access to managerial employment, which has brought with it sufficient resources to enjoy the privileges of car ownership and home ownership in a desirable neighborhood, she continues to experience her access to public space as constrained by her gender at certain times of day.¹³ Moreover, while she expresses a firm belief in the principle of gender equality within both the public domain of paid work and the private domain of domestic life, she offers no comparable sense of her "right" to move freely in urban public space. In other words, she does not question her experience of local streets at night as imbued with a hostile masculinity in the same way that she had challenged her previous employer for failing to promote women.

Comparing Moira's experience of urban public space with that of Sophie Hall, we see some continuities that are apparent alongside sharp

contrasts. In many respects, Moira's daily life shares a great deal with her male contemporaries of a similar age, class, and race (compare Phillips, 1987). They work in similar jobs, live in similar homes, and use similar means of transport. But what Moira shares with Sophie is that she adapts her behavior to cope with her sense of a strongly gendered vulnerability in certain places and at certain times. Moreover, to enhance her freedom of movement at night, she welcomes the surveillance offered by friends and by neighbors (and during daylight hours by others moving in the same spaces).¹⁴ Thus, Moira MacDonald does not experience an erosion of her democratic freedoms because of a decline in public space; rather, she remains constrained by the continuing threat and rhetoric of violence against women in unsurveilled public space.

We might think of the surveillance of public space appreciated by Moira as a continuation of the "feminization" of the city that began in Sophie Hall's time. In 1879, consumerism was more limited in spatial scope, and women's roles were more circumscribed—women were "allowed" into the downtown areas to be consumers at certain times, in certain locations, if those locations were feminized by designing and controlling them in particular ways. To a very large extent, the public spaces of late-twentieth-century western cities are spaces of commercial consumer activities (Knox, 1991; Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1991, 1995), and these spaces are feminized in the sense that, like the public spaces in which Sophie Hall moved, they are surveyed to create environments in which middle-class, feminine identities are fostered and protected (see, for example, Glennie and Thrift, 1996; Ruddick, 1996; compare Dowling, 1993). In this context, middle-class women are free to move in much the same ways as middle-class men. However, during periods when these cease to be spaces of commercial consumer activities—for example, at night (at least in some places)—surveillance declines, and the freedoms afforded to middle-class women decline, too.

Conclusion

As we have shown, the contours of the public/private dichotomy experienced by Moira MacDonald display some continuities with those of Sophie Hall's time, which we can trace back to the incipient modern forms evident in John Skelton's poem about Elinour Rummung. Initially, that dichotomy acted as an ideological tool for legitimizing the emergent bourgeois class, specifically as a way of distinguishing itself as both similar to the aristocracy (in that the family maintained kinship as its governing principle, allowing patriarchy to continue), yet quite distinct (in that the public world of the state and economy was governed by such things as egalitarianism and utility). And so began a process of separating public and private spaces in ways inextricably bound up with relations of gender

and class. Mass industrialization attenuated and shifted these interwoven divisions, since the feminine world of the family was now forced to participate in the public world of the economy. But the link between femininity and consumer activities enabled the values of production (coded masculine) to remain distinct from those of consumption. These processes created feminine spaces beyond the confines of middle-class homes and in this way reshaped the separation of the public from the private so that the value systems did not correspond directly to the distinction between public and private spaces.

By the late-twentieth century, the doctrine of separate spheres has largely broken down. Middle-class women in particular have advanced a great deal within the public sphere, and a rhetoric of gender equality has become the norm. More generally, the line separating consumption and production has become more fluid and unfixed and so, too, has the line separating the family from the state and economy. But women's widespread experience of unmonitored public spaces as strongly gendered suggests that some residues of the nineteenth-century distinctions persist. We have suggested that middle-class women's increased participation in the public sphere and especially their greater freedom of movement in public space can be understood in terms of the expansion of commercial consumer activities traditionally associated with the feminine. In this sense, we would argue that what is often described as a decline of public space is closely linked with a feminization of such spaces. The effects of this are complex, intensifying the exclusion of some (notably the poor), while facilitating the inclusion of others (middle-class women being the chief beneficiaries). Put another way, the lack of correspondence between the public sphere and public space has different consequences for different groups. If we are to build alliances sensitive to these differences, we must acknowledge such contradictions.

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Notes

1. Moira MacDonald is a pseudonym.
2. What we mean by "ideologically" is that during the early modern time period, the separation between these two spheres came to be seen as natural

and inevitable. The very real, material, and historical conditions that led to the separation were obscured for reasons we outline here. So even though the material, spatial separation between private and public was not complete in the early modern period, nor is it now, ideologically our society has seen the separation as a necessary and natural one.

3. Our understanding of the poem is based on the version in Rollins and Baker (1954). The rural setting of the poem contrasts with the urban focus of our central argument. However, the interpretation we offer focuses on an interweaving of space, class, and gender that was of crucial significance in processes of western urbanization.
4. In practice, of course, what we consider to be "home" is not necessarily experienced as "private" and is certainly not beyond "public" forms of sovereignty (see, for example, Bell, 1995; Duncan, 1996; Johnston and Valentine, 1995; Munro and Madigan, 1993; Squires, 1994; Veness, 1994).
5. Nicholson uses *bourgeois* as an adjective to describe the set of social, economic, and political changes that distinguish mercantile capitalism from feudalism. Although many of these changes were not manifest until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they certainly were rooted in processes that began in the two preceding centuries. *Webster's Dictionary* dates the word (as an adjective) to the mid-sixteenth century.
6. It is difficult to gauge the reception of such works as Skelton's given the relatively low level of literacy at the time and the lack of much contemporaneous written criticism or other documentation. What we can say is that today he is seen as part of the established canon of Renaissance literature in England, and this is what brought him to our attention. Skelton was, according to Rollins and Baker (1954:65), "the most considerable poet of early Tudor England."
7. This information is from the 1879 diary of Sophie C. Hall, located in the Rare Book Room of the New York Public Library.
8. Many small pamphlets were published, often by department stores, that outlined shopping and other leisure activities for women, and several ladies' magazines included such information. However, these were considerably different both in form and in content from the guidebooks, which were purportedly written for a general audience.
9. As several commentators have argued, the dynamics of the "gaze" was (and remains) of great importance in this gendering of space: identities were (and are) constituted partly through different positionings within a visual economy (see, for example, Pollock, 1988; Rose, 1993).
10. For an account of the project, see Bondi (1999).
11. This neighborhood has a good deal in common with those in Toronto described by Caulfield (1994) and with those in Montréal described by Rose (1989).
12. Statistically she is at a much greater risk of violence committed in domestic spaces by someone she knows, but the concern here is with her experience of public space, in which this discourse of hostile masculinity looms large (Pain, 1991).
13. The fears associated with public space reported by Moira MacDonald are widely shared by women of all social classes in western urban societies (see, for example, Koskela, 1997; Mehta and Bondi, forthcoming; Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1992).
14. This appreciation of surveillance has informed efforts to make urban space safer—or at least to feel safer—for women (see, for example, Matrix, 1984; Wekerle and Whitman, 1995; Women's Design Service, 1988).

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