

HABITABLE CITIES:
MODERNISM, URBAN SPACE, AND EVERYDAY LIFE

by

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DEDICATION PAGE

For Natasha, Mom and Richard, Shannon and Dad.

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Abstract

The “Unreal City” of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* looms large over the landscape of critical inquiry into the metropolitan character of Anglo-American modernism. Characterized by the disorienting speed and chaos of modern life, the shock of harsh new environments and bewildering technologies, and the isolating and alienating effects of the inhuman urban mob, the city emerges here, so the story goes, as a site of extreme social disintegration and devastating psychic trauma; as a site that generates a textuality of overwhelming dynamism, phantasmagoric distortion, and subjective retreat.

This dissertation complicates such conventional understandings of the city in modernism, proposing in place of the “Unreal City” a *habitable* one—an urban space and literature marked by the salutary everyday practices of city dwellers, the familiar environs of the metropolitan neighborhood, and the variety of literary modes that register such productive and adaptive dwelling processes. Taking seriously Rita Felski’s consideration of the “multiple worlds” of modernity, and thus diverging from the canonical formulations of modern urban experience put forth by the likes of Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, my work explores the richly ambivalent and ambiguous modernist response to the spatial complexities of the metropolis, drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol in the two volumes of *The Practice of Everyday Life* to attend to the quotidian valences that signal a healthful engagement with the city. I uncover this metropoetics of habitability in the vexed response to the city’s network of interconnected spaces in T. S. Eliot’s *Prufrock and Other Observations* and *The Waste Land*; in the attention to the viable dwelling practices of individual urbanites—in contrast to city itself as dominant and dominating character—in John Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer*; in the routine daily operations on display in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*—breakfast, for instance, or running an errand; in the ordinary series of moments that constitute the work of everyday life in the familiar cityscape of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*; and finally in the broad-ranging depictions of urban life in Jean Rhys’s *The Left Bank and Other Stories* and *Quartet*.

List of Abbreviations Used

<i>CP</i>	T. S. Eliot, <i>Collected Poems: 1909-1962</i>
<i>LB</i>	Jean Rhys, <i>The Left Bank and Other Stories</i>
<i>MD</i>	Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>
<i>MT</i>	John Dos Passos, <i>Manhattan Transfer</i>
<i>PEL</i>	Michel de Certeau, <i>The Practice of Everyday Life</i>
<i>PEL2</i>	Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, <i>The Practice of Everyday Life Volume 2: Living and Cooking</i>
<i>Q</i>	Jean Rhys, <i>Quartet</i>
<i>U</i>	James Joyce, <i>Ulysses</i>

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Through the distinct and yet representative vision of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), the cities of modernism emerge—so the pithy and famous formulation has it—as “Unreal” (*CP* 54). Not so much a space to inhabit as to endure, to suffer in, to be overwhelmed and even undone by, the city in this standard guise inherits and elaborates a collective understanding of western urban modernity as site of the significant crises of the modern era. For Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, to give an obvious example, as seat of industrial capitalism the modern metropolis is home to the physical degradations and ideological manipulations that organize human relationships to the severe detriment if not the preclusion of community. Engels's alarmed response to the urban masses in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) registers this striking dynamic of social disintegration:

The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space. And, however much one may be aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking, is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of the great city. (69)

Nearly as famously, at least in the realm of urban studies, sociologist Georg Simmel underscores the modern city's potentially devastating effects on both individuals and the

community, arguing in “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903) that the hallmark of metropolitan psychology is “the intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli” and that the urbanite must protect himself from the “threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment which would uproot him” (48). For Simmel, the coldly rational state of mind needed to endure such environmental pressures functions in concert with the workings of modern commercial capitalism, by whose logic and practice human relations are objectified and thus debased, rendered unrecognizable from the perspective of the old sociality of town and rural life.¹

This perception of the city’s increasing inhospitability is of course also evident in the art and literature of the nineteenth century, in its struggle to come to grips with both the drastic changes wrought by industrial and urban growth, and their social and psychological effects. As Raymond Williams illustrates in *The Country and the City* (1973)—tracing this evolving response in British writing ranging from the Romantics (William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Blake) to Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Gissing, among others—urban experience comes to be marked not by signs of the richly varied collectivity seemingly fundamental to the city’s constitution, but rather by the “oppressive and utilitarian uniformity” of its masses; by “an absence of common feeling, an excessive subjectivity” (223, 215). In the wider European as well as the American context, as Desmond Harding explains, notwithstanding the array of responses to the multiple and contradictory energies of the urban scene, “a consensus emerged, which is more often than not epitomized by the sense of the city as a menacing force beyond the capacity of

human experience to control or even sometimes comprehend” (13). From Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s existentialism to Edvard Munch’s expressionism to Emile Zola and Theodore Dreiser’s naturalism to George Grosz’s futurism, the word is urban angst. Of course responses to the city are not only pessimistic: F. T. Marinetti’s exuberant, if considerably troubling, affirmation of urban dynamism; Claude Monet’s evocative depiction of metropolitan vitality; Walt Whitman’s exhilarated celebration of the democratic potential inherent to the masses.² But overwhelmingly the city generates an extreme reaction, one frequently at odds—or so we are told—with the practical modes and emotional registers of dwelling in a space hundreds of thousands, millions of people make their home.³

According to this dominant—but as I will argue, limited—critical narrative, the distinguishing characteristic of literary modernism’s response to the city—in which again we see a marked urban angst and antisociality—is its radical subjectivity (at times an *anti*-subjectivity), which is articulated in and through an aesthetic of dynamic fragmentation distinctive to the formal innovations of stream of consciousness narrative and particular modes of free verse, James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* being the most obvious examples in the Anglo-American context. Here, arguably, the material and social city disappears in the midst of at worst extreme personal or spiritual crisis (or even the erasure of the subject altogether) and at best considerable communal disfunction. For Williams, as for others, the city as symbol of “the new anguished consciousness” now dominates:

Struggle, indifference, loss of purpose, loss of meaning—features of nineteenth-century social experience and of a common interpretation of

the new scientific world-view—have found, in the City, a habitation and a name. For the city is not only, in this vision, a form of modern life; it is the physical embodiment of a decisive modern consciousness. (*The Country* 239)

Having taken on such associations the urban environment comes to exist mainly in the mind of its isolated inhabitants: “This is the profound alteration,” Williams notes of Joyce’s *Ulysses*. “The forces of the action have become internal and in a way there is no longer a city, there is only a man walking through it” (243). Community, as a result, also vanishes. Again with respect to *Ulysses*, Williams contends that within the stream of consciousness form, contextualized history gives way to more abstract relations and archetypes. “The history is not in this city,” Williams argues of Joyce’s Dublin, “but in the loss of a city, the loss of relationships. The only knowable community is in the need, the desire, of the racing and separated forms of consciousness” (245).⁴

Decontextualized in this fashion, the city takes on further symbolic associations, its specificity obscured, as modernism adopts the modes of French symbolism and turns to mythology and non-western cultural traditions to formulate elaborate symbolic systems—the ostensible aim being to transcend and/or order the world of chaos through these self-conscious and supposedly self-sufficient aesthetic forms. The symbolist influences on modernism are multiple, but the key figure is of course Charles Baudelaire, whose aestheticism exerted a profound effect (whether direct or indirect) on a range of Anglo-American modernist writers (W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, and Virginia Woolf, along with Joyce and Eliot, to name but the most well-known), and whose figure of the *flâneur* embodies a passionate engagement with the fleeting beauty and distinct cruelty of the

urban scene—an engagement fundamental, in Baudelaire’s theorization, to making art *modern*. Articulated in symbolic terms, Baudelaire’s obsession with Paris (whether expressed as zeal or revulsion) thus prefigures the city’s paradoxical status within modernism as dominant and yet displaced. The paradox is evident also in the related modernist interest in myth, for while its stabilizing symbolic structures clearly respond to and thus seek to order an unstable (urban) *world*, they at once give rise (ostensibly at least) to significantly new and viable aesthetics marked by their *autonomy*.⁵ Consider Eliot’s famous claim in “*Ulysses, Order, and Myth*” (1923) that Joyce’s allusive connections (Yeats’s as well) offer “a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” and thus take “a step toward making the modern world possible for art” (177-78). Eliot’s assessment of this modern panorama betrays just the totalizing decisiveness Williams identifies in tracing the emergence of a “new anguished consciousness” dissociated from its culturally specific formative context in being universalized—the product, as Williams puts it in “Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism” (1989), of “the conviction of what is beyond question and for all effective time the ‘modern absolute,’ the defined universality of a human condition which is effectively permanent” (38). Eliot’s amorphous and thus rhetorically powerful evocation—one outdone only by *The Waste Land*’s “Unreal City,” notably an allusion to Baudelaire’s *Les fleurs du mal* (1857)—speaks to this universalizing, dehistoricizing, decontextualizing, despatializing move. As for the city—principal site of the predations of the modern—it disappears in the midst of Eliot’s panorama, where contemporary culture is obscured in an aesthetic vision of chaos,

and, in a telling characterization, the world is not to be made ready again for people, as a viable *social* space, but rather for art.

Williams's discussion of the city in modernism takes us back to the scene of the modern in calling attention to the need to deconstruct the processes by which modernism in literature and the arts achieved its canonical status and perceived shape as ahistorical formalism and thus recover and uncover an understanding of the dialectical relationship between modernism and modernity—a critical approach fundamental to the revisionist strategies of the 'new modernist studies,' whose multidisciplinary and multiperspectival approaches have radically remapped the contours of what is now understood to be an extremely varied and contested field of cultural production and engagement.⁶ While such interrogative remapping has been fruitful in so many regards, the city, while itself arguably rediscovered, has in many respects retained its canonical shape as "Unreal," as strange and alienating; linked still, as James Donald puts it, to the "psychic and spatial diseases of modernity" ("This, Here, Now" 193).

Williams's position in this regard is telling, for while he is convinced of the need to reconsider the relationship between modernist practice and its social and cultural moment in the city in order to better understand modernism, he is also perhaps too much convinced of the putatively definitive shapes and modes of metropolitan experience. In "When Was Modernism?" (1989), Williams offers the following synopsis of the function of the modern metropolis with respect to certain novel early twentieth-century literary and artistic forms:

Paris, Vienna, Berlin, London, New York took on a new silhouette as the eponymous City of Strangers, the most appropriate locale for art made by

the restlessly mobile émigré or exile, the internationally anti-bourgeois artist. [...]

Such endless border-crossing at a time when frontiers were starting to become much more strictly policed and when, with the First World War, the passport was instituted, worked to naturalize the thesis of the *non-natural* status of language. The experience of visual and linguistic strangeness, the broken narrative of the journey and its inevitable accompaniment of transient encounters with characters whose self-presentation was bafflingly unfamiliar, raised to the level of universal myth this intense, singular narrative of unsettlement, homeless, solitude and impoverished independence: the lone writer gazing down on the unknowable city from his shabby apartment. The whole commotion is finally and crucially interpreted and ratified by the City of Émigrés and Exiles itself, New York. (34)

Drawing attention to this urban stereotype as “universal myth” and “singular narrative,” Williams of course prompts a questioning stance toward the nature of modernism’s relation to the “unfamiliar” city, the “City of Strangers.” Still, if he seeks to expose and problematize the myths surrounding modernism and the city, he could go further to question the relative singularity of the alienating material urban environments that ostensibly generate such responses. In “Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism,” Williams does stress the array of modernist reactions to the metropolis, “from the Futurist affirmation [...] to Eliot’s pessimistic recoil” (43). However, in his discussion of the relationship between the city and modernism’s distinctive fascination

with its own practices, the major emphasis falls, still, on the conditions associated with urban angst and unhealthy sociality:

The formulation of the modernist universals is in every case a productive but imperfect and in the end fallacious response to particular conditions of *closure, breakdown, failure and frustration*. From the necessary negations of these conditions, and from the *stimulating strangeness of a new and (as it seemed) unbonded social form*, the creative leap to the only available universality—of raw material, of medium, of process—was impressively and influentially made. (“Metropolitan Perceptions” 47; emphasis mine)

That the city in modernism largely fails to function as a community for Williams is evident in his call for “an alternative tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margin of the century, a tradition which may address itself not to this by now exploitable because quite inhuman rewriting of the past but, for all our sakes, to a modern *future* in which community may be imagined again” (“When Was Modernism” 35). In what follows, my goal is to consider an alternative reading of the city *within* this tradition.

Frederic Jameson had arrived at a similar conclusion to Williams in the 1981 *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, in which Jameson aims to establish, as Williams does, a politicized dialectics of modernism and modernity, so as to move beyond formalist New Critical paradigms of modernism or other reductive interpretive models that position modernist (and other) works in a one-dimensional, reflective relationship with social or literary history.⁷ While Jameson thus employs “a terminology of reification, of fragmentation and monadization, which can be used

alternately to characterize social relations in late capitalism and formal relations and verbal structures within the latter's cultural and literary products" (in other words, social form mirrors literary form), he does not posit a mere causal relationship between socio-historical context and cultural/literary text. Rather, if I understand him correctly, Jameson emphasizes the element of a more conscious responsiveness on the part of cultural agents within the dialectical matrix:

if our aim, as literary analysts, is rather to demonstrate the ways in which modernism—far from being a reflection of the reification of late nineteenth-century social life—is also a revolt against that reification and a symbolic act which involves a whole Utopian compensation for the increasing dehumanization on the level of daily life, we are first obliged to establish a continuity between these two regional zones or sections—the practice of language in the literary work, and the experience of *anomie*, standardization, rationalizing desacralization in the *Umwelt* or world of daily life—such that the latter can be grasped as that determinate situation, dilemma, contradiction, or subtext, to which the former comes as a symbolic resolution" (42).

If, however, Jameson aims to carefully contextualize and thus "reassert the specificity of the political content of everyday life," by characterizing everyday modernity in such fairly one-dimensional terms—as a homogenous, homogenizing, and dehumanizing environment—he seems to me to fall short in his attempt to historicize and thus confront, as he suggests, the "multiple realities of concrete everyday experience" that constitute

modernity (22). Like Williams, then, Jameson recovers a manifold social, political, economic, and cultural field only to read it reductively through a totalizing Marxist lens.⁸

More recent studies that take up the city from a host of related perspectives are equally limited in presenting a restricted range of urban spaces and experiences. David Frisby's 2001 *Cityscapes of Modernity*, for instance, while addressing its investigations of the modern metropolis to the "ambiguities and contradictions of modernity" (12), nonetheless offers a relatively reductive reading of urban space in attending primarily to metropolitan themes and figures that diminish the city's status as ground for a variety of practical modes of dwelling, for example the often-tumultuous and thus threatening dynamics of the rationalizing urban money economy or the familiar figure of the *flâneur* as reader and producer of chiefly *texts* and as witness mainly to the extremes of the modern condition.

The *flâneur*, as depicted and theorized most influentially by Baudelaire and then Walter Benjamin, in his numerous meditations on urban space and modernity, has in many respects dominated critical discourse on the city in modernism (and on modernity in general).⁹ In Baudelaire, *flâneurie* speaks to the intoxicating energy of the urban scene and its masses. As famously articulated in "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), the *flâneur*'s aestheticized interaction with the city crowd is liberating in its paradoxical disengaged engagement; he may be at home, but only in the throes of a self-transcendent ecstasy inspired by metropolitan dynamism:

His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd.

For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of

movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world [...] The spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. [...] Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life. He is an ‘I’ with an insatiable appetite for the ‘non-I,’ at every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always unstable and fugitive. (9-10)

Here is the exterior, public urban world—the modernity of Baudelaire’s city is certainly not to be found indoors—as “phantasmagoria,” which Baudelaire’s model *flâneur*, friend and artist Constantin Guys, transmutes into art, his insatiable curiosity never tiring of the city’s “ferment of violent activity” (11), but importantly replacing this vital world with his pictures “more living than life itself.”

In Benjamin’s Marxist reading of the *flâneur* the city is cast in a rather different light, but it is still marked by extremes and is no less uninhabitable. Central figures in Benjamin’s prehistory of modernity,¹⁰ both Baudelaire and his *flâneur* provide entry points for a wide-ranging materialist investigation of nineteenth-century Parisian culture, as Benjamin traces the earliest signs of the radical transformations and predations of

modern industrial and consumer capitalism. The allure of the city felt by the *flâneur* is thus for Benjamin the allure of the marketplace:

The *flâneur* is someone abandoned in the crowd. In this he shares the situation of the commodity. He is not aware of this special situation, but this does not diminish its effect on him and it permeates him blissfully like a narcotic that can compensate him for many humiliations. The intoxication to which the *flâneur* surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity around which surges the stream of customers. (“The *Flâneur*” 55)

Swept up in and thus objectified by the urban commercial realm, the *flâneur*'s freedom is but an illusion. The community with which he and Baudelaire both engage is for Benjamin no collective but rather a throng of consumers; “socially they remain abstract—namely in their isolated private interests. Their models are the customers who [...] gather at the market around their ‘common cause’” (63). This “amorphous crowd” is characterized by its “inhuman make-up” (“On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” 165, 172), which, while strangely fascinating for Baudelaire, in Benjamin's reading suggests the catastrophic shocks of an instrumentalizing and dehumanizing landscape. So, while Baudelaire's reading of Edgar Allen Poe's “Man of the Crowd” (1840) emphasizes the invigorating potential of the urban masses, in Benjamin's reading Poe's crowd emerges as a collection of automatons whose uniform and automatic reactions to their surroundings suggest the conditioning of the mechanized factory, where man is made use of by machine and thus divested of his humanity.¹¹

Whether dehistoricized by the machinations of canonical high modernist literary criticism or rehistoricized by a range of often-totalizing materialist approaches to literature and culture, the cities of modernism and modernity continue to be configured so as to appear—even if in a variety of forms—unreal: alienating, dehumanizing, antisocial, or given toward extremes (whether psychic, aesthetic, or socioeconomic). A notable example of the persistence of such conceptions can be found in William Chapman Sharpe's 2008 *New York Nocturne: The City After Dark in Literature, Painting, and Photography, 1850-1950*, which, while an absolutely wonderful study, serves almost as a quick guide to this range of limited canonical responses to urban spaces in a Western (primarily Anglo-American) cultural tradition.¹² Sharpe is straightforward as to his approach; his book “concentrates not on nocturnal urban ‘reality’ as lived by various socioeconomic groups but on how creative individuals have in memorable ways depicted and reinterpreted that ever-evolving reality for themselves and their audiences” (3). Such depictions are indeed highly memorable; still, it is frustrating to encounter yet again the range of familiar urban topoi and responses: the Baudelairean symbolist, aesthetic response to urban ephemera; the adventure and mythical allure of the “sheer spectacle” of the city at night; the urban as almost exclusively an exterior, and visual, realm; the “rapid transformations,” “accelerated innovation” (8), and “unprecedented reality” (9) that suggest a uniform, even totalizing modernity; the urban sublime, whether apocalyptic or rapturous; loneliness and alienation; the psyche as city and the city as psyche: “how the urban night has come to mirror the electrified darkness within” (32).¹³

Seeking to offer a different vision of the city in modernism—the city as *habitable* space—my discussion responds to what Rita Felski helpfully and succinctly articulates as

the “partial view” of modernity which (as Sharpe’s study among others illustrates) has influentially shaped understandings of modern urban space within literature and without. As Felski outlines, identifying the critical trajectories delineated above, sociological and literary-artistic paradigms have given rise to the dominant notions of the modern: the latter sees it as “synonymous with the rise of bureaucracy and capitalism, the unchecked expansion of technology and industrialization, the loss of overarching meaning, and the profound alienation of human beings,” while the former regards it as “an experience of crisis and groundlessness that is simultaneously exhilarating and terrifying” (*Doing Time* 58). These conceptions are ultimately unsatisfying, Felski argues, because they overlook crucial elements of an experience of modern time and space, particularly the “multiple worlds” (61) that constitute a complex cultural modernity whose meanings are generated and contested by a wide variety of agents at a range of sites and levels—macro but also, importantly, micro. Felski thus attends to “everyday practices, popular forms of cultural expression, and the rich but often overlooked textures of daily experience” (59). For Felski, this “complex swirl of behaviors, perceptions, places, and ways of feeling that make up the fabric of daily life” is a sign of the manifold and contradictory modernities that throw into question conventional notions of the modern: its totalizing dominance; its typical subjects and experiential registers; its ostensible governing polarities; the nature and logic of its aesthetic responses and analyses (67).¹⁴

In reading a range of urban-focused texts from the Anglo-American literary modernist tradition—T. S. Eliot’s early poetry, including *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and *The Waste Land* (1922), John Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), and Jean

Rhys's *The Left Bank and Other Stories* (1927) and *Quartet* (1928)—my goal is to recover some of these “multiple worlds” so as to identify a modernist urban vision characterized not by the inhospitable “Unreal City” but by the habitability engendered by a range of urban practitioners and practices. Against the dominant formulations of the city in modernism, which, as we have seen, understand the city in extreme terms, frequently articulating a pessimistic response to an ostensibly uniformly uninhabitable space, I argue for an ambivalence toward the manifold spaces of the modern city that in these texts speaks to a recognition of the city's dwelling potential. A more nuanced understanding of the city in modernism (and, for that matter, both the city and modernism on their own) requires an appreciation for the way in which modernity, like modernism, signifies in multiple ways. To regard, for instance, the subjects of modernism as embodied, social subjects who routinely experience and engage with their manifold surroundings on multiple levels—from the interior mental workings of memory and contemplation, to the full range of the senses, to the variety of ordinary human behaviors and emotions—is to consider the ongoing negotiations with space that come to constitute viable dwelling practices.

Taking on the “Unreal City” involves an awareness of the value of these more ordinary, everyday experiential registers which obtain even in the charged environments of the modern metropolis. As Felski points out, the everyday has been considered antithetical to modernity (at least modernity as a *valued* concept) because of its association not with progress and innovation but with the arguably restrictive, deadening, imprisoning forces of modern life; the routine and mundane. The everyday is hardly so one-dimensional, however. For Felski it “is also a reminder of the persistent rhythms of

human embodiment and the recurring need to carve out patterns of stability and continuity within the maelstrom of change” (*Doing Time* 71). The temporality, modality, and spatiality associated with the everyday—in Felski’s formulation, repetition, habit, and home—need not always be objects of denigrating critique; to be defamiliarized and thus resisted or transcended. Additionally they need not necessarily be celebrated as sites of radical resistance. The contrary, rather, is true, for it is often in their relative neutrality that the practices and registers of everyday life can be integral to a healthful and meaningful relationship with one’s environment. As Franco Moretti has argued, interrogating Walter Benjamin’s typification of urban experience as shock, “the question we have to ask is whether the category of the traumatic and exceptional event is really the most appropriate for the analysis of the experiences of urban life” (*Signs* 116). “[C]ity life,” Moretti contends, “mitigates extremes and extends the range of intermediate possibilities; it arms itself against catastrophe by adopting ever more pliant and provisional attitudes. It is no accident that the city dweller has always appeared as a typically ‘adaptable’ animal” (117).

In drawing attention to the habitable urban spaces depicted in Eliot, Dos Passos, Joyce, Woolf, and Rhys, I rely on this specific sense of the everyday’s salutary dynamics. Important to my project is the work on the everyday by Michel de Certeau, in both the first volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) and, with Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, in *Volume 2: Living and Cooking* (1980). Here, the authors elaborate a range of arguments in regard to “ways of operating,” as de Certeau explores how a practical means of interaction—“doing things” (*PEL* xi)—facilitates a healthful and productive engagement within a cultural milieu where the “ordinary man” (de Certeau’s “common

hero” or “anti-hero” [*PEL* v, xxiv]) is frequently understood to be passive and subject to control. In contrast, then, to those theories of modernity that stress its totalizing power, even if diffuse, de Certeau’s articulation of an “antidiscipline” (*PEL* xv) discovers within the dominant order a plurality of operations taken up by users to make habitable their environment. As de Certeau frames it, “These ‘ways of operating’ constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production.” “If it is true,” claims de Certeau, “that the grid of ‘discipline’ is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it” (*PEL* xiv). Luce Giard lucidly summarizes the project in her introductory remarks to Volume 2:

It seems that, beneath the massive reality of powers and institutions and without deluding oneself about their function, Certeau always discerns a Brownian motion of microresistances, which in turn found microfreedoms, mobilize unsuspected resources hidden among ordinary people, and in that way displace the veritable borders of the hold that social and political powers have over the anonymous crowd. (*PEL2* xxi)

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* such resistance takes form in the idiosyncratic use of consumer products; in ways of active reading informed by memory; in a paradoxically mobile yet rooted urban wandering; in the social gestures of the neighborhood; in domestic practices such as cooking. A number of these practices emerge in the cities of the works considered in this dissertation as I elucidate their depiction of urban dwelling spaces and practices.

Overlooked or undervalued in scholarship on the city in modernism, de Certeau's "ways of operating" speak to an urban dynamic that marks cities out as habitable in their everyday valences. Now, by invoking and employing the term 'everyday,' I realize I am bringing to bear a truly vexing concept, one that is justifiably problematized. Indeed as Ben Highmore has argued, "The everyday offers itself up as a problem, a contradiction, a paradox: both ordinary and extraordinary, self-evident and opaque, known and unknown, obvious and enigmatic" (*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 16). To demonstrate that the everyday cannot be considered merely "a reality readily available for scrutiny" and that it contains "aspects of life that lie hidden," Highmore points out, for instance, that

To invoke an ordinary culture from below is to make the invisible visible, and as such has clear social and political resonances. To summon-up a specific everyday, or to call a group of people together so as to recognise a shared everyday life, has been an important step in bringing to visibility the lives of those who have been sidelined by dominant accounts of social life. But this has never been a simple act of calling on an already understood daily culture—in many respects it has needed to produce that culture (as problematic) in the first place. (*Everyday Life Reader* 1-2)

Because, as Felski has also argued, the everyday "epitomizes the quintessential quality of taken-for-grantedness," the problematizing Highmore highlights has become a standard approach to the consideration of everyday life. Frequently, then, as Felski outlines, "habit is excoriated as the enemy of an authentic life, an insidious, invisible, corroding away of the soul. [...] The all-too-familiar numbs and pacifies us, lulling us into a trance-like forgetfulness; unable to experience the vivid, clamoring there-ness of the world and to be

fully immersed in the moment, it is as if we had never truly lived” (Introduction 608). The defamiliarizing practices of Dada, the Surrealists, Henri Lefebvre, and the Situationists, among others, seek therefore to transform the everyday in order to escape its ostensibly insidious limitations and distortions.¹⁵

Modernism, of course, has also been understood in this way, its ‘making it new’ identified with, to borrow from Felski again, “moments of world-disclosing rupture and shock that are contrasted to the homogeneous and soul-destroying routines of daily life” (Introduction 608). Following Felski’s lead in defamiliarizing this problematic need to defamiliarize, my work on daily life in the cities of modernism considers how the modes and valences of the everyday—habit, routine, the familiar—come to constitute processes of healthful dwelling, and not symptoms of the subtle predations of modern (urban) life. In Highmore’s terms, my work thus summons up and brings to visibility lives and practices sidelined in critical accounts of this literary terrain, producing a modernist everyday urban culture so as to problematize modernism’s “Unreal City” and thus articulate a habitable city in its place.

Doing so involves considering the further set of ambiguities that obtain as regards everyday life. As noted above, given the variety of responses to the realm of the quotidian, it will not always do to regard it with disdain as mind-numbing or soul-crushing; nor will it do to idealize it as a space resistant or subversive to power.¹⁶ Rather, a phenomenology of the everyday attunes itself to “the sensuous feel of culture” (Highmore, *Everyday Life Reader* 32), to quotidian experiential textures that comprises not only the visual and the verbal, but as Highmore underscores, “the aural, the olfactory and the haptic” (*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 26). This “somatic, sensational life,”

as Terry Eagleton has wonderfully described it in his discussion of aesthetics, “is nothing less than the whole of our sensate life together—the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal, biological insertion in the world” (13). It is, moreover, as Felski maintains, “a repertoire of acquired abilities and practical skills”—a “*know-how* as opposed to *knowingness*” (Introduction 615). And yet it also obtains at the level of knowledge, ideas, and beliefs: for Felski, “The air we breathe is thick with the thoughts of others; daily life always comes to us from elsewhere, whether the stock beliefs and prejudices of past generations or the film sets of the Hollywood dream factories.” Everyday life, then, while it may be distinguished from other forms of knowledge, practice, and experience, cannot be simply set in diametrical opposition to them; “both heterogeneous and hybrid,” it encompasses a remarkable range of responses and practices (Introduction 616). The tremendous difficulty of establishing for certain just what constitutes the everyday leads us back, importantly, to de Certeau’s consideration of quotidian “ways of operating.” Here, Felski’s discussion is once more extremely helpful: “Everyday life,” she explains, “cannot be plausibly defined in terms of either its distinctive content or its unique ontological qualities; rather, it is best understood as a form of orientation to one’s environment, a way of rendering macrocultural systems meaningful and intelligible by translating them into manageable structures of sense on a human scale” (Introduction 618).

My analysis positions such adaptive practices alongside a set of textual dynamics attuned to the multiple and variable operations of daily urban life. This involves a reconsideration of modernist aesthetics, as I evaluate how the landmark innovations in

early twentieth-century prose and poetics communicate not only the crises of the modern but its significant range of experiences, the ordinary included. In contrast to many standard analyses of modernist interiority, for instance, I follow Victoria Rosner, who is skeptical of traditional understandings of modernism's inward turn. In Rosner's estimation this interest has become "a myth that literary modernism tells about itself: that consciousness is the writer's exclusive subject, that reality is merely the phantasmagoric projection of interior life onto the outside world" (11). Rosner's *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* (2005) takes important steps in working against this critical bias so as to better understand modernism's relationship to both the modern subject and modern space. Starting from the basis that "In order to fully understand the psychology of the modernist subject it must be allowed that interiority has spatial as well as cognitive dimensions" (12), Rosner moves to consider the relationship between literary modernism's construction of interiority and the emergent early twentieth-century domestic spatial realities with which modernists were engaged. "[A]t the very moments when modernist literature depicts itself as autonomous and sealed within psychological interiors," Rosner argues, "it is most reliant on the built environment of things, rooms, and spaces" (13).¹⁷ My exploration of a range of urban spaces and spatial practices thus reads modernist interiority—for instance the internal monologue or stream of consciousness styles evident in Dos Passos, Joyce, and Woolf—as an ambiguous record of the multifaceted practices of everyday life; not as retreat but as engagement; and neither as always a heightened, epiphanic response, but as acclimatized, oriented appropriation of space.

Similarly, as regards the fragmentation and striking juxtapositions typical of modernist verse—Eliot’s for example, but also the hyper-kinetic prose of Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer*, which clearly integrates such formal manoeuvres—I consider how such techniques reflect not only the speed and chaos of the modern but its further quotidian registers. As Edward Timms puts it, rehearsing a standard understanding of modernist innovation, “the dynamics of city life generated new forms of expression which accentuated its energy and turmoil. Conventional modes of representation were no longer adequate” (3). Ezra Pound’s famous comment about the literary mode suited to urban life speaks effectively to this sense of modern dynamism, and to the way in which an experience of the city could be communicated in linguistic terms, the “energy and turmoil” captured in a disjointed language:

The life of a village is narrative; you have not been there three weeks before you know that in the revolution et cetera, and when M le Comte et cetera, and so forth. In a city the visual impressions succeed each other, overlap, overcross, they are ‘cinematographic,’ but they are not a simple linear sequence. They are often a flood of nouns without verbal relations.
(Rev. of *Poesies* 110)

Works like *The Waste Land* or *Manhattan Transfer* are model examples of this new literary mode: fragmented and chaotic texts that in their move away from narrative reflect a fragmented and chaotic environment. But while the techniques employed by the literary innovators of the twentieth century certainly speak to surroundings that were unquestionably turbulent at times, and can thus evoke a set of highly charged responses, these forms, so I argue, also reflect the variety of spaces and variations in experience that

attend the modern, the diverse set of dwelling practices taking place within its “multiple worlds.”

Through this lens a poem like Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro” (1916)—

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough. (381)

—speaks not only to the striking, arguably haunting ephemeral encounter with the urban crowd (and as per Pound’s definition, a set of visual impressions and nouns unconnected by verbs), but also, given the suggestive but ultimately ambiguous juxtaposition of urban and rural imagery, to a contemplative engagement with one’s surroundings—one hardly characterized by Simmelean shock or revulsion, or even Baudelairean intoxication.

Likewise, in the fleeting urban encounter of William Carlos Williams’s “The Great Figure” (1921)—

Among the rain

and lights

I saw the figure 5

in gold

on a red

firetruck

moving

tense

unheeded

to gong clangs

siren howls

and wheels rumbling
through the dark city. (317-18)

—there is the alarming energy and velocity of the urban scene, embodied in the “tense” movement of the truck, the “clangs” and “howls” of its siren, and its “wheels rumbling” urgently toward the emergency of the fire, which itself further suggests the dangers of city life. That the machine is “unheeded” is telling, however, for if this suggests more than that at night there is simply no one there to see the firetruck, it also suggests, then, that the spectacle is not entirely overwhelming. If this is true, the poem’s goal may be in part to highlight and denounce an acclimatization to routine human disaster, given that here the gaze of the speaker/viewer certainly takes heed. But even if Williams’s goal is to draw attention to this menacing urban spectacle—to reassert its motion and energy, a crisis gone “unheeded”—in doing so he slows it down, tracing the truck’s movements at intervals within and across his short, rhythmically uneven lines, succinctly capturing the potency and urgency of the impressions but also arresting them and thus giving voice to a engagement with the urban marked by its equanimity.

Attending to these kinds of ambiguity and ambivalence enables me to recuperate the variety of responses to the urban scene lost through the standard formulations of the relationship between modernism and urban space. Following de Certeau, and also Henri Lefebvre, I understand space as localized and thus concrete, and yet also mobile insofar as it constitutes a *practiced* place, its meanings variable and contested given its social and political ramifications—the manifold ways in which it is conceived and put to use. Lefebvre sets out in *The Production of Space* (1974) to illuminate the complexities of space as a specifically *social* (and thus historically and politically contextualized)

phenomenon. For Lefebvre space is neither a purely abstract phenomenon nor a purely physical one. “Social space,” he explains, “will be revealed in its particularity to the extent that it ceases to be indistinguishable from mental space (as defined by the philosophers and mathematicians) on the one hand, and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of ‘nature’) on the other.”

This must involve the introduction of new ideas—in the first place the idea of a diversity or multiplicity of spaces quite distinct from that multiplicity which results from segmenting and cross-sectioning space *ad infinitum*. Such new ideas must then be inserted into the context of what is generally known as ‘history,’ which will consequently itself emerge in a new light.

(27)

Given this historicized and thus materially and socially contextualized “unlimited multiplicity,” a further crucial facet of social space obtains: its “intertwinement” (86):

Considered in isolation, such spaces are mere abstractions. As concrete abstractions, however, they attain ‘real’ existence by virtue of networks and pathways, by virtue of bunches or clusters of relationships. [...]

Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another. They are not *things*, which have mutually limiting boundaries and which collide because of their contours or as a result of inertia. [...] Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity. The space of a room, bedroom, house or garden may be cut off in a sense from social

space by barriers and walls, by all the signs of private property, yet still remain fundamentally part of that space. (86-87)

In considering the more salutary modes of urban spatial practice as a way of rereading the modernist city, I rely upon such a conception of space—urban space in particular—as social and networked. In the heavily and densely populated spaces of the modern metropolis citizens dwell in close proximity—to each other and to the public spaces of the city. My discussion thus considers both urban exteriors and interiors, spaces both public and private—as well as the indeterminate liminal spaces that open up in between and thus frustrate these spatial dichotomies. As such I follow the important work of critics like Betsy Klimasmith and Sharon Marcus, whose investigations of domestic urban space in literature and culture stress the importance of the “connectivity and permeability” of built urban environments (Klimasmith 10); “the fluid relations among dwellings, streets, pubs, and cafés” (S. Marcus 7); and, further, the ways in which such cityscapes are successfully navigated by urban dwellers in effecting spaces of home within this mobile environment.¹⁸

In Simmel’s famous analysis this urban dynamic of spatial and social continuity is a chief source of the threatening excess of stimuli the urbanite is forced to endure and in response to which he cultivates an emotionless, hyper-rational, ultimately blasé state of mind as a protective measure. Simmel’s most convincing example of the novel psychological conditions of modern urban life, it seems to me, is his discussion of the contrast between the nature of communal forms of engagement in a small town, where one has a familiarity with one’s neighbors, and in the big city, where one often doesn’t. The result is an attitude of “reserve” as the internal workings of the mind function

independently of the external stimuli generated in such a social (or perhaps for Simmel, antisocial) network:

If so many inner reactions were responses to the continuous external contacts with innumerable people as are those in a small town, where one knows almost everybody one meets and where one has a positive relation to almost everyone, one would be completely atomized internally and come to an unimaginable psychic state. (53)

I am less convinced, however, by Simmel's suggestion that this reserve is articulated primarily as "indifference," "aversion," "repulsion," "antipathy," even "hatred" (53), or that such individuality amounts to loneliness or is undermined in a futile attempt to objectify it in materialist terms in response to an objectifying, materialist culture.¹⁹ These conclusions are part of that "partial view" of modernity outlined above. Simmel's point stands, however, that such urban conditions allow for a kind of individual freedom, as within the concentrated yet less rigidly structured social network the urban dweller encounters fewer barriers to his mobility—both physical and also intellectual or cultural (as regards attitudes, beliefs, values). Further, while Simmel ultimately places emphasis on the rationalizing, objectifying effects of an urban modernity in which "The individual has become a mere cog in an enormous organization of things and powers which tear from his hands all progress, spirituality, and value in order to transform them from their subjective form into the form of a purely objective life" (58), in recognizing the fluidity and expansiveness that characterize the urban scene and allow for a degree of individual freedom, Simmel affirms the possibility of putting such freedom to use:

The most significant characteristic of the metropolis is this functional extension beyond its physical boundaries. [...] Man does not end with the limits of his body or the area comprising his immediate activity. Rather is the range of the person constituted by the sum of effects emanating from him temporally and spatially. [...] This fact makes it obvious that individual freedom, the logical and historical complement of such extension, is not to be understood only in the negative sense of mere freedom of mobility and elimination of prejudices and petty philistinism. The essential point is that the particularity and incomparability, which ultimately every human being possesses, be somehow expressed in *the working out of a way of life*. (56; my emphasis)

Such “working out of a way of life,” as Simmel only briefly addresses, unfolds crucially within the networked social spaces of the city, which dynamic Simmel and later Lefebvre outline. For my purposes I distinguish between an urban dynamic of interpenetration or interconnection that allows for a “working out of a way of life” and the similar-seeming—but less habitable—urban dynamic suggested by other urban commentators. In the declarations of Italian Futurism, for instance, there is a notable spatial fluidity and interpenetration:

How often have we not seen upon the cheek of the person with whom we are talking the horse which passes at the end of the street.

Our bodies penetrate the sofas upon which we sit, and the sofas penetrate our bodies. The motor bus rushes into the house which it passes,

and in their turn the houses throw themselves upon the motor bus and are blended with it. (Boccioni et al. 151)

But these observations do not stem primarily from an awareness of an urban spatial dynamic whose fluidity or interconnection constitutes a field that allows for adaptive behavior on behalf of its citizens; on the contrary such commentary works in service of a radical Futurist aesthetic of shock and dynamism, one which responds to and exaggerates the city's energy and velocity, frequently in violent terms. Like Baudelaire's—and to a degree Benjamin's—*flâneur*, the Futurists' is an aesthetic engagement with the city's "ferment of violent activity" (Baudelaire 11). Consider Marinetti's hyperbolic announcement in his famous 1909 manifesto:

we will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by *riot*; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervour of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd. (251)

In his discussion of the *flâneur*, Paris, and the arcades, Benjamin, too, betrays an awareness of the interconnectedness of urban space, where the city is configured by the

comfortable perambulations of the *flâneur* as “one great interior,” and as such it “can appear to someone walking through it to be without thresholds” (*Arcades* 422). Benjamin does bear witness to the dwelling potential of the urban scene. “Streets are the dwelling place of the collective,” he argues, which collective is “an eternally unquiet, eternally agitated being that—in the space between the building fronts—experiences, learns, understands, and invents as much as individuals do within the privacy of their own four walls” (*Arcades* 423). In the arcades in particular—those modern commercial palaces of iron and glass that become home for idling wanderers—Benjamin sees this merger of interior and exterior. “It is in this world,” Benjamin claims, “that the *flâneur* is at home.”

The arcades were a cross between a street and an *intérieur*. The street becomes a dwelling for the *flâneur*; he is as much at home among the façades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enameled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done. (“The *Flâneur*” 37)

In Benjamin’s reading, however, as an “*intoxicated* interpenetration of street and residence” (*Arcades* 424; my emphasis), this urban dynamic of interconnection—or perhaps better, a dynamic of illusory transformation, given its prominence within the spectacular, phantasmagoric centers of trade, the arcades—comes to serve not the practice of urban *dwelling* but the circulation of the commodity, of which the *flâneur* is one.

Benjamin's discussion of the "porosity" of Naples may be usefully set in contrast to this "intoxicated interpenetration," given especially the former concept's association with a viable and adaptive communal urbanity ("Naples" 168).²⁰ As for Lefebvre, while I make use of his understanding of spatial networks to establish the idea of a fluid, liminal field of operation characterized by its diversity and multiplicity, I do not take up his Marxist project, which in *The Production of Space*, and also his multi-volume, career-long work *The Critique of Everyday Life*, is tied to a transformative politics that, in contrast to the work of de Certeau, focuses less on the effectual uses of space by the inhabitants of modernity and more on the proliferation of the dominant and oppressive effects of capitalism.

Most helpful for my purposes, then, are the two volumes of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, for here the authors employ an understanding of interconnected urban space to elaborate upon the healthful dwelling practices it enables as well as the ideological consequences of such practices. Central in this regard is chapter 7 of de Certeau's study, "Walking in the City," in which he locates his practiced antidiscipline in the city streets, contrasting the totalizing discourses of the urban with the manifold everyday operations that disrupt such conceptualizations. The distinction and accompanying critique are laid out in the chapter's wonderful opening, where de Certeau invokes the view of Manhattan from atop the World Trade Centre:

Seeing Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Centre.

Beneath the haze stirred up by the winds, the urban island, a sea in the middle of the sea, lifts up the skyscrapers over Wall Street, sinks down at Greenwich, then rises again to the crests of Midtown, quietly passes over

Central Park and finally undulates off into the distance beyond Harlem. A wave of verticals. Its agitation is momentarily arrested by vision. The gigantic mass is immobilized before the eyes. (*PEL* 91)

To take up such a view, de Certeau explains, “is to be lifted out of the city’s grasp,” “the bewitching [urban] world” transformed into “a text that lies before one’s eyes.” To read the city as text, according to de Certeau, is “to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.” As compelling as this perspective is, however—and even de Certeau admits “Having taken a voluptuous pleasure in it” (*PEL* 92)—it is only a fiction, an image or concept blind to the urban scene’s ultimate complexity and multiplicity. Accordingly, for de Certeau this “panorama-city is a ‘theoretical’ (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices” (*PEL* 93).

One of my main contentions here is that analyses of modernism and the city, despite paying attention to the subjective engagement with the urban scene staged within the works under consideration, have constructed such a totalizing fiction—misunderstanding the viable practices of modernism’s urbanites as symptoms of an inhospitable urban modernity or as a record of aesthetic disengagement or transcendence. In the latter case, in particular, the city becomes text and/or aesthetic object, as in the case of the intoxicated (dis)engagement of the *flâneur*, whose *rejoicing* in the city can hardly be called *living* in it. Consequently, the species of engagement with the city that ostensibly obtains (even if a measure of multiplicity is allowed) lacks a degree of connection with the actual range of operations that emerge on the urban scene.

Highmore's argument about the limitations of certain brands of poststructuralism and postmodernism applies here: "By submitting the world to a form of textualisation," he explains, this type of analysis "renders the 'real' simply out of reach" (*Everyday Life Reader* 32). Consider, for instance, Cecelia Tichi's elaboration of an American modernist "engineering aesthetic" (73), where the city comes alive not as a social space (in this regard it is a failure) but as a machine-age model for a kind of unifying textualization or systematizing. Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, Tichi argues, thus presents "human components integrated in a large-scale, dynamic system conceived on the model of machine and structural technology" (202); "[his] America exists purely as structure and mechanism" (211).²¹ To offer another example, James Donald's 1999 *Imagining the City* does a better job handling the problematics of an analysis of the imagined or textual city: "It is not," he writes, "that the images are over here, on the noumenal side of representation and text, as opposed to the phenomenal space of the city over there. The reality of the city emerges from the interplay between them" (41). From my perspective, however, the devotion to an analysis of "*the city, not a city*" (x)—given that the urban is in Donald's view "always already symbolised and metaphorised" (17)—is much too redolent of the kind of top-down conceptualizations de Certeau takes on and which, in the context of a discussion of modernism's cities, keep the simulacrum of the "Unreal City" alive and the habitable city unrealized.²²

Even Roland Barthes's meditations towards an urban semiotics are restricted in a related sense—not because Barthes presents any kind of totalizing, unifying signifying system by which to understand the city, but rather because the poststructuralist, anti-totalizing urban semiology he theorizes (a language of the city that "never posits the

existence of a definitive signified”) suggests but a limited range of characteristic urban modes and practices. Now, like de Certeau, Barthes underscores the idea that urbanites are *users*, and as such “actualize” and so make habitable their surroundings. Yet, Barthes’s notion of the “*erotic dimension*” of the urban—though conceptually broad in its encompassing of “*sociality*”—leads to a valuation of what I understand to be a multi-node “center-city,” the distinguishing function of whose sites, or centers, is the staging of “our encounter with the other” (“Semiology and Urbanism” 199) and thus “always experienced as the space in which certain subversive forces act and are encountered, forces of rupture, ludic forces” (200). What emerges, it seems to me, is city as system of endless signification—“extremely imprecise, challengeable, and unmanageable” (201)—wherein certain elements fundamental to urban habitation are, ironically, marginalized by the proliferation of “center-cit[ies]” (199):

the center-city is experienced as the exchange-site of social activities and I should almost say of erotic activities in the broad sense of the term. [...] [I]t has been observed that for the periphery Paris as a center was always experienced semantically as the privileged site where the other is and where we ourselves are the other, and the site where one plays. *On the contrary, everything which is not the center is precisely what is not ludic space, everything which is not alterity: family, residence, identity.* (199-200; emphasis mine)

While Barthes’s semiotics of the city resembles de Certeau’s insofar as it underscores the complexity and multiplicity of the urban text or language, Barthes’s privileging of alterity arguably sacrifices, or at least limits, the city’s dwelling potential,

its habitability. In my attempt to identify the habitable cities of modernism I thus follow de Certeau in considering how urban space takes shape by way of a multitude of everyday practices that are attuned to and, moreover, give rise to the viable array of dwelling spaces that constitute the urban network. In “Walking in the City” the pedestrian act emerges as the dominant trope, as de Certeau articulates the complex urban “mobility” (*PEL* 92) that, in its ultimate irreducibility to the discourses that would totalize or immobilize the city, constitutes a healthful everyday practice effected within and through the urban spatial network. Here de Certeau presents his paradoxical mobile dwelling, in which “To walk is to lack a place” but to appropriate a space:

The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place—an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, [...] a network of *residences* temporarily appropriated by pedestrian traffic (*PEL* 103; emphasis mine; cf. Barthes)

In *Volume 2: Living and Cooking* such practices of mobile dwelling are further articulated in an investigation of the dynamics of the urban neighborhood, in which an analysis of interconnected city spaces—specifically, “the link that attaches private to public” and, further, “The mastery of this separation by the dweller” (*PEL* 2 8)—is central. The urban social network is here revealed as a salutary environment given the urban dweller’s familiar position within it; the result, as Mayol, explains of a “progressive privatization of public space” (*PEL* 2 11):

The neighborhood is, almost by definition, a mastery of the social environment because, for the dweller, it is a known area of social space in which, to a greater or lesser degree, he or she knows himself or herself to be recognized. The neighborhood can thus be grasped as this area of public space in general (anonymous, for everyone) in which little by little a *private, particularized space* insinuates itself as a result of the practical everyday use of this space. (PEL2 9)

The ordinary, everyday practices examined in my study constitute such spatial appropriations, as the fluid, liminal spaces of the urban network are articulated, so to speak, by metropolitan subjects in establishing secure sites of dwelling. These practices take place in the city's range of spaces, both indoors and out, as urban dwellers' "mastery" of their environment takes shape in a negotiation of the fluid urban boundaries with which they are faced. At times such liminality is troubling, but at others it is crucial to a salutary interaction with one's surroundings.²³ The critical insight here is that the spatial dynamics typically associated with modernity and modernism—the "mobility, movement, exile, boundary crossing" which Felski identifies as being typically associated with "a vocabulary of anti-home," with the "chaotic ferment" of the modern (*Doing Time* 86)—are, rather, associated with the operations that construct habitable spaces.²⁴

Given the importance of the city as a setting for the broad range of works that constitute the varied corpus of Anglo-American modernism, an extensive treatment of this topic, needless to say, would prove extremely challenging. Like the city itself, this literary field is a rich site of investigation difficult to exhaust—even *more* difficult to exhaust, I would argue, given the potential to reassess these texts' grappling with urban

space in terms suitable to a wide variety of dwelling practices. In this respect, novels like Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936), and Dorothy Richardson's multi-volume *Pilgrimage* (1915-1967), among others, stand as viable ground for an exploration of modernism's habitable cities—as do works of poetry like Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), Hart Crane's *The Bridge* (1930), and William Carlos Williams's *Patterson* (1946-1958). Of course the range of metropolitan centres examined by the works of Anglo-American modernism also speaks to the multiplicity of the modern urban experience and hence to the possibility for many different urban visions. My selection of authors and texts allows me to cover a lot of ground: London, New York, Dublin, Vienna, Paris. But there are obviously other important cities that have inspired significant literary contributions well worth investigating—cities and works that fall outside the scope of my argument. Chicago is one example; or Harlem, the city within a city, whose idealized status as cultural Mecca and socio-political Promised Land in the American context of the Harlem Renaissance and the Great Migration of black Southerners to expanding northern urban centers in the early decades of the twentieth century, makes it a fertile field for the study of urban habitability in modernism. Such a study would take up issues of race, something I have not done here—so as not to do it inadequately—given my particular revisionist approach, which looks closely at three major figures (Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf) and two more minor figures (Dos Passos and Rhys), each of whose metropoetics is ripe for reappraisal in light of prevailing critical estimations of modernism and the city.

Beginning with a discussion of T. S. Eliot's poems from *Prufrock and Other Observations*, and then turning to *The Waste Land*, I consider in Chapter 2 how Eliot's treatment of the interconnected urban spatial network reveals a distinct ambivalence towards city life, a conflicted response which problematizes simple notions of the "Unreal City" as overwhelmingly inhospitable environment, as modern hell. By no means do I argue here that Eliot's response to the city be characterized as optimistic; I do suggest, however, that we cannot possibly fully understand the nature of his vexed response to the modern city without a more comprehensive examination of the complex spatial dynamics represented in his poetry and, also, addressed in his prose. Eliot's polytopic, networked cities comprise both indoor and outdoor spaces, drawing rooms and trampled streets, comfortable public parks and flowing crowds, gardens and vacant lots—an array of interwoven spaces that trigger a complex range of reactions within which there is room to identify the marks of dwelling.²⁵

Chapter 3 examines John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, which, like Eliot's landmark verse, has been conceived as a formal analogue to, and thus an indictment of, the excesses and depredations of the modern urban scene. Paying further attention to the variety of spaces and experiences that obtain within this urban setting, and particularly to the liminality that marks the city's interwoven spatial complex and enables the multivalent, adaptive practices of its citizens, I trace Dos Passos's ambivalent reaction to the city that struck him as both "marvelous" and "hideous" ("What Makes a Novelist" 271-72). Here, in distinction to readings of the novel that stress the importance of the city itself as the novel's principal, dominant and dominating character, I contend that in Dos Passos's devotion to literary characters as human subjects is a recognition of the city's

potential habitability—a facet of the metropolis Dos Passos registers (in addition to urban velocity and chaos) through his multivalent narrative techniques.

My discussion of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in Chapter 4 explores the salutary everyday dynamics of the urban neighborhood, examining how Leopold Bloom, and also, briefly, Stephen Dedalus, engage with their surroundings so as to counter the often oppressive, objectifying discourses that obtain on the urban scene. Here what emerges is a practice of everyday life articulated through the city's liminality; an appropriation of space that constitutes what Pierre Mayol describes, as noted above, as a "privatization of public space." I read Joyce's formal innovations in *Ulysses* (principally his use of internal monologue) as attuned to these appropriations, in their multiform, variable textuality—one which embodies a broad human experiential range. Whether actively shaping space in the domestic sphere or out in the commercial zones of the city, Bloom's everyday practice reveals the city's important ordinary registers; the degree to which habitual behavior—of which adaptivity is a part—is fundamental to a healthful interaction with the city.

I take up Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* in Chapter 5 to further assess the importance of habit and routine within the city, considering, importantly, its status as a *familiar* space. Woolf's representation of urban space, so I argue, takes into account a greater range of experiences than the momentous, epiphanic reactions to the city most often attributed to her novel's treatment of London. Clarissa Dalloway's perambulations in English metropole, along with her party planning and the party itself, emerge in my reading as records of a Woolfian everyday modernist aesthetic that ought to be regarded alongside her distinctive aesthetic of the moment. From this point of view, I see Woolf's

famous claim that “On or about December 1910 human character changed” working less to articulate of a moment of rupture than to highlight how character effectively adjusts to a new environment. Woolf recognizes, as Ben Highmore does, that in the context of a culture in flux, the momentous is assimilated into the quotidian. In addition to a reading of *Mrs Dalloway*, I offer here a close look at some of Woolf’s pioneering works of literary theory to draw out her sense of the importance of the routine practices of everyday life in the city.

Chapter 6 focuses on Jean Rhys’s early fiction, in *The Left Bank and Other Stories* and, more briefly, *Quartet*. Rhys’s position as a mobile émigré, having been born in Dominica, and then moving to England and travelling extensively on the continent, has functioned to secure her position within the expanding canon of modernist literature, but, notably, on the familiar ground that emphasizes the significant discontinuities of the experience of the modern in general, and the modern city in particular. In Rhys’s first book of stories, however, is a broad range of urban sketches that seriously complicate such a reading, as Rhys, like Woolf, exhibits an awareness of the falsity of the fleeting event or encounter, recognizing that a plurality of moments both precedes and follows such instances of the illusive, and elusive, moment. By presenting urban practitioners whose equanimity signals a healthful appropriation of a range of city spaces, Rhys connects the ordinary to the city’s habitability. And yet, importantly, Rhys also reveals an understanding of the degree to which certain forms of routine, depending on their economic viability, can be unhealthful in their unsustainability. I thus attend here to the critique of class which qualifies, though it does not undermine, Rhys’s vision of a habitable city.

Finally, in my brief conclusion, I examine further some of the difficulties of realizing an alternative to the “Unreal City,” but also offer additional reasons such a view of urban space and modernism should ultimately compel us.

Chapter 2

T. S. Eliot's Real Cities: Urban Networks in *Prufrock* and *The Waste Land*.

The Waste Land's litany of fallen cities,

Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

Vienna London

Unreal (*CP* 67),

succinctly expresses T. S. Eliot's pan-historical vision of Western Civilization's cultural and spiritual decline, and speaks to what Eliot describes, in "Ulysses, Order and Myth," as the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (177). "Under the brown fog of a winter dawn" (*CP* 54), the poem's London crowd allusively becomes both the Dantean damned and the spectral Baudelairean passers-by, and social reality, distorted and fragmented by the text's endless series of allusive and perspectival disjunctions, is replaced by a frighteningly disorienting vision of the modern as hell; as Raymond Williams puts it, "This is the city of death in life" (*The Country* 239). Much more (or maybe much *less*) can be gleaned, however, from Eliot's engagement with the urban spaces of modernity, for the *realities* of Eliot's early landmark verse constitute modes of experience other than the powerfully charged moments of phantasmagoric angst and apocalyptic crisis for which the poet is now (in)famous. Alive in Eliot's work are traces of the *lived* experience of the interconnected urban network, a multiplicity of spaces within which urbanites operate in order to make the city—at times at least, in Eliot's ambivalent response—habitable.

Of course Eliot himself emphasized the striking complex of urban imagery that speaks to the poem's vision of the city as hell. In his notes to *The Waste Land* he makes reference to the "Fourmillante cité" of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857) ("cité pleine de rêves, / Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant" [CP 71])—and also to Dante's *Inferno* (as regards *The Waste Land*'s "I had not thought death had undone so many. / Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled" [CP 55]). Later, in "What Dante Means to Me" (1950), Eliot discusses his debt to both of these poets, explaining that Baudelaire revealed to him the "poetical possibilities [...] of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric, the possibility of the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic" (126); and also noting that Dante was a point of reference for just such a juxtaposition; to "establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life" (128).

Not surprisingly, then, Eliot has garnered many of his own *semblables*, as it were, as critics consistently treat the foggy urban vision of the "Unreal City" as the chaotic Hell of modern existence. Marianne Thormahlen, for instance, identifies Eliot's legacy as the definitive reversal of the "ecstatic" Wordsworthian image of the majestic city, as Eliot's focus is the apocalyptic urban landscape's "concentrated pool of barren humanity" (140). Hugh Kenner similarly stresses *The Waste Land*'s apocalyptic overtones and the dissolution of "the Great city" into the poem's desolate wilderness ("Urban Apocalypse" 46). In such critical estimations of Eliot's work, actual urban spaces—streets, parks, drawing rooms, apartment buildings—become of secondary importance to a broader set of concerns and ideas, ones either deeply personal or broadly cultural and historical, often

both. In Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane's seminal *Modernism: 1890-1930*, for example, G. M. Hyde, attentive to the unreality of Eliot's cities, contends that for Eliot the pursuit of spiritual salvation "has more substance than the unredeemed urban multitudes, whom Eliot presses into service as specimens of degeneracy and sterility" (337). Robert Crawford likewise diminishes the significance of the material realities in Eliot's poetry, and, further, as is so often the case in this regard, concludes that the world supposedly ignored is a world of horror. Like the haunted, nightmarish cities of Dante, Baudelaire, and James Thompson's *The City of Dreadful Night* (1880), Eliot's metropolis is, in Crawford's words, "a city of the mind" (45), one which, shaped by the poetic imagination, becomes a terrifying symbol of "humanity in its horrific aspect" (41).²⁶

The Waste Land's discomfiting urban imagery is of course only part and parcel of the poem's richly allusive aesthetic of fragmentation that Eliot deploys—via his "mythical method"—in response to the ostensibly hellish contemporary scene, and critics have long considered the significance of the poem's many disorienting voices in commenting on the poem's fraught relationship to the modern; its attempt to either distance itself from this failed culture or redeem it. Both Gilbert Seldes and Edmund Wilson, in the early reviews of the poem, argue that its allusive historical weight functions as an ironic or redemptive foil to the degeneracy of its modernity. Wilson, along with Conrad Aiken and Elinor Wylie, sees in the poem's radical break from conventional form a poignant new voice whose lack of intellectual clarity is more than compensated for by its intensity of emotional and musical expression, its artistic mastery.²⁷ New Critical estimations of *The Waste Land* fall along similar lines. F. R. Leavis sets the poem's anthropological intertexts off against the "scientific spirit" of

modernity (94) and, along with I. A. Richards, hails the work as a unified “poetic triumph” (Leavis 113), a “music of ideas” in which “every fragment, as a fragment, comes victoriously home” (Richards 294). Cleanth Brooks also posits a unity within the complex array of juxtapositions, underscoring how the poem’s indirect and paradoxical affirmation of the Christian ideal of sacrifice works to redeem the “modern waste land,” which Brooks characterizes, tellingly, “as a realm in which people do not even exist” (186).

In the wake of the New Criticism the question of voice has remained a central concern in Eliot scholarship, to the neglect of the multifaceted (often urban) culture from which many of these voices spring. From Hugh Kenner’s “invisible poet,” with his countless performative masks and virtuosic “verbalism,” to Calvin Bedient’s unifying multi-vocal protagonist of *The Waste Land*, to John T. Mayer’s psycho-biographic approach to Eliot in *T. S. Eliot’s Silent Voices*, critics continue to focus on the multiplicity of voices in Eliot’s poetry, particularly *The Waste Land*, without an adequate appraisal of Eliot’s “contemporary history.” Understanding Eliotic polyphony as issuing from the deep recesses of the tormented soul, or as the final result of poetic genius in action, or both at once, scholars of Eliot’s voices, like those of his urban themes, regard textual details as signs of idiosyncratic psychological and spiritual trauma or as elements of an all-encompassing allusive poetic vision that turns the dross of modernity into art.²⁸ The social and material world—if ever a principal consideration, only nominally so—provides the basis for personal and poetic excursions but is never the primary focus.

The bias for voice and text against what David E. Chinitz calls “‘lived’ culture in Eliot” (196) is even evident in more recent studies of Eliot’s urban themes, where,

although critics may be less inclined to plainly accept the simple notion of the “Unreal City” as hellish site of urban alienation, they nevertheless emphasize the disjunction between Eliot’s urban imagery and the social and material conditions of the modern urban environment. William Sharpe, for instance, reads *The Waste Land* as a record of Eliot’s *flâneuresque* encounter, not with the passing stranger in the real city, but with the many passing and fleeting intertextual sources harnessed to construct an ideal poem capable of redeeming the sordid modern world: Eliot’s encounter with Baudelaire’s work is “more striking than any actual encounter the city could provide. [...] Eliot destabilizes time, space, and mimetic effect so that his metropolis became a polyphonic, multivoiced, unabashedly literary artefact” (118). Similarly, Eluned Summers-Bremner stresses the poem’s “Unreal” intertextual allusive polyphony over its depiction of concrete urban spatial details: “The London of *The Waste Land* [...] contains a relative lack of London voices, as well as of social and historical detail relating to the city. Instead, we find a montage of references to other cities, cultures, and languages” (268-69).

Of course in heeding Ezra Pound’s advice and excising much of the more realistic elements of *The Waste Land*’s early drafts, Eliot no doubt secured the prevalence of the tremendous surrealism borne of the poem’s linguistic diversity and hypertextuality.²⁹ Eliot’s critical work can, further, be read to suggest a related disregard for, especially, day-to-day reality; his famous suggestion in “The Metaphysical Poets” that “poets in [his] civilization [...] must be *difficult*” (65) suggests in a concise manner the elitism that was to become central to both critical validations of Eliotic high modernism and the subsequent attacks on it. The irony, of course, is that this necessity for poetic difficulty emerges in Eliot’s thinking as a direct *response* to the modern scene it ostensibly

dismisses. There is an emphasis on allusion and “indirection,” along with refinement and a facility with language, all redolent of Eliotic superiority and a disregard for the ordinary; but Eliot also emphasizes the comprehensiveness required to sufficiently engage with a complex contemporary scene:

Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning. (“Metaphysical” 65)

The comprehensive poet concerns himself with the quotidian as well as the elevated, taking into account the “multiple worlds” and “dramatic variations in human experience” that constitute modernity (Felski, *Doing Time* 61, 62). As Eliot argues earlier in the essay,

When a poet’s mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man’s experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes. (64)

What I would like to consider is that Eliot’s emphasis on the ability to *unify* disparate experience within “new wholes”—an aesthetic manoeuvre comparable to the work of Baudelaire’s *flâneur*, whose goal in articulating an art form attuned to the modern is to recognize the eternal in the fleeting moment and thus the duality of beauty and of man—need not necessarily constitute a gesture towards transcendence or the usually attendant

denigration of the material world. Indeed, Eliot's primary focus here is not the enduring but the real, the everyday: typewriters, food, and the voices and perspectives of characters inhabiting these ordinary situations. My goal in this chapter in taking up Eliot's depiction of the urban environment is to suggest that the ostensible *unreality* of his cities is frequently a function of their spatial *realities*, in all their "variety and complexity," and that in response to these urban dynamics Eliot betrays an ambivalence which complicates an easy reading of his "Unreal City" as hell.

Considering further "The Metaphysical Poets," an additional instructive irony emerges as regards the impetus in Eliot to form "new wholes," a move foundational to the problematic notion of modernist formal or linguistic autonomy frequently brought to bear in regard to Eliot's verse, and by which critics read Eliot's recoil from the scene of the modern. Important to note is that Eliot's discussion of the "dissociation of sensibility" by which he characterizes the difference between the metaphysical poets, chiefly Donne, and the English poetry that followed, from Milton and Dryden to Tennyson and Browning—a distinction Eliot describes as the "difference between the intellectual poet and the reflective poet"—stresses the insufficiency of a poetic idiom seemingly principally concerned with language, with the "poetic function" (64). Eliot's dissatisfaction is with a poetry in which "refined" language conveys only "crude" feeling; thus the importance of "trying to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling" (65)—that "essential quality of transmuting ideas into sensations, of transmuting an observation into a state of mind" (66). Eliot's discussion of poetic language here—far from outlining a discursive mode that divorces itself from the real world by way of its self-sufficiency—in fact articulates a discourse that upholds language's ability to engage

with and express localized, embodied, real-world experience. Eliot's striking conclusion captures his rejection of the artificial emotionality of the poets he critiques and his embrace of an idiom attentive to this complex range of experiential registers: "One must look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts" (66). There is even room for this type of multifaceted cultural engagement in Eliot's difficult notion, articulated in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), of the "new art emotion" that would ostensibly move away from real life in dismissing personal emotional expression. For such an "art emotion"—in aiming to comprehend or express more than merely the poet's specific personality and thus embody a "very great number of experiences" (43)—has the potential to explore just the variety of complex experiences Eliot suggests obtain on the modern scene.

The New Critical bias towards questions of poetic autonomy and unity (which often become questions of literary or spiritual transcendence), along with the further related critical bias towards Eliot's voices (his subjective personal and poetic voice as well as his use of high literary allusion), has led to a disregard for Eliot's significant concern for the complicated and varied landscapes and experiences of modernity as represented and commented on through his poetry, the cultures of cities chief among them. More recent important work on Eliot and modernism has, however, reconnected the poet and his work with a popular material culture supposedly anathema to the elitist, apolitical Eliot conceived and constructed by the practitioners of New Criticism—the Eliot of high institutional aesthetic Modernism. As a part of the new modernist studies' "return to the scene of the modern," the work of Michael North and others—like David E. Chinitz's excellent investigation of Eliot's engagement with American popular

musical forms, and Cassandra Laity and Nancy K. Gish's collection of essays examining gender and sexuality in Eliot—reveals, importantly, that former critical constructions of Eliot shaped by rigid notions of serious poetry, high and low culture, and the role of the academy in maintaining these categories, prohibit a thorough appreciation of the poet, his work, and their complex and contradictory attitudes towards modernity.³⁰ Chinitz expressly recognizes the opportunity for further investigation of Eliot's "'lived' culture"—"cultural practices" that are distinct from but not unrelated to the "cultural texts" that Chinitz deals with (196).³¹ The essays in Laity and Gish's collection do the very same, focusing on Eliot's "intricate and multifaceted engagement with various worlds of women, the feminine, homoeroticism, and desire" (6).

Seizing upon the opportunity presented by Chinitz and taken up by Laity and Gish, my discussion of Eliot examines the representation of lived experience in the urban material realities traced in his early poetry: walking, watching, and being watched in the city; inhabiting and frequenting an array of urban dwelling places and social spaces; negotiating the shifting and permeable boundaries of a dynamic physical and social environment and thus confronting and adapting to the new subject positions it engenders to discover new methods of inhabiting the metropolis. Like his engagement with jazz and music hall (themselves a part of city life), Eliot's depiction of urban space is illuminating in its nuanced response to the modern scene, one whose complexities are distorted by the critical legacy of the "Unreal City" and its stock of characteristic features and responses—squalor, decay, cultural and spiritual drought, dehumanization, despair, recoil. Eliot's cities are unquestionably turbulent at times, but they are hardly so one-dimensional.

Urban space here comprises a diverse set of locales which inspire a range of complicated and conflicting experiences and reactions. In Eliot's work the street and the crowd certainly feature prominently, but so do a variety of other public and private spaces that constitute the interconnected urban network: drawing rooms, apartment complexes, hotels, bars, city gardens. An examination of Eliot's interconnected urban networks is thus crucial to an appreciation of his varied poetic response to the complexities of modernity, one that is not hopelessly pessimistic but deeply ambivalent. Eliot's poetry marks the ways in which city spaces shape a range of subject positions, and his work reflects these spatial and social dynamics both thematically and formally. Subjective reactions to interconnected urban space in Eliot are marked by both anxiety and a sense of possibility, as the spatial arrangements of the modern city give rise to the potential for novel, viable experiences. So, while Eliot's urbanites surely despair at times, they also react with anticipation, excitement, ambivalence, even boredom as they move and/or rest within this network. Moving unrestricted through the city, for example, or moving from an enclosed domestic environment to a crowded urban street can constitute a challenge, as well as an alternative, to conventional authority or conventional notions of gendered identities, male and female (which would resist the dissolution of urban spatial boundaries). Further, although the city's flowing crowd can indeed work to confine—its pressures felt even in the supposedly private interior spaces that border close to the exterior world of the masses—Eliot recognizes the urban subject's ability to adapt to these conditions and thus appropriate habitable spaces. Such "privatization[s] of public space" (*PEL2* 11) can be liberating, for among the multitudes, in the liminal spaces of the urban network, the individual may shape space to enjoy a curious privacy or gain stability

through routine practice. More than reveal the debased state of modern existence, then, this range of responses to the urban environment is a sign of the many modes of dwelling in the city facilitated by its networked spatiality—a range of experiential registers that demands a reoriented understanding of Eliot’s aesthetics so as to bridge text and context.

To bear these observations out, my investigation of the *real, practiced* cities in Eliot’s early poetry looks first at a range of interconnected urban spaces in *Prufrock and Other Observations*—city streets, drawing rooms, apartment complexes—and then turns to *The Waste Land* to explore more thoroughly Eliot’s depiction of urban domestic space and women’s engagement with it, as well as the rural spaces that border on and even reside within the metropolis. To fully understand Eliot’s vision of urban life, with all of its tensions and contradictions, we need to consider his cities not only as cities of the mind or as material merely to be redeemed by art, but as cities that bear the marks of the actual—and at times healthful—urban spatial dynamics and practices of the modern scene that inspired Eliot.

* * *

Perhaps the most frightening vision of the urban environment in Eliot’s first collection is found in “Rhapsody on a Windy Night,” a poem that concentrates key themes and images from a host of the major poems in *Prufrock* and also looks forward, with its chilling phantasmagoria, to the nightmarish elements of *The Waste Land*’s “Unreal City.” The poem’s “crowd of twisted things” takes shape within the context of the speaker’s hallucinatory urban noctambulism, which reveals a desolate, disturbing, and dehumanized landscape: “A broken spring in a factory yard” is “Hard and curled and ready to snap” (*CP* 17); “A twisted branch upon the beach,” the “skeleton” of the world,

lies “Stiff and white;” there is the “crooked pin” of a “stained” woman’s eye (*CP* 16) and the uncannily mechanical child with “automatic” hand; further, in arguably the most wonderfully icky description in the whole collection, there is “the cat which flattens itself in the gutter, / Slips out its tongue / And devours a morsel of rancid butter” (*CP* 17).

These disturbingly evocative images betray Eliot’s symbolist influences as well as his interest in Henri Bergson’s philosophical queries into the nature of memory, perception, and temporality—both of which inform the poem’s exploration of the markedly subjective experience of time and space, in clear distinction to anything we might call realism.³² In Lyndall Gordon’s estimation, Eliot, taken by Arthur Symons’s *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), “was immediately struck by its call for a spiritual vision to eclipse the realistic tradition” (*Imperfect* 39). Bergson’s influence on the poem—a further ostensible sign of Eliot’s anti-realism—is evident here in the tension between the rigid clock time associated with (and also announced by) the orderly, talking street lamps, each of which “beats like a fatalistic drum” (“Twelve o’clock,” “Half past one” [*CP* 16], “Half-past two,” “Half-past three” [*CP* 17], “Four o’clock” [*CP* 18]) and the less rigidly ordered experience of the poem’s phantasmagoria (though talking street lamps, however orderly arranged, are also surely phantasmagoric), where

Along the reaches of the street
Held in a lunar synthesis,
Whispering lunar incantations
Dissolve the floors of memory
And all its clear relations and precisions. (*CP* 16)

This tension has frequently served for critics as an index to Eliot's Bergsonian privileging of the subjective over the objective, of the fluid flow of time and experience as perceived by the subject on the one hand, and the "divisions and precisions" of the structured external spatial world on the other—a realm in which pure *durée* is adulterated by human's inevitable position within it. Mary Ann Gillies, for instance, argues that the conflict between Bergson's antithetical notions of rigid external clock time and the internal *durée* linked to memory is the key source of the poem's nightmarish madness (81-82).

To posit such a tension in "Rhapsody" between internal fluidity and external rigidity is, however, to overlook the degree to which the external urban spatial world of the poem is itself marked by the dissolution of precise divisions. Of course, in the poem the street lamps work as the primary ordering, structuring agent within the exterior (read 'real') urban landscape—both in their association with clock time and their orderly arrangement along the street; and, further, in their more literal ordering of the speaker ("Mount. / The bed is open; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall, / Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life" [CP 18]). Yet, the poem's nocturnal perambulations and their accompanying subjective (read 'unreal') phantasmagoria still unfold "Along the reaches of the street," an image well-suited not only to the poem's fluid states of consciousness but also, crucially, to the city's relative boundless spatiality. The appearance of the "woman / Who hesitates toward you in the light of the door / Which opens on her like a grin" (CP 16), similarly, calls attention not to the putative divisions of the external cityscape but rather to their dissolution, as an interior world opens up onto the exterior world of the street. Moreover, the speaker's ambiguous claim that "I have

seen eyes in the street / Trying to peer through lighted shutters” extends and amplifies this dynamic of spatial interconnection (*CP* 17). The image thus gives us either eyes looking *out* from the inside onto the street through open-shuttered (and thus “lighted”) windows (eyes which are, further, through the poem’s ambiguous grammatical construction, “*in* the street”); or eyes *actually* “*in* the street” looking *in* through unobstructed windows (potential stand-ins for the speaker’s own position in the poem). Or the image gives us both. And, notably, the liminality of “Rhapsody”’s city setting is apprehended not only visually but olfactorily, as a host of juxtaposed smells—their imagined combined stench intensified by their intermingling—suggest the porousness of urban boundaries. The odours are designated a specific space—

Smells of chestnuts in the streets,
And female smells in shuttered rooms,
And cigarettes in corridors
And cocktail smells in bars. (*CP* 18)

—and yet we can imagine that just as they commingle in the speaker’s mind, so they would moving from bars to streets and between rooms through corridors.

If the “Unreal” is dominant in “Rhapsody,” then, it is not down solely to the mental phantasms of the poem’s dazed, and occasionally shocked and shocking *flâneurie*; for these effects stem from the connective urban space that, like subjective experience, can *lack* as well as display the “clear relations” that only seemingly characterize the objective material world. Now, as regards the dynamics of this world, clearly both terms of the dialectic of division and connection that operates within the poem’s urban setting work to generate threatening experiences, be it the ominous “grin” of the opening door

and with it the twisting pin of the woman's eye (*CP* 16), or "The last twist of the knife" that arrives when the speaker is arguably most distant from the city's more liminal spaces, at home, securely bounded within his domestic space ("You have the key," the lamp tells him [*CP* 18]) and yet oppressed by the mundane aspects of his life, the "matter-of-fact" bed, tooth-brush, and shoes. And yet Eliot's ambivalence toward the urban scene is evident here, for the fluid movement possible within and through the city emerges in contrast to the potential rigidity and monotony of modern urban life, personified in this case primarily by the street lamps, whose insistent utterances signal the landmark pressures of modernity—the rationalization, routinization, and mechanization represented chiefly by the ordered time of the clock.

"Rhapsody"'s chilling urban vision thus exemplifies Eliot's Baudelairean approach, with its "fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric" and its "juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic," as both 'real' and 'unreal' contribute to the poem's eerie and menacing atmosphere. The poem's ambivalence towards the city is, however, also key to Eliot's response to the urban network and the range of spaces and experiences generated therein.³³ Writing to Conrad Aiken in 1914 from London, Eliot expresses both the attraction and repulsion he feels toward city life. He is tired of Oxford and has grown to like London, for he feels more alive there; but urban space is also a source of significant anxiety. Examine the letter at length:

Oxford is all very well, but I come back to London with great relief. I like London, now. In Oxford I have the feeling that I am not quite alive—that my body is walking about with a bit of my brain inside it, and nothing else. As you know, I hate university towns and university people, who are

the same everywhere, with pregnant wives, sprawling children [...] I have decided to have no pictures on the walls [of my room....] Outside I should have two bells, viz—

(1) VISITORS

(2) PROFESSORS

AND THEIR WIVES

and the second should have no bell [...]

Oxford is very pretty, but I don't like to be dead. I don't think that I should stay there another year, in any case; but I should not mind being in London, to work at the British Museum. How much more self-conscious one is in a big city! Have you noticed? Just at present this is an inconvenience, for I have been going through one of those nervous sexual attacks which I suffer from when alone in a city. Why I had almost none last fall I don't know—this is the worst since Paris. I never have them in the country. [...] One walks about the street with one's desires, and one's refinement rises up like a wall whenever opportunity approaches. (*Letters* 81-82)³⁴

The city serves as a welcome stimulant and an escape from the ordinary, and yet at the same time it can offer too many stimuli. Eliot's oft-quoted remark about "walk[ing] about the street with one's desires" speaks to the recurrent Eliotic urban subjectivity evident, as we have seen, in "Rhapsody" and, as we will see, in "Prufrock"—one marked by the

sexual panic notably induced by the city's lack of boundaries (indeed, in erecting a figurative barrier to contain his sexual urges, the diffident Eliot cannot but expose the fluidity of the environment which prompted that retreat). Of course, the letter's early moments concerning Oxford and the trick doorbell resonate much less with Eliot's city poetry than do the comments here about streetwalking. The former set of comments do work as an index, however, to Eliot's range of responses to the city. Along these lines, consider, for instance, that the more general ambivalence of the letter (country: dull; city: lively but anxiety-inducing) extends to Eliot's treatment of the urban network's dynamic of interconnection, which threatening but also compelling: this Eliotic self-consciousness is, after all, both an "inconvenience" and yet an "opportunity" presented by the scene. In Eliot's joke, moreover, is evidence of the centrality to urban experience of the manipulation or negotiation of the malleable or porous boundaries that characterize the urban network and mark its potential habitability: he is open to some visitors but not others.

Such moments mark Eliot's awareness of that which in part prompted Woolf's famous claim that "On or about December 1910, human character changed" ("Character in Fiction" 421)—given, in particular, Woolf's assessment of the changing patterns of engaging with space, primarily urban, in a modern world in flux. Eliot's own version of Woolf's Georgian cook appears in "Morning at the Window," another poem from

Prufrock:

They are rattling breakfast plates in basement kitchens,

And along the trampled edges of the street

I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids

Sprouting despondently at area gates. (*CP* 19)

As it does in “Rhapsody,” the speaker’s voyeuristic and liminal position here signals the city’s lack of clear boundaries, as he looks down from his window (“The brown waves of fog toss *up* to me”), listening to the sounds of the morning routine from neighbouring dwelling places, perhaps those in his own apartment building or boarding house, and observing the servants, who, like Woolf’s cook, move between urban spaces, crossing boundaries (the area gate). Eliot’s ambiguous portrayal of the characters inhabiting the scene is a sign of his characteristic ambivalence:

The brown waves of fog toss up to me
Twisted faces from the bottom of the street,
And tear from a passer-by with muddy skirts
An aimless smile that hovers in the air
And vanishes along the level of the roofs. (*CP* 19)

These are tortured, “Twisted” figures, corrupted and weighed down (“damp souls” with “muddy skirts”) by their grimy urban surroundings. And yet as near-Baudelairean spectres—disembodied (“faces” tossed and “smiles” torn), aimless, fleeting—the passers-by are also characterized as unrestricted and thus representative of the fluid urban network.

“Preludes” elaborates on the urban dynamics hinted at in “Morning at the Window,” evoking the porosity typical of Eliot’s cities in a further ambiguous portrayal of urban space and experience. Beginning as “The winter evening settles down / With smell of steaks in passageways,” the poem grants a compact image of the spatial network comprising interior dwelling spaces and exterior urban space. The smell of cooking food

within the large-scale dwellings of the city—apartment buildings with “a thousand furnished rooms”—moves from one room to another through its halls and out into the winter air. “[F]aint stale smells of beer” move, too, from social gathering places into the city streets, where “muddy feet [...] press / To early coffee-stands” for their morning coffee, a quotidian custom associated with the domestic arena having moved out into the city streets. In the highly populated space of the city, the boundaries dividing interior dwelling spaces from the exterior urban environment—and from themselves—are porous. As personified menacing force the city is responsible for this ostensibly threatening concentration, with its “showers beat[ing] / On broken blinds,” wearing down barriers dividing inside from out; the concentrated space of the city simply makes it inevitable that even the simple act of opening one’s room to the morning light opens it up to the countless others doing the same; and so “One thinks of all the hands / That are raising dingy shades / In a thousand furnished rooms” (*CP* 13).

But the dehumanized spaces of parts I and II—in which the mass of human figures are reduced to various body parts: feet and hands—give way in part III to a more developed, and importantly ambivalent, consideration of an urban dweller’s position within this dynamic. Looking closely at one of the “thousands,” Eliot again highlights the permeability of boundaries between urban zones, as the female subject’s dwelling place merges with the world beyond her room:

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images

Of which your soul was constituted;

They flickered against the ceiling. (CP 14)

The woman's watching functions primarily at a figurative level, standing in for her hazy thoughts, perhaps her dreams, as she lies and waits, struggling to sleep, dozing in and out. But given the poem's earlier association of both "winter evening" and "morning" with the grubby exterior urban world, we can pretty safely understand this section's "night" as a further personification of the external realm of "vacant lots" and the "sawdust-trampled street." As such, the woman's watching can also be understood literally; perhaps she looks out the window, at the street or the night sky. At least, the ceiling of her apartment acts as a screen for the flickering night lights (indeed, earlier in the poem there is "the lighting of the lamps" [CP 13]) which, we imagine, come up through her window from the street, whose eerie squalor is depicted in parts I and II and is surely recalled here by the "thousand sordid images." As in "Morning at the Window," Eliot thus presents an urban scene marked by interconnection, as the realm of the city street merges with the realm of the city home. What is more, by employing temporal phenomena as markers of spatial location—"winter evening" as *the air outside on a winter evening*; "morning" as *the streets full of people going to work in the morning*; "night" as *that which lies outside one's window at night*—Eliot's depiction of urban space gestures from the outset of the poem toward the spatial interpenetration we see most prominently in the domestic scene of part III. Elements from the exterior world enter into the interior world, and so these ostensibly separate spheres become enmeshed. Precisely because it transcends spatial limits, the temporal image customarily associated with the exterior environment actually unifies exterior and interior spaces.

Eliot's typical ambivalence becomes evident when we look at the particular effects of this connective city space on the urban dweller. As the night reveals its "sordid images," the subject herself is figured as being "constituted" by it—another "damp soul," tainted by urban filth. This woman's home leaves her exposed to the outside world and both she and her urban surroundings take on the characteristics of the dirty, disordered city space—the bed is "tossed" like the "withered leaves" of part I, and her feet and hands ("yellow" and "soiled") bear the marks of the "burnt-out ends of smoky days." And yet, in what seems a counterpoint to the disturbing spectacle of city life, with its "thousands" of depersonalized appendages, hers included, this apparently threatening environment—which also "stretche[s]" and "trample[s]" another soul in part IV and emerges as site of the inauthentic "masquerades" of part II (*CP* 13)—reveals its capacity to enable significant person vision:

And when all the world came back
And the light crept up between the shutters
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
You had such a vision of the street
As the street hardly understands. (*CP* 14)

Calling attention once more to the porousness of the boundaries dividing interior and exterior urban locales, Eliot associates this potentially redeeming vision with the interconnectivity of city space, as the sounds and light of morning make their way into the room. "Preludes" thus underscores the potential for new ways of thinking and being in this multifaceted urban network, associating them, significantly, not with the figure of the poet but with a seemingly unremarkable figure who is at home in this urban scene,

not only constituted *by* it, but herself constituting the scene, her vision a potentially salutary influence on her preparations to meet her day, as she takes the papers (curlers) from her hair in what is likely a morning routine. My contention here, then, is that we read this urban dweller's vision not only as an analogue to an Eliotic *poetic* outlook but as a component of the spatial practice enabled within the city's fluid spatial dynamic.

The vision of part III is echoed by the speaker's vision in part IV, which in its sympathetic response to the sordid urban scene signals the desire for some kind of significant, healthful connection, a gesture I would argue is articulated in the poem's shift from the depersonalized urban masses to the solitary dozer:

I am moved by fancies that are curled

Around these images and cling:

The notion of some infinitely gentle

Infinitely suffering thing. (*CP* 14)

Meaningful personal vision survives in the face of enervating, dehumanizing urban existence—the soul stretching sky, the “insistent feet,” “short square fingers,” and “eyes / Assured of certain certainties.” The poem's closing lines encapsulate Eliot's vexed response to the urban landscape: “Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh; / The worlds revolve like ancient women / Gathering fuel in vacant lots (*CP* 14). Paired with the grotesque and eerie near-apocalyptic imagery is a persistence for survival, captured in the image of the putative domestic subject voyaging into the city's “vacant lots,” a further sign of the urbanite's negotiation of urban boundaries. The squalor and disorder of the city may elicit this strange, putatively dismissive laughter, but Eliot does not dismiss the urban environment as a place of “vacant routines” (Gordon, *T. S. Eliot* 70), for his own

work, fuelled by what is routinely gathered here, suggests the possibility of meaningful engagement, or dwelling, within this spatial network.

In “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” Eliot again traces a range of reactions to the interconnected urban network and in so doing explores the relationship between the poem’s striking urban anxiety and paralysis and the city’s potentially salutary modes of dwelling. The urban space of the poem is clearly multidimensional and interconnected: “half-deserted streets” flow into other urban locales that serve as “muttering retreats”—“one-night cheap hotels / And sawdust restaurants”—a telling reversal of the usual paradigm according to which one retreats into more private domestic space. As in “Morning at the Window,” the urban fog works its way into every crevice of the city:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep. (*CP* 3)

Here, the famous image of the fog-as-cat surrounds the house and nearly enters, resting on the fragile limit of the interior/exterior divide. Later a related image-complex— evening as cat—has made its way inside, “sleep[ing] so peacefully! / Soothed by long fingers / [...] / stretched on the floor here beside you and me” (*CP* 5). Akin to the spatial-temporal images of “Preludes,” which traverse and thus bridge urban spaces, the feline

imagery here functions effectively to convey the porousness of urban boundaries, as the subtly-evoked cat is both an outdoor and an indoor creature.

This porosity is evident even in the poem's central domestic space of the drawing-room, to which the streets lead with sinister intentions for Prufrock to "make [his] visit," where "In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo" (*CP* 3). The space is at a distance from the poem's more explicitly (i.e. exterior) urban scenes, a factor Eliot marks by figuring the streets as moving tediously towards it, and also, simply, by twice separating the famous couplet typographically within the poem. This distance is not spatial, however, but rather metaphorical and ideological, as the "measured," predictable world of "coffee spoons" is antithetical to the mobility and fluidity possible within this environment, despite the fact that in coming and going the women obviously operate within an urban network of interwoven spaces.

Prufrock's reluctance to venture into this social space, to "meet the faces that you meet" (*CP* 4), is a result of his awareness of the world's stifling conventional resistance to the literal and figurative mobility possible within the urban environment, with which he has a complicated relationship—in certain respects seeming to be drawn to the city's fluidity and liminality; in other respects seeming incapable of engaging or appropriating his environment whatsoever. Eliot expresses this ambivalence in the poem's famous opening, as Prufrock seems inclined to motion—"Let us go then, you and I"—and yet like the immobilized, "etherized" patient (*CP* 3), he is ultimately paralyzed, unable to act, as in the space of the drawing-room he knows he will be "fix[ed]," "formulated" (*CP* 5). "Prufrock"'s introductory gambit masterfully reflects this tension: the evening sky as motionless patient suggests at once expansion and paralysis; and, as regards form and

structure, the closing lines of three of the stanza's rhyming couplets are enjambed, such that the sense of closure supplied by the rhyme scheme is in tension with the forward momentum of the syntax, which carries over the line breaks ("Let us go then, you and I / [...] against the sky/ While the evening:" "half-deserted *streets* / [...] muttering retreats / Of restless nights:" "a tedious *argument* / Of insidious intent / To lead you" [CP 3]).

Frustrated Prufrockian paralysis is hardly untouched critical ground, but while countless commentators have lingered about it like the poem's yellow fog, they have failed to consider its relation to the spatial dynamics of the poem's urban settings, which betray this tension between fixity and flux, in the contrast between the fixing, formulating world of "novels," "teacups," and "skirts that trail along the floor" and the liminal world of "sunsets," "dooryards," and "sprinkled streets" through which Prufrock moves (CP 6).

Prufrock's anxiety and frustration spring largely from the seeming incompatibility of these two types of space and their respective modes of spatial practice. He would offer the drawing room audience a sense of his world, his experience in an urban environment often characterized by its mobility and liminality—by what de Certeau would characterize as a "plural mobility of goals and desires—an art of manipulating and enjoying" (PEL xxii); or, as the "modalities of pedestrian enunciation" (PEL 99)—but this isn't something they, nor perhaps he even, will accept. "When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall," Prufrock asks, "Then how should I begin / To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?"

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets

And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes

Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws

Scuttling across the floors of silent seas. (*CP* 5)

This is arguably Prufrock's lowest moment and, crucially, it comes precisely when he, and Eliot, evoke the experiences and desires generated by the interconnected urban network—experiences of which Prufrock, notably, cannot speak, or enunciate. Like the liminal “sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets” (*CP* 6), the “men in shirt-sleeves” embody an urban liminality in resting on the thresholds of their own urban domestic spaces. If they are “lonely,” however, they are far more comfortable than is Prufrock. Their smoking has a casualness to it; as does their dress. They wear no jackets, or if they do they have taken them off and are thus in a relative state of undress; likely the mark of an end-of-day routine; their “art of manipulating and enjoying.” By contrast Prufrock's attire borders on the oppressive, comprising “morning coat” and “collar mounting firmly to the chin,” “necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin” (*CP* 4)—the pin which anticipates his being left “sprawling,” “pinned and wriggling on the wall” (*CP* 5). Most significantly, perhaps, in “leaning” from their windows, very arguably relaxed, these men embody a spatial dynamic by which interior becomes exterior; the private experience ostensibly limited to the enclosed private sphere moves outward. In Mayol's terms in *The Practice of Everyday Life Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, this privatization of the public is a practice of spatial appropriating crucial to making habitable one's surroundings.

Given, further, the striking intimacy established in “Prufrock” between the street-walking speaker and the “lonely men” at the windows, who rest on the boundaries of the

proximal interior and exterior urban spaces and who undoubtedly return and thus expose his gaze, Prufrock not only encounters an ostensibly more healthful mode of urban dwelling but also finds himself at the threshold of an alternative to socially normative sexual desire. Of course, the homoerotic energy of this image-complex is, like the mobile liminality of moving “at dusk through narrow streets,” impossible for Prufrock to integrate into the world of the drawing room, where even the feminine sexuality there on display arouses his revulsion—the arms “white and bare,” “downed with light brown hair!” and the perfume (*CP* 5).³⁵ That Prufrock distorts and disfigures himself (becoming “a pair of ragged claws”) in a similar manner to how he depersonalizes the women (who become only faces, eyes, arms; and who, notably, fragment *him* as well, at least potentially, noting “how his arms and legs are thin!” [*CP* 4]) suggests that in concert with his frustrated inability to reveal such experiences to those who would fix and formulate him, his refinement has risen up, like Eliot’s, in a moment of “nervous sexual attack” such as the young poet described to Aiken in regard to solitary city wandering. Whereas Eliot erects a figurative wall in the unbounded urban space, Prufrock banishes himself to the ocean floor, a metaphorical drowning that anticipates the poem’s despairing conclusion and dislocation from its primary urban environment to a sort of seaside anti-paradise.

Drowning, as Colleen Lamos argues, is again and again tied in Eliot’s work to anxieties surrounding sexuality, especially as regards men.³⁶ But the city plays a crucial role here too. Prufrock’s association with liminality—with thresholds, the spaces between—makes him in many respects the exemplary figure of the interconnected urban network. And yet because the world of “the cups, the marmalade, [and] the tea” lies

close—literally, as a part of the city’s spatial complex; and ideologically, as a limiting influence on Prufrock’s attitudes and modes of expression—even the city streets that would seem to serve as a retreat from the stifling convention of the drawing room cannot be home for this tentative *flâneur* or Certeauian spatial operator in the manner they are for the men in the windows. In pondering the advisability of “[forcing] the moment to its crisis,” Prufrock captures the proximity between the allegedly separate realms that inform his total experience, asking “Would it have been worth while / After the sunsets, and the dooryards, and the sprinkled streets, / After the novels, and the teacups, and the skirts that trail along the floor.” Because there is “so much more,” however, he exclaims “It is impossible to say just what I mean!” With characteristic Eliotic ambivalence, Prufrock would aim to ascribe precise meaning to his experiences, and yet he is loath for such meaning to become reductive. Indeed, when the unnamed “one” whom Prufrock imagines “settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl” (*CP* 6) turns towards the window, casting her cold, queenly gaze out into the city streets, and declares “That is not it at all” (*CP* 7), she becomes the rousing human voice that fixes and drowns Eliot’s antihero, in many ways like de Certeau’s urban totalizer, “looking down like a god” (*PEL* 92), ultimately limiting the potentially liberating because multiple and variable liminal urban space that the poem presents as a possible site of habitation.

* * *

If we agree with Marianne Thormahlen that Eliot’s “Unreal” urban vision finally reverses that of William Wordsworth—who gazes at London’s urban “majesty” (“Westminster” 1490) from a relative distance, upon Westminster bridge—it is undoubtedly a result of both Eliot’s sharper focus upon urban material realities and, as

critics emphasize again and again, his interest in the (tortured) subjective experience of (squalid) urban life. Thus, while Wordsworth's romantic description of the city positions it in relation to the natural world whose beauty is outshone here by the magnificent view of London—

This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare [...]
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill (1490)

—Eliot's depiction of the city appears at first glance, with its menacing landscape and claustrophobic crowds, to deny the existence of such a relation. Of course this difference has to do with more than simply the poets' different sensibilities, as Eliot encountered the city over a hundred years later than Wordsworth, a period during which rapid and extensive industrial change drastically reshaped both rural and urban landscapes, the latter encroaching more and more upon the former.³⁷ Despite the dominance in Eliot's time of the urban order, however, Eliot's vision of the city is in fact informed by the contrast between urban and rural evident in Wordsworth's related response, a contrast that further signals Eliot's sense of the variety of urban space and experience.³⁸

As is borne out by Raymond Williams's comprehensive study of the literary representations of rural and urban landscapes, country and city each acquires meaning through its relationship with the other. Williams argues in *The Country and the City* that throughout the long course of English literary history—well before the city emerged in its modern form as it would in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—writers emphasized the distinctions they perceived between rural and urban space, cultivating a nostalgia for

the natural landscape that would, in many ways, come to define both it and the city.³⁹ Such nostalgia laments the decline of the rural order, removing it temporally, as it is spatially, from the organized, social urban order. The fact that such nostalgia persists, however, belies the notion that the grey spaces of the city have eclipsed the green spaces of the country, and both, in fact, continue to exist, bound together both ideologically and, even, geographically.

Turning now to Eliot's *The Waste Land*, I want to explore how the natural, or rural, spaces that form a part of the poem's modern urban network, rather than function solely to evoke nostalgia for a bygone time or reject the realm of the city (which to a degree they do), also animate the distinctly liminal character of the metropolitan experience that is Eliot's focus—a liminality that is importantly, as we have seen, often an index to the city's habitability. Consider, thus, that even before encountering the poem's "Unreal City" in the last section of "The Burial of the Dead," Eliot momentarily grants us access to an urban scene which, while not exhibiting characteristics normally associated with the Eliotic modern city (urban squalor, mechanization of the human, alienation from mass culture), is actually instructive as regards key traits of Eliot's nuanced vision of the city: its variety of spaces and lack of clear division between them, along with a spatial practice that functions toward more healthful dwelling.

One of *The Waste Land's* chief concerns is the construction, dissolution, and traversal of boundaries, but this isn't always a cruel process, as it is in the poem's "April" (CP 51). The poem's first section, Marie's section, while offering an idyllic image of a European empire in its death throes—where new class and national boundaries are sure to emerge, often traumatically—also depicts an urban environment typified by a range of

locations whose dynamic of connection and separation allow for more comfortable and comforting spatial practice. From an unlikely source in the poem's first stanza, we thus begin to learn about these particular spatial dynamics as depicted in *The Waste Land*:

Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour. (*CP* 53)

First of all, Marie's urban scene comprises a range of spaces: the surrounding natural environment represented by the Starnbergersee, a lake near Munich, the city in question; the sheltered public space of the colonnade, where the speaker and her company stay to keep out of the rain; and, finally, the "Hofgarten," a 'natural' yet constructed site of comfortable and potentially intimate social engagement, one with which she is familiar. We also have movement between these spaces ("we stopped [...] / And went on"), and the spaces themselves complicate strict spatial dichotomies: urban vs. rural (the constructed, "natural," space of the urban park, as well as the proximity of the Starnbergersee to the city); public vs. private/domestic (the comfort and intimacy provided by the public park).⁴⁰ Here is the privatization of public space on a large scale.

Marie's Munich and the evident comfort attending her position and movement within the urban scene certainly stand in contrast to the "Unreal City" soon after presented in the opening section of *The Waste Land*. But the spatial dynamics are very similar, for in Eliot's London we also see movement between urban zones, a dissolution of boundaries erected in the city, and a complication of urban and rural, or natural, space; all of which complicate a simple reading of Eliot's cities. The "crowd flow[ing] over

London Bridge” is figuratively set in Dante’s hell by way of Eliot’s allusion to Dante’s response, in the *Inferno*, to the vast amount of dead (“I had not thought death had undone so many”). On a literal level, though, these are commuters entering London’s central financial district, as did Eliot himself, riding the train daily from the suburbs and then crossing the bridge on foot into the City, a transition which reveals distinct but connected urban zones: residential/domestic and commercial.⁴¹ That the crowd “flow[s]” across the bridge and onwards suggests, of course, its status as an amorphous mass of indistinguishable units—as we are told, “each man fixed his eyes before his feet” (*CP* 55)—but it also suggests the interconnection between diverse urban spaces and the permeability of their limits; there is, simply, *flow* between them. Moreover, while the downward stares of the crowd’s members establish for each of them a limited sphere of awareness which obviously disconnects them from their fellow commuters—a striking, if typical, image of urban alienation—the poem at once emphasizes the potential, given the physical proximity generated by concentrated urban populations, for urban *recognition*, where such personal, psychological boundaries are ruptured. So, as the speaker accosts a familiar face: Stetson, the latter is potentially aroused from his commuter trance. What is more, the speaker’s address emphasizes the difficulty, if not impossibility, of sustaining certain boundaries:

‘That corpse you planted last year in your garden,

‘Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

‘Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

‘Oh keep the Dog far hence, that’s friend to men,

‘Or with his nails he’ll dig it up again! (*CP* 55)

Alongside the evident lack of regeneration here—what was planted has yet to grow—there is the threat of discovery, of boundaries “disturbed.” Just what is uncovered is difficult to identify precisely. Is it an actual corpse? An effective metonym for the millions lost in the trenches of the First World War? Stetson’s deep dark secret? Likely all of the above. *Where* all of this is uncovered is perhaps more important. Certainly, the extended metaphor of the garden may function in a fashion similar to the corpse, standing in for Europe as a whole, or the depths of the human psyche. But, set at this point in the poem, in the “Unreal City,” we must at least consider the possibility that Eliot here offers us an image of a ruralized urban domestic space not at all uncommon within the realm of the city. Like the urban park, designed to capture and preserve the natural world in an environment understood, especially in Eliot’s own time, as moving farther and farther away from nature, the domestic garden’s presence in the city complicates the urban/rural dichotomy. Stetson, it seems, relies on such a dichotomy, where the naturalized space of the garden would remain at a distance from the “Unreal City,” transforming and thus keeping hidden the proverbial Eliotic corpse. But such boundaries remain porous in a city of limited space where one cannot keep his or her “semblable” (*CP* 55), or “the Dog far hence.” As a result this domestic space of the garden fails to function to delimit and contain, and like the ostensibly isolated sphere in which the urban commuters trudge it is at risk of being unsettled.

Eliot’s ambivalence toward this potential unsettling is clear, for the range of interconnected urban spaces generates both alienation and recognition on the part of its inhabitants. Paired with the allusion to the *Inferno*, Eliot’s invocation of Baudelaire’s “Fourmillante cité”—“where in broad / Daylight the spectre grips the passer-by”—

effectively establishes a sense of Baudelairean phantasmagoria, with Dante's dead playing the part of the city's ghostly wanderers.⁴² At the same time, however, the striking final lines Eliot borrows from the introductory poem in *Les Fleurs du Mal*—"You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"—establish a rather sharp contrast between the two types of urban experience evoked by Eliot's sources: the Dantean "so many" highlight the psychic withdrawal from and resignation to the urban scene (think of the "fixed eyes" and the "Sighs, short and infrequent"); the confrontational Baudelairean speaker, on the other hand, stands as a source of urban shock, calling his "semblable" to an awareness of himself and his environment (*CP* 55). The same conflicting forces—withdrawal and exposure—reveal themselves within the rural-urban complex of Stetson's garden. The poem's ambivalent response to an urban environment which includes and yet seems to disrupt the ostensible function of the more natural (and bounded) city spaces is evident insofar as the regenerative power of nature is figured as concealing something conceivably very sinister—"That corpse." Nature's failure here is of course typically understood as a sign of *The Waste Land's* portrayal of the spiritual and cultural death of modernity, particularly *urban* modernity, a portrayal which inherently calls for renewal—the source of which critics identify in the range of myths and rituals invoked by the poem.⁴³ In this instance, however, renewal would represent a covering up, a self-deception, as the "hypocrite" Stetson seems intent on avoiding the exposure wrought in this urban space, just as he seems intent to avoid exposing what is planted in his garden. We can blame the city for necessitating withdrawal on both psychological (downcast stares) and spatial (garden) levels—a withdrawal which is then impossible to maintain as the protective boundaries are broken—but the challenge presented to both Stetson and

Eliot's readers, in this instance through Baudelaire, is to become aware of the urban spaces and experiences not neatly bound and contained, those marked by effects similar to those April brings at the poem's outset, a "breeding," "mixing," and "stirring" (*CP* 53) typical of the diverse nexus of the modern city. At times these effects are, like April, cruel; at others—as we shall see further—they are, again like Spring, potentially vital.

Eliot continues to exploit the complicating tensions animating *The Waste Land's* urban scene as he moves from the harsh exterior worlds of "The Burial of the Dead," to the opulent interior domestic space which opens "A Game of Chess." Where Eliot had presented movement between urban spaces, now he crafts a scene typified to a large degree by stasis. Our principal character is at rest, seated on her Shakespearean "burnished throne," which, along with the marble floor, the metal "standards wrought," and the "coffered ceiling"—"Huge sea-wood fed with copper"—impresses the scene with a significant weight and thus immobility. This sense of stasis is intensified by a further sense of confinement, as the room is oppressed by the portraits on its walls—those "withered stumps of time" "Lean[ing] out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed"—the foremost of which, the depiction of the myth of Tereus and Philomel, powerfully underscores the theme of entrapment. And yet while the figurative "window" offering this particular view only heightens the room's oppressive atmosphere, the room's actual window opens it up, if only slightly, to the outside world, allowing a degree of flow between interior and exterior spaces and providing a sense of flux within the space that contrasts with the room's almost overwhelming stasis. The activity generated by "the air / That freshen[s] from the window" thus infuses the scene with a typically Eliotic tension as motion and stasis, enclosure and exposure, coexist. The two cherubs on the elaborate

mirror frame succinctly encapsulate this discord, as one surveys the scene while the other closes itself off: “a golden Cupidon peeped out / (Another hid his eyes behind his wing).” Likewise, the “strange synthetic perfumes” and smoke from the candles, stimulated by the air from the window, animate the languorous chamber, “stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.” But this freshening is also suffocating and succeeds in “drown[ing] the sense in odours.” Philomel’s story proves a further source of tension: brutally silenced by Tereus for fear she will report of her rape, her ultimate transformation leaves her ever voicing her “inviolable” plaint: “‘Jug Jug’ to dirty ears” (CP 56).

Like Stetson’s garden, or Marie’s Hofgarten, the “sylvan scene” (CP 56) and other such pictorial representations that enfold the room associate its domesticity with rural space. We may be compelled to contrast this type of space with the exterior spaces of the city, regarding the former as safely secluded from the more prototypically dangerous or corrupt urban world. But the rural setting of Philomel’s transformation, as Edenic “sylvan scene,” is itself marked by corruption and, further, the failure of protective boundaries, both because of Philomel’s rape and its status as Edenic fallen, or soon-to-fall, garden. Now, like Eden, where Satan lurks for a time on the edge of the garden, so too something lurks at the edges of this space, beginning to enter:

‘What is that noise?’

The Wind under the door.

‘What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?’ (CP 57)

The exterior urban world easily fills the role of Satan in this context: “rats’ alley / Where the dead men lost their bones” certainly evokes a sense of Eliotic urban macabre; as does the line from *The Tempest* (“Those are pearls that were his eyes” [CP 57]) that recalls

Madame Sosostris, “famous clairvoyante” (*CP* 54) of the “Unreal City.” And surely the sounds of “that Shakespeherian Rag” (*CP* 57) speak to the life of the city slipping through the porous borders of this space. And yet the city is not depicted as unequivocally malevolent. It is arguable, for instance, that in invoking Eden here Eliot evokes a space *inevitably* doomed for corruption, in which case there is no specific environment to highlight and denounce. Moreover, the horrific brutality of the myth of Philomel is obviously not rooted in the modern urban world and, therefore, does more to foreground gendered violence than strictly urban violence.

The interconnected urban scene thus comes across ambiguously, as the poem complicates the typical dichotomies that emphasize the malevolence of the city by contrasting the rural and the urban, as well as interior domestic and exterior urban space. Eliot in this way throws into question the modes of engagement suitable to, and successful within, such spaces. Notice, for instance, that while the manic wife of “A Game of Chess” is in part anxious about exterior city space—unsettled by the porous boundaries between these interconnected spaces, wanting to remain static inside (“Stay with me” she pleads)—she also feels driven to make use of the permeable spatial limits and embrace the mobility potentially generated by urban interconnection:

‘What shall I do now? What shall I do?’

‘I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street

‘With my hair down so. What shall we do tomorrow?’

‘What shall we ever do?’ (*CP* 57)

The speaker here moves from a series of questions to a firm assertion and is on the verge of a potentially liberating move. Once again, however, Eliot’s ambivalence is evident, as

the options apparently open to her—“hot water at ten. / And if it rains, a closed car at four / And we shall play a game of chess” (*CP* 57)—are, in their structured, conventional manner, equally as confining as her room, a feature accentuated by the verse’s formal structure, which moves from the predominantly regular iambic pentameter of the opening section, to the halting rhythms of the woman’s manic questioning and the syncopated rag, and then back to the iambics of these final lines before the scene shifts.

Eliot addresses such moments of fluctuation in “The Music of Poetry” (1942) where he argues that “Dissonance, even cacophony, has its place” and that “there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole [poem]” (112). He had earlier anticipated the use of such formal variation, writing in 1917 in “Reflections on *Vers Libre*” that

the most interesting verse which has yet to be written in our language has been done either by taking a very simple form, like the iambic pentameter, and constantly withdrawing from it, or taking no form at all, and constantly approximating to a very simple one. It is this contrast between fixity and flux, this unperceived evasion of monotony, which is the very life of verse. (33)

Certainly this section of *The Waste Land* succeeds in capturing—formally, rhythmically—the fluctuating emotions generated in large part by the urban spatial dynamics of the scene, the tension between interior and exterior urban space and between stasis and motion by which the spaces of the city can be both threatening and habitable. More than infuse the scene with “the very life of *verse*,” then, these rhythmic oscillations

infuse the scene with the very life of the modern urban environment, a significant element of the “great variety and complexity” with which Eliot’s comprehensive modern poet must come to grips.

A further dimension to the spatial complexities of “A Game of Chess” is, of course, the gender dynamic manifest through both Eliot’s poignant use of allusion and the scene’s loosely structured (figurative) dialogue between the manic wife and the reticent husband. Given its interest in the limitations, often violent, placed upon women—which interest is amplified by the scene’s many allusions: to Thomas Middleton’s *Women Beware Women* (1657), in which a young woman is seduced while her mother plays chess; to the “sylvan scene” and Eve’s seduction in *Paradise Lost* (1667); to the rape of Philomel in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*; and finally to Ophelia’s breakdown in *Hamlet*—the scene has been a focal point for critical discussions of Eliotic misogyny. Tony Pinkney contends, for example, that the “Eliotic text needs to, wants to, in one way or another, do a girl in” (18); and that it accomplishes its goal here by vengefully “decimating” (107) the powerful Cleopatra’s pawns via the section’s final lines from *Hamlet* (“Good night, ladies...” [CP 59]). Lyndall Gordon locates Eliotic misogyny within the scene’s relevant biographical details. As is well known, Eliot modeled the section’s first half after his wife Vivienne and their disastrous marriage.⁴⁴ Gordon argues that Vivienne’s “anarchic abandon” perfectly embodies “*The Waste Land*’s vision of a disorderly hell” (“Eliot and Women” 11), and that their marriage—disrupted by, among other things, Vivienne’s deteriorating mental and physical health—proved a key source of inspiration for the poem’s denigration of female sexuality (10).⁴⁵

Like those responses to Eliot's urban themes which stress the poet's aim of removing himself and his work from the real, assessments of Eliot's treatment of women have emphasized a similar, and related, desire for escape, in this case from the feminine—Eliotic misogyny in this case being taken for granted as a central function of the poet's distanced position as elitist, masculinist, reactionary modernist.⁴⁶ Carole Christ, for instance, locates a misogynist element in the gendered contest of voices prevalent in Eliot's work, as well as its depiction and deformation of bodies. Christ contends that Eliot seeks to "distance" (27) himself from the feminine influences that dominated his youth—from his mother's status as poet, to the feminized literary scene, where more and more women took up active roles, to Eliot's romantic literary forbears, such as Tennyson and Swinburne, whose work was notoriously regarded in Eliot's time as feminine. Eliot could establish "a more successfully articulated voice," Christ argues, "by scattering the body"—especially the female body—and "repressing and dislocating the visual" (36). To bear out her argument Christ highlights the many scattered body parts of "A Game of Chess" (stumps of time, dead men's bones, Lil's teeth) and its failure to actually visualize the woman on the "burnished throne." That the woman's hair ultimately "Glow[s] into words" (*CP* 57) confirms for Christ that Eliot ultimately moves away from the visual and the bodily towards a more purely abstract voice, free from (feminine) gender. But while Christ's analysis certainly accounts for the voice Eliot adopts in much of his later work, such as *Four Quartets*, the voice—or voices—of *The Waste Land* as seen here in "A Game of Chess" are unquestionably (though not exclusively) marked by embodiment. Indeed, although the manic wife's hair glows into words—a move from the bodily to the verbal—when she speaks her voice is

characterized by her frustrated, embodied spatial relationship with the network of spaces surrounding her, being trapped in *this* room.

Far from suppressing or moving beyond gender (or other located, contingent categories, such as space) to establish his poetic voice, Eliot employs them in *The Waste Land* to dramatize the “fluctuating emotion” essential to both “the very life of verse” and an engagement with modernity. Indeed as the gendered urban spatial dynamics of “A Game of Chess” illustrate, Eliot’s aim is hardly to contain or stifle the feminine; rather, he employs it as a central feature of his work’s reflection and investigation of the modern urban scene’s peculiar dynamic of stasis and motion and the degree to which this dynamic enables viable spatial practice. Consider further the spaces of the first half of “A Game of Chess.” For the most part, they are gendered according to simplistic understandings of feminine, private domestic space on the one hand, and masculine, public, exterior urban space on the other. Indeed, the urban-tinged elements which slip into the scene—“rats’ alley,” the rag, the recollection of Madame Sosostris—can all be understood to issue from the husband whom the wife ostensibly addresses, the one whose “Footsteps shuffled on the stair.” In addition, as the poem’s implied dialogue makes evident, the options that seem available to the wife (“hot water,” “closed car” [CP 57] “a game of chess” [CP 58]) are not voiced by her, but, like the urban elements, by the husband figure. Her personal assertion (“I shall rush out as I am”), which is subsumed by a concern for collective interests (“What shall *we* do tomorrow? / What shall *we* ever do?), thus anticipates the male voice’s silent confirmation of the conservative confinement that stifles any opportunity for revitalizing movement, replacing it with an ironically restless and yet paralyzing stasis, “Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock

upon the door” in an idle, ineffectual struggle against an absence of boundaries—trying to cover eyes that cannot close, waiting for the shut door to open. The poem’s treatment of gender here is anything but simplistic, however, for in the contrast that emerges between the silent (urban) dread of the arguably male speaker’s “I think we are in rats’ alley / Where the dead men lost their bones” and “Those are pearls that were his eyes,” and the relative vitality (remember it is the woman who asks the man, “Are you *alive*, or not?”) of the woman’s paradoxically paralyzed manic energy, is the suggestion of a salutary feminine urban mobility (*CP* 57). This woman’s gendered position within the domestic sphere is clearly limiting, and yet she embodies—albeit in frustrated form—the city’s potential to allow for the freedom from such limits.

The second section of “A Game of Chess” continues Eliot’s investigation of the role of dynamic women in the urban realm, presenting another female character’s struggle to successfully position herself within the city’s shifting social and spatial environment. The scene’s repeated closing time call—“HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME”—marks the site of the unnamed narrator’s monologue as an urban pub, where the narrator recounts a series of conversations she has had with Lil, as well as Lil’s husband Albert, whose imminent return from the war (he’s been “demobbed”—demobilized) stands as a source of significant social pressure upon Lil: “He’ll want to know what you did with that money he gave you / To get yourself some teeth,” the narrator has told Lil, adding “He’s been in the army four years, he wants a good time.” Lil faces the pressure of resuming a painful domestic role of which she has been partly relieved during Albert’s absence, and from which she has taken steps to free herself. The narrator’s question about the money given Lil for her teeth suggests she did not do as Albert asked; moreover, “the

pills [she] took to bring it off” suggest an abortion, as Lil is understandably averse to child bearing (“She’s had five already, and nearly died of young George” [CP 58]). Now, while Lil is not strictly present at the pub where the narrator tells her story, Albert’s absence would certainly allow Lil more of the mobility required to frequent such a place and likely this is the type of setting where the speaker’s recollected conversation with Lil has taken place.

Eliot thus exploits the contrast between the exterior space of the pub and the interior space of the home, to which Lil ultimately returns. The dilemma facing Lil beforehand, then, like the dilemma facing the woman on the “burnished throne,” is whether to embrace the shifting social roles and urban boundaries or accept and uphold a degree of separation and structure. Lil is of course anxious about Albert’s return and her own return to a stifling domestic role, but there is also a sense that she is anxious about being supplanted, sexually and otherwise, by her female counterparts, the narrator especially: “And if you don’t give it him, there’s others will, I said. / Oh is there, she said. Something o’ that, I said. / Then I’ll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look” (CP 58). More than a threat to Lil, however, the narrator serves as an example of the possibility of other viable female subject positions open to women; we cannot identify for certain her marital status, but she certainly seems unrestricted: she insinuates to Lil her sexual availability and desire, as we just saw, and appears to have been asked alone to dinner with Lil and Albert (“they asked *me* in to dinner” [CP 59]—not ‘us’). But while possible alternative identities exist, there is a definite risk in taking them up: as the narrator tells Lil, emphasizing the potential loss of stability that would attend, in Lil’s case, a separation, “If you don’t like it you can get on with it. / Others can

pick and choose if you can't / But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling" (*CP* 58).

Keeping in mind Lil's ambivalent response to the evident tensions within the urban spatial network, the closing time call, "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME," can productively be read in a twofold manner, as either demanding that Lil "get on with it," or calling her back to her domestic role. The repeated cry intensifies the difficulty of the decision, and certainly the urban environment comes across as a tremendous source of discomfort; but it bears underscoring that the reasons for this urban angst are multiple and complex and, further, that there is a possibility here for alternative, more liberated identities. The section's final parting words—"Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight. / Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight"—speak in a double voice as well. We might read them as the tedious parting pleasantries of the conventional domestic world of "hot gammon" on Sundays (*CP* 59), or—if we locate them, like the closing time call, within the pub (we do not, after all, see Lil or Albert's name here)—we can read them as markers of the mobility that stands in contrast to Lil and Albert's domesticity, as these figures now move on their way to other spaces and other encounters, establishing a more fluid but still familiar set of dwelling places in the city. Ophelia's lines from *Hamlet* here also bring home Eliot's ambivalent reaction to modern gender roles in flux, specifically female sexuality. The allusion leads us to recall Ophelia's descent into madness and, in the sexually charged context of Lil's situation, the significant role sexuality plays in this fall.⁴⁷ Eliot thus suggests that a similar madness attends Lil's dilemma; but, importantly, he recognizes, with Shakespeare, the dangerous consequences and ultimate instability of idealized constructions of femininity. Like Ophelia's madness and suicide, *The Waste*

Land exposes the fissures in these identities, highlighting the psychological trauma but also gesturing towards the failure of traditional stabilities and the emergence of new subject positions, and new, potentially more viable uses of urban space, in their wake.

The personal and sexual mobility that both Lil and the manic wife verge on in “A Game of Chess” is dominant in “The Fire Sermon,” where the city becomes—in part at least—both the site of the frustrating sterility and violence of modern sexuality and the potential end point of the poem’s search for regeneration. The section opens along the natural space of the river that runs through the city, where the absent “testimony of summer nights” speaks to the casual sexual encounters between the “departed” nymphs and “their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors.” The urban network allows for further such short-lived encounters: Sweeney takes a motor to Mrs. Porter; and Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant, solicits an unidentified narrator for a hotel lunch and a future rendezvous. Just as casual and fleeting as the encounters on the Thames, this last pair also embodies a sense of the seeming futility and sterility of the riverbed’s “brown land,” which is ironically both devoid of and yet corrupted by Eliot’s phantom waste—“empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends” (*CP* 60). In Sweeney’s case, Eliot alludes to the myth of Acteon and Diana, in which Acteon, caught by Diana watching her bathe, is transformed by her into a stag and then torn limb from limb by his own hounds. Sweeney, a figure of brutal and yet fatigued and thus ineffectual masculinity, is Eliot’s “urban lout” (North, *The Waste Land* 12, note 6) and is associated both in *The Waste Land* and Eliot’s Sweeney poems (“Sweeney Erect” and “Sweeney Among the Nightingales”) with male sexual violence and female revenge. As regards Mr. Eugenides, the homosexual element of the encounter obviously precludes

regeneration. Moreover, it carries a sinister weight given the need for a degree of discretion, which is aided no doubt by the city and resort hotels' crowd-like dynamics, as well as the "brown fog" (CP 61), which picks up from the "brown land." In addition, as a foreign merchant Mr. Eugenides is itinerant; he resides in the city's liminal spaces, present at one moment, absent the next—a veritable piece of the "Unreal City"'s human waste, with his unclean shave and lower-class French; a potent source of urban anxiety, like "[t]he sound of horns and motors" (CP 60).

Still, while the "Unreal City" returns here with its unsettling depersonalization—"At the violet hour, when the eyes and back / turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits / Like a taxi throbbing waiting"—in the section's famous sexual encounter between the typist and "the young man carbuncular" (CP 61), we can once more trace an Eliotic ambivalence and in so doing further complicate Eliot's urban vision. The scene of the encounter expands upon "The Fire Sermon"'s involved complex of anxieties concerning sex, gender, regeneration, sterility, corruption and death. As inevitable, "expected," and "foretold" by the great seer Tiresias, the encounter arguably lacks any significant emotion and thus evokes a sense of the *ennui* cum horror that is stimulated, for example, by the mundane particulars of "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" (bed, toothbrush, and shoes). The tedium and monotony of city life are here too: the routine tidying and preparation for supper ("The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights / Her stove, and lays out food in tins"); the clothing, underwear exposed to view along the fragile borders of interior/exterior urban divide, piled in the tiny apartment whose couch is at once its bed ("drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays, / On the divan are piled (at night her bed) / Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and

stays” [CP 61]).⁴⁸ Like “the loitering heirs” the clerk is there and then gone, facing no obstacle to the source of his “one bold stare,” his vanity’s carnal appetite. For her part, the typist, apparently indifferent, seems also to embody this vapid urban routine: “[Pacing] about her room again, alone, / She smoothes her hair with automatic hand, / And puts a record on the gramophone” (CP 62). As Gregory S. Jay remarks, the typist “turns into a copulating machine, on automatic, as she puts the phallic stylus into the receiving platter. The modernization of the typist leads to her reification as an instrument” (238). In other words the typist is utterly dehumanized, her behaviour—like her occupation—a function of the routinized mechanization of the modern urban environment.

Lawrence Rainey presents a similar argument about the relationship between the typist figure and her role as part of the “Unreal City”’s “human engine.” Rainey points out that Eliot’s interest in the figure of the typist stems from his time at Lloyds Bank, where, working alongside these female employees, he encountered the latest technological advances in data-storage and communication to arrive on the urban scene:

Eliot [...] worked in a new office culture which had only recently taken form, an interlocking grid of new communications and storage-and-retrieval technologies—typewriters, telephones, Dictaphones, adding machines, duplicators, loose-leaf ledgers, card indexes, and vertical filing systems. The typist was the epitome of that grid—capital concentrated into flesh, flesh turned into a nexus of formal communication flows under the impress of systematic management. (*Revisiting* 55)

Like Jay, Rainey argues that the typist breaks beneath these modern pressures, which in the poem are woven into the frigid and demeaning sexual encounter with the young clerk. Now, notably, neither Jay nor Rainey sees this passage as exemplifying the reactionary misogyny often ascribed to Eliot as high modernist grand-master. Jay emphasizes Eliot's identification with patriarchy (243), but he highlights the typist's relative sexual autonomy as an "unmarried, working woman" (239) and underscores the ambivalence with which Eliot treats his female characters, arguing that *The Waste Land* "displays sympathy as well as hostility toward all its women" (238). Rainey similarly diverges from a conservative treatment of this scene, remarking upon the "unprecedented" employment of the typist figure in a "serious poem" such as *The Waste Land* and stressing "the promise of modern freedom" she represented as "an allegedly new, autonomous subject whose appetites for pleasure and sensuous fulfillment were legitimated by modernity itself" (*Revisiting* 55).

Both Jay and Rainey stop short, however, in their investigation of the feminist suggestions inherent in the cultural specificities of the scene and, thus, I would argue, of the scene's treatment of the city's dwelling potential. Rainey's conclusion is particularly frustrating, for after arguing for Eliot's innovative use of the typist figure in his poem, and sketching the different ways in which Eliot's contemporary fiction writers attempt to dignify the typist by "explicitly transgress[ing] the convention which had made the preservation of the heroine's chastity a governing device of melodrama and romance" (*Revisiting* 62), Rainey still characterizes "The Fire Sermon"'s typist figure as powerfully dismayed in the wake of her sexual experience with the young man, and thus a further victim of *The Waste Land*'s urban "engine." Rainey thus undercuts his own suggestion

that Eliot moves beyond the conventional gender politics that would conceive of such an event as a woman's ultimate ruin, reading *The Waste Land* through contemporary novelistic reactions to similar scenes: "Disgust, shock, horror, bitter humiliation, terror, dread, memories that sting, seize the heart, or weigh heavily... here is the lexicon of the contemporary novel when treating a postseduction or postcoital scene" (69; ellipses in original). With regard to *The Waste Land*'s typist, after her guest "gropes his way" out, she looks herself in the mirror, barely aware of her lover; thinks, "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over," "Paces about her room," "smoothes her hair with automatic hand, / And puts a record on the gramophone" (CP 62). There is little if any evidence in the typist's response to suggest she feels the same violent reactions suffered by her fictional counterparts, but Rainey nonetheless ascribes them to her: "Horror and terror: they are the more powerfully present for being inscribed in silence" (*Revisiting* 68).

It is conceivable, admittedly, that she has entered into a sort of catatonic state as a result of her sexual encounter, or that she has numbed herself to the pain. But it is equally conceivable that she is beyond such a conventional fall and that her behaviour here is simply a function of her boredom or indifference, a function of quotidian repetition, to be regarded not as soul-stifling routine, but as stabilizing habit (and in this light details like her "divan or bed" begin to look less like sordid living and more like adaptive spatial practice). Indeed, as suggested by the poem's satirical treatment of the "young man carbuncular" and the ironic allusion to *The Vicar of Wakefield* ("When lovely woman stoops to folly" [CP 62])—where the song of lament for the fallen woman claims that "The only art her guilt to cover, / To hide her shame from every eye, [...] is to die" (North, *The Waste Land* 57)—the typist and clerk, in their mundane urban surroundings,

are set in contrast to the typical narratives of villainous sexual predators and fallen women. Thus while the typist's interaction with the clerk is arguably meaningless, it also ceases to mean in the manner of the typical romance narratives (Eliot establishes a similar ironic contrast here through his use of the sonnet form; one embedded sonnet, "The time is now propitious, as he guesses," runs from lines 235 to 248 [CP 62], its couplet notably half-rhymed and thus incomplete, like the typist and "young man carbuncular," a failed coupling; and another sonnet, "She turns and looks a moment in the glass," significantly incompleting, immediately follows at line 249 [CP 62], breaking off as the typist puts on the record). What in another context would signify the typist's unalterable fall is here devoid of that momentous significance, and as a result she achieves a degree of freedom (a freedom echoed by the poem's deviation from formal conventions), unbound, in the urban environment, by a conservative ideology of gender according to which she is inevitably a victim.

Indeed, as Rita Felski argues of the routine habits of everyday modern life, to understand all habit as "a straitjacket and constraint" is to "ignore the ways routines may strengthen, comfort, and provide meaning" (*Doing Time* 91). The typist's striking automatism, through this lens, may not merely reflect the city's stultifying influence, as indeed her "automatic hand" is also connected by *The Waste Land* to the newly emergent popular culture in which she has the potential for more freedom and comfort, and to which Eliot turns in "The Fire Sermon" for a degree of relief from the section's torturous desires. So, after the typist turns on her gramophone we hear the sounds of the city, which, while elsewhere a source of shock, is here soothing:

"The music crept by me upon the waters"

And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
O City, City, I can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
The pleasant whining of a mandoline
And a clatter and a chatter from within
Where fishermen lounge at noon: where the walls
Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold. (*CP* 62-63)

As the section gains forward momentum and moves towards its orgasmic climax, elements of this rejuvenating experience of the city (its music, the church's white Ionic columns and bell) are heard as traces beneath "The peal of bells / White towers" (*CP* 63). With poetic economy Eliot thus conflates the "splendour" of city life and the ecstasy of consummated desire with the imperative to temper the lust inspired in and by the urban environment. The cries of the nymphs from Wagner's *Die Gotterdammerung* perfectly encapsulate this vexing ambivalence as they are at once elated and chastising. "Burning burning burning" (*CP* 64), the poem is aflame with desire—a desire which, if consummated, might release one from the monotonous grip of urban routine and squalour, but which also threatens to consume both its subject and object in violent hell fire and/or venereal disease, a threat beside which the routine elements of *The Waste Land's* urban realm appear all the more comforting.

When the "Unreal City" next appears in *The Waste Land's* final section, the poem has exchanged its more realistic imagism and brief narrative sketches for a delirious flurry of brilliantly strange and haunting images. As an all-encompassing vision treating

both space and time, this observation of the world's great cities evokes everything from deeply subjective trauma to pan-cultural apocalypse. That the scene now moves away from the urban environment with which most of the poem deals perhaps suggests a desire to escape from it, or perhaps to gain some perspective on it. Of course the desert is also counterpart to the urban wasteland elsewhere sketched, and as in the city there is hope here too for rejuvenation and an end to drought. Regardless, however, of any definitive conclusion the poem might come to about the set of experiences it rehearses, Eliot, if nothing else, holds true to his stated ambition of taking account, in a comprehensive manner, of the "great variety and complexity" of his modern civilization: its motion and stasis; its interiors and exteriors; its public and private spaces; and of course the range of reactions these variable spatial configurations allow for, along with the ways in which such dynamics frustrate conventional understandings of urban spaces and identities in giving rise to more salutary urban practices. Moving now to examine John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, I will consider a further instance of an arguably prototypical modernist depiction of urban space—one also frequently understood as sketching an unlivable environment—which in fact attends to the variability and hence viability of city spaces and practices.

Chapter 3

Beyond “The Center of Things:” *Manhattan Transfer*’s Manifold Urban Modernity

Like Eliot’s early verse, and in the manner, for instance, of Imagism’s scientific precision or Futurism’s affirmation of the dynamism and violence of the machine age, John Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer* presents a narrative idiom capable of reflecting the velocity, discontinuity, and general poignancy of modern urban experience. Dos Passos’s ode to and lament for New York was, in the author’s words, “an attempt to chronicle the life of a city. It was about a lot of different kinds of people. In a great city there is more going on than you can cram into one man’s career” (“Contemporary” 238). Recalling his return to the United States from Europe and the Middle East in early 1922, Dos Passos remarked that “New York was the first thing that struck me. It was marvelous. It was hideous. It had to be described” (“What Makes a Novelist” 271-72). In order to capture in its entirety the urban scene which so compelled him, Dos Passos turned away from conventional plot- and (singular) character-driven narratives and experimented with a range of innovative techniques, primary among them filmic montage.⁴⁹ “The style of the writing had to be made up as I went along,” he recalls. “It was all an experiment. Direct snapshots of life. Rapportage was a great slogan. The artist must record the fleeting world the way the motion picture film recorded it. By contrast, juxtaposition, montage, he could build drama into his narrative” (“What Makes a Novelist” 272).

According to this helpful—but as we will see, limited—critical narrative, Dos Passos had discovered a technique by which the writer or narrative took on the

mechanization typical of the urban environment. In the words of *Manhattan Transfer*'s first critics, Dos Passos had seemingly "set a blank record revolving to receive all the sounds, and a film-camera going to photograph all the motions of a scattered group of individuals, at the points where they meet and touch in New York" (D. H. Lawrence 75). His method is that of "the movie, in its flashes, its cut backs, its speed" (S. Lewis 69), and as a result Dos Passos becomes "a mere instrument for registering impressions" (Stuart 65). Whether they liked the novel or not, early critics of *Manhattan Transfer* agreed: these new methods enabled Dos Passos to effectively render the city's fragmentary dynamism; its excess, speed, chaos, and confusion. Sinclair Lewis proclaimed in his exuberant review that "Dos Passos presents the panorama, the sense, the smell, the sound, the soul, of New York" (69). Paul Elmer More is less enthusiastic, but his sense that the work amounts to "an explosion in a cesspool" still highlights his perception of the novel's energy (63). In other reviewers' estimations, *Manhattan Transfer* "flies and hurries so, like an express train, [...] it swoops and manoeuvres like a stunt aeroplane" (Gold 73); it is "a rush of disconnected scenes and scraps, a breathless confusion of isolated moments" (D. H. Lawrence 75).

The city of *Manhattan Transfer*—it hardly needs noting—is *not* conceived of here as a space of dwelling marked by salutary everyday modes of engagement. The novel's representation of New York City struck its first reviewers as remarkable and nearly unprecedented, and they viewed its urban setting in similarly dramatic terms—as the city is wont to be understood. The attitude towards the city generally ascribed to Dos Passos in these reviews is thus quite typical. With the exception of Lewis, the reviewers consider the novel's metropolis a menacing force, an environment of despair. As "a set piece of

horror” (Stuart 67) or juggernaut of commercialism (Gold 74), the city is regarded with the traditional pessimism exhibited by critics of industrialization and urbanization, who, as we have seen, stress the degree to which the massive, mechanized urban scene dwarfs and crushes the individual caught up and ground down by its frenetic, chaotic pace; and/or who lament the natural simplicities of a “vanishing rural order” (Williams, *The Country* 10).⁵⁰ This perspective has persisted in scholarship on the novel. Blanche Housman Gelfant identifies in *Manhattan Transfer* a romantic and patriotic distaste for the urban scene, which in her estimation “embodies the trend away from formulated American ideals of a social system [...] towards a mechanized kind of life” (143), one doomed to futility by the oppressive and destructive forces of the metropolis. Axel Knönagel comes to the same familiar conclusion: Dos Passos’s city is an “unnatural” and uninhabitable nightmare (594); an “environment unsuited to the requirements of ordinary human beings” (593). Iain Colley also stresses the traumatic chaos and violence of city living, describing Dos Passos’s urbanites as pygmies “overawed and smashed by monstrous [urban] machinery full of undirected energy” (49).⁵¹

Notwithstanding a relative reinvigoration of Dos Passos studies along the lines of numerous other recent culturally-informed reinvestigations of the relationship between modernism and modernity,⁵² critical discussions of Dos Passos’s focus on the city have still not progressed much further than the concise early responses to *Manhattan Transfer*, with their emphasis on the usual suspects of urban experience. Even Desmond Harding’s more recent (2003) examination of *Manhattan Transfer* falls short in failing to examine how Dos Passos’s ambivalent “fascination-repulsion relationship with New York” (122) works to distinguish his novel’s vision from the traditional, frequently pessimistic

conception of the city as material and symbolic totality, the productive micro-level operations of whose inhabitants remain unrecognized. In distinction, then, from Harding's claim that investigations of Dos Passos's metropolitan themes stand as an exception to the lack of scholarship on his work (172), responses to the author's urban vision are in fact symptomatic of a general stasis in the larger body of Dos Passos criticism. In what is thus a frustrating and ironic critical stereotyping, Dos Passos's commentators—despite taking the author at his word and recognizing his endeavor to encapsulate the breadth of urban life (e.g., “all the sounds, [...] all the motions”)—have homogenized *Manhattan Transfer*'s heterogeneity, reading as a totality what is in fact for Dos Passos a complicated plurality—of spaces and spatial practices. Even Bart Keunen's careful discussion of the novel's fusion of diverse narrative modes (documentary realism, naturalism, impressionism, expressionism, among others) condenses the text's multiplicity by considering only macro-level philosophical and linguistic concerns, emphasizing Dos Passos's epistemological uncertainty—“that the world can no longer be unequivocally understood” (435)—instead of looking closely at the environment within which the novel's range of experiences speaks to the many understandings of and modes of engagement with the city, elucidating its habitability as well as its hostility. Because the city's complexity is acknowledged but not directly addressed, *Manhattan Transfer*'s “polychronotopia” (421) (to borrow Keunen's Bakhtinian terminology) is in these estimations redolent only of the typical symptoms of urban malady: alienation, decay, speed, crisis. Overlooked are the urban spaces amenable to more healthful dwelling practices.

Now, in many respects Dos Passos has pointed the way to this type of analysis. With a youthfully righteous enthusiasm the author set out in 1916's "A Humble Protest" to highlight and denounce the science-driven progress undergirding modern Western material culture. Stressing the debilitating effects of "Mechanical Civilization" (31)—which takes shape in the metropolis where the "mob [...] deprived of its idols and banners [is] left to wander muddleheadedly through meaningless streets" (30), finding only "the hectic pleasures of suffocating life in cities," "grind[ing] their lives away on the wheels, producing, producing, producing" (34)—Dos Passos mocks the notion that scientific discovery, "the new god of our century," has positioned Man "on a girder-constructed pinnacle, calling the four winds to his service, enslaving the sea, annihilating time and space with the telegraph ticker" (30). Dos Passos's ultimate goal here is to question the actual consequences of the modern thirst for innovation and progress. "Isn't it time," he asks, "to try to discover where this steel-girded goddess, with her halo of factory smoke and her buzzing chariot-wheels of industry, is leading the procession of human thought which follows so tamely in her trail? What, we should ask, is the result on the life of men of the spirit of science" (31). The result, Dos Passos concludes, is a materialism detrimental to humankind in general and the artist in particular: "the energies of the scientific spirit have been turned to building about us a silly claptrap of unnecessary luxuries, a clutter of inessentials which has been the great force to smother the arts of life and the arts of creation" (33).

Though published when he was just twenty years old and still an undergraduate at Harvard, "A Humble Protest" nevertheless articulates what would become the main concerns of Dos Passos's long career as a writer and critic of the American social,

cultural, and political scene, and of modernity in general. As his political stance developed and evolved in the late 1920s and 30s, Dos Passos would focus his critique of modern institutions, specifically as they operated within the United States (in his trilogy *U.S.A.* [1930-36]). A first major step, however, was to tackle the concentrated locus of modernity: the modern metropolis; thus *Manhattan Transfer*. Like his contemporaries, Dos Passos's misgivings about the modern took form in and through literary innovations that, ironically, in many ways mirrored the innovations of modernity. Because, for Dos Passos, American modernity precluded the formation of a literature like that of its settlers' ancestors, lacking in Dos Passos's view the genuine richness granted by a long and deep-rooted history, American literature was to stop attempting to imitate a European tradition whose essence it had no hope of truly embodying or expressing and instead look to the nation's future.⁵³

Manhattan Transfer's formal innovations of course speak directly to this progressivist impulse; as noted above, Dos Passos compared his job in the novel to the modern technologies of photography and film. In thus 'making it new,' Dos Passos resembles very closely Ezra Pound, who memorably demanded such a literature of scientific precision in rejecting the dominant literary conventions of his immediate predecessors.⁵⁴ In "Against American Literature" (1916) Dos Passos claims, along these lines, that "Worse than [American literature's] lack of depth and texture is its abstractness, its lack, on the whole, of dramatic actuality" (38)—thus calling for a vividness and immediacy that dismisses a feminized bourgeois aesthetic in favour of a masculinized professionalism marked by the technical expertise and innovation of the scientist. "The tone of the higher sort of writing in this country," Dos Passos affirms, "is

undoubtedly that of a well brought up and intelligent woman, tolerant, versed in the things of this world, quietly humorous, but bound tightly by the fetters of ‘niceness,’ of the middle-class outlook” (38). As Dos Passos would put it later in his career in “The Writer as Technician” (1935)—moving away from the crude, convenient caricature of the feminine as foil to the new masculine literature and instead comparing his innovative drive to the work of science—“The process [of writing] is not very different from that of scientific discovery and invention. The importance of a writer, as of a scientist, depends upon his ability to influence subsequent thought. In his relation to society a professional writer is a technician just as much as an electrical engineer is” (169).⁵⁵

Manhattan Transfer marks Dos Passos’s most direct engagement with the new gods of modernity and his most concentrated employment of the novel methods of representing these modern deities’ mighty works and, further, registering their devastating, “smother[ing]” effects. But by no means does Dos Passos lose sight of the practitioners of the “arts of life.” At stake in the novel, as is consistent with his early theorizations, is the welfare of the people, subject positions to which Dos Passos aimed to be responsible throughout his lifelong engagement with the frequent turbulence of the twentieth century. In *Manhattan Transfer*, specifically—notwithstanding the scientific-minded narrative innovations employed to “chronicle the life of a city” as a whole—a sustained focus on character allows for a balanced vision of the urban scene in which both its (destructive) macro-level forces and its (salutary) micro-level operations are evident. The crucial distinction thus to make between Dos Passos’s scientific ethos and the one he lambastes in “A Humble Protest” is, of course, that Dos Passos aims toward the true benefit of society:

There is no escaping the fact that if you are a writer you are dealing with the humanities, with the language of all the men of your speech of your generation, with their traditions of the past and their feelings and perceptions. No matter from how narrow a set of conventions you start, you will find yourself in your effort to probe deeper and deeper into men and events as you find them, less and less able to work with the minute prescriptions of doctrine; and you will find more and more that you are on the side of the men, women and children alive right now against all the contraptions and organizations, however magnificent their aims may be, that bedevil them; and that you are on the side, not with phrases or opinions, but really and truly, of liberty, fraternity, and humanity. (“The Writer” 171-72)

Dos Passos’s modernist idiom thus seeks to capture his contemporary scene as it is: the “speech of [his] generation,” “events as you find them.” Now, in such everyday urban activity, as represented in *Manhattan Transfer*, there are indeed marks of the dangers of city life. After all, the language often employed metaphorically by critics to describe the city’s devastating impact on human life—that it *smashes* or *crushes* the individual—is no mere metaphor with respect to the novel’s many casualties of the urban scene’s *actual* violence (traffic accidents, fires). But this continual emphasis on urban violence and despair, in conjunction with the fixation upon the speed and energy of both the city and the novel, obscure other important aspects of Dos Passos’s all-encompassing urban vision as it is articulated in both his fictional work and his essays. As a chronicler aiming to get everything in, Dos Passos contemplates the full range of urban

environments and experiences.⁵⁶ Along with the masses moving through the crowded street, then, his work presents the solitary hotel- and apartment-dweller, at rest, comfortable. We also encounter the lone wanderer of the empty street and the multiple residents of a tenement house. Contemplating the gamut of urban spaces—both public and private, exterior and interior, and, importantly, the liminal spaces that emerge within this spatial complex—*Manhattan Transfer* illustrates the breadth of reactions to city spaces and, as a result, the insufficiency of a singular, totalizing understanding of the city as juggernaut of modernity or of urban experience as utterly shocking and alienating.

In as much as Dos Passos's narrative mode approximates the methods of modern technology-based media, capturing with precision the geographical and phenomenological landscape of the city, *Manhattan Transfer* attends closely to the varied psychological and emotional landscapes composed by its characters—in de Certeau's terms, its practitioners. Dos Passos certainly highlights the severe limitations of living in the city, for women in particular; but his urbanites are not merely cogs in the wheel of urban machinery, living only to be pulverized or objectified. Rather, their experiences form and are formed by the varied and variable tapestry of urban space, whose network of interconnections gives rise to the multivalent conditions of modernity. As well as moments of dejection and despair, then, there are moments of escape, elation, ecstasy—spaces of withdrawal both public and private by which city-dwellers make homes of their environment. Dos Passos's city is certainly one of extremes, extremes which at times pull at one another, generating a vexing ambivalence. But as site of dwelling, and of the ordinary, the city is—even in Dos Passos's often fragmentary depiction of the urban

scene, in its marvellousness and hideousness—not merely an environment marked by such polarity.

With an aim to illustrate Dos Passos's significant contribution to literary modernism's multivalent vision of city life, the following will attend to the complex subtleties of urban space and experience that compel Dos Passos's representation of the metropolis and the lives of its inhabitants—their Certeauian “ways of operating.” Rather than replicate the critical bias in which *Manhattan Transfer*'s only important character (antagonist) is the personified monolith of The City—which, as one critic puts it, functions as a “thematic device” with predetermined parameters (the typical ones: “futility, spiritual stagnation, nothingness” [Lowry 54])—my discussion focuses primarily on Jimmy Herf and Ellen Thatcher's conflicted and contradictory experiences as dwellers of the urban network, within whose multifaceted spatial, social, cultural, and economic dynamic their identities are shaped, both by themselves and their surroundings. I read these characters through the lenses of both Dos Passos's conviction that character is central to fiction—Dos Passos's characters are not merely naturalist puppets representative of their environment—and de Certeau's avowal that the users of urban space activate the city's habitability by way of the practice of everyday life. Through Jimmy and Ellen, Dos Passos exposes the generational conflict and shifting gender dynamics that inflect urban life in New York at the turn of the century. Further, these characters' engagement with their urban setting—spaces both indoors and out, public and private—permits Dos Passos to explore a range of city spaces, using a range of prose techniques, that belies the notion of an urban totality; indeed, many of these spaces and experiences, as well as the narrative devices employed to represent them, do not bear the

marks of stereotypical urban crisis, but rather betray an important liminality, and at times an ordinariness, that is essential to the city-dweller's making a home of the city.

* * *

Without a doubt *Manhattan Transfer* succinctly evokes the city's ability to pulverize and dehumanize. In the novel's opening moments commuters emerge from the ferry "crushed and jostling like apples fed down a chute into a press;" and newborn baby Ellen Thatcher takes on the lifelessness of her sterile hospital surroundings, being treated like a bedpan and figured as a "knot of earthworms" (*MT* 3). Further, we encounter Bud Korpenning, in many ways the prototypical Dos Passosian tramp, whose futile search for "the centre of things" (*MT* 4) and ultimate suicide at the end of the novel's first section speak to the failure of a rugged individualism in the face of the harsh urban environment. But following Bud's trail in the early moments of the novel, along with a portrait of urban excess and refuse (a nod, most certainly, to *The Waste Land*), Dos Passos also gestures towards construction—as the foundations for New York's monumental edifices are lain—and, further, to the viability of the urban community with its array of familiar locales:

Bud walked down Broadway, past empty lots where tin cans glittered among grass and sumach bushes and ragweed, between ranks of billboards and Bull Durham signs, past shanties and abandoned squatters' shacks, past gulches heaped with wheelscarred rubbishpiles where dumpcarts were dumping ashes and clinkers, past knobs of gray outcrop where steamdrills continually tapped and nibbled, past excavations out of which wagons full of rock and clay toiled up plank roads to the street, until he was walking

on new sidewalks along a row of yellow brick apartment houses, looking in the windows of grocery stores, Chinese laundries, lunchrooms, flower and vegetable shops, tailors', delicatessens.

(*MT* 21)

In addition, then, to presenting the abrasive cityscape customarily understood as exemplifying modern urban space, Dos Passos here reveals his interest in the range of commonplace urban facilities and dwelling places that compose the expanding urban network.

As outsider ever looking in, unable to find a home to replace the one with which he cut ties, Bud's experience speaks to the city's extreme alienating power. Others, however, do find and make their homes in the city, and through them Dos Passos ultimately illustrates that the spaces to which Bud is denied access—like the neighborhood's various shops, but also the city's home spaces—are as much a part of urban experience as are the city's velocity, excess, and inhospitability. Indeed *Manhattan Transfer* is deeply concerned with the city dweller's relationship to his or her living space, be it profoundly vexed—as when Ed Thatcher's lofty aspirations for his family are undercut by his pacing around his cramped apartment, knocking over and breaking one of his wife's beloved knickknacks (*MT* 11-12)—or much more ambivalent—as when Ellen Thatcher finds both freedom and loneliness after leaving her husband to live on her own (*MT* 139-40). So, while the novel registers the most dramatic transformations wrought (literally) upon the city cum spectacle—the “Steel, glass, tile, concrete [. . .] of the skyscrapers. Crammed on the narrow island the millionwindowed buildings will jut glittering, pyramid on pyramid like the white cloudhead above a thunderstorm” (*MT*

11)—it is also equally attuned to the changes affecting the dwelling habits of urbanites; to the shape of domestic spaces in the city, the liminality of which space is often an index to its habitability.

If under extreme circumstances, then, Dos Passos's urban homes are under attack and thus utterly uninhabitable—set on fire by the sadistic firebug whose presence, along with the fire engines, lingers throughout the novel—at the level of the everyday, by contrast, domestic space in *Manhattan Transfer* is far more ambiguous, Dos Passos's attitude toward it ambivalent. Indeed, as a component of the interconnected urban network, whose boundaries display varying degrees of permeability, such spaces allow for both the retreat and entrapment of an enclosed space and the freedom and anxiety generated by a space whose borders are also at times porous.

The multivalence of urban domestic space is evident from the novel's outset, as Dos Passos introduces us to his two principal characters and their families, setting up generational contrasts which highlight the variety of responses to the urban environment. Upon returning to New York from overseas, young Jimmy Herf and his mother Lily move into a hotel, at which point Lily basically takes permanently to bed. Notwithstanding her illness, Lily betrays both disdain and paranoia towards the world outside her suite, both of which attitudes disturb Jimmy's youthful interest in the vital urban energy surrounding him in New York. Arriving on the 4th of July, in Lily's opinion "a dreadful time to arrive" (*MT* 56)—presumably because of the crowds—Lily's solicitude for her son reveals her fear of the changes impacting the city. As they disembark, "Mother's hand has grasped his firmly," and she tells her son to "promise [her] to stay on the promenade deck and be very careful" (*MT* 55, 56). At this point,

specifically, what is partly at stake are the demographic changes wrought by large-scale immigration, a facet of urban transformation that Dos Passos subtly evokes through Jimmy's brief interaction with a fellow traveler, the "tweedy man," who points out to Jimmy the "quarantine boat" and then speaks to someone who Jimmy has become aware is Jewish: "A stout man with rings on his fingers—he's a Jew—is talking to the tweedy man" (*MT* 57). Lily Herf's nativist discomfort with the changing shape of early-twentieth-century America is also intimated through her refusal to let her son play with his American flag, as well as her support for Alton B. Parker over the vastly more popular progressivist Theodore Roosevelt in the 1904 presidential election (Jimmy's stream of consciousness describes "Billy with the freckles on his ears whose people are for Roosevelt instead of for Parker like mother" [*MT* 56]).

Lily's impact on her son is profound; and through her association with the domestic space of the city—a facet of the urban landscape that throughout the novel remains a significant component of Jimmy's own vexed response to the metropolis—Dos Passos captures the full range of urban spaces and experiences that constitute his ambivalent vision of the city. At home, Lily's anxiety about urban space is further illustrated through Jimmy's own awkward engagement with their surroundings. As Jimmy begins to mature and establish his own identity, however, Dos Passos makes clear that Jimmy will respond differently to the city than his mother, whose death early in the novel suggests her incompatibility with this new world. Looking out the window "watching umbrellas bob in the slowly swirling traffic that flowed up Broadway" (*MT* 65), Jimmy is clearly enticed by the worlds beyond his hotel suite, as his imaginative taste for adventure attests. At dinner he fancies himself "head waiter at Delmonico's [...]"

arranging the table for Graustark and the Blind King of Bohemia and Prince Henry the Navigator” (*MT* 66); he wonders “what it’d be like to be a seal [...] to swim around in the sea whenever you wanted to” (*MT* 67); and longs to be an African adventurer. What is for him and his mother a secure place of rest, a home, is also for Jimmy both a stifling environment (“the whiff of medicines made his ribs contract with misery”) and an exciting one, given its contiguity with exterior urban space (“sounds of cabs and trolleycars squirmed in brokenly through the closed windows” [*MT* 67]). In a moment of Joycean epiphany, Dos Passos emphasizes the conflicting impulses provoked in Jimmy in response to his home’s complex spatial dynamic; its liminal quality. Asked to fetch some butter from the bathroom windowledge, Jimmy crosses the threshold between indoors and outdoors and feeds his budding curiosity for the various elements of the broader social/spatial landscape:

He pushed up the window at the end of the tub. The ledge was gritty and feathery specks of soot covered the plate turned up over the butter. He stood a moment staring down the airshaft, breathing through his mouth to keep from smelling the coalgas that rose from the furnaces. Below him a maid in a white cap leaned out of a window and talked to one of the furnacemen who stood looking up at her with his bare grimy arms crossed over his chest. Jimmy strained his ears to hear what they were saying; to be dirty and handle coal all day and have grease in your hair and up to your armpits.

“Jimmee!

“Coming mother.” Blushing he slammed down the window and walked back to the sittingroom, slowly so that the red would have time to fade out of his face. (*MT* 67)

Jimmy’s embarrassment here marks his desire to please his mother and remain uncorrupted by exterior city space (the class and sexual dimensions of which are present here), even as he is excited by the prospect of this other realm of experience.

When Lily allows him to walk out to buy some candy, this ambivalence is clearer still. Jimmy’s stream of consciousness mixes his taste for adventure with his mother’s anxieties (“There are such terrible dangers” [*MT* 69], she had told him before he left; she had even begun to cry):

He walked fast uptown past the Ansonia. In the doorway lounged a blackbrowed man with a cigar in his mouth, maybe a kidnapper. But nice people live in the Ansonia like where we live. Next a telegraph office, drygoods stores, a dyers and cleaners, a Chinese laundry sending out a scorched mysterious steamy smell. He walks faster, the chinks are terrible kidnappers. [...] [H]e thinks of the Mirror place two blocks further up, those little silver steamengines and automobiles they give you with your change. I’ll hurry; on rollerskates it’d take less time, you could escape from bandits, thugs, holdupmen, on rollerskates, shooting over your shoulder with a long automatic, bing...one of em down! that’s the worst of em, bing...there’s another; the rollerskates are magic rollerskates, whee...up the brick walls of the houses, over the roofs, vaulting chimneys,

up the Flatiron Building, scooting across the cables of Brooklyn Bridge.
(*MT* 69-70)

So even as Jimmy familiarizes himself with the energy and excitement of urban modernity (“steamengines and automobiles”), becoming an urban superhero as he engages with the liminal urban space of the street, he is plagued by the knowledge of his mother’s worsening condition and feels guilty for leaving her alone and, also, frightened lest her absence destroy their shared familial space: “‘Mother.’ She wasn’t in the sittingroom. He was terrified. She’d gone out, she’d gone away. ‘Mother!’” (*MT* 71).

Jimmy’s subsequent experiences in the novel speak to this tension in which a home in the city can be both a space of retreat as well as confinement. In another epiphanic moment that foreshadows his eventual rejection of his uncle Jeff’s offer to work in the family business, Jimmy is humiliated for using the word “fool” in front of his cousin and runs home, locking himself in his room, safe from the street “dark and blowy, full of ponderous advancing shadows and chasing footsteps” (*MT* 90). When Jimmy does decide, however, to reject the life his uncle envisions for him, he makes the opposite move, going from the lavish, comfortable diningroom setting to which Jeff has taken him to bring him into the fold, to the cold, abrasive world outside, a transition in which the urban masses speak, at once, to both the city’s mechanized soul-crushing routine and its more liberating vitality and diversity:

For a moment not knowing which way to go, he stands [...] watching
people elbow their way through the perpetually revolving doors;
softcheeked girls chewing gum, hatchetfaced girls with bangs,
creamsweatyfaced messengers, crisscross glances, sauntering hips, red

jowls masticating cigars, sallow concave faces, flat bodies of young men shuffling, fed in two endless tapes through the revolving doors out into Broadway, in off Broadway. Jimmy fed in a tape in and out the revolving doors, noon and night and morning, the revolving doors grinding out his years like sausage meat. All of a sudden his muscles stiffen. Uncle Jeff and his office can go plumb to hell. (*MT* 101)

Not intent on following the prescribed path he imagines as agonizingly monotonous, Jimmy exits through the doors and heads down Broadway towards Battery Park, passing “stenographers and officeboys [...] eating sandwiches among the [churchyard] tombs,” watching “Outlandish people cluster outside steamship lines; tow-haired Norwegians, broadfaced Swedes, Polacks, swarthy stumps of men that smell of garlic from the Mediterranean, mountainous Slavs, three Chinamen, a bunch of Lascars.” In a move that anticipates the *U.S.A.* trilogy’s panoramic vision of the dynamic face of the American populace in the early decades of the twentieth century, including in particular the struggle of the working classes, Dos Passos here positions Jimmy amongst the newest Americans striving to make a new home in a changing country, where, free from unwanted familial pressure and “facing the wind squarely” (*MT* 101), Jimmy too must start to make his own way.

Dos Passos’s call in “Against American Literature” for a new brand of American writing evokes a relatively similar scene in which the dynamic urban environment’s rapid transit system functions as the site of a social encounter which speaks both to changing urban demographics and, figuratively, to the crucial effects of the new literature Dos Passos would aim to create. Taking Walt Whitman as his model—America’s “only

poet [who] found his true greatness” (37)—Dos Passos emphasizes the importance of moving beyond the staid conventionality of the past to adopt a new perspective:

Whitman failed to reach the people he intended to, and aroused only a confused perturbation and the sort of moral flutter experienced by a primly dressed old bachelor when a ruddy smiling Italian, smelling of garlic and sweat, plumps down beside him in the street car. Still, the day of Whitman’s power may be in a rosy future, when Americans, instead of smiling with closed eyes, will look keenly before them. (37)

The sketch of the working-class immigrant is admittedly crude, but the encounter aboard the streetcar demonstrates Dos Passos’s nuanced appreciation and application of the many modes of modern urban experience. And in this case—urban trauma and spectacle notwithstanding—a more quotidian and arguably mundane form of city life becomes emblematic of the desired work of Dos Passos’s art. As an amplified echo of this early analogy, Jimmy’s experience moving down Broadway in *Manhattan Transfer* speaks to the novel and salutary fictional vision announced in “Against American Literature,” insofar as the novel here bears witness—as Jimmy does—to the shape of everyday American urban life, whose spectacle (“Outlandish people”) and banality (“eating sandwiches”) combine to constitute the scene of potential revelation and rebellion, even if on the small scale of the order of Jimmy’s spatial appropriations.

Dos Passos’s depiction of the Manhattan crowd at this point in *Manhattan Transfer* reflects Walter Benjamin’s understanding of the duality that obtains in the crowd. In a significant sense, Benjamin remarks, the crowd (as depicted in Poe) comprises “less the movements of people going about their business than the movements

of the machines they operate” (*Arcades* 337). Under ideal circumstances, however, Benjamin’s *flâneur* reveals that this mechanization might not be pervasive, for the city-wanderer’s nonchalance acts as “nothing other than an unconscious protest against the tempo of the production process” (*Arcades* 338). While Jimmy hardly fits Benjamin’s vision of the idling *flâneur* (indeed at this point he is highly conscious of his protest), still his behavior reveals the potential of city space to be shaped by its inhabitants to suit their own purposes. In this way Dos Passos’s representation of urban experience also exemplifies de Certeau’s conceptualization of urban life as the scene in which such potential is realized, where the wanderer, in a figurative manner, enunciates a spatial language. De Certeau equates the practice of the urban-dweller with that of language in order to emphasize the “phatic” (*PEL* 99) function of making one’s way in the city; that, like language’s capacity to “initiate, maintain, or interrupt contact, such as ‘hello,’ ‘well, well’” (*PEL* 99), walking in the city amounts to an endless range of strategies by which the walker negotiates his position within and connection to the environment, working within, and through, the limitations it presents; to say ‘hello’ to certain spaces and ‘goodbye’ to others. In true Certeauian fashion, then, Jimmy’s move from the hotel out into the streets constitutes such an enunciation; and, what is more, Jimmy’s physical announcement is accompanied by a near *actual* utterance as Jimmy himself is almost sure that his thoughts have been heard by those around him:

Uncle Jeff and his office can go plumb to hell. The words are so loud inside him he glances to one side and the other to see if anyone heard him say them. [...] He squares his shoulders and shoves his way to the

revolving doors. His heel comes down on a foot. 'For chrissake look where yer steppin.' He is out in the street. (*MT* 101)

“Against American Literature” contains a further spatial metaphor important to Dos Passos’s elaboration and enactment of a new American literature in *Manhattan Transfer*. It comes when Dos Passos addresses the “sudden vogue of Russian literature” (38). “It has so much that our own lacks,” Dos Passos argues, “no wonder it is a relief to us Americans to turn from our prim colonial living room of thought, where the shades are drawn for fear the sun will fade the carpet Puritan ancestors laid there, to the bizarre pains and passions, to the hot moist steppe-savour of a Russian novel” (38). In the context of Dos Passos’s interest in the range of urban experiences generated by a city typified by the proliferation of liminal spaces, by the breakdown of clear divides between interior and exterior and its consequent social interactions, this appeal to look beyond typical domestic confines functions as more than simply a metaphor for the rejection of a feminized and thus domesticated literary legacy in favour of a new and exciting literature and its exotic locales (here evident in the “moist steppe-savour” of the Russian landscape, far from the New England “colonial living room”). Rather, like the amusing (for Dos Passos) situation on the street car, as well as Jimmy’s experiences coming of age in the modern metropolis, the attention to these particular dynamics of space marks Dos Passos’s conviction that such unique, and yet increasingly normal, urban spatial arrangements and encounters are home to alternative modes of being, thinking, and dwelling central to the author’s urban vision of a potentially habitable city.

Now, while Jimmy’s defiant position highlights the city’s potential to allow for a reimagining and reconstitution of identity, the duality by which the urban environment—

indoors and out—is both oppressive and liberating remains for him a consistent source of frustration. Out late after a party—having escorted Ellen home and away from violent suitor George Baldwin, and then encountered Tony Hunter, who tells Jimmy he “cant like women,” that his sexual orientation is “not even in the dictionary,” and that as a result he is suicidal (*MT* 198; sic)—Jimmy’s thoughts converge upon the agony of sexual desire in what is arguably the novel’s most tortured depiction of city life:

He wanted to run along yelling sonsobitches at the top of his lungs. Lightning flickered along the staring rows of dead windows. The rain seethed along the pavements, against storewindows, on brownstone steps. His knees were wet, a slow trickle started down his back, there were chilly cascades off his sleeves onto his wrists, his whole body itched and tingled. He walked on through Brooklyn. Obsession of all the beds in all the pigeonhole bedrooms, tangled sleepers twisted and strangled like the roots of potbound plants. Obsession of feet creaking on the stairs of lodgings, hands fumbling at doorknobs. Obsession of pounding temples and solitary bodies rigid on their beds. (*MT* 199-200)

Echoing an earlier scene in which Jimmy lies in bed imagining “men and women’s bodies writh[ing] alone tortured by the night and the young summer” (*MT* 164), this undeniably powerful vision of urban isolation and confinement stems from Dos Passos’s own frustrated ambivalence towards modern sexual mores. Writing close friend Rumsey Mervin in 1922 as to “this horrible Y man drug clerk attitude to girls or flappers or whatever one calls them” (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 347), Dos Passos rails against the puerility of the American “Obsession” with sex. “God America’s filthy,” he writes.

“Everything about sex is so hideously perverted it makes you shudder—God I wish every college in America could be wiped off the face of the earth. Beastly holes!” (348). As he regains a sense of equanimity in his letter, however—adding “Forgive my silly vehemence. I’m probably quite wrong—And my own experience vis à vis women is so incomplete that I have no right to preach” (348)—so too in this scene from his novel *Dos Passos* belies Jimmy’s subjective vision of the innumerable lonely bodies by the plain fact that lovers Stan and Ellen make use of the apartment that very night, Stan having asked Jimmy’s permission to do so.

As part of *Manhattan Transfer*’s urban vision, its representation of domesticity is equally ambiguous. Later in the novel, upon Jimmy’s return home from Europe with Ellen and their infant son—the couple having reconnected and married while working for the Red Cross during the war—Jimmy is no longer as painfully alone; now, however, he faces the pressures of a more traditionally domestic living arrangement. Ultimately he is still very fond of Ellen and, were she able to reciprocate his feelings, he would happily make a family with her. Instead, though, Jimmy can only cling to romantic memories of their courtship overseas, and their would-be home comes to embody the torpid state of their relationship: “Chairs, tables, books, windowcurtains crowded about them bitter with the dust of yesterday, the day before, the day before that. Smells of diapers and coffeepots and typewriter oil and Dutch Cleanser oppressed them” (*MT* 258). In contrast to Jimmy’s writing, however, which takes on the menacing characteristics of urban mechanization (“The linotype was a gulping mouth with nickelbright rows of teeth, gulped, crunched” [*MT* 280]), a home with Ellen is at other times a space of refuge. The

sight of Ellen bringing him breakfast in bed, for instance, prompts Jimmy to ask if he had “died and gone to heaven,” as here he is “warm and happy” (*MT* 280).

In the end the Herfs are unable to share a similar experience of their shared space, and like the many other couples Dos Passos presents in the novel’s final section (Dutch Robertson and Francie, poor young lovers with no space of their own; con artist Jake Silverman and the reasonably paranoid Rosie; Nevada Jones and Tony Hunter, covertly cohabitating platonic roommates), their struggle to establish a comfortable home space is futile. In the novel’s famous ending Jimmy abandons his job and family and heads out from the city, set to go “pretty far” (*MT* 342), a conclusion that, while not necessarily abandoning all hope in the pursuit of America’s founding ideals, arguably affirms Dos Passos’s pessimism about life in the city. And yet even as Jimmy here takes up the position of the itinerant Bud Korpenning, abandoning his search for a secure domestic dwelling place in the city, there *are* those making homes within the reaches of the metropolis—even if Jimmy has decided to move on in search of other spaces. Consider that when, still feeling the “gayety” (*MT* 341) he has difficulty explaining to himself while on his ride from Manhattan on the ferry, Jimmy passes “between rows of otherworldly frame houses.” The houses alien to Jimmy and his need for movement are those arguably furnished by the “huge furniture truck, shiny and yellow” that picks him up. Located amidst the Fitzgeraldian wasteland of “rusty donkeyengines, skeleton trucks, wishbones of Fords, shapeless masses of corroding metal,” the houses—and certainly the furniture truck—are ostensibly part and parcel of the soul-stifling materialism at which *Manhattan Transfer* takes aim. But as the night’s mist lifts with the dawn, “a morning pearliness [...] seeping in from somewhere,” these dwelling places are not without the

significant potential that marks the dawn of Jimmy's flight and the struggle to establish an alternative space of belonging. Furthermore, the liminal space Jimmy takes up at the end of the novel—a type of space that, as we have seen, is a key component of life in the city—allows identity to be suspended and, thus, potentially reformulated and made more viable, a sense suggested by Jimmy's "walk[ing] on, taking pleasure in breathing, in the beat of his blood, in the tread of his feet on the pavement" (*MT* 342). In this sense, *Manhattan Transfer's* conclusion does not foreclose on the possibilities of life in the city but rather recognizes and anticipates the wider applicability of such urban spatial dynamics to the broader realm of American cultural and political life, issues Dos Passos would come to explore further in *U.S.A.*

* * *

As is the case with respect to Jimmy Herf, Dos Passos's ambivalent response to the interconnected urban network is also evident with respect to Ellen Thatcher's experience in the city, as well as her family dynamic while growing up. Susie Thatcher, Ellen's mother, whom we first encounter in the hospital in utter hysterics after giving birth to Ellen, continues to languish anxiously well after her return home. "[M]oaning fretfully" (*MT* 19), she is disturbed by the sounds of the city below her window: "A wagon clattered by down the street. She could hear children's voices screeching. A boy passed yelling an extra. Suppose there'd been a fire. That terrible Chicago theatre fire. Oh I'll go mad! She tossed about in the bed, her pointed nails digging into the palms of her hands" (*MT* 20). Susie's thin-walled apartment is a further source of agitation, as she lies nervously in bed listening to her neighbors argue, a discussion which, in addition to

establishing the specific conditions of this urban domestic space, functions to mark the changing gender dynamic in which Susie's newborn, Ellen, will take part:

A young girl was crying through her nose:

“I tell yer mommer I aint agoin back to him.”

Then came expostulating an old staid Jewish woman's voice: “But Rosie, married life aint all beer and skittles. A wife must submit and vork for her husband.” [...]

“But I aint a Jew no more,” suddenly screeched the young girl. “This aint Russia; it's little old New York. A girl's got some rights here.” (*MT* 19; sic)

While Ellen's mother, like Jimmy's, is unable to countenance these urban spatial thresholds, living in perpetual agitation and fear, Ellen herself (again like Jimmy) betrays an adventurousness that ultimately supersedes her childhood fright and leads her to embrace the fluid boundaries that mark her experience of urban space, one marked by an adaptive spatial practice. Thus, the utterly frightening exterior world encountered early on through Ellen's perspective—“wheels and gallumping of hoofs, trailing voices” (*MT* 37); “the roaring and the rattat outside” that grows and merges with the terrifying “shadows nudg[ing] creakily towards her [. . .] slipping into the bed” (*MT* 37-38)—in time turns into a world of possibilities where Ellen becomes “Elaine the lily maid of Astalot” (*MT* 45) and “Elaine of Lammermoor” (*MT* 46), braving Central Park despite parental warnings to the contrary, fleeing a lurking kidnapper in a fear-filled self-directed fantasy:

The man on the bench has a patch over his eye. A watching black patch. A black watching patch. The kidnapper of the Black Watch, among the rustling shrubs kidnappers keep their Black Watch. Ellen's toes don't kick in the air. Ellen is terribly scared of the kidnapper of the Black Watch, big smelly man of the Black Watch with a patch over his eye. She's scared to run. Her heavy feet scrape on the asphalt as she tries to run fast down the path. She's scared to turn her head. The kidnapper of the Black Watch is right behind. When I get to the lamppost I'll run as far as the nurse and the baby, when I get to the nurse and the baby I'll run as far as the big tree, when I get to the big tree. . . . Oh I'm not so tired. . . . I'll run out onto Central Park West and down the street home. She was scared to turn around. She ran with a stitch in her side. She ran till her mouth tasted like pennies.

'What are you running for Ellie?' asked Gloria Drayton who was skipping rope outside the Norelands.

'Because I wanted to,' panted Ellen. (*MT* 46; sic)

Ellen's child's play augurs both her career as a performer and the vexed independence consequent to it. From the outset of her characterization, Dos Passos marks the tension implicit in Ellen's struggle to establish an identity, as her deliberate act of defiance ("I wanted to") leaves her vulnerable as the focal point of the male gaze (even if here in part imaginatively). For Janet Galligani Casey this struggle is futile. Casey argues that Ellen lacks true autonomy because as a woman "her rise [to fame] is premised entirely on the acceptance of certain prescribed social roles—as object of the gaze, as

spectacle—that objectify her and deny her the status of subject” (106). According to Casey, Ellen’s perpetual status as passive visible commodity renders her powerless, a mere “pawn in a socio-cultural system conceived by and for men” (118).

Casey’s perceptive analysis of Ellen’s detrimental hypervisibility notwithstanding, the urban space in which Ellen circulates as a commodity does at times allow for moments of freedom from the oppressive gender dynamic in which she is consistently objectified. On her honeymoon, for instance, Ellen finds some respite from her newly-wed melancholy as she and John Oglethorpe move on the train through the marginal urban zones between New York and Atlantic City. Unable at turns to even look at her husband, let alone feel the happiness expected of a new bride, Ellen is soothed by the train’s motion and the changing landscape:

she could only look out at the brown marshes and the million black windows of factories and the puddly streets of towns and a rusty steamboat in a canal and barns and Bull Durham signs and roundfaced Spearmint gnomes all barred and crisscrossed with bright flaws of rain. The jeweled stripes on the window ran straight down when the train stopped and got more and more oblique as it speeded up. The wheels rumbled in her head, saying Man-hattan Tran-sfer. Man-hattan Tran-sfer. Anyway it was a long time before Atlantic City. (*MT* 97-98)

Although reminiscent of the urban blazon through which Dos Passos captures the hostility typifying Bud Korpenning’s first moments in the city, this catalogue registers differently because it is filtered through Ellen’s perspective. As a fine-tuned recording device, a chronicler, or as he also put it, “a sort of second-class historian of the age he

lives in” (“Statement of Belief” 115), Dos Passos renders the various landscapes of *Manhattan Transfer* so as to allow for a high degree of interpretive latitude. Arranged paratactically, lists of this type can, on the one hand, function to capture urban excess and agglomeration, as in Bud’s case. On the other hand, because the structure of such lists suggests no distinction between the items the lists comprise, and there is no intervening authorial presence to interpret specific details, such particulars are seldom immediately significant of anything beyond simply themselves.

Now, Dos Passos does arguably invoke the pathetic fallacy here, given Ellen’s despondency: “*brown marshes,*” “*black windows,*” “*puddly streets.*” But Ellen’s thoughts suggest the calming effect to which the landscape contributes in this particular situation, as “it was so comfortable in the empty parlor car in the green velvet chair with John leaning towards her reciting nonsense with the brown marshlands slipping by” (*MT* 98). As such, the details Ellen observes on her way to Atlantic city are significant only insofar as they are insignificant; part of a liminal, significative-neutral space in which Ellen is momentarily free from the discourses which both shape and restrict her identity. Dos Passos’s fine-tuned realism does more, therefore, than convey the “rush” and “breathless confusion” of the modern that D. H. Lawrence and countless other critics emphasize. As a narrative mode capable of maintaining a significant degree of objectivity, it captures, moreover, the uneventful, ordinary moments that also constitute a more secure and stable experience of modernity.

De Certeau’s discussion of train travel in *The Practice of Everyday Life* can help us further understand Dos Passos’s keen sense of the many valences of experience generated by *Manhattan Transfer*’s mechanized environment, here revealed through

Ellen's position aboard the train. On the one hand, moving along the rigid network of the railroad, she is trapped. Her destination set, she dreads the arrival: "White letters, ATLANTIC CITY, spelled doom over the rainpitted water" (*MT* 98). As de Certeau asserts, on the train "The unchanging traveler is pigeonholed, numbered, and regulated in the grid of the railway car, which is a perfect actualization of the rational utopia" (*PEL* 111). But as the train propels the static, imprisoned observer past an equally static, ostensibly oppressive landscape, the traveler is separated, removed from her surroundings; and in "losing [her] footing" (*PEL* 112) she comes to inhabit what de Certeau characterizes as a hallowed space of dreams and prayers:

A strange moment in which a society fabricates spectators and transgressors of spaces, with saints and blessed souls placed in the halos-holes (*auréoles-alvéoles*) of its railway cars. In these spaces of laziness and thoughtfulness, paradisiacal ships sailing between two social meeting points (business deals and families, drab, almost imperceptible violences), atypical liturgies are pronounced, parentheses of prayers to no one (to whom are all these traveling dreams addressed?). (*PEL* 113)

Dos Passos does not grant his readers access to what prayers or dreams Ellen might voice silently during this "incarceration-vacation" (*PEL* 114), if any. However, her momentary but significant relief speaks to both de Certeau's and Dos Passos's understanding that the forces of modernity are hardly totalizing and, rather, the machinery of modernity enables moments of respite, withdrawal, fleeting but real paradises within the often brutal modern terrain. As Dos Passos noted in a letter to friend Robert Hillyer, "Locomotion even under the most adverse conditions always cheers me up" (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 361).

Dos Passos's sense of the productive contradiction inherent to rapid transit is clear even in the novel's title. Note that while *Manhattan Transfer's* titular reference to modern transportation is certainly meant to evoke the rapid motion and dynamic change repeatedly emphasized by Dos Passos's critics, the novel's eponymous New Jersey train station—as a transfer point and potential resting place—also speaks to the static complement to this energy.⁵⁷ Dos Passos's biography is further illuminating in this regard, for in as much his near constant world-travel enabled him to embody the dynamic spirit of the age, his itinerancy was continually punctuated by moments of intermission, intervals of rest that constitute an exemplary mode of Dos Passos's engagement with modernity. As his diaries and letters illustrate, notwithstanding the plain fact of having to sit down to write, Dos Passos's characteristic position as solitary, often temporary, hotel or apartment dweller foregrounds a static yet lively interaction with the liminality of the modern urban scene, one which signals the author's ambivalence towards its ambiguities. In Madrid, for example, Dos Passos is taken in—not alienated—by the city sounds surrounding his dwelling place. As he tells Rumsey Mervin in another letter, his room is situated above “the biggest & noisiest square in the city, and the noises are really fascinating they are so constant and jumbled into long jangling chords” (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 52). In New York, the surrounding environment is much less stimulating, but through it Dos Passos cultivates a curious comedic pathos which approaches urban tedium and squalour with equal measures of dejection and levity. As such while he “sit[s] here this accursed Sunday afternoon in a fuzzy hospital bathrobe looking out through a rusty flyscreen at the backyards and clotheslines and paradise bushes [...] feel[ing] about as alive as an opened tomato can,” he tells Mervin that in regard to his illness “the cutting

out of certain ingrown tonsils where the tenement house conditions among the streptococci, were just disgraceful, my dear, and as for their morals well... will put me on my feet again” (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 354).

Dos Passos elsewhere treats archetypal urban tropes with a similar sense of humour, diminishing the tenor of erstwhile serious characterizations of the city by referring to the commonplace. To John Howard Lawson, Dos Passos writes that “Grey purple heavy evening goggles over the town like those thick sauces they pour over rice pudding” (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 304), arguably parodying “Prufrock”’s modernized adaptation of the evening poem, but to markedly less ominous effect, especially given the banal image of the sauce and rice. Describing a new Manhattan apartment he is about to move into, Dos Passos invokes the image of the Labyrinth so often associated with the modern metropolis. Applied on a smaller scale, however, with Dos Passos himself as surly Minotaur, the image works not to capture the bewildering complexity of urban space but rather to distinguish—lightheartedly, humorously—one identical apartment building from the next: “Alas I am not yet settled in the Labyrinth—the official name of 15 East 33rd Street, top floor—but, next week the happy event, the installment of the Minotaur—will take place” (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 70). And in yet another telling example of Dos Passos’s comic equanimity as regards the city, he describes London as “the same old smoky chaos,” adding, wonderfully dry, that it is “a little more interesting than ever before, I expect; the feeling of impending doom is always interesting” (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 203). Outside of the context of *Manhattan Transfer*’s more self-conscious artistry, Dos Passos is understandably more irreverent towards his surroundings. Still, these brief autobiographical records—like Ellen’s experience aboard

the train—bear witness to the range of urban tempos, moods, and spaces that mark Dos Passos’s distinct vision of metropolitan life as comprising not only discomfort but stability.

Manhattan Transfer foregrounds the tension inherent in Ellen’s engagement with the novel’s range of urban spaces again later when she moves through the heart of the bustling city in the first chapter of section II. Here, Dos Passos makes further use of the urban catalogue to evoke the city’s jagged violence:

She was walking with brisk steps too short on account of her narrow skirt; through the thin china silk the sunlight tingled like a hand stroking her back. In the heavy heat streets, stores, people in Sunday clothes, strawhats, sunshades, surfacecars, taxis, broke and crinkled brightly about her grazing her with sharp cutting glints as if she were walking through piles of metalshavings. She was groping continually through a tangle of gritty sawedged brittle noise. (*MT* 115)

Now, the streetscape’s general auditory and visual discord and even violence is punctuated by a suggestive sensuality in part unsurprising given the gender dynamics of the city’s public spaces, in which bodies (the female body especially) are on constant display. Ellen thus faces a specifically gendered assault, one that was foreshadowed by her childhood experiences. Not only, for instance, is her feminine garb an obvious physical constraint, but as a visible commodity within this public space she is compelled to struggle against her own body, and so tries self-consciously “to keep her hips from swaying so much” as two lolling sailors’ “seagreedy eyes cling stickily to her neck, her thighs, her ankles.” (*MT* 115). Of a number of striking evocations of the oppressive male

gaze, this instance is particularly disquieting, given both its insidious tangibility and its reduction of Ellen to discrete body parts. Dos Passos, as we have seen, was keenly aware of and appalled by the dehumanizing attitudes towards women that were widespread in the early twentieth century United States. To Mervin in 1918 he wrote that “the majority of men—allowing for the fact that they talk bigger than they act—, think rather of a piece of tail than of a woman. It means to them the frequent stimulation of a certain part of the anatomy and nothing else” (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 226; sic). To be sure, as both Casey and Paula E. Geyh argue, this scene speaks strongly to the constraints Ellen faces within an intensely visual economy. For Geyh, Ellen’s selfhood is only ever a “simulacra of identity” (434) as her desires and sense-of-self are a specific function of the advertising-driven specular discourse of consumer capitalism. Similarly, for Casey, as noted earlier, Ellen’s visible commodity status prevents her from establishing a subject position through which she can “[become] a spectator and not merely a spectacle” (123).⁵⁸

And yet in this very scene, immediately following her brush with the sailors, Ellen looks a male observer directly in the eyes during a fleeting encounter that echoes the distinct eroticism lurking within and tempering the aggression of the futurist/cubist sketch—a sensuality not only abrasive (the bright, crinkling, “cutting glints” of urban stimuli) but delicate (“sunlight tingl[ing] like a hand stroking her back”). Dos Passos thus subtly establishes Ellen’s active engagement and self-control within this economy of desire:

She was looking in the black eyes of a young man in a straw hat who was drawing up a red Stutz roadster to the curb. His eyes twinkled in hers, he jerked back his head smiling an upsidedown smile, pursing his lips so that

they seemed to brush her cheek. He pulled the lever of the brake and opened the door with the other hand. She snapped her eyes away and walked on with her chin up. Two pigeons with metalgreen necks and feet of coral waddled out of her way. An old man was coaxing a squirrel to fish for peanuts in a paper bag. (*MT* 115-16)

Ellen's interest in this man is surely tied to his upper-class status, of which the roadster is a distinct marker. Following Geyh's discussion of the interpellative power of advertising in *Manhattan Transfer*—especially with respect to the formulation (or, rather, debilitation) of Ellen's identity—we might argue that this is a prototypical example of the production of desire by the Veblenian signifier of “pecuniary strength” and conspicuous consumption (Veblen in Geyh 416). Indeed, what better advertisement for a Stutz roadster could we imagine to exemplify the vehicle's allure and masculine prowess than a scene like this one: the male driver spots a beautiful woman walking by the road; he catches her eye, stops, opens the door; she joins him; off they go.

Dos Passos's scene does not end this way, though, and thus the import is not Ellen's submission to the prescribed male fantasy (in which the intention is to fulfill the supposed female fantasy), but rather her own subjective pleasure in the experience—in the glitter of his eyes and the imagined touch of his lips—and, moreover, her *subversion* of that fantasy in cutting it short. She is subject to the male gaze, certainly; but like de Certeau's urban practitioners, whose quotidian manoeuvres “[escape] the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye” (*PEL* 93), she is not fully contained nor deindividualized by her object-status. Further, if the vignette's curious punctuating image of the old man tempting a squirrel picks up on the motif of enticement that characterizes

the brief encounter, Ellen is as much enticer as enticed, and so in turning her eyes and walking on haughtily she wrests both pleasure and control from the exchange.

By overlooking this encounter in their analysis of Ellen's position within the city's interconnected social and economic networks, Geyh and Casey underestimate and undervalue Ellen's ability to deal with and even take pleasure in the forces bearing on her as a woman in the city. The more crucial critical oversight, however, is in treating Ellen's engagement with urban space solely in terms of its specularly, considering the city as an environment shaped exclusively by the proliferation and exchange of signs and images in which she is, in the Althusserian sense, always-already an object. Now, certainly Dos Passos was keenly aware of the widespread impact of image-based advertising on the life of the city. Writing John Howard Lawson in 1920 upon his return to New York from England and the continent, Dos Passos remarks that "New York is rather funny—like a badly drawn cartoon—everybody looks and dresses like the Arrow-collarman" (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 299). In place of the Arrow Man, *Manhattan Transfer*—whose series of brief, juxtaposed character sketches are themselves redolent of advertising's increasing minimalism in the early twentieth century—gives us King C. Gillette, whose "highbrowed cleanshaven distinguished face [...] the face of a man who had money in the bank" (*MT* 9) becomes a model of success for an unnamed and thus representative frustrated working-class family man through whom Dos Passos reveals the serious (and comic) effects of a largely sterile, inauthentic ad-based commercial culture.⁵⁹ Moreover, as we have seen, Ellen's "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Casey 115) is undoubtedly a fundamental quality of her experience of the city.⁶⁰ Ultimately, however, the multiplicity of urban space allows for a variety of responses on behalf of its inhabitants, which Dos

Passos represents by combining his realistic, imagistic description with a fine-tuned psychological—and, even, physiological—realism.

Such a sensual range is evident, for instance, when, following her encounter with the sailors and the Stutz stud, Ellen rides the bus downtown and enjoys another moment of the paradoxically restful motion provided her on the train to Atlantic City—an experience again captured through the largely matter-of-fact descriptive narration filtered through Ellen’s perspective:

Sunday afternoon fifth avenue filed rosily by dustily jerkily. On the shady side there was an occasional man in a top hat and frock coat. Sunshades, summer dresses, straw hats were bright in the sun that glinted in squares on the upper windows of houses, lay in bright slivers on the hard paint of limousines and taxicabs. It smelled of gasoline and asphalt, of spearmint and talcumpowder and perfume from the couples that jiggled closer and closer together on the seats of the bus. In an occasional storewindow, paintings, maroon draperies, varnished antique chairs behind plate glass. The St. Regis. Sherry’s. The man beside her wore spats and lemon gloves, a floorwalker probably. As they passed St. Patrick’s she caught a whiff of incense through the tall doors open into gloom. Delmonico’s. (MT 116)

While the text’s filmic approach is elsewhere employed to reflect what Casey describes as the culture’s “fetishistic presentation of Ellen as a [static] sign” (117), here, within an urban blazon marked not by excess but by the familiar, Dos Passos positions her as the central seeing, but also smelling, hearing, and thinking subject who is, significantly, *in motion* riding down Fifth Avenue past shops, hotels, restaurants, etc.—her physical

movement in tune with the Certeauian mobility of her engagement with her surroundings; with what Franco Moretti describes as the “more pliant and provisional attitude” of the city dweller (*Signs* 117).

There is, moreover, another example of Certeauian “laziness and thoughtfulness” here, as in addition to watching and listening, Ellen begins to write a poem while waiting for her stop, adopting the male love poet’s voice in a further reversal of the male/female-subject/object dynamic and, further, expressing one of the “traveling dreams” that for de Certeau characterize such a liminal journey. Touches of modernist stream of consciousness internal monologue thus mark Ellen as more than simply the passively receptive vehicle for the novel’s instrumental record of Manhattan. As Dos Passos himself highlighted—despite his own emphasis upon the visual, filmic function of *Manhattan Transfer*—the novelist’s main goal should be “to create characters first and foremost” (“Business” 160). His contemporaries, he argues in a 1934 review, “do the snapshot, the silhouette, the true-to-life spittin’ image very well, but that is as different from the real invention of a personality out of the tangle of functions, sense reactions, memories, habits that are observable in the people we know, as a photograph is different from the person photographed” (160). Like Virginia Woolf’s call in “Modern Fiction” for a fictional perspective that will “come closer to life” (161), Dos Passos’s characterization transcends the visual materialism so often emphasized by commentators, shaping from this “tangle” a series of sharply realized individuals whose identities reflect the manifold urban subjectivities that function within and despite the dominant discourses of urban commercialism; who in fact activate, appropriate, and thus articulate the polysemous Certeauian urban spatial network traced in *Manhattan Transfer*.

Like de Certeau's spatial practitioners whose figurative enunciations mark out a range of habitable spaces in the city, Ellen later enjoys another momentary release from her frustration and despair over her alcoholic lover Stan—whose drinking ultimately spoils what is at times a blissful relationship—by recalling/reliving the ecstasy of her time spent with him. In transit once again after leaving him drunk at dinner, “as she climbed [into the streetcar] she remembered swooningly the smell of [his] body sweating in her arms. She let herself drop into a seat, biting her lips to keep from crying out. God it's terrible to be in love” (*MT* 130). Ellen's movement along the pathways of the urban network functions similarly to her relationship with Stan. As we see here, as elsewhere, Dos Passos grants Ellen time for reflection and thus opens up her subjective perspective to readers, revealing her to be more than a static female object. With respect to the affair, while Stan does first come to an awareness of Ellen after seeing her perform, as *object*, on the whole their relationship works to extract Ellen from the positions that cast her in such prescribed roles. Her relationship with Stan, of course, represents an alternative to her marriage, and as a secret it aims to evade visibility; indeed, upon first evidence that their relationship has been consummated, the post-coital scene, we learn that Ellen is avoiding the stage by skipping rehearsal (*MT* 129). Moreover, in distinction to Casey's claim that Ellen is incapable of wielding the gaze, here her eyes fall squarely on Stan, whose lean, tanned body she remarks admirably upon (*MT* 128). Even Stan himself is frequently characterized as hoping to evade being seen (*MT* 118, 129), and while his desire for self-effacement—via alcohol and ultimately suicide—is clearly a source of severe anguish for Ellen, the two do take advantage of the occasional opacities of urban space to create moments of respite for each other. Like the parting lovers whom she sees

embracing “In the shadow of a doorway [...] sway[ing] tightly clamped in each other’s arms,” and at whom she “smile[s] happily” (*MT* 130), Ellen takes up liminal spaces both at home and in the city streets, and in the process finds moments of reprieve from the gendered social and economic pressures that impact her.

In a further move through which Dos Passos again reveals the urban network’s spatial variability and accompanying propensity to accommodate identity reformulation, Ellen’s dissatisfaction with her husband Jojo ultimately compels her to leave him and set out on her own. As she packs her things, getting ready to leave her apartment, Dos Passos makes clear her position within the network of interconnected city spaces, as the morning light begins to illuminate her surroundings, “obliquely drenching the chimneypots and cornices of the houses across the street.” Hardly confining, this domestic space is open to the exterior world and, in turn, the presence of other interior spaces, a function of the urban topography that Ellen takes advantage of in first moving into a hotel and then finding her own apartment. In scratching out the ‘O’ from the initials (E. T. O.) on her trunk, Ellen renounces her role as John Oglethorpe’s wife and is intent on (re)discovering herself, a process which is at once difficult—“It’s all too terribly disgustingly low,” she says to herself as she packs (*MT* 139)—and exhilarating—once in the taxi, “When they turned into the very empty sunlight of Broadway a feeling of happiness began to sizzle and soar like rockets inside her. The air beat fresh, thrilling in her face.” Before she leaves, Ellen dons a hat and veil to disguise the fact she has been crying. She need not hide her discontent, nor her decision to leave, however, as she and her cabdriver—whose occupation, notably, allows him to comfortably embody the fluidity of the urban network and the movement between stations of rest—enjoy a discussion that reaffirms her

decision to “be going away somewhere.” The cabbie has been thrown out by his wife and is set on beginning again as well, having decided to “[get] an apartment on Twentysecond Avenoo wid another feller an [...] git a pianer an live quiet an lay offen the skoits” (*MT* 141; sic), details which suggest the fluctuation of gender roles in the city—as regards women’s power and, if only very subtly, queer desire—but also a potentially more stable mode of urban dwelling.

The network of urban spaces that permits Ellen’s escape and allows her moments of simple, ordinary comfort is not, however, an environment without frustrations, as she must often isolate herself to enjoy such moments of reprieve. In isolation, however, the self-awareness she ultimately employs to begin to re-imagine her social role becomes evident. After leaving Oglethorpe, Ellen arrives at the Brevoort Hotel and the conflict of emotion which marks her departure returns. Initially she is positively giddy, “[running] about the room like a small child kicking her heels and clapping her hands,” laying in bed “laughing with her legs stretched wide in the cool slippery sheets.” Soon, though, she feels utterly alone amidst the awakening urban sea: “From the street she could hear the occasional rumble of a truck. In the kitchens below her room a sound of clattering had begun. From all around came a growing rumble of traffic beginning. She felt hungry and alone. The bed was a raft on which she was marooned alone, always alone, afloat on a growling ocean. A shudder went down her spine.” By registering the contradictions that mark Ellen’s experience and, in particular, through the poignant but ambiguous image of Ellen catching “sight of herself in the mirror, [standing] naked looking at herself with her hands on her tiny firm appleshaped breasts” (*MT* 142), Dos Passos suggests both her awareness of her status as visual commodity and her search for an alternative way of

seeing/knowing herself. In this private moment at the hotel it is not entirely clear how Ellen's gaze functions. Does she cover her breasts in order to preserve a degree of modesty congruent with the image she would wish to project? Is this a moment of self-evaluation/self-hatred directed at her body and object-status? Is she covering up to thwart her own adoption of the male gaze, unable to see herself in any other mode and thus unable to look at herself fully and completely? For Casey, as noted above, Ellen's visual self-awareness is an indication that "her identity is entirely contained in and constrained by her image" (121). That Ellen's breasts are described as "firm," however, signals a tactility to this image-complex which again stresses that her subjectivity encompasses far more than the visual realm—a fact which her childlike glee, the feeling of the sheets in bed, and the surrounding city sounds also bear out. Furthermore, unlike other examples in the novel where Ellen contemplates her appearance in the mirror—at dinner, parties, or out shopping—here Dos Passos gives no specific sense of Ellen's reaction to her image and as a result suggests the possibility that within this private, liminal node of the urban network she is momentarily unconstrained by the visual economy elsewhere so prevalent.

Indeed, Dos Passos confirms Ellen's relative freedom within the urban network at this juncture in the novel by setting her acquisition of a place of her own against other women's damaged relationships with respect to both men and the space of the home. Just before she leaves to go to the Brevoort, and just after she moves into her new apartment, Ellen speaks with her friend Cassie, whose emotionally abusive boyfriend Morris ultimately impregnates her after pressuring her into having sex. In contrast with Cassie's naive romantic idealism (she "wanted [her and Morris's] love to be always pure and beautiful" [*MT* 158]) Ellen's gruff realism permits her—for a time at least—to avoid the

gender-inflected subjection Cassie endures. By finding her own apartment, moreover, Ellen avoids the confinement felt by another female character, Cecily Baldwin, whose husband George demands they remain married and living together despite her bitterness and anguish as a result of his infidelities (“What do you think I stay in this hell except for you?” Cecily she tells him [*MT* 156]). In a telling moment of narrative juxtaposition in which the image of Cecily looking out of the window at the cage-like skeletons of new buildings against the stormy sky is succeeded by the image of Ellen hanging up curtains in her new place, Dos Passos marks the distinction between these two women, one of whom looks longingly skyward hoping for some kind of escape or relief, thinking “Oh if it would only rain,” while the other, “looking happily about the big shoeboxshaped room,” takes comfort in arranging her domestic environment, notably manipulating porous urban spatial boundaries, the scene marked by the process of shaping habitable space: “Ellen had just hung a chintz curtain in the window to hide with its blotchy pattern of red and purple flowers the vista of desert backyards and brick flanks of downtown houses. [...] [T]he yellow hardwood floor was littered with snippings of chintz and curtainpins; books, dresses, bedlinen cascaded from a trunk in the corner; from a new mop in the fireplace exuded a smell of cedar oil” (*MT* 157).

Furthermore, in addition to highlighting *Manhattan Transfer*'s investment in depicting the range of subjectivities operative within the city, the contrast here between Ellen's relative independence and Cecily Baldwin's figurative imprisonment highlights the ideological currents that limit such diversity. After Stan Emery's death, Ellen's experiences begin to resemble those of Cecily Baldwin, and the apartment that had granted Ellen's independence begins to oppress—“the room [...] bristl[ing] with itching

stuffiness; spotty colors of pictures, carpets, chairs wrap[ing] about her like a choking hot blanket” (*MT* 219). Crucially, however, Ellen’s malaise is again marked not only by a desire for an alternative social position but by an awareness of the impact of gender upon this dynamic, an awareness that speaks to Ellen’s ability to adapt to and counteract the pressures she faces. For instance, in contemplating cutting off her hair Ellen imagines a revolt against the feminine ideal of beauty that is central to her performative role. As well, while grieving for Stan at this point, Ellen’s thoughts are punctuated by lines from Shelley’s ode to Keats, “Adonais” (“The shadow of white Death [...] And at the door, Invisible corruption”⁶¹), which resonate with the aggravating telephone’s “shivering beady tentacles of sound” that forcefully reconnect her with the urban social fabric within which she circulates as a female performer and from which she would escape. The poem marks Ellen’s grief, as well as a sense of foreboding. But more importantly, in improvising upon the poem’s conclusion (which Ellen quotes), in which the speaker envisions a liberating reunion with the spirit of the departed Adonais (“my spirit’s bark is driven / Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng / Whose sails were never to the tempest given” [Shelley 488-490]), Ellen recognizes the limitations of her gendered position: “Darkly, fearfully afar from this nonsensical life, from this fuzzy idiocy and strife; a man can take a ship for his wife, but a girl. The telephone is shiveringly beadily ringing, ringing” (*MT* 219). Ellen’s frustration reaches a peak here with the arrival of Cassie and Ruth Prynne, whose expressions of sympathy (regarding Stan’s death) and congratulations (for Ellen’s recent “wonderful success” [*MT* 220]), while not insincere, are hardly salutary; and whose appearance reflect, twice over, the subject position against which Ellen is struggling: “Those women’ll drive me mad,” Ellen thinks after running

into the bathroom where finally “the tension in her snaps” and she throws up (she is at this point pregnant with Stan’s child), another marker of a very real gender-specific limitation bearing upon her at this stage in the novel.

In this literally gut-wrenching scene in Ellen’s apartment, certain agents of the city’s spatial/communication network (“claptrap of unnecessary luxuries,” “ringing, ringing” telephone, and maddening visitors) are in conflict with the urban liminality that, as we have seen, is so important to Ellen, such that a moment looking out the window and the thought to take a walk are ultimately frustrated and supplanted. Dos Passos makes constructive work of this frustration, however, through Ellen’s understanding of her position, which in turn underscores the need for alternative identities. And as the novel progresses Ellen does in fact take up subject positions that in her lowest moments she imagines to be impossible. Her relationship with Jimmy emerges as an alternative to those she has with her other often violent suitors, for although Jimmy is intensely attracted to her, initially he respects her request that they remain friends (“I dont want to be had by anybody,” Ellen had told George Baldwin. “Cant you understand that a woman wants some freedom? [...] It’s not so easy never to be able to have friends” [MT 190]); and their eventual marriage becomes, at least for Ellen, a comfortable, if not typical, arrangement in which she betrays a greater degree of independence and maturity (“I guess I’m growing up” [MT 292]), taking on the role of breadwinner (“But Jimps, we’ve got to live”) and, for a time, distancing herself from her old crowd (“I’m getting to hate large parties” [MT 287]; “Oh Jojo I’m sick of this sort of thing” [MT 289]). Moreover, in contrast to Jimmy, who is ultimately driven to a breaking point, bitter at Ellen’s status as primary wage-earner and emasculated by her inability to return his affection, Ellen

betrays a level-headed practicality that speaks to her desire to subsist as a family and step outside the bounds of the specular economy in which she is so valuable. Whereas Jimmy's frustrations reach a peak ("Inside him all sorts of unnamed agonies were breaking loose. He felt like the man in the fairy story with an iron band round his heart. The iron band was breaking" [MT 293]), Ellen, despite her fatigue—a recurrent motif in the novel's final section—is not without hope; she maintains a degree of equanimity:

"I guess I dont love anybody for long unless they're dead...I'm a terrible sort of person. It's no use talking about it."

"I knew it. You knew I knew it. O God things are pretty rotten for me Ellie."

She sat with her knees hunched up and her hands clasped round them looking at him with wide eyes. "Are you really so crazy about me Jimps?"

"Look here lets get a divorce and be done with it."

"Dont be in such a hurry, Jimps....And there's Martin. What about him?"

"I can scrape up enough money for him occasionally, poor little kid."

"I make more than you do, Jimps....You shouldnt do that yet." [...]

"Well I'm going home." He gave a little dry laugh. "We didnt think it'd all go pop like this, did we?"

"Goodnight Jimps," she whined in the middle of a yawn. "But things dont end..." (MT 294; sic)

That Jimmy refuses to engage with Ellen as a friend and co-parent and not a lover—his male ego wounded, even if to less a degree than Ellen's more volatile, less

compassionate hangers-on—in turn leads Ellen to slip back into her role as the “Elliedoll” (*MT* 256), a narrative move through which Dos Passos again identifies the negative effects of the traditional masculinist discourse that positions Ellen at its centre, whether as showgirl or wife. Such moments seem to confirm Casey’s argument that in *Manhattan Transfer* “men have options whereas women do not” and that “there is no alternative site for women.” Casey asserts, further, that “For Ellen, the notion of departure, like the notion of autonomy, is simply inapplicable, for she *is* the city, at least insofar as New York functions as a kind of specular center; an exhibitionist extravaganza, for the (masculinist) society around it” (128). Contrary to Casey’s thesis, though, as we have seen Ellen manages to carve out habitable spaces within New York’s diverse spatial network that escape the oppressive male gaze. That she leaves New York during the War is further proof that departure is a possibility, even if only under extreme circumstances.

There is a more crucial gesture, however, in the novel’s attempt to illustrate the fissures in the would-be totalizing specular discourse of the city, and it occurs by way of Ellen’s own ruminations on this urban “exhibitionist extravaganza” during her brief tenure as an editor for *Manners* magazine. In this job Ellen takes up a divided role. Undoubtedly she works to facilitate and proliferate the ideology undergirding women’s oppression as objects of, and consumers in, the consumer-oriented visual discourse. At the same time, she occupies the ostensibly male-gendered position of those who enact and are served by this ideology. Consider that Ellen’s engaged, witty conversation with magazine big wig Mr. Harpsicourt about her work editing reveals her awareness of, and sense of how to manipulate, the discourses shaping desire within the urban realm. Her assertion that “What you want to do is make every reader feel Johnny on the spot in the

centre of things. [...] Not today but tomorrow” (MT 313) reveals her understanding of the fictional and illusory nature of the hopes and dreams manifest in the city, dreams always another day away—a conclusion at which the novel as a whole arrives in presenting the idealized centre as both unobtainable and thus destructive in its propensity to frustrate.

If Ellen is herself the city, however, lying at the ever-elusive “center of things,” she is in a position to exploit the ever-elusive gap between signifier and signified and, arguably, insert or articulate herself within this liminal space. This we can witness even within her most tortured moments of interior monologue, where a distance remains between the static image that she herself presents, and the subjective thinking, feeling voice to which Dos Passos grants readers access. Out to dinner with Baldwin, himself a “marionette,”

It seemed as if *she had set the photograph of herself in her own place*, forever frozen into a single gesture. An invisible silk band of bitterness was tightening round her throat, strangling. [...] *Ellen felt herself sitting* with her ankles crossed, rigid as a porcelain figure under her clothes, everything about her seemed to be growing hard and enameled, the air bluestreaked with cigarettesmoke, was turning to glass. (MT 318; my emphasis)

Dos Passos thus conserves, even in Ellen’s overall tragic case, the difference he discusses between the image of a person (the photograph of Ellen) and the person herself (the component of Ellen manipulating that “photograph of herself” and who “felt herself,” that other), even as he reveals the debilitating effects upon a “real personality” when this gap verges on closure, as it does here. Ultimately, then, because the dominant and

dominating urban discourses at stake in the novel rely upon an endless deferral of desire in which the object (Ellen as “photograph” or “porcelain figure”) is never fully grasped, Ellen, even in such a dire situation, is never completely immobilized.

In addition to enabling a sophisticated method of characterization, Dos Passos’s critical move of preserving a viable interiority—in this case, Ellen’s—stands as a further example of the way in which individual subjectivity is articulated within, and often despite of, the forces that mark the complex and contradictory modern scene of *Manhattan Transfer*. As already illustrated, Ellen’s experience of the city’s fluid liminality (aboard the train, in the park) functions similarly as an index to its habitability and thus serves as a counterpart to urban oppression. So, to offer another example, after “the fagging memory of the office, the smell of it, the chirruping of typewriters, the endlessly repeating phrases” leaves Ellen exhausted, “the minutes [hanging] around her neck leaden as hours” (*MT* 316), in the taxi she calms her nerves by contemplating the cold, numbered order of the city: “It must have been to keep from going crazy people invented numbers. The multiplication table better than [psychotherapist] Coué as a cure for jangled nerves. Probably that’s what old Peter Stuyvesant thought, or whoever laid the city out in numbers. She was smiling to herself. The taxi had started moving again” (*MT* 317)—this, a further Certeauian moment of “incarceration-vacation” during which Ellen contemplates and thus ironically distances herself momentarily from the hyper-rational discourses that would totalize the city.

The novel’s final vision of Ellen also grants us an image of the city’s potential habitable spaces, notably again while she rides a cab through the city, a momentary

“traveling dream” in which Ellen’s imagination and desire flickers up before her thoughts trail back to the ever looming urban “claptrap:”

Suppose I’d gone with that young man with the ugly necktie who tried to pick me up....Kidding over a banana split in a soda fountain, riding uptown and then down again on the bus, with his knee pressing my knee and his arm around my waist, a little heavy petting in a doorway.... There are lives to be lived if only you didn’t care. Care for what, for what; the opinion of mankind, money, success, hotel lobbies, health, umbrellas, Uneda biscuits...?” (*MT* 339)

Given Ellen’s conflicted response to her surroundings in the final moments of *Manhattan Transfer*, the image of the city Dos Passos leaves us with is characteristically ambiguous, for there are both traces of failure and futility as well as alternatives that suggest—in distinction to, for instance, Ellen’s “mind [going] brr all the time” as if “a busted mechanical toy” (*MT* 339)—that the city would be the place in which to forge more viable subject positions. For as much as the urban scene is home to the traditional stabilities and modern totalizing discourses which Dos Passos attacks in “A Humble Protest” and “Against American Literature,” and which plague so many of his novel’s characters, certain urban spaces and dynamics are precisely those in which such forces can be countered, as we see at turns with respect to both Jimmy and Ellen throughout the novel. Like Eliot’s ambivalent portrayal of the city in his landmark early poetry, Dos Passos’s work bears witness not only to the crises that shape the experience of modern urban space but to the ordinary moments which also bear on the lives of city-dwellers, and which, moreover, give rise to the literary innovations employed to represent them. To

search, then, for the ideal “centre of things” in Dos Passos’s urban world (and, necessarily, to fail to find it) is to misunderstand the degree to which one’s centre—one’s secure place of dwelling—is to be found in a host of spaces and a range of ways of using space, be it speeding calmly through the country-side, walking frustratedly down city-street through the cold air, or lying comfortably in bed, with a lover or without.

Chapter 4

The Practice of Everyday Life in James Joyce's *Ulysses*: Kitchens, Neighborhoods, Markets, Home

In an effort to understand the vision of the city presented in James Joyce's *Ulysses*—to get, so to speak, to “the center of things,” to the heart of a text which itself aims to “get to the heart of Dublin” and, consequently, “to the heart of all the cities in the world” (R. Ellmann, *James Joyce* 505)—Joyce's readers inevitably come to consider the novel's tenth episode, “Wandering Rocks,” whose wide-ranging view of life in Dublin ostensibly constitutes Joyce's most concerted effort towards capturing the city as a whole. Joyce famously composed the chapter using a map of Dublin, on which he traced the paths of his wanderers, carefully calculating their movements through the city. The most conspicuous feature of this feat of civil engineering, as Frank Budgen characterizes it,⁶² is the chapter's famous set of interpolations—spatial-narrative shifts (usually from one of the episode's nineteen subsections to another) that establish simultaneity between the discrete vignettes, stitching them together and thus evoking a sense of the urban totality. This image of Joyce meticulously crafting the episode should remind us of Stephen Dedalus's conception of the artist in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), who “like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails” (189). Indeed, critics have found traces of this invisible artist-deity's handiwork within the formal and thematic structures of “Wandering Rocks,” positing, in classic New Critical fashion, elaborate unifying frameworks that aim to uncover the chapter's, and often the novel's, guiding principles: for instance, a “synecdochic” reading that

understands the chapter “as a sequence of synecdochic reversals of the main chapters of the work” (Lane 125); a “bathymetric” reading that attends closely to the correspondences outlined in the Gilbert and Linati schemata,⁶³ as well as the novel’s mythic and religious allusions (Knuth 405); a reading that identifies a “chiastic” patterning underlying the episode, in which Joyce’s masterful control is evident in the ironic contrasts across episode subsections (Hart, “Chiastic”).

As regards the city, within this familiar approach to the formal innovations of modernism—and of *Ulysses* in particular (here the montage of “Wandering Rocks”)—it is of interest not as historically contingent cultural phenomenon but rather as primary source material for Joyce’s formal mastery. Like Eliot’s famous reading of *Ulysses*, or Joseph Frank’s influential discussion of the novel’s “spatial form,” according to which Joyce’s “unbelievably laborious fragmentation of narrative structure” served to establish “a sense of Dublin as a totality” (67), such interpretive strategies subordinate actual spatial dynamics to the figurative formal space of the (unified) work of art and consequently avoid discussing the full range of complexity that marks the relationship between text and context.

According to such schema, which are predicated on notions of totality or the god-like, Joyce’s readers are frequently understood to take on an omniscient, bird’s-eye view of characters and events in the city setting of “Wandering Rocks,” a perspective the episode promotes insofar as it moves away (for the most part) from the subjective internal meanderings of Stephen and Leopold Bloom (the dominant approach up to this point in *Ulysses*) towards an ostensibly panoptic vision of the urban scene.⁶⁴ At the same time, and by contrast, many Joyceans stress the degree to which readers of “Wandering Rocks”

are, rather, victims of the totality, of the episode's "hostile milieu" (Johnson 738), whose countless reader traps (narrative dead-ends, misleading homonyms, the interpolative narrative shifts) frustrate and subject them to the narrative's omniscient and omnipotent controlling force, one no longer conceived of as "indifferent."⁶⁵ For Clive Hart, a leading proponent of this outlook, this makes readers and Dubliners kin, as in Hart's view both encounter unfavourable conditions navigating the textual and urban labyrinths of the episode: "Reading this chapter is like walking in the maze of a city's streets. One finds oneself continually taking wrong turnings, being caught in dead ends, having to retrace one's steps. [...] This narrator is omnipresent, and very much in charge. [...] [B]oth we and the characters suffer from [the narrator's] totalitarian dominance" (Hart, "Wandering Rocks" 189-90). Culturally-informed readings of the chapter's urban environment have also stressed a deterministic framework, not, as Vincent Sherry explains, "authorial but historical and ideological" (32). Here Joyce's Dublin is ordered and contained by the forces of church and state, whose representatives, Father Conmee and William Humble, earl of Dudley, bookend the chapter, their journeys "powerfully enclos[ing] the episode, so that the citizens of Dublin either are subjected to a form of consciousness one might aptly term 'Conmeeism' or else are drawn en masse to the cavalcade in a double reminder of their actual physical oppression" (T. Williams 269).

By all these accounts of "Wandering Rocks," Dublin emerges as a linguistic/city setting given towards totalities, be they formal, authorial, social, political, cultural, or any combination of these. Other readers less invested in identifying definitive governing structures of either city or text have, however, highlighted the problematics of these strategies, and in offering alternative considerations of the chapter they suggest ways of

understanding the Dublin of *Ulysses* in terms other than these deterministic ones. Sherry, for instance, looking for alternatives to the harsh “mechanism” so often emphasized with respect to the episode,⁶⁶ challenges the rigid formalist approach by exploring the motif of the gratuitous in the Dublin of “Wandering Rocks,” arguing that the interpolations, so often scrutinized to determine their narrative logic, actually “occur for no good reason” (33). Challenging deterministic frameworks as well, Andrew Gibson’s look at the chapter problematizes a narrow Marxist or Foucauldian reading, as in concert with a recognition of the “radical imbalance” of power in Dublin, Gibson identifies “flickers of resistance” on behalf of certain Dubliners, as well as the text itself, towards the hegemonizing discourses operating in the contested spaces of the colonial city (50). Gibson’s discussion is not, at least explicitly, informed by Michel de Certeau’s theorization of everyday practices—the operational tactics employed by citizens to make use of space and time in the city so as to resist or subvert the discourses of power bearing on their environment and forge habitable spaces—but to a great degree it bears out the Certeauian thesis that the urban power dynamic is a dialectical one. In de Certeau’s words, “if in discourse the city serves as a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies, urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded” (*PEL* 95).

In regard to “Wandering Rocks,” these analyses push us to see that the chapter’s apparent endeavor towards wholeness (to represent *all* of Dublin) contains within it a recognition of the impossibility of such a totalizing vision.⁶⁷ Indeed, while the episode’s scope includes an array of Dubliners, it also necessarily traces limits around their appearance within its many narrative frames. The final result is thus only *suggestive* of

wholeness. Hart's remarkable endeavor to verify the accuracy of Joyce's feat of engineering—to see whether the chapter's wanderers' movements and vectors intersected appropriately (which, according to Hart's findings, they do)—also uncovers wholeness's other, as a look at his chart mapping the actions of the Dubliners over time (so as to verify their intersections) reveals mostly just blank space: a testament to the innumerable other unwitnessed crossings and encounters taking place every minute of every day in the city.⁶⁸ Similarly, while the totality of the city/text of "Wandering Rocks" has been understood by appealing to de Certeau's image of the elevated urban voyeur's erotic, (supposedly) all-encompassing vision of the cityscape hundreds of stories below, the chapter (along with the ongoing critical dialogue it has sparked) in fact supports de Certeau's central thesis that the grand vision of such a "solar Eye" is but a fiction, a construct that misunderstands the manifold everyday practices that compose and make mobile and livable the arguably fixed and uninhabitable urban text (*PEL* 92).⁶⁹

Ulysses's tenth episode's putative centrality and representative character can also be subjected to similar critique. "Wandering Rocks"'s position just right of centre in *Ulysses* (it is the tenth of eighteen chapters and so begins just beyond the novel's formal centre) belies the centrality with which the chapter is often accorded, at once alerting us to what is in fact the novel's *non*-centre, a central gap befitting this highly decentered text. Furthermore, as regards the episode's ability to epitomize Dublin and its inhabitants, not only do the subsections' discrete narrative frames speak to a failure to totalize, but more basically, the chapter's one-hour time frame offers only a small slice of the daily life of a city, whose shape of course changes as the day winds along, certain kinds of things happening and certain forms of behavior evident at certain times of the day.

Joyce's famous claim that he wanted "to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of [his] book" testifies to *Ulysses*'s encyclopedic nature (Budgen 67-68), but as "Wandering Rocks" shows, Joyce, like de Certeau, bears witness to the plurality of urban life while at once acknowledging the impossibility of comprehensiveness.

To shift focus away from both the author figure as controlling agent and the reader as either stumbling labyrinth-dweller or Icarian "solar Eye" is to attend to the complexities of *Ulysses*'s urban culture, as it is manifest in both "Wandering Rocks" and the novel as a whole; this is my goal in this chapter. The "flickers of resistance" Gibson identifies are part of a broad range of everyday practices through which Joyce's Dubliners generate habitable spaces within their city. For de Certeau—as well as for his co-authors in *The Practice of Everyday Life Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol—it is "the murky intertwining daily behaviors" (*PEL* 93) such as walking, story-telling, cooking and eating, dreaming and desiring that characterize the life of cities, and not the broad conceptual "utopian" frameworks that formulate and organize the singular "Concept-city" (*PEL* 94, 95). My look at *Ulysses* aims to underscore this distinction so as to elucidate the nuances of Joyce's habitable city.

To illustrate the differences between these urban discourses, de Certeau employs a distinction between the "map" and the "tour" or "itinerary" (*PEL* 119-20), the former a product of a rationalizing urbanist discourse that sees only inert *places*, the latter a term describing the process of enacting and inhabiting the city's dynamic, contingent *spaces*. As is the case with moments of internal monologue in *Manhattan Transfer* (for instance Ellen's ride to Atlantic City aboard the train), in *Ulysses*, to witness Father Conmee

“walk[ing] through Clongowes fields, his thinsoaked ankles tickled by stubble” (*U* 217) when in fact he is walking in the outskirts of Dublin; to hear Miss Dunne working at her desk wondering “will that fellow be at band tonight” (*U* 220); or to listen to Lenehan’s account of Tom Rochford’s rescue of a “poor devil stuck down in [an open sewer] half choked with sewer gas” (*U* 223), as Lenehan and M’Coy walk down Sycamore street; all this is to experience the various itineraries of Joyce’s Dubliners, their contribution to what de Certeau terms the “*blind* mobility characteristic of the bustling city”—blind because this knowledge and experience is other than that of “the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye,” that product and producer of the city as concept or simulacrum and thus antithetical to the spatial practices constitutive of dwelling (*PEL* 93).

Joyce puts to use his keen attention to specific geometric and geographical detail (e.g. tracing the course of his characters on a map of Dublin) in order to represent the mobile urban spaces of Dublin and the processes through which they are engendered, as Joyce’s fictional gaze comprehends and reproduces the subtleties of urban social and psychological experience, reflecting them through its predominant focus on the mental life of its characters as well as the narrative’s ever-changing forms and modes—the novel’s polymorphous textuality, which itself speaks to the multiple experiential registers of everyday urban experience; what critics such as Franco Moretti, Rita Felski, and Ben Highmore emphasize in their explorations of the resistant and habitable practices of everyday life.

Consider a wonderful example from “Wandering Rocks” of this focus on the micro-level experience or perspective, where for a brief moment according to Joyce’s text the physical city itself is literally in motion, as “North wall and Sir John Rogerson’s

quay, with hulls and anchorchains, sailing westward, sailed by a skiff, a crumpled throwaway, rocked on the ferrywash, Elijah is coming” (*U* 230), a point at which we realize the throwaway skiff, formerly (and, strictly speaking, *actually*) moving eastward on the Liffey out to sea, is now at rest, and that the quay is that which moves, “sailing westward.” “Wandering Rocks”’s clever and confusing reversal of perspective here signals Joyce’s interest in a particular “way of being” that de Certeau argues is forgotten when the dynamic operations of the city are fixed or ignored (*PEL* 97). This is not the objectifying point of view of the looker from-on-high, but rather the localized, highly subjective point of view of one of Dublin’s passers-by. In this case the perspective is that of an inanimate object, but of course throughout *Ulysses* Joyce registers this act of “passing by” (*PEL* 97) through his principal character Bloom, and to a lesser degree through Stephen, Molly Bloom, and even figures such as the “Cyclops” narrator and Gerty MacDowell.

As we saw in *Manhattan Transfer*, in *Ulysses* such subjectivity serves as an index to the everyday dwelling practices by which urbanites make habitable their surroundings. Joyce characterized the writer’s treatment of these perspectival differences to Arthur Power in terms of a contrast between intellectual and emotional writing, a contrast highly redolent of Virginia Woolf’s famous criticisms made first in her essays “Modern Novels” (1919) and “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (1923) of the Wells-Bennett-Galsworthy school of realism, where Woolf begins to sketch out her commitment to the representation of subjective experience. Joyce claims that

in emotional writing one arrives at the unpredictable which can be of more value, since its sources are deeper, than the products of the intellectual

method. In the intellectual method you plan everything beforehand. When you arrive at the description, say, of a house you try and remember that house exactly, which after all is journalism. But the emotionally creative writer refashions that house and creates a significant image in the only significant world, the world of our emotions. (Power 95)

This creative emotional complexity is not to be confused with the personal emotionalism Joyce associated with Romanticism, and from which he turned away, telling Power,

That [romantic sensibility] is the emotional aspect, [...] but there is also the intellectual outlook which dissects life [...] instead of puffing it up with romanticism, which is a fundamentally false attitude. In *Ulysses* I have tried to forge literature out of my own experience, and not out of a conceived idea, or a temporary emotion. (36)⁷⁰

The slippage in Joyce's use of terms, as regards not only "emotion," but the "intellectual," betrays his disinclination to carefully theorize his work, but it also reveals the ongoing development of his writing, from the "tormented youth" (as Joyce put it to Power) of *A Portrait*, to the attempt, in *Ulysses*, to try "to see life clearly [...] and as a whole" (37), where Joyce's own experience is less a focus and more a mediating sensibility. The difference between an "intellectual outlook" and "the intellectual method" presumably comes down to a difference between a disinterested objectivity (in contrast to a romantic, overly-emotional subjectivity) and an active, interested, strategic formalizing—what Eliot perceives and applauds in the putatively Joycean "mythical method" ("*Ulysses*, Order and Myth" 178).

This concomitant turn away from systematics and investment in a broad-ranging emotionalism was inspired by a mediaeval mind-set, whose productive tensions, in distinction from classical organization, Joyce felt were suited to the scene of the modern:

everything is inclined to flux and change nowadays and modern literature, to be valid, must express that flux. In *Ulysses* I tried to express the multiple variations which make up the social life of a city—its degradations and its exaltations. In other words what we want to avoid is the classical, with its rigid structure and its emotional limitations. The mediaeval, in my opinion, had greater emotional fecundity than classicism, which is the art of the gentleman, and is now as out-of-date as gentleman are, classicism in which the scents are only sweet, [...] but I have preferred other smells. (Power 95)

Joyce's preference for "other smells" signals both his devotion to the messy contradictions and complexities—and, of course, banalities—of everyday life and his rejection of idealism, whether formal/aesthetic or philosophical. Evident here is the distinction, in de Certeau's terms, between, on the one hand, the microcosmic blind knowledge and practice of the passers-by and, on the other, the macrocosmic immobilizing constructions of the God-like totalizing eye.

Now, Joyce's comments clearly highlight his interest in subjective experience, what he terms in conversation with Power "the world of our emotions"—this, a prototypical modernist move, the turn inward, evident in writers ranging from Henry James to Joseph Conrad to Woolf to Marcel Proust. From the earliest responses to the supposed Freudianism of *Ulysses* to the New Critical understanding of modernism's

antagonistic response to “mass” culture, critics have emphasized modernism’s obsession with interiority and the psyche, as well as notions of the autonomy of both the work-of-art or text and the subject or individual.⁷¹ Joycean interiority does not lack a spatiality, however. Indeed it is central to *Ulysses*’s investigation of urban space. As his comments to Power illustrate, Joyce’s interest in the rich mental or emotional life of his characters constitutes an interest in their surroundings, the built physical environment of the city, the “significant world” comprised by that “refashion[ed]” house or other such spaces, both indoors and out, that are seen, heard, smelt, tasted, touched, remembered, imagined and thus also shaped or produced by their inhabitants. *Ulysses* thus operates as a spatialized Janus-face, at once looking within and without, at the flux of modernity evident in both the mental and spatial environs it renders. Like de Certeau, Joyce understands the dialectical relationship between subjects and spaces; that space is a social phenomenon shaped by the human agents (both individual and collective) that play a part in producing it. So Joyce’s predominant focus upon the inner workings of characters’ minds stands as a record of the ways in which subjects *use* or *appropriate* spaces; the ways in which their everyday activities make habitable their surroundings, in spite of the broader and at times limiting social forces that also act to shape and produce space.

Such is also Pierre Mayol’s thesis in *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, where he argues that the everyday use of urban space inevitably allows for the production of habitable spaces within the city despite its potentially threatening dynamics:

Faced with the totality of the city, obstructed by codes that the dweller has not mastered but that he or she must assimilate in order to live there, faced

with a configuration of places imposed by urban planning, faced with the social unevenness inside urban space, the dweller always succeeds in creating places of withdrawal, itineraries for his or her use and pleasure that are individual marks that the dweller alone inscribes on urban space.

(*PEL2* 10)

According to Mayol the chief site for these “places of withdrawal”—which are importantly not only domestic sites in the strictest sense (a house, an apartment) but rather the entire range of urban spaces (from home to street to office to cafe to marketplace, etc.)—is the neighborhood. In Mayol’s theorization, as a site in which the dynamics of the private shelter or domestic dwelling extend into the exterior public urban realm, the neighborhood is the realm in which users operate, in which dwellers inhabit their surroundings. Mayol writes of this salutary spatiality:

As a result of its everyday use, the neighborhood can be considered as the progressive privatization of public space. It is a practical device whose function is to ensure a continuity between what is the most intimate (the private space of one’s lodging) and what is the most unknown (the totality of the city, or even, by extension, the rest of the world); ‘a relationship exists between the apprehension of lodging (an “inside”) and the apprehension of the urban space to which it is connected (an “outside”).’⁷²

The neighborhood is the middle term in an existential dialectic (on a personal level) and a social one (on the level of the group of users), between inside and outside. And it is in the tension between these two terms, an *inside* and an *outside*, which little by little becomes the

continuation of an inside, that the appropriation of space takes place. As a result, the neighborhood can be called an outgrowth of the abode; for the dweller, it amounts to the sum of all trajectories inaugurated from the dwelling place. It is less an urban surface, transparent for everyone or statistically measurable, than the possibility offered everyone to inscribe in the city a multitude of trajectories whose hard core remains the private sphere. (*PEL2* 11)

Using the work of de Certeau, Mayol, and Luce Giard, my aim in this chapter is to articulate the nuances of Joyce's treatment of the neighborhoodly valences of the urban environment in *Ulysses*. Joyce's Dublin does not have the reputation for alienation and despair that obtains, for example, in the Eliotic or Dos Passosian cityscape. Yet as we have seen by looking at responses to the "Wandering Rocks" episode, Joyce's city has long been treated in terms concurrent with conventional understandings of the city in modernism—as an oppressive space as opposed to an habitable one—and so we must consider other modes and textures of urban living in Joyce that counter or dismiss such oppression, as well as the ways in which modernist interiority in fact registers a mode of dwelling in a range of urban spaces, from domestic home to city street. Everyday life emerges here as the thread tying together the various practices through which the urban dweller engages with the city, activating its potential habitability. Quotidian activities in *Ulysses* such as eating, shopping, walking, smalltalking, ogling, fantasizing, remembering, anticipating, adjusting, adapting—among others—speak to Joyce's urban subjects' ongoing ability to subsist in the city, despite a host of spaces and forces that threaten its viability. Bearing witness in its narrative techniques to the everyday

“privatization of public space” by which these urban dwellers inhabit the city, *Ulysses*’s urban vision belies standard readings of the city in modernism and thus presents a far more crucial, if less consumable, analysis of modernity and the modern subject. In what follows I begin with a reading of *Ulysses*’s two early breakfast scenes in order to illustrate the novel’s quotidian, neighborhoodly dynamics, after which I examine further Bloom’s engagement with urban space as his day progresses, all with an aim to highlight the ways in which Joyce’s principal protagonist makes Dublin his home. This investigation is by no means exhaustive; I don’t consider, for instance, the pub scene in “Cyclops” or the further communal drinking environment of “Oxen of the Sun,” both of which exhibit complex neighborhood structures that inflect Joyce’s ultimate vision of Dublin. Readings of *Ulysses* are wont to be limited, though; and so my hope is to at least carve out a critical dwelling place of my own as I elucidate the habitable urban spaces of Joyce’s novel.

* * *

From the very outset of *Ulysses* Joyce marks his concern for the productive and transformative spatial practices crucial to the operations of the everyday. I have in mind here Buck Mulligan’s parodic mass; a performance and thus a *production* (in dramatic and spatial terms), both of a verbal or linguistic, and of a spatial nature. Notice that in the process of parodying the Catholic celebration of the Eucharist, Mulligan momentarily transforms the Martello tower into a church-like space, gunrest becoming altar. Notably, though, Mulligan’s spatially-transformative shenanigans come out of a context already marked by a kind of productive transformation, as the colonial fort he, Stephen, and the Briton Haines are staying in, is being used as a lodging place, gunrest in this respect

becoming toiletstand with Mulligan's shaving accessories. Within a spatial matrix inflected by the religious and political dimensions of early twentieth-century colonial Irish society, Joyce thus registers the traces of everyday life as it functions to transform or produce space.

Now, Mulligan's mock mass also works here as a unique moment of Joycean epiphany; significantly, an *anti*-epiphany, where the quotidian remains quotidian as a means towards the performance's parodic ends. In poking fun at both the Church and Stephen, Mulligan's "genuine Christine: body and soul and blood and ouns" (*U* 3) necessarily remains un-transubstantiated, merely shaving cream; as such it assumes an importance as simply ordinary. That is, at least, for Mulligan. Stephen, in his melancholy, sees the shaving kit mainly as another sign of his status as reluctant servant—the cracked mirror stolen from Mulligan's aunt's serving-girl a "symbol for Irish art" (*U* 7), one Stephen regards with bitterness given its connotations of servitude. After Mulligan leaves the shaving bowl on its perch and returns indoors, Stephen contemplates whether or not to bring it down, struggling with the associations the toiletries have evoked:

The nickel shaving-bowl shone, forgotten, on the parapet. Why should I bring it down? Or leave it there all day, forgotten friendship?

He went over to it, held it in his hands awhile, feeling its coolness, smelling the clammy slaver of the lather in which the brush was stuck. So I carried the boat of incense then at Clongowes. I am another now and yet the same. A servant too. A server of a servant. (*U* 11)

Stephen responds acutely here to the symbolic import of his surroundings; the objects remind him of his religious upbringing and speak to him of his subservience, to Mulligan,

and by extension to his (and Joyce's) favourite ideological nemeses. Stephen has returned to Dublin clearly not having realized his ambition, as announced in *Portrait*, of flying past the nets of "nationality, language, religion" (179), or of refusing to serve the would-be masters that call themselves his home, his fatherland, and his church (218). He may have refused to kneel and pray for his mother on her deathbed, but Stephen's morbid obsession with his servitude (as well as that of the Irish nation) is clear throughout the episode—by way of his guilt over his mother's dying wish; his anxiety over Haines's somniloquy; his thoughts on the milk woman who is soon to arrive, whom he casts as a "lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer" (*U* 14); his comment to Haines that he is "the servant of two masters, [...] an English and an Italian" (*U* 20); and his relinquishing the tower key to the "Usurper" Mulligan (*U* 23).

But notwithstanding Joyce's obvious aim in "Telemachus" of establishing the dynamics of British colonialism as it plays out in the Martello tower and surrounding environs,⁷³ as a dwelling place the tower is enacted by a set of everyday activities that allow for a resistance to, or a dismissal of, the oppressive forces so much on Stephen's mind. Attending to Mulligan's toiletries as mere toiletries—to the ordinary as ordinary—allows for alternative readings of this space, readings that bear witness to alternative productions of it, where habitual everyday practice—the seemingly insignificant moment or activity—becomes significant as a means of shaping a habitable social and communal environment.

Observe Mulligan at kitchen work: "Kinch, wake up. Bread, butter, honey. Haines, come in. The grub is ready. [...] Sit down. Pour out the tea there. The sugar is in the bag. Here, I can't go fumbling at the damned eggs. He hacked through the fry on the

dish and slapped it out on three plates.” Ready for breakfast, Mulligan orders his roommates around; but for good reason. Stephen only just “[sits] down to wait” while Mulligan busily prepares the meal (*U* 12); and Haines lounges before stepping outside for fresh air and to survey the scene, as is his wont on this his ethnographical expedition to the colony. With Mulligan’s encouragement, though, in the end all three men lend a hand; and with the arrival of the milk woman they enjoy a relative feast. Not only prone to “idle mockery” (*U* 21), as Stephen later puts it, Mulligan here actively shapes the tower’s domestic space, his everyday use of it set in contrast to Stephen’s “brooding,” symbolizing interiority—Stephen most often simply *reacting* to the oppressive marks of his surroundings instead of *acting* to make the space habitable despite its colonial dimensions.

Reading along these lines, Mulligan’s relative dominance in “Telemachus” begins to look more like solicitude, and he emerges less as an usurping betrayer than a kind of brother-figure. His concern for Stephen’s dress (“I must give you a shirt and a few noserags. How are the secondhand breeks? [*U* 6]); his sincere apprehension over Stephen’s coldness towards him (“Why don’t you trust me more? What have you up your nose about me? [...] I’m quite frank with you. What have you against me now?” [*U* 7]); his flustered near-apology for offending Stephen, along with advice even Joyce would likely offer this younger fictional version of himself (“Don’t mope over it all day [...] I’m inconsequent. Give up the moody brooding” [*U* 9]); these details position Mulligan as the one to lure Stephen out of his wallowing and present him with a different mode of engaging with and shaping his surroundings. Returning, for example, to Stephen’s response to Mulligan’s shaving kit (where notably Stephen confronts the ordinary

material reality of Mulligan's toiletries, their feel and smell, as well as their associative and symbolic import) we see the potential for a more productive use of the tower's domestic space. So, when Stephen returns the bowl to the living room, is he merely a servant-of-a-servant, or is he being a good roommate and contributing positively to his domestic arrangement by doing Mulligan a favour?

The same question obtains as regards the breakfast preparation. For here, what can be figured as servitude is valuable for the role it plays within a set of basic daily human needs; not only breakfast (food, nourishment), but social interaction. As Mayol argues, there is "an art of coexisting with the partners (neighbors, shopkeepers) who are linked to you" (*PEL2* 8), one involving a recognition of the importance of propriety and one's obligations to his or her neighbor—obligations that yield the "symbolic benefit" of "full insertion into the everyday social environment" (*PEL2* 22). Strange as it may seem to invoke the notion of propriety with respect to Mulligan, Stephen's participation, however brief, in the daily life of this small community relies on such an act of obliging. Having thus observed a Mulligan-like propriety while helping with breakfast, Stephen enjoys a moment of community with his roommate, finally reciprocating Mulligan's playful mockery and bawdiness as the two draw on dirty Irish folk humour to poke fun at both Celtic revivalism and Haines's interest in Irish folk culture. Here we see that Mulligan's deference to Haines, which for Stephen casts Mulligan as Ireland's "gay betrayer" (*U* 14), is tempered by a playfulness by which Mulligan becomes trickster, not betrayer. Of his mother Grogan and Mrs Cahill—Mulligan's comedic versions of characters from popular Irish folk tale and song,⁷⁴ who take care not to make tea in the same pot that they make water in (*U* 12)—Mulligan asks Stephen, with rich irony, "Can

you recall, brother, is mother Grogan's tea and water pot spoken of in the Mabinogion or is it in the Upanishads?" (U 13). Stephen plays along:

—I doubt it, said Stephen gravely.⁷⁵

—Do you now? Buck Mulligan said in the same tone. Your reasons, pray?

—I fancy, Stephen said as he ate, it did not exist in or out of the Mabinogion. Mother Grogan was, one imagines, a kinswoman of Mary Ann.

Buck Mulligan's face smiled with delight. (U 13)

Mulligan and Stephen here secure a wonderfully Joycean taking-the-piss-out-of with the introduction of the popular bawdy song character Mary Ann, who, according to some versions, "pisses like a man" (Gifford 21)—most certainly the line missing from Mulligan's uncompleted quatrain, and for which it is begging for its pay off: "*For old Mary Ann / She doesn't care a damn, / But, hising up her petticoats...*" (U 13). The joint parody targets the ethnographic impulse (evident here in Haines) to discover and document a fading authentic Irish folk culture by emphasizing those aspects of the cultural discourse to which the primitivist and nostalgic ethnographic gaze is willfully blind. As Vincent J. Cheng points out, the quest for authentic Irishness in the early twentieth century—by colonialist ethnographers and Irish nationalists alike—constituted a selective discourse that disregarded, among other things, the "more sordid, vulgar, or obscene elements" of the folk cultures being objectified, with an aim to establish their purity or incorruptibility ("Authenticity and Identity" 250). Everyday vulgarity—which notably involves (with, admittedly, comedic distortion) an everyday activity, urination—

is thus positioned here in the service of a domestic homosociality which critiques the essentializing imperial discourse underlying something like Haines's book on Irish sayings. In this way, Haines's generally threatening presence (his "raving all night about a black panther" has Stephen worried, wondering where the Briton is keeping his gun) is mitigated by way of this salutary spatial practice.

With the arrival of the milk woman, Joyce presents a further instance in which the everyday troubles essentializing colonialist and ethnographic narratives, in this case by foregrounding an everyday practical knowledge, or "knowingness" (Felski, Introduction 615). For in spite of being Othered in many ways here (as Mulligan's native "islander" on display for Haines [*U* 13], or as Stephen's mythic "messenger from the secret morning" [*U* 14]); and despite suggesting the decline of, and thus the need to rediscover and preserve this Other (given her inability to speak Gaelic), as everyday practitioner the milk woman evades the tendential logic of these gazes. Note the "knowingness" evident in her engagement with the men in the tower. After she fills the milk and speaks for a moment with Mulligan and Haines, misunderstanding Haines's Gaelic for French, she makes to depart before Haines reminds Mulligan to pay her—for her milk, but as much for her services as putative anthropological specimen. Haines having asked for her bill, she responds, "—Bill, sir? she said, halting. Well, it's seven mornings a pint at two pence is seven twos is a shilling and two pence over and these three mornings a quart at fourpence is three quarts is a shilling and one and two is two and two, sir" (*U* 15).

How do we read this striking linguistic moment, arguably the most Joycean moment of the chapter, with its disorienting textuality sprung from quotidian routine? How does it affect our understanding of this figure? The milk woman arguably hails from

a rural world (Stephen imagines her “Crouching by a patient cow at daybreak in the lush field” [U 14]), but clearly her work is a part of a commercial system of exchange. And yet she is also obviously not driven by profit: initially she means to leave without collecting any money, and it becomes obvious she hasn’t been paid for some time; moreover, ultimately it is an “uneager hand” that receives the coin, and she feels there will be “Time enough, sir [...] Time enough” (U 15) for the rest (this, surely not in a Prufrockian mode!). That her calculation involves money precludes, I think, understanding this moment as some kind of “natural” expressiveness, like the famous Irish wit Mulligan is keen for Haines to witness in Stephen. Rather, I would contend, she has acquired a knack for basic math that serves as a practical tool for use in her day-to-day activities.

No mere Other, then, the milk woman is productive for Joyce in that she troubles the totalizing Orientalist narratives at work in the Irish context, inflecting the tower as a domestic space resistant to colonialist scripts and thus subverting dichotomies at stake in notions of modernity: urban vs. rural, natural vs. civilized, capitalist vs. pre-capitalist. The conspicuous textuality of her running over her bill, moreover, with its lack of punctuation, functions to defamiliarize; not primarily the milk woman herself, but the narrative standard established so far in the chapter. Joyce thus deviates from his text’s version of ordinary language (as tenuous as it is) by paradoxically moving *towards* the ordinary in presenting this moment of habitual, everyday practice. In a formalist vein, then, Joyce calls attention to the constructedness of his text; yet, tellingly, he does so not by rejecting but by foregrounding (albeit in a contextually strange way) a practical, referential, everyday discourse.

* * *

In terms of urban spaces in *Ulysses*, the Martello tower, to be sure, has little to recommend it as such. And yet its spatial dynamics are similar to those we encounter as we enter *Ulysses*'s Dublin proper. Obviously both city and tower bear the marks of British colonialism in Ireland; indeed, Joyce understood Dublin's claim to rank amongst the great European capitals as a function of its status as colonial outpost, calling it "the 'second' city of the British Empire" (R. Ellmann, *James Joyce* 208). Also, despite its relative rurality, the tower, located in Sandymount, near Kingstown and Dalkey, is positioned within reach of the city's modern transportation network, famously introduced in the opening to "Aeolus," where "IN THE HEART OF THE HIBERNIAN METROPOLIS" trains set off for Dublin's many satellite towns (*U* 112). Perhaps most importantly, though, it is as a site for Joyce's investigation of the quotidian that the opening chapter's setting prepares us for the city spaces of *Ulysses*, and, further, for Joyce's favourite Dubliner, Leopold Bloom.

We can begin to gain an understanding of Bloom's practice of everyday life by comparing him to *Ulysses*'s first two introduced spatial practitioners: Stephen and Mulligan. Consider that while Stephen tends to focus on the marks of oppression shaping his surroundings—dwelling *on* as opposed to dwelling *in*—Bloom more successfully engages with his surroundings so as to counter (deliberately, but also instinctively and by dint of habit) such forces, despite his own relative status as exile—from his home, as cuckold, and from his nation, as Jew. If, then, both Stephen's and Bloom's relationships with their environments are marked, to one degree or another, by dispossession (remember that both end up keyless in the novel) and even servitude (at *his* breakfast

Bloom serves both his wife Molly and their cat), Bloom's alienation never becomes for him an object of obsession; persistent is his ability to forge habitable spaces in both the domestic realm proper and, as we will see, the space of the neighborhood of which he is a member. So it makes sense that Bloom's similarities to Mulligan serve as further evidence of the former's effective practice. Like the animated, embodied, "plump" Mulligan (*U* 3), for instance, whom we encounter "skipp[ing] off the gunrest," "hopp[ing] down from his perch" (*U* 4), "thrusting a hand into Stephen's upper pocket" for a handkerchief (*U* 5), "mov[ing] briskly about the hearth to and fro" (*U* 11), "lung[ing] towards his messmates" their morning bread (*U* 13), et cetera, Bloom has a distinct corporeality, an affinity with and for the *real*—a fact clear from our first meeting with Bloom, given his "relish [for] the inner organs of beasts and fowls" (*U* 53), Joyce's prose itself wonderfully harsher and less fluid here, evoking with its sharp accents and occasional alliterative repetition and assonantal rhyme the tangible, tasty foods Bloom loves to ingest: "thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liver slices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencods' roes" (*U* 53). As "thick" as the prose becomes at this point, revealing Joyce's obvious fondness for language in and of itself, a further effect is to mark Bloom's sensory engagement with his surroundings, which, like Stephen's atypical interaction with Mulligan's (ordinary) toiletries or the milk woman's practical everyday discourse, works as part of a healthful quotidian manner of relating to one's surroundings.

I would like to read Bloom's domestic activities the morning of June 16, 1904 in the light of Virginia Woolf's famous claim that "on or about December 1910, human character changed" ("Character in Fiction" 421). Not, however, because Bloom's

behavior marks a point of rupture or crisis, but on the contrary because in Woolf's discussion of this change (which I will return to in Chapter 5) is an awareness of the importance of the dwelling practices that characterize a more ordinary, salutary negotiation of the spaces of the modern city. Notice, then, that like the activity of Woolf's Georgian cook, "creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing room, now to borrow the *Daily Herald*, now to ask advice about a hat," who is set in contrast to her Victorian cook, a "leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable" (422), Bloom's breakfast preparations in "Calypso" illustrate the modern city's interconnected spatial network and its propensity to enable a fluidity of both movement and identity: not only does Bloom move in and out of doors with ease, heading around the corner to the butcher's and then back home, in making breakfast for Molly he speaks to the shift in "human relations" (in this case as regards the roles of "husband and wife" [422]) identified by Woolf as a hallmark of the modern—a shift related to the spatial ramifications of the "chang[ing]" social world but also, and more importantly, to the acclimatized practice of that space.

The concern for this kind of practice is clear in Woolf's discussion of the novelist's attempt to adequately capture the ever-elusive "phantom" ("Character in Fiction" 422) that is human character, a consideration that is part and parcel of her interest in the vast, fluctuating field of human relations known as modernity, Joyce's flux. That such a set of shifts is for Woolf a contributing factor to the peculiar urgency with which modern novelists feel pressed to respond to the devilish call of character—as Woolf puts it, the "demon that whispered in my ear and urged me to my doom, [...] 'My name is Brown catch me if you can'" (420)—speaks to the need to understand how

exactly the subjects of this new age engage with a changing world; how they “[react] to [their] surroundings” (“Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” 387); how, ultimately, they fit in. Out of the wreckage of an old space—“the ruins and splinters of [the] tumbled mansion” (“Mr. Bennett and Mrs Brown” 388) that is for Woolf at once the elaborate Edwardian character-less fictional edifice and the remnants of a bygone social and historical era (Victorian vs. Edwardian cook)—Woolf’s writer of modern fiction “must somehow reconstruct a habitable dwelling-place” for the representative Mrs Brown (388). The writer, in other words, must bear witness to the ways in which the subject of a period of significant change, to use the terms of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, appropriates space, all in spite of the apparent state of homelessness or isolation in which these changes apparently leave her. Note that Woolf’s prototypical modern character, Mrs Brown, is imagined sitting alone in the corner of the train, “suffering intensely,” “unmoored from her anchorage” (“Character in Fiction” 425). At the same time, though, she appears to Woolf “in the centre of all sorts of different scenes,” tremendously vital and heroic despite her vulnerability (425).

Bloom, in many ways Joyce’s Mrs Brown, exhibits just this persistent ability to forge habitable spaces in the city he has made, and makes, his own. Like Woolf’s domestic servant, who is characterized as a part of an urban world of popular culture (the newspaper, fashion) and a neighborhood distinguished by its sociality (she borrows, asks advice), Bloom’s engagement with his surroundings bespeaks the practices of everyday life by which he appropriates space. On his way to the butcher shop, for instance, Bloom is sure to poke his head in to Larry O’Rourke’s, a decision Joyce registers Bloom making before Bloom initiates the brief moment of small talk, thus highlighting Bloom’s

conscious decision to engage with the urban environment so as to enact its potential function as a space of community: “Stop and say a word: about the funeral perhaps. Sad thing about poor Dignam, Mr O’Rourke” (*U* 56).

Other similar moments of seemingly innocuous interaction reveal the subtle dynamics of the urban neighborhood of which Bloom is a part, and in which he is careful to observe certain protocols of propriety so as to reap the symbolic benefits of belonging. In Mayol’s terms, as we saw briefly in regard to Stephen in the tower, Bloom “is obliged to take his [...] social environment into consideration, to insert himself [...] into it in order to be able to live there. ‘Obliged’ should not only be understood in a repressive sense, but also as something that ‘obliges,’ which creates obligations, *links*” (*PEL2* 15-16). At Dlugacz’s while buying sausages, Bloom establishes another such (excuse the pun) “*link*,” cordially engaging with the porkbutcher despite an eagerness to make his way out of the shop in hopes of being able to ogle his next-door neighbor’s servant-girl’s “vigorous hips,” her “moving hams” (*U* 57), she having just made her purchase. Here Bloom only heeds his obligation to a minimum degree, but it is plain that in such a situation Mayol’s social connection is both established and called for again:

A speck of eager fire from foxeyes thanked [Bloom]. He withdrew his gaze after an instant. No: better not: another time.

—Good morning, he said, moving away.

—Good morning, sir. (*U* 58)

Bloom’s thoughts here reveal a further dimension to this linkage between members of the neighborhood, one at stake with regard to the city’s everyday commercial interactions, with respect to which, Mayol argues, propriety is extremely important

insofar as its observance enables an “accumulation of symbolic capital [...] from which the dweller will obtain expected benefits.” An everyday purchase, therefore, is not merely an exchange of money for goods, but a social interaction through which buyers and sellers constitute a community whose propriety, if adhered to, allows for specific extra-commercial benefits. “The act of buying,” Mayol asserts, “is surrounded by the halo of a ‘motivation’ that, one might say, precedes it before its completion: *faithfulness*.” Bloom’s “another time” is a mark of his faithfulness as a consumer and his understanding of the many valences of the moment of commercial exchange, in which the routine habits—remarks and gestures—of the commercial transaction constitute an “uncountable surplus in the strict logic of the exchange of goods and services” (*PEL2* 19). For Mayol this surplus heightens the quality of both the goods purchased and the relationship between buyer and seller—this latter relation typified by a moment of “recognition” (*PEL2* 20), which Joyce masterfully condenses in the butcher’s “speck of eager fire” and Bloom’s thought to chat longer next time.

The sharp moment of the butcher’s thankful look at Bloom is, however, only one element of the often banal process of recognition so integral to the symbolic benefits to be gained from the functional urban neighborhood. So there is also the obligatory exchange: “—Good morning, [Bloom] said, moving away. —Good morning, sir.” And while these obligatory gestures may be read as the mark of the debasement of human relations within the modern metropolitan commercialized environment—its lack of genuine communication and community—this is far from the case.⁷⁶ Mayol explains how this healthful neighborly discourse functions:

Between what is said (the shopkeeper's polite phrases, for example [...]) and what is not (the calculation of the benefit in the relationship to objects), propriety gives rise to a complicity in which each person knows [...] that what one says is not immediately what is at stake and that, nevertheless, *this disparity between what is said and what is unsaid is the structure of the exchange* currently engaged, and that it is to this law that it is proper to consent in order to benefit from it. The relationship that links a customer to a shopkeeper (and vice versa) is made from the progressive insertion of an implicit discourse within the explicit words of conversation, which weaves between both partners in the purchase a network of signs, tenuous but efficient, favoring the process of recognition. (*PEL2* 20)

The successful appropriation of neighborhood space thus involves maintaining a careful balance between the obligation to social propriety and the attention to personal impulse, a dynamic Joyce also succinctly registers in Bloom's visit to Dlugacz's, where Bloom is careful not to gaze too long at the next-door girl's behind and so takes up a sheet of newspaper (used to pack the meat) and reads an ad for the "model farm at Kinnereth," "bending his senses and his will, his soft subject gaze at rest"—fantasizing about her dusting carpets, her "crooked skirt swinging whack by whack by whack" (*U* 57), instead of ogling. Bloom's chat with M'Coy about Dignam's funeral (when "Henry Flower" is eager to read a fresh letter from Martha); and Bloom's brief suffering of the gambling "scut" Bantam Lyons while Bloom eyes a woman getting up into a carriage across the street (*U* 82) are further examples of this necessary tension between the social and the

personal, in which Bloom must “find an equilibrium between the proximity imposed by the public configuration of places and the distance necessary to safeguard one’s private life” (*PEL2* 15).⁷⁷

To read Bloom’s interiority as traced by *Ulysses*’s interior monologue as a form of unequivocal retreat from or rejection of the exterior world; or to understand it along with other forms of stream of consciousness mainly as an intense mental flurry—common responses in readings of modernist interiority (recall Raymond Williams’s “racing and separated forms of consciousness”)—is thus to fundamentally misunderstand Bloom’s successful appropriation of urban space. Throughout *Ulysses*, as we will see in greater detail below, Bloom’s interiority stands as a record of Mayol’s “privatization of public space,” whereby Bloom’s spatial practice constitutes “a way of being-in-the-world and making it one’s home” (*PEL2* 154), by making use of the many opportunities for intimacy within the city’s spatial network, spaces both indoors and out. From Franco Moretti’s perspective, similarly, such a narrative approach speaks to “A neutrality, opacity, and emotional mediocrity, that enables millions of human beings to live side by side without exterminating each other. If on that June day,” Moretti continues, “everything were meaningful, Bloom’s head would burst—and so would the reader’s” (“*Ulysses*” 326). It is just such a “pliant and provisional attitude,” as Moretti puts it elsewhere, that allows Bloom “to live *in the metropolis*” (“*Ulysses*” 326).

Fittingly, then, some of our first moments with Bloom and his thoughts as he walks in the city mark Joyce’s dismissal, or negation, of certain well-established (and often oppressive) public discourses of urban experience and his concomitant affirmation of the Certeauian practice of everyday urban life, with its routine appropriations and

emphasis on the practice of domesticity. Consider that on his way to the butcher shop Bloom imagines, in a standard Orientalizing mode, a *flâneur*-like experience of the exoticized East, one marked by the stereotyped images that constitute western popular (and imperial) culture's construction of the Orient: "Walk along a strand, strange land [...] Wander through awned streets. Turbaned faces going by. Dark caves of carpet shops, big man, Turko the terrible, seated crosslegged smoking a coiled pipe. Cries of sellers in the street [...] I pass on" (*U* 55). In *Joyce, Race, and Empire*, Vincent J. Cheng ably demonstrates that while Bloom is certainly compelled by such essentializing narratives, he is also fully aware of their status as fiction (176): "Probably not a bit like it really. Kind of stuff you read" (*U* 55).⁷⁸

A corollary to Joyce's and Bloom's problematizing of this Orientalist fiction—one certainly relevant in the context of Bloom's first steps out into the city streets in *Ulysses*—is a further critique of typical constructions of modern western urban experience that figure the city as an alien landscape, one either striking or alienating in its otherness, or both. Bloom's darker complement to the Orientalist (and Zionist⁷⁹) fantasies that emerge in Calypso—in his initial reverie as well as in the advertisements for the Agendath Netaim model farms, with their idyllic images of cattle and fields full of fruit trees—also takes aim at these idyllic fictions, Bloom again thinking, "No, not like that." But the images of "A barren land, bare waste. Volcanic lake, the dead sea: no fish, weedless, sunk deep in the earth. No wind would lift those waves, grey metal, poisonous foggy waters. Brimstone they called it raining down: the cities of the plain: Sodom, Gommorah, Edom" are equally artificial insofar as they reflect the hyperboles of Judaic

biblical discourse, as well as, of course, a cultural tradition in which city is site of destruction and “Desolation.”

This later vision of the city is the alienating complement to the city as exotic spectacle, one that in many ways reaches its apotheosis (or nadir, depending on your perspective) in Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. For a moment, Bloom’s experience in the city is shaped profoundly by the powerful images of this discourse, as “Grey horror seared his flesh. [...] Cold oils slid along his veins, chilling his blood: age crusting him with a salt cloak”—Bloom’s sweat becoming the salty water of the Dead Sea. But it is passing, as Bloom’s way out of this dialectic of essentializing discourses in which city is site of either exotic allurements or utter desolation is through the practice of everyday life. Thus he shakes off his moment of Eliotic angst with a return to his localized position within comforting habitual daily concerns: “Well, I am here now. Morning mouth bad images. Got up on the wrong side of the bed. Must begin again those Sandow’s exercises. On the hands down. [...] To smell the gentle smoke of tea, fume of the pan, sizzling butter. Be near her ample bedwarmed flesh. Yes, yes” (*U* 59).⁸⁰ As in the tower, where Mulligan’s shaving bowl retains a resonance of its everyday materiality and breakfast becomes a means of community formation and critique of power, Joyce here—through Bloom’s activity within the neighborhood as well as his internal cogitation—foregrounds a related dismissal of distorting or oppressive urban discourses in favour of the city’s more comforting quotidian valences.

Along these lines, after returning from his errand Bloom continues to put into practice the habitual quotidian mode of operating by which he is characterized so memorably in the opening to “Calypso:” “Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner

organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards,” etc. (*U* 53)—both verbs here (‘to eat’ and ‘to like’) in a particular past tense that characterizes the ongoing, recurrent nature of Bloom’s practice of everyday life. Just as Bloom’s behavior out shopping exemplifies Mayol’s discussion of the neighborhood, so his breakfast preparations constitute what Luce Giard calls “doing-cooking.” Another important mode of “being-in-the-world and making it home,” for Giard the preparation of food is one of the key arts of dwelling:

the preparation of a meal furnishes that rare joy of producing something oneself, of fashioning a fragment of reality, of knowing the joys of a demiurgic miniaturization, all the while securing the gratitude of those who will consume it by way of pleasant and innocent seductions. This culinary work is alleged to be devoid of mystery and grandeur, but it unfurls in a complex montage of things to be done according to a predetermined chronological sequence: planning organizing, and shopping; preparing and serving; clearing, putting away, and tidying up. (*PEL2* 158).

In his “relish;” his forethought (“Another slice of bread and butter: three, four: right. She didn’t like her plate full. Right” [*U* 53]); his deliberation over what to buy to eat for breakfast (‘Ham and eggs, no. No good eggs with this drouth. [...] Thursday: not a good day either for a mutton kidney at Buckley’s. Fried with butter, a shake of pepper. Better a pork kidney at Dlugacz’s” [*U* 53]); his efficient use of his materials and ability to adapt (letting the cat lick the blood stained paper and giving it the burnt piece of kidney); and his solicitude (for both Molly and the cat), Bloom clearly embodies the role of producer

of domestic space; he even tidies up while waiting for his kidney to cook. Admittedly, there is an unspoken tension in the domestic air, precipitated here by Boylan's card, marker of Boylan's imminent visit, where he will penetrate both the Bloom's domestic abode and Molly herself; and Molly is a little on the bossy side: "—Hurry up with that tea [...] I'm parched. [...] —Poldy! —What? —Scald the teapot" [*U* 60]). Yet the Blooms' morning activities still yield a salutary moment of recognition, as when Molly's "O Rocks! [...] Tell us in plain words" produces a shared look, Bloom "smiling, glancing askance at her mocking eye," thinking fondly of Molly's "same young eyes" (*U* 62)—a testament to Giard's claims that "The nourishing art has something to do with the art of loving" (*PEL2* 169) and an early indication of the Bloom domestic dynamic on display later in the novel when Bloom shares a cup of cocoa with Stephen.

Joyce registers the effects of Bloom's "doing-cooking" on the Bloom household through moments of description that capture the elements and the quality of the everyday, incorporating into his textual web—along with Bloom's thoughts and memories—the defining marks of the space of domestic comfort Bloom sets out to produce (recall Bloom's looking-forward-to: "To smell the gentle smoke of tea, fume of the pan, sizzling butter. Be near her ample bedwarmed flesh. Yes, yes"):

The warmth of her couched body rose on the air, mingling with the fragrance of the tea she poured. (*U* 61)

She poured more tea into her cup, watching its flow sideways. (*U* 62)

The sluggish cream wound curdling spirals through her tea. (*U* 62)

Cup of tea now. He sat down, cut and buttered a slice of the loaf. He shore away the burnt flesh and flung it to the cat. Then he put a forkful into his mouth, chewing with discernment the toothsome pliant meat. Done to a turn. A mouthful of tea. The he cut away dies of bread, sopped one in the gravy and put it in his mouth. (*U* 63)

Joyce thus accomplishes something akin to the hyperrealism Chantal Akerman discusses employing in her films, “reveal[ing] all these gestures [of everyday activity] by giving back to them their actual duration” (qtd. in *PEL2* 155). These gestures are a taking of time, a shaping of space, such that there is time to smell, to taste, to sense.

For Bloom in “Calypso” breakfast thus allows him the time to read his daughter Milly’s letter, and so she is integrated by way of this taking of time into the domestic routine, one—as is clear through Bloom’s attention to Molly’s own habits (her toast; and also on his way to Dlugacz’s Bloom thinks, in response to the breadvan’s passing, “but [Molly] prefers yesterday’s loaves turnovers crisp crowns hot” [*U* 55])—that, again, accords with Giard’s description of “doing-cooking:” it is “the medium for a basic, humble, and persistent practice that is repeated in time and space, rooted in the fabric of relationships to others and to one’s self, marked by the ‘family saga’ and the history of each” (*PEL2* 157). For Giard, Akerman’s attention to detail amounts to a “[return] to triviality in order to break through the entrapment” (*PEL2* 155), entrapment, for Giard, referring to the oppression typically understood to exemplify domestic routine, primarily for women. In *Ulysses*, as in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, routine is salutary in an interrelated twofold manner: as comfort-giving and as oppression-dismissing.

As demonstrated in “Calypso” by his engagement with the neighborhood as well as his “doing-cooking,” Bloom is much less affected by entrapment than is Stephen in the novel’s opening chapter, precisely because of the former’s practical facility and ability to appropriate space. Just as he gives shape to the domestic space of number 7 Eccles Street at breakfast time, Bloom’s activities throughout the day in Dublin reveal his propensity to take advantage of the city’s spatial malleability and liminality to carve out habitable spaces, a process through which Joyce depicts the city as a space amenable to Mayol’s privatizing of the public arena, by way of its liminality and the ways in which urbanites practice and position themselves—their bodies, as well as their dreams and their private histories—within it. So in “Lotus Eaters” Bloom cautiously drops into the post office to see if there is a return letter from Martha Clifford, with whom Bloom, as Henry Flower, Esq., has struck up a flirtatious concordance. Bloom’s epistolary affair reveals the possibilities offered by the city’s communication network to proliferate identities, as Bloom takes on an alter ego, and likely so has the creator of “Martha Clifford.”

The city is the potential site for such fantasy, its opaque spaces enabling further moments of taking-time. So, just as at breakfast Bloom takes time, and thus makes space, to read his daughter’s letter, in “Lotus Eaters” he likewise takes a moment, finding a space to appropriate in order to engage his ongoing fantasy, slipping into a side street to read Martha’s letter:

He turned into Cumberland street and, going on some paces, halted in the lee of the station wall. No-one. Meade’s timberyard. Piled balks. Ruins and tenements. With careful tread he passed over a hopscotch court with its forgotten pickeystone. Not a sinner. Near the timberyard a squatted

child at marbles, alone, shooting the taw with a cunnythumb. A wise tabby, a blinking sphinx, watched from her warm sill. Pity to disturb them. Mohammed cut a piece out of his mantle not to wake her. Open it. And once I played marbles when I went to that old dame's school. She liked mignonette. Mrs Ellis's. And Mr? He opened the letter within the newspaper. (*U* 74)

Bloom finds a sheltered space out of sight, withdrawing momentarily to indulge in this small pleasure—in Mayol's terms, privatizing this public space, turning the unknown into the intimate. Bloom marks this urban locale as his own by reading Martha's letter, but also through his thoughts on the scene—his recollections and reflections. Memories combine with cultural awareness (of hopscotch and popular Islamic lore) and a solicitude for his neighbors (though few, the child and the cat—"Pity to disturb them") to carve out a multifaceted personal space that is at once social; here once more is the balance Mayol argues is typical of the healthful engagement with the neighborhood.

Bloom's experience at All Hallows church in this chapter, where he stops to sit down and observe, offers an even more drastic illustration of the privatization of a social, (semi-) public space (one arguably very oppressive) as in the church Bloom adheres to religious propriety to the extent that he can enter the space, even though for the most part it exists for him in a very different way from the "blind masks" (*U* 77) he observes passing down the aisle. Bloom's comic yet insightful analysis of the service furthers Joyce's critique of catholic doctrine, Bloom acting here (as Mulligan does in "Telemachus") as the physical, embodied presence that counters the Church's idealism and mystification, for example conceiving of the Eucharist as un-transubstantiated

“Body. Corpse” (*U* 77), and noticing the priest’s big grey boots under his gown—an incongruity befitting Bloom’s sense of the performative nature of the ceremony, its artificiality here revealed. Despite a recognition of the Catholic church’s “narcotizing effects” (Johnson 798), however, Bloom also understands the power of religious practice; the sense of belonging it provides:

There’s a big idea behind it, kind of kingdom of God is within you feel.
First communicants. Hokey pokey penny a lump. Then feel all like one
family party, same in the theatre, all in the same swim. They do. I’m sure
of that. Not so lonely. In our confraternity. Then come out a bit spreeish.
Let off steam. Thing is if you really believe in it. (*U* 78).

Is Joyce’s seemingly harsh critique of religious mystification at all tempered by Bloom’s level-headed assessment of the *use* of the church as a social space, be it Bloom’s mode of use, or another’s? After all, like the religious experience, Bloom’s letter from Martha generates a degree of intoxication concurrent with the pleasure Bloom enjoys in the moment of public withdrawal—a pleasure the text registers, and also seems to take part in, in a wonderfully elusive and fluid passage of internal monologue (one which anticipates the fluid, shapeshifting prose of “Sirens”): “walking slowly forward, he read the letter again, murmuring here and there a word. Angry tulips with you darling manflower punish your cactus if you don’t please poor forgetmenot how I long violets to dear roses when we soon anemone meet all naughty nightstalk wife Martha’s perfume” (*U* 75).

Ulysses’s concern for the particular linguistic effects of both of the “narcotizing” discourses on display in “Lotus Eaters” (language of love and language of god)

anticipates the novel's growing interest in the workings of language and its status as a thing in itself, a self-referential medium. Nevertheless, Joyce here reveals the social and spatial matrices within which the urban subject engages with and responds to such discourses, putting them to use in space, just as Bloom will put to use his vision of himself in the bath at the end of the episode: "Enjoy a bath now: clean trough of water, cool enamel, the gentle tepid stream. This is my body" (*U* 83). As Mayol maintains, "Our successive living spaces never disappear completely; we leave them without leaving them because they live in turn, invisible and present, in our memories and our dreams. They journey with us" (*PEL2* 148). That Joyce has Bloom imagine making use of this space of withdrawal—" [foreseeing] his pale body reclined in it at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled by scented melting soap," etc (*U* 83)—highlights the importance of the imagination, of fantasy, in the practice of everyday life, as that which enables the dweller to leave and yet continue to find "living spaces," to effect the "continuation of an inside" so crucial to making one's way in the city.

* * *

Given *Ulysses*'s obvious concern for urban perambulation, Bloom's experiences wandering in Dublin have been understood as a prime illustration of *flâneurie*.⁸¹ I would like to take issue with this assessment, however, and contend that in fact Bloom's itinerancy speaks to Joyce's *diversion* from the Baudelairean-Benjaminian conception of urban experience with which the *flâneur* is associated. First of all, Joyce's Dublin is, simply, not Baudelaire's Paris, nor for that matter Poe's London. This is something Benjamin himself can teach us: his methodology employs a keen sense of the relationship between urban conditions and urban experience, and thus he concludes that *flâneurie*

takes certain forms under certain specific conditions. A windowless Brussels streetscape is, for example, hardly the place to stroll (“The Flâneur” 50). As regards Dublin’s own urban character, in qualifying his comment that were the city to be destroyed it could be reconstructed from the pages of *Ulysses*, Joyce reveals one of Dublin’s important peculiarities:

And what a city Dublin is! [...] I wonder if there is another like it. Everybody has time to hail a friend and start a conversation about a third party, Pat, Barney, or Tim. “Have you seen Barney lately? Is he still off the drink?” “Ay, sure he is. I was with him last night and he drank nothing but claret.” I suppose you don’t get that gossipy, leisurely life in London?
(Budgen 68)

This is not the site of Baudelairean urban phantasmagoria, be it nightmarish hell or intoxicating bliss. It *is* marked by leisure, something essential to *flânerie*; but it is also decisively social: there are relationships at stake in Joyce’s sketch, as there are throughout *Ulysses*, as we saw above with regard to “Calypso.”

The *flâneur* in Baudelaire, on the other hand—and as elucidated by Benjamin—does not engage with a neighborhood, but a crowd, a mass of faceless automatons with respect to which the idle wanderer is anonymous. His city emerges as a wilderness, an uncharted territory,⁸² the Eliotic waste land—an image of modern times that exerts an almost ineluctable hold on the western imagination. Indeed, witness Budgen’s response to Joyce’s question about London, in which Budgen rehearses the standard conception of the modern metropolis: London is not like Dublin, he answers Joyce, for “London isn’t a city. It is a wilderness of bricks and mortar and the law of the wilderness prevails” (68).

Ironically this conception, despite its frequent use as a means not only of lamenting the modern condition, but of highlighting its shortcomings or calling for an alternative, is a curious product of the very condition it decries. It is an advertisement: simple and powerful. City as wilderness. City as hell. Like the advertisement, which “dematerializes the commodity” (Cooper 174) in associating material products with ideas and lifestyles and thereby propagating their status as fetishized objects, the enduring notion of the city as the site of total crisis “dematerializes” the city itself, obscuring its actualities and failing to recognize its habitability.

That the city itself becomes an advertisement is perhaps fitting, though, given that for Benjamin urban space is also, of course, epitomized by the marketplace, the Paris arcades which open up to the *flâneur* a small city, “a world in miniature” (Benjamin, *Arcades* 31). And while at times the arcades are for Benjamin an extension of the domestic interior, where benches become couches, newsstands libraries, and advertisements paintings hung on the wall (“More than anywhere else, the street reveals itself in the arcade as the furnished and familiar interior of the masses” [*Arcades* 423]), the marketplace, and the city in general, are in Benjamin still sites of crisis, of disorientation:

An intoxication comes over the man who walks long and aimlessly through the streets. With each step, the walk takes on greater momentum; ever weaker grow the temptations of shops, of bistros, of smiling women, ever more irresistible the magnetism of the next streetcorner; of a distant mass of foliage, of a street name. Then comes hunger. Our man wants nothing to do with the myriad possibilities offered to sate his appetite.

Like an ascetic animal, he flits through unknown districts—until, utterly exhausted, he stumbles into his room, which receives him coldly and wears a strange air. (*Arcades* 417)

Benjamin's privatized public space (street as interior) is thus never quite the same as the (livable) one articulated in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, for urban space always bears its phantasmagoric haze; a result, principally, of its market-driven character. Here, for Benjamin, the *flâneur* becomes the commodity—as well as the advertisement—insofar as he is prone to circulate in the market: “Empathy with the commodity is fundamentally empathy with the exchange value itself. The *flâneur* is the virtuoso of this empathy. He takes the concept of marketability itself for a stroll. Just as his final ambit is the department store, his last incarnation is the sandwich-man” (*Arcades* 448). The urban wanderer as commodity/advertisement is thus either completely free to move within the marketplace, strolling, to a high degree uprooted from the social and material conditions of his existence (like the commodity),⁸³ or he is a mere instrument of the commercial economy, reduced to a sign, dehumanized, imprisoned within the system of exchange. Benjamin thus incorporates the Baudelairean ambivalence towards the crowd into his Marxist-influenced reading of urban market forces, and the city-wanderer becomes either intoxicated spirit passing through and/or over the city, or a cog in the wheel of this modern urban machine.

Now, notwithstanding the obvious differences between Joyce's Dublin and the cities theorized in the landmark investigations of the modern urban scene, such as *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *The Arcades Project*, the urban setting of *Ulysses* is clearly the site for Joyce's investigation of the forces, including those of the market, that shape experiences

of modern urban space—those same forces at stake in the works of Baudelaire and Benjamin. In contrast to the Baudelairean-Benjaminian conception of the urban dynamic, however, Joyce's reading in *Ulysses* of commodity culture and the urban marketplace constitutes a far more nuanced understanding both of the effects of these dominant forces of modernity upon the person walking in the street, at the level of the everyday, and of the consumer's response to, and manipulation of, his surroundings. As the following example will illustrate, if in certain respects Joyce's urban dynamic seems to exemplify the typical conceptions that have come to dominate thinking on urban space and life, this is only because such a reading does not fully account for the urban subject's active, embodied role within the urban network, as well as this network's many valences, the quotidian included.

Notice, firstly, how Joyce succinctly evokes the allure and energy of the marketplace in "Lestrygonians" as Bloom makes his way along Grafton street, passing a variety of shops: "Grafton street gay with housed awnings lured his senses. Muslin prints, silk, dames and dowagers, jingle of harnesses, hoofhuds lowringing in the baking causeway" (*U* 160). Bloom offers some disparaging remarks about a woman in stockings, then thinks to buy a pin cushion as well as something for Molly's birthday. Next, the marketplace evokes an erotically charged moment of *flâneuresque* intoxication, arguably worthy of Baudelaire:

High voices. Sunwarm silk. Jingling harnesses. All for a woman, home and houses, silk webs, silver, rich fruits, spicy from Jaffa. Agendath Netaim. Wealth of the world.

A warm human plumpness settled down on his brain. His brain yielded. Perfume of embraces all him assailed. With hungered flesh obscurely, he mutely craved to adore.

Duke street. Here we are. Must eat. The Burton. Feel better then.

He turned Combridge's corner, still pursued. Jingling hoofthuds. Perfumed bodies, warm, full. All kissed, yielded: in deep summer fields, tangled pressed grass, in trickling hallways of tenements, along sofas, creaking beds.

—Jack, love!

—Darling!

—Kiss me, Reggy!

—My boy!

—Love! (*U* 160-61)

The market's phantasmagoria is undeniable. Its discourse is that of fantasy; of the Orientalist (the return of "Agendath Netaim" here, as marker of wealth and riches) and romantic modes ("—Jack, love! —Darling!" is clearly something from a trashy novel either of the Blooms would enjoy). It is not advertising *per se* that Bloom reacts to in this case, but the associations Bloom makes (or which are sparked in Bloom) between commodities and erotic fantasy constitute precisely the symbolic economy through which advertising functions; and through which, arguably, the consumer/*flâneur* becomes dematerialized along with both the city and the commodities circulating within its markets.

According to this thinking both community and history evaporate; as a space of the marketplace, the urban environment obliterates older communal forms. As John Xiros Cooper argues,

Exchange as a socioeconomic framework for everyday life brings into play new values, encouraging new kinds of sociality and conduct. But the new sociality seems from the perspective of the old a species of nonsociality. The human community is replaced by the human series. Massed aggregates and the big numbers (Benjamin, *Arcades* 290) which they generate take the place of actual people dwelling in interdependent, mutually regarding groups. (87)

In Cooper's analysis, "the epistemology of the market" (76)—according to which the scope of what is knowable is a function of the ever-changing yet never-developing "permanent revolution" (79) that is capitalism (the intoxicating phantasmagoria Benjamin ascribes to the crowded marketplace)—exemplifies the modernist text's particular stylistic and linguistic concerns; its radical subjectivity or interiority, which for Cooper constitute the "nonsociality" that obtains in market society. Cooper's reading of modernism, Joyce, and the city follows that of Raymond Williams, who, as we have seen, emphasizes the "isolation, alienation [and] loss of community" that emerge with modernism's "separated subjectivity" (*The Country* 246). So Cooper claims, echoing Williams, that

the only knowable community lies in the verbal forms generated by mobile and separated forms of consciousness. Perhaps we have here a desire that defines the inherent sociality of the human. But this is a desire

that no longer finds concrete embodiment in a practical historical memory. It finds its voice in the improvised communities of speech that lie at the heart of the modern city and at the heart of *Ulysses*. [...] The consciousness of drift and dispersal foregrounds in discourse the only and most deeply known human community there is, which is, according to modernism, the community of language itself. (175-76)

There is no debating Joyce's obsession with "communities of speech" or with "the community of language." At the same time, though, he clearly employs his linguistic mastery to evoke a whole range of human sensations, thoughts, and emotions, all of which speak not to "separated subjectiv[ies]" or "forms of consciousness" but rather to embodied and localized subjective and social experiences. Examine again Bloom's moment of intoxicated *flâneurie*. Undoubtedly, the language of advertising, of fantasy, plays a part in his erotic reveries; arguably, even, this discourse *writes* Bloom's experience in interpellating him. But Joyce also obviously evokes the physical and bodily dimensions of this experience: "the warm human plumpness [that] settle[s] down on [Bloom's] brain" (notice it is not 'mind' but 'brain,' the bodily organ not the immaterial site of "separated [...] consciousness"); the scent of perfume; the "hungered flesh." Further, that Bloom "*mutely* crave[s] to adore" suggests the degree to which these sensations cannot find a perfect shape in language; they are mute and can only be "spoken" through the body. If the discourses of commodity fetishism and advertising construct immaterial fantasies that shape the urban subject's consciousness and being, then the subject plays a part in articulating these discourses—or speaking back to them—by re-embodiment, and potentially satisfying, the myriad desires generated in the

marketplace. Accordingly, Bloom's thoughts in this scene gesture towards the *practice* of such desires within a range of actual spaces, urban and otherwise—further examples of urban dwellers' forging of habitable spaces: the "Perfumed bodies, warm, full. All kissed, yielded: in deep summer fields, tangled pressed grass, in trickling hallways of tenements, along sofas, creaking beds."

In distinction from Williams and Cooper, then, Joyce thus resists the facile conclusion that the city is chiefly (and at the extreme, purely) a linguistic or textual 'space.' In this way Joyce's fiction supports Henri Lefebvre's important insight that space is not reducible to language, regardless of how great a role linguistic semiosis plays in giving spaces meaning(s). Lefebvre admits in *The Production of Space* that "an understanding of language and of verbal and non-verbal systems of signs will be of great utility in any attempt to understand space." He is sure to add, however, that the predilection for a formalist reading of the linguistic character of actual space amounts to a fetishization, a "cult, in short, of *words*." "This trend," Lefebvre argues, "has even generated the claim that discourse and thought have nothing to express but themselves, a position which leaves us with no truth, but merely with 'meaning'; with room for textual work, and such work only" (131). Lefebvre thus offers the following alternative and corrective formulation, one that, as we have begun to see, is exemplified in *Ulysses*: "Every language is located in space. Every discourse says something about space (places or sets of places); and every discourse is emitted from a space" (132).

Bloom's engagement with the marketplace and its commodities further bears out Lefebvre's discussion of space in illustrating the degree to which personal and social history bear upon the language of advertising and consumption. For not only do scripted

romantic associations accrue around the “silk webs, silver, rich fruits” etc, giving them meaning; Bloom’s own personal and social circumstances give meaning to the products he encounters in the city’s commercial spaces. Now, in part what comes to bear here along with Bloom’s arousal are his frustrations and anxieties with regard to his relationship with his wife; his displacement, sexually, by Blazes Boylan, a person never far from Bloom’s mind (or brain) over the course of his day in Dublin. Such troubling associations are tempered, however, as Bloom works to make habitable his surroundings, securely positioning himself in the midst of a host of conflicting urban spaces and discourses. So in this scene, for instance, in response to the intoxicating commodities of the market, Bloom adapts to his environment to recover a space of public withdrawal, in this case moving on to get something to eat, a practical shift of focus from one appetite to another that speaks to the salutary nature of urban practitioner’s habitual behaviour:

“Duke street. Here we are. Must eat. Feel better then” (*U* 161).

Bloom’s spatial practice at this point in *Ulysses* again reveals the healthful quotidian valences of the city, its status as a network within which urbanites unfold their days’ routines; in which there is a time for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, as well as a time for shopping and fantasizing, and shitting and pissing and bathing and masturbating, etc. etc. Bloom has the ability to shape, or appropriate, urban space in a manner most suitable to his particular sensibilities. In this way, he rejects the Burton’s “Men, men, men” (“Smells of men. [...] Spaton sawdust, sweetish warmish cigarette smoke, reek of plug, spilt beer, men’s beery piss, the stale of ferment” [*U* 161]) and carefully makes an exit, pretending to look and not find someone, “rais[ing] two fingers doubtfully to his lips,” his eyes saying “Not here. Don’t see him” (*U* 162)—a practical manoeuvre through which

Bloom obliges the neighborhood (by disguising his distaste for this particular group) while at once following his own personal impulse. Choosing instead to eat lunch at Davy Byrne's, in his estimation, a "Nice quiet bar" (*U* 165), Bloom aims for an ideal space in which to "feel better." He can never quite escape the main source of his frustration in "Lestrygonians:" Boylan, who again comes up in conversation, and whom Bloom narrowly avoids crossing paths with at the end of the episode; nor can he suppress the other appetites aroused by both his history and his environment: the memory of he and Molly atop Howth Hill, a memory that brings pleasure as well as frustration ("Hot I tongued her. She kissed me. I was kissed. All yielding she tossed my hair. Kissed, she kissed me" [*U* 168]) along with, of course, the difference and distance between his past and present, and the attendant threat of paralysis this poses ("Me. And me now. Stuck, the flies buzzed" [*U* 168]). Still, Bloom continues to negotiate these tensions in an effort to offset frustration and anxiety with renewal and comfort ("Feel better. Burgundy. Good pick me up" [*U* 171]) and adeptly select one space over another to accomplish this ("To the right. Museum. [...] Hurry. Walk quietly. Moment more. My heart. His hand looking for the where did I put found in his hip pocket soap lotion have to call tepid paper stuck. Ah, soap there! Yes. Gate. Safe!" [*U* 174-75]).

Balanced against Bloom's angst-filled moments of city-wandering in *Ulysses* are, as I have shown, the many mundane moments that form a part of Bloom's day as he ably negotiates the urban territory of Dublin—a combination that belies any notion of a Joycean vision fully in accord with the canonical formulation of an alienated modernist urban subjectivity. The closing moments of "Sirens" speak to this fact perhaps better than any other moment in the novel, as here, in a masterful stretch of compressed Joycean

narrative comprising interwoven Bloomian internal monologue and the chapter's wonderful musical-textual play, Joyce explores the myriad interconnected facets of Dublin's social, commercial, political, textual, aural—not to mention bodily—space in order to expose the complex and contradictory social, sexual, intellectual, emotional, physical, and sensorial landscape that constitutes Bloom's interaction with urban space. Consider the scene at length:

I must really. Fff. Now if I did that at a banquet. Just a question of custom shah of Persia. [...] Wonder who was that chap at the grave in the brown mackin. O, the whore of the lane!

A frowsy whore with black straw sailor hat askew came glazily in the day along the quay towards Mr Bloom. When first he saw that form endearing. Yes, it is. I feel so lonely. Wet night in the lane. Horn. Who had the? Heehaw. Shesaw. Off her beat here. What is she? Hope she. Psst! Any chance of your wash. Knew Molly. Had me decked. Stout lady does be with you in the brown costume. Put you off your stroke. That appointment we made. Knowing we'd never, well hardly ever. Too dear too near to home sweet home. Sees me, does she? Looks a fright in the day. Face like dip. Damn her! O, well, she has to live like the rest. Look in here.

In Lionel Marks's antique saleshop window haughty Henry Lionel Leopold dear Henry Flower earnestly Mr Leopold Bloom envisaged candlestick melodeon oozing maggoty blowbags. Bargain: six bob. Might learn to play. Cheap. Let her pass. Course everything is dear if you don't

want it. That's what good salesman is. Make you buy what he wants to sell. Chap sold me the Swedish razor he shaved me with. Wanted to charge me for the edge he gave it. She's passing now. Six bob.

Must be the cider or perhaps the burgund.

Near bronze from anear near gold from afar they chinked their clinking glasses all, brighteyed and gallant, before bronze Lydia's tempting last rose of summer, rose of Castile. First Lid, De, Cow, Ker, Doll, a fifth: Lidwell, Si Dedalus, Bob Cowley, Kernan and big Ben Dollard.

Tap. A youth entered a lonely Ormond hall.

Bloom viewed a gallant pictured hero in Lionel Marks's window. Robert Emmet's last words. Seven last words. Of Meyerbeer that is.

—True men like you men.

—Ay, ay, Ben.

—Will lift your glass with us.

They lifted.

Tschink. Tschunk.

Tip. An unseeing stripling stood in the door. He saw not bronze. He saw not gold. Nor Ben nor Bob nor Tom nor Si nor George nor tanks nor Richie nor Pat. Hee hee hee hee. He did not see.

Seabloom, greaseabloom viewed last words. Softly. *When my country takes her place among.*

Prrpr.

Must be the bur.

Fff. Oo. Rrpr.

Nations of the earth. No-one behind. She's passed. *Then and not till then.* Tram. Kran, kran, kran. Good oppor. Coming. Krandlkrankran. I'm sure it's the burgund. Yes. One, two. *Let my epitaph be.* Karaaaaaaa.

Written. I have.

Prrrpfirppfff.

Done. (U 278-79)

Joyce here crafts a simultaneously heartbreaking and hilarious critique of the Irish nationalistic spirit on display in the chapter; of the celebratory tschinking and tschunking of the “brighteyed and gallant” contingent in the bar; of the Catholic church’s betrayal of the nationalist cause (conveyed via “The Croppy Boy,” the song’s title figure embodied here by the young, blind piano tuner); and of Robert Emmet’s commercialized heroism, his “gallant” image and heroic last words now but a puffed-up and hollow consolation for what was lost—as Bloom’s fart suggests, a lot of hot air.

Of course the scene also has much to say about Bloom’s productive use of urban space, as well as Joyce’s idiosyncratic and specified vision of the city. A key figure in this regard is, of course, the “whore of the lane,” whom Bloom recognizes and who, it seems, is familiar to a degree with both Bloom and Molly. Startled by her, Bloom avoids her (as he had Boylan earlier in the day) by window shopping a moment, successfully evading what for him would be a tremendously awkward and embarrassing situation. Just what the whore would do if she recognized Bloom is unclear. Would she solicit him, recalling their previous meeting (“That appointment we made”)? Would she ask why Bloom didn’t keep it (“Knowing we’d never [...] Too dear too near to home sweet

home”⁸⁴)? Would she ask about Molly (“the one in the brown costume”)? If she didn’t recognize him what would she do or say? What at least seems clear, though, from both this scene and the whore’s reappearance later on in “Eumaeus,” where she passes by and looks into the cabmen’s shelter, prompting a further nervous attack in Bloom, is that given the pair’s past meeting, Bloom would be mortified to have to engage with her again, and especially mortified were she to recognize him in the company of others. In “Eumaeus,” as he has less room to manoeuvre in the shelter than alone walking in the street, Bloom is much more ill at ease. And yet even here when the whore looks into the shelter, Bloom doesn’t let on as to his discomfort, and so preserves a division between his inward thoughts and his outward appearance: “Bloom scarcely knowing which way to look, turned away on the moment flusterfied but outwardly calm, and picked up from the table the pink sheet of the Abbey street organ” (*U* 587).

Now, Bloom’s decision in “Sirens” to withdraw and look in the shop window reflects not only the general social unease generated by the whore as social outcast and Other, but also, undoubtedly, Bloom’s marginal position within the sexual economy of his marriage, a central theme in “Sirens” given “jingle jaunty blazes boy” Boylan’s (*U* 252) considerable presence in the episode, the time having arrived for his rendezvous with Molly—themes amplified by the chapter’s musical-textual allusions, which speak to the frustrations of desire; to love, lost love, deceit, and betrayal. This marginality is a fact the whore would make clear were she to invite Bloom into her own sexual economy—a prospect Bloom seems averse to but whose potential nonetheless emphasizes his lack of sexual capital as regards his wife.

But we can unpack this scene even further. Unlike the prostitutes in, for instance, Joyce's *A Portrait*, who enable Stephen to satisfy his lusts and break free from the confines of the domestic and religious discourses limiting his self-expression—prostitutes who fit neatly into a configuration of urban space according to which they are the pure objects to be desired by the anonymous, ever-desiring *flâneur* who casts aside social conventions, taking on any identity he wants, becoming the all-seeing, yet unseen “*prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito” (Baudelaire 9)—the “whore of the lane” in “Sirens” and “Eumaeus” is not only a familiar figure, but one who is herself familiar with the male gazer; who returns the city-wanderer’s gaze and so prohibits his anonymity, his empathy with the advertisement and the commodity, and his ability to circulate unbounded through the urban commercial network.

Joyce’s whore in “Sirens” thus speaks to an urban realm marked by the (admittedly, often frustrating) process of negotiation between the embodied urban dweller and his or her urban space. Indeed, the ability to navigate the city is something Bloom, despite his aversion, recognizes even in her, noting “she has to live like the rest” (though clearly the whore has fewer opportunities, and faces greater limitations, than Bloom). The whore’s mobility, moreover, poses a threat to certain more standard configurations and uses of urban space, as she not only prevents the self from escaping from itself (she’ll recognize the *flâneur*) but brings home to the self its otherness. As Bloom puts it, she is “too near to home sweet home” and so “put[s] you off your stroke.” She exposes the frailty of the ideological construct of the traditional domestic arrangement (“home sweet home”) and, as well, of a stable, normative sexuality. Indeed, while in “Sirens” her presence reinforces, as noted above, the frailty of the Bloom

marriage, in “Eumaeus” her eerie, “demented glassy grin” and “evident amusement” (*U* 588) at the men in the shelter looking at Murphy’s tattooed chest seems to suggest an affinity between her and the men, her otherness—as abnormal, insane—reflecting back onto the homosocial scene and, along with the chapter’s other homoerotic undertones, exposing its own otherness and abnormality.⁸⁵

And yet, while the whore is clearly an unsettling figure for Bloom, we also see in the scene from “Sirens” Bloom’s own ability to unsettle standard configurations of the urban, as his relative compassion for the whore, along with this common-sense wisdom (“That’s what good salesman is. Make you buy what he wants to sell”), betrays his understanding of the workings of Dublin marketplace (where bodies, along with goods and services, are bought and sold)—a commercial environment here exposed (like the whore herself) to the light of day as Joyce reveals not a marketplace prone to allure, intoxicate, and potentially alienate, but one whose (notably, used) wares’ values are contingent upon individual consumers’ own unpredictable values and sensibilities. And finally, Bloom’s last spatial manoeuvre here involves yet another successful appropriation of urban space, as he slips, in order to disguise, his audible gas (borne, need I mention, of daily habit) beneath the far louder voice of the city’s passing tram—the ostensibly harsh and oppressive noise of the city’s modern machine, here a most welcome convenience.

* * *

The need to contextualize the sheer magnitude of details in *Ulysses* of course makes it very difficult to position the novel’s depiction of urban space within the coordinates of standard configurations of the city. After all, for every angst- or ecstasy-

filled moment of *flânerie* (which are themselves always highly complicated by social and historical specificities, along with the text's playfulness and many allusions; or, best of all, Bloom's gas), there are many more moments whose quotidian register is principally evident. And even as the novel becomes more and more *textual*, linguistic play seemingly coming to dominate over the novel's realism, the discursive world of *Ulysses* never entirely loses its associations with embodied subjects and city space (and not merely the commercial spaces Cooper and others conceive of as generating modernism's separated subjectivity and investment in language in-and-of-itself). So, in "Sirens" Joyce's musical prose is pined with the human appetite, for love and romance, yes, but for food and drink and sex too. Similarly, while "Oxen of the Sun" takes readers on an ungainly tour through the history of English prose forms, we must not lose sight of the fact that an actual woman is struggling to bring her child into the world; or, further, that the episode suggests not the demateriality of language but rather its organicity. Even "Nausicaa"'s sentimental and consumerist language—whose ostensible tragic effect is to leave Gerty MacDowell under a kind of spell, blind to the true conditions of her reality—can be conceived of as a tool by which the spatial practitioner embodies and fulfills his or her sexual desire (as both Bloom and Gerty do in the episode) and in doing so appropriates a viable space of withdrawal. Now, "Circe" is certainly an exemplary depiction of modernist urban phantasmagoria, replete with unimaginable and uninhabitable spaces, both mental and physical, in which both Stephen and Bloom are at turns paralyzed by the visions and ghosts haunting them. But Joyce is sure to give the episode its complement, and in "Eumaeus" Stephen and Bloom—at Bloom's suggestion, Bloom working hard to establish for Stephen a space of withdrawal and comfort—make

their way to the cabmen's shelter, exhausted (as the episode's sloppy, worn-out language obviously reflects). The shelter is itself a notable urban space which reflects the complementary valences of the urban dynamic, speaking to both the city's network of transportation and, like Dos Passos's titular point of rest and transition in *Manhattan Transfer*, the static complement to that motion.

Bloom's solicitude for Stephen in "Eumaeus"—the further mark of his neighborly practice—carries over into the novel's penultimate chapter, where the two each famously enjoy a cup of Epps cocoa and then a shared pee. Here, Bloom's successful (though comic) adaptive (and acrobatic) spatial practice is once again on display, captured in the cold and calculated—and yet lovely—language of Joyce's "ugly duckling" of a chapter (Budgen 258):

Bloom's decision? [as to what to do having locked himself out]

A stratagem. Resting his feet on the dwarf wall, he climbed over the area railings, compressed his hat on his head, grasped two points at the lower union of rails and stiles, lowered his body gradually by its length of five feet nine inches and a half to within two feet ten inches of the area pavement, and allowed his body to move freely in space by separating himself from the railings and crouching in preparation for the impact of the fall. (*U* 621)

"Ithaca" also elaborates on Bloom's domestic habits (here, shaving), which, as the following passage illustrates, are themselves subject to adaptation (plaster for a cut from shaving) and alteration (shave at night to avoid morning distractions) so as to make them

as salutary as possible; and these are, further, moments to make space, take time, and or fantasize:

For what personal purpose could Bloom have applied the water so boiled?

To shave himself.

What advantages attended shaving by night?

A softer beard: a softer brush if intentionally allowed to remain from shave to shave in its agglutinated lather: a softer skin if unexpectedly encountering female acquaintances in remote places at incustomary hours: quiet reflections upon the course of the day: a cleaner sensation when awaking after a fresher sleep since matutinal noises, premonitions and perturbations, a clattered milkcan, a postman's double knock, a paper read, reread while lathering, relathering the same spot, a shock, a shoot, with thought of aught he sought though fraught with nought might cause a faster rate of shaving and a nick on which incision plaster with precision cut and humected and applied adhered which was to be done. (*U* 627)

An odd passage this, especially in the context of the chapter's rigid catechistical discourse. What is happening, though, is that like Bloom shaving in the morning (I think it's fair to imagine this has happened to Bloom, for the longer response to the second question above quoted is redolent of his kind of thinking) the narrative gets distracted and thus reflects the effects of the "perturbations"—"a shock, a shoot"—on a morning shaver

who, despite the fact a touch of plaster on the cut is easily enough “to be done,” has since discovered the benefits of shaving at night.

Such a daily disruption—along, as well, with the more playful Joycean voices that begin to slip into the chapter’s questions and answers (“with thought of aught he sought though fraught...”)—marks Joyce’s staging of the faults and cracks in the putatively objective, scientific language of the episode’s catechism. What emerges, as Karen Lawrence ably argues, is a wide-ranging parody of totalizing, taxonomic discourse (be it the Catholic catechism or nineteenth-century positivism): “Science, logic, mathematics, theology, and literary criticism are all implicated in the parody, for they are all systems of ordering and containing knowledge. [...] [“Ithaca”] adopts the mask of dogma and belief in order to reveal a radical skepticism of order and authority” (195-96). As is the case with “Wandering Rocks,” then, the impulse in “Ithaca” to capture *all* contains its other: the inability to do so. “Ithaca” thus works alongside Joyce’s representation of Dublin urban dynamics not only as regards Bloom’s ability to appropriate and thus inhabit urban space (his home at #7 Eccles street included), but also as regards Joyce’s critique of the discourses that would reduce or contain the myriad complexities even of one relatively ordinary day in the life of a city-dweller.

Joyce thus strikes a balance in “Ithaca” between the dissective “intellectual outlook” and the significant emotional creativity he tells Power are both fundamental to the work of *Ulysses*, generating, in the process, a cold yet tender beauty that does not so much de-familiarize, as do Joyce’s epiphanies, but rather re-familiarizes, employing an objectivity that in combination with readers’ long, novel-length voyage with Bloom (and to a lesser degree Stephen) imbues Bloom’s domestic scene with the “emotional

fecundity” Joyce prized in the mediaeval mindset. As he wrote to Budgen of “Ithaca,” all of the chapter’s “events are resolved into their cosmic physical, psychical, etc., equivalents [...] so that not only will the reader know everything and know it in the baldest coldest way but Bloom and Stephen thereby become heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which they gaze” (Budgen 257)—distant, unreachable; yet wondrous and familiar. For despite—or, ironically, perhaps as a result of—the chapter’s often overwhelming specificity of detail (whose precision is certainly similar to the journalistic reporting, which, recall, Joyce argued to Power was devoid of the needed emotion), the “significant world” of Bloom’s dwelling-place, and its significance to him, is memorably laid out here in one of the novel’s final odes to everyday life.

Indeed, the world of material things certainly dominates “Ithaca”’s landscape; consider Bloom’s fantasy of Flowerville or his drawer full of postcards, letters, stamps, etc. But these are part and parcel of the human, social world within which Bloom establishes his dwelling-places; part of his nighttime routine (the Flowerville fantasy “when *practised habitually* before retiring for the night alleviated fatigue and produced as a result sound repose and renovated vitality” [*U* 672; my emphasis]) as well as the familiar surroundings of his home (his daughter’s notebook, a letter from her, a christmas card, family heirlooms, other quotidian ephemera) or his further fantasies (the pornographic photos and the letters from Martha). So, for instance, while readings of “Ithaca” (and Joyce in general) have emphasized the role of advertizing discourse and commodity culture in shaping everyday experience, figuring Bloom as largely subject to these forces—ever interpolated by the aura of both advertisement and product; ever-desiring, so as to sublimate a fear of the void or fill a Lacanian lack of the Real⁸⁶—they

overlook Bloom's role as an active participant in this cultural dialectic, an agent whose fantasies, even if a construction of his modern culture, are also put to use within his practice of everyday life.

Joyce's modernism, given these complexities, necessitates a rethinking of the shape and texture of modern urban experience, for the "velocity of modern life" in *Ulysses* is hardly uniform. Bloom's ideal ad, for instance, that "one sole unique advertisement to cause passers to stop in wonder, a poster novelty, with all extraneous accretions excluded, reduced to its simplest and most efficient terms not exceeding the span of casual vision and congruous with the velocity of modern life" (*U* 672), is an example tempting to hold up as paradigmatically Joycean and, moreover, paradigmatically modernist—akin, as Garry Leonard argues, to Stephen's theorization of the epiphany aesthetic experience and so to Joyce's own artistic investment in the epiphany, as well as to the work of other modernists (think, for instance, of the Imagist poem) (Leonard 4). But clearly this is not the only Joycean paradigm; indeed, the appearance of Bloom's ad within the context of the "Ithaca" episode—whose language, while arguably simple and efficient, is by no means devoid of "extraneous accretions" or digestible "within the span of casual vision"—clearly belies any centrality or primacy an advertisement of the type Bloom imagines has with respect to Joyce's project. Indeed that the ad functions for Bloom as a calmativè, to help him unwind as it were, suggests there are further modern velocities than the one to which the ad aims to be attuned. At stake here, then, is not primarily the singular but the habitual: the Bloomian practice of everyday life which readers encounter throughout *Ulysses* and which Joyce employs to develop his vision of the habitable spaces of the modern city.

Chapter 5

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*: Ordinary Moments in the Familiar City

Writing in her diary in May of 1924 while preparing the novel (*The Hours*) that would become *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf described, in largely fantastical terms, the London that so inspired her:

London is enchanting. I step out upon a tawny coloured magic carpet, it seems, & get carried into beauty without raising a finger. The nights are amazing, with all the white porticoes & broad silent avenues. And people pop in & out, lightly, divertingly like rabbits; & I look down Southampton Row, wet as a seal's back or red & yellow with sunshine, & watch the omnibus going & coming, & hear the old crazy organs. (*Diary 2 301*)

Hardly Eliot's "city of death in life" (Williams, *The Country* 239), Woolf's London here is nevertheless in many respects "Unreal." At the mercy of its beauty and enchantment, the urbanite is swept up into the city's near otherworldly environment, the social world mildly distorted (people as rabbits) and then eclipsed by the spectacle of modern transport machinery and the music of the crowded commercial thoroughfare. The passage anticipates Woolf's striking essay on the city from 1927, "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," in which she conceives of the urban wanderer as "an enormous eye" easily enthralled by the astonishing array of visual stimuli on display in the modern metropolis: "the glossy brilliance of the motor omnibuses; the carnal splendor of the butchers' shops with their yellow flanks and purple steaks; the blue and red bunches of flowers burning so bravely through the plate glass of the florists' windows" (482). The city's beauty

comprises urbanites uncannily unmoored from this urban context, from “life” itself, “gliding smoothly on the surface” like the eye:

How beautiful a street is in winter! It is at once revealed and obscured. Here vaguely one can trace symmetrical straight avenues of doors and windows; here under the lamps are floating islands of pale light through which pass quickly bright men and women, who for all their poverty and shabbiness wear a certain look of unreality, an air of triumph, as if they had given life the slip, so that life, deceived of her prey, blunders on without them. (481-82)

Woolf’s most famous description of London is also marked by a certain phantasmagoric “unreality,” given the similarly intense response to a similar-seeming set of urban stimuli: movement, machinery, music, the *moment*. Here is the city scene into which Clarissa Dalloway “plunges” (*MD* 3) at the outset of *Mrs Dalloway*; the ultimate object of her affection:

In people’s eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June. (*MD* 4)

Like the Baudelairean *flâneur*’s disengaged engagement within the urban crowd, or Raymond Williams’s “racing and separated forms of [urban] consciousness” (*The Country* 245), Clarissa’s “plunge” *into* the life of the city, as a near overwhelming subjective experience, becomes, simultaneously, a move *away* from it. The city, as a

result—even if hardly the Eliotic modern Hell—is in important ways just as much an “Unreal City;” or, to frame it slightly differently, an instance of de Certeau’s urban simulacrum, an erotic, primarily visual object, which thus becomes “a misunderstanding of practices” (*PEL* 93). To comprehend Woolf’s urban vision in this way, so I contend in this chapter, is indeed to misunderstand her more nuanced engagement with the modern urban scene, in particular the everyday valences associated with a successful habitation of city space.

Consider this problematic as it unfolds within the scene of Woolf’s early reception. As a result both of her depiction of the sheer exhilaration of perceiving the urban spectacle and of her marked interest in exploring the “dark places of psychology” (“Modern Fiction” 162), Woolf’s audience seemed, in general, to misread her approach. Indeed, if Woolf’s goal was to come “closer to life” (“Modern Novels” 33)—by rejecting what she saw as the mediocre materialism of her favourite trio of antagonists, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, and H. G. Wells, whose realism Woolf thought offered merely “ill-fitting vestments” (“Modern Fiction” 160) that do nothing in the way of fulfilling the novelist’s chief aim—her early readers perceived her moving away from it. “She should mix with the world a little more,” claimed “Simon Pure” (novelist Frank Swinnerton) in a 1924 review of Woolf’s “Character in Fiction” (130). Hers is a world of “disembodied spirits,” argued Gerald Bullett in *The Saturday Review*, claiming of *Mrs Dalloway*, that “To those who desire a static universe, in which they can examine things at their leisure, this speed, this insubstantiality, this exhilarating deluge of impressions, will be perhaps unpleasing” (164). J. F. Holms, in his review of the novel, describes it as “a mirage entirely unconnected with reality,” its “treatment of character and human relations [...]

almost ludicrously devoid of psychological and aesthetic truth” (170-71). And, similarly, P. C. Kennedy affirms that the novel “is like that ghostly world of Mr Bertrand Russell’s philosophy, in which there are lots of sensations but no one to have them. [...] I want to weep with Peter Walsh and leap to death with poor Septimus Warren Smith; and my trouble is that I can’t” (166-67).

Of Woolf’s Bloomsbury compatriots, Clive Bell did claim of Woolf that “Her world is not a dream world; she sees, and sees acutely, what the reviewer in a hurry calls ‘the real world’” (142). However, both E. M. Forster and Lytton Strachey were struck by the curious problematic generated by Woolf’s particular mode of realism. For Forster, Woolf was very close to achieving that chief novelistic goal of forging *real* characters, what Forster calls “human beings as a whole and as wholes” (176). What was missing from Woolf’s portrayal of urban social and cultural life, in Forster’s view, was a “Victorian thoroughness” that accounts for more than the “storm” of impressions registered in the city:

Think how difficult this is. If you work in a storm of atoms and seconds, if your highest joy is ‘life; London; this moment in June’ and your deepest mystery ‘here is one room; there another,’ then how can you construct your human beings so that each shall be not a movable monument but an abiding home, how can you build between them any permanent roads of love and hate. (177)

For Forster this “storm” within which Woolf’s characters live and move—those poignant moments in which they respond with great intensity to their physical, mental, and social worlds—worked to limit the characters’ range of experiences; thus they are, as I read

Forster, striking, but one-dimensional “monument[s]” and not multifaceted “abiding home[s].” Strachey’s response to *Mrs Dalloway* similarly addresses the way in which Woolf’s approach to character and narrative seems at odds with her drive to come nearer reality, which reality, in Strachey’s estimation, in part constitutes—given the subject matter of the novel, a single day in the lives of a host of interconnected urban dwellers—the hard facts of everyday existence in the city. As Woolf wrote in her diary, Strachey’s view of the novel was “that there is a discordancy between the ornament (extremely beautiful) and what happens (rather ordinary—or unimportant). [...] So that [Strachey] think[s] as a whole the book does not ring solid” (*Diary 3 32*).

Woolf was well aware of this problematic. In the early stages of conceiving and composing what would come to constitute *Mrs Dalloway*, and in response to Bennett’s criticisms of Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room* (1922), Woolf expressed some doubt as to her method of characterization: “People, like Arnold Bennett, say I cant create, or didn’t in J’s R, characters that survive. [...] I daresay its true, however, that I haven’t that ‘reality’ gift. I insubstantise, willfully to some extent, distrusting reality—its cheapness. But to get further. Have I the power of conveying the true reality?” (*Diary 2 248*; sic). Woolf would “get further” in writing *Mrs Dalloway* by continuing to cultivate, arguably perfecting, the psychological realism that set her apart from the rigid, classicist realism of Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells. As we learn from her diaries, the often arduous task of writing *Mrs Dalloway* was punctuated by the bright moments of discovering, or enacting, the interiority for which she is so well-known: her self-avowed “prime discovery” of a “tunneling process,” “how [she] dig[s] out beautiful caves behind [her] characters,” which “gives exactly what [she] want[s]; humanity, humour, depth” (*Diary 2 272, 263*).

Woolf's aim was to achieve a kind of balance in her focus. So, alongside the "insubstantis[ing]" that enables her "beautiful caves" and the "tunneling process," Woolf emphasized the need to insert also an element of the real, at one point claiming that she can write only "by clinging as tight to fact as [she] can" (*Diary 2* 272), and during her work revising *Mrs Dalloway*, asking "But is it 'unreal'? Is it mere accomplishment?" and responding "I think not" (*Diary 2* 323). In response to Strachey's suggestion that Woolf apply her approach to "something wilder and more fantastic," Woolf expressed her desire not to "lose touch with emotions," to which Strachey agreed, as Woolf reports, that indeed "there must be reality for you to start from" (*Diary 3* 32).

Still, Forster's and Strachey's perceptive readings of the ambivalence or discordancy apparent as regards Woolf's handling of "the real"—their uncertainty as to whether or not Woolf has that "'reality' gift," whether or not her characters comprise an abiding, solid home; whether or not her "ordinary" *really* is perceived as ordinary; whether or not as a gorgeously ornamented "storm" the novel's form and subject matter are out of sync—foreground the difficulty, presented by Woolf's particular uses of the stream of consciousness technique, of coming "closer to life" and locating her characters in the real (in this case urban) world, even when that world seems clearly evident. As a subjective, fantastic "storm," "life; London; this moment of June" can all begin to move farther and farther away from their real, ordinary starting point in the city toward some kind of abstract, insubstantial mental flurry. Put differently, the city as spectacle becomes primary site for such epiphanic and/or shocking mental excursions and as a result its potentially healthful everyday registers are obscured.

To counter, or at least temper, such a reading, my discussion in this chapter begins with an examination of Woolf's landmark theorizations of fiction and then turns to *Mrs Dalloway* in order to highlight the degree to which Woolf's fictional theory and practice engage with the ordinary, everyday experiential registers of urban life. I argue that Woolf's innovative approach to fiction constitutes not only a reaction against outmoded representational strategies but an attempt to come to grips with the habitual dwelling practices employed by modern urban subjects in negotiating the spaces of the city. While Woolf's urban aesthetic unquestionably turns on the moment and, further, on an understanding of modernity as itself a moment of change, it also recognizes the routine, familiar, and communal aspects of the changed and changing urban scene that serve as an index to its status as an habitable environment. In tracing the social, psychological, and spatial tensions that obtain in Woolf's individual and collective streams of consciousness, and setting in contrast to Woolf's "Unreal"-seeming aesthetic of epiphany an aesthetic of the ordinary, I thus elucidate the dynamics of urban dwelling central to her vision of the city.

* * *

Many assessments of Woolf's modernism have responded similarly to assessments of her urban themes, emphasizing the spectacular and novel, and identifying an aesthetics of epiphany and rupture. In conventional articulations of modernism, Woolf finds a place as a radical experimentalist breaking from the rigid fictional constraints of the Victorians and Edwardians. According to Bradbury and McFarlane, for instance, Woolf belongs to the "great aesthetic revolution" inaugurated by the French Symbolists for whom a central principle is the "Flaubertian dream of an order in art independent of

or else transcending the humanistic, the material, the *real*” (“The Name and Nature” 25).⁸⁷ Woolf’s literary theory, of course, emphasizes a break, most memorably in her many attacks on the materialists Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy, and in her famous claim that “on or about December 1910 human character changed” (“Character in Fiction” 421). By no means, however, does transcendence feature prominently in her work. Both her fiction and criticism, rather, strive to come to terms with the changes shaping the scene of the modern (in its many valences, the ordinary included) and, further, with the ways in which modern subjects respond to and engage with these surroundings. Crucially, the urban and spatial dynamics Woolf invokes in laying out these arguments are distinct from those landmark theorizations of urban space, modernity, and modernism with which she is often (mis)identified—in both their relative ordinariness and the viability of the spatial practice evident therein.⁸⁸

As regards “Character in Fiction” (1924) for example, Woolf supports her claim about December 1910 using, as she puts it, the “homely illustration [...] of one’s cook,” comparing the Georgian to the Victorian domestic servant and emphasizing the former’s liminal position within the social urban network; highlighting her movement in and out of and within the house as she makes practical use of the neighborhood (albeit perhaps mainly for her employers):

The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing room, now to borrow the *Daily Herald*, now to ask advice about a hat. Do you ask for more solemn instances of the power of the human race to change? (422)

The rhetorical force of Woolf's famous comment can tend to belie her interest in the modernity of the ordinary, the ordinariness of modernity. It is not that such changes lack profundity, but that they are hardly entirely tumultuous: "The change was not sudden and definite," Woolf writes, "But a change there was, nevertheless; and since one must be arbitrary, let us date it about the year 1910" (421-22). Woolf does attend to the violent shocks of the modern, but these are not them.

Neither does Woolf frame her own experimental contribution to the modern in literature in terms of violent rupture, as she employs a thematics of dwelling and familiarity in sketching out her literary theory. The results of modernist experimentation—"the smashing and crashing," "the sound of breaking and falling [...that] is the prevailing sound of the Georgian age" ("Character in Fiction" 433-34)—Woolf level-headedly argues are at best "a vigorous and stimulating sound in [her] ears" (435), and at worst a "wanton exhibition [...] of spleen" (434). It is "a season of failures and fragments," she adds, "where so much strength is spent on finding a way of telling the truth the truth itself is bound to reach us in rather an exhausted and chaotic condition." So, for instance, for Woolf, Joyce, while magnificent at times, is also desperately indecent; Eliot, while lovely, is too obscure and overly intolerant, without "respect for the weak, [or] consideration for the dull" (435). In Woolf's opinion these authors leave readers in an inhospitably unfamiliar dark, one far from that which Woolf holds as an ideal literary "meeting-place" (432).

The writer, Woolf maintained, must hold onto certain grounds of convention, such that readers feel welcomed into a work of fiction, as they would at a social gathering:

Both in life and in literature it is necessary to have some means of bridging the gulf between the hostess and her unknown guest on the one hand, the writer and his unknown reader on the other. The hostess bethinks her of the weather, for generations of hostesses have established the fact that this is a subject of universal interest in which we all believe. She begins by saying that we are having a wretched May, and, having thus got into touch with her unknown guest, proceeds to matters of greater interest. So it is in literature. (“Character in Fiction” 431)

Because the sufficient “common meeting-place” was not to be gotten by way of the old materialist Edwardian tools, which in Woolf’s words “have given us a house in the hope that we may be able to deduce the human beings who live there” (432), the Georgians’ dilemma was how to recover fiction’s ability to adequately capture and explore character; as Woolf puts it in “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” (1923), “To bring back character from the shapelessness into which it has lapsed, to sharpen its edges, deepen its compass” (387); in the spatial terms that signal Woolf’s recurrent interest in dwelling, to *house* it. “For what,” Woolf asks, “is character—the way that Mrs Brown, for instance, reacts to her surroundings—when we cease to believe what we are told about her, and begin to search out her real meaning for ourselves?”

In the first place, her solidity disappears; her features crumble; the house in which she has lived so long (and a very substantial house it was) topples to the ground. She becomes a will-o’-the-wisp, a dancing light, an illumination gliding up the wall and out of the window, lighting now in freakish malice upon the nose of an archbishop, now in sudden splendour

upon the mahogany of the wardrobe. The most solemn sights she turns to
ridicule; the most ordinary she invests with beauty. She changes the shape,
shifts the accent, of every scene in which she plays her part. (387-88)

As an embodiment of the Georgian approach to fiction, Mrs Brown here anticipates the modernist “crashing and smashing” of the later “Character in Fiction.” No longer abiding in the novel house of the past, she stands as a disruptive force; disrespectful of tradition, defamiliarizing and illuminating the beauty of the ordinary. She is a mystery; and for Woolf at this point she has yet to be caught. But she will: “from the gleams and flashes of this flying spirit,” Woolf is confident, it is possible to create a “solid, living, flesh-and-blood Mrs Brown” (388).

Woolf’s encounter with the substantial Mrs Brown aboard the train from Richmond (a principal metropolitan suburb) to Waterloo, notably a move toward the city centre, speaks further to the significance of urban social and spatial dynamics—and, particularly, of the dwelling practices evident on the urban scene—to Woolf’s fictional enterprise. The attempt to revitalize the literary means of representing character, more than simply a rejection of outmoded approaches to fiction, constitutes a response to the question of how subjects dwell in an age of changing relations. As Woolf puts it in “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown,” “it is from the ruins and splinters of this tumbled [Edwardian fictional] mansion that the Georgian writer must somehow reconstruct a habitable dwelling-place” for Mrs Brown (388). But additionally at stake in Woolf’s need to embody this “flying spirit”—as Woolf’s much more extensive sketch of this mysterious and elusive Mrs Brown in “Character in Fiction” reveals—is the related problem of Mrs Brown’s establishment of “a habitable dwelling place” in *her* world. As a representative

of human character in general Mrs Brown stands for the limitless complexity of the human creature and its interactions with its surroundings, along with the difficulty of adequately embodying such figures in a work of fiction. As a more fully individualized and culturally contextualized character, Mrs Brown emerges as a woman whose mode of survival in the modern world Woolf finds extremely fascinating and, moreover, extremely important—as ordinary as it is. To fully draw this out of the essay requires a careful look at the nuances of Woolf’s more developed depiction of Mrs Brown.

The narrative, as drawn out by Woolf in “Character in Fiction,” looks like this. Having rushed aboard the train and sat down haphazardly, Woolf stumbles upon and interrupts the elderly Mrs Brown and her middle-aged companion (whom Woolf names Mr Smith) in a heated conversation, one in which it is clear, given Mrs Brown’s relief at Woolf’s arrival, that Mr Smith is bullying Mrs Brown. Woolf remarks upon Mrs Brown’s “extreme tidiness—everything buttoned, fastened, tied together, mended and brushed up,” which to Woolf “suggests more extreme poverty than rags and dirt.” The story-teller in Woolf loses no time imagining a sort of narrative to “account” for Mrs Brown and ease the anxiety of travelling with an unknown companion—a habit of Woolf’s to which she readily admits. “I felt,” Woolf writes of Mrs Brown, “that she had nobody to support her; that she had to make up her mind for herself; that, having been deserted, or left a widow, years ago, she had led an anxious, harried life, bringing up an only son, perhaps, who, as likely as not, was by this time beginning to go to the bad.” As for Smith, “He was no relation of Mrs Brown’s,” and though “a man of business,” “very likely a respectable corn-chandler from the North,” Woolf senses “a secret, perhaps sinister business” at stake in their exchange (423). In Woolf’s presence, the other travelers’ conversation proceeds

rather pleasantly, but not without evident tension. Mr Smith's small-talk mention of a family's trouble with servants prompts Mrs Brown's to recall and mention briefly her grandmother's maid, who, in contrast to Mr Smith's troubling servant, stayed working for the family for her entire adult life. (It is worth noting at this point that the conversation Woolf sketches hinges on the evident social and cultural changes to which both Mrs Brown and Mr Smith bear witness, a thematic that clearly resonates with Woolf's evocative statement regarding the year 1910.) Following these comments, in a curious and ambiguous moment, Mr Smith, in response to Mrs Brown's consideration of these generational contrasts, remarks upon the "changes they're making in this part of the world," and while doing so looks "furtively" at Woolf (424), a gesture by which Mr Smith ostensibly reveals his sense of Woolf herself as a product or reflection of this change, perhaps responding to her as a lone female figure with a visible degree of freedom and mobility, a sort of *flâneuse*, detached and observant, herself a product of early twentieth-century urban dynamics.

As Woolf first encounters—and describes—her aboard the train, then, Mrs Brown is in a position that in many respects contrasts this freedom of Woolf's. Mrs Brown remembers and as such is to a degree a part of the age left behind by the "changes" Mr Smith mentions. Further, it seems on the surface at least that in her relationship with Mr Smith—as a woman subject to a man's influence—Mrs Brown is engaged in an imbalanced, gendered power dynamic; another facet of human character (gender relationships) changing at this point in history. Woolf emphasizes this imbalance as she continues to wonder and speculate as to the specifics of Mrs Brown and Mr Smith's engagement:

It was plain, from Mrs Brown's silence, from the uneasy affability with which Mr Smith spoke, that he had some power over her which he was exerting disagreeably. It might have been her son's downfall, or some painful episode in her past life, or her daughter's. Perhaps she was going to London to sign some document to make over some property. Obviously against her will she was in Mr Smith's hands. ("Character in Fiction" 424)

Clearly struck, Woolf is filled with pity for Mrs Brown. And yet the author is even more surprised by Mrs Brown's subsequent behavior, in which, balanced with her marked pain is a sense of self-possession: "suddenly and inconsequently," Mrs Brown then asks Mr Smith, speaking "quite brightly, and rather precisely, in a cultivated, inquisitive, voice, [...] 'Can you tell me if an oak tree dies when the leaves have been eaten for two years in succession by caterpillars?'" The question suggests Mrs Brown's idiosyncratic interiority, likely all along at work in response to, and in the face of, Mr Smith's domineering presence. As Mr Smith answers Mrs Brown, shortly but in detail, she then begins to cry; and yet she maintains her composure—a fact which, Woolf observes, seems to annoy Mr Smith, who then returns to the heated topic of conversation, finally getting an assurance from Mrs Brown, who, "gathering herself together with superb dignity," affirms that "George will be there on Tuesday"—"We shan't be late" ("Character in Fiction" 424).

What impresses Woolf about Mrs Brown is her ability to persist—composed, with dignity—despite all that suggests she could not: her age, her size, her socio-economic status (as implied by her appearance), her antagonist—Smith, along with the "changes" he identifies. Woolf states that she can imagine Mrs Brown in a host of different environments; she thus has a ubiquity, one in part the function of Woolf's imaginative

faculty, but equally a part of this capacity of Mrs Brown's to successfully inhabit seemingly inhospitable (here urban) spaces. Following Mr Smith's departure, as Woolf and Mrs Brown are left alone on the train, Woolf's further imaginative sketch metaphorizes the recent encounter, as the author envisions Mrs Brown in her seaside house—mobile, contemplative, at home in this space, “popp[ing] in and out of the room, perching on the edges of chairs, picking meals out of saucers, indulging in long, silent stares. The caterpillars and the oak trees seemed to imply all that.” Woolf then imagines Mrs Brown interrupted by Mr Smith, who breaks “into this fantastic and secluded life” (“He banged, he slammed. His dripping umbrella made a pool in the hall”), invading Mrs Brown's space, compromising her privacy. Yet, in characterizing Mrs Brown's next move (on the train, now) as making “her heroic decision,” packing her things and heading for the station (“She would not let Smith touch it”), Woolf emphasizes her admiration for Mrs Brown's perseverance in the face of her disadvantages: “She looked very small, very tenacious; at once very frail and very heroic.” Woolf senses Mrs Brown's ability to appropriate space, to secure a degree of functional, salutary privacy beyond the ostensibly physically contained private sphere. After all it is only in Woolf's imagination that Mrs Brown inhabits her seaside house (and even here, Mr Smith bursts in). In reality, at least as Woolf encounters her, she lives and moves in the city, on the train, through the “vast blazing station,” an environment whose networks of interconnection often preclude such sharp divisions between public and private, thus demanding such privatization of public space (“Character in Fiction” 425).

The city is of course central to the dynamics at play in this scenario. In addition to the distinctly urban scene aboard the train, we see in Mrs Brown's age and in the small-

talk between her and Mr Smith the fact of modernization of which the city is a chief marker. Further, and most importantly, Woolf comes into contact with Mrs Brown and Mr Smith through a chance encounter such as is typical in the densely populated urban environment. And at a basic level Woolf's curiosity, her interest in the ever elusive "character," is stimulated by her spatial proximity to these unknown figures, particularly Mrs Brown—a proximity and anonymity (at least before Woolf's imagination takes over) which in this case is a function of the city setting. Woolf herself even describes the irresistible call of character, and her concomitant authorial inquisitiveness, in spatial terms: "What I want you to see in it [the encounter on the train] is this. Here is a character imposing itself upon another person. Here is Mrs Brown making someone begin almost automatically to write a novel about her. I believe that all novels begin with an old lady in the corner opposite" ("Character in Fiction" 425). Woolf is fascinated by the complexities potentially involved in the life of each and every stranger she may encounter aboard the train or see sitting in the corner. Rather than heed to the typical urban response to one's fellow anonymous urbanites in which one quickly stereotypes the other in order to, in Jonathan Raban's words, "substitute a simple lurid part for a bafflingly complex whole" (24), Woolf's aim is to bear witness to the complexities of the ordinary which few people—even novelists—care to regard.

Importantly, though, Woolf is sure that such complex ordinariness, which, for instance, unfolds daily in the city, is not merely the province of the writer but rather is common to all. For Woolf "the things [Mrs Brown] says and the things she does and her eyes and her nose and her speech and her silence have an overwhelming fascination," and she is convinced her readers should feel the same:

In the course of your daily life this past week you have had far stranger and more interesting experiences than the one I have tried to describe. You have overheard scraps of talk that filled you with amazement. You have gone to bed at night bewildered by the complexity of your feelings. In one day thousands of ideas have coursed through your brains; thousands of emotions have met, collided, and disappeared in astonishing disorder.

(“Character in Fiction” 436)

Like many modernists Woolf aims to defamiliarize, to make the ordinary look strange; here is one of her contributions to the Georgian “smashing and crashing,” as she imagines her audience bewildered by the speed and collision of mental stimuli. Woolf’s use of defamiliarization can be distinguished, however, from the prototypical modernist usage.

Rita Felski characterizes the latter as follows:

Modernism especially, with its roughened verbal textures and often startling juxtapositions, can inject a sense of strangeness and surprise into its portrayal of the most commonplace phenomena. It makes the familiar seem newly uncanny, jolting us out of atrophied perceptions and ready-to-hand formulae. The aesthetic encounter, one might say, is defined by a distinctive temporality; it pivots around moments of world-disclosing rupture and shock that are contrasted to the homogeneous and soul-destroying routines of daily life. (Introduction 608)

But unlike, for instance, the Russian formalists, or Futurism, or Dada—to name but a few theoretical and literary schools for whom defamiliarization is central—Woolf by no means intends to denigrate the quotidian or call readers to transcend it, for daily life is

never so simple as to constitute but a realm of the “homogenous and soul-destroying,” or always even so “astonishing.” Unlike some of her contemporaries, in other words, Woolf does not beg the question as to the nature of everyday life. Her fiction unquestionably targets a range of stale, much too familiar *narrative* conventions; as she puts it in “Modern Fiction,” “the life of a Monday or Tuesday” may have “no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style” (160). But in doing so Woolf seeks a return to the familiar realm of human experience, for this arguable site of convention has been left by the wayside by the materialists, who in “the accepted style” have failed to attend to the confluence of the ordinary and the extraordinary, to the ways in which everyday life’s mundane details function as an integral part of each and every individual’s multifaceted and complicated existence.

Mrs Brown is such an effective model for Woolf precisely because she speaks both to the persistence of the ordinary (the mundane, the quotidian, the commonplace) as well as to the incontrovertibility of the changes also characteristic of the modern. A crucial counterpart to Woolf’s Georgian cook, Mrs Brown is an exemplary figure of an age in which “All human relations have shifted” (“Character in Fiction” 421), not because she is a primary embodiment of such shifts (as is Woolf’s cook) but because she is in a position to adequately gauge it. As noted above, Woolf qualifies her claim that “on or about December 1910 human character changed” in a much less often quoted portion of her famous essay: “I am not saying that one went out, as one might into a garden, and there saw that a rose had flowered, or that a hen had laid an egg. The change was not sudden and definite like that” (421-22). To work with Woolf’s metaphor, Mrs Brown has been tending to her garden long enough, day after day, year after year, to notice these

gradual changes: Mrs Brown does not see a rose having bloomed or an egg lain overnight, but rather she has seen a full-grown tree come up from a sapling. As an elderly woman, of course, Mrs Brown is in a position to feel acutely the shifts and changes that constitute twentieth-century modernity, those which in Woolf's account are in part embodied by the oppressive Mr Smith, who breaks into her "fantastic and secluded life," whereby she is "unmoored from her anchorage" (425).

But, to reiterate, Mrs Brown, and, as we will see, those Brown-like figures that populate, in particular, *Mrs Dalloway's* urban landscapes are very different from the often inviable subjects one encounters in many other modernist texts grappling with an age of shifting relations, be it Eliot's Prufrock, Gerald Crich in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, or Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, to give a few examples. In Septimus Smith, to be sure, Woolf has her own inviable urban subject radically "unmoored" by the devastating shock of the modern, in this case its warfare. Many of *Mrs Dalloway's* characters are, however, far more adept at dealing with the shifts and changes they face on a day-to-day level in the city. And day-to-day life is, it bears underscoring, where Woolf sees evidence of these changes: in the Georgian cook's daily errands, which stand in contrast to her Victorian counterpart; in Mrs Brown's encounter with Mr Smith, in which Woolf highlights Mrs Brown's habitual mode of response to moments of stress; in Woolf's encounter with "character" at random in the space of the city, where such happenstance encounters are the norm.

* * *

From its outset, *Mrs Dalloway* begins to lay out the familiar urban neighborhood with which Clarissa Dalloway habitually engages. The environment, notably, betrays an

urban dynamic of liminality and interconnection: in preparation for their party and the caterers' arrival the Dalloways' "doors would be taken off their hinges," opening the domestic space up to the exterior urban realm. Further, Clarissa here becomes Woolf's hybrid Georgian cook-Mrs Brown, "a creature of sunshine and fresh air," "frail" and "heroic," who in so moving from interior, private to exterior, public urban space signals the novel's interest in the crucial dwelling practices of spatial appropriation and the privatization of public space, which Woolf's focus on Clarissa's interiority itself announces. The nuances of Woolf's narrative also allow, however, for a sketch of Clarissa's London community. Consider the following momentary deviation, early on in the novel, from Clarissa's point of view to that of another Londoner, Scrope Purvis, a narrative oscillation much more common after the novel's first unnamed section.⁸⁹ After the narrator registers Clarissa's self-affirming declaration that she'll "buy the flowers herself" and readers thence "plunge" along with her both out into the crisp London morning air and back into her past, through her perception of the present moment and her memory of time spent at Bourton as a young woman, the novel's Clarissa-centered stream of consciousness gives way to the following:

She stiffened a little on the kerb, waiting for Durtnall's van to pass. A charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought her (knowing her as one does know people who live next door to one in Westminster); a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious, though she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness. There she perched, never seeing him, waiting to cross, very upright. (*MD* 3)

A reading of *Mrs Dalloway* informed by only a general understanding of Woolf's literary theory (as it is articulated in her numerous essays and reviews, as well as her letters and diaries)—given its emphasis on interiority—would be forgiven for finding something strange in the shift to Purvis so soon after introducing readers to Clarissa's train of thought and to Woolf's customary approach to character and narrative, one motivated to a major extent by an interest to "stick like a leech to [her] hero or heroine" (*Letters* 2 588). The early oscillation is crucial, though, for it presents to readers an instance of everyday experience in many ways dissimilar to the high-pitched mental wandering of Woolf's "ordinary mind on an ordinary day," for whom, as Woolf spells it out in "Modern Novels" (1919), and in the later, revised "Modern Fiction" (1925), life is a mysterious "luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope"—a range of experiences Woolf's extremely evocative language can make difficult to reconcile with the "life of a Monday or Tuesday" with which she also identifies it in the essay ("Modern Fiction" 160), precisely what Forster and Strachey pick up on in their responses to the novel.

But the gaze of Scrope Purvis, insofar as it perceives what is familiar within the urban environment as well as how that familiar has changed over a period of time (a mark of a routine, of seeing a person day after day), suggests the possibility of a fuller, more nuanced reading of Woolf's understanding of the daily experience of the city of which her fiction, *Mrs Dalloway* especially, aims to be a proper record. Indeed, as metonym for a wealth of details of varying degrees of significance, Purvis leads us to see more—or perhaps, rather, *less*—than the poignant epiphanic moments that stand out most prominently, in what is often their ostensible "unreality," in both Woolf's fiction and literary theory. While *Mrs Dalloway*'s famous London passage effervescently captures

Clarissa's, and Woolf's, passion for the energy and vitality of city life, positioning the novel's protagonist in such an environment but arguably taking her out of it again (or, to a degree, de-realizing these surroundings) through the passage's emotional or rhetorical charge, the preceding succinct shift to Purvis's point of view establishes Clarissa's position not primarily in a bustling, modern city but in a familiar neighborhood (in this case, Westminster), where one person lives "next door" to another. The narrative thus *familiarizes* us with its protagonist; Clarissa, we learn through Purvis, is over fifty; she's pale; she's been ill. More subjectively, she has a charm, a vivacity, despite her waning age and health; and a pride, visible in her bearing. Now, importantly, *Mrs Dalloway's* brief narrative shift to Purvis does in fact reveal Woolf's distaste for the detached, omniscient narration and needless specificity of her materialist foils, for in electing instead to make use of a chorus-like observer such as Purvis to enable such characterization, Woolf sustains her narration's immersion in the minds of her characters while at once situating them in a particular social world. Woolf thus strikes a sort of balance between pure psychological interiority and contextual social exteriority—a balance potentially belied as a result of Woolf's emphasis (in part a rhetorical necessity of her essays and reviews) on the innovations through which she distinguishes herself from her Edwardian counterparts.⁹⁰ More important for my purposes, however, is the novel's recognition of the centrality of familiarity and routine (as well as community) to a healthful engagement with urban space.

Notwithstanding her moments of relative rapture, Clarissa's response to London in the opening moments of *Mrs Dalloway* is marked by such traces of the routine and familiar. The boom of Big Ben's chime soon after Purvis sees her exemplifies Clarissa's

plunge out-of-doors into the life of the city streets, into the ostensibly singular “moment of June;” but she attends it as she would a ritual: there is “a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense” prior to the clock’s strike. In addition, then, to the sense of immediacy Woolf generates here (“There! Out it boomed”), the power of the chime is for Clarissa bound up with its being a routine occurrence, one she full well expects to encounter. After more than two decades of familiarity with the sights and sounds of these urban surroundings, she is still struck in this manner. Woolf thus reveals her understanding (and Clarissa’s too) of the power of routine; its capacity to excite as well as comfort. Of course, the clock’s sounds unfold according to a certain process: a musical warning, the hour, then the dissolution of the novel’s famous “leaden circles” (*MD* 4)—a *series* of moments befitting Woolf’s description of the halo and the envelope encircling one over the course of an entire lifetime, one which, importantly, is not univocal but rather fluctuates in its intensity.

Of course, the wonderfully evocative and poetic language Woolf employs in Clarissa’s thinking of what makes life so worth loving (“the swing, tramp, and trudge” etc.)—with its extensive alliteration and alternating syntactical structure (at times succinctly paratactic; at others exuberantly conjunctive)—is also, like the boom of Big Ben, highly effective at evoking the poignant, vital textures of urban life: sights, sounds, movement, mystery. Importantly, though, this flurry of “what [Clarissa] loves” is not a representation of Clarissa’s direct experience of the actual “moment[s]” in June she encounters at this point in the novel; rather, it constitutes Clarissa’s *established* mental registry of the urban realm at a feverish intensity. This most affecting of *Mrs Dalloway*’s passages, again like the strike of the city clock, thus gathers its energy in part from the

simple fact of Clarissa's extensive experience of life in London, her familiarity with the urban environment. What shapes her experience of the city, therefore, is not merely the energy of the city itself but, as is evident here, her long-established fascination for its effect on her; a set of thoughts and emotions established by way of routine and capable of being summoned from (or at least sparked by) her memory. Evident here is a peculiar instantiation of the Woolfian cave of memory and personal experience, as Clarissa's acquired understanding of the city is deeply entangled with a practice of inhabiting those surroundings.

Clarissa's familiarity with the city in *Mrs Dalloway* is clear also in her response to the summer season, with its many commonplace occurrences of which she is extremely fond (cricket, dancing young men and women, motoring dowagers, shop keepers)—the narrator's/Clarissa's "For it was the middle of June" and the even more concise "It was June" (*MD* 4) speaking to a discursive context in which there is an implicit understanding of what London in June is routinely like, and so the *need* to qualify (even though the narrator does) is slight. Clarissa's imaginative contemplation of this range of familiar activities speaks to her being situated within the urban community; she is conscious of the urban network's social/communal forms and betrays a serious concern for community formation, the ultimate expression of which is of course the party she is planning to throw that evening. Because she loves "it"—June, life, London—"with an absurd and faithful passion, being part of it," "she, too, was going that very night to kindle and illuminate; to give her party" (*MD* 5). As if in response to these feelings of connection to the urban network/neighborhood and her concomitant desire to throw her party—to generate ("kindle" [*MD* 5]) a familiar social space—Clarissa soon encounters the familiar face of

long-time friend Hugh Whitbread, who stands as a further mark of the familiar urban environment the novel begins to sketch with Scrope Purvis.

Clarissa's affirmative, all-embracing investment in the urban experience routinely open to her in many ways adequately encapsulates the novel's early moments here under discussion: Clarissa "love[s] walking in London" (as she tells Whitbread) in large part because it is an exciting place. Importantly, though, as a function of Clarissa's sense of what it means to live and love life, this passion for the city is not only a passive response to one's surroundings but also an activation of them; a productive practicing or appropriation of them. Unlike Woolf, then, who (in her letter quoted above) is "carried into beauty without raising a finger," or the "enormous eye" of "Street Haunting," which is hardly an active agent, Clarissa is characterized as "making [life] up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh" (*MD* 4). Now, undoubtedly this description bears Woolf's distinct expressive energy—that ostensible ornamentation which for Strachey is out of tune with what it describes. But as much as life is figured here as 'ever being created *anew*,' where the emphasis is on that freshness, that vitality and energy, it is also figured as '*ever being created anew*.' In other words, here is the productive work of routine; the city dweller as practitioner forging and appropriating habitable spaces daily, just as Clarissa has in this neighborhood for over twenty years, herself a Mrs Brown-like figure engaging with and embodying the range of experiences that obtain within the scene of the modern.

Evidence of such spatial practice in *Mrs Dalloway* lies, in part, within the narrator's occasional further deviations from Clarissa's interiority in the novel's opening moments, which continue both to anchor Clarissa to her urban environment and to draw

attention to the connection between her physical negotiation of the city and the interior mental and emotional movement of her consciousness. Notice, for instance, that in the same way that the narrator's observation that Clarissa is "waiting for Durtnall's van to pass" marks, along with the shift to Purvis's perspective, a change in Clarissa's line of thinking (from cabbages at Bourton to her longstanding love for the city), her standing "for a moment, looking at the omnibuses in Piccadilly" before "walking on" (*MD* 7) and, shortly after, her "waiting to cross" at Bond Street before "stepping on to the pavement" (*MD* 9), also attend distinct shifts in the direction of her thoughts. In the former instance her mental focus moves from her frustrated recollection of her and Peter's falling out, a section marked by bitterly judgmental attitudes ("Cold, heartless, a prude, he called her," Clarissa recalls, thinking, too, that Peter's "whole life had been a failure" [*MD* 7]), to a more general consideration of her mode of engagement with others, about which she ultimately concludes, displaying a far more accepting attitude, that she would not judge either Peter or herself ("she would not say of Peter, she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that" [*MD* 7]). In the latter instance, quite similarly, Clarissa's line of thinking moves from her worries about constantly behaving so as to please those around her or generate a specific impression of herself ("half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make people think this or that" [*MD* 9]), to a sort of daydream fantasy in which she imagines herself as a different person, wondering what a different life would have meant for her ("Oh if she could have had her life over again! she thought, [...] could have even looked differently!" [*MD* 9]). This first section of the novel is punctuated by a further similar moment of simultaneous physical and mental transition as Clarissa's conscious dismissal of her hatred toward Miss Kilman ("this brutal monster! this hatred

[...] which made all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful, rock, quiver, and bend [...] as if the whole panoply of content were nothing but self love! [*MD* 10-11]) is paired with her crossing the threshold of the flowershop (“Nonsense, nonsense! she cried to herself, pushing through the swing doors of Mulberry’s”), where she is “greeted at once by button-faced Miss Pym, whose hands were always bright red” (*MD* 11)—a moment of neighborly recognition in which Clarissa’s selfish loathing of Miss Kilman (“nothing but self love!”) is dissipated by a healthful communal interaction.

In these moments Clarissa’s routine intermittent peripatetic motion through the city streets is masterfully connected to her fluctuating self-examination, everyday practice mirroring everyday cogitation as Clarissa’s shifts in attitude move from a state of certainty and contemplation of the actual to a state of uncertainty and contemplation of the possible; or from a state of mental stagnation or frustration to a state of mind far more calm and composed—a complex set of dialectics on display throughout the novel in Clarissa’s struggle to understand herself and her position within her world, a struggle she engages in, to a degree, by physically navigating that world; her practice of everyday life. Moving between stasis and motion, fixity and flux, separation and connection—both literally (in walking around Westminster) and figuratively (in imagining and reimagining the way in which she relates to others and her surroundings)—Clarissa’s negotiation of selfhood is enacted alongside her negotiation of both social and physical city space. Here are the “itineraries” Pierre Mayol discusses in thinking about how the urban dweller appropriates habitable spaces within his or her neighborhood, establishing a balance between a more personal, private and a more public, social space, as does Bloom in

Ulysses. Insofar as she becomes a comfortable, comforted, viable urban dweller—whether out in the street or at home, at rest or in motion, withdrawn or socially engaged—Clarissa must work at striking this balance, in Mayol’s terms a “continuity” (*PEL2* 11), such that she is securely positioned and yet can adapt, or manoeuvre, and so avoid becoming overwhelmed by her emotions or surroundings, or both.

The tensions evident in Clarissa’s complicated characterization thus speak to tensions inherent within the dynamics of urban space and practice, as she feels both immersion in and isolation from her surroundings: “She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on.” She feels that sharp, cutting engagement with life, with the life of the city and the moment. At the same time she feels withdrawn, isolated, “far out to sea and alone” (*MD* 7); as well as insignificant, “invisible; unseen; unknown,” not enlivened by her position within her surroundings but annihilated by them, past the prime of life and reduced to a nonentity by the urban crowd and her stagnant social status as wife, “there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs Richard Dalloway.” Here is the threat of becoming “nothing at all” but a condition of her monotonous surroundings (*MD* 9). And yet given the intensity of the knife-like relationship to life, Clarissa also feels it “very, very dangerous to live even *one* day” (*MD* 7).

Such dangers are abated in the novel, however, as we see with Miss Pym, through Clarissa’s more *connective* interaction with her environment and community, a mode of engagement which, unlike the novel’s opening “plunge” or her knife-like slicing,

constitutes a more salutary connection within the urban realm, such that at turns even her fear of death is abated (“did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely”), “she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist.” She imagines a kind of life after death, “that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived” (*MD* 8). But such is her life in *life*, surviving within the routine “ebb and flow” of the familiar social urban environs she negotiates daily.

In Clarissa’s use of urban space, furthermore, we can see what Felski refers to as an interweaving of the ordinary and the extraordinary common to the lives of all individuals (*Doing Time* 92). There is Clarissa’s near-epiphanic “this, here, now”—the singular obscurely meaningful type of moment never far from the novel’s chief concerns—but also the Scrope Purvises and Hugh Whitbreads; “the fat lady in the cab” (*MD* 8); books, fabric, fish, pearls, gloves in shop windows; Clarissa’s irritation at Miss Kilman, soon chased away as Clarissa arrives at the flower shop. Woolf’s “ordinary mind” begins to look very extraordinary if we lose track of its relation to the “ordinary day” with which it engages in the spaces of the metropolis; but this is a relationship neither Woolf nor her characters ever actually sever. The novel’s opening line, for instance—notwithstanding its connection to Clarissa’s symbolic self-affirmation, the flowers’ status as objects of significant beauty, and the errand’s obvious relationship to the party, which itself takes on tremendous importance as the novel progresses—does

after all refer to a simple errand to run in the city. Clarissa's thoughts here unfold within an experiential matrix of which such ordinary daily activities and artifacts are a key part.

Following *Mrs Dalloway's* opening section, Woolf sketches a further series of events/experiences that illustrate Felski's balance, when upon Clarissa's return home from the flower shop, her experience of the singular, poignant moment is interwoven with and even offset by moments of routine activity, including in this case an act of productive domestic practice. First of all, the shock Clarissa receives at not being invited to lunch with Lady Burton—which leaves her feeling as if shut out of a party filled with friends, a lone figure “against the stare of this matter-of-fact June morning,” disconnected from all she had earlier felt at one with—is followed by Clarissa's midday routine as she retires momentarily to her room: “Women must put off their rich apparel. At midday they must disrobe. She pierced the pincushion and laid her feathered yellow hat on the bed” (*MD* 26).

And while this domestic space to which Clarissa makes her slow, sad withdrawal is associated at this point with “an emptiness about the heart of life” (*MD* 26), the attic room's familiar associations also speak to a degree of comfort that the space provides for her, where even if she cannot rest as well as Richard would like, still she enjoys reading (“And really she preferred to read of the retreat from Moscow”). In her room Clarissa's well-made bed leads her thoughts to settle momentarily on her frustrations as regards sexual experience; to her “virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet.” Despite, however, the “contraction of this cold spirit” and its attendant disappointments, the narrative makes clear also that there are comforting moments, when Clarissa's desire is illuminated (in response, for instance, to news of an illicit affair, “a

woman confessing, as to her they often did, some scrape or folly”), and here, her frigidity abated, “she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough.” Consider this astonishing passage at length:

It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores. Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over—the moment. Against such moments (with women too) there contrasted (as she laid her hat down) the bed and Baron Marbot [of Clarissa’s book] and the candle half-burnt.”

(MD 27)

As is the case at times in the city, “the moment” is at stake here; but its life, as familiar process, is traceable, like the boom of Big Ben that is anticipated, sounds, and then fades. However intense the experience, it is undoubtedly well-known; indeed as regards this “revelation” there are *many* “such moments,” a fact the narration’s descriptive confidence and energy also makes clear. What is more, in addition to a recollection of Clarissa’s response to such titillating accounts (Woolf, characteristically, avoids being sexually explicit here, and the passage is arguably all the more wonderful as a result), this highly suggestive description may even evoke (though admittedly here I may be over-reading) a masturbation scene, as thoughts of bedtime habit (reading her

book) are interwoven with thoughts of Clarissa's "cold spirit" thawed out (the orgasmic "spread" and "expansion;" the suggested quivering and swelling; the pressure, gushing, and pouring; the burning and alleviation), and the passage concludes with Clarissa lying awake in bed, in the post-moment, phallic candle only *half*-burnt (more of such moments await), attentive to Richard's familiar going-to-bed—a further moment whose status as habit is evident ("as often as not, [Richard] dropped his hot-water bottle and swore!" [emphasis added]), and which habitual occurrence provides a salutarily humorous ("How she laughed!" [MD 28]) contrast to "the moment" and its loss.

Note also the further Woolfian "moment" that follows soon upon this memorable section, as Clarissa's memories of Sally and Peter at Bourton inspire her anxiety over having aged. In response to this "sudden spasm, as if, while she mused, the icy claws had had the chance to fix in her," Clarissa initially responds in kind, holding onto the moment "as if to catch the falling drop," focusing everything—the morning, the objects in her room, herself—into "one point" so as to engage with everything at once, again "plung[ing] into the very heart of the moment, transfix[ing] it" (MD 31). This figurative plunging is followed by a literal plunging, however, as Clarissa's focused—and, here, near-paralyzing—self-examination yields to a much more productive and healthy articulation, and practice, of self: "Her evening dresses hung in the cupboard. Clarissa, plunging her hand into the softness, gently detached the green dress and carried it to the window. She had torn it. Some one had trod on the skirt. She had felt it give at the embassy party at the top among the folds. [...] She would mend it" (MD 32).

Clarissa's decision to mend the dress reveals once more Woolf's understanding that the momentous—the moment where life seems most worth living, and so loving;

where one feels engaged, alive, important, connected, comfortable, at home; or, on the other hand, the equally affecting moment where, as Lady Bruton's slight brings to light, one is left out, barred access to the moment to which one tries desperately to cling, a sort of anti-moment—is achieved or, alternatively, (counter-) balanced by way of a certain productive practice of space. In this case Clarissa takes up a domestic habit in mending her dress. She imagines herself a singular, sharp point, spurred on to generate and hold to the moment as a result of being denied access to it, but her physical behavior draws out that focused self, allowing it to persist as she becomes a lasting, viable “point”—more connective mist than divisive knife—in engaging in this practical activity, and, further, counterbalancing her frustration by taking up the preparatory work required for her party.

* * *

Perhaps because it is easier, or maybe more exciting, to discuss the ineffable than the arguably meaningless that the former has come to dominate the attention of many of Woolf's readers. In Franco Moretti's discussion of *Ulysses*, for instance, Moretti positions Woolf's poetic fiction in opposition to the prosaic Joycean stream of consciousness, whose hallmark, for Moretti, is its *lack* of meaning—its “neutrality, opacity, and emotional mediocrity” (“*Ulysses*” 326). Moretti turns to *To the Lighthouse* to illustrate how Woolf's “syncopated and almost feverish use of the deictic”—“...it was this: it was this”—“brings things closer, and squeezes out their meaning” (325-26), reducing a wealth of stimuli by making, in Moretti's words, “an ‘empty space’ in front of them [...] and restrict[ing] the field of observation” (325). Certainly, as regards *Mrs Dalloway*, in the narrator's/Clarissa's “this, here, now” there is a similar use of this feverish deictic. But, as I have shown, alongside such poignant moments are the neutral

elements of experience Moretti emphasizes with regard to Joyce: for example, Purvis, the lady in a cab, Whitbread, etc. Moretti's observation as regards *Ulysses* is thus well worth directing also towards *Mrs Dalloway*: "If on that June day everything were meaningful, Bloom's head would burst—and so would the reader's" (326). By emphasizing the subtle elements of Woolf's stream of consciousness narrative that preclude such head-bursting intensity in the balance they provide to the moments of sharper, ineffable, meaningfulness (Clarissa's laughter at Richard, to offer another instance), we can see how Woolf's characters (Septimus Smith being the most important exception) persist heads intact; and further, how their often seemingly pure, disembodied interiority reflects a practice of everyday life by which they come to successfully inhabit their surroundings.

Such neutrality can even be detected in one of Woolf's most memorable attempts to render a certain spirit of the modern evident on the urban scene: *Mrs Dalloway's* famous aeroplane sky-writer scene, where Woolf attends to a range of individual experiences using a range of narrative registers, her representation of modernity like the sky-writing itself in its striking multiformity. First of all, in certain respects the plane appears a menace, as its "sound bore[s] ominously into the ears of the crowd" (*MD* 17). As Bonnie Kime Scott is sure to point out, the craft is a tool of warfare and a clear reminder of the first World War's impact on the city; for Scott, even the plane's script is associated with the "all too-typical patterns of Western capitalist and imperial impositions upon the East" of which the Great War was a cataclysmic symptom (*Refiguring* 12), as the clouds of letters "cross from *West to East* on a mission of the greatest importance" (*MD* 18; my emphasis). Notwithstanding these associations, however, the narrative's emphasis as regards the vehicle and its sky-writing falls very

significantly upon their beauty—a beauty found in the plane’s agile movement and the writing’s evanescent shapeliness.⁹¹ With her luxurious descriptions of this modern technological marvel/advertising spectacle—using plenty of alliteration and a variety of confident rhythms—Woolf plainly romanticizes the scene, crafting a kind of gentle futurism:

Dropping dead down, the aeroplane soared straight up, curved in a loop, raced, sank, rose, and whatever it did, wherever it went, out fluttered behind it a thick ruffled bar of white smoke which curled and wreathed upon the sky in letters. [...] Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky. (*MD* 17)

The sky-writer thus functions to establish the opposite of wartime violence, as in the wake of the machine’s motion and energy the contrasting calm is all the more apparent, and the natural and social worlds stand in a solemn harmony:

All down the mall people were standing and looking up into the sky. As they looked the whole world became perfectly silent, and a flight of gulls crossed the sky, first one gull leading, then another, and in this extraordinary silence and peace, in this pallor, in this purity, bells struck eleven times, the sound fading up among the gulls. (*MD* 18)

The plane itself becomes more natural, anthropomorphized, “like a skater [...] or a dancer;” and the clouds, soon free of their initial forms, take up their unknown “mission of the greatest importance” (*MD* 18), which, in spite of Woolf’s suggestion of the imperialist drive, speaks to the ineffability essential to the novel’s aestheticizing of yet

another fleeting “moment,” the potentially shocking machinery of modernity becoming here an object of aesthetic contemplation.

Importantly, however, despite the attention directed toward the plane in this section, the narrative does not lose sight of this spectacle’s audience, the urban crowd; and in regarding it—and in particular the specific idiosyncrasies of certain of its members, as well as their different responses to the scene—we see traces of an everyday urban mode of engagement with the modern that stands in contrast to the narrative’s arguably more conspicuous rapt excitement at the aeroplane’s dynamism. To make use of Moretti’s image of the head-bursting intensity of certain examples of stream of consciousness, if Woolf’s narrator’s head seems at times ready to explode at the sight of this plane, the narration also noticeably modulates to reflect the ways in which the scene’s onlookers respond in their own different ways to the urban surroundings. So, while the narrative celebrates the exquisite ineffability of the sky-written clouds—more interested in the abstract formal beauty of the medium than any particular message it aims to relay—the onlookers *are* interested in discovering what message is written up in the sky. Aiming to decipher the sky-writer’s script and thus make sense of their environment, they betray a practicality along with their awe at the spectacle: “But what letters?” the narrator asks, capturing the many spectators’ curiosity. “A C was it? an E, then an L? [...] a K, and E, a Y perhaps? “Glaxo” is one observer’s hypothesis, “Kreemo” another’s (*MD* 17); “‘It’s toffee,’ murmured Mr Bowley” (*MD* 18). As many critics have emphasized in considering the novel’s vision of the urban collective, Woolf here captures a range of perspectives, a multiplicity of subjective responses to the urban scene which unsettles the notion of a singular reading of either text or experience.⁹² What is more, the

novel itself operates here on a number of registers, working not only as social critique and kind of formalist ode, but also as comedy. Woolf is, it goes without saying, not known for her sense of humour, but the gimmicky product names and the confusion itself, incongruously paired with the serious aestheticizing, constitute undoubtedly the novel's funniest moment, and work toward her commentary on 1920s advertising, to which, as John Young observes, the scene is clearly responding, with Woolf's fascination with the novel sky-writing technology balanced by a degree of satirical critique of the commercial culture supporting it.⁹³

The novel's, and London's, ordinary modernity again reveals itself in this section in a further moment of humour (Woolf even makes what is pretty obviously a *joke*), one part and parcel of an important set of minor character sketches through which the narrative's emotional pitch is tempered. So, some time after the sky-writer first appears, Maisie Johnson comes into the narrative focus in asking Rezia Smith the way to the tube station. Put off by the Smiths' strange behavior (even Rezia acts peculiarly, concerned that no one be near her husband Septimus, who is acting, in Maisie's focalized words, "very queer"), and in general overwhelmed by the metropolis ("She was only up from Edinburgh two days ago"), Maisie has a sense that "something was up" (*MD* 22). "Something was up, she knew," the narrator repeats. Of course what is "up," literally, is the sky-writer, something Maisie fails to notice in her veritable panic: "Horror! horror! she wanted to cry. (She had left her people; they had warned her what would happen)" (*MD* 23).

In her anxiety, of course, Maisie is actually aligned to a degree with Septimus: both stand as victims of the modern—Septimus of modern warfare, Maisie of the modern

urban centre (although Maisie, as greenhorn, is admittedly more of a *potential* victim). Septimus doesn't see the plane either, at least in the manner his wife wants him to: "Look, look," Rezia repeatedly implores him, aiming to get him to "take an interest in things outside himself, to "notice real things" (*MD* 18, 22). It is worth pointing out here that in spite of the association established between such "real things" and the seriously flawed medical practice of Dr Holmes, and later Dr Bradshaw—both of whom Woolf scathingly critiques for their naïve, common-sense approach to a problem they fail to take seriously, and the devastating consequences it yields—Septimus's mental illness is plainly marked by an inability to balance interiority and exteriority, to get "outside himself" and so beyond his tormented and increasingly impenetrable and detrimentally captivating interiority. Now, to be sure, Maisie Johnson is not Septimus Smith; the comparisons between the two only go so far. As a young woman in the city, Maisie does face a particular set of challenges (as well as opportunities); but her experiences are hardly those of the traumatized World War One veteran. And yet Maisie's not seeing the plane—a fact Woolf seems intent on emphasizing with her joke—works as a part of the brand-new urbanite's inability to successfully interact with her surroundings such that she can allay the discomfort she feels in the urban setting; she fails to take the opportunity to pause and experience the calm Woolf suggests a vision of the plane can provide. Like Septimus, again, her subjective experience is rather out of tune with her surrounding environment. Indeed, does the following look quite like an urban scene to which one would recoil in horror?

that gently trudging, vaguely gazing, breeze-kissed company—squirrels perching and preening, sparrow fountains fluttering for crumbs, dogs busy

with the railings, busy with each other, while the soft warm air washed over them and lent to the fixed unsurprised gaze with which they received life, something whimsical and mollified—(*MD* 23)

And yet, in response to this, just prior to her Kurtzian mental exclamation, “Maisie Johnson positively felt she must cry Oh!” (*MD* 23). Unlike Septimus, whose case is certainly extreme and so demands much authorial and readerly sympathy, Maisie comes across here in large part as an ironic figure, a negative example of the proficient city-dweller whose use of urban space allows her to pause and experience a brief moment of comfort—a successful privatization of public space—in what can be a daunting environment.

Woolf effects this ironizing further by juxtaposing Maisie with one Mrs Dempster, who watches Maisie in the park and intuits her situation:

That girl, thought Mrs Dempster (who saved crusts for the squirrels and often ate her lunch in Regent’s Park), don’t know a thing yet; and really it seemed to her better to be a little stout, a little slack, a little moderate in one’s expectations. [...] She had had a hard time of it, and couldn’t help smiling at a girl like that.

In the contrast between Maisie Johnson and Mrs Dempster, Woolf again presents a set of very different responses to the London of *Mrs Dalloway* and thus underscores the range of emotional and experiential registers that obtain in the city. The appearance of the elder, seasoned, level-headed Mrs Dempster to reveal Maisie’s drama as melodrama is equally important in that the Mrs Brown-like Mrs Dempster, who stands as a representative of ordinary, everyday life (consider, for example, her routine of feeding the squirrels while

eating at the park; and also her thoughts about “eating, drinking, and mating, the bad days and the good”), lets Woolf further embody and articulate her model of the ideal modern fictional character, carefully expressing her project of finding in the “ordinary mind on an ordinary day” an alternative means and focus for the novel. Mrs Dempster is, simply, to use the terms of “Character in Fiction,” that “old lady in the corner.” As is the case with Mrs Brown as she lives in Woolf’s imagination, Mrs Dempster’s “life had been no mere matter of roses:” “What hadn’t she given to it? Roses; figure; her feet too. (She drew the knobbed lumps beneath her skirt.)” She has most certainly “had a hard time,” and yet can still smile, or summon up a degree of irony to persist (“Roses, she thought sardonically. All trash, m’dear”). And yet in Mrs Dempster’s sincere call for pity—“Pity, for the loss of roses;” “to feel on the creased pouch of her worn old face the kiss of pity” (*MD* 23)—is Woolf’s call to bear in mind the proverbial Mrs Brown in all her complexity; to consider her continuing engagement with her urban surroundings, from the toll it has taken (“knobbed lumps” of feet) to the routine practices (crumbs for squirrels) or moments of joy (view of sky-writer) that offer respite.

Maisie and Mrs Dempster’s brief appearances in *Mrs Dalloway* are further significant in that through them Woolf alludes to two influential modernist texts—Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Eliot’s *The Waste Land*—and in doing so distinguishes herself from these other writers and suggests the limitations of their readings of modernity and modern urban subjectivity. Woolf accomplishes this by presenting Mrs Dempster’s mindset as an alternative to the more typical horror-struck or forlorn attitude toward the modern—and toward the city—as embodied, and arguably satirized, in Maisie Johnson. As already suggested, Maisie’s “Horror! horror!”—in the context of the lovely

Woolfian park description and also Mrs Dempster's remarks and equanimity—stands as a further curiously comic and satiric moment. The allusion to Eliot's famous poem traceable in Mrs Dempster's observation of Maisie "standing by the hyacinth beds" (*MD* 23) is very likely—given Woolf's familiarity with both Eliot and *The Waste Land*—a response to Eliot's hyacinth girl. Both Woolf and Eliot depict a figure of youth and beauty ostensibly subject to the depredations of the modern landscape. Further, Woolf, like Eliot, gives her hyacinth girl a companion of sorts in Mrs Dempster. But whereas Eliot's hyacinth girl's companion speaks to a complete inability to connect or communicate with another human being, and moreover a kind of total erasure of subjecthood and subjectivity—

Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence (*CP* 54)

—Woolf's Mrs Dempster stands for a genuine desire for interpersonal connection (she "could not help wishing to whisper a word to Maisie Johnson" [*MD* 23]), one far more likely to be consummated in the world of Woolf's fiction than in that of Eliot's poem. In Mrs Dempster, as in virtually all of Woolf's characters, is Woolf's assertion of the viability of the modern urban subject.

Now, Woolf clearly shares Eliot's sense of a scene that has changed, arguably for the worse: Eliot's hyacinth girl is a year removed from first receiving her flowers; her time has passed. Similarly, Woolf's Mrs Dempster knows roses are "trash, m'dear." But

Woolf is also unmistakably intent on highlighting the limitations of such pessimism, presenting an alternative mindset marked by a familiarity with everyday life's routine blend of the ordinary and the extraordinary, of pleasure and pain. Mrs Dempster's excitement at the sight of the plane ("Ah, but that aeroplane! [...] Her stomach was in her mouth" [MD 23]) is not a sign of serious contemplation of the sublime; the plane is not for her "a symbol [...] of man's soul" as it is for another viewer. Rather, it suggests to her "foreign parts" she has always wanted to see and so leads her to think of her missionary nephew; she recalls her vacations and her impatience for women less adventurous than she; she imagines the pilot a handsome young man. The scene works on one level as an index to Woolf's consciousness of gendered colonial dynamics: the plane and the clouds moving West to East are markers of Britain's colonial prowess; Mrs Dempster is a passive female subject while the "fine young feller" an active male imperial agent; in her dissatisfaction with "women who were afraid of water" (MD 24) perhaps lurks Woolf's own feminist dissatisfaction with women content to remain passive. On another level, though, for Mrs Dempster the plane serves as an enjoyable distraction, allowing her a moment of mild fantasizing and idle speculation not out of tune with the ordinary thoughts of a "life of a Monday or Tuesday," one filled with good days and bad. Woolf in this way brings together one obvious emblem of modernity—the plane, a technological marvel—and her own far-from-obvious emblem of modern urban subjectivity, the Mrs Brown-like Mrs Dempster. The result is, at least in this instance, a valuable instance of Moretti's "emotional mediocrity." Of course Mrs Dempster does not stand in for *all* of *Mrs Dalloway*'s subjects; indeed following her sketch are two other sky-writer spectators for whom the plane is more intensely symbolic. But as a foil to these figures, a character

like Mrs Dempster is valuable to observe as an index to Woolf's concern for the position of the ordinary within modernity.

* * *

Important to the related narrative and urban spatial dynamics of *Mrs Dalloway's* sketches of metropolitan collectivity is, as we saw with regard to Clarissa Dalloway's healthful negotiation of urban space, a tension between the connection that stands as a mark of community and the division (suggested by the Woolfian caves of interiority and the "dark places of psychology") that speaks to both the figurative space of the individual consciousness and the important distinctions between urban subjects' or consciousnesses' individual responses to the urban scene. As David Daiches explains, while Woolf's characters' "fleeting impressions of the principals" of the cityscape seem in many respects to serve the novel's holistic aestheticized vision, the characters exist also as discrete entities, each one "an independent person with a life of his own somewhere in the background, with experiences, prejudices, a texture of living" (n.pag.). Recognizing the tensions that emerge within this dynamic is crucial if we are to understand the ways in which the London of Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* functions as a habitable space, with a variety of "texture[s] of living" (the textures of everyday practice included), for while at some moments the novel celebrates the loss of certain boundaries as a means of suggesting urban collectivity, at others it highlights the potential danger of such a permeability or fluidity and its detrimental effects on a salutary process of dwelling.

Examine for instance Septimus and Rezia Smith. In Septimus's response to the sky-writer lies Woolf's appreciation for the beauty of the machine's particular amorphous language. The plane is for Septimus something similar to Mr Bentley's "symbol [...] of

man's soul, of his determination to get outside his body" (MD 24). Septimus is brought to tears at "the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky," "one shape after another of unimaginable beauty" (MD 19). The narrative stream focused through Septimus here also contains an exemplary illustration of the connectedness Woolf's style is notable for evoking and, arguably, celebrating. But given the distress Septimus is in *as a result* of these feelings of connection, Woolf's view of such a dynamic emerges as far from unambiguous. For Septimus stands to be driven insane by his wondrous engagements with his multifaceted environment: the human voice—"A marvelous discovery [that...] can quicken trees into life!"—"rasp[s] his spine deliciously and [sends] running up into his brain waves of sound which, concussing, broke." Like the sky-writer's script, everything around Septimus speaks to him; he feels a connection with it: "But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibers with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. [...] All taken together meant the birth of a new religion—" Rezia here interrupts Septimus's feverish cogitations—these increasingly intense speculations and reflections upon his relationship with his environment and what it means—for she is terribly concerned onlookers will witness her husband's evident agitation. Just prior to this the pressure of her hand on Septimus's leg leaves him "transfixed" lest he be pushed over the edge by "the excitement of the elm trees rising and falling, rising and falling with all their leaves alight and the colour thinning and thickening from blue to the green of a hollow wave." Woolf's cautious response to such momentous hyper-connectedness is further evident given that Septimus himself notably erects a certain barrier in response to this intensity: "But he would not go

mad. He would shut his eyes; he would see no more” (*MD* 19). Septimus’s tortured, fragmented subjectivity effectively serves Woolf’s antirealism, for he struggles against—moreover, is oppressed by—certain elements of the *real*, and is driven inward in the face of an unbearable reality in which the devastating repercussions of wartime experience and the misguided benevolence of the likes of doctors Holmes and Bradshaw leave little to no room for any kind of stability or comfort. Septimus’s and Rezia’s perspectives are notable examples of Woolf’s “dark regions of psychology”—those interiorized perspectives drawn in a manner that contrasts sharply with the traditional realism with which Woolf was so dissatisfied. They also constitute further exploration of the states of fluidity of interest to Woolf; think of her famous contrast between the “series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged” and the “uncircumscribed” “luminous halo” and “semi-transparent envelope” (“Modern Fiction” 160). But again, while a consideration of this type of experience enables Woolf’s magnificently plastic prose, the often terrifying darkness of such an *isolated* mental state—as opposed to the fluid prose put to use to suggest a sense of a more healthful urban community—is an indication of Woolf’s extremely ambivalent vision of this complicated textual and spatial dynamic, and, as we will see, an index to her appreciation for the relief offered by a certain ordinary solidity also possible within the urban network.

The novel’s wonderful sketch of Rezia’s state of mind in response to the isolation she feels having to deal with Septimus’s mental illness perfectly indicates this problematic. Examine the passage at length:

Her words faded. So a rocket fades. Its sparks, having grazed their way into the night, surrender to it, dark descends, pours over the outlines of

houses and towers; bleak hillsides soften and fall in. But though they are gone, the night is full of them; robbed of colour, blank of windows, they exist more ponderously, give out what the frank daylight fails to transmit—the trouble and suspense of things conglomerated there in the darkness; huddled together in the darkness; reft of the relief which dawn brings when, washing the walls white and grey, spotting each window-pane, lifting the mist from the fields, showing the red-brown cows peacefully grazing, all is once more decked out to the eye; exists again. I am alone; I am alone! she cried, by the fountain in Regent's Park (staring at the Indian and his cross), as perhaps at midnight, when all boundaries are lost, the country reverts to its ancient shape, as the Romans saw it, lying cloudy, when they landed, and the hills had no names and rivers wound they knew not where—such was her darkness. (*MD* 20-21)

Like the sky-writer's words Rezia's own fade away unheard and leave her alone in a strange darkness, one painful, "reft of relief" in its lack of boundaries and yet existing in a heightened state, "ponderously," reflecting a "trouble and suspense" clearly fascinating to Woolf—a state, moreover, that betrays a certain communality along with its association with isolation, "things conglomerated there in the darkness; huddled together." It is a state of pre-lapsarian (and pre-colonial) dimensions, but as such, and despite its conglomerations, it is unordered and so unknown and perhaps uninhabitable (*MD* 20).

Woolf's characterization of her approach to fiction as an investigation of a state of both darkness and luminosity goes some way toward encapsulating this paradoxical

dialectic. On the one hand are the “dark places of psychology;” on the other life’s “luminous halo.” Woolf’s metaphor of the “caves [that] shall connect, [...] each com[ing] to daylight at the present moment” (*Diary 2* 263), perhaps best captures the many facets of this vision: darkness, light, connection (or a lack of boundaries). These dynamics enable Woolf to establish a sense of the urban collective; and yet as Rezia’s and Septimus’s experiences illustrate, Woolf at times harnesses such fluidity to evoke terrifying states of individual consciousness. What these famous descriptions of her own fictional technique neglect, however, is Woolf’s attention to the moments of “relief” typified not by fluidity or pure connection but by solidity or at least a more limited, “safeguard[ed]” connection.

In the final moments of Septimus’s life, for example, Woolf presents a stretch of lucidity which serves as an important point of contrast to the tortured interiority predominant in the novel’s portrayal of him. And crucially, Woolf once more focuses here on an everyday reality marked by productive domestic work and routine, which has an evident salutary effect, and, further, where the maintenance of important urban spatial boundaries is critical. Upon returning home later on in the day after their meeting with Bradshaw, Septimus finds himself more willing to heed Rezia’s, and also Holmes’s, advice and come “outside himself:” “He began, very cautiously, to open his eyes, to see whether a gramophone was really there. But real things—real things were too exciting. He must be cautious. He would not go mad.” Septimus emerges guardedly from his radical interiority into an environment populated with a range of ordinary domestic objects:

First he looked at the fashion papers on the lower shelf, then gradually at the gramophone with the green trumpet. Nothing could be more exact. And so, gathering courage, he looked at the sideboard; the plate of bananas; the engraving of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort; at the mantelpiece, with the jar of roses. None of these things moved. All were still; all were real. (*MD* 120)

The scene reflects Woolf's conviction that the marks of twentieth-century change (a change ongoing) lie in the most "homely" examples or details: the fashion papers and the gramophone stand as indices of the popular urban culture of the mid 1920s; the image of Victoria highlights the period as one still informed by its past. But along with the sideboard and the bananas these details are significant for their relative neutrality. Plain facts here stand as reason for Septimus to relinquish the intensity that marks his more troubled moments: "Mr Peters was in Hull. Why then rage and prophesy? Why fly scourged and outcast? Why be made to tremble and sob by the clouds? Why seek truths and deliver messages when Rezia sat sticking pins into the front of her dress, and Mr Peters was in Hull?" (*MD* 121).

Like Clarissa's mending of her dress, Rezia's domestic work serves as a necessary foil to the disembodied, hysterical cogitation that marks Septimus's psychological deterioration and engagement within the city, for him more so than for others a space threatening in its lack of boundaries. Her sewing of a hat (where Woolf perhaps echoes the hat her Georgian cook asks advice about in "Character in Fiction"), which is compared to a further domestic object or activity—"she made a sound like a kettle on the hob; bubbling, murmuring, always busy"—contributes to a safe and secure

environment in which Septimus is comfortable: “he would wait, he thought, stretching out his feet, looking at his ringed sock at the end of the sofa [another element of the ordinary]; he would wait in this warm place, this pocket of still air.” Happy having helped Rezia finish the hat—having played an active part in this productive act of dwelling—Septimus enjoys a rare moment of harmony with the real: “It was wonderful. Never had he done anything which made him feel so proud. It was so real, it was so substantial, Mrs Peters’ hat” (*MD* 122).

The routine associated with everyday life is a further significant contributor to this brief moment of concord in the Smith marriage and home. And again Rezia appears in this instance as Clarissa’s complement, actively engaged in the practice of everyday life, creating habitable spaces marked by the habitual, and, moreover, the neighborly:

What always happened, then happened—what happened every night of their lives. The small girl [who has delivered the evening paper] sucked her thumb at the door; Rezia went down on her knees; Rezia cooed and kissed; Rezia got a bag of sweets out of the table drawer. For so it always happened. First one thing, then another. So she built it up, first one thing and then another. Dancing, skipping, round and round the room they went. He took the paper. Surrey was all out, he read. There was a heat wave. Rezia repeated: Surrey was all out. There was a heat wave, making it part of the game she was playing with Mrs Filmer’s grandchild, both of them laughing, chattering at the same time, at their game. He was very tired. He was very happy. He would sleep. (*MD* 122-23)

As Septimus falls asleep, however, losing contact with the ordinary world that is here figured as the product of a practice of forging, or appropriating, space—a dynamic in which the dweller contributes to the formation of his or her environment (as does Rezia; “she built it up, first one thing then another”)—he is once more lost: “He shut his eyes. But directly he saw nothing the sounds of the game became fainter and stranger and sounded like the cries of people seeking and not finding, and passing further and further away. They had lost him!” (*MD* 123). When he then awakes alone, Rezia having gone to see the child home to her mother, Septimus falls back into a state of agitation, calling for Evans, hearing voices of the dead, panicking about Bradshaw’s request that the couple be separated, and demanding Rezia burn all his papers.

With the disruption of the comforting communal environment, Septimus once more feels his terrifying and inevitable isolation (“That was it: to be alone forever” [*MD* 125]). At the same time, however, he is undone equally by way of a *loss* of privacy, in being exposed—to the potential control of Bradshaw’s “must[s]” and, ultimately, Holmes’s arrival at the Smiths’ dwelling. Woolf thus reveals the necessity not only for community but for one securely bounded. Before Septimus throws himself from the lodging-house window—compelled, finally, by Holmes’s forcing his way inside to see him, invading the Smiths’ privacy as he had on another occasion (“Holmes and Bradshaw were on him! The brute with the red nostrils was snuffing into every secret place!” [*MD* 125])—Rezia bundles her husband’s papers up in a final attempt to retain control over the literal and figurative boundaries Holmes, and by extension Bradshaw, disrespectfully traverses. The attempt is figured as a success, a further indication of Woolf’s understanding of the importance of such spatial boundaries: Rezia thus becomes “a

flowering tree; and through her branches looked out the face of a lawgiver, who had reached a sanctuary where she feared no one; not Holmes; not Bradshaw; a miracle, a triumph, the last and greatest. [...] ‘Must’ they said. Over them she triumphed” (*MD* 125-26). Septimus’s suicide, too, is arguably a triumph in that he also retains control over his negotiations with his urban surroundings and the boundaries thereof by refusing to be submitted to the oppressive ‘musts’ of the doctors Holmes and Bradshaw. Denied a secure domestic familial space, *driven* from it by Holmes, Septimus takes his own life in a highly public spectacle that as such—as public (an old man sees him preparing to jump; he falls into the area railings of a neighbor)—stands at least potentially to expose the significantly troubled subjectivity (and its causes) denied legitimacy by the novel’s oppressive medical authority figures.

* * *

Woolf’s concern for the question of “the moment” and the momentous come once more to the fore—along with questions of everyday life, urban space, and the relative separation or connectedness of city dwellers—when word of Septimus’s suicide reaches Clarissa at her party when the Bradshaws arrive, a crucial moment for both Clarissa and the novel as a whole. From Clarissa’s point of view the news of death comes at what initially seems like the most inopportune time: in the midst of her party, which earlier in the day she characterizes as her means of expressing her serious appreciation for death’s opposite, *life*. Reflecting on this man’s suicide, however, and considering its relationship to her life both in general and at this particular moment, Clarissa is struck by the implications: while “They went on living” and “would grow old,” Septimus “had preserved” that ineffable “thing” which makes life matter. He had embraced the moment,

refusing to let it fade away. So Clarissa concludes, “Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death” (*MD* 156).

To get at the heart of life and preserve it, it would seem, one needed to die. In sharp contrast to the isolation that factors heavily in Septimus’s decision—nay *need*—to take his own life, Clarissa’s party clearly works to establish a sense of community. Her aim in hosting such gatherings is to unite people who in her estimation are otherwise wastefully disconnected: “Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it.” Clarissa’s energies as party-thrower in many ways resemble Woolf’s own as novelist in establishing a communal dynamic; “it was an offering; to combine, to create” (*MD* 103). As Woolf’s oscillating narrative stitches together a range of urban subjectivities, so Clarissa’s party gathers people from a host of London neighborhoods within a familiar environment. And this combining and creating works to establish a space for the type of neighborly engagements that speak to the healthful sociality of the urban realm.

Now, countless critics have commented on the similarity between Clarissa’s and Woolf’s creative enterprises. But in most often highlighting either Clarissa’s or Woolf’s remarkable artistry—arguing, for instance, as Geneviève Sanchis Morgan does, that “In Clarissa’s skillful hands domestic tools create an art akin to poetry” (100); or, as Jacob Littleton does, that Clarissa is “Woolf’s high priest of consciousness. [...] Her parties

project the truth she sees onto a ritual physical structure freed in many ways from the forms and concerns of everyday life” (44)—such estimations fail to recognize the way in which the party expresses (albeit in an amplified form) the dynamics of the everyday. Responses of this type focus primarily on Clarissa, and read in her hostessing a “revolutionary” Woolfian aesthetic (Littleton 45), stressing the communal function of the party but, ironically, associating it with Woolf the avant-gardist or Woolf the radical or Woolf the quasi-religious mystic, instead of with Woolf the writer interested in the ordinary, the familiar; the writer whose oeuvre is shaped by the notion of the importance of a “common meeting-place.”⁹⁴

Of course given Clarissa’s intensity, it can be easy to overlook the party’s broader, more ordinary sociality—as it is in her other engagements within the urban network. As the guests begin to arrive, for instance, Clarissa is sure it will not go over well (“Oh dear, it was going to be a failure; a complete failure”) and anxiously questions her motivations in throwing it: “Why, after all, did she do these things? Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? Might it consume her anyhow! Burn her to cinders!” (*MD* 142). The party is for Clarissa a momentous occasion, one set in contrast to the ordinary in the narrative’s articulation of its puzzling, paradoxical, near inarticulable dynamics:

Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself, and that everyone was unreal in one way; much more real in another. It was, she thought, partly their clothes, partly being taken out of their ordinary ways, partly the background; it was possible to say things

you couldn't say anyhow else, things that needed an effort; possible to go much deeper. (*MD* 145)

And yet the gathering's success is a function of the simple social interactions between its guests, just as a healthful urban sociality is contingent upon Clarissa's running into Whitbread or her stop into the flowershop. This we see in Richard's chatting with the shy Ellie Henderson, and Peter, for instance; or Willie Titcomb's, Sir Harry, and Herbert Ainsty's laughter, mark of their enjoying themselves. Admittedly Woolf satirizes much of this social interaction as part of her critique of the British upper class, employing Peter's point of view in the process ("Lord, lord, the snobbery of the English! thought Peter Walsh" [*MD* 146]). In general, however, given that the narrative focuses not on the specifics of the party's conversations but on their simply taking place, it is clear Woolf's interest lies also with what Christopher Ames describes as the party's "social rituals," which he argues—articulating a position in line with Mayol's discussion of the dynamics of the neighborhood, and as we saw with respect to Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*—are "valuable for the communication they may symbolize rather than the information they communicate" (92).

The party's particular communal engagement is, furthermore, set in contrast to the more momentous, aesthetic elements of the party scene. Notice that in the early, uneasy (for Clarissa) moments, the breeze blowing through the open window—which "gently" disrupts the curtains "as if there were a flight of wings into the room, right out, then sucked back" (*MD* 143)—calls attention to the spatial boundaries of the gathering space, aestheticizing it, but also disrupting it in so drawing such attention. The porous boundaries of the urban domestic setting allow it to function as a healthful social space,

for it must necessarily remain open so that its inhabitants can benefit from their engagement with it, for instance coming and going at their leisure. (Sally's situation speaks to this necessity, for instance, as she arrives not having been invited, and yet she is more than welcome.) At the same time, however, as the gathering's communal energy builds, the collective focus is on the party itself and not its borders. So, later, when this potential disruption is unrealized, disregarded, clearly the party has taken viable shape: "The curtain with its flight of birds of Paradise blew out again. And Clarissa saw—she saw Ralph Lyon beat it back, *and go on talking*. So it wasn't a failure after all! It was going to be all right now—her party. It had begun. It had started" (*MD* 144; my emphasis).

Further signs of this "go[ing] on talking"—the ordinary social processes that have superseded the potentially portentous moment—mark the party's success; this is the "noise" Clarissa remarks upon ("But the noise!" she said. "The noise!") and which as effective hostess she helps facilitate, for instance in intervening between Professor Brierly and Jim Hutton (whose discussion of Milton signals their not quite "hitting it off") in order to strike up a conversation with Hutton by finding a point of common interest ("She said she loved Bach. So did Hutton. That was the bond between them" [*MD* 150]); or in coordinating other party-goers' conversations (Peter and Aunt Helena's, for example). Indeed, other guests' observations of Clarissa, particularly Peter's and Sally's, underscore the hostess's ability to shape this social space so as to give rise to a welcoming atmosphere. Peter senses in her, as she receives her guests, "a breath of tenderness; her severity, her prudery, her woodenness were all warmed through now, and she had about her [...] an inexpressible dignity; an exquisite cordiality" (*MD* 148). Sally,

similarly, is struck by “how generous to her friends Clarissa was! and what a rare quality one found it” (*MD* 162).

Such are the marks of Clarissa’s effective hostessing, a role even she comes to understand as responsible to the familiar and not the momentous; to the collective and not the noteworthy (because prestigious) individual. Thus when the Prime Minister arrives to stay for a time, although Clarissa feels “that intoxication of the moment, that dilation of the nerves of the heart itself till it seemed to quiver, steeped, upright,” she admits that such “triumphs [...] had a hollowness; at arm’s length they were, not in the heart; and it might be that she was growing old, but they satisfied her no longer as they used.”

Reminded of Miss Kilman, who stands in contrast to many of the prominent party guests with whom she is less familiar, Clarissa experiences a bracing “rush” of reality (“That was satisfying; that was real”) and—by way of her paradoxical hatred and love for Kilman (“She hated her: she loved her. It was enemies one wanted, not friends”), with whom her relationship is satisfying in its being more firmly established than those with so-called “friends” such as the Bradshaws—Clarissa realizes the importance of both the community (primarily “She was for the party!”) and her familiars (on the heels of this “rush:” “There was her old friend Sir Harry”) over and above those others who in this context speak to mere hollow triumphs (*MD* 148). We might want to highlight the extremity of Clarissa’s reactions—to Miss Kilman, for instance, perhaps the most notable example—as a trait incompatible with the effective urban dwelling practices in tune with the familiar, or with the kind of equanimity associated elsewhere in the novel with a healthful appropriation of space, but ironically this intense ambivalence, as we see at this point, speaks to Clarissa’s well-established and thus viable mode of engagement. As

regards my examination of modernism's habitable cities, which relies upon drawing out ambivalences, this instance is quite interesting. For here the particular ambivalent response is worth considering not merely because one facet or pole reveals a functional dwelling process, but rather because the conflicted response itself, as a whole, sheds light on a salutary relation to the social environment.

Now, the urban community brought together by way of Clarissa's party is, of course, a rather limited one, primarily as regards class. As Alex Zwerdling points out, the neighborhoods Clarissa thinks of when she imagines bringing various so-and-sos together are primarily upper-middle-class. "Clarissa's integration is horizontal," he argues, "not vertical" (127); and on the whole the party's guests reflect this exclusivity. Woolf, however, marks her sense of those excluded from the festivities in the attention she pays to the party's servants, whose positioning highlights the class structures on display in the novel, but whose domestic work emerges as an integral part of the gathering and a further element of its connection to the everyday. Lucy's final adjustments to the drawing-room in the opening moments of the party scene speak to the work involved in preparing for the evening's festivities. Admittedly, this labour aims at establishing a remarkable scene suited to the occasion, one Lucy pauses to survey one last time (before, of course, "running full tilt downstairs" to be out of the way of the guests), "feel[ing] whoever came in must think how clean, how bright, how beautifully cared for, when they saw the beautiful silver, the brass fire-irons, the new chair-covers, and the curtains of yellow chintz." But while the luxuries themselves are arguably far from ordinary, the novel associates them—via the attention Lucy pays to them, for they are "beautifully cared

for”—with a routine domestic practice certainly connected to the everyday in its association with the instruments of the meal and its necessity.

Woolf presents the behind-the-scenes counterpart to the drawing-room details in sketching the labour of Mrs Walker, the cook. The passage exposes the class-based imbalance upon which the party is predicated (some toil so that others may enjoy), but also relishes in the specifics that contribute to the elaborate production, and, more importantly, expresses a distaste for the party as *event*, which distaste anticipates Clarissa’s own revelation as to the limitations of the intoxicating moment (featuring, like Clarissa’s anti-epiphany, the Prime Minister):

did it matter in the least, one Prime Minister more or less? It made no difference at this hour of the night to Mrs. Walker among the plates, saucepans, cullenders, frying-pans, chicken in aspic, ice-cream freezers, pared crusts of bread, lemons, soup tureens, and pudding basins which, however hard they washed up in the scullery seemed to be all on top of her, on the kitchen table, on chairs, while the fire blared and roared, the electric lights glared, and still supper had to be laid. All she felt was, one Prime Minister more or less made not a scrap of difference. (*MD* 140)

So, despite functioning as a critique of the British class structure and the power imbalances by which it is constituted—imbalances Woolf’s narrative arguably replicates given its principal focus (Clarissa and her crowd)—the attention paid to the Dalloway’s servants reveals a similarity between the master’s and the servant’s attitudes toward the event in question: both responses resist understanding the party as (solely) momentous. Woolf thus underscores the gathering’s relation to the everyday dynamics of routine and

familiarity—along with, of course, domestic work, the significance of which, it is worth noting, the narrative marks right from its outset, giving such work near primary importance (even if it is then relatively obscured). For after all, Lucy is given second billing; a not insignificant position, though easy enough to overlook: Clarissa “buy[s] the flowers herself” because “Lucy had her work cut out for her” (*MD* 3).⁹⁵

I would like to explore a further, crucial ambiguity that attends *Mrs Dalloway*'s everyday urban spatiality and sociality as they are enacted at Clarissa's party, for this dynamic stands as either a potential solution to, or, alternatively, the precise embodiment of, what Clarissa deems life's “supreme mystery”—“here was one room; there another” (*MD* 108), which evokes both separation and connection in calling up two spaces imprecisely, matter-of-factly related to one another. Clarissa's thinking about these urban spatial and social relations is sparked at first earlier in the day as she catches a glimpse of her neighbor through the window. This “old lady opposite climbing upstairs,” merely going about her everyday business, is profoundly moving to Clarissa, but precisely because the woman's behavior and, moreover, her existence are not amenable to, or to be explained by, the usual discourses that typically deal with profundity (here, love and religion): “Somehow one respected that,” thinks Clarissa, “that old woman looking out of the window, quite unconscious that she was being watched. There was something solemn in it—but love and religion would destroy that, whatever it was, the privacy of the soul” (*MD* 107). Clarissa senses something tremendously important in this ordinary moment. As Big Ben strikes she imagines the chime's impact upon, or connection to, the old woman; “Gigantic as it was, it had something to do with her” (*MD* 108).

Once more the narrative turns on a particular “moment” in the urban setting. Importantly, though, we may set such a moment in contrast to the type of defiant and preservative moment Septimus captures in death, for as regards Clarissa and her neighbor the moment exists paradoxically as both solemn and ordinary (“Down, down, into the midst of ordinary things the finger fell making the moment solemn”)—as it does elsewhere for Woolf: in the solemn and yet routine sound of the bell at *Mrs Dalloway*’s outset; or in the “solemn instan[t] of the power of the human race to change” evident in the notably habitual city errands of Woolf’s Georgian cook in “Character in Fiction.” Indeed, neither religion nor love—as systems of thought or states of being—can offer satisfactory guidance to understand such a set of moments as Clarissa here contemplates, for “that’s the miracle, that’s the mystery; that old lady [...] whom she could see going from chest of drawers to dressing-table.” Woolf’s use of the deictic “that” does border on the feverish, as Moretti argues is common in Woolf, a sign of her interest in the ineffable moment. But in this case—unlike Septimus’s attempt to reach that ever elusive centre and hold onto that unnamable “thing”—Woolf/Clarissa actually points to *something*; to this ordinary urban dweller doing ordinary things (*MD* 108).

Clarissa thus finds puzzling certain basic facts or conditions of everyday life in the city: “the supreme mystery which Kilman might say she had solved, or Peter might say he had solved, but Clarissa didn’t believe either of them had the ghost of an idea of solving, was simply this: *here was one room; there another*” (*MD* 108; my emphasis). In this putatively mysterious moment, as in the “go[ing] on talking” of the party, Woolf gestures importantly toward a process, as Clarissa’s neighbor goes about her daily activities, one by one; and further to a relational spatiality—one room, then another—that

precludes the designation of a singular, centralized moment. At stake here are particular fundamentals of modern urban life; Clarissa and the old woman's proximity to one another—as neighbors who are essentially strangers—is a function of belonging to a concentrated metropolitan populous. Woolf creates for Clarissa her own Mrs Brown, the “old lady in the corner” (or aboard the train or across the way), in order to foreground what is essentially a foundational moment in both Woolf's fiction and philosophy—both of which are intimately bound up with an investigation of urban space and experience. For Woolf such an encounter calls for an empathetic imaginative engagement with the inevitable and elusive complexity—and yet simplicity—of innumerable human lives, which involves, crucially, a examination of their modes of dwelling in a changing modern world. For Clarissa the encounter brings home the importance of moving *beyond* the moment by engaging with life in the city in its ordinary as well as its extraordinary dimensions. As Erich Auerbach reflects in his landmark discussion of Woolf in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946), the modernist aesthetic of subjective perception and the moment betrays just such a duality: “what happens in that moment,” Auerbach asserts, “concerns in a very personal way the individuals who live in it, but also [...] the elementary things which men in general have in common.” Auerbach thus sees in Woolf's focus on the “random moment” an attention to what may seem the *singular* “wealth of reality and depth of life” significant to the individual. But, importantly, he also sees in this moment a mode of experience “comparatively independent of the controversial and unstable orders over which men fight and despair; it passes unaffected by them, as daily life;” and thus concludes that “The more numerous,

varied, and simple the people who appear as subjects of such random [plural] *moments*, the more effectively must what they have in common shine forth” (552; emphasis mine).

The final moments of *Mrs Dalloway* thus provide a further example of the relatively ordinary, commonplace experiential register of the novel’s habitable London, as Clarissa moves to look out the window at the sky and once again sees her elderly neighbor across the way, who this time seems to look directly at Clarissa, a notable moment of connection. We may read Clarissa’s surprise at seeing her neighbor with some irony; after all, they are neighbors and routinely inhabit their dwelling places such that they would be regularly visible to one another. Still, as she had been earlier in the day, Clarissa is taken by this ordinary moment and the relationship between her neighbor’s life and her own. Clarissa is throwing a party, and her neighbor is simply going to bed; but in contrast to Septimus—who in taking his own life has, as Clarissa perceives it, “preserved” or frozen the moment—both persist through the *series of moments* that constitute their lives, actively shaping them as they do so. So, as the clock strikes—that routine and yet solemnly significant occurrence that represents for Clarissa the call to *live*—Clarissa “must go back to them;” she must return to the party (recall she is “for the party”). “[G]lad that [Septimus] had done it; thrown it away,” she by contrast will “assemble,” engaging productively, habitually (to throw such parties is after all a habit of Clarissa’s) with her surroundings in a productive and salutary manner (*MD* 158).

In the final estimation, then, *Mrs Dalloway* examination of a range of urban scenes and characters celebrates the ordinary anti-moment as much as the truly momentous. In the novel’s final line Woolf captures both possibilities. “For there she was,” the narrator relates, as Clarissa finally makes her way to see her most valued

guests. Her appearance fills Peter, for one, with “extraordinary excitement” (*MD* 165). But as a mere statement of fact this final line can hold as little or as much meaning as one wants it to. As the narrative’s gaze closes upon Clarissa it arguably settles upon its central figure, a final revelatory moment in a novel in many ways driven by them. And yet Clarissa’s work as a hostess aims precisely to dissipate any kind of centre; to make each guest feel central and important. As the radiating waves of sound from Big Ben suggest, along with Clarissa’s “supreme mystery” of here one room and there another, Woolf’s urban “moments” belie their own import insofar as they come in waves; as they are multiple, habitual. This paradoxical dynamic informs the textures of ordinary life in the city in Woolf’s novel and ought at times to be distinguished from Woolf’s most “luminous textures,” whose singularity, intensity, and “unreality” are potentially limiting, damaging, preclusive of a viable subjectivity and a productive engagement with one’s surroundings. Woolf’s modernism—more so like Joyce’s than Moretti’s formulation recognizes—thus offers a vision of the modern city as habitable in its ordinariness, its communality, its familiarity, and its habituality.

Chapter 6

Cities of “Solidity” in Jean Rhys’s *The Left Bank* and *Quartet*

As does Virginia Woolf, in many respects Jean Rhys responds in her writing to the disruptions typical of modernity and the urban scene: those poignant moments of heightened sensation or perception, and those often painful moments of alienation and homelessness that characterize many of modernism’s landmark texts. Indeed, only just a superficial knowledge of the usually tragic careers of Rhys’s semi-autobiographical fleet of down-and-out heroines in her novels from the 1920s and 30s (*Quartet* [1929], *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* [1931], *Voyage in the Dark* [1934], and *Good Morning, Midnight*, [1939]) does much in the way of supporting such an understanding of Rhys’s fiction.⁹⁶ Andrew Thacker’s argument that “Rhys’s work exhibits a passage through modernity that constantly subverts any discourses of place as settled attachment” is, for instance, contingent upon a biographical reading. Thacker maintains that

in Rhys the quest for the fixity of place is always undermined by a spatial history determined by two key features: her experience of being a woman alone in the cities of London and Paris; and her status as a colonial exile from Dominica, a place whose imperial history can be traced throughout her texts. For Rhys the voyage of subjectivity is always a little off course, and never arrives at its destination. (192)

Helen Carr, likewise, sees the world of Rhys’s fiction as “uncertain, indifferent, discontinuous,” dealing with female figures “who belong nowhere”—who are, like Rhys herself, “migrant, marginal, homeless” (xiv). Along similar lines, Coral Ann Howells

identifies in Rhys “a feminine colonial sensibility becoming aware of itself in a modernist European context, where a sense of colonial dispossession and displacement is focused on and translated into gendered terms, so that all these conditions coalesce, transformed into her particular version of feminine pain” (5). A significant site of this pain, Howells argues, is the city, which is both “actively hostile to women” and devoid of redemptive meaning; it “never organises itself into moments of revelation; on the contrary it is figured as a Gothic labyrinth or a futurist nightmare, always a place of female dread” (27).⁹⁷

The first critic of Rhys’s treatment of the city, Ford Madox Ford, saw something similar in Rhys’s sketches of Parisian life in *The Left Bank and Other Stories* (1927), noting in his preface to the collection the association between Rhys’s urban setting and a “mournful” outlook and atmosphere, and also emphasizing Rhys’s “passion for stating the case of the underdog” (*LB* 23, 24). Ford’s reading no doubt responds to the relatively torturous urban experiences captured in stories like “Hunger,” “Discourse of a Lady Standing a Dinner to a Down-and-Out Friend,” and “A Night,” all of which capitalize on what James Donald has described in his discussion of urban modernism as an “aesthetic of despair” (“This, Here, Now” 194). Ford’s prefatory remarks are equally attuned, however, to the multiplicity inherent in Rhys’s response to a space he characterizes as “one of the vastest regions in the world” (*LB* 7). Rhys’s “profound knowledge of the life of the Left Bank” constitutes for Ford an understanding of “many of the Left Banks of the world” (*LB* 23).

Indeed, the collection takes on an array of dramatic—and not so dramatic—situations, and as such precludes a reading that casts Rhys’s urban vision in solely

“mournful” terms. Ford stresses, for instance, along with their sadness, “a sympathy” in the sketches, which he regards as a distinguishing mark of Rhys’s writing. Such a note of sympathy, Ford claims, “badly needs sounding, since the real activities of the world are seldom carried much forward by the accepted, or even by the Hautes Bourgeoisies!” (LB 24). Evident in Ford’s statement is the idealistic, self-righteous reverse snobbery essentially driving his preface, which contrasts the “stony” (LB 7), functionalist, monotonous Haussmannized north-west Paris full of despised “financiers!” (LB 8) with the softer, warmer, vital heart of Paris that *is* the Left Bank—for Ford “the region of Pure Thought and of the Arts,” “perfection” (LB 11). Given Rhys’s suspicion of such simplistic idealizations (as we will see), the pronouncement is in many ways unsuited to the collection. And yet Ford’s “real activities of the world” speaks to what I will argue in Rhys is an interest in everyday life that complicates an urban vision so frequently characterized in the extreme terms typical of standard readings of the cities of modernism.

To consider, then, as Lilian Pizzichini does, that Rhys “found universally [...] the indifference of urban society towards the individual” (159), or as Deborah L. Parsons does, that in Rhys the city’s strictures speak to an “uncompromisingly deterministic perception of the urban condition” (148), is simply to fail to attend to the rich nuances of her sketches of city life. Like the other authors taken up in this study, Rhys is compelled by the various shocks of the modern evident on the urban scene. She understands, however, the fleeting and illusory nature of the *moment*; and, recognizing the more ordinary series of moments preceding and following the singular moment of crisis or epiphany, she highlights the importance of these quotidian valences in shaping a viable

experience of urban space. A facet of Rhys's work crucially unexamined, the quotidian realities I will examine in both *The Left Bank* as well as *Quartet* serve as an index to the habitability of Rhys's urban spaces. Both these works reveal Rhys's discernment of the work urban dwellers take on to successfully inhabit their surroundings, as well as her recognition of the salutary communal connections forged even in environments marked by deracination—which connections often emerge in and through moments of ordinary experience. Beginning with a brief discussion of two *Left Bank* stories that clearly problematize the notion of city as hell, I then take up a longer consideration of the collection's concluding piece, "Vienne," to carefully explore the tensions in Rhys between the fleeting, elusive, illusory moment and the frequently more habitable dynamics of the everyday. One of *The Left Bank*'s main questions seems to be how to negotiate between these two modes of engagement with and within the city. Along with "Vienne," *The Left Bank*'s "Mannequin," "Illusion," and "Tea with an Artist" allow me to develop my assessment of Rhys's habitable cities by focusing on a range of urban spaces and spatial practices, the main goal being to highlight the healthful dwelling habits that obtain despite an often threatening, objectifying environment. Turning from *Left Bank* to Rhys's first novel *Quartet*, my discussion of Rhys's everyday modernism then interrogates the ostensibly natural comforts of the everyday, fully aware of their contingency as regards class and economics.

* * *

Notwithstanding the "mournful" tone struck in *The Left Bank*, many of its stories work to trouble stereotypical, often facile and one-dimensional understandings of urban experience and subjectivity. "In the Luxemburg Gardens," for instance, makes clear the

equanimity of Rhys's response to the city. The story illustrates Rhys's keen (and certainly underappreciated) sense of humour in briefly sketching the encounter of a "very depressed young man" with a beautiful woman with "Pretty Legs and [a] Green Hat" in the park (*LB* 73, 74). The man is introduced "meditating on the faithlessness of women, on the difficulty of securing money, on the futility of existence," as Rhys strikes a note of mock sincerity which casts the man and his troubles in an ironic light. The annoying children in the park do nothing to improve his state of mind, but soon, walking "slowly and with calculated grace," a "girl" passes by and his mood changes (*LB* 72). The man fidgets, hesitates, then gets up to pursue; the woman's pace quickens. His "hunting instinct [awakes] and he follow[s], twirling his little moustache determinedly." He soon catches her up, whereupon they exchange a pleasant greeting: "'Mademoiselle...'" "Monsieur...." The story concludes in a playful tone that secures its ironizing of the sad young man no longer sad: "Such a waste of time, say the Luxemburg Gardens, to be morose. Are there not always Women and Pretty Legs and Green Hats" (*LB* 72). Rhys's feminism is definitely at work in the story; she is ever aware of the status of women as commodified objects in the space of the city. And yet the woman here is clearly part of the game, the childishness of which, along with the childishness of the man's depression (both reinforced by the presence of the children in the story, one dressed in the same color as the woman), Rhys targets here in an amusing send up of this near farcical urban drama.

"In the Rue de L'Arrivée" strikes a much different tone in presenting a comparable urban encounter between a lone man and woman in the city, but like "Luxembourg Gardens" speaks to Rhys's resistance to a simplistic vision of urban

experience as well as her attempt to unsettle expectations derived from prevalent urban stereotypes. The main character of this piece functions as the darker, female version of the morose young man in the Gardens. At the story's outset she is despondent, "drinking her fourth *fine à l'eau* and thinking how much she disliked human beings in general and those who pitied her in particular" (LB 114). She is exhausted, her life characterized by disruption, by "a series of jerks, very violent and very sudden." Tragically, however, she persists in holding onto the dreams she once had (her youth now gone), those "pathetic and charming illusions" which keep her drinking to avoid facing their falsity (LB 115). As the story progresses she drinks more and more, despairing more and more. Recalling a former lover ("a gentleman she knew intimately—very intimately indeed") who has purposefully avoided her earlier that day on the street, she feels acutely her isolation. Out in the street, she is at the mercy of the city night, which "put[s] out a gentle, cunning hand to squeeze her heart" (LB 117), and as she returns to her hotel the urban surroundings take shape, from her point of view, as utterly "sinister and unholy." The city is loathsome, for her a site of danger: "She hated that street. [...] A street of sordid dramas and horrible men who walked softly behind one for several steps before they spoke" (LB 118).

The man who does indeed come up from behind her is, however, not nearly what she expected. He asks, not in a threatening but a concerned manner, as to her walking by herself late at night, to which she snaps and tells him to leave her be. She anticipates a rude retort from this poorly dressed, suspicious-looking, "slinking" character, "But the man, now level with her, only looked with curious, kindly, extremely intelligent eyes and passed on" (LB 119). Rather than confirming her despairing sense of being both alone

and preyed upon in the menacing cityscape, the man exhibits genuine compassion for her sorrow, and Rhys's character comes to a new appreciation for humanity's capacity for understanding and connection—feeling strongly the man's wisdom and tolerance, “Her intense desire for revenge on all humanity [...] giv[ing] place to an extraordinary clear-sightedness,” and concluding that “only the hopeless are starkly sincere and that only the unhappy can either give or take sympathy” (*LB* 120-21). “In the Rue de L'Arrivée” closes as Dorothy Dufreyne—whose full name only becomes clear at the story's end, after this striking encounter during which her humanity, and thus her identity, is confirmed—dreams upon her return home and to bed that she dies and is borne to hell by an angel resembling the man in the street, “dressed in a shabby suit and crimson scarf.” This surreal final set of images suits well Dorothy's fragile mental state. The story's concluding question, though, highlights Rhys's serious suspicion—borne out by the contrast between Dorothy's conditioned expectations of urban life and her encounter with the man—of the totality of the putative urban nightmare, here belied in a unique moment of recognition: “But what if [this hell] were heaven when one got there?” (*LB* 121). Rhys's questioning stance toward the nature of urban experience emerges through this early instantiation of her typical urban heroine, who—in contrast to the protagonists of novels such as *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* and *Good Morning, Midnight*, both of whom fail to find any such kind of redemption through their urban interactions—allows us to think about the ways in which Rhys attends to the city's range of experiences, which includes such moments of salutary social engagement and release from the often overwhelming pressures of metropolitan life.

“Vienne,” Rhys’s first published work and *The Left Bank*’s concluding story,⁹⁸ foregrounds a similarly ambiguous and ambivalent treatment of the urban scene, and attends to both the sense of loss and the sense of connection that obtain within this environment. In the story, Frances, the near-autobiographical narrator, recollects her time spent in Vienna with her husband Pierre, who is serving as secretary and interpreter for a Japanese delegate of the Interallied Disarmament Commission, which arrives in the city in early 1920. Frances’s narrative outlines her life in the Austrian capital through a series of diary-like sketches—of evenings out, of friends and acquaintances, of their apartment, of vacations, of delegates of the Commission; and finally of the precipitous decline of the couple’s fortune and their flight to avoid authorities, Pierre having gambled away Commission money selling foreign currency on the black market.⁹⁹ The story illustrates Rhys’s consistent concern with movement and displacement, registering the traumatic effects of geographical transit in both Pierre’s and Frances’s reactions to their hasty departure from Budapest to Prague, and further, at the very end of the story, to their imminent retreat to London. The story’s title serves as a succinct marker (here in linguistic terms) of this interest in dislocation: “Vienne,” an English language story, names the prominently German-speaking city in French. What is more, as a homonym for the French *viene*—the first and third person singular form of the verb *venir* (to come) in the subjunctive mood—the title suggests a condition of arrival—of coming—“*as conceived*” and not enacted and so resonates with the kind of liminality or contingency that is so often frustrating, but also, as we will see, in tune with the viable spatial practice Rhys attends to (“Subjunctive,” def. A1b).¹⁰⁰

The unmistakable sense of loss on display in “Vienne” from its outset signals Rhys’s understanding of modernity as a phenomenon marked by the fleeting, evanescent moment. Her modernism, in response, often makes use of an aesthetic of fragmentation, in this case notably employing the modern technology of photography in part to express this sense. “Funny how it’s slipped away,” the story begins. “Nothing left but a few snapshots. Not a friend, not a pretty frock—nothing left of Vienna. Hot sun, my black frock, a hat with roses, music, lots of music.” The story’s first “snapshot” depicts a dancer Frances has become enamoured with, struck by her mastery of her art, her innocence, her beauty, her fragility: “She was so exquisite that girl that it clutched at one, gave one a pain that anything so lovely could ever grow old, or die, or do ugly things” (*LB* 193). In this dancer Frances encounters the ephemeral, inarticulable moment; Rhys’s version of the modernist epiphany encountered in, say, Woolf or Imagism. “I’d met sheer loveliness with a flame inside,” Frances explains; “for there was ‘it’—the spark, the flame in her dancing” (*LB* 194). The dancer “disappears,” we are told, returning to Budapest to marry. The story’s first sketch then closes with a concision befitting the consideration of the momentary and fragmentary, Frances commenting on the dancer’s lot as well as the Viennese context and her own position in it:

Married to a barber.

Rum.

Pretty women, lots.

How pretty women here are—

Lovely food.

Poverty gone, the dread of it—going. (*LB* 194)

This sharp, fragmentary prose notwithstanding, Rhys's aesthetic of the moment is belied by Frances's reflections on what happens to the dancer following her departure from Vienna. Her marriage to someone with such a mundane profession as a barber contrasts with the extraordinary nature of her artistry as a dancer. And while Frances clearly means to emphasize the fleeting nature and beauty of this figure, in highlighting such a mundane detail she reveals her concern also for the ordinary moments that necessarily follow those of tremendous intensity. Observe, as well, that in the tone of Frances's thoughts is a kind of quizzical attitude significantly dissimilar to her feelings of intensity and loss: "*Funny* how it's slipped away;" "Rum." The note about "Pretty women, lots" suggests, furthermore, that even a figure as compelling as the dancer is not actually so rare. And the mention of food additionally foregrounds the theme of the quotidian (though here it is notably a "Lovely" kind of daily activity, an important qualification to which I will return). On the whole, "Vienne"'s diary-like structure—by its nature accounting for an extended period of time—engenders an aesthetic attuned to everyday life.¹⁰¹ This includes the realm of the social. So while the story's introductory sketch foregrounds the significant Rhysian themes of detachment and loss, the more fully developed narratives of its subsequent sections speak to Frances's embeddedness in a community.

Admittedly this community is a shifting one, as members of Frances and Pierre's social circle come and go—either like them, because of the Disarmament Commission; or in drifting through for one reason or another, out of tune with the traditional stabilities, like the performers, prostitutes, and other remarkable men and women Frances discusses (Tillie, for instance, "the adventuress, the 'Man Eater'" [LB 200]). Like the collection's

titular city, Paris, Vienna is notable for its status as European hub, an urban centre distinguished by its cosmopolitanism, which, in the particular historical context Frances finds herself, was intensified by post-war social, cultural, and economic instability.¹⁰² Rhys gestures towards this socio-cultural flux, for instance, through Frances's note about the "Aristokraten," who "sat at home rather hungry, while their women did the washing" (*LB* 201), as well as through the tension between the conservatism and nostalgia of the General von Markens, in whose house Frances and Pierre take a room, and also through Frances's own values and sensibilities (she takes down her landlords' "gloomy and whiskery" portraits of "Franz Joseph and all the ancestors," for instance, before putting them back up again so as to atone for "the shock to [her landlords'] virtue," the von Markens' young daughter Blanca having run into a dancer, Lysyl, whom Frances's friend André had brought home).

If there is tension and uncertainty within this ideologically unstable environment, however, there is also adjustment and adaptation. So, for instance, while the figures who populate Frances's particular fluctuating community are like André and Lysyl—their presence brief, their behavior at times clearly anti-communal—Frances herself frequently behaves so as to generate a communal environment. Note, for instance, Frances's response to André's apologetic request to bring Lysyl to dinner. André is worried about offending his roommates, "contaminating her" as Frances puts it (*LB* 196); but she will have none of it and welcomes them back. In the morning Frances remains friendly with Lysyl, though the dancer is clearly somewhat put off ("Why is this woman polite to me," said her little crafty eyes"). Here Lysyl runs into the aptly named young Blanca, which causes a bit of a stir. Frances apologizes to Madame von Marken, but does so only out of

courtesy, asserting that “God knows, if there’s one hypocrisy I loathe more than another, it’s the fiction of the ‘good’ woman and the ‘bad’ one.” Frances’s hospitality emerges at this point as a function of her liberal attitude towards sex and sexuality, itself the reason she dismisses the von Markens’ “old-fashioned” sensibilities (*LB* 197). And yet at the same time, “Because [she] liked Blanca and Madame von Marken,” Frances undoes her redecorating, recognizing that it had “hurt that poor pretty lady” (*LB* 198).

This episode reveals Frances’s ability to adapt in her practice of dwelling; Rhys portrays her interest in forging a peaceable community while dealing with different and conflicting forms of neighborhood propriety in an urban setting marked by shifting social mores. Inviting André’s girlfriend to dinner; appeasing Madame von Marken; adjusting to having to *readjust* her domestic dwelling-space (living-room gloomy once more, she “started living in her bedroom, which was charming” [*LB* 198]): these are the spatial practices through which Frances appropriates habitable spaces in the city. Further, the attention given to both her dwelling place and her habitual behavior in the urban environment points to her enjoyment of everyday comfort marked by routine: “Very big, polished floor, lots of windows, little low tables to make coffee—some lovely Bohemian Glass. Also I spent much time in the ‘Prater’” (*LB* 198). Like Leopold Bloom, Frances’s behavior both indoors and out reveals, as Pierre Mayol puts it, that “the act of arranging one’s interior space rejoins that of arranging one’s own trajectories in the urban space of the neighborhood, and these two acts are the cofounders of everyday life in an urban milieu” (*PEL2* 11).

The ethic of understanding crucial to the communal sentiment that persists in Rhys’s work emerges even in the face of the much less hospitable urban conditions

represented in “Vienne.” To be sure, we must not overlook that despite the dwelling comfort intimated by Frances in her sketch of her lodgings and her note of spending time in the park (the Prater), her portraits constitute an exploration of community which emphasizes a significant degree of antagonism between women and men. Elsewhere, simply, the city is much less hospitable, particularly to women. And yet Rhys’s ambivalence toward the gender dynamics shaping these fluctuating urban communities—even toward individual misogynists (both men and women) and the effects of the widespread misogyny of a patriarchal culture—suggests the “sympathy” Ford identifies in his preface. The story’s last sight of André, for instance, sees him made a fool of by the “Man Eater” Tillie, who convinces him she has lost a pearl necklace and dupes André, along with Frances and other members of their party, into ‘looking’ for it in the woods; for Tillie a big joke Frances characterizes as part of the latter’s role as avenger of women mistreated: “Glory to the Tillies,” Frances exclaims, half ironically, “the avengers of the Ridis!”—Ridi being a girl André had hurt; to use Frances’s terms: “smash[ed]” (*LB* 200). Yet when Frances realizes Tillie’s game, and that both she herself and André had been fooled, Frances sides with him: “At that moment I liked André—I felt sorry for him, akin to him. [...] I could have shaken his hand and said: ‘Hail, brother Doormat, in a world of Boots!’” (*LB* 207).

Frances’s sympathy even extends to members of the entourage of Japanese military officials she and Pierre socialize with; men whom she admits she loathes for their views and treatment of women. Ishima, for instance, for whom Pierre is secretary, regards women as “war material,” mere spoils (*LB* 209). Frances expresses her hatred for the man when recalling how he broke up with his mistress when she refused to be of

‘service’ to a friend of his. By contrast, however, Frances remarks upon how another official, Kashua, “rescued another unfortunate bit of war material;” but notably, in addition to coming to her general financial aid—and the unspoken fact of the matter of course is that she becomes his mistress—he “paid for her expenses at a sanatorium for six months—she was consumptive.” Now, without a doubt one of Rhys’s goals here and throughout “Vienna” is to expose women’s status as objects, mere accessories easily discarded; and this particular example is no exception, for whether ‘smashed’ or ‘kept’ the woman’s lack of individual agency, her reliance upon a man, is manifest. Once more, though, Frances—and through her, Rhys—is ambivalent toward the situation (as she is toward her “old-fashioned” landlady Madame von Marken), and here exclaims “There you are! How can one judge!” (*LB* 214), exasperated in considering from a moral standpoint a situation complicated by ostensible prostitution, chauvinist paternalism, and potentially genuine interest and solicitude.

* * *

Rhys’s ambivalence towards the urban environment—that though it can be threatening (particularly to women) it is also a site of dwelling and community—is obvious at a number of other points in *The Left Bank*, where Rhys cultivates a range of tones in developing her complex response to and portrayal of the experience of the city, further highlighting the role of the everyday (in contrast to the shock of the modern) as a register closely associated with the practice of being at home in the urban scene. “Mannequin” perhaps best crystallizes Rhys’s ambivalence toward the urban experience of women in particular (and notably of a certain type of woman, the mannequin), with its focus on the compromising effects of the fashion industry and the compelling illusions it

fosters, where women function as objects of a visually-based commercial economy, and yet also find themselves in social settings where the potential exists for beneficial communal interaction. Rhys introduces readers to this world through the protagonist Anna's first experiences on the job as a mannequin for a Paris fashion house. Anna, "fragile, like a delicate child, her arms pathetically thin," appears as a vulnerable figure in a distinctly threatening environment. The story begins as Anna winds "along dark passages and down complicated flights of stairs," trying to find the house's lunch room, which, menacingly, is located in the basement (*LB* 59). "The morning had been dream-like," the narrator explains, providing access to Anna's initial response to her surroundings. "At the back of the wonderfully decorated salons she had found an unexpected somberness; the place, empty, would have been dingy and melancholy, countless puzzling corridors and staircases, a rabbit warren and a labyrinth. She despaired of ever finding her way" (*LB* 60). Relatively overwhelmed by the pace of the work and her lack of familiarity with protocol, Anna encounters the "Coldly critical glances" of both her fellow employees, particularly the house dresser Madame Pecard, and the visiting buyers (*LB* 61).

Set in contrast to the cold figures in this environment, however, is the neighborly *vendeuse* Jeannine, who, friendly and encouraging, introduces herself to Anna and begins to show her the ropes. Further, at lunch (an "ordeal" for which Anna "brace[s] herself," appreciating having gotten lost and so having the time to mentally prepare [*LB* 63]), a keen sense of competition is in the air—an antagonism between the mannequins evident, for instance, in Mona's haughtiness and "astonishingly cruel smile" (*LB* 67). But clear marks of a more functional community are also apparent. For instance, mannequin

Georgette's friendliness is noticeable, smiling at Anna, which she does again later in the story as the mannequins head off from work. Also, another model, Babette, shares with Anna and her coworkers stories of her time working in London, and after lunch pulls Anna aside in a gesture that invites her into the community, Anna's protection at stake: "Don't answer Madame Pecard. We don't like her. We never talk to her. She spies on us. She is a camel'" (*LB* 68). This comes in response to the condescending Madame Pecard's censuring of the women's smoking, Anna having offered cigarettes to the group—itsself a simple yet notable attempt at establishing communal ties.

Such behavior, of course, troubles any simple understanding of the models as reducible to their *genres*, to their function as primarily assets to their employer, an element of the arguably atomizing, objectifying social environment which Rhys highlights but complicates. Of the mannequins, the narrator notes that "Each of the twelve was of a distinct and separate type: each of the twelve knew her type and kept to it, practising rigidly in clothing, manner, voice and conversation" (*LB* 64). In contrast to this picture of separateness and artificiality, however, are notes of socializing and subjective depth, revealed via the women's interactions over lunch (a further example: Simone and Georgette enjoy a conversation clearly indicative of a friendship), and, equally, by way of the suggestion of more complicated interiorities, as is the case with Lilianne, "a quiet girl, pleasant-mannered. She wore a beautiful emerald on one long, slim finger, and in her small eyes were both intelligence and mystery" (*LB* 65). Indeed insofar as each of the mannequins "[knows] her type and [keeps] to it," Rhys grants her agency, a know-how by which she can function successfully in her field.

To give a further example of the way in which Rhys sets up in “Mannequin” a balance between more oppressive and more hospitable conditions, notice Anna following lunch. Returned to work, she encounters once more the burdensome atmosphere of Madame Veron’s:

About five o’clock Anna became exhausted. The four white and gold walls seemed to close in on her. She sat on her high white stool staring at a marvelous nightgown and fighting an intense desire to rush away.

Anywhere! Just to dress and rush away anywhere, from the raking eyes of the customers and the pinching fingers of Irene. (*LB* 69)

She seems on the verge of a breakdown: “‘I will one day. I can’t stick it,’ she said to her self. ‘I won’t be able to stick it.’ She had an absurd wish to gasp for air” (*LB* 69). The saleswoman Jeannine senses Anna’s anxiety, however, and offers her further encouragement—Rhys once more tempering the environment’s cruelty with the kindness of another employee. Come day’s end Anna is relatively revitalized. As she makes her way out into the Paris streets, the ordeals of her first shift are far from her mind as she is roused by the excitement of the city.

The final moments of “Mannequin” are worth regarding at length to appreciate the nuances of Rhys’s representation of the urban scene:

At six o’clock Anna was out in the rue de la Paix; her fatigue forgotten, the feeling that now she belonged to the great, maddening city possessed her and she was happy in her beautifully cut tailor made and a beret.

Georgette passed her and smiled; Babette was in a fur coat.

All up the street the mannequins were coming out of the shops, pausing on the pavements a moment, making them as gay and as beautiful as beds of flowers before they walked swiftly away and the Paris night swallowed them up.

(*LB* 69- 70)

This strikingly beautiful passage succinctly encapsulates the many complex ambiguities and tensions on display in the story as a whole. Rhys emphasizes that Anna's work day has been strictly regimented, the precise "six o'clock" echoing the story's outset where lunch is to be taken at twelve exactly. Out on the famous shopping street, le rue de la Paix, Anna's renewed spirits no doubt have to do with the "maddening" hum of the commercial urban scene, where, now appropriately dressed—mannequin to and for the consumer-driven market itself—Anna feels a sense of belonging. Notably though she is "possessed" by this emotion and so once more objectified. Deborah L. Parsons, as noted earlier, stresses such a reading of the city's constraints in her consideration of Rhys's fiction, and undoubtedly there is much to suggest it. Alissa G. Karl, similarly, reads Rhys's urban commercial scene as a site within which women's bodies are colonized both figuratively and literally and are thus not their own.¹⁰³ Still, though, Georgette's smile has the note of neighborly recognition central to the salutary dynamic possible of the urban neighborhood, a mark of a different sort of belonging suggested earlier in the story. If in a certain respect, then, the ostensible community of mannequins that materializes here as the women's working days come to a close is of the illusory nature of the city's community of strangers, testament less to the communal than the isolating and even deleterious effects of urban life, in a different respect this "swallow[ing]" suggests a

spatial dynamic antithetical to the restrictive and objectifying pressures characteristic of the mannequins' work environment, for insofar as they disappear into the city's liminal spaces, unbounded, undetermined, they become figures exemplifying the city's liberatory potential. This tension is evident in their pause on the walkway as they exit. Do they stop to be looked at, admired, objectified and thus fixed, controlled, colonized? Or in stopping do they announce their ability to proceed in any direction they choose, a mark of their subjectivity and Certeauian or Mayolian practice of space?

Rhys's admiration in "Mannequin" for the titular heroines' ability to soften and brighten the urban setting reveals her characteristic fascination for the fleeting moment of beauty of the type already examined in "Vienne." Throughout *The Left Bank*, Rhys characterizes such powerful aesthetic objects, figures, and events as illusions—illusions by which she is compelled, but which she is also compelled to dis-illusion. The collection announces its concern with the themes of beauty, fashion, and the illusory plainly enough in its opening story, "Illusion," in which the narrator discovers her older female acquaintance's secret obsession with the striking modern Parisian fashion she is by all appearances only disinterested in. Wealthy, independent, Miss Bruce was "a shining example of what character and training—British character and training—can do" (*LB* 29):

After seven years in Paris she appeared utterly untouched, utterly unaffected, by anything hectic, slightly exotic or unwholesome. Going on all round her were the cult of beauty and the worship of physical love: she just looked at her surroundings in her healthy, sensible way, and then

dismissed them from her thoughts...rather like some sturdy rock with
impotent blue waves washing round it. (*LB* 29)

The narrator soon discovers, however, that appearances have been deceiving; and in Miss Bruce's wardrobe are not "the square and solid coats and skirts" she normally wears, but "a glow of colour, a riot of soft silks...a...everything that one did not expect" (*LB* 32-33). So while it seems Miss Bruce is unimpressed by the tokens of conspicuous consumption so evident on the urban scene, "valu[ing] solidity and worth more than grace or fantasies" (*LB* 32), it turns out—at least as the narrator speculates—that Mrs Bruce is prey to "the perpetual hunger to be beautiful and [the] thirst to be loved," and so "An accident, an impulse"—the purchase of one dress—becomes "the search for *the* dress, the perfect Dress, beautiful, beautifying, possible to be worn. And lastly, the search for illusion—a craving, almost a vice, the stolen waters and the bread eaten in secret of Miss Bruce's life" (*LB* 34). As the narrator imagines it, while for Miss Bruce "beauty and all that beauty brings" seems so close at hand, she simply cannot bring herself to grasp it (*LB* 35).

"Illusion," like "Mannequin," rehearses Rhys's grappling with the value of such items of fashion and the ideals of feminine beauty they aim to let one embody. On the one hand, Miss Bruce's inability to wear them—her resistance to such fantasy—acknowledges the illusive and elusive nature of such ideals and a rejection of an aesthetic and sexual economy the story suggests is potentially damaging to women. Such concern for outward appearances, as the narrator puts it, is "the real curse of Eve" (*LB* 34), one visible in the harried behavior of the story's *petites femmes*, the Parisian prostitutes "anxiously consulting the mirrors of their bags, anxiously and searchingly looking round

with darkened eyelids: ‘Those unfortunate people!’ would say Miss Bruce” (*LB* 30). On the other hand, the narrator, and Rhys too, clearly sympathizes with Miss Bruce’s passion for these trappings. “I had no business to look or to guess,” she explains. “But I guessed. *I knew*” (*LB* 33-34; emphasis mine). She relishes in the discovery, living vicariously through the closet shopaholic while imagining her experiences: “Wonderful moment! When the new dress would arrive and would emerge smiling and graceful from its tissue paper,” she exclaims, and then imagines that Miss Bruce, having dressed and made herself up, “would gaze into the glass at a transformed self. She would sleep that night with a warm glow at her heart!” (*LB* 34-35). Further, the narrator is ashamed that the vitality and transformative potential of such commodities are being “stifled” (*LB* 34), a sense conveyed in her excitement at the discovery, her reluctance to close the wardrobe, and her personifying the dresses (““Wear me, give me life”” they seem to say [*LB* 34]). And what is more, even Miss Bruce has a sense that something is lost in not making use of these possessions. At dinner, weeks following the bout of appendicitis that necessitated the narrator enter Miss Bruce’s wardrobe so as to bring her her nightgowns, Miss Bruce herself concedes that “They ought to be worn,” this despite her assertion that she “should never make such a fool of [herself] as to wear them” (*LB* 36).

Much like “Mannequin,” then, “Illusion” concludes in a highly ambiguous manner befitting Rhys’s ambivalence towards the modern urban scene—in both these cases, specifically the commodity-based, highly visual sexual economy of the metropolis. Rhys is both compelled by its dynamics and by the aesthetic power of its products and concerned for its potentially harmful effects. More than simply expose the limiting pressures of these urban discourses, however, Rhys attends to their limits and thus to the

spaces and spatial practices that in their more healthful dynamics run counter to the city's oppressive forces. To this end Rhys's work explores the tensions between the illusory and the real, the latter frequently emerging as salutary.

If we look again at "Mannequin," we can see this dichotomy is clear in Rhys's treatment of the spatial layout of the fashion house, in the contrast between the basement eating area and the upper section of the house. On the one hand, in the salon the illusory is prominent, as the mannequins carry out their roles in both effecting and affecting such illusion. On the other hand, in the more communal space of the cafeteria, the real is at the fore, the ordinary. Here is "Mannequin"'s version of the "solidity and worth" exemplified (for the most part, at least) by Miss Bruce: as Anna makes her way to lunch "She had reached the regions of utility and oilcloth: the decorative salons were far overhead.... Then the smell of food—almost visible, it was so cloud-like and heavy, came to her nostrils, and high-noted, and sibilant, a buzz of conversation made her draw a deep breath." Along the lines of "utility and oilcloth," there is also the "thick and hideous white china plate, a twisted fork, a wooden-handled stained knife, a tumbler so thick it seemed unbreakable" (*LB* 63). The principal function of these details would seem to be to further the contrast between the elegance of the world in which the mannequins are on display and the austerity of their subterranean mess hall. Importantly, though, it is also a space of "rest and refreshment" (*LB* 64), a detail in the light of which Anna's "deep breath" begins to look less like a breath taken out of nervousness, and more like one taken out of relief—the kind she feels the need for later in the day as the fatigue and stress mount ("She had an absurd wish to gasp for air" [*LB* 69]). This is not to say that the markers of such stress are not evident in this particular space, for they are; in the tension

between the models, for instance, and the suggestion of dependency in their need for strong coffee and especially alcohol. Further, the narrative's attention to the other employees at lunch, who notably sit apart from the mannequins—"the sewing girls, pale-faced, black-frocked—the workers, heroically gay, but with the stamp of labour on them: and the sales women (*LB* 65)—indicates clear divisions in this community (there are inklings here of Rhys's investigation of class, which I examine further below). Nonetheless, the space has the potential to allow for healthful community; a healthfulness closely associated with its ordinariness.

Regarding "Mannequin" in this way lets us complicate the kind of urban vision frequently attributed to Rhys. As regards this particular story's setting, the fashion house's general labyrinthine structure does resonate with typical conceptions of the city as a whole, and in this way works as potential metonym for the urban scene—one whose "narrow and crooked" streets Ford calls attention to in his preface, stressing the neighborhood's ability to isolate and overwhelm: "I have realized," Ford writes, "how minutely little one can know even of one street thickly inhabited by human beings," highlighting, further, the lasting "impression of infinitely long walks with the legs feeling as if you dragged each step out of sands" (*LB* 10-11). But the contrast Rhys establishes here between the upper and lower reaches of the workspace frustrates such readings, and on the whole the story's ambiguities suggest a range of urban dynamics not as much evident in her later work. Along with "Illusion," "Mannequin" suggests Rhys's awareness of the connection between a more mundane, everyday mode of urban experience (in contrast to the city's sharp, fleeting moments of intensity) and a more viable mode of urban dwelling.

Rhys continues to investigate these poles of urban experience in “Tea with an Artist,” which explores further the link between habitability and the everyday—in this case, specifically, within the scene of domestic routine. The story marks its interest in the process of a subject’s comfortable engagement with the modern scene through the story’s main subject, Verhausen, who is an object of curiosity for the narrator because of his remarkable equanimity. “It was obvious that this was not an Anglo-Saxon,” the narrator observes, watching him at a Paris café; “he was too gay, too dirty, too unreserved and in his little eyes was such a mellow comprehension of all the sins and the delights of life. He was drinking rapidly one glass of beer after another, smoking a long, curved pipe, and beaming contentedly on the world” (*LB* 73). The narrator becomes intrigued by the knowledge that this Verhausen is—or perhaps more accurately, *was*—a famous artist, who now refuses to exhibit or sell his work. What first strikes her, though, is his happiness (“Who is the happy man in the corner?” [*LB* 73], she asks her lunch date), a characteristic on display further when she ventures to his apartment to see his paintings, having arranged a meeting with the artist. Though Verhausen is initially suspicious of the narrator, “scrutiniz[ing]” her for a moment when she knocks on his door, the warmth detected earlier returns as “he smiled with a sudden irradiation, stood away from the door and bowing deeply, invited [her] to enter” (*LB* 76). His hospitality and kindness are continually evident: he has prepared tea and a snack (“On a table was spread a white cloth and there were blue cups and saucers and a plate of gingerbread cut into slices and thickly buttered” [*LB* 76]); and his is “a delightful personality—comfortable and comforting” (*LB* 77).

More than emphasize Verhausen's contentment and accommodating nature, which enable a healthful communal space, I would like to stress here the degree to which this bearing and its effects are connected to the routine and quotidian elements of his lifestyle. When first introduced, recall, he is drinking "one glass of beer after another," and in his home the narrator notices that he "looked exactly as he had looked in the café, his blue eyes behind the spectacles at once naive and wise, his waistcoat spotted with reminiscences of many meals" (*LB* 77). Verhausen embodies routine, and despite this further note of his seeming untidiness, his apartment is very orderly ("quite clean and even dustless" [*LB* 76]) and thus comfortable: "His long, curved pipes hung in a row on the wall; they made the whole room look Dutchly homely." And Verhausen himself recognizes the importance of things ordered, of routine, telling the narrator: "Now you have drunk your second cup of tea you shall see my pictures. Two cups of tea all English must have before they contemplate works of art" (*LB* 77).

Verhausen functions for Rhys in "Tea with an Artist" as a notable specimen of viable urban subjectivity, this viability a function of the quotidian valences of the artist's dwelling habits. Through Verhausen, moreover, Rhys again evokes a relative contrast between more ordinary and more extraordinary kinds of experiences, not overtly siding with one or the other, but sympathizing with the former to a significant degree. The prize-winning artist ("[he] had started out being a Prix de Rome and he had had a big reputation in Holland and Germany" [*LB* 73-74]) has the potential to access the public sphere of the artistic marketplace, where his paintings stand to make a major impact. But in refusing to involve himself and his work in this particular arena, Verhausen is more closely associated with the private sphere, the realm of the domestic, and its ordinary

pleasures: for instance the tea and gingerbread, and later Verhausen is “pleased and greedy” at his spouse’s purchase of artichokes at a good price (*LB* 81). Indeed his very name evokes some suggestive associations along these lines. Among the meanings of the German verb *hausen* (whose root is *haus* or ‘house’) are ‘to live’ or ‘to dwell’ (“Hausen”). The verb is often used in the context of dwelling in poor living conditions, which suits Verhausen to a degree, though the narrator notes his apartment’s surprising neatness. *Hausen* also means ‘to play or work havoc,’ a connotation also fitting for Verhausen given his stance toward the market for visual art. This is fitting, too, for Rhys, given her ambivalence toward the city and the way in which Verhausen’s accommodating manner frustrates certain notions of what constitutes typical urban experience. A model Certeauian everyday practitioner, Verhausen both resists institutional forms of valuation and exhibits dwelling habits which constitute a successful appropriation of urban space.

Now, while Verhausen’s name, among other things, associates him closely with the realm of the home, it is important to note he engages with *both* the public and the private sphere in effecting for himself an habitable environment. So while “Tea with an Artist” makes use of this dichotomy in staging its exploration of these themes (a dichotomy of which we will see further evidence below as regards Verhausen’s spouse Marthe), the story’s treatment of such spatial dynamics ultimately resists capitulating to a simplistic duality. Consider, for example, Verhausen’s paintings: they are potentially objects of mass public consumption, but they are all kept at home; and yet Verhausen is not unwilling to display them to an audience. In the domestic arena, though, he has a measure of control over his works, which he admits are “precious to [him]” (*LB* 80); here he can attend to them with the care he feels they deserve—something the narrator is

particularly struck by (“what fascinated me at first was his way of touching the canvases—his loving, careful hands” [LB 78]) and which further emphasizes the attentiveness inherent in Verhausen’s engagement with his surroundings.

Like the disjunction between Verhausen’s former popularity and his current approach to his life and art, the disjunction between the art itself and the domestic scene of its display allows Rhys to further explore the tension between opposing modes of experience (extraordinary and aesthetic vs. ordinary and everyday). In their modern-ness Verhausen’s works stand in contrast to the more mundane surroundings of his apartment. They are for the most part impressionist, “rough and brilliant” (LB 78). The narrator notes that “They were successive outbursts of colour: it took me a little time to get used to them” (LB 77). She finds most striking, however, a more realistic portrait of a woman who, it turns out, is Verhausen’s spouse Marthe, with whom he lives and whom the narrator encounters soon after she sees the portrait, when Marthe returns from shopping. In the painting, “A girl seated on a sofa in a room with many mirrors held a glass of green liqueur. Dark-eyed, heavy-faced, with big, sturdy peasant’s limbs, she was entirely destitute of lightness or grace.” The narrator is reminded of Manet, whose portraits of solitary female figures frequently evoke this kind of gracelessness.¹⁰⁴ Despite its realistic elements and the inelegance of the subject, however, like his other pieces this painting has a vitality striking to the narrator: “all the poisonous charm of the life beyond the pale was in [the figure’s] pose, and in her smouldering eyes—all its deadly bitterness and fatigue in her fixed smile” (LB 78).

This aesthetic object stands in sharp contrast, however, to “the original” (LB 79), Marthe, whom the narrator regards as “heavy, placid and uninteresting”—“Without the

flame [Verhausen's] genius had seen in her and had fixed for ever" (*LB* 80). In her apartment, Marthe engages in her practical, quotidian domestic habits. She enters, "carrying a string bag full of greengroceries" (*LB* 79), and here informs Verhausen of her purchase of artichokes. From the narrator's perspective, far from having that "flame," Marthe's eyes "were clear with the shrewd, limited expression of the careful housewife—the look of small horizons and quick, hard judgments" (*LB* 80). That Marthe is additionally reputed to have been a prostitute further throws this everyday behavior into relief, and the narrator is ultimately disappointed; her assessment of Marthe illustrates her relative dismissal of the quotidian, and though she seems impressed by Verhausen's accommodating domestic practice, as the story concludes the narrator remains compelled by his genius. Upon leaving she is surprised at how the portrait of Marthe stays with her, its aesthetic power echoed by the rich and romantic urban surroundings: "the figure of the girl...blended with the coming night, the scent of Paris and the hard blare of the gramophone." She is equally taken aback by the fleeting nature of that beauty, asking herself "Is it possible that all that charm, such as it was, is gone?" (*LB* 81). But while the narrator arguably recoups Marthe into her own preferred vision of Verhausen's former model and current cohabiter—sensing in "the way in which she had touched his cheek [...] the ghost of a time when her business in life had been the consoling of men" (*LB* 81), looking for an element of that romantic "charm" or "flame"—here in "Tea with an Artist," as she does in "Mannequin" and "Illusion," Rhys positions an everyday mode of experience as an alternative to the fleeting and illusory experiences that often attend urban life. So as the music playing in the café across from Verhausen's sings of how "Souvent femme varie" and "Bien fol est qui s'y fie" ('Often women vary, crazy is one

who relies upon her') (*LB* 81), the final image of Verhausen and Marthe, if lacking in charm, is full of dwelling know-how. Surrounding that "ghost" of the grue—the prostitute, women whom elsewhere in the collection Rhys refers to as the "sellers of illusion in Paris" (*LB* 51)—is a "knowledge, and a certain sureness" (*LB* 81) that attend a healthful communal mode of urban dwelling.

"Tea with an Artist"'s presentation of a viable, everyday form of engagement with the urban scene is related, furthermore, to the spatial tension evident when examining Marthe's position in the story as both image and domestic subject—a tension between exterior and interior, public and private. Marthe's location in the painting is ambiguous: she is on a sofa, which may indicate a domestic or private setting; and yet the drink in her hand signals the possibility of social interaction, and the many mirrors suggest a high degree of specularity which echoes the portrait's objectification of her—her submission to the aestheticizing and objectifying gaze women typically encounter in the public sphere. Of course, if as implied she was indeed a prostitute, she has literally become a visual and sexual commodity to be exchanged in an urban market—literally outside, on the street. That this image, moreover, resonates for the narrator with the striking and alluring experience of the exterior urban environment further signals an ostensible equation between the vital or extraordinary and the exterior on the one hand, and the ordinary and the interior on the other. Notable, though, is the fact that Marthe's entry into the house from the marketplace once more reveals Rhys's understanding of the problematic nature of a strict dichotomy of public and private. Like Verhausen, Marthe operates both inside and outside of the home. And although her means of engagement may lack appeal or vitality—largely an aesthetic one—this operation across such

ostensible boundaries speaks to the possibility of extending the salutary effects of the domestic setting outward—as in Mayol’s characterization of the everyday dwelling practice of the privatization of public space; and, notably, in contrast to common understandings of Rhys’s analysis of domesticity as regards, to borrow Coral Ann Howells’s formulation, the “traditional structures of containment” operative within gendered colonial encounters (123).¹⁰⁵ And Rhys presents her narrator in this very position at the story’s end: she is captivated by the allure of the public urban scene (a sentiment present in both “Mannequin” and “Illusion”), and yet she moves from the interior to the exterior, bringing with her an image of a mode of quotidian dwelling whose “sureness” (think Miss Bruce’s “solidity and worth” or “Mannequin”’s “utility”) is a sign of the city’s habitability.

* * *

Rhys’s quotidian mode often signals a more healthful interaction with the urban surroundings that is associated with the natural or the ‘real.’ Think of the recurring contrast evident in *The Left Bank* between the illusory and the real: the world of fashion versus Miss Bruce’s “solidity” or the “utility” of the mess hall in “Mannequin;” the commercial art world versus the scruffy authenticity of Verhausen, whose appearance is the same in both public and private, and who lives in the “real Latin Quarter” (*LB* 75). But there is a further dimension to her examination of everyday life in the city. For Rhys also understands that such modes of viable engagement—the ordinary, the routine, the quotidian—can never be natural insofar as they are predicated upon a degree of financial stability. Elsewhere in her fiction—in “Vienne,” to which I will return, and in her first novel, *Quartet*—comforting habit comes at a particular cost.

Examine once more the central figures of “Vienne,” Frances and Pierre, whose sharp change in fortune and the considerable disruption thereby caused to their living situation unfold alongside—enmeshed with and, really, compounded by—a relatively consistent routine of dining and drinking which for them has become comforting everyday activity, but which ultimately brings with it destabilizing effects that counter the supposed benefits of such practices. Frances/Rhys marks a clear shift in the couple’s situation in the section entitled “The Last Act of Vienna—The Spending Phase,” where Pierre’s sudden increase in income arouses Frances’s suspicion. Shocked at how much Pierre is spending socializing with his regular entourage of delegates from the commission, Frances confronts her husband, but he dismisses her apprehension: “‘Don’t worry,’ said Pierre, ‘soon I will pull it quite off and we will be rich, rich.’” In a subtle but significant shift in the narrative, this is followed directly by Frances’s muted “We dined in a little corner of the restaurant” (*LB* 224), which is the first of a host of such instances where the note of the couple’s lives running rapidly out of their control is set off against the fact of their dining, a moment of potential healthful habit—the aim or result of which juxtaposition being that the calamity is disavowed or overshadowed by the routine activity. As in Vienna, in Budapest (where they move on account of Pierre’s work in association with the Commission) they continue their habitual practice of dining and entertainment: “We took our meals together,” Frances notes in regard to a new acquaintance, Haughton, “and *every night* we made up a party for the Orpheum or one of the dancing places” (*LB* 234; my emphasis).

Soon, however, the comfort provided by such familiar engagements is obscured and precluded by its functioning as part and parcel of the fleeting and illusory stability of

their existence; of Pierre's duplicity. After banking officials call asking for Pierre, Frances once more presses him; but again the issue is pushed aside and the trio (Haughton the third) dine, the impending disaster silenced by Pierre in a manner that speaks volumes: "[Pierre] said: 'My dear, let me alone, I'll pull it off if you let me alone—but I don't want to talk about it....Haughton has asked us to dine at the 'Ritz.'...*Et qu'important les jours pourvu que les nuits soient belles?*'" Rhys presents a further example of the couple's routine instability when the tension finally breaks and Frances finds Pierre sitting "hunched up, staring at the revolver in his hand" (LB 237). The two ultimately prepare a lavish meal after Pierre calms down and they make their plans to flee Budapest: "We had dinner upstairs that night," Frances recalls, "*paprika, canard sauvage*—two bottles of Pommery." A function of Pierre's profligacy and fraudulence, and far from the healthful "doing-cooking" of *A Practice of Everyday Life*, the meal fails to comfort; and the drinking (Frances ends up drinking four glasses) clearly signals the pair's attempt to avoid the reality of their situation. Frances is struck by Pierre's changed spirits ("I've always loved him for these sudden, complete changes of mood"), but the composure she musters here to deal with her husband's despondency does not last, as the confidence she aims to identify with in order to gain security vanishes and in its place is left the overwhelming fear of forces beyond the individual's control: "I put out my hand, and as I touched him my courage, my calm, my insensibility left me and I felt a sort of vague and bewildered fright. Horrible to feel that henceforth and for ever one would live with the huge machine of law, order, respectability against one" (LB 241). In Pierre's comment about the days not mattering if the nights are beautiful, the ostensibly comforting routine engagement becomes a deceptive illusion;

and in Frances's reaching out to Pierre for assurance, the attempt at connection becomes a moment of acute disconnection, leaving Frances feeling completely unmoored, "a feather on the sea of fate and all the rest" (*LB* 242).

Rhys evokes similar such contrasts through her (and Frances's) attention to the couples' domestic space at this point in the story. By the time they arrive in Budapest, Frances is pregnant, and her living quarters become a sanctuary, her attention to detail a sign of her relishing in the particulars of this familiar atmosphere:

There was a hard, elegant, little sofa in our room, covered with striped, yellow silk—sky blue cushions. I spent long afternoons lying on that sofa plunged in a placid dream of maternity.

I felt a calm sense of power lying in that dark, cool room, as though I could inevitably and certainly draw to myself all I had ever wished for in life—as though I were mysteriously irresistible, a magnet, a *Femme Sacrée*. (*LB* 235-36)

By contrast, as the couple prepare to depart post duck-and-champagne feast, the room bears the marks of their inadequate, even detrimental, use of the space: "I remember," observes Frances, "the table covered with cigarette-ends and liqueur-glasses, the two empty bottles of champagne, and the little yellow sofa looking rather astonished and disapproving" (*LB* 242).

Traces of what might otherwise be daily habit (breakfast, lunch, a coffee break) appear in Frances's subsequent account of the couple's flight, but they are mere remnants of a dynamic of routine and stability that has become more and more compromised. An earlier scene foreshadows this eventual loss, and resonates with the note on which, and

even the form in which, the story begins (where Frances remarks how Vienna has “slipped away,” attending to the concrete details that signal her familiarity with and fondness for the city), but also evokes an aesthetic of fragmentation that captures the sense of loss apparent as the story moves toward its conclusion. It comes, not surprisingly, as the couple prepares to leave Vienna for Budapest. Frances has spent her day and evening alone, lonely, and returns home where in bed she finds some relief. But her uncertainty and fear—of her plans for the future, of aging, of leaving a place she loves—taint this space of simple comfort, associating it not with stability, security, or reality (as such instances of comfort are so associated elsewhere in the collection), but with illusion and instability (and note here, too, in the detail of Frances’s bed sheets, the marks of the couple’s volatile financial situation):

Besides, if I went back to London—

I go back to what, to who?

How lonely I am—how lonely I am.

Tears. [...]

I creep in and am comforted. How I adore nice sheets; how good the pillow smells.

I’m awfully happy really—why did I suddenly get the blues? [...]

Good-bye Vienna, the lilac, the lights looking down from Kahlenberg, the old lady with the yellow wig singing of Frauen. [...]

Will I ever be like the old lady? And run to the massage shop because I have to prop up the failing structure? Possibly, probably.

Lovely Vienna. Never see you again.

Nice linen sheets.

Sleep.

Well, we all have our illusions. God knows it would be difficult to look in the glass without them. (*LB* 232)

In the concluding moments of “Vienne”—which feature yet another dining outing—the habitual and familiar once more collide with the destabilizing as Rhys punctuates the story of Frances and Pierre’s decline in a simultaneously climactic and anticlimactic scene. Before the couple eats, Frances lingers in preparation, clinging to her habitual process of getting done up (“I spent an hour dressing for dinner that night. And it was a gay dinner” [*LB* 255]) but in so doing revealing the unsustainability of the couple’s lifestyle and its inevitable collapse. Her desire for the familiar is evident, further, in her request to hear an old waltz (“ask him to play the Saltimbanques Valse.’ ‘That old valse?’ ‘Well, I like it...ask him’” [*LB* 255-56]) and, finally, in her desire to go for a drive in the car they are forced to give up in order to afford their retreat to London, all other options exhausted. But this is clearly a reckless, desperate, suicidally mad embrace of the vitality and excitement—and control—they stand to lose (and nearly do here); a final instance of the paradoxical destabilizing routine that comes to typify their situation in the latter sections of the story:

...Listen, Pierre, have we still got the car?’

‘Till to-morrow.’

‘Well go to the garage and get it. I’d like to drive like hell to-night....Wouldn’t you?’

He shrugged: ‘Why not?’

Once more and for the last time we were flying between two lines of trees, tops dancing madly in the high wind.

‘Faster! Faster! Make the damn thing go!’

We were doing a hundred.

I thought: he understands—began to choose the tree we would smash against and to scream with laughter at the old hag Fate because I was going to give her the slip.

‘Get on!...get on!...’

We slowed up.

We were back at the hotel. (*LB* 256)

The Rhysian dynamic of the moment following the moment is clear again as Rhys, as well as Frances, exploits the power of the modern machinery. The automobile calls forth many of the tensions animating Rhys’s story—the tension, for instance, between control and instability, a fine line Pierre and Frances ride in this instance; and also the tension between the extraordinary and the ordinary, for the car surely allows for a unique experience of space and time and yet as commodity it has the potential to become ordinary, as it has for these two (“Once more and for the last time”).

The further point Frances and Pierre’s situation in “Vienne” allows us to make is that access to such experiences—the extraordinary and even certain versions of the ordinary—is contingent upon one’s financial security. Frances’s personal crisis cannot be separated from the financial crisis playing out in the story; something she recognizes early on, expressing by way of her repetition and banal diction the detachment that in part

marks such experience as commonplace for her (I quote at length again so as to illustrate this attitude):

Nice to have lots of money—nice, nice.

Goody to have a car, a big chauffeur, rings, and as many frocks as I liked.

Good to have money, money. All the flowers I wanted. All the compliments I wanted. Everything, everything.

Oh, great god money—you make possible all that's nice in life. Youth and beauty, the envy of women, and the love of men.

Even the luxury of a soul, a character and thoughts of one's own you give, and only you. To look in the glass and think I've got what I wanted.

(LB 221-22)

Rhys's awareness of the economic conditions affecting and, as Frances has it, effecting her characters as they struggle for security and stability is furthermore made clear in Frances's empathizing with a woman who kills herself—who, in Frances's words, "With her last money [...] had a decent meal and then bang! Out— [...] [W]ho had pluck enough and knowledge of the world enough, to finish when [her] good time was over" (*LB 224-25*). This is most certainly the bleak Rhys, and yet Frances's empathy, while ironic, serves as a counterpoint to the isolation and alienation suggested by the account of the suicide.

* * *

Rhys presents a further situation in which the stability offered by particular types of habitual behavior is accompanied by a maddening set of circumstances in Marya

Zelli's fantastically compromising relationship with Hugh Heidler (as well as his wife Lois) in Rhys's first novel *Quartet*. Here, the difference between Marya's and the Heidlers' financial situations throws into sharp relief the economic factors that bear on these social and spatial engagements and, moreover, the rigid and oppressive attitudes and power structures that mark the Heidlers' class position. Marya, whose "existence [...] lacked, as it were, solidity" is compelled to accept the Heidlers' putative hospitality when her husband Stephan is arrested for theft, having stolen, to sell, expensive and rare goods, and Marya thus finds herself without adequate financial means. Stephan's confidence, his being "Definite" (*Q* 18), those qualities which had initially attracted Marya to him, turn out (like Pierre in "Vienne") to have constituted only illusory certainty. Heidler, similarly, is compelling to Marya for his propensity to inspire confidence and security: around him "[she] began to feel miraculously reassured, happy and secure (*Q* 72); and his size she finds reassuring: "He was a rock of a man with his big shoulders and his quiet voice" (*Q* 43). The key difference between Stephan and Heidler is, of course, their socio-economic statuses; in this respect the certainty Heidler can provide Marya is indeed "definite," though as the novel moves forward, as we will see, this definiteness, or definitiveness—as regards both Heidler and his wife—proves highly problematic.

Rhys clearly marks the contrast between the condition Marya's marital relationship leaves her in and the condition open—though, again, obviously not without extreme difficulty—to her as Heidler's mistress, something her love for Heidler ultimately leads her to become, despite the subtle means by which he manipulates her, including colluding with his wife Lois to have Marya stay with them, essentially arranging the conditions in which he would engage in his affair with her. Indeed, Marya's

attraction to Heidler and what he represents remain even after the tension breaks and Marya snaps, confronting both Heidlers (““You’re torturing me, you’re mocking me, you’re driving me mad””), ultimately hitting Hugh “as hard as she could” (*Q* 103). Signs of Marya’s alternatives are further apparent in the novel soon after this blow-up, as while the Sunday crowds wait for the train to Fresnes to spend a day in the country, as the Heidlers are wont to do with their country house in Brunoy (site of Marya’s explosion), Marya heads this way south of Paris to visit her husband in prison, where “She had begun to have a dreadful feeling of familiarity with the place. [...] The drably terrible life of the under-dog” (*Q* 108). As she returns to the city, Marya cannot but think of Heidler, for he speaks to a different, better life; on the train he merges with the regular pulse of the passing countryside, as Rhys again evokes the consistency and stability he stands to offer Marya as her potential (financial) savior:

As she walked away she knew why the prison had seemed closer and more terrible than ever before. It was because the thought of Heidler had always stood between her and the horror of it. He was big and calm and comforting. He said: ‘Don’t worry. I love you, d’you see?’ And one hadn’t worried. At least, not so much.

She sat in the corner of the tram watching the sycamore trees speed past.

Heidler, Heidler, Heidler.

Supposing she asked him, next time she saw him: ‘Heidler, save me. I’m afraid. Save me. (*Q* 109-10)

Marya's initial moments spent with the Heidlrs shape her obsession for the man and his capacity to allow her the "solidity" she lacks, for here the three develop a distinct routine within their urban milieu, "every morning" having coffee at nine o'clock, dining for lunch regularly at Lefranc's, and hosting weekly parties where dancing with Heidler Marya "felt a definite sensation of warmth and pleasure" (Q 63)—this latter detail echoing Marya's "long, calm afternoons staring through the windows at the tops of the leafless trees and listening to [Lois's] stories about Montparnasse" (Q 59). But although healthful in many respects, the trio's quotidian arrangement bears its problematic nature quite immediately, as the members' respective roles mark a distinctly classed power dynamic. Note, for instance, that in sitting as model for Lois's painting Marya becomes more object than subject of the Heidlrs' privileged discourse of daily life; and, in a more striking example, in regularly serving Heidler in taking coffee—"for he was very majestic and paternal in a dressing-gown, and it seemed *natural* that she should wait on him" (Q 59; emphasis mine)—Marya engages in this routine domestic practice not only in a capacity that subjugates her, but in a way in which the power imbalance is naturalized, which for Marya may allow her a sense of security, but which for Rhys functions ironically as part of her project in *Quartet* of exposing, in addition to the benefits of habitual, comfort-giving domestic practices, the potential for such quotidian modes to conceal and thus perpetuate violence.

Indeed in these early moments a kind of violence can be read in the power dynamic obvious in Marya's relationship with the Heidlrs, and further in Lois's rigidly judgmental attitude: "she liked explaining, classifying, fitting the inhabitants [...] into their proper places in the scheme of things. [...] [She] was so perfectly sure of all she said

that it would have been a waste of time to contradict her” (*Q* 60). Later, in the wake of Marya’s confrontation with the married couple—which comes in response to her overhearing them talk about her, where once more she becomes the object of their discourse—the ordinary works to suppress the conflict, which now appears “very unreal and impossible.” Thus the following morning “Peace, the normal, reigned downstairs. Madame Guillot was in the kitchen, bustling about and singing” (*Q* 105). And yet, importantly, Rhys’s ambivalence at this point toward this “normal” comes through clearly. On the one hand, the novel asks that we sympathize with the apparently salutary everyday domestic practice/labour of Madame Guillot (whom we learn once herself part of a violent threesome, “[her] husband [having] killed her lover—or the other way around”), as the narrative presents her “singing away among her pots and pans, [...] her fat back seem[ing] to say ‘Life has got to be lived, mademoiselle or madame. One might as well be cheerful about it’” (*Q* 105). On the other hand, this “normal” works as part of the dynamic through which Marya becomes Heidler’s mistress, and essentially his whore (Heidler here begins paying for Marya’s room at a hotel, where their affair is consummated and he visits regularly), while at the same time the Heidlers—the established, financially secure socialite-artists—succeed for the most part in keeping up appearances.

In the hotel we see once more Marya’s positive response to routine in the curious image of her “listening for the man with the flock of goats who passed under her window every morning at about half-past ten, playing a little frail tune on a pipe.” She is “enchanted” by the song, as well as by the “wonderful goats” which “crossed the street calmly, avoiding trams with dignity and skill. One behind the other and no jostling, like

the perfect ladies that they were” (Q 111). The strange image of this cheese-seller and his goats calls to mind a successful, because orderly, navigation of urban space, one associated for Marya with happiness. Like the ostensible stability offered to her by Heidler, however, this happiness is fleeting, or out of reach; Marya hears the music “dwindling away in the distance, persistent as the *hope* of happiness” (Q 112; emphasis mine). Marya has become one of the “*petites femmes*” she imagines frequent such a liminal living space, led to take up such a compromised position despite her aim to achieve ostensible “solidity.” The novel’s description of the hotel room does much to capture the frustrating dynamic that the space calls forth, one both of connection (which Marya finds here with Heidler) and detachment (which Marya undoubtedly feels as merely his *petite femme* shut up in this hotel):

An atmosphere of departed and ephemeral loves hung about the bedroom like stale scent, for the hotel was one of unlimited hospitality, though quietly, discreetly and not more so than most of its neighbours. [...] It was impossible, when one looked at that bed, not to think of the succession of *petites femmes* who had extended themselves upon it, clad in carefully thought out pink or mauve chemises, full of tact and savoir faire and savoir vivre and all the rest of it. (Q 111)

What frustrates and affects Marya the most, however—more than being yet another woman in this succession, or feeling the effects of the liminality of the urban network—is Heidler’s stability turned oppression, a principle feature of which is a rigid mindset similar to his wife’s:

he was forcing her to be nothing but the little woman who lived in the Hotel du Bosphore for the express purpose of being made love to. [...] It was, of course, part of his mania for classification. But he did it with such conviction that she, miserable weakling that she was, found herself trying to live up to his idea of her. (*Q* 118)

Within this “classification” is, of course, the class dynamics that shape their relationship throughout the novel, by which he maintains his privileged position over her.

Furthermore, along these lines, Heidler’s size, initially an index of the stability, security, and solidity he allows her, becomes both a figurative and literal weight upon her: “Her body ached. He was so heavy. He crushed her. He bore down on her” (*Q* 119).

The stable everyday urban experience Marya encounters through her relationship with Heidler (with the Heidlers both) thus proves too solid, as it were, and in this way Rhys—despite the idiosyncrasies of *Quartet*’s particularly tortured interpersonal drama—comments on the limitations of such a class-based mode of living. In light of the traumatic conclusions to her relationships—with both Heidler, who breaks up with her and pays for her to take a trip to Cannes, essentially such that she is out of the way, and Stephan, who in response to the knowledge of her affair also leaves her, after a violent fight in which he throws her and she knocks her head—Marya’s “lack of solidity” (in many respects the driving force behind her actions throughout the novel) appears all the more viable a mode of engagement. The novel reveals early on that “she was used to a lack of solidity and of fixed backgrounds” (*Q* 15). In the context of her early history this characteristic comes across as something she is forced to endure or overcome. Given, however, her love of wandering in the city—“walking along the shadowed side of one of

those narrow streets full of shabby *parfumeries*, second-hand book-stalls, cheap hat-shops, bars frequented by gaily-painted ladies and loud voiced men, midwives' premises..." (Q 7-8)—such a “lack of solidity” comes to constitute (if only briefly) a beneficial interaction with her environment, whose range of spaces stands to offer a number of hospitable locales; not so much destabilizing “lack” of place as mobile enactment or appropriation of space. Consider her experience at “a most attractive restaurant,” clearly an establishment friendly to gay men (the patron “talked with a lisp. The room was full of men in caps who bawled intimacies at each other”) and by implication to Marya, as here she is less likely to be regarded as sexual object, an experience which marks her life at nearly every turn, beginning with her career as a dancer. She recalls of the restaurant that “a gramophone played without ceasing” and that “a beautiful white dog under the counter, which everybody called Zaza and threw bones to, barked madly” (Q 8)—details Rhys provides in a manner (as we have seen already) intended to mark a multi-sensory relishing of the environment encountered. The fact that “Stephan object[s] with violence to these wanderings in sordid streets” is an early indication in the novel of Marya’s restricted access to such healthful routine engagements with the spaces of the city, and thus she pursues far more problematic avenues.

In regard to Rhys’s work as whole, such a detail stands, metonymically, as a mark of the gendered power imbalance operative within the urban scene. But while we are left in *Quartet* with Marya’s relative failure to find stable comfort and security in the city, still, as we see to a greater degree in *The Left Bank and Other Stories*, Rhys’s investigation of habitual urban practice leaves room for such salutary social and spatial

interaction, and so, as is the case with respect to the work of Eliot, Dos Passos, Joyce, and Woolf, we must take it into account in our assessment of her multivalent urban vision.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In her introduction to the 2007 *PMLA* Special Topic issue on cities, Patricia Yaeger speculates as to the possibility of a process of literary urban restoration, asking “How can we shelter or care for, how can we nurture, the ruined city in the belly of the text?” (9). The need to take up the question is clear, for on the contemporary global scene, as Yaeger puts it, we find ourselves “in the midst of unsurpassed urban crises.” Cities decaying in the wake of deindustrialization and depopulation; ravaged by sectarian violence and war; devastated by climate change; crumbling under the pressures of overpopulation: here are “the new avatars of the city in ruins” (11). If these are “failed” spaces, however, they are also “creative” ones (13). Yaeger thus highlights the potential for communal vitality in the face of metropolitan hostility and draws attention to the resilient use of the city’s compromised infrastructural networks; she underscores the urban scene’s fundamental and enduring capacity to offer shelter and emphasizes the promise therein for transformative counterpublics. Yaeger aims for a metropoetics guided by the “space-mapping advantage” inherent to literature’s multiple codes, layers, narratives, perspectives, atmospheres, tonalities, rhythms, and figures of speech (22). The city’s “acts of cultural and literary making” come to the fore (25).

In reimagining a modernist metropoetics of habitability in response to the “Unreal City,” I have taken up a similarly-aimed “space-mapping” project, tracing the salutary practices of everyday urban life in a number of texts attuned to the urban spatial ambiguities that belie such a uniform, extreme vision. My question, then, in contrast to

Yaeger's, is not quite how to care for the ruined city, but more so whether the city is in fact ruined. Indeed, the obvious point to make here is that the living conditions of the bourgeois cities of Anglo-American modernism are in general far better than those of the "extrabourgeois" cities of the developing world. As Yaeger remarks, considering the need to take up and move beyond Raymond Williams's work in *The Country and the City*, "by the time Williams writes [his study], in 1973, urban crises in Western cities seem minor compared with," as Williams himself puts it, "'the deeper crises of Calcutta or Manila or a hundred other cities across Asia and Africa and Latin America'" (12, Williams qtd. in Yaeger). Of course in looking for an early twentieth-century habitable urbanity, it won't do to rely on such geographical and historical comparisons, but the contrasts are telling.

Consider one of the urban wastelands Yaeger addresses, Ayi Kwei Armah's 1968 *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, in which the Ghanaian protagonist's use of the shit and piss-soiled latrine works toward a "symbolism of waste" central to the author's vision of urban crisis. In Yaeger's perceptive reading, "Economic crisis and fecal matter come together in a constellation of misery and derision in which Armah dramatizes the difficulty and absurdity of living in a cityscape brimming with people the economy cannot support" (14). Faced with "the scat of the encroaching multitudes" (Yaeger 13) we might think of Eliot's "undone so many" (*CP* 55). But this kind of waste is not really even in *The Waste Land*; indeed, the material conditions of Eliot's cities are hardly this deplorable. In terms of *bodily* waste in the context of the city texts I look at, really only Joyce is worth discussing. And, notably, the human waste he presents—in *Ulysses*, for instance, when Bloom uses the outhouse, or when Molly begins to menstruate in the final

episode—hardly points to the oppressive multitudes, but rather illustrates (as it also does for Armah) a negotiation of the familiar spaces where these routine excremental processes unfold (Bloom and Armah’s protagonist are both cautious to keep their trousers clean; Molly, too, is eager not to soil the recently changed sheets and worries not to make much noise getting out of bed so as to avoid disturbing her husband).

Joyce’s “cloacal obsession,” as Maud Ellmann has pointed out, is tied to his interest in networks, a fascination that “extends from the underworld of pipes to the overworld of tramlines, tracks, and cables, in which the modern city-dweller is enmeshed” (57). In terms of this question of urban infrastructure, we can establish a further point of contrast between my project’s habitable cities and the urban centres Yaeger explores. Pointing to José Samarago’s *Blindness*, for example, Yaeger stresses the debilitating effects of an impaired infrastructure, which in Samarago’s novel transforms a developed Western city into essentially a Third World slum. By contrast, in Joyce— notwithstanding the concern for Dublin paralysis, or Bloom’s master plans to improve facets of the city’s infrastructure—we find a notable affirmation of infrastructural efficiency in, for instance, “Ithaca”’s query as to the water coming from Bloom’s tap:

Did it flow?

Yes. From Roundwood reservoir in county Wicklow of a cubic capacity of 2400 million gallons, percolating through a subterranean aqueduct of filter mains of single and double pipeage constructed at an initial plant cost of 5 pounds per linear yard by way of the Dargle, Rathdown, Glen of the Downs and Callowhill [...etc] (*U* 623-24)

Infrastructure features similarly in Dos Passos and Woolf. So, while the presence of emergency vehicles in their fiction—the many firetrucks of *Manhattan Transfer* or the ambulance responding to Septimus Smith’s suicide in *Mrs Dalloway*—is in many respects an index to the crises of urban space, in other respects it speaks to these cities’ capacity to respond to such calamity. Here then, for example, we might read Peter Walsh’s comments about “the triumphs of civilization” and “the efficiency, the organization, the communal spirit of London” with a degree less irony. We shouldn’t lose sight of Woolf’s critique of Peter’s idealism, which works with the novel’s scrutinizing of British colonialism and, especially in this scene, Septimus’s breakdown in the face not only of traumatic wartime experience but of the authoritative medical discourse that would embody the very notion of civilization. But we should also see the truth in Peter’s observations: “That was civilization. [...] Every cart or carriage of its own accord drew aside to let the ambulance pass. Perhaps it was morbid; or was it not touching rather, the respect which they showed this ambulance with its victim inside” (*MD* 128). This respect exemplifies a collective urban practice that permits the effective functioning of metropolitan infrastructure. What is more, given that this “respect” (at least as Peter imagines it, in his rather detached, contemplative state of mind) is accompanied by the many urbanites’ more self-invested sense that it might well have been them or someone close to them involved in an accident, it stands to reason that such a practical, habitual relationship to infrastructure proceeds with a certain lack of awareness of the structures being enabled—a lack of awareness that in fact signals the city’s infrastructural facility. As Yaeger contends, “when infrastructure disappears, drifting toward invisibility in many

city texts, we should remember to read this absence as a taking for granted of infrastructural privilege” (17).

Modernism’s habitable cities come into view through just this fact of relative infrastructural invisibility. With this in mind, if in modernism the city supposedly disappears, leaving only a man walking through it—as per Raymond Williams’s influential and problematic formulation of modernist urban subjectivity—it may *seem* to do so in part because of the lack of spatial awareness that, paradoxically, accompanies a functional use of space. Like the lack of self-consciousness that attends the everyday “know-how” discussed by Rita Felski—something we glimpse in Bloom’s doing-cooking, for instance, or in Stephen’s less brooding treatment of Mulligan’s toiletries—what we have here is an absence telling of a healthful, habitual engagement with importantly *operative* surroundings. In my discussions of the use of space by urban practitioners in Eliot, Dos Passos, Joyce, Woolf, and Rhys, my aim has been to underscore the high degree to which these practices shape city spaces to make them viable, dwellable. Implicit in this approach, however, is an understanding of a basic level of urban infrastructural functionality that permits such a salutary practice of everyday life in the city. So, for example, in *Manhattan Transfer*, *Ulysses*, “Character in Fiction,” and *Quartet*, the trains, to put it simply, work; in *The Waste Land*, London Bridge is, well, not *out*. While the standard move in explorations of the modern city is to stress the ways in which urban infrastructure works to oppress—for instance, streets which funnel both the overwhelming masses and a dangerous vehicular traffic, set out grid-like, rationalizing, dehumanizing—it is just as worthwhile to think about how these metropolitan spatial

forms, frequently muted in the literary text, serve as the functional apparatus with which urban dwellers work to make a home of the city.

Searching for traces of habitability within the cities of modernism has thus involved reimagining the relationship between urbanites and urban spaces. It has involved, as well, a reconsideration of the relationship between the modernist text and the modern scene with which it is engaged. More precisely—working with the assumption that in analyzing a specific context, the literary work may come to embody elements of that context—my discussions are concerned with features not typically associated with the scene, and so therefore neither with the texts. The trouble articulating a modernist habitable urbanity is that features seemingly integral to the aesthetic contours of these works are features readily identifiable with a modern setting (for my purposes the city) understood primarily as one beset by crisis. Alternatively, or even at the same time, the literary work is thought to function as a counteracting or redeeming force with respect to the depredations of this cultural milieu, in which case the putative total crisis is taken for granted, while the grounds upon which the art is evaluated (its redemptive as opposed to its mimetic capabilities) position the social, political, and cultural context at a remove and so make it difficult to (re)assess. To offer yet a further paradigm troubling to any attempt to offer a nuanced conception of modernism compatible with a set of viable dwelling practices, the literary work as aesthetic object that privileges *aesthetic* experience tends simply to fail to constitute an adequately varied engagement with the multiplicity of the urban scene. To aestheticize urban experience is not in itself a problem; nor is looking for such a response in a critical or analytic mode. But insofar as attending to certain aesthetic elements of text and context unfairly limits notions or perceptions of urban space and life,

there is a need on behalf of literary and cultural critics to recalibrate our sense of how a range of aesthetic manoeuvres (both those typical of modernism and those underappreciated in this regard) is potentially in tune with the city's complete range of registers and practices, especially those less sexy features like the ordinary and the everyday.

This difficulty engaging with the city on some of its principal grounds as a site of dwelling, of habitation, is, of course, related to a further, different set of figurative landmarks much more familiar to the critical geography of urban modernity. According to this particular map the modern city is site of drastic change; of dramatic spectacle; of extreme social and psychological pressure but also revolutionary possibility; it is a place to be idealized or vehemently rejected. As Carl E. Schorske has influentially sketched out, the modern Western city, from the Enlightenment through the Industrial Revolution and into the first half of twentieth century, is most easily characterized in extreme terms: the Enlightenment city of virtue, the industrial city of vice, and the city of existential and moral crisis that moves "beyond good and evil" (96). As a massive theatre for human drama the city amazes and confuses; as a space for an encounter with the Other it offers mystery and the promise of the extraordinary. This is the source of Baudelaire's "haunting ideal" of modern verse, the "huge cities" and "their innumerable interrelations" distilled into art (*Paris Spleen* ix); and of Eliot's "Unreal City," the urban realm as phantasmagoria minimally formulated to speak volumes. Think again about William Chapman Sharpe's *New York Nocturne*, whose riveting urban nightworlds embody one such captivating urban extreme: the city at night, a markedly visual spectacle Sharpe attends to with his focus on painting and photography (in addition to literature). That

Sharpe's study, winner of the 2009 Modernist Studies Association annual book prize, resonates with scholars is a sign that this well-established urban paradigm continues to enthrall.

From my perspective, however, it is a sign of the clear need for an alternative approach. Through this lens artistic distillation amounts to reduction, and minimalist magnification to a speaking on limited registers. Here, the city's network of interrelations is not an unfathomable and hence reductive totality, but rather the record of urban users' articulations of this space-to-be-made-livable—the viable, *practiced* ground from which the landmark speculations on the city are made and which they then efface or distort. As Jonathan Raban puts it in *Soft City* (1974), where he envisions how the city might “invite [...] you to remake it, to consolidate it into a shape you can live in,” “The sheer imaginative cumbersomeness of the city makes us frequently incapable of distinguishing its parts from its whole” (1, 24). So we miss much that is important, most often because it seems unremarkable. Examine Andreas Huyssen's essay in the *PMLA* issue on cities, “Modernist Miniatures: Literary Snapshots of Urban Spaces,” which offers a further discussion of a literature of modern urban crisis restricted in this sense. Regarding in particular the early twentieth-century German context, Huyssen argues for a modernist miniature whose formal features of fragmentation and compression of sensory detail are attuned to an urban spatio-temporal context marked by a radical shift in perspective in which traditional narrative forms no longer apply. The miniature captures the city's excessive stimuli, condensing the multiplicity of urban data to evoke “the feeling of terror emanating from space,” “its threatening, even horrifying dimension as experienced by the subject lost in urban space” (32, 33). It is notable that Huyssen recognizes that such a

response is not uniform; although so is the fact that he chooses *not* to focus on the alternatives which would complicate the established modernist vision of the city. I find it telling, for instance, that Huyssen figures the concept of *Durchdringung*—the overlapping and interpenetration of urban spaces—as central to urban spatial terror, rather than recognizing the degree of mobility, and thus habitability, such interconnection allows for. Further, while Huyssen develops a notion of the “snapshot” that allows for a more complex temporality and spatiality resistant to the putative “easy legibility” of the static image, on the whole he explores a set of textual transfigurations of social city spaces that is uninterested in the healthful *processes* of urban experience also traceable within modernism—the work, for example, of the acclimatized and adaptive urban dweller who routinely navigates familiar city spaces and responds with equanimity to those less familiar.

My own nurturing of the only ostensibly ruined modernist city finds evidence of these processes in the rich modernist textual ambiguities borne of an ambivalent response to the metropolis, a response that contemplates the striking extremes but also the banal middle grounds of quotidian urban reality—where even the “Unreal City” bears the marks of habitability; where the decentered cityscape is the locus not of meaninglessness but of a practiced multiplicity of meaning-as-dwelling; where the urbanite-as-neighbor makes a home both at home and in the city streets; where the arresting urban moment gives way to a striking yet routine assemblage that constitutes the habitual practice of everyday life; and where the illusory, elusive, and hostile metropolitan environment disappears and in its stead there materializes a city of mobile stability and security.

This is a different modernist city and so in important ways a different modernism, the details of whose aesthetic are significant in their comparative insignificance to other more momentous details. In the place of a metropoetics that would disregard these apparently insignificant elements, then, I would highlight an urban aesthetic that accounts for the variations in urban experience (which often includes a *lack* of variation). As Roland Barthes notes in his essay on “The Reality Effect,” an exhaustive literary analysis has to account for “the entire surface of the narrative fabric” (141). Of particular interest to Barthes are what he refers to as the “useless details” at times frustrating to the interpretive endeavor, the descriptive notations seemingly antithetical to narrative and hence to meaning in their superfluity and incompatibility with complex structure. Such details are indeed meaningful, Barthes argues, not mainly because they may be beautiful in and of themselves, serving a more traditional aesthetic function, nor because they work referentially to denote specific referents in the real world. Rather, they are meaningful insofar as they *connote* the real as a category, according to what Barthes terms “the *referential illusion*.” These details announce, Barthes claims, “*we are the real*,” without actually ever constituting it: “the very absence of the signified [...] becomes the very signifier of realism: the *reality effect* is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity” (148). Barthes makes a very fine distinction here between, on the one hand, literature as a series of effective signs that works to represent real things in the world, and, on the other hand, literature as a series of *differently* effective signs that works to *connote* or *suggest* or *evoke* the real. Those less taken by poststructuralist linguistic and literary analysis might

not be convinced here: ‘Of course the literary work can’t serve as an *exact* replica of the things it describes,’ so the thinking goes. ‘That is why it’s called *representation*.’

To a degree I am inclined toward this kind of suspicion. As we have seen with respect to traditional understandings of the modernist engagement with the city, and modernism more generally, to regard the text primarily as text—as self-referential formal or symbolic system, or as autonomous literary and aesthetic artifact whose chief concern is its own function—leaves the world, and the city, unfairly out of view, or as something to denigrate and thus transcend. Emphasizing modernist mimesis or verisimilitude allows us to reconnect the modernist text with its modern context. I do think, however, that Barthes’s distinction can be helpful in approaching the works of urban modernism, particularly if we want to allow for an array of registers—the literary and the experiential both. For Barthes’s “reality effect,” in considering the general concept of the real as a broad range of arguably insignificant details, ultimately gives us traces of the more ordinary realities that form a part of everyday life in the city—realities, Barthes suggests, that are fundamental to a modernity characterized by the kind of variety that includes the neutrality essential to dwelling. As regards modernism, this means we get things both ways. We can understand the literary text as a linguistic construct prone to the instabilities of language and hence a self-awareness; or as a traditional aesthetic object prone to defamiliarize or induce a particular effect in a reader responsive to aesthetic experience. But we can also see that such a discourse leaves room for the “referential plenitude” (Barthes, “The Reality Effect” 148) characteristic of the varied literary response to the modern city and the diversity of practices that make it habitable.

Notes

¹ Simmel may helpfully be understood as part of a tradition of German sociologists, the key figures of which—Max Weber and Oswald Spengler—offer analyses of the modern city which stress its limiting pressures and ultimate inviability. Weber considered the modern metropolis as far less sophisticated than, for example, the cities of the Italian Renaissance or those of the medieval Low Countries, whose cosmopolitanism and diversity of social, political and economic forms allowed for ideal community conditions. Spengler, in his tellingly titled *The Decline of the West* (1918), situates the modern city at the low point of his theorized life-cycle of cities and civilization, and argues that it lacks balance between the forces of civilization and those of the natural world and, as a result, is on the brink of disaster. See Sennett 3-13.

² See Harding's excellent introductory discussion in *Writing the City: Urban Visions and Literary Modernism*, 1-30.

³ See William Sharpe and Leonard Wallock, "From 'Great Town' to 'Nonplace Urban Realm': Reading the Modern City" for another helpful overview of the dominant critical and artistic paradigms for understanding modern urbanity. Here the usual noises are made as regards the city in modernism: "each aspect of city life seems to generate or demonstrate a characteristic of this artistic movement—multiplicity of meaning, loss of sequential or causal connection, breakdown of signification, and dissolution of community" (5). Sharpe and Wallock's discussion of the city in art and literature also, importantly, underscores the degree to which the modern city came to be understood in extreme terms:

as it symbolized human faith and aspirations, the contemporary metropolis took on aspects of the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem; as it embodied the failure of these hopes, it partook of the depravity of Babylon or Sodom; its smoke, industry, and avarice suggested the Infernal City of Dante; and its confusion, noise and lack of direction or community likened it to Babel, the original urban chaos. (6)

⁴ For proponents of this view, see also Edward Timms's introduction to *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*. In line with Simmel, Timms asserts that the "culture shock of metropolitan civilization required an unprecedented degree of mental and social readjustment." "How," asks Timms, "were sensibilities shaped by the ox-cart, oil-lamp and school slate to adjust to an environment of aeroplanes, electric lights and telephones?" For Timms, "There is no stable centre to be found either in the city or in the civilisation which it epitomizes," and as a result "the city ceases to be pictured as a social environment and is transposed on to an existential plane. The metropolis ultimately becomes a metaphor—a dynamic configuration of the conflicting hopes and fears of the twentieth century" (4). See also Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*; and G. M. Hyde, "The Poetry of the City." Lehan emphasizes the distressing anonymity generated by the crowd, which in modernism presents as a "move [...] to a private, autistic state of mind, shutting out the urban, commercial, and industrial world that had become hostile. Under such pressure the city as a physical place gave way to the city as a state of mind" (76). Hyde, likewise, underscores the city's seeming unreality: "Cities get less real as they get closer: or as one gets closer to them" (337); and stresses the "dominance of view point over material"

(338). In “The Cities of Modernism,” Malcolm Bradbury also highlights what he sees as modernism’s propensity “to substitute for the ‘real’ city [...] the ‘unreal’ city, the theatre of license and fantasy, strange selfhoods in strange juxtapositions” (99).

For yet another example of the hellish, nightmarish, antisocial, “unreal” modern city-vision, consider Monroe K. Spears’s comments in *Dionysus and the City*:

Modernism in Twentieth-Century Poetry:

The City is both massive fact and universally recognizable symbol of modernity, and it both constitutes and symbolizes the modern predicament: the mass man, anonymous and rootless, cut off from his past and from the nexus of human relations in which he formerly existed, anxious and insecure, enslaved by the mass media but left by the disappearance of God with a dreadful freedom of spiritual choice, is the typical citizen of Megalopolis, where he enjoys lethal and paralyzing traffic, physical decay and political corruption, racial and economic tension, crime, rioting, and police brutality. This is the lurid picture we are accustomed to; and even for those who have never heard of Dante or Baudelaire, it is the most natural of metaphors to speak of this scene of cruelty, ugliness, inhumanity, and despair as Hell. It is no wonder that, for the great modern writers, the line between literal and symbolic City is similarly tenuous. (74)

Of course in the wake of two devastating World Wars, such an assessment, even if problematic, is not invalid. More compelling, however, is something like George Steiner’s assessment of the crises of modern Western civilization in *In Bluebeard’s*

Castle, given its broad and yet specific focus on the “ultimate inhumanity” of these traumatic global conflicts, the Holocaust chief among them. Steiner, in attempting to locate “the internal relations between the structures of the inhuman and the surrounding, contemporary matrix of high civilization” hypothesizes, with notable equanimity, that “there may be in the genocidal reflexes of the twentieth century, in the compulsive scale of massacre, a lashing out of the choked psyche, an attempt to ‘get air,’ to break the live prison-walls of an intolerably thronged [urban] condition” (29, 52-53). Notably, Steiner does not settle on a reading of urban space to account for the horrors of war. See, in particular, chapter 2 of *In Bluebeard’s Castle*, “A Season in Hell,” 27-56.

⁵ This paradox by which the city is both overwhelming and yet lost from view is similar to the paradox that characterized the study of modernism as a whole in the wake of its most concentrated period of production in the early decades of the twentieth century to its institutionalization in the academy in the post-WWII years and even through the 1960s and 70s. Astradur Eysteinnsson outlines this problematic in *The Concept of Modernism* (1990): “we need to ask ourselves how the concept of autonomy, so crucial to many theories of modernism, can possibly coexist with the equally prominent view of modernism as a historically explosive paradigm” (16). In thus exposing the tensions and contradictions within a host of prominent modernist paradigms, Eysteinnsson offers a crucial reassessment of the often frustrating but still “salient” concept of modernism (5), a reappraisal foundational to the revitalized interest in the field of modernism over the last twenty years, particularly as regards its dialectical relationship with modernity as a richly contextualized social, political, economic, and cultural field.

⁶ “A return to the scene of the modern,” to borrow the subtitle from Michael North’s important 1999 study *Reading 1922*, is in many ways a fitting motto for the now-dominant approach to the study of modernism. This new modernist studies reconsiders the relationship between modernity—the social, political, and economic conditions of a world in flux—and modernism, or *modernisms*—the varied and complex cultural responses to these novel material and ideological circumstances. North, for his part, looks back to the *annus mirabilis* of modernism, the year in which both Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Joyce’s *Ulysses* were published. The significance of his approach is in considering the broader networks of cultural production of which these and a wide range of other cultural texts (whether philosophy, anthropology, film, a range of popular cultural forms) were a part.

⁷ See Richard Sheppard, “The Problematics of European Modernism” for a discussion of this limited reflective understanding of modernism. Sheppard offers a breathtaking overview of the many configurations of the concept and the wide range of responses that emerge from the dialectic of modernism and modernity.

⁸ Such totalizing is, of course, Jameson’s goal in *The Political Unconscious*. In reacting against apolitical reading strategies—both historical (at least ostensibly so) and postmodernist—Jameson contends that

only Marxism offers a philosophically coherent and ideologically compelling resolution to the dilemma of historicism [...] Only Marxism can give us an adequate account of the essential *mystery* of the cultural past [...] This mystery can be reenacted only if the human adventure is one [...] These [diverse and wide ranging] matters can recover their

original urgency for us only if they are retold within the unity of a single great collective story. (19)

⁹ In addition to Frisby, *Cities of Modernity* 1-51, see, for example, Peter I. Barta, *Bely, Joyce, and Döblin: Peripatetics in the City Novel*, 1-18; James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*; and Steve Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life*.

¹⁰ David Frisby and others employ this term in reference to Benjamin's investigation of nineteenth-century Western, primarily Parisian, culture. See, for instance, Frisby, "Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project: A Prehistory of Modernity;" and also Donald, *Imagining the City*.

¹¹ In addition to Benjamin's discussions in "The *Flâneur*" and "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," see "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" for his further related insights into the relationship between *flânerie* and the emerging Parisian commercial-capitalist scene. See Katherine Arens, "Stadt wollen: Benjamin's *Arcades Project* and the Problem of Method" for a nuanced reading that diverges from traditional interpretations of Benjamin's vision of the city. For studies that consider the *flâneur*, see Keith Tester, ed., *The Flâneur*.

¹² Sharpe's previous work on the city is, notably, in line with traditional urban visions that emphasize its unreality. In *Unreal Cities: Urban Figuration in Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Whitman, Eliot, and Williams*, his specific focus is the passing stranger. See Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel* (2005) for another more recent study which rehearses a number of the common analytic moves

in treating the city in modernism, where striking, dynamic new environment generates striking, dynamic new literary forms.

¹³ See Sharpe's tellingly-titled introduction, "The Dream Site," 1-36. Steve Pile's *Real Cities* is also revealing in this regard. For while I agree with his claim that "What is real [...] about cities is as much emotional as physical, as much visible as invisible, as much slow moving as ever speeding up," his focus on the urban phantasmagoria of "Dreams, magic, vampires and ghosts" prevents him from articulating a convincing argument about *real* cities that differs significantly from the typical critical assessments (3).

¹⁴ The concept of a plural modernity, or "modernities" (11), is important also in Peter Brooker's *Modernity and Metropolis: Writing, Film, and Urban Formations*, which seeks to deconstruct, as Felski does, the binary of modernism and postmodernism in order to consider the various and contradictory urban formations of the twentieth-century. See also, for instance, Andreas Huyssen, "Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World."

¹⁵ For recent discussions of modernism and the everyday for which defamiliarization is important, see, for instance, Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (2007); and Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (2009). Randall's consideration of dailiness in the work of Henri Bergson, William James, Dorothy Richardson, Gertrude Stein, H.D., and Virginia Woolf attends to "the shifting and multiple temporalities of the human subject" in order to stage a critique of everyday life, one that constitutes a "critique of everyday language" and a "questioning of society's standards" (26). Olson takes what is at least on the surface a very different tack in her

readings of Joyce, Stein, Woolf, and Wallace Stevens, aiming in her study to treat the “ordinary *as* ordinary” (5). And yet Olson’s insistence on these authors’ self-conscious questioning of language’s ability to adequately represent the field of the ordinary ironically reinscribes the modernist imperative to critique and/or defamiliarize the ordinary and thus ordinary language, an imperative that her work ostensibly seeks to resist.

¹⁶ As Ben Highmore argues, while de Certeau’s focus on everyday practices “foregrounds a range of practical forms of ‘resistance’ within everyday life,” his “poetics problematize cultural theory as a theoretical architecture based on a division between power and resistance” (*Everyday Life* 31). As Highmore puts it elsewhere, de Certeau’s “resistance” works as “a conservative force that is more easily associated with a slow tenacious refusal to adapt to the rhythms of modern capitalist culture than with the more flamboyant antagonisms performed by subcultures.” As regards critics’ and theorists’ (mis)appropriation of de Certeau’s resistant everyday practices, Highmore suggests that “While cultural studies has impatiently pronounced ‘political’ verdicts on the cultures of the daily, the work of attending to the everyday has yet to be done” (*Everyday Life Reader* 13).

¹⁷ For other studies examining the spatiality of modernism, see, for instance, Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity: Space, Geography and Modernism*; Andrew Thacker and Peter Brooker, eds., *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*; and Wesley A. Kort, *Place and Space in Modern Fiction*. Influential in this regard, along with the work of Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* and Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, has been the work of a range of

materialist cultural critics and geographers, for instance David Harvey, Edward W. Soja, Derek Gregory, Doreen Massey, as well as Frederic Jameson—all of whom regard space as a localized, contingent category that has demanded reconsideration within the context of social, political, economic, cultural, and literary theory. See Thacker 1-45 for an overview of how these thinkers' work applies to an exploration of modernism.

¹⁸ See, in addition, Shiach, "Modernism, the City, and the 'Domestic Interior.'" Shiach's reading of the modern city is predicated on the argument that "the overwhelming critical and historical focus on the figure of the *flâneur* in readings of literary modernism has led to the marginalization of key aspects of the experience of living and writing in the modern city: the marginalization, in fact, of the domestic interior" (255). Shiach builds upon the important work of Christopher Reed. See, for example, Reed's edited collection *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, as well as his more recent study *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity*.

¹⁹ For Simmel this is "the difficulty of asserting his own personality within the dimensions of metropolitan life:"

Where the quantitative increase in importance and the expense of energy reach their limits, one seizes upon qualitative differentiation in order somehow to attract the attention of the social circle by playing upon its sensitivity for differences. Finally, man is tempted to adopt the most tendentious peculiarities, that is, the specifically metropolitan extravagances of mannerism, caprice, and preciousness. (57)

²⁰ See Benjamin, "Naples." Of the city, he observes that

Building and action interpenetrate in the courtyards, arcades, and stairways. In everything they preserve the scope to become a theater of the new, unforeseen constellations. The stamp of the definite is avoided. No situation appears intended forever, no figure asserts its ‘thus and not otherwise.’ This is how architecture, the most binding part of the communal rhythm, comes into being here: civilized, private, and ordered only in the great hotel and warehouse buildings on the quays; anarchical, embroiled, villagelike in the center, into which large networks of streets were hacked only forty years ago. And only in these streets is the house, in the Nordic sense, the cell of the city’s architecture. (165-6)

²¹ Kevin Lynch’s discussion of urban “legibility,” which he understands as primarily a “visual quality” of the city (2), may be subject to similar critique, for while he recognizes the urbanite’s manifold modes of engagement with the city, the emphasis on a clear, “distinctive” (5) visual urban landscape (what he also calls “*imageability*: that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer” [9]) sacrifices that multiplicity to a degree in offering a putatively objective but often frustratingly vague and arbitrary-seeming set of criteria by which to define an ideal urban setting.

For related reasons, something like Gaston Bachelard’s remarkable *The Poetics of Space* (1958)—even though it considers viable, salutary processes of *dwelling*—is less useful for me. For Bachelard’s articulation of a poetics of habitation privileges language and the imagination, and, notably, the poignant, “isolated poetic image” (xxvii), and thus amounts to a “topophilia” (xxxv) that in its devotion to an aestheticized relationship to

space seems to me quite out of touch, at times even comically so, with a range of modes of dwelling. Where, for instance, are the other *people* in Bachelard's sketch of the house as protective space? Indeed, his portrait of his younger self in his childhood home is very much the portrait of the reclusive artist alone in his garret:

the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits. After twenty years, in spite of all the other anonymous stairways, we would recapture the reflexes of the 'first stairway,' we would not stumble on that rather high step. [...] We would push the door that creaks with the same gesture, we would find our way in the dark to the distant attic. (14-15)

In a formulation highly redolent of both modernist interiority and aesthetic autonomy, the unreal is predominant here:

The house we were born in is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams. Each one of its nooks and corners was a resting-place for daydreaming. [...] The house, the bedroom, the garret in which we were alone, furnished the framework for an interminable dream, one that poetry alone, through the creation of a poetic work, could succeed in achieving completely. (15)

²² Not that Donald merely revisits the traditionally pessimistic or elated responses to the city, but his choice of figures and texts does constitute the canonical western urban imaginary: Dickens, Baudelaire, Engels, Benjamin, Le Corbusier. See Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, especially 1-61.

²³ Again, in “Naples” Benjamin suggests a certain healthfulness in the porous spatiality of the city, though in his characteristic observational style he does not name it as such or elaborate. In the details that supply the unique texture of this porosity, moreover, is an element of the everyday (tools for domestic work, food, furniture), which is clearly associated with the community’s vitality:

[In Naples] dispersed, porous, and commingled is private life. What distinguishes Naples from other large cities is something it has in common with the African kraal; each private attitude or act is permeated by streams of communal life. To exist, for the Northern European the most private affairs, is here, as in the kraal, a collective matter.

So the house is far less the refuge into which people retreat than the inexhaustible reservoir from which they flood out. Life bursts not only from doors, not only into front yards, where people on chairs do their work (for they have the faculty of making their bodies tables).

Housekeeping utensils hang from balconies like potted plants. From the windows of the top floors come baskets on ropes for mail, fruit, and cabbage.

Just as the living room reappears on the street, with chairs, hearth, and altar, so, only much more loudly, the street migrates into the living room.

(171)

²⁴ Hannah Wirth-Nesher makes a similar point in her discussion of the city in twentieth-century fiction, noting that what distinguishes the modern urban novel is “the predominance of [...] indeterminate public and private spaces, and a construction of self

that is far more dependent on the ‘street’ than it is on domestic resources” (20). In keeping with her “close look at varied representations of the city in modern fiction with the emphasis on *differences* among discourses of the metropolis” (3), Wirth-Nesher argues that such spatial indeterminacy elicits a variety of responses. From my perspective this is a valuable approach, for it rejects the pessimism with which such an urban dynamic is frequently met and, if not quite explicitly, constitutes a search for habitable cities. And yet Wirth-Nesher characterizes the urban realm as a space marked chiefly by gaps, where “Every glimpsed interior, every passerby, every figure in a distant window, every row of doors, every map itself is both an invitation and a rebuff,” and as a result “every urbanite is to some extent an outsider.” Consequently, even as she means to highlight the “multiple acts of imagination” by which the city dweller “learns to contend with [...] areas to which he or she no longer has access, [...] inventing worlds to replace those that are inaccessible” (9), Wirth-Nesher risks losing the *real* cities she means to discover—“the belief that diverse visions of the metropolis make up that real city” belied by the simultaneous conviction “that the most enchanting panorama is the imaginary one in the city’s gaps” (26).

²⁵ I borrow the term “polytopic” from Andrew Thacker. See Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity* 13-45 for an overview of his consideration of the polytopic spaces of modernism.

²⁶ For another discussion of “Eliot’s ‘infernal’ vision,” see Northrop Frye, “Unreal City.” For a more general assessment of the Eliotic “Unreal” modernist city, see Malcolm Bradbury, “The Cities of Modernism,” and Edward Timms and David Kelley, eds. *Unreal City*. Discussions of Baudelaire in Eliot can be found in Nicole Ward,

“‘Fourmillante Cité’: Baudelaire and *The Waste Land*,” Nancy Hargrove, *Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot* 27-35; and Lachlan Mackinnon, *Eliot, Auden, Lowell: Aspects of the Baudelairean Inheritance* 7-48. For a consideration of Eliot’s relationship with Dante, see Dominic Manganiello, *T. S. Eliot and Dante*; and Steve Ellis, *Dante and English Poetry: Shelley to T. S. Eliot* 210-43. It is probably also worth noting at this point that one of Eliot’s epigraphs for an early draft of *The Waste Land* was, of course, Kurtz’s famous line from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899): “‘The Horror! The Horror!’” (69).

²⁷ See Seldes, “T. S. Eliot;” Wilson, “The Poetry of Drouth;” Wylie, “Mr Eliot’s Slug-Horn;” and Aiken, “An Anatomy of Melancholy.” These, along with a further wealth of contextualizing material, can be found in Michael North’s Norton Critical Edition of *The Waste Land*.

²⁸ See Kenner, *The Invisible Poet*; Bedient, *He Do The Police In Different Voices: ‘The Waste Land’ and its Protagonist*; and Mayer, *T. S. Eliot’s Silent Voices*. There are, of course, many more studies of “voice” in Eliot and *The Waste Land*, among them Denis Donoghue’s literary critical memoir *Words Alone: The Poet T. S. Eliot*; and James E. Miller, Jr., *T. S. Eliot’s Personal Waste Land: Exorcism of the Demons*. The long-standing interest in Eliot’s sources and use of allusion is obviously part and parcel of this approach. See Grover Smith, *T. S. Eliot’s Poetry and Plays*, which remains an excellent discussion of Eliot’s significant literary and historical intertexts, as well as A. Walton Litz, “The Allusive Poet: Eliot and his Sources” 137-152.

²⁹ See Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts* to get a sense of the poem’s genesis and Pound’s editorial advice.

³⁰ For an excellent overview of this paradigm shift—and Eliot’s central role within it—see Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* 1-18. See also Laity, “Introduction.”

³¹ Chinitz’s study does betray the longstanding interest in Eliotic intertextuality, but in taking up Eliot’s significant use of underappreciated popular cultural forms Chinitz performs the crucial task of locating Eliot within the context in and about which he wrote, and from which he has frequently been divorced.

³² For a discussion of Eliot and Bergson, see, for example, Donald Childs, “T. S. Eliot’s Rhapsody of Matter and Memory;” Stephen Medcalf, “Points of View, Objects and Half Objects: T. S. Eliot’s Poetry at Merton College, 1914-15;” and Mary Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* 78-106.

³³ Chinitz’s approach to Eliot also stresses ambivalence, highlighting Eliot’s own deep ambivalence towards modernity, and calling readers of Eliot to become comfortable responding to him with their own ambivalence. See Chinitz *passim*, and 9-10 for a focused discussion of the term.

³⁴ Other critics have also highlighted the sentiments of this particular letter, as a means of illustrating both Eliot’s troubled response to the city and his sexual frustration. See Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism* 143; and Jewel Spears Brooker, “Mimetic Desire and the Return to Origins in *The Waste Land*” 137.

³⁵ There is, of course, also room to read class tension and anxiety in Prufrock’s vexed response to the “lonely men in shirt-sleeves” as it relates to his response to the women who “come and go.”

³⁶ See Lamos, “The Love Song of T. S. Eliot:” Elegiac Homoeroticism in the Early Poetry;” and *Deviant Modernism: Sexual and Textual Errancy in T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Marcel Proust* 55-114.

³⁷ See, for instance, Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, especially 142-52, 182-96.

³⁸ Although Wordsworth’s sonnet “Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802” speaks to the awe-inspiring capability of the great metropolis, it is worth noting, of course, that in Wordsworth there are passages that despair of the city’s frightening and mysterious social tumult. See Williams 149-152 for a discussion of Wordsworth’s Baudelairean engagement with the phantasmagoric London crowd.

³⁹ See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* 9-12.

⁴⁰ See Lawrence Rainey, *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot’s Contemporary Prose* 74 for some excellent images of a number of these urban scenes, including the Hofgarten’s Arcade and café, as well as an aerial shot of the garden. The café most clearly embodies the confluence of ostensibly antithetical spaces, as one would sit for lunch in what looks, with its rows of trees, like a forest, albeit one precisely constructed.

⁴¹ See Lyndall Gordon, *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* 163-165, and Rainey, *Revisiting The Waste Land* 53-55 for accounts of Eliot’s experiences as a clerk in London.

⁴² Eliot’s notes to *The Waste Land*—lines 60, 63, and 64—point readers to Dante’s *Inferno* and Baudelaire’s “Les sept vieillards,” from *Les Fleurs du Mal*. The translation I use of the line from Baudelaire in Eliot’s notes (“Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant” [CP 71]) comes from North, *The Waste Land* 43.

⁴³ The “mythical method” (178) outlined in “*Ulysses, Order, and Myth*” has, of course, played a large part in shaping this critical approach to the poem; as have, of course, the many elements Eliot employs from a range of religious, spiritual, and mythical discourses, including Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Grail legends.

⁴⁴ For a succinct account of significant biographical details relevant to *The Waste Land*, including “A Game of Chess,” see Richard Ellmann, “The First *Waste Land*.”

⁴⁵ For a detailed account of Eliot’s and Vivienne’s courtship and marriage, see Gordon, *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* 97-98, 113-130.

⁴⁶ See Cassandra Laity and Nancy Gish, eds., *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T. S. Eliot*, for a host of discussions that reconsider Eliot’s fraught relationship to gender and sexuality. The collection proceeds from the position that because Eliotic misogyny had long been taken for granted as a central function of Eliot’s position as elitist, masculinist, reactionary modernist, his complicated grappling with “various public and private worlds of women, eroticism, and the feminine” has only begun to be fully understood (3). See Laity, “Introduction: Eliot, Gender, and Modernity.”

⁴⁷ The song Ophelia sings leading up to this farewell includes these sexually charged lines:

By Gis and by Saint Charity,
Alack, and fie, for shame!
Young men will do ‘t, if they come to ‘t.
By Cock, they are to blame.
Quoth she, “Before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed.”

He answers,

“So would I ha’ done, by yonder sun,

An thou hadst not come to my bed.” (*Hamlet* 4.5.56-64)

⁴⁸ See Rainey, *Revisiting The Waste Land* 52-61 for a thorough and stimulating account of these urban details in a range of fictional texts contemporaneous with Eliot’s life and work.

⁴⁹ Dos Passos discusses his debt to documentary film, as well as the Italian Futurists, in “Contemporary Chronicles” (239-40). For an extended consideration of Dos Passos’s employment of filmic form, see Gretchen Foster, “John Dos Passos’ Use of Film Technique in *Manhattan Transfer* and *The 42nd Parallel*.”

⁵⁰ Raymond Williams’s discussion in *The Country and the City* of a curiously age-old “formula” of nostalgia for a natural country life—what he characterizes as an escalator that keeps moving him farther and farther back in time as each successive generation of English writers laments a “vanishing rural order” (9)—is succinct proof of the enduring but also stereotypical dialectic of urban pessimism and rural nostalgia. See Williams, *The Country and the City* 9-12.

⁵¹ Studies of Dos Passos’s concern for the urban environment are numerous; and most betray the typical pessimism that yields such hyperbolic descriptions, in which the city is, for instance (to offer yet another example), “a screaming turmoil of machines and people—a clouded vortex in which the characters are arrested for poignant moments and then disappear again into the whirling background” (Walcutt 84). See also E. D. Lowry, “*Manhattan Transfer*: Dos Passos’ Wasteland;” David Vanderwerken, “*Manhattan Transfer*: Dos Passos’ Babel Story;” Todd Gibson, “*Manhattan Transfer* and the

International Style: The Architectural Basis of Dos Passos's Modernism;" A. C. Goodson, "Manhattan Transfer and the Metropolitan Subject;" Bart Keunen, "The Plurality of Chronotopes in the Modernist City Novel: The Case of *MT*;" and Cecilia Tichi, *Shifting Gears: Technology, Literature, Culture in Modernist America* 195-216. Peter Brooker also discusses Dos Passos in *New York Fictions*, especially 51-59.

⁵² Reassessments of Dos Passos have sought to more fully integrate his work into the evolving body of modernism, with respect to which he has long occupied an equivocal position, given both his political commitments and his concern for all things American. See, for instance, Janet Galligani Casey's examination of the role of the feminine in Dos Passos, *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*, which works on the assumption that the author's engagement with American culture is complex and inclusive, and not limited to a single sphere. Casey's introduction (1-17) offers an excellent overview of Dos Passos's curious position with regard to the academy and critical conceptions of modernism. Desmond Harding's *Writing the City: Urban Visions and Literary Modernism* likewise highlights Dos Passos's connection to what he terms a "transatlantic literary modernism" (95), an ambiguous and contradictory cultural discourse that Harding distinguishes from the monolithic formations of Anglo-American modernism. Harding's discussion, while thorough, is limited as regards modernism in that it only focuses on Dos Passos and Joyce. See in particular, chapter 5: "*Ulysses* and *Manhattan Transfer*: A poetics of Transatlantic Literary Modernism," 95-132.

⁵³ In "Against American Literature" (1916), Dos Passos extends his critique of modern science and industrialism to a more focused examination of the state of American

literature, which he argues, echoing the anxieties of his literary forebears, is struggling to discover an original literature:

We find ourselves floundering without rudder or compass, in the sea of modern life, vaguely lit by the phosphorescent gleam of our traditional optimism. [...] No ghosts hover about our fields; there are no nymphs in our fountains; there is no tradition of countless generations tilling and tending to give us reverence for those rocks and rills and templed hills so glibly mentioned in the national anthem. (37)

See also “What Makes a Novelist” and “The Writer as Technician” for Dos Passos’s take on his role and function as a writer.

⁵⁴ Pound’s hope, voiced in “A Retrospect” (1918), is that modern poetry will move against poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, it will be what Mr. Hewlett calls ‘nearer the bone’. It will be as much like granite as it can be [...] We will have fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it. At least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither. (12)

In 1913’s “The Serious Artist” Pound declares that “[t]he arts, literature, poesy, are a science just as chemistry is a science. Their subject is man, mankind and the individual” (42). Dos Passos’s own efforts to “make it new,” as expressed in his essays and self-assessments, may very well stem from Pound’s work in the 1910s, as Dos Passos was familiar with both Pound’s work on *Blast* (1914-15) and the *Des Imagistes* anthology, which he commended in *Monthly* magazine in May 1916 (Ludington, *Dos Passos* 57, 75). Like many of his contemporaries Dos Passos found inspiration in the writing of

forebears such as Walt Whitman, Gustave Flaubert, and Arthur Rimbaud—artists now considered the forerunners of literary modernism. Dos Passos was also heavily influenced by Joyce, in part for the latter’s stream of consciousness technique, but primarily for his direct—what Dos Passos termed “straight” (“Introduction” 147)—realism, which for Dos Passos put the lie to the popular sentimentality inherited from the nineteenth century and captured both the monotony and wonder of everyday life. For Dos Passos’s discussions of his influences, see “What Makes a Novelist,” “An Interview with John Dos Passos,” and “Portrait of a Man Reading.”

⁵⁵ That Dos Passos regarded the innovative techniques employed in *Manhattan Transfer* as gendered masculine can be gleaned from his letter to Robert Hillyer, written after the author met with the novel’s publishers to discuss certain controversial items of the novel’s diction. “Did you know that Kerist? was not blasphemous, but that Christ! was?” Dos Passos asks Hillyer, concluding, “Still my next novel, after the battle with the gelding-shears was found to be not quite castrated, perhaps half a testicle remained on the left side” (Ludington, *Fourteenth* 361). While Dos Passos here seems to lament a demasculinizing of his novel as it is prepared to meet certain moral standards, his graphic, explicit humour betrays the ironic distance at which he holds a wholly masculinist stance. So while in his early essays he aligns himself with certain misogynist strains of modernism, as Janet G. Casey argues, “[i]t is virtually impossible, given Dos Passos’ expressed attitudes towards women in both his private letters and his novels, that he shared such misogynistic tendencies” (21). For broader discussions of the problematic tendency of male modernists to define their work against a feminized popular and/or conventional culture, see, for instance, Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide:*

Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism; Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*; and Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern*, 173-204.

⁵⁶ Dos Passos figures himself in this manner—as historian, chronicler, reporter, documentarian, etc.—again and again in essays, lectures, and interviews. See for instance “Statement of Belief,” “The Business of a Novelist,” “Contemporary Chronicles,” and “John Dos Passos.”

⁵⁷ Cecilia Tichi points out that the novel’s titular train station was, further, the point at which trains coming into New York transferred to electric power (198).

⁵⁸ Casey does qualify Ellen’s powerlessness by highlighting her self-awareness and use of masquerade: “[Ellen’s] utilization of herself as image constitutes a threat, since it indicates, despite her failure to break out of the sociocultural power dynamic, her mastery of its paradigms for her own purposes” (123). Casey affirms, however, that

any power Ellen appears to wield is illusory in that it depends entirely on the disruption, rather than the expropriation, of the cultural system already in place. Her masquerade is threatening only in terms of her manipulation of her own representation in men’s gazes; it says nothing about her ability to wield the gaze herself, to take on power by looking boldly back. (123)

⁵⁹ For a discussion of Dos Passos and advertising, see Geyh, “From Cities of Things to Cities of Signs: Urban Spaces and Urban Subjects in *Sister Carrie* and *Manhattan Transfer*.” Dos Passos’s relationship to visual artistic practices is addressed in George Knox, “Dos Passos and Painting,” and Michael Spindler, “John Dos Passos and the Visual Arts.”

⁶⁰ Casey borrows the term from Laura Mulvey in “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ Inspired by *Duel in the Sun*.”

⁶¹ These lines come from Stanza 8 of “Adonais:”

Within the twilight chamber spreads apace,
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place (65-68)

⁶² See Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses* 121-23.

⁶³ For the Gilbert and Linati schemata see *Ulysses* 734-39.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, Clive Hart, “Wandering Rocks” 194; Richard Brown, “Time, Space and the City in ‘Wandering Rocks’” 57, 66; Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* 350; and Mervin Lane, “A Synecdochic Reading of ‘Wandering Rocks’ in *Ulysses*” 125. Harry Levin also considers “Wandering Rocks” as a “scale model of *Ulysses*” (130).

⁶⁵ See Hart, “Wandering Rocks” 186 and *passim*; and Trevor Williams, “‘Conmeeism’ and the Universe of Discourse in ‘Wandering Rocks’” 269.

⁶⁶ In the Gilbert and Linati schemata the chapter’s art is listed as “Mechanics” (*Ulysses* 735, 738).

⁶⁷ See, also, Bonnie Kime Scott, “Divisions from Mastery in ‘Wandering Rocks,’” for a further critique of “controlled readings” of the chapter (136).

⁶⁸ See Appendix B in Hart, “Wandering Rocks” 215-216, with fold out chart. Hart’s description of his wandering around Dublin with a stopwatch, over and over again, in the guise of each of the characters encountered in the episode, is a delight to read.

⁶⁹ See Richard Brown, “Time, Space and the City in ‘Wandering Rocks.’”

⁷⁰ Joyce also commented memorably to Power on the difference between romanticism and realism:

In realism you are down to facts on which the world is based: that sudden reality which smashes romanticism into a pulp. What makes most people's lives unhappy is some disappointed romanticism, some unrealizable or misconceived ideal. In fact you may say that idealism is the ruin of man, and if we lived down to fact, as primitive man had to do, we would be better off. That is what we were made for. Nature is quite unromantic. It is we who put romance into her, which is a false attitude, an egotism, absurd like all egotisms. (Power 98)

⁷¹ As regards *Ulysses* specifically, see in Deming, *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage Volume One 1902-1927*, for instance, Edmund Wilson, Review of *Ulysses*; and Wyndham Lewis, "An Analysis of the Mind of James Joyce." For the canonical assessment of modernist subjectivity and autonomy see, for example, Bradbury, "The Cities of Modernism;" Hyde, "The Poetry of the City;" and Lehan, *The City in Literature* 71-82. Michael Levenson's *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality* is a notable example of a more nuanced approach to the problematic of modernist interiority.

⁷² Mayol's quotation is from Jacqueline Palmade et al., *Contribution à une psychosociologie de l'espace urbain: La dialectique du logement et de son environnemenent* (Paris: Ministère de l'Équipement, 1970) 64 (PEL2 264).

⁷³ See Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* 151-162, for an excellent discussion of the imbricated religious and political power dynamics operating in "Telemachus."

⁷⁴ Don Gifford points to an anonymous Irish song, “Ned Grogan,” as the source for Mulligan’s Mother Grogan; as for Mrs. Cahill, Gifford’s suspicion is that she is Mulligan’s invention (20).

⁷⁵ It would be a mistake to read Joyce’s use of “gravely” here as a mark of Stephen’s “moody brooding.” Clearly his remark re: Mary Ann is a sign he is playing along. Consider that Joyce employs ‘gravely’ and ‘grave’ elsewhere in the chapter only in conjunction with Mulligan’s typical mocking irony: when he “bless[es] gravely thrice the tower [etc]” (*U* 3); when he “gravely ungirdle[s] and disrobe[s] himself,” stating, again with ironic regard to Christian narrative (in this case Christ’s being disrobed during the passion [Matthew 27:28 and John 19:23-24]), “Mulligan is stripped of his garments” (*U* 16); and when he “pass[es] out with grave words and gait,” riffing/punning again on the biblical “And going forth, he wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:75) with “And going forth he met Butterly” (*U* 17). Joyce thus subtly signals here Stephen adoption of Mulligan’s chief mode of discourse. See Gifford 22.

⁷⁶ See, for instance, Lehan, *The City in Literature* 104-22. Lehan argues that “the twentieth century revealed for Joyce the grotesqueries of commercialism” and that Joyce sees the city as a debased, “commercial nightmare” (109, 115).

⁷⁷ See Raymond Williams’s discussion of this scene. In contrast to my reading informed by Mayol’s discussion of neighborhoodly obligation, Williams identifies the “loss of the city” in this difference and distance between Bloom’s internal world and what Williams considers as the ineffectual social realm of the novel (*The Country* 243-44).

⁷⁸ See Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* 169-184.

⁷⁹ See Marilyn Reizbaum, *James Joyce's Judaic Other* for a thorough discussion of Joyce's interest in Zionism.

⁸⁰ In "The World's Strongest Man: Joyce or Sandow?" R. Brandon Kershner discusses how Sandow's exercises function within commodity culture, as a means of advertising a specific mass-produced image, one Bloom ostensibly aims to embody. In the context of this moment of "desolation," however, they are significant for Bloom less for what they purport to deliver as an end result than what they allow Bloom to do, on a day-to-day level—a *routine* that is an end in itself.

⁸¹ See, for instance, Peter I. Barta's *Bely, Joyce, and Döblin* and Doris Bremm's "Stream of Consciousness Narration in James Joyce's *Ulysses*."

⁸² Benjamin emphasizes this association in his discussion of the connection between Alexandre Dumas's *Mohicans de Paris* and the work of James Fenimore Cooper. See "The Flâneur" 41-42.

⁸³ Benjamin further characterizes "the intoxication of empathy felt by the *flâneur* (and by Baudelaire as well)" by referring to a letter of Flaubert's, in which Flaubert imagines for himself a transhistorical identity, as, for instance, "a boatman on the Nile [...] then Greek rhetorician in Suburra" etc. (*Arcades* 449).

⁸⁴ Bloom's internal monologue is ambiguous. Following "Knowing we'd never" he thinks "well hardly ever," which I read here not as an indication that Bloom *did* see this whore, but as only a snatch of a tune from Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore: or, The Lass that Loved a Sailor*. See Johnson 881.

⁸⁵ Stephen Watt's "Brief Exposures: Commodification, Exchange Value, and the Figure of Woman in 'Eumaeus'" offers an excellent reading of the chapter's homosocial

and homoerotic dynamics, using Eve Sedgwick's landmark formulation of homosocial triangulation.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Ellen Carol Jones, "Commodious Recirculation: Commodity and Dream in Joyce's *Ulysses*" and Garry Leonard, *Advertising and Commodity Culture in Joyce*.

⁸⁷ For an excellent overview of Woolf's complicated relationship to the evolving discipline of modernist studies, see Jane Goldman's essay in Anna Snaith, ed., *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies*. In more recent years Woolf's position in twentieth-century literary history has begun to be reconsidered. Michael Whitworth underscores the importance, for instance, of recognizing Woolf's tremendous debt to the Victorians, a point potentially obscured by an uncaredful reading of Woolf's critique of Edwardian materialism alongside her sketch of the Victorian cook. See Whitworth 150-53. Steve Ellis considers this topic at length in his book-length study *Virginia Woolf and the Victorians*.

⁸⁸ As regards Woolf's metropolitan themes, Rachel Bowlby, and following her, Laura Marcus, both consider Woolf's depiction of urban space in terms of Baudelaire's *flâneur*, though importantly they consider the ways in which *flâneurie* is complicated by gender, specifically as regards the difficulty women—conceived of as passive *passantes*, the objects of desire for the active male urban subject—have faced in taking up such positions within the city. See Marcus, *Virginia Woolf* 64, 77; and Bowlby, "Walking, Women and Writing." See, also, Makiko Minow-Pinkney, "Virginia Woolf and the Age of Motor Cars" for a consideration of Woolf's modernism for which the *flâneur* and the Benjaminian shock experience are central. Here, unsurprisingly, "the standardized,

denatured life of the civilized [urban] masses” (168) is conceived as divorced from a more genuine experience of the world, one Minow-Pinkney identifies with the striking, fragmentary, and liberatory experience of motoring and “the law of the machine” (176).

⁸⁹ I must recognize Benjamin D. Hagan for his helpful description of Woolf’s narrative as consisting of “oscillatory movements;” thus my “narrative oscillation.” Note, though, that Hagan identifies only two forms of narrative movement in the opening moments of the novel: first, movement between narratorial exteriority and Clarissa’s interiority; second, movement between Clarissa’s present observations and her recollections of the past. The third oscillation, that “between one character (whether major or minor) and another” (541), Hagan argues we see only after the “pistol shot” (*MD* 12) of the backfiring automobile. Although this is generally the case, the deviation to Scrope Purvis’s perspective illustrates that Hagan is not entirely accurate.

⁹⁰ In his helpful comparison of Woolf’s approach to narrative in *Mrs Dalloway* to that of Michael Cunningham in *The Hours*, Seymour Chatman makes note of Woolf’s references (in both her notebooks and her diary) to the chorus technique. See Chatman, “*Mrs Dalloway*’s Progeny: *The Hours* as Second-Degree Narrative” 276. The question of Woolf’s interest in the interior world of psychology is, of course, central to any consideration of her fiction, and the degree to which this interest constitutes a neglect of the exterior social, political, and/or cultural world is an issue long debated among critics of her work. Indeed, as critics of Woolf’s interest in urban space have pointed out, by no means does Woolf’s rejection of the materialist mode in favour of a focus on the “dark regions of psychology” constitute a complete dismissal of the external environments with which her characters engage. Susan Dick, for one, recognizes the many facets of Woolf’s

fiction's reality, arguing of *Mrs Dalloway* that its verisimilitude—as regards, for instance, the particular mundane details of the urban environment, or characters' physical appearance—“adds solidity to the characters,” offering a “source of stability” or “solid base upon which speculations about other dimensions of reality may rest” (52, 56, 57). For an excellent overview of this critical debate, see Anna Snaith's introduction to the *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies*, specifically 3-9; and also Melba Cuddy-Keane's chapter, “Narratological Approaches,” in the same volume, specifically 18-20.

⁹¹ Scott's examination of the sky-writing scene functions as a part of her discussion of Woolf's critique, in the novel, of Western imperialist and patriarchal language, where, according to Scott, Woolf's aestheticism works directly toward such a critique. Scott emphasizes, for instance, that the sky-writing becomes an object for aesthetic appreciation only as it dissipates and ceases to work as language in the traditional, conventional sense (*Refiguring* 12). See Jane Marcus, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* for a similar assessment of Woolf's feminist dismantling of phallogocentric discourse.

⁹² Many critics have emphasized *Mrs Dalloway*'s tendency to evoke the totality and collectivity of the urban scene. Seymour Chatman argues that the novel's “technique emphasizes the democracy of the city street, [...] a place where everyone, even the youngest or most modest denizen, enjoys the dignity of a name and even a partial view of the scene” (278). For both Kate Flint and Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Mrs Dalloway*'s communal London emerges by way of Woolf's attention to the way the city soundscape links and thus unites a community of listeners. In Flint's estimation, “Woolf's welcoming of noise of various kinds is repeatedly bound up with the desire to acknowledge human

connections” (188). For Cuddy-Keane, similarly, an aural event such as the aeroplane over London or Big Ben’s chime becomes part of Woolf’s “new, modern, urban community delineated, not through visual connection or physical proximity, but through shared aural experience” (“Modernist Soundscapes” 387).

At the same time, a range of critics have commented on how in sketching such a collective Woolf subverts a totalizing vision. For Jennie-Rebecca Falcetta, Woolf takes her cue here from cubism, offering a fragmented vision of “plural realities” (113) which comes closer to capturing the essence of any event than “a fixed homogenous view” (114). Jane Marcus reads the “mysterious” sky-writing as an index to a host of “oppressed voices of race and class, of difference and colonial subjectivity” (11). And Christine Froula configures this “multiplicitous reality” as a contest between “an outworn monotheism” and “an immanent modernist cosmos” (110), where the “Loss of monovocal authority becomes gain as the weird enchanting harmonies of irreducible differences surround and displace the totalizing “spirit” in their midst” (111).

⁹³ In his note in *The Explicator* 58.2 Young discusses the scene and offers a brief but informative discussion of sky-writing and Glaxo dried milk.

⁹⁴ Morgan maintains that “Woolf saw the home as the locus of all great aesthetic, social, and political change” (92). Littleton argues that because Clarissa “is an outsider to the male-dominated realm of official art [...] the art she does create, which she is compelled to create by her Self, cannot but be revolutionary in form” (45). Suzette Henke contends that “Clarissa’s party is analogous to the Catholic offering of the Mass, a ritual culminating in sacramental communion” (141). For other responses along these lines see Ann Ronchetti, *The Artist, Society & Sexuality in Virginia Woolf’s Novels* 49-59; Suzan

Harrison, "Playing with Fire: Women's Sexuality and Artistry in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Eudora Welty's *The Golden Apples*" 299-300; and Lisa Williams, *The Artist as Outsider in the Novels of Toni Morrison and Virginia Woolf*. Natania

Rosenfeld's suspicion of the party-as-art analogy is refreshing if slightly dismissive (she finds it "coy and wishful"), but she is perceptive in highlighting other key factors besides Clarissa that are important to the gathering's operation, such as guests, servants, and mere circumstance (159).

⁹⁵ Christopher Ames makes a similar point as regards Woolf's critique of the British ruling class in his discussion of *Mrs Dalloway*, arguing that the more important component in Woolf's claim that she wanted in the novel "to criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense" (*Diary 2* 248) is not the element of critique, but rather the productive work done by this system; "and work it does," Ames argues, "in a positive, liberating sense" (93). Ames only goes so far, however, in identifying just what constitutes this work, and how through it the party generates a "magical communion," oddly dismissing "the realm of conversation" despite emphasizing the importance of "social ritual" (92).

⁹⁶ Though potentially limiting, autobiographical readings of this type are not uncalled for. Though Rhys was leery herself of having her works read through her life, she saw her writing as a way of grappling with personal adversity. Rhys relays how writing affected her, recalling moments of unhappiness during her childhood in Dominica: "It was so intolerable this longing this sadness from the shapes of the mountains, the sound of the rain the moment just after sunset that one day I spoke to my mother of it and she at once gave me large dose of castor oil. One day I discovered I

could work off the worst of it by writing poems and was happier” (qtd. in Carr 81; sic). In *Smile Please*, Rhys’s unfinished autobiography, the sentiment appears in Rhys’s exclamation, “Oh, the relief of words!” (165).

⁹⁷ For discussions of Rhys’s treatment of the city along these more pessimistic lines, see also Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis* 132-148; and Sheri Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 437-41.

⁹⁸ An shorter version of “Vienne” first appeared in the final issue of the short-lived Ford Madox Ford edited *transatlantic review*, which ran monthly from January to December 1924.

⁹⁹ See Carole Angier, *Jean Rhys* 116-22 for an account of Rhys and Lenglet’s time in Vienna and Budapest; and of Lenglet’s misappropriation of funds.

¹⁰⁰ The subjunctive, according to the *OED*, “Designat[es] a mood [...] the forms of which are employed to denote an action or a state as conceived (and not as a fact) and therefore used to express a wish, command, exhortation, or a contingent, hypothetical, or prospective event” (“Subjunctive”).

¹⁰¹ In presenting to H. Pearl Adam the notebooks from which the early version of the story came (Adam urged Rhys to do so and would give the work to Ford Madox Ford at *the transatlantic review*), Rhys referred to the manuscript as “a diary”—“or rather,” she explains, “I wrote it in diary form” (*Smile Please* 155). In its first instantiation the piece even bears the real names of both Rhys and Lenglet (as they called each other: Ella and John).

¹⁰² For a discussion of this interwar instability, see Nicholas Parsons, *Vienna: A Cultural History*, especially 237-245.

¹⁰³ See Alyssa G. Karl, *Modernism and the Marketplace: Literary Culture and Consumer Capitalism in Rhys, Woolf, Stein, and Nella Larson* 16-42.

¹⁰⁴ Consider, for instance, Manet's café/bar scenes in *Plum* (1877-78) or the famous *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1881-82); or the park scene of *The Railway* (1872-73).

¹⁰⁵ Assessments of Rhys's critique of domesticity emerge primarily from discussions of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and its writing-back to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) so as to expose, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has influentially argued, "the general epistemic violence of imperialism, the construction of a self-immolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of the colonizer" (251). See Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." See also, for instance, Howells, *Jean Rhys* 104-23; and Elaine Savory, *Jean Rhys* 133-51.

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