

EXPERIMENTS IN DECENTRALIZATION:  
SUBURBAN SPACES IN THE WRITINGS OF EARLY  
TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITISH FEMALE NOVELISTS

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### Abstract

My dissertation examines how Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, Vita Sackville-West, and Elizabeth Bowen utilize imagery of suburbia to formulate critiques of patriarchal gender norms. As lower-middle and working-class families relocated to suburbia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they colonized a way of life that was specific to the affluent bourgeoisie. That such shifts in urban geography and demographics threatened the bourgeois identity is perhaps best observed through an analysis of the literary texts of the period, which featured suburbs as Gothic spaces of otherness, or as feminized lands of monotonous domesticity. John Carey and Andreas Huyssen argue that various male modernists' artistic projects were partly a reaction to the perceived femininity and vulgarity of mass culture, which was repeatedly associated with suburban spaces. My project explores the relationship between these misogynistic discursive practices and the innovative representations of urban decentralization in the writings of the British female authors.

My first chapter concerns a largely ignored *fin-de-siècle* literary interest in suburban masculinity, especially in detective Gothic stories by Arthur Conan Doyle and Arthur Machen. My other three chapters, which focus, respectively, on the works of Richardson and Woolf, Sackville-West, and Bowen, show how these authors subvert negative stereotypes of suburbia and traditional concepts of subjectivity and gender by portraying specific suburban spaces or the phenomenon of suburban growth as occasioning opportunities for women's development of self-empowering personal privacy. While Michel Foucault's ideas of the governmental management of space and deployment of sexuality enable me to study the links between suburban growth and gender, I also utilize Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope or literary space-time; Henri Lefebvre's differentiation between multiple modes of spatiality; Foucault's idea of heterotopia;

and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concepts of "smooth" and "striated" spaces and "becomings" to identify various degrees and combinations of destabilizing and rigidifying energies that exist in selected literary representations of suburbia. My project emphasizes the subversive energies galvanized by urban decentralization; analyzes the mutually productive relationship among spaces, gendered bodies, and class identities; and extracts a range of semantic possibilities from the history of suburbia.

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## Introduction

Many North Americans associate the beginnings of modern suburbia with post-World War II American society, especially as reified by television programming. *Leave it to Beaver* comes to mind, for example, as a show about an ordinary family's life in Pleasantville, USA. Class conflict, sexual deviance, artistic innovation, and political activism seem out of place in an environment in which respectable parents smile benevolently upon Beaver's naughty escapades. These "destabilizing" elements, however, are as much a part of suburbia's story as is the Cleavers' televised utopia. Suburbia's origins actually date back to mid- to late-nineteenth-century London, a period that witnessed a mass influx of lower-middle- and working-class families into spaces that had up until that point been the domain of the affluent bourgeoisie; the rapid building of new suburban housing created a society in which "the commuter challenged the Cockney for the title of the Typical Londoner" by the time that the World War II had begun (Bowdler 114) (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> That such shifts in urban geography and demographics threatened the bourgeois identity is perhaps best observed through an analysis of the literary texts of the period, which featured suburbs as Gothic spaces of otherness and mystery, or, more commonly, as feminized lands of monotonous domesticity.

*Population in and around London 1841-1961*

	<i>Inner London</i>	<i>Outer London</i>	<i>Conurbation</i>	<i>Extra Conurbation</i>
<i>Population 1841-1961</i>				
	<i>'000s</i>	<i>'000s</i>	<i>'000s</i>	<i>'000s</i>
1841	1,949	290	2,239	1,700
1851	2,363	322	2,685	1,833
1861	2,808	419	3,327	1,970
1871	3,261	628	3,890	2,193
1881	3,830	940	4,770	2,394
1891	4,228	1,410	5,638	2,625
1901	<b>4,536</b>	2,050	6,586	2,923
1911	4,521	2,734	7,256	3,294
1921	4,485	2,963	7,488	3,590
1931	4,397	3,819	8,216	3,950
1939	4,013	4,715	<b>8,728</b>	4,457
1951	3,348	<b>5,000</b>	8,348	5,125
1961	3,195	4,977	8,172	<b>6,253</b>
<i>Percentage population change 1841-1961</i>				
	%	%	%	%
1841-51	21	11	20	8
1851-61	19	30	20	7
1861-71	16	50	21	11
1871-81	17	50	23	9
1881-91	10	50	18	10
1891-01	7	45	17	11
1901-11	-	33	10	13
1911-21	-1	8	3	9
1921-31	-2	29	10	10
1931-39	-11	23	6	13
1939-51	-17	6	-4	15
1951-61	-5	-	-2	22

*Source:* decennial censuses.

*Figure 1:* Population of Greater London, 1841-1961 (Coppock 34).

The works of *fin-de-siècle* middle-class writers such as George Gissing, Ella D'Arcy, H. G. Wells, and numerous cultural commentators played a crucial role in disparaging the new suburbia by identifying it with female consumerism and philistinism. On the other hand, scholarly studies of modernism, most notably those by John Carey and Andreas Huyssen, argue that various male modernists' artistic projects were partly a reaction to the perceived femininity and vulgarity of mass culture, which was repeatedly associated with suburban spaces. Between mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth century, a period that witnessed the emergence of universal elementary education in Britain, as well as a significant expansion of the middle class and the entrance of middle-class women into the public sphere, suburbia came to be characterized as an architectural expression of those processes by which English traditions were being eroded and its culture brought down to its lowest common denominator. The fact that suburban philistinism was equated with femininity and embodied primarily in the figure of a vulgar, lower-middle-class housewife essentialized its inferiority while simultaneously reaffirming gender and class differences.

Several early twentieth-century female authors, whose writings were integral or related to the aesthetic practices of Anglo-American modernism, formally and thematically resist the common disparagements involving women and suburbia. By portraying specific suburban spaces or the phenomenon of suburban growth as opportunities for women's constructions of innovative forms of personal privacy, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West, and Elizabeth Bowen repeatedly seek to destabilize traditional concepts of subjectivity and gender. The texts that I examine in my dissertation testify to the fact that these authors respond to the changes associated with suburban growth in a positive or, at the very least, a multifaceted manner, and use imagery of suburbia to complicate or subvert, rather than reaffirm, patriarchal beliefs regarding gender.

While Michel Foucault's ideas of the governmental management of space and deployment of sexuality enable me to study effectively the ideological implications of historical suburban growth and its links with gender, I utilize, at various points, Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope or literary space-time, Henri Lefebvre's differentiation between multiple modes of spatiality, Foucault's idea of heterotopia or space of alternative ordering, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concepts of "smooth" and "striated" spaces and "becomings" to identify various degrees and combinations of destabilizing and rigidifying energies that exist in selected literary representations of suburbia. Although the theorists and critics that I mention above do not focus on issues of gender, I will adapt their ideas to construct a feminist study of the selected texts and will introduce the works of feminist scholars who have already studied the connections between space-time and gender politics: Jessica Blaustein's work on the emergence of the gendered concept of suburban familial privacy; Elisabeth Bronfen's analysis of a variety of urban and semi-urban spaces and gender in Richardson's *Pilgrimage*; Youngjoo Soo's Lefebvre-influenced study of Woolf's subversion of "dominant [patriarchal] spatial codes"; and Sue Vice's notion of the feminine chronotope. By focusing on the imagery of decentralization and suburbia in the female authors' texts, and taking into consideration the socio-historical conditions surrounding the texts' production and reception, my project emphasizes the subversive energies galvanized by urban decentralization; analyzes the mutually productive relationship among spaces, gendered bodies, and class identities; and extracts a range of semantic possibilities from the history of suburbia.

### **The History of Suburbia**

It was in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England that numerous bourgeois families first sought to affirm their class identity by physically removing themselves from urban

overcrowding, pollution, and poverty. The population of London was increasing rapidly at this time due primarily to the high poverty and unemployment rates in the countryside and increasing employment opportunities in the city (Barratt 156). Only relatively affluent families could afford the luxury of men's daily, private transportation (by horse-drawn coach) to the city; those who possessed less money had to wait for the development or extension of public transit to escape what they perceived to be urban ills. In his detailed study of suburban London, Nick Barratt observes that by 1831 outermost areas of the metropolis were still "relatively untouched," with perhaps less than 250,000 individuals living in the semi-rural spaces (155). The privileged inhabitants of these peripheries, notes a then-contemporary J. C. Loudon, could experience the benefits of "breathing air unconfined by close streets of houses and uncontaminated by the smoke of chimneys," and enjoy a rural-like environment befitting "the greatest nobleman in England" while still maintaining their city-based professional lives (1, 9).

Early bourgeois suburban residences were unlike the monolithic rows of identical semi-detached villas that later came to populate suburban spaces: as Lewis Mumford observes, members of the upper middle class who formed the vanguard of the suburban movement "preferred rude originality to polite conformity" (489). With enough money to colonize the outskirts of London with their individual tastes, the owners hired architects who were willing to experiment with various materials, building styles, and garden arrangements. Most of the suburban residences were built in the "villa" style, which was brought to England from Italy in the seventeenth century and involved a compact arrangement of interior spaces, evoked rustic simplicity, and carried traces of Italian farmhouses designed for the sixteenth-century city noblemen by Italian architect Andrea Palladio; in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England, observes Chris Miele, the term "villa" clearly denoted "higher class status" (48, 50).<sup>2</sup>

The suburban abodes thus enabled the rising bourgeoisie to imitate aristocratic country-house environments, while constructing their own gender-based separation between home and work, privacy and public life. In his influential study *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (1987), Robert Fishman argues that suburbia expresses “values so deeply embedded in bourgeois culture that it might also be called the bourgeois utopia” (4). Since the Industrial Revolution did not greatly affect London until the middle of the nineteenth century and since records do not show that there was any major increase in urban crime at this time, Fishman concludes that the bourgeoisie’s move to the city’s margins was occasioned primarily by a desire to distance itself from its social “inferiors” and spatially affirm its class-based habits and standards of cleanliness, health, and nuclear family values (32-33).<sup>3</sup> The Evangelical movement (most popular in the first half of the nineteenth century), with its stress on family and the identification of women as the guardians of Christian homes, significantly influenced the development of early suburbia and built “into the physical environment that division between the feminine natural/emotional world of family and the masculine/rational/urban world of work” (Fishman 33-38, 62).<sup>4</sup> John Ruskin’s “Of Queen’s Gardens” (*Sesame and Lilies*, 1865), which was very influential in elaborating the ideology of separate, gendered spheres, reflects Evangelical arguments and testifies to the way in which their ideologies continued to shape middle-class, Victorian gender norms. Even the writings of such liberal thinkers as John Stuart Mill are permeated by the notion of separate spheres: in the essay “The Subjection of Women” (1869), Mill and Harriet Taylor argue that women should be given the same educational and professional opportunities as men, but concede that it is a married woman’s “natural” duty to take care of the domestic space (80).

My dissertation is the first to argue that early examples of bourgeois suburbia had a significant role to play in what Michel Foucault would term “the deployment of bourgeois

sexuality,” the emergence of which he situates in the late eighteenth century. Foucault observes that discussions and management of sex on the institutional level, by which sexual irregularities were identified, controlled, and also multiplied, were put into effect “to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative”; sex-related discourses in fields such as criminology, sexology, evolutionary biology, and medicine, as well as numerous population surveys (which analyzed birth, death, and marriage rates), were utilized in defining a “normal” bourgeois sexuality and in forecasting the future of the bourgeois body (*History of Sexuality* 1: 24).<sup>5</sup> Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, therefore, this notion of sexuality only applied to the bourgeoisie for it existed to reaffirm the identity of a group of people who had a specific hygiene, family upbringing, and morality; it enabled the bourgeoisie to distinguish itself (“bourgeoisie’s ‘blood’ was its sex”) but also to “exert its strength” and perpetuate its dominance (*HS* 1: 124-5). Although Foucault never discusses suburban living, I argue that it was one of the most striking spatial manifestations of heteronormative, “healthy” bourgeois sexuality, for it distanced the bourgeois body from urban poverty and deprivations and, more importantly, shaped and essentialized the gender differences and heteronormativity that ensured the sexual distinctiveness and longevity of this class: “The family cell . . . made it possible for the main elements of the deployment of sexuality . . . to develop along its two primary dimensions: the husband-wife axis and the parents-children axis” (*HS* 1: 106).

Foucault’s suggestion that the bourgeoisie sought to foster the life of its population through practices of “stocktaking, classification, and specification” is inextricably linked to his notion of governmentality. The governmentalized state, he suggests, and its emergence in the eighteenth century, is directly connected to the increase in birth rates, the growing numbers of the bourgeoisie, and the concomitant rise of the concept of “population,” which became its primary target. In his essay “Governmentality” (1978),<sup>6</sup> Foucault differentiates governmentality

from the earlier forms of power, sovereignty and discipline. Sovereignty, associated with monarchical rule and feudalism, is characterized by laws, parliaments, constitutions; it is exercised through the judicial and executive arms of the state. What is deemed the “common and general good” in this kind of society is the submission to sovereignty and obedience to its laws (Foucault, “G” 210). On the other hand, disciplinary power, which initially emerged in monastic, military, and educational practices, gained dominance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: “It concerns the exercise of power over and through the individual, the body and its forces and capacities and the composition of aggregates of human individuals (classes, armies, etc.)” (Dean 20). The emergence of disciplinary power is reflected in the development of administrative and bureaucratic apparatuses: its aim is to discipline individuals into disciplining themselves. Governmental power, argues Foucault, is not “defined by its territoriality, by the surface it occupies, but by a mass: the mass of population, with its volume, its density” (“G” 221). The aim of this new form of governance is not simply to ensure that laws are obeyed or individuals disciplined, but to foster the life of the one and the many by creating and managing its citizens’ desires and their sense of identity: “Government is defined as a right manner of disposing of things so as to lead not to the form of common good, as the jurists’ texts would have said, but to an end that is ‘convenient’ for each of the things that are to be governed” (“G” 211). This form of governance uses tactics instead of laws (and laws as tactics) and is characterized by the development of knowledges and apparatuses of security. Power is depersonalized, productive rather than oppressive, and is practiced daily by individuals themselves. Nevertheless, sovereignty and disciplinary power did not disappear, but were rather recast in this modern art of government: the contemporary judicial system with its laws in an example of modern re-casting of the former, while disciplinary power continues to be exercised in armies, schools, prisons and other institutions (“G” 219).<sup>7</sup>

The way in which space is utilized in disciplinary and governmental forms of power is best observed when one contrasts the architecture of discipline, such as that of prisons, with what I argue is the “architecture of governmentality,” such as that of suburbia. Perhaps the most noteworthy example of the way in which individuals are disciplined through the division of space is the panopticon used in prison architecture, in which the cell-confined prisoners cannot see each other but can be observed by the guard on duty:

Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the superior; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see . . . . It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, or dispositions of centers and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power.

(Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 200)

The arrangement of objects and bodies in space plays a role in shaping the inmates’ subjectivities: their actions and understanding of self are sutured to the hegemonic management of space. On the other hand, in suburbia, human beings are distributed in separate cells according to gender and class, but this version of the panoptic model no longer requires an external disciplinarian in the shape of a guard. The inhabitants of suburbia are not prison inmates, but citizens whose decision to live in suburban locations is, in actuality, usually an affirmation of their specific class- and gender-identity and heteronormativity, or rather, an expression of their aspirations, dreams, and desires.

Lewis Mumford, writing in the 1960s, argues that suburbia’s distance from the city and its predominantly residential nature ensure that human beings are subject to a modern kind of discipline:

The organizers of the ancient city had something to learn from the new rulers of our society. The former massed their subjects within a walled enclosure, under the surveillance of armed guardians within the smaller citadel. . . . With the present means of long-distance mass communication, sprawling isolation has proved an even more effective method of keeping a population under control. With direct contact and face-to-face association inhibited as far as possible, all knowledge and direction can be monopolized by central agents and conveyed through guarded channels, too costly to be utilized by small groups or private individuals. (512)

Mumford's description of suburbia applies first and foremost to women, for the new spaces were based upon a gendered division of labour that ensured females and children would be its most constant occupants. Defining modern suburbia in expressly negative terms, Mumford notes that the town housewife, who was once an integral part of an inner-city family business and community, became the suburban subject whose isolation and consumerism ensured her dependence on and adherence to cultural codes of middle-class femininity.

The spatial divisions utilized in the conceptualization of suburban living were so effectively reaffirmed through the co-dependent concepts of family-based privacy and gender that it is no wonder numerous *fin-de-siècle* and even twentieth-century writers chose to characterize the newly-developed suburbia as being inferior by deeming it feminized. From the beginning suburbia shaped and was in turn shaped by the bourgeoisie's desires to express, through spatial arrangements, its cultural values and to provide an environment that ensured middle-class heteronormativity. Yet, as the London railway and omnibus companies extended their services in the nineteenth century, the ostensible benefits of suburban living became accessible to those citizens who were not as affluent.<sup>8</sup> Although early railways in England were designed primarily for long-distance, inter-city travel and the transport of goods, the opening of

the first underground railway in London in 1863 popularized commuter-based, short-distance railway services; the passing of various legislation in the next two decades, such as the Cheap Trains Act (1880), ensured that the railway companies offered a number of cheaper tickets for lower-middle- and working-class individuals (Barson 76).<sup>9</sup> By 1880, there were approximately 40 million passengers carried by the Metropolitan line alone (190). The development of cable trams starting in 1884, motor buses in 1897, and electric tramways in 1901, as well as the continued extension, and, later, electrification, of train routes, contributed to a boom of suburban development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (62) (see Figure 2).<sup>10</sup>

The establishment of London as the world's center of financial capitalism in the 1870s (the Parisian financial market collapsed after the Franco-Prussian War), and concomitant increases in salaries and leisure time, also occasioned an expansion and fragmentation of the middle class population. An anonymous contributor of an opinion piece entitled "What Has Become of the Middle Classes" in an 1885 edition of *Blackwood Magazine* observes:

Contrary to the common assumption, the middle class of a hundred years ago did not breed all the families of the middle classes of today. A certain number of them, no doubt, are sprung from the order of gentlefolk, continuing a stock centuries old; others – much larger contingent – do not know who their people were, or where they were, three generations ago. But by far the largest number are the sons and grandsons of men who were born in the lower ranks of society, or themselves began life deep down in the social scale. (176)

Significant numbers of these recent middle-class (as well as working-class) families could afford to buy a home in the suburbs by the latter half of the nineteenth century (Cunningham 51).

Speculative builders and private developers, who grasped the potential of the rising demand for new suburban housing, sought to profit from its popularity by building less expensive, and, often,

not very picturesque versions of early suburban architecture. Since various technical trade guides, such as the *Illustrated Carpenter* or the *Builder's Practical Director*, published the plans of architects who designed bourgeois villas, private builders could create cheaper and smaller imitations of these earlier models of rustic simplicity: the result, observes Barson, was “little innovation in house plan, construction or materials and a monotonous appearance in the repetition of façades” (82-3). The term “villa” was soon applied to small, detached suburban houses, and, later, to semi-detached abodes of any size (Meile 53).<sup>11</sup> Builders also put innovative and ostentatious features on their products by mixing various architectural styles such as the vernacular, neo-Norman, Gothic, and Classical, which “often crowded together hugger mugger on the simple brick façade” (Barson 57).

Until the Public Health Act (1875) was passed, there was not much centralized control over house building (very few restrictions or local guidelines in terms of sanitation, width of streets, spaces between the houses, and type of materials used), so numerous suburban abodes were shoddily constructed (Barson 57). Even after building-related legislation (which did not ensure high standards of construction) were put into effect, many suburban communities (such as the working-class suburbs in Tottenham, Edmonton, and Leyton) continued to be badly planned: “Here most of the houses were in long terraces, standardized and depressingly dull to the eye. . . . Built to conform to the basic standards of the 1875 Public Health act, they were crammed in tight at up to forty an acre” (Jackson, *Semi-Detached London* 22). During the late nineteenth century, contends Lara Baker Wheelan, suburbia became “truly sub-urban rather than sub-rural” (24).

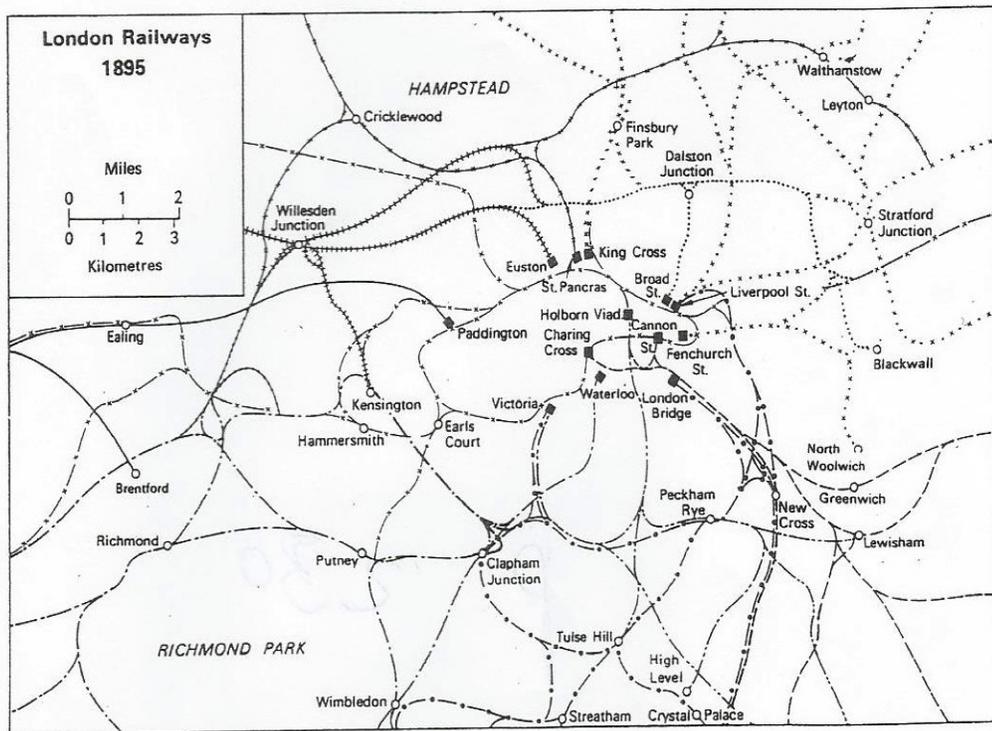
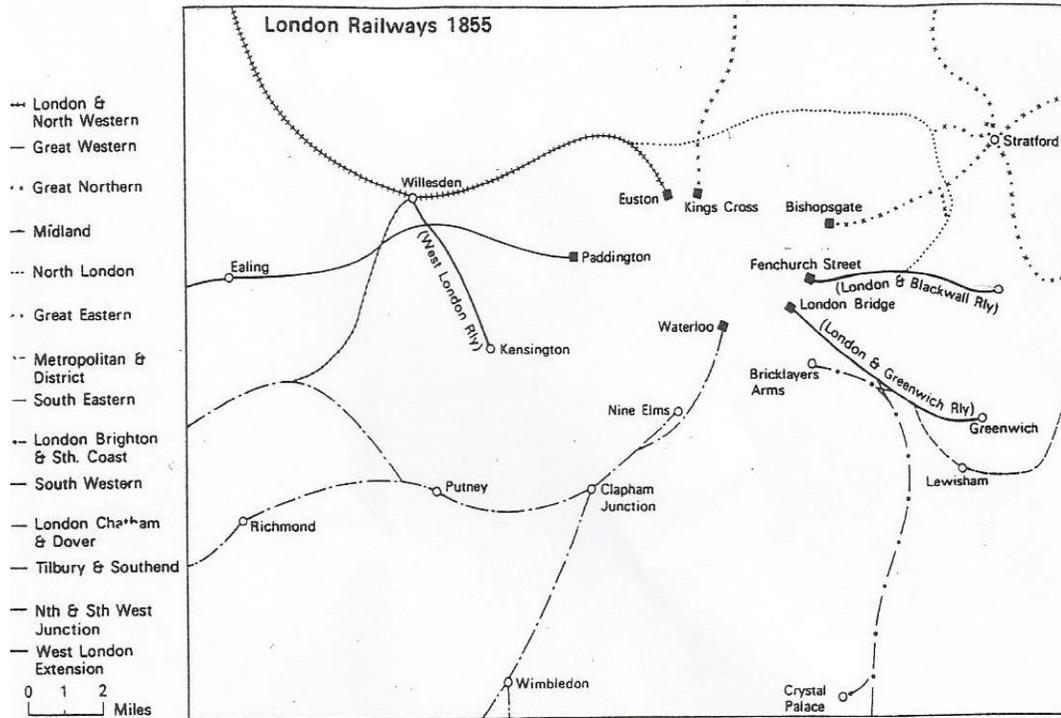


Figure 2: Expansion of the London railways in late nineteenth century (Porter 216).

Barratt observes that the rise in the population of greater London in the latter half of the nineteenth century was concomitant with a decrease in the number of residents in central London: people moved from the congested center to the now-accessible suburbs (213). While there were only approximately 288,000 people living in outer boroughs of London in 1851, by 1901 that figure reached nearly 2 million, an increase of a remarkable 585 percent; in 1900, some 200,000 people travelled from the suburbs to the center of London each day (193, 212). The bourgeoisie's efforts to maintain a monopoly on suburban living and to check the influx of the less affluent are suggested by numerous transportation- and building-related policies in the mid-nineteenth century: in 1853, the London and Northwestern Railway offered free first-class passes for twelve years only to those people who bought suburban houses that were worth a defined amount of money; numerous developers and landowners tried to ensure that the growing suburbs would house only well-off middle-class residents by specifying which materials could be used in construction and how much the houses must be worth (Dennis 187-8).

Nevertheless, the very nature of capitalism ensured the spread of suburban building: these developments offered a market for the construction industry, financial services (finance of construction and house purchase), and consumer products (buying goods to furnish the new houses) (Dennis 183). Furthermore, the building of grand civic edifices in central London (such as the Foreign Office and New Colonial and Home offices) in the late nineteenth century, which emphasized the city's status as an imperial capital, occasioned a government-sponsored teardown of working-class inner-city districts and a relocation of displaced populations to suburban areas (Barratt 343; Jackson *Semi-Detached London* 53). In his study of late-Victorian suburbs, Todd Kuchta notes that lower-middle- and working-class suburbs grew most rapidly at this time (4).

Developments in various forms of transportation and the popularization of suburban living resulted in daily overcrowding problems as hordes of (predominantly male) commuters

moved between the city and suburbs on trains, omnibuses, and trams. Architects, urban planners, and writers such as William Morris, Ebenezer Howard, Edward Bellamy, and C. B. Purdom repeatedly raised awareness about traffic congestion and wrote about the need for a substantial re-planning of urban centers: Bellamy (*Looking Backward*, 1888) and Morris (*News From Nowhere*, 1890) placed the idea of less-centralized, low-density housing at the core of their fictional, utopian societies; Purdom and Howard (who were influenced by Morris's ideas), were instrumental in putting forth the idea of Garden Cities (self-sustainable, low-density communities defined by a surrounding green belt) and in the building of Letchworth Garden City in Hertfordshire, starting in 1905.<sup>12</sup> Mumford observes that Howard proposed a new "pattern of city growth" that would "overcome both the prevalent apoplexy of urban center and the paralysis at the extremities" (*City in History* 515).

Although Howard and Purdom's ideas were a reaction to the mass growth of suburbia in the late-Victorian period – Purdom observes that the development of English cities "need not to be left to the chance or to the mercy of speculators" (*The Garden City* 21) – the term "Garden City" was often appropriated by builders and advertisers "in the hope that the good name would carry them through"; it started to be commonly used to denote a superior type of suburb that featured low-density housing (Dentith 26).<sup>13</sup> The architect Raymond Unwin, who designed parts of Letchworth and who was influenced by Morris's utopian aspirations and interest in vernacular building traditions, applied some of the design ideas from Garden Cities and Morris's Arts and Crafts movement<sup>14</sup> to his plans for the Hampstead Garden Suburb at the beginning of the twentieth century. This led to further confusion between Garden Cities and Garden Suburbs, the latter of which were mainly commuter-based (Dentith 18).<sup>15</sup> Even Unwin, however, was vocal about his dislike of suburbs that were built by speculative builders. These communities, he argues, lack "air-space and sunlight" and have poorly planned street-layouts and common

spaces; they “express by their ugliness the passion for individual gain which so largely dominates their creation” (*Town Planning in Practice* 13).

While architects frequently deplored what they perceived to be a vulgarization of their models by the “jerry-builders” (Purdom, *The Building of Satellite Towns* 31), many members of the bourgeoisie felt outraged at the fact that their “pleasant” suburbs were being “invaded” by a “swarm” of inferior dwellings: an anonymous writer of a letter entitled “The Debasement of London Suburbs” that appeared on 21 April 1892 in the *Times*, for example, condemns the legislation and commercialism that ministers to the “interests and enjoyment of the working classes” and effects a degradation of “the pleasantest spots around London,” such as his community of Streatham, near Brighton. As the more affluent moved further from the city to escape the influx of their “inferiors,” and as their spacious abodes were torn down to make way for rows of identical, semi-detached or terraced houses, it became evident that the ideal which was meant to shape and reaffirm bourgeois identity became the victim of its own popularity, and ultimately involved a redrawing of spatialized class boundaries. Although the lower-middle- and working-class suburban units were in reality often shabbily constructed and small (and thus drastically different from the spacious bourgeois residences), they aspired to middle-class ideals of heteronormativity, privacy, and spaciousness. The fact that the late nineteenth-century censuses<sup>16</sup> also recorded unprecedented numbers of single women, many of whom were living independently in the cities or suburbs, further testified to the lack of bourgeois success at controlling the boundaries among classes, genders, and suburban spaces.

London suburbs, therefore, were from the mid-nineteenth century spaces of frequent flux that had to be constantly redefined. Previously respectable bourgeois neighbourhoods, for example, could become “working-class refuges within ten years” (Whelan 2). Lower-middle- and working-class families lived side by side in places such as Tottenham, Edmonton,

Walthamstow, and Leyton, and often let out rooms to transient lodgers (Dennis 222). It is worth noting that shoddily-constructed houses and significant mortgage payments often ensured social inequality: lower-middle- and working-class families' properties rarely appreciated in value (if anything, they usually depreciated), while the owners' incomes were so drained by monthly payments that there were no resources for any outside investments. The popularization of suburban living, however, unarguably reflected an overall increase in the standards of living and a significant expansion of the lower echelons of the middle class. More importantly, it symbolized a colonization of those paradigms by which the affluent bourgeoisie had defined itself. As Lynne Hapgood reminds one, "suburban mobility appears to have changed people's awareness of the possibilities of class mobility" (171).

While working-class authors such as Shan Bullock, William Pett Ridge, and Edwin Pugh presented lower-middle- and working-class suburbans as being hardworking and honest individuals (Hapgood, *Margins of Desire* 174), Barson notes that a "certain jaundiced and patronizing view of the seemingly endless suburbs encircling 'proper' London" became preponderate during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (61). This view, Barson observes, was reflected in the works of many prominent contemporary writers, most notably H. G. Wells and John Ruskin, who "imbue[d]" their descriptions of suburbia with "scorn, cynicism or passionate hatred" (61). In *Tono-Bungay* (1909), for example, Wells paints a picture of the "yeasty British expansions" that characterizes suburbia as being a form of an unstoppable infection:

And south of this central London, south-east, south-west, far west, north-west, all round the northern hills, are similar disproportionate growths, endless streets of undistinguished houses, undistinguished industries, shabby families, second-rate shops, inexplicable people who in a once fashionable phrase do not "exist." All

these aspects have suggested to my mind at times, do suggest to this day, the unorganized, abundant substance of some tumorous growth-process, a process which indeed bursts all the outlines of the affected carcass and protrudes such masses as ignoble comfortable Croydon, as tragic impoverished West Ham. (83)

The monotonous but ominous suburban environments are identified most directly with the protagonist's semi-educated and unimaginative wife, Marion, who comes from a lower-middle-class family. Similarly, Gissing satirizes lower-middle-class suburbans in *The Year of Jubilee* (1894) through the figure of the vulgar, shrewish Ada Peachey.

Indeed, if one takes a look at the writings of *fin-de-siècle* authors such as Gissing, D'Arcy, Crosland, and the Grossmith brothers, or the cartoons in *Punch*, one repeatedly encounters portrayals of insipid and feminized or feminine suburban go-getters whose philistinism and flagrant consumerism are the main subjects of focus. Both Hapgood and Gail Cunningham suggest that the disparagement of suburbia as being silly and feminine defused bourgeois anxieties concerning the encroachment of suburbia by lower-middle- and working-classes families. Furthermore, the fact that suburbia was originally conceived as being a space whose most constant inhabitants would be women and children, and because its spatial arrangements were therefore reaffirmed through the notion of essential gender differences, it follows that the elaborations of suburbia's multiple "inferiorities" would take as their starting point its closely-bound relationship to the gender that was traditionally othered.

Once again, the story of suburbia coincides temporally with Foucault's history of sexuality: it is precisely towards the end of the nineteenth century that conflicts over urban space ("cohabitation, proximity, contamination, epidemics," "prostitution and venereal diseases") and the development of heavy industry (which required a stable, regulated, and substantial labour force) occasioned the extension of "the science of sexuality" to the working classes (*HS* 1: 126).

The management of sex and the discourses concerning it were increasingly designed to define, distribute, and control not just the bourgeois body, but that of the entire population. Foucault argues that a theory of repression, namely psychoanalysis, became the new instrument by which the bourgeoisie sought to define itself:

[T]he theory would justify its authoritarian and constraining influence by postulating that all sexuality must be subject to the law; more precisely, that sexuality owes its very definition to the action of the law: not only will you submit your sexuality to the law, but you will have no sexuality except by subjecting yourself to the law. But on the other hand, the theory of repression would compensate of the general spread of the deployment of sexuality by its analysis of the different interplay of taboos according to the social classes. . . .

Henceforth social differentiation would be affirmed, not by the ‘sexual’ quality of the body, but by the intensity of its repression. (*History of Sexuality* 1: 129)

This mode of thinking allows one to point out the connections among the transformations of urban environments (namely, the popularization of suburban living), the formulation of a sexualized and “sexually repressed” human subject, and “normalizing” disciplines and discourses. It also helps to account for the variety of ways in which the bourgeois identity crisis was reflected in the *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth-century writings through formulations of characters whose gender identities, psychology, and sexual activities are intimately related to their suburban existences.

Suburbs in England continued to spread during the initial decades of the twentieth century, propelled by further developments in transportation,<sup>17</sup> the initiation of collectivist policies and public services (which further expanded the middle-class population),<sup>18</sup> and the extension of consumer and advertising industries (see Figure 3). After World War I, and due to

concerns about the physical and medical fitness of English soldiers, the government passed the Housing and Town Planning Act (1919) (otherwise known as the Addison Act): characterized by Prime Minister Lloyd George's catchy phrase "Homes Fit for Heroes," the legislation ensured substantial government subsidies to local authorities for building more spacious housing for the working classes (Bowder 105). Overall, approximately half a million houses were built in suburbia between 1921 and 1931, and another 780,000 between 1931 and 1939 (Johnson, "The Suburban Expansion" 155).

Even though the Addison Act presented suburban development as being a panacea for the perceived health issues of the English population, continued expansion of London's peripheries often raised concerns, as can be witnessed by articles and letters to the editor that repeatedly appeared in the *Times* between the Wars: on 30 April 1924 the writer of a short letter entitled "Expanding London" observes that the spread of suburbia adds to the crowding of traffic in central London, while a somewhat longer piece on 8 January, 1932, "Suburban Motor-Coach Services," draws attention to the fact that motor coaches cannot come too close to the urban center due to congestion.<sup>19</sup> Todd Kutchta argues that these decades of "unprecedented suburban growth," combined with the steady decline of British imperialist ventures, resulted in repeated characterizations of suburbs as spaces of stagnation and degeneration (10). Kutchta's multilayered claim needs to be engaged with at some length, but at this point I am utilizing it in order to draw attention to the fact that the early twentieth century saw a continuation, and perhaps even an intensification, of those processes by which suburbia was popularized, extended, yet frequently vilified.

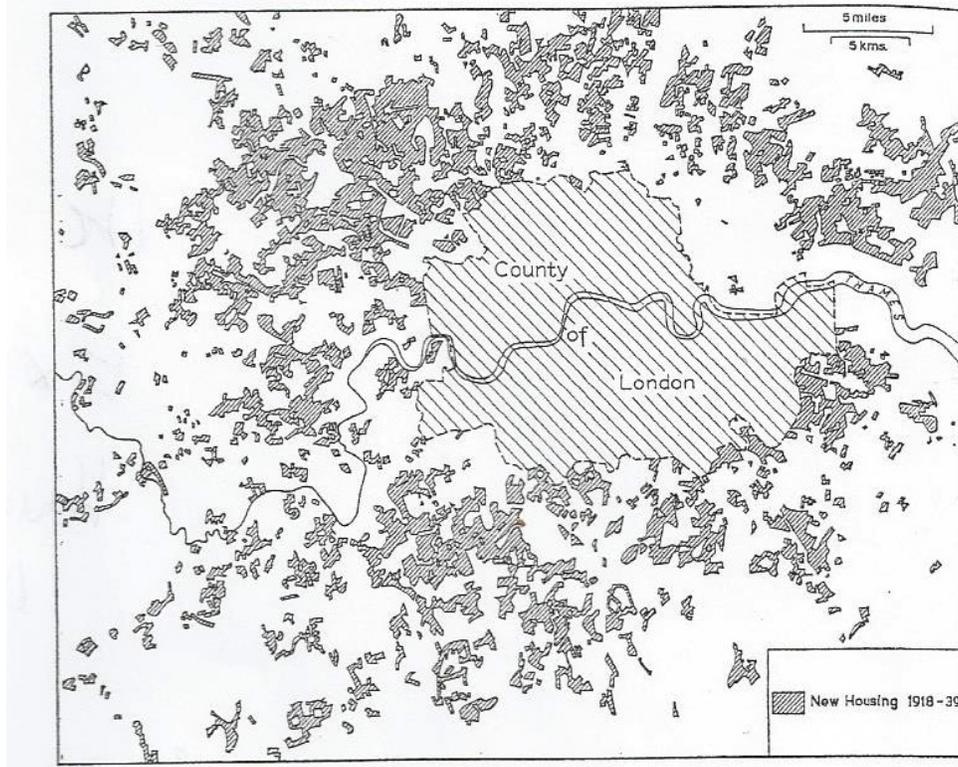


Figure 3: Interwar suburban expansion of London (Johnson, *Greater London* 146).

The beginning of the twentieth century also witnessed significant changes in the status of English women, who were far more publicly visible than before, as department store shoppers and members of the workforce. They gained limited suffrage in 1918 and “universal” in 1928, as well as permission to take degrees at some universities (such as Somerville College, Oxford) after World War I. At least partially in response to such continued developments, many male modernists and intellectuals of this period, such as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Clive Bell, and George Orwell, perpetuated dominant and negative *fin-de-siècle* stereotypes of femininity and mass culture, and frequently formulated them by directly or indirectly invoking suburban imagery. In “Matriarchy” (1928), Lawrence identifies women with materialistic, violent masses at the same time that he mocks the effeminacy of the suburban-like “Daddy in the bosom of the family, wheeling the perambulator on Sunday” (105). Clive Bell, in his long essay

*Civilization* (1928), scoffs at the “flock instinct” of typically-suburban “shop-walkers” and consumers who are swayed by advertisers and retailers (181), while noting that a rare woman’s ability to develop elite artistic sensibility and rise above the masses is usually related to her friendships and sexual relationships with men (234). Finally, George Orwell’s male protagonist in *Coming Up for Air* (1939) observes that a symbol of suburbia would be a “queer sort of god” whose “top half would be a managing director and the bottom half would be a wife in the family way” (15).

John Carey’s *Intellectual and the Masses* (1992) and Whelan’s *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era* (2010) characterize early twentieth-century male modernists’ practices as reactions to the spread of the suburban ideal and growth of public education and mass culture, and thus expose a conservative streak in the artists’ experimental projects.<sup>20</sup> While Carey mentions that male intellectuals’ rebellion against the newly literate and their emphasis on objective, controlled creation of (frequently) culturally-elitist artistic forms<sup>21</sup> are deeply connected to an aversion to what they perceived as being emotional, feminized, suburban consumerism, neither his nor Whelan’s work provides an in-depth study of the ways in which these reactions were grounded in the complex relationship between the overall challenges to gender norms, suburban mass culture, and its feminization. Andreas Huyssen’s *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (1986), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *No Man’s Land: The Place of Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (1988), and Ann Ardis’s *New Women: Feminisms and Early Modernism* (1990) help one to understand how women’s increasing public visibility and association with consumerism, as well as the suffrage movement and the popular New Women writing of the late nineteenth century, contributed to the male modernists’ desire to create a masculine aesthetic that emphasized tradition and escape from

personality; their studies, however, do not touch upon the central role that suburbia *per se* played in the male modernists' perception of women, mass culture, and writing.

While none of these studies individually addresses all of the crucial issues I have cited, when considered together they do suggest important connections among crises of suburbia, femininity, women's writing, and early twentieth-century reactions to Victorian culture and its traditions. Paradoxically, the above-mentioned male modernists elaborated their artistic techniques by rebelling (in various degrees) against the Victorian modes of literary realism and what they perceived to be hypocritical, bourgeois morality, but they concomitantly utilized Victorian stereotypes of insipid femininity and lower-middle-class philistinism. In an age in which rising standards of living, mass-produced consumer goods and print media, and suburbanization made it increasingly difficult to distinguish among social classes, these artists and thinkers sought ways of creating new hierarchies: Yeats, Pound, and Bell all elaborated the notions of intellectual aristocrats (Carey 71); Eliot strove to create writings that were too "difficult" to be read by the philistine "masses"; and Lawrence, Bell, Eliot, and Orwell bolstered their hierarchical constructs by exploiting ready-made and suburbia-enhanced formulae of gendered othering.

The above claim should not be applied to all male modernists and certainly not to the same extent, nor am I arguing that all modernist experimentations are inherently or equally elitist. I have mentioned the writings of several prominent male modernists, who explicitly based aspects of their experimental theories of art and literature upon a desire to separate from the suburban, "effeminate" mass culture, as a way of drawing attention to the existence of a reactionary streak in some of the modernist texts. Furthermore, the artists' theoretical chauvinisms were often coupled with practices that contradicted them: Maria DiBattista and Lucy McDiarmid observe that the elitist statements and projects of many male modernists were

accompanied by artistic collaborations and friendships with female authors and various engagement with aspects of mass culture. One should not, therefore, view all of the aforementioned reactionary writings as being indicative of equal elitism or sexism in practice, nor does my focus on the conservatism of several male artists indicate a reductive, essentialist argument about a gender-determined view of suburbia. My goal is to emphasize the inextricability of suburbia and gender, to identify those early twentieth-century texts that challenged traditional gender norms and stereotypes, and to study whether the texts' subversion of these conventions is effected through creative representations of suburban spaces and decentralization. It is hardly a surprise that innovative portrayals of suburbia and gender would predominantly be found in texts written by female authors of this period: given that governmental management of space is so deeply implicated in the construction of gendered identities, one would expect to observe some difference between men's and women's experiences of urban transformations.

My research has shown that selected writings by Richardson, Woolf, Sackville-West, and Bowen that seek to subvert gender conventions frequently do so by employing suburban settings and imagery of decentralization. It is crucial to determine if these middle-class and aristocratic novelists' writings feature forms of "cultural elitism," and to what degree this "elitism" is intentional or exists simply as a byproduct of an experimental aesthetic project that is primarily anti-oppressive along the axis of gender. Furthermore, how do the female novelists' modernisms shape, and how are they shaped by, male modernists' disparagements of suburban, effeminate mass culture? This line of inquiry allows me to address a crucial gap in the scholarship concerning literary representations of suburbia, as there are no studies that explore the connections among the realities of and discourses concerning suburban growth and early twentieth-century writers' gender-inflected innovations with theme and form.

To date, analyses of literary representations of suburbia have focused primarily on Victorian England (Gail Cunningham; Andrew Smith; Todd Kutchta) and post-World War II America (Catherine Jurca; Robert Beuka; Bernice Murphy). Lynne Hapgood's *Margins of Desire* (2000) details suburban-themed fictions written from 1900 to 1925; however, she discusses mainly male authors and fails to provide an in-depth analysis of how they used decentralized spaces to challenge gender norms. Although there is a general dearth of scholarship on Sackville-West and Bowen's texts, scholars such as Susan Squier and Deborah Parsons effectively analyze Woolf and Richardson's city texts for their representations of sexual politics and the figure of the *flâneuse*, but fail to acknowledge the authors' layered representations of decentralization. Cultural studies texts that explore the possible creative or empowering aspects of suburban life, such as Judy Giles's *The Parlour and the Suburb* (2004), focus on lower-middle- and working-class women's experience of suburbia as a space that signified an escape from unhealthy, crowded inner-city work and housing.

My goal, on the other hand, is to explore how relatively privileged female authors utilized suburban topoi and imagery as a way of creatively formulating the complex interactions of their gender and class identities, and of lived and textual spaces. I consider how they engage with both the discourses on and the reality of suburban growth by creating literary spaces in which ontology, epistemology, and ethics intersect in ways that are potentially destabilizing to accepted categorizations of gender, class, heteronormativity, and "normalcy." I also explore how the authors depict non-traditional suburban households; the relativity of space and time emphasized by new forms of transportation, such as the omnibus and automobile; and the experimental spatial planes associated with modernism, which Raymond Williams argues are a result of the changing metropolis.

### **Methodology: Theories of Space-Time**

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the Western world's understanding of time and space had mirrored the basic tenets of Enlightenment rationality and was largely informed by the mathematical concepts of Euclidean geometry. According to this view, the two dimensions are homogenous pre-givens, with space as a passive entity that holds objects and exists between them, and time as a linear succession of distinct states progressing at a fixed rate. Both could be divided and mapped. The prevailing notion of time and space was challenged by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century developments in technology (railway, wireless telegraph, telephone, automobile, airplane), which significantly altered forms and speeds of human communication and movement. Albert Einstein's theory of relativity further complicated the matter by proving that time was dependent on speed of movement through space, so that one could no longer speak of time and space as being uniform or completely independent of each other.

During this historical period several art forms in their various ways disturb traditional representations of temporal and spatial parameters. As Andrew Thacker observes, realist fictions rely on a "linear narrative schema that seemed unsustainable in a world where events did not necessarily concur in consecutive time" (38). Indeed, realists' detailed descriptions of the materiality of places fail to account for the disorientation brought on by the developments in technology and science – changes that were most clearly visible in the rapid expansion of urban centres. Modernist narratives, on the other hand, reflect the fragmented experience of modernity by frequently abandoning linearity and focusing on characters' subjective impressions of time and space.<sup>22</sup>

Michel Foucault points out that even though space became a point of focus in literature during the twentieth century, there persisted a certain "devaluation of space" in theory, as "the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile" ("Questions of Geography" 177). In *Time and*

*Free Will* (1889) Henri Bergson, for example, makes a valid point when he contends that time, inherently heterogeneous, is mistakenly represented in spatial terms as being a relation of points on a straight line. While “rescuing” time from Euclidean logic, however, he seems to confirm the undifferentiated, passive nature of space. Perhaps it is the seemingly concrete nature of space, its very “there-ness,” that made it (and still makes it) difficult for people to consider it as anything but a transparent and essential entity (Friedland and Boden 5). Drawing attention to a tradition within modernist studies that continues to privilege the experience of temporality, Thacker argues that contemporary scholars need to emphasize the inextricability of time and space, history and geography, but also to interrogate how the formal experiments associated with literary modernism are related to the changing material spaces of modernity (3-5).

My dissertation will address the role time and space (or rather space-time) play in the representations of suburbia found in texts by Woolf, Richardson, Sackville-West, and Bowen, with special attention paid to the spatial dimension. The expansion of British cities, most notably London, into the unpopulated (or sparsely populated) areas surrounding it, and the development of suburbia, was based upon various gender- and class-inflected conceptions of how settlements should be temporally and spatially organized and occupied. Furthermore, the constant discrepancy between these theoretical conceptions and the ever-shifting realities of suburban living in the late nineteenth century gave rise to a discursive explosion concerning suburbia, through which urban planners, journalists, and literary authors sought, in their various ways, to give meaning to a shifting signifier. As gender difference is one of the foundational binaries upon which society is organized (and upon which suburbia was organized), it is perhaps unsurprising that definitions of suburbia were usually effected through discussions of gender. To speak about suburbia, therefore, is to discuss how the organization of time and space intersects with construction of gendered identities. I will combine the ideas of several key twentieth-

century theorists of time and space in order to highlight the dynamic relation between space-time and social life, as well as identify the interplay between real, theorized, and literary space-times. The following paragraphs will feature brief summaries of the philosophers' theories and my notes on the concepts that I find most useful to my project.

Although most of the theorists of space and time that I will discuss in this section assume an inextricability of these dimensions, it is only Mikhail Bakhtin who linguistically fuses the two in his notion of the literary chronotope, which he elaborates in his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel (1937-8).<sup>23</sup> Bakhtin describes the chronotope as being an integral "formally constitutive category of literature":

We will give the name chronotope [literally, "time-space"] to the intrinsic connectedness of the temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. . . . In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movement of time, plot and history. (84)

Chronotopes give a literary work artistic unity in relationship to reality and are the discursive intersections where the "knots of narrative are tied and untied"; each text has a dominant chronotope that interacts with minor chronotopes, all of which are "coloured by emotions and values" (250, 243). This represented, textual world is, however, always chronotopically different than the real world – a remark of Bakhtin's that reminds one not to read literary descriptions of suburban spaces as being necessarily reflective of the everyday existence of people who live in suburbia (250).

Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope, his insistence that "the image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic," is useful for my analysis for it emphasizes that in being the central

ordering principles of art, time and space determine its form and meanings. More specifically, I employ Bakhtin's theories of the chronotope of the road (which brings people of different social positions into intensive contact) and the idyllic chronotope (which emphasizes stability and cyclical rhythms of nature) to study, respectively, Woolf's descriptions of women's potentially insightful walks in the city in *Night and Day* (1919) and Sackville-West's creation of a woman's suburban idyll in *All Passion Spent* (1931). In both cases, I analyze how the authors mobilize and sometimes transform conventional chronotopes or ways of structuring literary space-time with the aim of destabilizing traditional understanding of gender. Vice's theories of the feminine chronotope, through which she introduces the gender dimension into Bakhtin's work, is particularly useful in my study of Sackville-West's creation of female-oriented idyllic chronotope.

Unlike Bakhtin, whose theories of space-time concern literary texts, the Marxist-informed ideas that Henri Lefebvre unfolds in *The Production of Space* (1974) influenced significantly the way in which real space was viewed in social theory in the latter part of the twentieth century. His notion that "(social) space is a (social) product," the organization of which is a crucial factor in the shaping of any society, forms the basis of my argument (Lefebvre 26). A society's relations of production, Lefebvre argues, are inscribed upon its space: the space of the capitalist society, controlled by the dominant bourgeoisie, is an abstract one, "formal and quantitative," which "reverses distinctions" between objects and mirrors the abstract nature of capitalist labour (48-9). Through a double illusion of transparency and natural simplicity, the constructed nature of abstract space is hidden from its users, so that the means of control and domination inscribed within this social product/producer of social relations are able to persist (30). By defining three categories of space – *perceived* (the space of daily reality as experienced by users), *conceived* (the dominant space of "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic

subdividers and social engineers, all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived”), and *lived* (symbolic imagery of artists and users) – Lefebvre shows that multiple modes of spatiality create each concrete place.

I utilize Lefebvre’s notion of space as a product and producer of social relations to explore how various authors reveal the constructed nature of space and create dynamic and multifaceted, rather than static, textual spaces. His notion of multiple forms of spatiality also enables me to study how the authors’ developments of female characters – especially Miriam Henderson in Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* novel series (1915-1967) and Emmeline Summers in Bowen’s in *To the North* (1932) – is effected through their emphasis on the differences among planned space, space of everyday reality, and symbolic or created space. The characters’ responses to these various spatial modes suggest their growing resistance to patriarchal gender constructs. My focus on specifically female characters’ interaction with the three types of spaces shows how Lefebvre’s theories, which are generally not centered around the issues of gender, can nevertheless be useful in generating gender-inflected analysis of texts that are concerned with innovative forms of living and writing.

The fact that the physical realization of the bourgeois suburban ideal managed to survive for only a short time in the nineteenth century before members of the lower echelons of the middle class and the working class annexed it is proof enough that plans of “social engineers” rarely match or contain reality. While the conceptual management of time and space certainly plays a role in effecting the organization of subjects, urban planners, scientists, and cultural studies experts cannot fully predict and control the heterogeneity of events occasioned by the rapid developments of capitalist society. As a signifier that no longer signified what it was designed to represent, and that consequently inspired many imaginative and unimaginative narratives, suburbia, or rather its literary counterpart, could be analyzed as being a form of

*heterotopia* – a term Foucault uses in his 1967 lecture “Of Other Spaces” to describe those spaces that disturb, challenge, or expose as illusory our habituated experience of time, space, and identity.

According to Foucault, heterotopias are *not* utopias because they contain in them the messiness of everyday life; heterotopias can be real while utopias are too perfect to exist. The former are “different spaces,” “other spaces,” that are like utopias only in that they have a relation to all the other spaces in society but “in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (“Of Other Spaces” 24). These spaces can contain various degrees of disciplinary or potentially subversive qualities, but the very fact that they disturb one’s conventional experience of time, space, and self suggests they may occasion practices of resistance. As examples, Foucault cites boarding schools, graveyards, hospitals, rest homes, mental institutions, ships, and numerous other spaces, some of which are defined by their particular treatment of temporality (such as the carnival or the museum).

Although Foucault does state that heterotopias frequently exist in a material form, he uses the same term in his later work, *The Order of Things* (1973), to describe the type of incongruous, textual space created by Jorge Luis Borges in one of his short stories:

Heterotopias are disturbing probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter and tangle common names, because they destroy “syntax” in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and opposite one another) to “hold together.” (xviii)

In this manner, Foucault's notion of the heterotopia allows one to make a connection between real and metaphorical spaces, and to analyze the latter as being equally capable of disrupting dominant power relations. The failure of the early suburban ideal and its consequent annexation by other classes inspired literary visions of suburbia that were frequently heterotopic. Foucault's notion of heterotopia thus enables me to study how the subversive potential of specific literary space-times could be occasioned by an author's temporary inversion or suspension of dominant spatial and linguistic codes; this approach proves particularly useful in my analysis of suburbia in Bowen's Gothic short story "Attractive Modern Homes" (1938), in which Bowen portrays an unfinished, new suburban estate as having a defamiliarizing effect on a housewife's sense of self.

Foucault's studies of different forms of power in capitalist society and the discipline of bodies through spatial arrangements influenced Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's formulation of bodily and spatial "flows" that exceed or defy regulation in their collaborative text *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980).<sup>24</sup> Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between striated and smooth space (and practice of space): striated space of capitalist labour is divided according to work-based hierarchies and hours of the capitalist work day, while "smooth" space, such as the desert, is less regulated and heterogeneous. The former space is an organized, surveyed space that seeks to minimize vagabondage, whereas the latter consists of developing forms, and offers occasions for various types of self-experimentation (*TP* 478). In striated space, time and space are organized according to the Euclidean model, by which both are divided into identical units; on the other hand, smooth space is intensive rather than extensive, filled with multiplicities that do not alter in nature upon division. Flows of energy occasion a "development of form," a "continuous variation," while in striated space there is an investment in stability and a negation of multiplicity (*TP* 478).

Although this model of space seems to be founded upon a striated-smooth binary, it is far more complex than my initial description would suggest. The two types of spaces “exist only in mixture,” with smooth space always in the process of being translated into striated and vice versa (474). The relationship is one of constant communication rather than a separation (Deleuze, “Occupy Without Counting” 300). More importantly, the two are mutually productive: striation is an operation “that undoubtedly consists in subjugating, over-coding, metricizing smooth space, in neutralizing it, but also in giving it a milieu of propagation, extension, refraction, renewal, and impulse without which it would perhaps die of its own accord” (*TP* 486). The desert or the sea, “smooth space par excellence,” were the first to be striated by navigators, while cities – centers of striation – produce various smooth spaces as they enable individuals (and, as I shall demonstrate, various female characters) to experience a level of anonymity; cities also produce “sprawling, temporary, shifting” settlements, such as the suburbs. Furthermore, the “smooth” is not “liberatory,” as it can function in service of larger striating forces, in processes that Deleuze and Guattari term “microfascisms” or “molecular fascisms”: bureaucratic suppleness of communication and multiplication of covert managerial figures that ensure more stringent surveillance of workers; submarines that set off smoothing energies by covertly crossing boundaries only to survey all space more carefully; and the insidious infiltration and proliferation of Nazi ideologies and influence into rural areas or youth groups in pre-World War II Germany (216).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, spatial practices or ways of occupying space ultimately determine to what degree a space is liberating or oppressive. Spaces are “not in themselves liberatory,” but are in their smoothing or striating tendencies conducive to certain manners of spatial practice: in smooth space “the struggle is changed or displaced” so that “life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries” (*TP*

500). One could, however, live in the city as an “urban nomad,” voyage imaginatively without physical, measurable movement, or live striated in the “deserts, steppes, or seas” by thinking primarily in hierarchical (binary, linear) fashion (482). It is the awareness that space does not simply act on subjects, but is acted upon and energized by them, that allows one to conceive of those who creatively and artistically utilize the potentialities of various spaces.

This line of thinking brings one closer to understanding Deleuze and Guattari’s complex concept of “becoming,” which is inextricably linked to “living and voyaging smoothly” (482). Becoming is always a “becoming-other,” a process of extracting the particular energies that constitute who one is becoming: it means entering a “zone of proximity” in which the “discernibility of points disappears” (*TP* 294). Becoming-other means to reject the notion of a unified identity and to open one’s self up to experiments in living that resist habit-forming striations. The fact that Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of becoming is best defined through a discussion of an alternative, creative spatial practice, in which one chooses to recognize the inherently heterogeneous and “flowing” nature of reality, shows the integral role that space plays in the theorists’ discussions of resistance: “Life in its cycles of becoming and unbecoming is an inherently spatial business” (West-Pavlov 28-9). I argue that several of the texts studied in this dissertation portray instances of what one could term “becoming” as being processes of gender-related subversion and innovation.

Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of the co-existence and mutual production of smooth and striating forces are also useful for analyzing the proliferation of paradoxical realities, meanings, and representations concerning space-times and situations that originally feature or are supposed to feature an intensification of either smoothing or striation. Suburbia is an ideal example of this type of organization: initially built to divide or “stiate” people according to gender and class, suburbs became sprawling and shifting spaces that occasioned, in various degrees, a blurring of

class boundaries and, as my chapter on Arthur Conan Doyle and Arthur Machen's suburban Gothic detective tales will show, often inspired narratives that sought to investigate and define these ostensibly elusive types of spaces.

The female authors that I am studying respond to the material and discursive phenomena of suburbia in complex ways that have not been examined up until now. Using Deleuze and Guattari's poststructuralist ideas allows me to analyze the innovative representations of time, space, and gender in the selected texts of these authors as *processes* that continually generate new meanings. I will show how perceived "deterritorializations," or shifts in urban and suburban environments, could inspire semantically-rich narratives about suburbia, in which suburban settings are represented as being smooth, under-coded spaces of "becomings" that can open up avenues for experimentation in art and life. Finally, Deleuze and Guattari's theories enable me to show how the mutually-productive relationship between striation and smoothing accounts for simultaneous disparagement and innovative characterizations of suburbia.

As the spread of suburban living occasioned both drastic shifts in the urban geography of London and daily mass movements of commuter population to and from the city, and was enabled by developments in transportation, changes in class structure, and rise of consumerism, I will argue that it was one of the most visible signs of modernity's impact on the organization of everyday life. Specifically, I will interrogate how Woolf, Richardson, Sackville-West, and Bowen portray suburban spaces or suburbia-related movements (the daily motions of commuter crowds, the rides on suburban trains and buses) and discourses as being sites of semantic and epistemological instability. I will furthermore examine how patriarchy inscribes yet hides its unequal power relations in its organization of time and space – not just in terms of the obvious suburban divisions of work and leisure, public and private, which obscure women's domestic

labour, but also in relation to how suburban notions of privacy in fact cater to the creation of male and familial rather than women's individual space-time.

As a way of resisting the notion of fixed, homogenous time, space, and gender, the authors I study make time and space alive by showing how it is produced by human interactions with various environments; by focusing on the specific forms of "smooth" voyaging and becoming (sometimes of the mental, rather than physical type) that can be created by women whose movements in the city and suburbs have traditionally been limited; by subverting "phonetic, syntactic, and semantic conventions" (Bogue 5, 7) of language and disrupting the fixed (patriarchal) power relations inscribed in it, especially in their descriptions of suburbia; and by privileging the description of the domestic sphere, which has traditionally been underwritten in male modernist texts as a less-political, feminine dimension. Discussing the representations of suburbia and things suburban in the texts of the four authors is a way of asking how an urban phenomenon that occasioned change and instability (both literal and discursive) enabled or inspired women writers to develop innovative aesthetic projects by experimenting with chronotopically-based creations of gendered identity.

My project is divided into four chapters. In Chapter 1, "The Many Faces of Mr. Suburbia: Male Deviance in the Gothic Detective Stories of Doyle and Machen," I briefly acknowledge those late Victorian texts which reaffirm the connections among femininity, suburbia, and consumerism, but focus on an equally prevalent, yet largely ignored *fin-de-siècle* literary interest in spatially-involved masculinity. I pay special attention to short stories of Doyle ("Man with a Twisted Lip," 1891 and "The Norwood Builder," 1903) and Machen ("The Novel of the Iron Maiden," 1890 and "The Inmost Light," 1894), which combine elements of the Gothic and detective fiction motifs and specifically suburban milieus to sensationalize men's experience of changing urban environments. I explore how and why the combinations of detective fiction and

the Gothic are adapted to suburban settings as a way of “othering” suburban spaces through images of degenerate, bifurcated masculinity. Using Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of smooth and striated spaces, I identify the complex literary and journalistic discourses concerning the growth of suburbs in the late nineteenth century, and point out the growing cultural interest in the interplays of gender and emerging semi-urban spaces. More importantly, I analyze a largely ignored and very creative way of representing the relations between suburban spaces and gender.

Chapter 2, “The Thrills of Modernity: Representations of Suburbia in the Urban Texts of Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf,” is devoted to analyzing the representations of suburbia in Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* novels and Virginia Woolf’s *Night and Day*. By examining Richardson’s *Backwater* (1916), *The Tunnel* (1919), and *March Moonlight* (1967), which describe Miriam Henderson’s life in various parts of the greater London, I show how the author’s attempts to create “feminine prose” (Foreword, *Pilgrimage*) constitute her important contribution to modernist innovation and articulate her reaction against gender inequity. Using Lefebvre’s notion of various types of spaces, I will show how Richardson communicates the development of her young character through descriptions of Miriam’s responses to various suburbs and her realization that people can use space creatively. My chapter seeks to address the critical neglect of Richardson’s writing in contemporary academia by emphasizing the author’s influence on and difference from Woolf’s aesthetic projects; my goal is to identify the multiple ways in which Richardson’s texts are integral to the study of female modernists’ “political aesthetics” (Gillespie 133).

In the second half of Chapter 2, I focus on Virginia Woolf’s second novel, *Night and Day*, which most critics regarded as being disappointingly traditional, but which contains descriptions of urban decentralization that are crucial to the development of Woolf’s critique of patriarchy and later formal and stylistic experiments. The analyses of gender in urban London

are consistently articulated through an awareness of suburban London, and Woolf's experiments with de-centered narration are linked to the characters' and narrator's negotiations with decentralizing spaces and movements. By employing Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope of the road, I draw attention to Woolf's exploration of the ways in which an otherwise sheltered female character's sighting of the phenomenon of mass commuting in central London constitutes a critique of the patriarchal gendered division of space and concept of familial privacy.

In Chapter 3, "A Woman's Suburban Idyll: Hampstead and the Country House Genre in Vita Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent*," I examine the text of Vita Sackville-West, whose "suburban experimentations" are of a primarily thematic kind. In *All Passion Spent*, Sackville-West explores how a suburban setting can prove conducive to an older woman's construction of an unconventional, resistant space. Using Bakhtin's notion of the idyllic chronotope, I analyze the way in which Sackville-West creates a space-time that undermines patriarchal spatial codes and privileges women's development of individual privacy in a suburban environment that resembles a country-house setting. By examining the influence that Woolf had on Sackville-West's writing, I also draw attention to the innovative aspects of the latter's text, as well as to limited nature of her critique of the status quo.

Finally, my last chapter, "Suburban Dreams and Nightmares: Elizabeth Bowen's Visions of Modernity," analyzes the texts of an author whose works have often been and continue to be neglected in academia. In *To the North*, Bowen shows how modern, technologically-savvy young women can create innovative forms of privacy in suburban environments, as well as how persisting patriarchal stereotypes about female sexuality ultimately occasion the destruction of these empowering or nurturing spaces. Her short story "Attractive Modern Homes," on the other hand, allows me to analyze how a female author could use Gothic tropes of spaces in transition – or suburban heterotopias – to construct a spatio-temporal study of gender inequity.

As Richardson, Woolf, Sackville-West, and Bowen were all situated in London at the same historical period, and crossed each other's paths either personally or through their writings, their texts bear marks of various levels of interaction, as well as traces of a shared, tempestuous cultural moment in which suburbanization played a crucial role.<sup>16</sup> The fact that I analyze the texts of two modernist authors side by side with the texts of two authors who adhere more obviously to the realist tradition testifies to my interest in studying how female authors could record their impressions of urbanity and modernity through various aesthetic modes and practices. Furthermore, I will examine how Richardson, Woolf, Sackville-West, and Bowen's artistic projects elaborate (through suburban imagery) gendered identities that are sometimes distinctly "classed." In other words, their subversions of gender norms are usually coupled with formulations of distinctly privileged female identity, which sometimes work to striate the smoothing pockets of flux occasioned by their gender critiques. It is crucial to note, for instance, that all of these authors occasionally disparage lower-middle- and working-class suburbia in their personal writings, and that Sackville-West and Bowen's innovative fictional suburbs are distinctly characterized as being upper-middle-class. On the other hand, Richardson and Woolf's aesthetic projects and daring fragmentation of traditional narrative forms resulted in writings that were sometimes not ideally suited for mass consumption.

These female authors' texts proliferate, in various degrees, with mutually productive forces of striation and smoothing. It is my goal to identify the myriad forces at work in these texts using a "suburban lens," and to prove that a focus on literary portrayals of suburbia yields a multi-dimensional diagram of historically-specific semantic fluxes. My study seeks to complicate the history of suburbia, which has predominantly been described as being monotonous, by focusing on the productive and innovative energies that it occasioned in fiction. In order to reclaim suburbia from its ostensible Cleaver-like one-dimensionality, I locate its

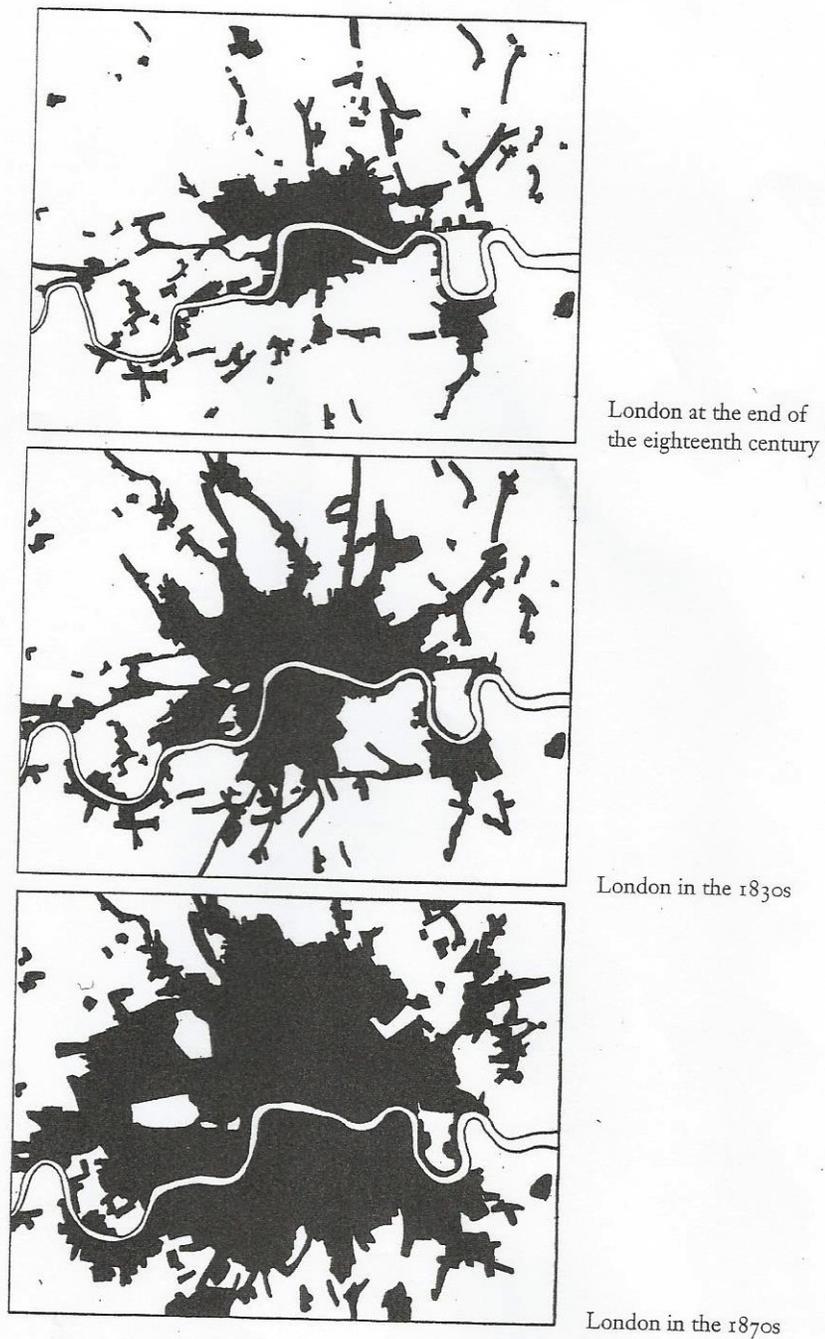
important place and function within the matrix of varied cultural forces. Ultimately, I hope to prove that even urban transformations such as suburban expansion, which seem to be, or are, the most straightforward in their causes (escape from the city due to urban overcrowding) and effects (culturally-flat sprawls that breed gender inequality), are worth investigating in detail: the links between human identities, bodies, and their environments are so multilayered that behind every significant (sub)urban development there is bound to be rich semantic potential. It is thus no wonder that Doyle, Machen, Richardson, Woolf, Sackville-West, and Bowen all found inspiration in the frequently-overlooked suburban spaces, nor is it surprising that I am now finding a richness of meanings in their respective tales.

**Chapter 1**  
**The Many Faces of Mr. Suburbia: Male Deviance**  
**in the Gothic Detective Stories of Doyle<sup>25</sup> and Machen**

In her study of the suburban Gothic in American popular culture, Bernice Murphy observes that “the trope of the peaceful-looking suburban house with a TERRIBLE SECRET within is so familiar as to have passed into cliché” (2, emphasis in original). Interested in post-World War II cinematic and fictional manifestations of this subgenre, Murphy attributes the frequently macabre characterizations of the suburbs to American anxieties concerning the rapid growth of housing developments around major cities in the 1950s and 1960s, and the concomitant changes in people’s modes of living. The ostensibly quiet suburban abode and its disturbing interiors may have passed into cliché in the latter half of the twentieth century; the Gothicization of suburbia, however, had become much earlier a popular means by which an Anglo-American society expressed its anxieties about multifaceted cultural changes. Writing in the latter half of the nineteenth century, British authors such as Margaret Oliphant, Mrs. R. J. H. Riddell, Sheridan Le Fanu, Wilkie Collins, Arthur Machen, and Arthur Conan Doyle explored fictional suburban landscapes as being mysterious and gloomy spaces replete with supernatural events, criminals, anarchists, sexual deviants, and con artists. Gothic characterizations of suburbia in Victorian and *fin-de-siècle* Britain were a response to rapid technological, economic, and cultural transformations, one of which was the popularization of suburban living.

This chapter will focus specifically on the journalistic and fictional discourses concerning suburbia in the *fin de siècle*.<sup>26</sup> It was during this period that lower-middle- and working-class families relocated *en masse* to housing estates surrounding major British cities (most notably London) (see Figure 4). In the eyes of many commentators, the popularization of suburban living symbolized the bourgeoisie’s inability to maintain a monopoly on a way of life that was

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*Figure 4:* Expansion of London in the nineteenth century (Porter 214).

conceived to be an expression of fundamental middle-class values. The new, small, suburban units were most often shoddily constructed and geographically separate from the neighbourhoods occupied by the bourgeoisie, but what they signified far outweighed their mundane reality: for the incoming suburbanites an acquisition of a semi-detached house promised an “escape into a middle-class world of space and time,” whereas for the bourgeoisie the encroaching housing developments were a reminder that the suburban model could no longer mirror and reaffirm their special class identity (Hapgood, “The New Suburbanites” 45).

In middle-class *fin-de-siècle* fiction and journalism, new suburbia was most commonly disparaged as being a feminized land of vulgar consumerism. Lynne Hapgood contends that the relentless satire of suburban up-and-comers in jokes, cartoons, and articles in *Punch* from 1889 to 1892 set a “reassuring distance” between the bourgeoisie and the “encroaching” newcomers, and popularized the use of the word “suburbanite” to connote misguided class aspirations, philistinism, and feminization (“New Suburbanites” 37). While this chapter will briefly discuss *fin-de-siècle* stereotypes of feminized suburbia, it will focus primarily on analyzing the intersections of space-time and gender in the less-commonly-studied suburban Gothic texts of the period. Mikhail Bakhtin contends that classic Gothic tales, such as Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), are organized around the chronotope of the historical past that is embodied in the castle and its collections of ancient objects and memories (246). In the case of *fin-de-siècle* suburban Gothic, housing estates also possess a special relationship to the past: rather than being saturated with the *historical* past, however, they are envisioned as being connected to a *primitive* and *disorderly* past through the use of popular imagery of degeneration and regression. Their disturbing, chronic instability is most frequently expressed through the character of a morally and/or biologically degenerate male subject, whose frequent commutes

between private and public spheres hint at a discontinuity in the notion of a unified human subject and suggest possibilities for experimentation with alternative identities.

Several short stories, namely Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (1891) and "The Norwood Builder" (1903) and Arthur Machen's "Novel of the Iron Maiden" (1890) and "The Inmost Light" (1894), which feature a dynamic combination of the Gothic and detective genres, are particularly apt examples of texts that create links between problematic masculinity and suburban spaces.<sup>27</sup> In these tales, the male characters' experiments in "becoming-Other" suggest the unreadability of human identity and generate destabilizing energies that can only be partially and temporarily contained with the aid of gentlemanly, brave detectives. The prevalence of *fin-de-siècle* suburban narratives, as well as the important role that discourses of degeneration and masculinity play in both the production and correction of deviance in these stories, suggest a middle-class desire to define suburbia as being a site of semantic confusion. While widespread suburban living ostensibly poses a serious threat to the status quo, the pervasive crisis can be countered only through constant surveillance and reassertions of traditional bourgeois masculinity.

There has been a substantial amount of scholarship written on late-Victorian Gothic fiction, but no commentators so far have discussed the links between Doyle and Machen's suburban Gothic detective stories. Todd Kuchta's book on imperialism's relation to the expanding suburbs and Lara Baker Whelan's detailed exploration of Gothic imagery in mid-nineteenth-century narratives of suburban living, for example, are extremely useful in pointing out the central role suburbia played in *fin-de-siècle* Gothic and detective fiction; neither of these authors, however, provides an in-depth analysis of my chosen short stories by Doyle and Machen, or focuses on the tropes of male bodies in transition.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Audrey Jaffe and Anne Marck's studies of "doubling" in "The Man With the Twisted Lip," Andrew Smith,

Diana Barsham, and Joseph A. Kestner's work on troubled masculinity in Doyle's texts, and Sage Leslie McCarthy, Paul Fox, and Adrian Eckersley's essays on Machen's representations of degeneration and detection, do not discuss the semantic importance of suburban settings in the fiction of the two authors.<sup>29</sup> This chapter aims to address the significant gap in Doyle and Machen scholarship by reading their texts with a focus on suburbia while emphasizing the inter-relatedness of *fin-de-siècle* discourses about degeneration and gender. Deleuze and Guattari's theories of "striated" and "smooth" spaces and "becoming" are particularly useful in analyzing the potential resistance that Doyle and Machen's attribute to their fictional suburban spaces.

Since Doyle and Machen's works portray suburbia as being complex and mysterious rather than one-dimensional and feminized, they can be related to Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West, and Elizabeth Bowen's texts, which similarly resist simplistic disparagements of suburban living. While these male authors' short stories do not explode or significantly question traditional Victorian gender norms, an analysis of their texts is a fitting prelude to an engagement with Richardson, Woolf, Sackville-West, and Bowen's suburbia-related innovations: it testifies to the complex semantic possibilities that can be found in those late-Victorian texts that feature a dynamic interplay between gender and changing urban spaces.

### **Degeneration of Suburbia and Suburbanization of Degeneration**

In order to explain why suburban forms of decline were most frequently expressed through images and discussions of problematic femininity and masculinity, it is necessary to analyze carefully the multifaceted transformations besetting late-Victorian society. As the British suffrage movement gained ground throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, national censuses reported higher numbers of single females and increased employment of women as teachers, typewriters, secretaries, and retailers (Kestner 121). Ann Ardis observes that popular

female-authored New Women novels, which featured risqué discussions of sex and sexuality, frequently occasioned readers' outrage about the looseness of the female characters' morals and contributed to a common misconception that "women were taking over the literary world" (42-3). It was becoming increasingly clear that the Angel in the House, the Victorian ideal of nurturing, homebound femininity, was threatened (or rescued) by more independent and publicly visible feminine activities.

Concomitant with the proliferation of active femininity at the *fin de siècle* was a sense that masculinity was in a state of crisis. In her analysis of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1889), Jennifer Beauvais observes that Gothic stories about bachelors reflect a late-Victorian fear that the popular tendency of male professionals to marry later or remain single could lead to "unnatural" homosexual practices (173-87). The exposé of a Cleveland Street male brothel in 1889, for instance, proved the existence of a burgeoning homosexual subculture in *fin-de-siècle* London (Kestner 58). This "crisis" in masculinity, Andrew Smith contends, was caused less by the threat of active femininity than by nineteenth-century discussions of sexology, which identified masculinity as being particularly vulnerable to "perverse" biological urges and utilized a discourse of degeneracy to describe instances of male sexual misbehaviour (*Victorian Demons* 2-4).

Chronic decreases in birth rates in England during this historical period were often cited as being a proof of the erosion of Victorian gender norms (Masterman 78). Such changes were particularly troubling since the health of the nation and the empire was seen as being dependent on heteronormativity: the nuclear family was an instrument of normalization that produced children who would eventually take over their parents' roles in the maintenance of British national identity and colonial ventures. Discourses concerning the decline in Victorian values and ways of life were thus preponderate and resonant on multiple levels at the time when defeats

during the Zulu War, First Boer War, and Sudanese War, as well as the rising powers of Germany and the United States, made it clear that British imperial dominance was no longer uncontested (Kestner 7; Showalter 5). While the sciences of physical anthropology were devoted to “establishing the legitimacy of racial differentiation” as a way of naturalizing British global dominance, signs of instability at home and abroad suggested a weakening of racial vitality and instigated fears of reverse colonization and future miscegenation (Showalter 5).

The London Dock Strike of 1889, as well as the founding of the British Labour Party and the organization of trade unions in the late nineteenth century, compounded the sense of instability pervasive during this period. Located in London’s East End district, the docks were the primary entryway for foreigners and their products, and it became a common practice among late-Victorian, middle-class commentators to equate the working-class East End with the mutually reinforcing notions of foreignness, criminality, and mystery. Such characterizations reasserted class boundaries and justified the practices of surveillance and correction in the form of law enforcement, surveys, and philanthropy.<sup>30</sup> McLaughlin contends that one of the salient characteristics of late-Victorian culture was its “conflation of imperial (exotic, oriental, colonial) and metropolitan discourses”: the increased presence of the foreign within the East End elicited the imagery of the “urban jungle,” by which “the way of describing peoples, places, and experiences on the periphery of empire became an effective rhetorical strategy for imagining the imperial center” (14, 1). While McLaughlin’s claim regarding the blurring of boundaries occasioned by the proximity of the foreign “other” in the consumer-oriented metropolis is valid, the imagery of the “urban jungle” was inseparable from the bourgeoisie’s more general concerns surrounding the inter-related discourses of class-, gender-, and race-based degeneration.

It is in fact impossible to write about the links among *fin-de-siècle* suburbia, gender, and the Gothic without addressing the discourses of degeneration that were pervasive during this

historical period and that significantly shaped the way in which late Victorians expressed their concerns about all of these interrelated societal changes. With roots in the work of Bénédict Augustin Morel (1840s and 1850s), who studied the decline in faculties of mental patients by utilizing pre-Darwinian theories of evolution, the notion of “degeneration” as a “change of structure by which an organism, or some particular organ, becomes less elaborately developed and assumes the form of a lower type” (*OED*) became especially popular after the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origins of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) (Smith, *Victorian Demons* 14). Darwin’s idea of a common ancestor and his theory of natural selection not only linked human beings with lower orders of animals, but also suggested the disquieting spectre of de-evolution, by which humans could once again acquire characteristics of their animal predecessors.

The possibilities of biological change imagined by *fin-de-siècle* commentators were often disturbing, as suggested by Doyle in his short story “Lot No. 249” (1892), in which a young student degenerates into a reptile.<sup>31</sup> Images of bodies in transition are central to late-Victorian Gothic texts such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Rudyard Kipling’s “The Mark of the Beast” (1890), as well as Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1894) and *The Three Impostors* (1895). Yet, Wilde’s suggestion that Dorian’s changing, macabre portrait reflects his hedonism, and Machen’s hints that a female character’s descent into animalism in *The Great God Pan* is caused by her sexual perversion, draw attention to the fact that late-Victorian authors frequently conflated various types of decline in their descriptions of degeneration: the physical and the moral being the most obvious in the case of these two texts. Indeed, Havelock Ellis’s *The Criminal* (1891), which introduced Cesare Lombroso’s studies in criminal anthropology to England, equates “the criminal with atavism, and both with the lower classes,” thus arguing for

links between social, moral, and biological decline (Arata 34). In order to explain the success of certain social characteristics and justify the dominance of specific human groups, on the other hand, Herbert Spencer and social Darwinists extended Darwin's notion of the "survival of the fittest" into ethics and the social sciences.

Stephen Arata observes that degeneration was a term which "became a component of debates over the growth of cities, the expansion of empire, the rise of criminal classes, the growth of mass culture, and the development of socialist and anarchist philosophies, not to mention the blossoming of decadent art"; it could also be applied to discussions about women's suffrage or human sexuality and "provided ways to make connections among these disparate phenomena" (15). Both Arata and William Greenslade note that discourses of decline were the means by which the dominant bourgeoisie provided itself with ostensibly scientific ways of "othering" groups of people according to their class, race, morality, sexual practices, gender, or religion and accounting for more stringent forms of surveillance (Arata 15-17; Greenslade 2-3). For example, the new technologies of sex by which this class elaborated its identity in the nineteenth century merged "the medicine of perversions and the programs of eugenics" with the theory of "degenerescence" as a way of scientifically explaining the hereditary development of sexual perversion, identifying sex as being a "biological responsibility" with regard to the species, and justifying the "medical – but also political – project for organizing a state management of marriages, births, and life expectancies" (Foucault, *HS* 118).

Neither Arata nor Greenslade, however, study the intricate semantic relationship between suburbia and the omni-functional concept of degeneration, nor do they analyze how late-Victorian authors utilized imagery of suburbia to describe what they portrayed as being prevalent forms of "local foreignness." The phenomenon of a rapidly expanding *fin-de-siècle* suburbia played a significant role in the conglomeration of ideas concerning degeneration: as

multitudes of “lower classes” colonized the open spaces around British cities, suburbia became a striking visual symbol of change. Sidney Low, British journalist and historian, observes in his 1891 article, “The Rise of the Suburbs,” that the dramatic increase in the English and Welsh populations was concomitant with a growing concentration of people in the suburbs: “The majority of the people of this island will live in suburbs; and the suburban type will be the most widespread and characteristic of all, as the rural has been in the past, and as the urban may perhaps be said to be in the present” (547-548). If suburban living was becoming increasingly (and disturbingly, to most middle-class commentators) familiar, then the potential future of suburban development and its population reflected that of the entire British Empire. It is no surprise that suburbia was frequently featured in discussions of degeneration, both as a source of the problem and, more rarely, as a means of alleviating potential decline. Most journalists and writers who wrote about the suburbs, furthermore, were concerned less with providing realistic accounts of the changing landscapes than with using suburbia as a discursive nexus through which to elaborate their visions of pervasive cultural problems and define boundaries of middle-class identity.

Low is one of the few *fin-de-siècle* commentators who argues that the spread of the suburbs is a positive thing, for suburban dwellers were far healthier than the “stunted and degenerating masses” of East-Enders and “more alert, more active, and more elastic” than the rustics (554). By titling his article “The Rise of the Suburbs,” Low implies that suburban living symbolizes a new order of society, one which is healthier, more adaptable, and more productive: the word “rise” suggests a large-scale galvanization of energy and hints at the role suburbia could play in strengthening and promoting the interests of the British Empire. Doyle is also fairly sanguine about the suburban future of Britain in his novella *Beyond the City: Idyll of a Suburb* (1892), in which heterosexual unions among young people prosper, and in his Sherlock Holmes

short story “The Naval Treaty” (1893), in which the detective calls the boarding schools filled with suburban youths the “beacons of the future” (346).

Such optimistic characterizations and visions of suburbia, however, were outnumbered by a plethora of variously ambivalent or negative constructions. C. F. G. Masterman, a Liberal party politician and journalist writing in 1909, describes the spiritually and intellectually limited new suburbanites as representing the less-than-satisfactory future of English society: “Living amongst us and around us, never becoming articulate . . . these people grow and flourish and die, with their own codes of honour, their special beliefs and moralities, their judgements and often their condemnation of the classes to whom has been given leisure and material advantage” (98). In far more acerbic terms, T. W. H. Crosland, British author and journalist, disparages lower-middle-class housing developments, attacking the “idiotic free libraries” found in suburbia, as well as its pretentious, materialistic, “ruddy-faced, glassy-eyed residents,” who were “born to wrestle, not to reign” (18, 141, 151-2). According to Crosland, suburbanites are, contradictorily, both narrow-minded and potentially subversive in their tendency to adopt and breed democratic ideas and modes of living. While he does not comment on Low’s article, Crosland’s description of suburban living echoes the former commentator’s use of the “rise” metaphor, except that in this case suburban development suggests a pervasive and growing cultural malaise.

Ironically, the ideal of familial privacy, which was originally meant to shape and reaffirm the heteronormativity of bourgeois citizens, was by the late nineteenth century frequently imagined as being one of the more disturbing aspects of suburbia: not only could neighbours hide their class status behind the façades of their abodes, but they could experiment with various types of alternative lifestyles and sexualities. In G. K. Chesterton’s *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* (1908), for instance, anarchist’s plans progress behind closed suburban doors, while in Machen’s *The Three Impostors* (1895) a mutilated corpse of a young

man rots in a deserted suburban mansion. Using Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, one could say that suburbia was envisioned as being a paradoxical space in which a specific type of "striation" constructed a terrain for striking instances of subversion or "smoothing." The scenario was disquieting, for the idea of an increasing multitude of private cells suggested hordes of potential "becomings," which could produce myriad forms of otherness.

Discourses concerning the "urban jungle" and local foreignness were thus applied frequently to suburbia by *fin-de-siècle* commentators who sought to emphasize the implications of recent geographic and demographic changes: Crosland refers to newcomer suburbans as being "almost inhuman" (48); Masterman notes that they are as "unknown" to "classes that investigate, observe, and record, as the people of China or Peru" (98); and Ford Madox Ford observes in 1905 that these regions have something about them that is "touching and romantic, something 'characteristic' and foreign" (*The Soul of London* 30). In his effective study of the multilayered relations among suburbia and British imperialism, Kuchta argues that colonial wealth financed "residential speculation," while foreign investment and trade created jobs for "suburbia's representative specimen, the clerk"; suburbia was imagined as being both a dangerous frontier that could degenerate into a vulgar neighbourhood (or even a slum), and a land so tamed by convention and materialism as to have lost all its vitality (6, 3-5).<sup>32</sup> At a time when the English countryside was progressively idealized as being "home" in relation to the distant lands of the British Empire, suburban building around major cities rapidly degraded natural beauties and signified a deterioration of core English values and ways of life (Williams, *The Country and the City* 281). One could argue, therefore, that suburbia joined, if not replaced, the East End as a symbol of local foreignness. Unlike the East End, however, the suburbs were visible almost everywhere and were practically becoming the norm of modern living.

The architectural monotony of these new developments, described by Masterman as “defying imagination,” was furthermore portrayed as being disturbing in its very blandness (65). Produced en masse by profit-oriented speculative builders, whose goal was to build cheaper, standardized versions of earlier picturesque suburban residences at a quick pace, the new suburbs featured monotonous rows of semi-detached, identical houses (Dennis 191). The rectangular building block, a layout that could be “swiftly reduced to standard monetary units for purchase and sale,” sprawled in all directions, failing to respect the many “vital factors that determine the proper utilization of an urban site” (Mumford 422-423). For many commentators, the expansion of such suburban estates emphasized the way in which individualistic laws of capitalism could create a society devoid of quality, originality, and beauty.

Using Kant’s notion of the terrifying sublime, Whelan argues that authors of mid-Victorian Gothic short stories describe new suburbs as being particularly unsettling sites that fail to represent their meaning and stand for more than one can grasp (125). The inhabitants of the suburban estates – in Crosland’s words, “like one another as peas” – were imagined to be “deeply familiar and beguilingly strange,” unsettling, like their houses, specifically because of their anonymity and sheer numbers (Crosland 141; Wallace 114).<sup>33</sup> These new suburbanites and their respective cellular abodes represented the perceived disappearance of originality and vitality in consumer society, as well as potential horrors of well-hidden, deviant interiors. The fact that these figures were becoming increasingly familiar in *fin-de-siècle* culture explained why their ostensible links with degeneration carried such complex ontological significance.

### **Suburban Genders: The Comic and the Gothic**

*Fin-de-siècle* British fiction is strewn with the recurring figures of problematic suburban femininity and masculinity: the emasculated and comedic lower-middle-class husband;

the shrewish, vulgar, and materialistic lower-middle-class housewife; and the shape- or identity-shifting suburban male. Instances of the first two, more common figures contributed to the stereotypical view of the suburban population. As Hapgood observes, late-Victorian, middle-class press frequently portrayed male suburbanites as being silly and pretentious:

The reassuring message was that the most private and cherished thoughts of the new suburbanites were not dreams of the class struggle envisaged by Socialism and labour politics, but dreams of acceptance into the middle class – their only desire, not revolution but endless imitation. (“The New Suburbanites” 39)

Both Masterman and Crosland remark on the popular comedic characterization of the suburban male, with the latter commentator himself affirming that the figure is “a hen-pecked, shrew-driven, neglected, heart-sick man” (Masterman 64; Crosland 53, 37). In George and Weedon Grossmith’s *The Diary of a Nobody* (1892), for example, the lower-middle-class Charles Pooter is a pretentious but chronically ridiculous butt of everyone’s joke, while George Gissing’s *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894) mocks Samuel Barmby, a “suburban deity,” for half-educating himself “by dint of busy perusal of penny popularities” (Gissing 321, 214). There is, however, something unsettling in the images of these suburban males which Hapgood does not explore: they may be comic, but these characters are also suggestive of a pervasive lack of male vitality and character, for they are too tame or philistine to be competent architects of a strong British future. The men’s deficiencies are related primarily to the fact that they are dominated by the vulgarity and materialism of suburbia, which is represented by the figures of their own, or other men’s, shrewish suburban spouses.

In *fin-de-siècle* fiction, observes Gail Cunningham, suburbia is typically presented as being a feminine world that entraps its male members (51). Unlike the majority of the male population, women were suburbia’s constant inhabitants and the primary shoppers of goods that

decorated the newly-developed abodes. In *Tono-Bungay* (1909), for example, Wells describes suburbia as a land of pretentious, semi-educated females: “Most husbands were ‘in business’ off stage. . . . and the wives were giving their energies to produce, with the assistance of novels and the illustrated magazines, a moralised version of the afternoon life of the aristocratic class” (193). According to many late-Victorian texts, the primary flaw of the fictional, lower-middle-class woman was her obsessive materialism, sparked by a desire for gentility and the leading cause of her hectoring temperament. Ada Peachey in Gissing’s *In the Year of Jubilee*, for instance, absorbs penny novels and ignores her young child, while expecting her equally neglected husband to earn the money for her “modish” clothing (240). Meanwhile, Minnie Corbett and her sister, Loetitia, the antagonists of Ella D’Arcy’s “At Twickenham” (1897), are the exact replicas of Ada, for they boss Mr. Corbett around and try to make their house as “over-furnished” and “over-ornate” as possible (68).<sup>34</sup> As a result, suburban men are sapped of their energy by trying to earn enough money to sustain their wives’ class ambitions, or are tamed, like Mr. Pooter and Mr. Corbett, by their own adoption of the consumer lifestyle: “But Corbett found consolation in the knowledge that hall was paved with grey and white comasic,” states D’Arcy, “that the Salve bristled at you from the door-mat, that the dining-room boasted of a dado, and that the drawing-room rose to the dignity of a frieze” (64). The figure of the vulgar housewife was thus portrayed as being the driving force of the suburban malaise in general and men’s emasculation in particular. Obsessed with material goods and superficial symbols of social status, the suburban woman was presented as forgetting her wifely and motherly duties, consequently eroding the Victorian ideal of nurturing femininity, and draining the energy of the nation itself.

Such characterizations of suburbia betray a desire of various commentators to find ways of othering the up-and-coming suburbanites through rather contrary impulses: there is an attempt

simultaneously to suggest and ostensibly defuse (through comedy) the sense of destabilization which the presence of suburban newcomers implied, while the conflation of femininity and suburban philistinism reaffirms gender dichotomy through an emphasis on essential female inferiority. The exaggerated pretentiousness and materialism of characters such as Minnie Corbett suggest that the authors of stories about new suburbanites had little interest in mimesis. Rather, their accounts *produce* suburbia, defining it in strikingly one-dimensional terms as being a land oversaturated with the values of femininity: “The fact that suburban life is underpinned by the economics of the city and the realities of commuting is ignored; suburban life is domesticated and feminized, its values those of the family and the emotions” (Hapgood 39). The suburban newcomers are defined as being different from the original inhabitants of the picturesque peripheries because they, as over-enthusiastic imitators frequently do, exaggerate and consequently debase many of the values upon which bourgeois suburbia was based.

Although male members of suburbia were primarily characterized as being intellectually limited and quasi-impotent, the popular late-Victorian Gothic imagery of male doubleness and fragmentation (famously showcased in Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* or Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*) was also utilized in descriptions of suburban businessmen and bachelors. Less common and less commonly studied than the one-dimensional stereotypes of lower-middle-class masculinity and femininity, these figures of problematic maleness are nevertheless particularly indicative of how middle-class responses to suburbia were formulated through literary productions of gendered characters – and how gender norms are elaborated and performed through human beings’ relationship with time and space. The figure of the shape- and identity-shifting suburban male is most especially prevalent in Doyle and Machen’s short stories: in Doyle’s “The Man With the Twisted Lip,” Neville St. Clair, a respectable family man, maintains his comfortable suburban existence by daily becoming an East-End beggar; Jonas

Oldacre, the successful suburban builder of Doyle's "The Norwood Builder," is actually a corrupt and revengeful con artist with a secret identity; Dr. Black from Machen's "The Inmost Light" covertly practices the "dark arts" in the privacy of his suburban home; and in Machen's "Novel of the Iron Maiden," Mr. Mathias, a suburban bachelor and quiet member of a London's gentlemen's club, is privately an enthusiastic collector (and perhaps a user) of macabre, foreign torture devices. In these stories, the men's dynamic relationships with the public-private dichotomy of suburban living produce situations through which developing housing estates are envisioned as being hiding and breeding places of deviant behaviours.<sup>35</sup>

Suburban men's relative freedom of movement reaffirmed their difference from the stay-at-home women, as they frequently (in most instances, almost daily) exchanged their family personae for urban, work-based ones. While the men's transitions among various spheres of existence were usually regulated by the rhythms of a capitalist workday, they also hinted at the constructed nature of human identity. The stringent separation between the suburban man's public and private lives enabled him to control the flow of information between the two spheres and hide important discrepancies between his identities. These realities of suburban living inspired authors such as Doyle and Machen to imagine disturbing scenarios associated with masculinity. Indeed, the city, with its jostling crowds, foreign workers, East-End mendicants, and criminals, offered temptations to the suburban male, a means of "becoming-Other" by entering into proximity with various subcultures. As his family occupied only the suburban portion of his existence, the man could keep them in the dark about his city experiments. The privacy of his home, on the other hand, ensured that the man's suburban neighbours could not easily discern his class identity (in other words, know what he did in the city), or (especially in case he was a bachelor) his potential forms of deviance.

The Gothic is ideally suited for a discussion of shifting suburbs and their shiftier inhabitants, for it deals primarily with the past, or rather with the way the past haunts or disturbs the present: in their descriptions of the ways in which the past colonizes brand new suburban landscapes, late-Victorian authors hint at the degenerative possibilities that could arise from widespread geographic and demographic transformations. Whereas the tales of silly “new suburbanites” and their imitations of the bourgeois lifestyle depict a comic misuse of suburban values, Gothic stories imagine the destructive potential inherent in the suburban gendered division of space and time. Suburbia is represented as being conducive to the development of masculine “abnormality”: it is an ostensibly ordinary space-time that is in actuality disturbingly close to the primitive, less-evolved past, and that requires constant surveillance and invites processes of detection and correction.

### **Twisted Lips, Twisted Minds, and the Holmesian Panopticon**

At the time when Doyle created the character of Sherlock Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), the Scottish-born author lived at No. 12 Tennyson Road in South Norwood, a London suburb (Pearson 130). In 1891, he began to publish short stories with the same detective character in a newly established magazine, *The Strand*. Doyle was interested in appealing to a primarily suburban population of male commuters, who usually read the publication during their daily trips to and from the city:

Considering [the] various journals with their disconnected stories it had struck me that a single character running through a series, if it only engaged the attention of the reader, would bind that reader to that particular magazine. On the other hand, it had long seemed to me that the ordinary serial might be an impediment rather

than help to a magazine, since, sooner or later, one missed one number and afterwards it had lost all interest. Clearly the ideal compromise was a character which carried through, and yet instalments which were each complete in themselves, so that the purchaser was always sure that he could relish the whole contents of the magazines. (Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* 95-6)

Holmes, the gentleman detective of extraordinary deductive powers and esoteric knowledges, became so famous that numerous readers thought he was a real man: “That Sherlock Holmes was anything but mythical to many,” observes Doyle in his memoirs, “is shown by the fact that I have had many letters addressed to him with request that I forward them” (Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* 100).<sup>36</sup> In a rapidly changing culture, the figure of an infallibly logical Holmes, who could solve any puzzle through his careful observations of everyday life, imparted a sense of control: the readers’ belief in a flesh and blood version of the detective suggests a form of wishful thinking (Ougby 155).<sup>37</sup>

John Carey, who records the disparaging comments made by many male modernists regarding the consumerist suburban masses, contends that Doyle was an author who wrote against the burgeoning intellectual elitism, for Holmes’s self-styled “redemptive genius as a detective lies in rescuing individuals from the mass” (8). Although it is clear that Doyle did not dismiss the suburban lifestyle and its practitioners, as T. S. Eliot,<sup>38</sup> Ezra Pound, D. H. Lawrence, and Clive Bell did, Holmes’s constant detections of deviance among ordinary citizens and landscapes suggests a destabilization that is disturbing specifically because it is produced by and hidden within the commonplace. The detective’s ability to make trivial objects reveal telling information may generate a comforting feeling of control, but the very fact that “the everyday”

becomes an object of mystery and investigation is unsettling: “‘As a rule,’ said Holmes, ‘the more bizarre a thing is the less mysterious it proves to be. It is your commonplace, featureless crimes which are really puzzling, just as a commonplace face is the most difficult to identify’” (“The Red-Handed League” 231).

Consequently, it is no wonder that the increasingly familiar suburban lifestyle is imagined to be a site of crime, mystery, and “becomings” in numerous Sherlock Holmes tales: apart from the two Doyle narratives studied in this chapter, texts such as *The Sign of Four* (1890), “A Scandal in Bohemia” (1891), “The Red-Handed League” (1891), “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet” (1892), “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” (1892), “The Naval Treaty” (1894), and “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” (1903) describe a variety of disturbances caused by males of various classes in London’s suburban landscapes. While the gentleman detective addresses crimes using qualities characterized as being integral to Victorian bourgeois masculinity (namely “observation, rationalism, factuality, logic, comradeship, daring, and pluck”), he nevertheless brings to a reader’s attention the fact that suburban masculinity is pervasively and chronically deviant (Kestner 2). In order to analyze images of suburban males’ doubleness in Doyle’s “The Man With the Twisted Lip” and “The Norwood Builder,” one would have to engage with the texts’ simultaneous reaffirmations of sturdy, rational masculinity and indications of a gender-inflected cultural malaise. In this manner, one could account for the popularity of Holmesian narratives by looking at the ways in which they repeatedly and alternately occasion discomfort *and* relief, and suggest that seriality is necessary because the antidote is but temporary.

### **“The Man With the Twisted Lip”: A Wealthy Suburban Beggar**

Doyle’s “The Man With the Twisted Lip” begins with a description of Isa Whitney, “brother of the late Elias Whitney, D. D. Principal of the Theological College of St. George” (137). Isa is “much addicted to opium,” a drug associated in the *fin-de-siècle* with working-class East London’s foreign subcultures (“MWTL” 137; Marck 114). The opening sentence establishes Isa’s distinguished family genealogy and class status only to shock the reader with the mention of his addiction: behind the veneer of middle-class respectability, it seems, lurk potentially corrupt habits. The opium user is a “wreck and ruin of a noble man” whose “drooping” and “huddled” body is undergoing a steady process of disintegration (“MWTL” 137). His face is no longer white, but “yellow” and “pasty,” which implies that degeneration into a racialized Other is also an aspect of Isa’s physical decline. The spectre of Isa’s deviance enters Dr. Watson’s domestic haven, for the former man’s distraught wife disturbs the Watsons at the very apex of their daily heteronormative domesticity, at “the hour when a man gives his first yawn” and a wife lays “the needlework down in her lap” (137). A “young and timid” woman, Kate Whitney asks Dr. Watson to help her retrieve her missing husband from an opium den in the “farthest End of the City”: she is relegated to the nurturing care of Mrs. Watson while the brave and earnest doctor embarks on a journey to the unknown working-class districts (138). From the outset, troubled masculinity is presented as being a potential threat to middle-class domesticity, which can be vanquished only by a utilization and reaffirmation of traditional masculine qualities.

The dutiful Dr. Watson enters East London’s labyrinthine streets and descends into the den through a “black gap like the mouth of a cave,” a description that suggests a return to pre-civilized times (“MWTL” 139). In this gloomy Gothic landscape, respectable middle-class men such as Isa dissolve into anonymous “black shadows,” lying in “strange, fantastic poses,” their

individual bodies dissolving into a mass of fragments: references to “bowed shoulders,” “bent knees,” “heads thrown back,” and “chins pointing upwards” read like descriptions of hungry, lurking animals (139). Furthermore, the opium den, with its Lascar owner and “sallow Malay attendant,” looks like the “forecastle of an emigrant ship” (139). Isa, who has spent two days soaking in this atmosphere, informs Dr. Watson that he requires help in leaving: ““I can do nothing for myself”” (140). His masculinity is so drained that he has become as helpless and dependent on Dr. Watson as his wife had been earlier in the story. Moral and physical degeneration is equated with class, racial, and gender “inferiority,” and middle-class masculinity is effectively problematized through association with the complexly layered forms of otherness.

This association is reaffirmed and complicated in the main plot of the story, in which Holmes – whom Dr. Watson meets in the opium den, where the latter is conducting an investigation – discovers that Hugh Boone, an East End beggar, is actually Neville St. Clair, a respectable suburban husband. Unable to pay off a bill that he had “backed” for a friend with his low monthly income as a journalist, St. Clair makes a sudden realization during his undercover research into the London’s beggar community: ““[I] knew that I could earn as much in a day by smearing my face with a little paint, laying my cap on the ground, and sitting still”” (“MWTL” 159-60). By day, a disguised St. Clair earns enough money by begging to support his wife and children in a wealthy suburb near Lee, in Kent (142-3). The picturesque residence in question, named The Cedars, is a “large villa” located approximately seven miles from the opium den (142). Since St. Clair has come to an agreement with the “rascally Lascar” from the opium den and changes into Boone daily above said establishment, the realm of the den comes to stand in “a semi-detached – separate but conjoined – relation to the suburban residence” (“MWTL” 142; Kuchta 68).

The gender-based separation of home and work ensures that St. Clair can keep his mendicant activities a secret from his wife and children, while the suburban “architectural and geographic isolation facilitate criminality” by limiting “flows of information and access to clues” (Kuchta 79). Indeed, it is only by sheer coincidence that St. Clair’s covert activities are discovered: his wife makes an unscheduled trip to the city to pick up a parcel, spies her husband changing above the den, finds only Boone in the room when she enters, and hires Holmes to investigate St. Clair’s disappearance. Holmes is aware that it is in the privacy of the suburban home that he will find the clues to the mystery, which is why he tells Dr. Watson that ““many inquiries must be made out here”” (“MWTL” 150).<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the detective is fortunate that St. Clair’s wife invites him to spend the night in her home, for it is within the most private of suburban rooms, the bathroom, that Holmes discovers a sponge, the clue to St. Clair’s practices of disguise (156).

It was the nature of finance capitalism in the nineteenth century, argues Jaffe, that enabled men like St. Clair to perpetuate so successfully their multiple identities: finance capitalists and stock brokers were not physically attached to the businesses they invested in, so St. Clair, a self-proclaimed businessman “interested in several companies,” has an excuse to go to the city but can roam because he does not have to visit a workplace on a daily basis (Jaffe 97-8; “MWTL” 144). The increase in stock market speculation, as well as “unexpected, devastating crashes” or booms, inspired fictional scenarios in which gentlemen could become beggars and, perhaps more disturbingly, in which poor men could become rich in a short period of time (Jaffe 97). Up-and-coming suburban businessmen such as St. Clair were disruptive specifically because they were most capable of exposing the artificial nature of social hierarchies and undermining traditional class boundaries by experimenting with various identities. In fact, St. Clair/Boone’s description of his begging practices displays a successful commodification of social identity, for

he uses his acting and make-up skills to make himself “as pitiable as possible”: with a bit of “coarse brown tint,” an orange wig, dirty rags, and “a small slip of flesh-coloured plaster” that gives his lip a twist, the suburban gentleman becomes a mendicant on a daily basis (“MWTL” 159-160). This “gentleman’s” success as a beggar is based on his ability to stand out “amid the common crowd of mendicants,” for he is “ever ready with a reply to any piece of chaff which may be thrown at him by the passers by” (147). Boone represents beggary as commodified and professionalized by a middle-class man for primarily middle-class passers-by: he fits the role well enough so as not to be discovered, but atypically enough so as to earn more than “seven hundred pounds a year” (161).

Watson’s description of St. Clair’s disguise is telling, as it hints that class-otherness is equated with animalism: the twist in the lip creates a semblance of a scar that runs from “eye to chin,” turns up “one side of the upper lip,” and causes the man’s teeth to be “exposed in a perpetual snarl” (“MWTL” 158). While the eponymous “twisted lip” of Doyle’s short story might connote the satisfaction St. Clair/Boone feels with his hidden knowledge or simply indicate his “twistedness”/deviancy, it also literally makes him look like a rabid animal. Through this description, Boone is connected to the imagery of decline and otherness associated with the opium den: the process by which St. Clair turns into Boone involves ostensible degeneration into a diseased specimen of a “lower” species. The suburban lifestyle is thus sustained by the louche activities of the East End rather than by traditional middle-class values.

While capitalist economic relations occasion a decline in male morality, gender-based, suburban spatio-temporal divisions enable this decline to pass unnoticed by those closest to the misbehaving man. Detective and policing forces in the text, however, work to contain the proliferation of male identities occasioned by cultural, demographic, and economic changes. Holmes and the sergeant in charge of the case acknowledge that St. Clair did not break the law,

but they do threaten, to St. Clair's horror, to tell his wife about Boone: "It must stop here, however," said Broadstreet. "If the police are to hush this thing up, there must be no more of Hugh Boone" ("MWTL" 162). In Holmes's opinion, St. Clair has committed "a very great error," for he "would have done better to have trusted [his] wife": the detective thus implies that the suburban man's crime lies in his lack of proper middle-class spousal behaviour (159). If St. Clair has chosen to marry, have children, and buy a suburban house (especially a home in a wealthy, picturesque area), Holmes suggests, he needs to fit the role of a "normal," predictable middle-class gentleman.

Both Marck and Jaffe remind one that there are striking similarities between St. Clair/Boone and Holmes in Doyle's short story (Marck 111-13; Jaffe 110-15). The first time Holmes is introduced in this tale is in the opium den, where he fits only too well into the landscape as a "thin old man, with his jaw resting upon his two fists and his elbows on his knees, staring into the fire" ("MWTL" 139). His transformational abilities exceed those of St. Clair, for Holmes utilizes no paints or wigs to disguise himself: "His form had filled out, his wrinkles were gone, the dull eyes had regained their fire, and there, sitting by the fire, and grinning to my surprise, was none other than Sherlock Holmes" (141). Like Boone, Holmes works by sitting down, for in "The Man With the Twisted Lip" the detective reaches the solution to the mystery by "consuming an ounce of shag" and thinking (Jaffe 100; "MWTL" 163). Dr. Watson's description of Holmes's brainstorming is reminiscent of his earlier portrayal of the opium den:

In the dim light of the lamp I saw him sitting there, an old brier pipe between his lips, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the corner of the ceiling, the blue smoking curling up from him, silent, motionless, with light shining upon his strong-set aquiline features. ("MWTL" 155)

With its many commas, the sentence has a lulling rhythm, while words such as “fixed,” “vacantly,” “silent,” and “motionless” imply a kind of stupor or a hypnotic state (155). Blue smoke, akin to the vapour of an opium pipe, encircles Holmes, who sits like an Asian monk, “cross-legged” on an “Eastern divan” (155). In the process of conducting an investigation into the disappearance of St. Clair, Holmes generates the very Gothic imagery of otherness and shiftiness that he must otherwise locate and contain.

The detective is in fact a master of transformation, and it is this skill that enables him to explore thoroughly various nooks and crannies of London and its surroundings.<sup>40</sup> He is an instrument of governmental policing and normalization, who in order to detect and contain aberrations must himself become-Other. While institutions featured in the Holmes stories are “structurally incapable of discovering the truth” and the police frequently apprehend the wrong man specifically because they operate according to rigid, striated rules, Holmes taps into the possibilities of “smoothing” occasioned by the multifaceted changes in late-Victorian culture (Leps 196). Using Deleuze and Guattari’s theories, one could say that the great detective’s practices testify to the fact that “the smooth space itself can be drawn and occupied by diabolical powers or organization” (*TP* 480). Operating like a “strategic submarine” (which “outflanks all gridding” and “striation” imposed upon an inherently smooth space of the sea by the organizing powers of the state), Holmes re-imparts smooth space for the purposes of controlling all space more completely (*TP* 480).<sup>41</sup> A supple micro-manager, he is imagined to be the means by which deterritorializations or “creative lines of flight” occurring in such spaces as private suburbia can be penetrated, diagnosed, and “reterritorialized” or corrected (508).

It is hardly surprising that Doyle had made Holmes an unemotional bachelor who uses cocaine and enjoys macabre crimes: to bestow transformational abilities upon an ordinary, heterosexual man with existent or future wife and children would have undermined the stability

and balance that undergird a heteronormative existence.<sup>42</sup> Even though his masculine rationality and bravery are admirable, Holmes is otherwise too eccentric to serve as a perfect model for normative masculine behaviour. Nevertheless, the detective's practices of disguise and drug use showcase his self-control and extend his knowledge of crime and human nature: they are an integral part of his detective work. Associated as he is with drug addicts, foreign cultures, and mendicants, Holmes becomes-Other to further his goals of surveillance, enlarge his familiarity with a variety of human experience, and prove his capability as an agent of the law by resisting submersion in deviance or abnormality.<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, he is made safe by the very fact that his persona and adventures are framed within the narrative of the old-fashioned, bourgeois Dr. Watson, whose profession and common last name testify to his respectability and ordinariness, and who sometimes joins the detective on the "singular adventures which were the normal condition of his existence" ("MWTL" 141). Approved and defined by Watson, Holmes, however eccentric, can stand as an example of admirable masculine qualities.

Jaffe utilizes the concept of capitalist "identity alienation" to account for the similarities and differences among Holmes and the males he investigates: while the opium addicts and city businessmen like St. Clair are addicted not to one identity or another "but to the detachment from self both opium, and, profession, imply," Holmes is a "fantasy of professionalism as unalienated labour" because "his work is the complete expression of his nature" (113). While Jaffe effectively explains Holmes's unique social status and identifies male transformations as being enabled by the economic conditions of the *fin de siècle*, she does not explore the detective's role as an agent of governmental micro-policing, nor explain why suburban professionals rather than opium addicts are the primary focus of investigation. The disintegrating, passive men who frequent the East-End opium den at the beginning of Doyle's short story are so detached from the organization of everyday life that they are clearly recognizable as being outcasts, both by their

inability to simulate “normal” subjectivity and by their clustering in the den. Holmes finds and infiltrates these “watering-holes” of the opium addicts very easily: the fact that he is already in the den at the beginning of the story, and that Doyle does not bother to relate the means by which he arrived there, suggests that such proceedings are not challenging to the expert detective and shape-shifter. Suburban deviants, however, are trickier to identify. This is why it takes Dr. Watson more than twenty pages to describe Holmes’s quest for truth in St. Clair’s disappearance. Although the suburban professional man may be detached from his identity, he is a functioning member of society, capable of passing as “normal.” St. Clair indulges in quasi-illicit practices of begging in the city, but ultimately structures his day according to the rhythms of a capitalist work day, returning home every day by the “5.14 from Cannon Street” and thus maintaining an illusion of normativity through punctuality (“MWTL” 144).

As mentioned earlier, Holmes solves the St. Clair/Boone mystery because he is granted access to the suburban bathroom, the safe hiding-place of St. Clair’s secret (the sponge), but he is previously on the wrong track for an uncharacteristically long period of time. When, shortly before the detective finds the clue, Mrs. St. Clair asks Holmes bluntly to tell her if he thinks her husband is alive, he responds, ““Frankly, then, madam, I do not”” (“MWTL” 152). Holmes is stunned to learn from Mrs. St. Clair that she has received a letter from her husband, for he had developed a complicated and lengthy hypothetical scenario of his own, in which Boone had killed St. Clair and thrown him into the river through an open window (149). St. Clair’s wife plays with Holmes’s reactions during this scene, as she withholds the information about the letter and urges him to first tell her his opinion, only to taunt him with a “smiling” face: ““Then perhaps, Mr. Holmes, you will be good enough to explain how it is that I have received this letter from him today?”” (152) When asked by Holmes if she believes the letter was written by her husband’s hand, Mrs. St. Clair responds ““one of his hands,”” which seems to baffle Holmes,

who cannot comprehend the multiplicity of human identity implied by her comment: ““One?”” (153) Although usually of a belief that women are the inferior sex, Holmes observes (shortly after Mrs. St. Clair shows him her husband’s letter) that ““the impression of a woman may be more valuable than the conclusion of an analytical reasoner””: the comment reasserts the Victorian dichotomy that assigns reason to men and intuition to women, but also suggests that Holmes has somewhat less confidence in conventional masculine qualities while in the land of suburbia (154).<sup>44</sup>

Marie-Christine Leps’ contention that “the general hermeneutic quest for truth led by Holmes and the other characters calls into question the basic epistemological presuppositions of contemporary method of knowledge production” (such as the notion that reality is a given or that truth is absolute) seems especially applicable to suburban scenes in this short story (201). Indeed, the blockage in the flow of information caused by the private nature of suburbia, Kuchta argues, challenges Holmes’s deductive powers far more than do the more visible deviancies of the East-End alleys: in “The Man With the Twisted Lip,” Holmes admits that he has been ““one of the most absolute fools in Europe”” (Kuchta 80; “MWTL” 156). Such moments of weakness or diffidence in an ostensibly omniscient detective, whose job it is to unravel semantic confusions, as well as locate and organize flows of information, suggest the serious nature of the perceived “suburban malaise.” Although Holmes ultimately unravels the mystery of St. Clair’s disappearance through the use of logical analysis, his encounter with suburbia plays a part in the story’s denial of basic “suppositions of analytico-referential discourses”; the detective also fails to address the economic realities and gendered division of labour that occasioned and allowed St. Clair’s doubleness (Leps 200). To draw attention away from the fact that his ability to re-install order is but temporary and limited, Holmes must be very insistent, diligent, and always ready for a challenge. In short, he must be serialized.

### **“The Norwood Builder”: Corruption and the Making of Suburbia**

In order to move on to what he regarded as being more interesting literary ventures, Doyle decided to end Holmes’s life in the short story “The Final Problem” (1893): “I am in the middle of the last Holmes story after which the gentleman vanishes, never never to reappear. I am weary of his name” (*Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* 319). His reiteration of “never” emphasizes finality and one could confidently argue that Doyle’s revival of the famous detective in “The Adventure of the Empty House” (1903) and his continued publications of Holmes short stories in the *Strand* until 1913 had little to do with the author’s actual interest in the character.<sup>45</sup> Rather, the ongoing publications of the short detective stories indicate that the reading public could not get enough of the formulaic tales.

As Doyle published “The Norwood Builder” immediately after “The Adventure of the Empty House,” it is important to read the former story in the light of the lengthy hiatus and observe which thematic concerns bridge the gap between the early 1890s and early 1900s. Significantly, descriptions of male suburban duplicity in “The Norwood Builder” form one type of semantic continuity between the two neighbouring decades. This later story is a somewhat shorter and much-less-frequently analyzed narrative than “The Man With the Twisted Lip,” but it focuses more intensely on a suburban setting than the earlier text: while St. Clair’s duplicity unfolds both in the East End and wealthy suburbia, Oldacre’s corrupt con trick is set almost exclusively in the suburbs.<sup>46</sup> This change in setting suggests the author’s interest in showing how the organization of suburban living could produce deviant behaviours in men as different as a commuting husband and a reclusive bachelor.

In his “big modern villa of staring brick” in Lower Norwood, the eponymous retired builder schemes, simultaneously, to get out of his debts and avenge an ex-lover’s long-past

rejection (“NB” 45).<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, it is in this quiet suburban home that Oldacre carries out his plan: he invites his former lover’s son (a law clerk, John Hector McFarlane) to his house, makes him the sole heir to his property, and then fakes his own murder as a way of framing the young man and enabling himself to start afresh in another suburb with a new identity. Once again, crimes perpetrated by suburban males are complex enough to challenge the formidable Holmes, who is at the beginning of the story somewhat contradictorily mourning the loss of his arch nemesis: “London has become a singularly uninteresting city since the death of the late lamented Professor Moriarty” (“NB” 33).

The fact that Doyle’s villain in this tale is a suburban builder is very suggestive. Seen as both a producer of disturbing changes and an example of an unscrupulous up-and-comer, the builder was a frequently reviled figure in the *fin de siècle*. Writers such as Gissing expressed their concern regarding the societal ills caused by spread of suburbia by pinning a large portion of the guilt upon speculative builders: “A year or two ago the site had been an enclosed meadow, portion of the land attached to what was once a country mansion; London, devourer of rural limits, of a sudden made hideous encroachment upon the old estate, now held by a speculative builder . . .” (*In the Year of Jubilee* 218). The poor quality of many of the new suburban houses also proved that their makers were expert opportunists: in D’Arcy’s “At Twickenham,” for example, the lower-middle-class family’s suburban abode is a pretentious spectacle named “Braemar,” but its “Elizabethan casements let in piercing draughts, the Brummagen brass door-handles came off in the confiding hand that sought to turn them,” and “the tiled hearts successfully conducted all the heat up the chimney” (D’Arcy 64).

By building an additional, secret room in the house, Oldacre is able to hide and maintain the illusion of his own homicide for several days: “A lath-and-plaster partition had been run a cross the passage six feet from the end, with a door cunningly concealed in it. It was lit

within by slits under the eaves” (“NB” 54). Holmes, who is baffled by the case for two days, specifically identifies Oldacre’s profession as being potentially threatening to the forces of organization and detection: “‘There’s the advantage of being a builder,’ said Holmes, as we came out. ‘He was able to fix up his own little hiding-place without any confederate save, of course, that precious housekeeper of his, whom I should lose not time in adding to your bag, Lestrade’” (54). Kuchta correctly states that Oldacre’s “secret chamber serves as an architecture analogue for the suburban unknown, a residential disguise into which he can be virtually absorbed without leaving a trace” (67). Indeed, Oldacre’s room is so private that it enables him to become temporarily invisible in a society in which governmental power surveys and classifies its population: temporarily, he is both dead and alive, in a limbo that will ensure he is later able to fashion and occupy a new persona, to “change his name altogether, draw his money, and vanish, starting life elsewhere” (“NB” 56). The builder’s plan is presented as being paradoxically capable of success because it is protected by the privacy of the suburban home.

The very name “Oldacre” is, as Waxenberg suggests, “obviously fictitious,” for the classic legal language uses “the suffix ‘-acre’ to denote a fictional person or place, as in ‘Blackacre leaves a will devising his property, Greenacres, to Whiteacre’” (34). From the outset, Oldacre is characterized as being a shifty signifier, always on the brink of duplicity. A “bachelor in his fifties,” he is capable of building a form of suburban privacy that is not familial but individual, so that his plots are not monitored even by his kin: his deviance is double, for he both rejects heteronormative behaviour and utilizes a family-oriented architectural and ideological structure for his own “eccentric habits” (“NB” 36). Through this villainous character, the text identifies the degenerative possibilities inherent in the suburban ideal of privacy at the exact moment in history when the bourgeoisie’s claim on suburban privacy was being contested. His ex-lover, Mrs. McFarlane, in fact describes Oldacre as being “‘more like a malignant and

cunning ape than a human being,” while Watson states upon meeting him that the old man has an “odious face – crafty, vicious, malignant, with shifty light-grey eyes and white eyelashes” (44, 53). Deviant masculinity is thereby conflated with physical de-evolution into an inferior species, while adjectives such as “crafty” and “shifty” identify creativity and transformative ability as being germane to criminality. “Light-grey eyes” and “white eyelashes,” on the other hand, are signs of advanced age, but as *Oldacre* is middle-aged rather than old, the descriptions suggest an accelerated pace of decline, most likely caused by the man’s rejection of a stable, familial identity. Finally, the reiteration of the adjective “malignant” in descriptions of the suburban builder connotes menace but also disease and its potential cancer-like spread to other bachelors. Since Doyle’s story focuses on several single men – Dr. Watson (whose wife has died) and McFarlane – it suggests that it is urgent for the detective and the police to locate Oldacre. By putting the builder away and investigating his most private suburban room, Holmes, an extraordinary single man who is immune to infection, can temporarily contain the disease and make sure that it does not strike other bachelors.

It is the commuting practices of the suburban male that initially betray discrepancies in the case and convince Holmes that young McFarlane is likely telling the truth. The detective closely examines Oldacre’s will (in which the builder has named McFarlane his heir) and deduces several important facts from it:

“[This] was written in a train; the good writing represents stations, the bad writing, movement, and the very bad writing, passing over points. A scientific expert would pronounce at once that this was drawn up on a suburban line, since nowhere save in the immediate vicinity of a great city could there be so quick a succession of points. Granting that his whole journey was occupied in drawing up the will, then the train was an express, only stopping once between Norwood and

London Bridge.... Well, it corroborates the young man's story to the extent that the will was drawn up by Jonas Oldacre in his journey yesterday. It is curious – is it not? – that a man should draw up so important a document in so haphazard a fashion. It suggests that he did not think it was going to be of much practical importance.” (“NB” 41)

While the suburban house hides information from the police force that surrounds and probes it, railway transportation enables the detective to locate the individual and analyze his actions and intentions. The existence of physical movement, therefore, does not imply freedom from surveillance: the fact that Oldacre escapes detection by sitting in a confined space but gets “spotted” while travelling reminds the reader that one can live smoothly (or voyage) in place and be striated (stand still) while moving. One can see by this example how developments in technology, which initially destabilized older modes of living and moving, or in other words acted as a “cutting edge of deterritorialization,” could ultimately be employed for purposes of striation (Deleuze and Guattari, *TP* 221). Such an approach enables one to understand how middle-class commentators could envision even the small suburban abodes as being spaces that could “house” innovative ways of living as various as those practiced in the more interactive and chaotic crowded city space.

Holmes's inability to solve the Oldacre crime for two days, and his growing dissatisfaction, testify to the baffling nature of suburban mysteries. Looking “pale and harassed” after a night of unsuccessful investigation, the great detective informs Dr. Watson that he needs “moral support” (“NB” 48). Eventually, he solves the crime because the over-confident Oldacre abandons his hiding space at night in order to plant McFarlane's bloody thumbprint, thus providing new evidence to incriminate the young man. Since Holmes knows that he did not observe the thumbprint on the previous day, the new “evidence” makes him examine “each face

of the house in turn” and consider its “smoothing” possibilities (49-50). The multiple “faces” of the house provide the clue to the multiple identities of Oldacre: both the abode and its corrupt inhabitant, the text implies, are deviant in their shiftiness. Holmes, suddenly merry, takes control of the situation and produces Oldacre in the most dramatic manner, by faking a fire alarm and making the builder run out of “what appeared to be solid wall at the end of the corridor” (53). Like a “conjurer who is performing a trick,” the initially befuddled detective is ultimately able to locate the missing man (53).

One cannot help but ask, however, if Holmes would have solved the puzzle had Oldacre not left his hiding space to tamper further with and add to the evidence. The detective’s theatrical revelations of the criminals in Doyle’s suburban texts (in “The Man With the Twisted Lip,” Holmes rubs out traces of Boone off of St. Clair’s face to the surprise of Dr. Watson, the police, and the reader) partially compensate for the fact that his previous investigative progress has been relatively slow, marked by discomfiting instances of diffidence or confusion, and sometimes enabled by the criminals themselves. While successful detection at the end of the two tales provides some level of reassurance, it cannot contain the instabilities and insecurities associated with suburban masculinity and suburban living in general. By characterizing as potentially deviant a way of life that was becoming massively popular in the *fin de siècle*, the Holmes stories “comprise a series of startling indictments of ‘everyday life’”: in them, Arata observes, criminality is “shown to be systemic, a by-product of the way we live now” (144).

### **Arthur Machen: Suburbia’s Troubled Men and the “Women” Who Love Them**

Although writers such as Wilde, T. S. Eliot, and W. B. Yeats greatly admired Machen’s horror tales, Mark Valentine observes that the author’s work never achieved “popular appreciation,” nor garnered lasting critical attention (7). This is reflected most clearly in the very

limited nature of Machen scholarship, which focuses primarily on his best-known text, *The Great God Pan* (1894).<sup>48</sup> Lack of convincing characters, an over-abundance of convoluted plotlines, and “immense” reliance on coincidence, are listed by Eckersley as some of the weaknesses of Machen’s fiction, and they account in large degree for the scholarly neglect of the author’s writings (279). Eckersley argues that those Machen stories that did enjoy some success in the 1890s were popular primarily because of their intense focus on degeneration: imagery of moral and biological decline, which is prevalent in Machen’s *The Great God Pan*, “The Inmost Light,” *The Three Impostors*, and “Novel of the Iron Maiden,” was certainly likely to enhance the popularity of the texts in the degeneration-obsessed *fin-de-siècle* culture (279).

Considering the popular links between suburbia and degeneration, it comes as no surprise that Machen’s above-listed tales are set primarily in suburban landscapes; suburbs also appear as sites of fluidity, revelation, and horror in Machen’s stories, “A Fragment of Life” (1904) and “N” (1935), and his autobiography *Far Off Things* (1922). Originally from Gwent, the eastern county in Wales that overlaps with England, Machen moved to London as a young man to attend medical school; he became intimately acquainted with the city’s many suburbs during long walks (Valentine 7).<sup>49</sup> Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke contends that suburbia plays a central role in Machen’s work, evoking various yet powerful reactions in the writer: “simple aversion to the solitary, dreary built-up districts”; “horror” at the sight of new suburban houses in Harlesden; inspiration when faced with the “beautiful medieval” simplicity of a “seminary” in an outlying suburb; and a sense of realities hiding behind simple façades in such places as Brentford, Islington, and Gransbury (304-6). In “The Inmost Light” and “Novel of the Iron Maiden,” Machen imagines the burgeoning private spaces as being particularly conducive to the development of male duplicity, criminality, and perversity: Dr. Black and Mr. Mathias

perpetuate their fictions of respectability by hiding their aberrant practices behind closed doors of bland suburban abodes.

Machen's interest in representing the mystery of suburbia and describing its many forms of degeneration connects his fiction with that of Doyle.<sup>50</sup> His experiments with the conventions of detective fiction, however, are, as Paul Fox reminds one, strikingly different from Doyle's (Fox 58-9). Rather than Holmes-like professionals with superb powers of deduction, observation, and transformation, Machen's investigators are impressionable *flâneurs* who wander through sub/urban landscapes in their quest for artistic inspiration and knowledge of human nature: Dyson, an amateur detective who appears in Machen's "The Inmost Light" and *The Three Impostors* (1895), is a friendly young man bent on studying the mysteries of London life, while Frank Burton of "Novel of the Iron Maiden" spends his ample leisure time interacting with various social classes.<sup>51</sup> These men are "detectives" because they make it their hobby to unravel and relate the mysteries of their surroundings, but their discoveries are aided more by their gregariousness, and chance, than by feats of deductive reasoning. Indeed, it is their artistic sense and willingness to engage in interactions with their fellow sub/urban dwellers that enable these characters to receive invitations to even the most private of suburban abodes.

The stories' episodic and coincidence-laden plots reflect the amateur detectives' meandering movements and differ vastly from Doyle's more logically structured, cause-and-effect narratives. Whereas in Doyle's stories Holmes tries temporarily to clarify various types of confusion, Machen's tales strive towards a discovery of disorder: Machen's primary goal is to emphasize, rather than systematically eradicate, the mysteries hiding behind everyday objects and events – to hint at the existence of a reality that only the most receptive and curious of individuals can discover.<sup>52</sup> These texts are thus not ultimately concerned with creating an illusion of stability, but in elaborating a model of plucky and adventurous young masculinity, the

practitioners of which channel their artistic talents and vast energies into pursuits that are lawful rather than perverse or risky. While producing Gothic imagery that is in many ways a response to the bourgeoisie's anxiety and confusion surrounding unpredictable suburban growth, Machen's short stories therefore emphasize the importance of traditional, middle-class masculine qualities.

### **“The Inmost Light”: Dr. Black and the Horror of Harlesden**

Both Dyson,<sup>53</sup> an “idler about town” whose curiosity leads him to solve the mystery of a suburban woman's death, and Charles Salisbury, a sceptic who half-heartedly listens to the former man's tales, are young, single gentlemen working on their respective careers (“IL” 114). It is through the story of their camaraderie and adventurous strolls around metropolitan London that Machen unfolds the tale of Dr. Black, an experimental scientist who turns his wife into a demon and later kills her. The active young men's movement in and around the city enables them to chance upon strange occurrences and produce pieces of a puzzle that they can solve by continuing to be responsive to the city environment.<sup>54</sup> Since it is highly unlikely that a young woman of Dyson and Salisbury's age could have meandered nightly through London without being harassed or mistaken for a prostitute, Machen identifies the amateur detectives' investigative practices to be specifically male.

A curious and social man, Dyson is posited as being a healthier alternative to Dr. Black, whose pre-marital days were spent in the study of mystical “regions so terrible that the mind of man shrinks appalled at the very thought” (“IL” 163). Dr. Black's early interest in arcane and dangerous knowledge seems to be have been directly related to his solitude: ““What are commonly called the pleasures of life had never any attractions for me, and I lived alone in London, avoiding my fellow-students, and in my turn avoided by them as a man self-absorbed

and unsympathetic” (162). By contrast, Dyson’s sociable nature enables him to avoid the kinds of deviant interests that imaginative young men could apparently develop if isolated: he pours his creative energies into narrating interactions with other human beings and in the process discovers instances of problematic masculinity that are shown to be harmful to both the deviants themselves and those they interact with. Men like Dyson are urban scholars of human nature, whose outdoor engagements with various city environments develop their masculine sense of adventure, independence, and creativity, while leaving them sane and law-abiding enough to lead “normal” (and more peaceful) conjugal lives in the future.

Dyson’s professional goal is to perfect the “science of the great city” by studying the “physiology of London” (“IL” 116). By describing the city’s mysteries as being related directly to its “vastness and complexity,” he suggests that its growing size accounts at least in part for the often mysterious and confusing quality of the space in which the “abode of a washerwoman” is directly below the flat that houses a man who studies “Chaldee roots” and the garret of a “forgotten artist,” who is “dying by inches” (“IL” 115).<sup>55</sup> It is Harlesden, the suburb in which Dr. Black lives with his wife, which strikes Dyson as a particularly unusual space: ““You pass instantly from town to country; there is no transition as in a small country town, no soft gradations of wider lawns and orchards, with houses becoming less dense, but a dead stop”” (“IL” 117-18). This sudden transition from suburbia to the countryside, or in other words, the glaring visibility of transformation, shocks the impressionable young man.

The description of Harlesden in the story is derived from Machen’s personal response to the developing suburb, which, he recounts in his memoirs, struck him “as a wholly new and unforeseen horror, something as strange and terrible as the apparition of a rattle-snake or a boa-constrictor might be to an English child”: “These are the places where the hedges are half ruined, half remaining, where the little winding brook is defined, but not yet a drain, where one tree lies

felled and withered, while its fellow is still green” (*Far Off Things* 122-23). Machen portrays the jarring contrast between the “cartload of cheap bricks” and the countryside that is being quickly devoured by “rabid streets” through imagery of threatening, foreign reptiles, violence-inducing disease, and decay, thereby characterizing rapid suburban change as being likely to inspire tales that involve mystery and degeneration (122). In the “Inmost Light,” the “horror of Harlesden” is represented by the figure of a loyal suburban wife, Mrs. Black, who has allowed her husband to extract her soul from her body and let a demonic force enter instead (*Far Off Things* 124).

The male characters’ “abnormalities” are thus dramatized primarily through the imagery of potent female monstrosity that they occasion. Although men in the nineteenth century were thought to be particularly vulnerable to sexual temptations, women were theorized as being “incomplete human subjects” who occupy a lower standing on the evolutionary scale and are thus inherently more likely to regress biologically (Hurley 119). Furthermore, possession was traditionally “troped as feminine”:

From sexual possession (the heterosexual female possessed by her virile lover) to demonic possession (the possessed witches of the sixteenth and seventeenth century) . . . to psychic possession (the female hysteric,<sup>56</sup> as in the *Three Faces of Eve*), possession is typically an act/state that happens to the female subject.

(Hendershot 43)

Empty, passive vessels that could be filled with various types of “pollution,” as subhuman beings limited by biological inferiority, these misogyny-begotten women became powerful symbols of the thin line that divides the human race from the terrifying possibilities of degeneration imagined by *fin-de-siècle* commentators. Mr. Black’s activation of his wife’s inherently

dangerous and unstable femaleness reaffirms his more active, masculine nature, as well as emphasizes women's passivity and the innate corruptibility of their biological sex.

While resting in a meadow near the suburb, Dyson looks up at a window of a nearby house and loses his breath:

“It was the face of a woman and yet it was not human. You and I, Salisbury, have heard in our time, as we sat in our seats in church in sober English fashion, of a lust that cannot be satiated and of a fire that is unquenchable, but few of us have any notion what these words mean. I hope you never may, for as I saw that face at the window, with the blue sky above me and the warm air playing in gusts about me, I knew I had looked into another world – looked through the window of a commonplace, brand-new house, and seen hell open before me.” (“IL” 121)

The unsettling contrast between nature and suburban construction, and between an ordinary house and the horror within, is also reflected in the discrepancy between the woman's “mist of flowing yellow hair” and her inhuman face, like “an aureole of glory round the visage of a satyr” (123). Mrs. Black is terrifying specifically because she still has the feminine attributes that can attract men (especially long, blonde hair, the staple of ideal feminine beauty), but the potential for degeneration within the female sex is clearly written on her face: as the word “satyr” generally connotes maleness, its use in Machen's description of Mrs. Black's face implies an “unnatural” mixture of genders. While the woman in question is not at all violent, she possesses an “undifferentiated body,” one that implies an aggressive destruction of stability because it is “proceeding towards a state of pure disorganization, or perhaps reorganizing into new configurations, unknown and hence terrible” (Hurley 32).

It is the creative but misdirected Dr. Black who originally pierces the veil between the ostensibly ordinary life of suburbia and the hidden forces of chaos that lie behind it. The doctor

subverts society's illusion of organization and control when he enters a "region of knowledge" which "wise men seeing from afar off shun like the plague": he is interested in analyzing the relations among bodies and souls, "the gulf between the world of consciousness and the world of matter" ("IL" 164). Although in attempting to separate the two through scientific method he reaffirms the traditional Western dichotomy of body versus soul, his experiments undermine the notion of a unified human identity.

Aware that pursuits of the dark sciences mean "the wreck of a life," Dr. Black distracts himself from his obsession by focusing on other subjects in school and later marrying ("IL" 163). In his diary, he implies that the organization inherent in suburban life enabled him to "striate" himself into "normality" for a certain period of time:

We took a new house in this remote suburb, and I began the regular routine of a sober practice, and for some months lived happily enough, sharing in the life about me, and only thinking at odd intervals of that occult science which had once fascinated my whole being. (163)<sup>57</sup>

Quiet suburban life, however, in which the only known "form[s] of entertainment" are "high teas," and where human beings spend a large portion of time in their respective, private cells, is ultimately portrayed as encouraging the type of isolation that Dr. Black had already experienced in the days of his most intense interest in the forbidden "sciences" (119). No longer in university, but rather practicing a routine existence of a doctor in a quiet suburb, Dr. Black has no novelties to distract him from his obsession: "But suddenly – I think it was the work of a single night, as I lay awake on my bed gazing into the darkness – suddenly, I say, the old desire, the former longing, returned, and returned with a force that had been intensified ten times by its absence . . ." (164). The scientist describes his renewed obsession through imagery of claustrophobia, which hints at the fact that his inability to resist pursuing his studies has something to do with what he

perceives to be the extreme monotony of his suburban life: “My position was as utterly hopeless as that of the prisoner in an utter dungeon, whose only light is that of the dungeon above him; the doors were shut and escape was impossible” (165). Perceiving that he has forced himself into an acceptance of a lifestyle designed to reaffirm a heteronormative existence, Dr. Black rebels by once again pursuing his passion with “steps that knew no faltering” (166).

When he decides to proceed with his experiment, the doctor seems to know right away on “whom this fate would fall”: “I looked into my wife’s eyes” (“IL” 166). His almost instant choice suggests that a suburban wife is somehow naturally suited for an extraction of her soul. Earlier in the story, Dyson foreshadows Mrs. Black’s spiritual death when he characterizes a women-filled suburbia as being devoid of life: “I believe the people who live there mostly go into the city. I have seen once or twice a laden bus bound thitherwards. But however that may be, I can’t conceive a great loneliness in a desert at midnight than there is there at midday. It is like a city of the dead . . .” (117-8). According to Dyson, housewives who remain in the suburbs when their husbands go to work are already dead figuratively, their lives extinguished by the extreme loneliness and passivity associated with a stringently private, suburban lifestyle. These women, he suggests, are so lacking in personality that they can easily be “filled” or controlled by men, while their female bodies are innately more primed than men’s for biological degeneration: in other words, their “inmost lights” are ready for extraction because their spirits are already inactive and housed in easily corruptible shells. The routine space-time of suburbia is thus presented as being problematic in that it cultivates elements of the less morally and physical evolved past.

The doctor is able to hide his eccentric interests and kill his demonic wife without being discovered because the curious suburban neighbours (who wonder why they have not seen Mrs. Black in a long time) are ultimately too preoccupied with their families to penetrate the well-

protected privacy of Mr. Black's home. After the death of his wife, the doctor gives up his practice and moves away, only to be discovered coincidentally by Dyson some time later, renting a room in another suburb. He is able to live out the rest of his life in various peripheries of London, where he can hide the clues to his dark secrets and where his presence infiltrates and potentially threatens the health and safety of various lower-middle- and working-class families, who supplement their incomes by subletting rooms.

Perhaps it is in order to counteract the sense of destabilization occasioned by his creation of Gothic suburbia that Machen makes Dr. Black's degenerative qualities very obvious. Dyson describes his encounter with Dr. Black in a dark street of a dilapidated suburb: "When I saw Dr. Black come down the steps of his house at Harlesden he was an upright man, walking firmly with well-built limbs. . . . And now before me there crouched this wretched creature, bent and feeble, with shrunken cheeks, and hair that was whitening fast" ("IL" 145-46). The doctor's slouched back and his decreasing size suggest a reversal of the process by which apes evolved into *homo sapiens*. Although Dyson uses the word "man" to describe an earlier version of Dr. Black, he calls him a "creature" in the latter half of the text: the man used to be seen "walking," but the current creature "crouches." The doctor is rapidly aging, "whitening" and shrinking; he becomes a corpse by the end of the tale. Yet, the literal de-evolution of Dr. Black's body, by which he is de-humanized, is comforting for it is an outward reflection of his skewed morality and criminal past. In a society where bland suburban façades can nurture and hide any form of aberration, the text suggests, a direct correlation between an inner and outer self stabilizes the increasingly mercurial relation between the signifier and the signified.

While Machen's tale does not describe analysis-driven investigations or official punitive procedures, it does provide a certain level of reassurance: the world of "The Inmost Light" is chronically strange but the mystical forces that seem to direct it ensure that evil is ultimately

discovered and eradicated. As the unruly member of society physically de-evolves into non-existence, one could say that Machen blends the ostensibly contrary discourses of magic or “dark arts” and “science” to argue for an existence of a universal law that ultimately establishes the survival of the *morally* fittest and the suppression of the “deviant link.” The suburban landscapes that Machen characterizes as being particularly favourable to developments of abnormality among the active and creative members of the male gender are featured as being the arenas upon which unfolds the eternal struggle of good versus evil: increasingly pervasive and yet unknown and seemingly uncontrollable, the ostensibly ordinary suburbs are analogous to the chaotic and awe-inducing cosmic forces that Machen was so keenly interested in writing about.

### **“Novel of the Iron Maiden”: A Suburban History of Torture**

Descriptions of the otherworldly nature of suburbia and its problematic male inhabitants is present in a far more condensed and explicit form in Machen’s *very* short story “Novel of the Iron Maiden,” in which a young, sociable man, Frank Burton, misses his train, becomes stranded in unknown suburbs, and encounters a club acquaintance from the city, Mr. Mathias.<sup>58</sup> Promptly, the latter man invites Burton to his house to show him a private collection of foreign torture devices, only to be accidentally smothered by a newly purchased contraption, an Iron Maiden. Burton is a young man who is “feeling [his] way” in society and whose copious leisure time is spent in learning about various social classes of London: “I have always tried to find out new types and persons whose brains contained something fresh to me; one may chance to gain information even from the conversation of city men on an omnibus” (“NIM” 165). Although he never undertakes detective-like investigative practices (after all, the story is only six pages long), Burton’s interest in random strangers and his sociability make him similar to Dyson.

Imagery of suburban foreignness, decay, and chaos is so preponderate in the opening paragraphs of the short story that it is clear Machen wanted to create a vision of an extraordinarily strange space. Burton stares at the “dreary distance marked by rows of twinkling lamps” and notes that “the air was poisoned by the faint, sickly smell of burning bricks,” thereby indicating the unhealthy nature of the empty, monotonous landscape. While walking the “nine miles of such streets,” however, the young man realizes that the ostensibly dull suburbs feature a variety of architectural designs and social classes:

. . . [A]s I walked, street after street branched off to right and left, some far-reaching to distances that seemed endless, communicating with other systems of thoroughfare, and some mere protoplasmic streets, beginning in orderly fashion with serried two-storied houses, and ending suddenly in waste, and pits, and rubbish-heaps and fields whence magic has departed. . . . At first the road by which I was travelling was linked with houses of unutterable monotony, a wall of grey brick pierced by two stories of windows, drawn close to the very pavement; but by degrees I noticed an improvement, there were gardens, and these grew larger; the suburban builder began to allow himself a wider scope; and for a certain distance each flight of steps was guarded by twin lions of plaster. (“NIM” 165-66)

The dramatic growth of suburbia and the shifts in its class structure are inscribed by Machen into the fictional suburban landscape: the discrepancy between the ostensible monotony and the actual heterogeneity makes the spaces schizophrenic and unreadable. While Burton tries to define his reaction to the desolate landscape, his chronic vagueness suggests that the object of his interest cannot be contained and organized by the power of human language. He describes suburbia in sublime terms, repeatedly using far-fetched figures of speech, as when referring to

the “immensity as in the outer void of the universe” or sensing “some glamour of the infinite” (165). This failure of expression is most obvious in Burton’s conflation of various kinds of foreignness, for he compares the deserted suburban streets to “those of Pompeii,” a ruined, ancient Roman city, but also observes, *pace* Conrad, that the region is as unknown to him “as the darkest recesses of Africa” (166). Befuddled by his surroundings, he others suburbia in terms of time and distance/race: Pompeii represents the height of a Roman civilization suddenly eradicated by natural forces, while Africa stands for its antithesis, a continent then considered to be less- or pre-civilized. As Burton’s descriptions imply, copious differences need to be conglomerated to indicate the nature of suburban space and its paradoxical combination of “unutterable monotony” and unsettling mystery (166).

Indeed, nothing is what it seems in the shifting suburbs: it is revealed that Mr. Mathias’s solitary and quiet gentleman’s club persona acts as a public front for a somewhat perverse and loquacious private man. His hobby, collecting authentic torture devices from continental Europe and the Far East, inspires ready and gleeful comments. The “indistinct objects” that Burton at first identifies as being furniture in Mr. Mathias’s “vague and shadowy” room turn out to be parts of the man’s macabre collection (“NIM” 167). The latest acquisition, of which Mr. Mathias is particularly fond, and which kills him at the end of the story, is an Iron Maiden, a bronze statue of a woman whose iron grip and final kiss smother the unfortunate victim. Behind the suburban façade, Machen suggests, lurks not the respectable family man with an obedient wife and children, but a dead bachelor of questionable tastes and class who lies in the arms of an equally lifeless, foreign mate.

The terrifying devices that Mr. Mathias shows to his young visitor haunt the modern present in the same way that ancient curses and ghosts of tyrannical aristocrats possess the castles of classic Gothic tales:

Great wooden frames, with complicated apparatus of ropes and pulleys, stood against the wall; a wheel of strange shape had a place beside a thing that looked like a gigantic gridiron; little tables glittered with bright steel instruments carelessly put down as if ready for use; a screw and vice loomed out, casting ugly shadows, and in another nook was a saw with cruel jagged teeth. (“NIM” 168)

Silently, the ghastly objects tell tales of gratuitous bodily torture that are anachronistic (or degenerative) in the late-Victorian age, in which penal justice was based on less visible but more continuous, efficient, and organized forms of punishment: namely prisons, which discipline, define, and monitor rather than simply exact revenge (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 87). Burton’s observation that steel instruments were strewn around tables “as if ready for use,” as well as Mr. Mathias’s claim that ““some – many, I may say – have been used,”” indicate the possibility that the middle-aged bachelor actually practices torture: he introduces elements of “expenditure and excess,” of quasi-chaotic punishment, into suburbia, his perversions undetected specifically because they are protected by well-defined privacy (“NIM” 168; Foucault 87). As in “The Inmost Light,” the suburban man’s deviance in “Novel of the Iron Maiden” is channelled into a figure of female monstrosity: “[The Iron Maiden] was a large statue of a naked woman, fashioned in green bronze, the arms were stretched out, and there was a smile on the lips; it might well have been intended for a Venus, and yet there was about the thing an evil and deadly look” (“NIM” 168). While copper does turn “green bronze” as it ages, the statue’s colour also connotes the process of rotting: the Iron Maiden is symbolic of her owner’s moral corruption and his imminent physical decay.

Instruments of gratuitous punishment, however, ultimately ensure that the deviant male element, Mr. Mathias, is eliminated, for he fails to read the instructions on the Iron Maiden and accidentally presses the button that sets the killing mechanism into action: “The head had slowly

bent down, and the green lips were on the lips of Mathias” (“NIM” 169). Once again, Machen suggests that chaotic elements are eliminated by chaos itself. Set on destruction, degenerate characters ultimately destroy each other or self-obliterate. Suburbia is featured as being the site of cyclical creation and elimination of abnormalities: the regulated landscape, the striations of which monstrously turn against it, is presented as the perfect example of the frequently paradoxical, incorrigibly changeable nature of human existence.

### **Conclusion**

While Doyle and Machen’s Gothic detective tales construct suburbia and its relationship with masculinity as being both symptomatic and causal of *fin-de-siècle* degeneration, they insist that it is only virtuous, plucky, bourgeois men who can temporarily and partially mitigate the crisis. In other words, the stories represent masculinity as being a problem *and* a solution. There is a clear indication that no matter how severe the crisis is, or how closely related its main features are to characteristics inherently perceived as masculine, the female sex is not capable of dealing with its complexities. Indeed, the women in “The Man With the Twisted Lip,” “The Norwood Builder,” “The Inmost Light,” and “Novel of the Iron Maiden” are featured as minor characters relegated to the private sphere or as passive vessels whose dormant biological powers can be galvanized into monstrosity only by active masculinity. Using Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s theories, one could argue that these minor characters often exist only to reaffirm the male figures heterosexuality and defuse homoerotic undertones that could be occasioned by instances of intensive homosocial bonding. The texts therefore produce their Gothic visions of suburbia not only to express imaginatively bourgeois anxieties and confusion, but also to reaffirm traditional Victorian gender roles and emphasize the important role that normative, middle-class masculinity plays in the maintenance of societal order. As Leps suggests, “the very choice of

criminal *man* as the primary object of scientific investigations signals a will to normalize using ‘man’ as standard measurement . . . and considering all other groups (defined by class, gender, race) as somehow secondary or deviant phenomena” (6).

Doyle and Machen’s insistence on describing the superior characteristics of the male sex and camaraderie in fact suggests an anxiety about a widespread feminization of society and a need for this overflowing force to be urgently dammed. Most likely, these authors were responding to the common stereotype of the women-ruled, consumerist suburbia, the increased public visibility of women as shoppers and workers, and the perceived feminization of the literary world (indicated by the popular New Women novels and suburban-garden stories by authors such as Elizabeth von Arnim, Barbara Campbell, Kathleen L. Murray) (Hapgood, *Margins of Desire* 111).<sup>59</sup> The texts discussed in this chapter can indeed be read as belonging to the male romance genre, which Arata suggests was very popular in the *fin de siècle*: tales of exclusively male heroism and adventure were thought to be highly instrumental in counteracting the effeminacy of modern life as they compensated “for the decline of English letters, for the degeneration through over-refinement of bourgeois society, for the ‘emasculat[i]on’ of the middle-class male, and so on” (94, 79, 91). Although debunked by scientists, the “degenerationist tropes” inspired by the work of Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordeau continued to be used by commentators in discussions of modern society: in fact, Arata reminds one that this same discourse of degeneration and “softness” was adopted by male modernists and intellectuals such as Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot and levelled *against* the (primarily suburban) middle class as a way of creating a new, intellectual type of hierarchy (180).

Both the bourgeoisie and those intellectuals who mocked this dominant class therefore used a similar discourse to reaffirm or create societal boundaries in an increasingly suburban nation. Since direct or indirect characterization of women as being inferior (or male as being

superior) played a central role in the elaboration of these hierarchies, it is essential to inquire whether female authors utilized suburban landscapes differently as a way of redefining gender roles. As the application of Deleuze and Guattari's theories of space and becoming to Doyle and Machen's stories has shown, suburbs could be imagined as featuring an almost numberless variety of space-time(s) and smoothing-striating combinations, many of which enabled exciting possibilities for experimentation. Yet, visions of suburban innovations are perhaps most elaborate and layered in texts by early twentieth-century female authors such as Richardson, Woolf, Sackville-West, and Bowen, whose writings explicitly challenge aspects of the entrenched gender dichotomies in various manners and degrees. Although these female writers were interested in experimenting with femininity rather than reaffirming traditional masculinity, their suburban works connect with those of Doyle and Machen, for they, too, focus on characters that subvert/deviate from traditional gender norms. Finally, if fragmented identities are indeed terrifying, then the works of the female authors can also be termed Gothic detective, for their female characters constantly sleuth for the "ghosts which are living within ourselves" (Woolf, "The Supernatural in Fiction" 288).

## Chapter 2

### The Thrills of Modernity: Representations of Suburbia in the Urban Texts of Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf

It is rare to find modernist works that take place primarily in suburbia and even rarer to find scholarly studies of modernist fiction that make representations of suburbia their focus.<sup>60</sup> Misogynistic dismissals of suburbia were common among modernist authors, who often presented the sites as being too feminized and one-dimensional to inspire artistic innovation.<sup>61</sup> Ezra Pound, for example, orders his poem, “Commission” (1913-15), to “Go to the bourgeoisie who is dying of her *ennuis* / Go to the women in suburbs,” declaring himself to be clearly non-suburban and implying that rousing art can only be imported to, rather than made in, suburbia. A setting that is marginalized in a text that focuses on the city proper, however, is by no means semantically unimportant. In Dorothy Richardson *Pilgrimage* novels – specifically *Backwater* (1916), *The Tunnel* (1919), and *March Moonlight* (1967) – and Virginia Woolf’s *Night and Day* (1919), the spread of suburbia is always vividly present as a symbol of exciting reconfigurations of space, time, and everyday life.<sup>62</sup> Unlike early twentieth-century “architects, urban planners, educators, politicians, women’s clubs, and popular periodicals,” who, according to Jessica Blaustein, increasingly equated privacy with a “suburban [familial] conception of private space” (49), Richardson and Woolf use suburban settings and imagery to formulate their non-traditional versions of middle-class women’s individual privacy and to subvert the notion of sealed female interiority that bolsters the patriarchal ideology of separate spheres. To analyze the role suburbia plays in these novels is to show how two female modernists who consciously sought to undermine gender norms through their respective literary projects did so in part by creatively utilizing that which was ignored or disparaged by many of their contemporaries.

Studying Richardson and Woolf's works together in the context of their representations of suburbia enables me to show how Richardson's novels influenced Woolf's development as a writer, serving as examples both of an elastic prose that could capture the fluctuations of an individual's consciousness and of narrative focalization that the latter author chose not to pursue. The comparison testifies to the intensive exchange of ideas among modernist writers who were reading each other's works and to the female authors' specific interest in the relations between rapidly changing material spaces, narrative explorations of interiority, and subversions of traditional gender constructs. A key to modernism, Raymond Williams argues, is the new character of the metropolis ("The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism" 22); suburbia was not only a part of the greater metropolis, but a symbol of people's increasing social mobility and changing modes of habitation, and thus a potentially crucial factor to consider in a study of semantic patterns prevalent in modernist works.

While various scholars such as Tamara Katz, Elaine Showalter, and Diane Filby Gillespie have discussed the relations between Woolf and Richardson's prose, there has been no study that compares representations of suburbia in their works. Indeed, only Elisabeth Bronfen has conducted a materialist feminist analysis of the ways in which Richardson portrays suburban spaces in *Pilgrimage*; her detailed study of various urban, suburban, and rural settings in the texts is especially useful for the purposes of mapping Richardson's literary landscapes. Bronfen, however, does not utilize Deleuze and Guattari's notion of space as process, which aids one in reading Miriam Henderson's changing perceptions of potential for individual privacy in specific suburban locales, nor does Bronfen benefit from Lefebvre's differentiation of conceived/planned, perceived/experienced, and lived/imaginative spaces. Combined with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas, Lefebvre's theory helps one to explain Miriam's layered and contradictory responses to various suburbs and her initial inability to construct imaginative or "lived space" within

suburbia. In terms of Woolf's texts, Andrew Thacker provides an analysis of the relation between modernists' (including Woolf's) formal experiments and changing material spaces of modernity that proves useful in my study of movement and space in *Night and Day*, but he focuses solely on representations of suburbia in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910). Similarly, I use Youngjoo Soo's Lefebvre-influenced study of Woolf's subversion of "dominant [patriarchal] spatial codes" (90) but introduce the missing suburban element into the equation. Susan Squier contends that the city functions as a "vehicle for the exploration of feminist concerns in the works of women writers" (*Women Writers and the City* 6) regardless of whether they praise or blame it: my goal is to show that suburbia sometimes plays a similar role.

### **Projects of Becoming: Richardson and Woolf's Feminine Sentences**

A focus on suburbia in my chosen texts draws attention to the fact that modernity's "furious restructuring of space" (Thacker 47) was often experienced differently by the two sexes. As Rita Felski observes,

[F]requent descriptions of the modern period as a period of deepening despair, paralysis, and anxiety fail to address the visions of many female modernists, for whom the idea of the modern was to embody exhilarating possibilities and the potential for new and previously unimaginable sexual and political freedoms. (194)<sup>63</sup>

Although the growth of suburban communities and the development of a more defensive familial privacy did suture an increasing number of women to the private sphere, physical redefinitions of the suburban and urban environments and changes in technology and social mobility that occasioned or accompanied such developments frequently altered people's experience of space, time, and movement. People's increasing interest in purchasing suburban homes energized the

development of more efficient and varied transportation forms and routes, which in turn contributed to the spread of outlying suburbs: the number of mechanically propelled buses in London, for instance, rose from 241 in 1905 to 3,522 in 1913, a change that parallels the acceleration of suburban building in the areas that were not close to railway stations (Jackson 29-30). In his introduction to *Metroland* (1932), a guidebook to suburban areas in the north-west of London that was issued annually by the Metropolitan Railway's Publicity Department from 1915 to 1932, Oliver Green observes that the main focus of the publication was the "House Seekers Section," in which suburbia was advertised as being a blend of rural and urban elements (Introduction). On the other hand, the passing of the Ministry of Transport Act (1919), which established the governing body responsible for the laws and regulations concerning various types of transportation, testifies to the diversification and increase of new modes of transport.

Among the new phenomena that defined city experience, therefore, were the increasingly large throngs of suburban commuters and the forms of transport (such as trains, trams, buses, and later, automobiles) that carried these professionals to and from suburbia. Women, whose scope of action and behaviour was traditionally limited in a patriarchal society, often experienced the loss of "the ballast of familiar life" (Williams, "The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism" 16) as being liberating. As more women made their way into the public sphere, they came into contact with the new urban and suburban sights and means of transportation – interactions that Richardson and Woolf's texts portray as being adventurous. Wendy Gan reminds one that this type of reaction was more typical of well-off, middle-class, and educated women who had the financial means to experiment with alternative models of domesticity and social life in the city and, often, in the suburbs (13).

It is during this tumultuous period in British history that Richardson and Woolf sought to develop ways of writing that would more effectively portray women's subjective experiences of

life in rapidly changing and increasingly sprawling urban environments.<sup>64</sup> Both women thought that the realist mode of representation – which involves an emphasis on external detail, an implicit belief in the transparency of language, and authoritative commentary by a narrator who organizes (hierarchizes) characters’ experiences – neither reflected life’s contradictions and uncertainties nor revealed “the flickering of that innermost flame which flashes its myriad messages through the brain” (Woolf, “Modern Novels,” *Essays* 3: 34). Richardson states in her 1938 Preface to *Pilgrimage* that she attempted to produce a “feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism,” implying that realist conventions are structured by a masculine desire for semantic certainty (Preface 9). In the fourth book of the novel series, *The Tunnel*, Miriam Henderson considers the imposition of any type of artificial order on a text to be a sign of “mannish cleverness”: “Women who wrote books and learned these things would be absurd and would make men absurd” (*Tn* 131). Miriam is channelling the opinion Richardson later expressed in her essay “Women and the Future” (1924), in which she states that women are more capable of “imaginative sympathy” and more accepting of ambiguity than men (414). Her goal in *Pilgrimage* is to develop a prose that would reflect the reality of women’s capacity to “think flowingly” (“Women and the Future” 414).

In *The Tunnel*, Miriam summarizes effectively her view of language: “Whether you agree or not, language is the only way of expressing anything and it dims everything” (*Tn* 99). Her claim is related to her later contention that men such as her dentist employer (and, as her other statements indicate, men in general) are only interested in “statements, things that had been agreed upon”: rigidity of thought makes language even less capable of expressing life’s complexities, and is directly informed by and perpetuates men’s sense of gender superiority (*Tn* 107-8). Against such stratification of language and thought, Richardson elaborates her notion of a more flexible prose, which can be practiced by both sexes, and which is “unpunctuated,

moving from point to point without formal obstruction,” ignoring or at least departing from “the stereotyped system of signs” and conventional modes of narration (Preface 12). As Ronald Bogue reminds one, “linguistic regularities are merely partial components of power structures that enforce regular patterns of practice” (5). An alternative, or in Deleuze’s words, *minor*, use of language, a “manipulation of linguistic variables that sets them in disequilibrium” (Bogue 5), effects a becoming-Other of language (Deleuze “Literature and Life” 5)

Richardson accentuates Miriam’s exhilaration at riding her bicycle in the open roads of London’s outer suburbs, for instance, by using a long sentence that features few punctuation marks and indicates the character’s darting thoughts:

I’ve got my sea-legs . . . this riding – not just straining along trying to forget the wobbly bicycle, but feeling it wobble and being able to control it . . . being able to look about easily . . . there will be a harvest moon this month, rolling up huge and hot, suddenly over the edge of a field; the last moon. (*Tn* 231)<sup>65</sup>

The ellipses give an impression of temporal extension, suggesting that Miriam is savouring every moment of what she perceives as a liberating experience. Punctured by dashes, ellipses, and, at one point, a semi-colon, the stuttering and meandering sentence showcases Richardson’s attempt to disturb fixed linguistic rules and minimize her authorial organization of the character’s scattered thoughts. She aims to depict the daily reality of an independent woman’s consciousness in as unfiltered or unmediated a manner as possible and thus reframes as central that which has been marginalized in the literary identification of modernity with the male figure of the *flâneur*: women’s experience of modern life.<sup>66</sup> My aim is to show that by focusing on the intricate workings of Miriam’s consciousness, Richardson is able to depict the character’s complex and fluctuating responses to a wide array of suburban settings, ranging from a lower-middle-class north London community, to more affluent middle-class milieus in the south-west, and well-off,

secluded suburbs that were popular among artists. She thus presents a picture of a heterogeneous, rather than one-dimensional suburbia that plays a substantial role in an independent woman's experience of gender, class, and space in a sprawling city.

"Stream of consciousness," a phrase coined by May Sinclair in her laudatory review of early *Pilgrimage* novels in 1918, has been adopted by the majority of scholars who have written about Richardson's work.<sup>67</sup> Sinclair contends that Richardson's rejection of a realist narrative mode subverts the notion of an authoritative narrator, prioritizes women's subjective experience of modernity, and captures effectively the random yet mundane nature of life: "Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on" (Sinclair 444). In her 1919 review of *The Tunnel*, Woolf also observes the author's rejection of the "old deliberate business" and an invitation to the reader to "embed himself in Miriam Henderson's consciousness" ("*The Tunnel*," *Essays* 3:11). Woolf's call for a new form of narrative in "Modern Novels" (1919), in which she urges authors to "record the atoms as they fall upon the mind," to "trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness" (34), might have been influenced by her reading of Richardson's *The Tunnel*, which she reviewed shortly before publishing this essay. In the review, Woolf states that Richardson portrays "impressions as they flicker through Miriam's mind, waking incongruously other thoughts, and plaiting incessantly the many-coloured and innumerable threads of life" ("*The Tunnel*," *Essays* 3:11). Imagery of sporadic patterns and threads of impressions is present in both Woolf's essay and the review, which indicates a degree of similarity that Woolf identifies between her own method and that of the latter author.

Woolf, like Richardson, was on a quest to find modes of novelistic writing that would challenge the patriarchal conventions she believed were embedded within the realist mode and the traditional sentence structure of the English language:

It's a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for woman's use. [. . . ] [W]hen a woman comes to write a novel, she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values – to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what is to him important. (Woolf, "Women and Fiction," *Essays* 5: 32)<sup>68</sup>

In her later review of *Revolving Lights* (1923), Woolf observes that Richardson has invented "the psychological sentence of the female gender," one that is of a "more elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest principles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes" ("Romance and the Heart," *Essays* 3: 368). While Woolf contends that this type of sentence has been utilized by male writers she states that Richardson's application and further development of the technique is different, for Richardson has consciously fashioned it to investigate a woman's mind. In this sense, "feminine prose" does not channel some innate female essence, but acts as a means by which a woman (or a man) can capture an experience specific to her or his daily reality and yet subvert the linguistic traditions and epistemological certainties of patriarchal culture.

Woolf's praise of Richardson's work, however, was always qualified, and her review of *The Tunnel* ends with a mention of a "slight disappointment" caused by Richardson's inability to resolve her vision into a "perceptible whole": "But sensations, impressions, ideas, and emotions glance off [Miriam], unrelated and unquestioned, without shedding quite as much light as we had hoped into the hidden depths" ("*The Tunnel*," *Essays* 3: 11). This review seems to be a response to Sinclair's earlier praise; Woolf has a problem specifically with the fact that Richardson portrays life as simply going "on and on," without reflecting in some way on the given experience.<sup>69</sup> Ending her review of *The Tunnel* with an acknowledgement of the importance of

Richardson's daring break with tradition, Woolf nevertheless argues that the author has not yet found an effective method:

But it must be admitted we are exacting. We want to be rid of realism, to penetrate without its help into the regions beneath it, and further require that Miss Richardson shall fashion this new material into something which has the shapeliness of the old accepted forms. We are asking too much; but the extent of our asking proves that *The Tunnel* is better in its failure than most books in their success. (*The Tunnel*, "Essays 3: 12)

What primarily bothered Woolf about Richardson's – and James Joyce's – writing, and what she wished to avoid in her own prose, is, as she notes in her diary, "the damned egoistical self" (*Diary 2*: 13-14). Despite Richardson's exciting "expansion" of prose, her refusal to step outside of a single mind results in the cramping of her vision within the "confinement of personality"; modern writers like Richardson and Joyce, while "sincere," do not, according to Woolf, go beyond recording "transitory splendours, which may perhaps compose nothing whatsoever" ("How it Strikes a Contemporary," *Essays 3*: 359).<sup>70</sup> In other words, Woolf argues that Richardson's writing lacks "art" and merely reflects the author's overt fascination with her own ability to record impressions. While Richardson may have been trying to escape what she perceived to be masculine egoism inherent in the role of the authoritative narrator, Woolf perceives her method as being driven by similar impulses.<sup>71</sup>

Gillespie observes that Woolf was reading and reviewing Richardson's *The Tunnel* and *Revolving Lights* (the only *Pilgrimage* novels she reviewed) around the time that she began experimenting more daringly with form in her short stories, essays and, later, *Jacob's Room* (1922) (139).<sup>72</sup> Although *Night and Day* does not feature the same degree of formal innovation as these later texts, it is certain that Richardson's writing (and that of Woolf's other

contemporaries such as Katherine Mansfield) influenced Woolf's aesthetic choices in this early novel – both as an example of ways to subvert realist conventions and a reminder of the kind of limited point of view that she wished to avoid.<sup>73</sup> In *Night and Day*, the third person narrator's slightly ironic distance from the characters among whose minds she moves and whose frequently chaotic thoughts she describes enables Woolf to emphasize links among ostensibly unrelated urban and suburban bodies and spaces. Using Elizabeth Grosz's Deleuze-informed theory of the relation between bodies and cities, one could say that Woolf's mobile narrative voice portrays bodies and spaces not as being “megalithic total entities, but as assemblages or collections of parts” (*Time and Perversion* 104, 108).

It is because she resists limiting herself to the mind of a single character that Woolf is able to link suburban settings and socially mobile suburban characters to exciting changes occurring within the modern city, thus characterizing suburban expansion as being symbolic of those forces that erode stale conventions. Furthermore, Woolf's focus on the mind of the suburban up-and-comer Ralph Denham in *Night and Day* contrasts with Richardson's unwavering devotion to portraying only a woman's subjective view of the world and with her consequently limited portrait of suburban masculinity; through Ralph's character, Woolf explodes the stereotype of the philistine clerk, instead characterizing the suburban male as possessing the potential to create more egalitarian relations between genders.

One should keep in mind, however, that *Night and Day* does not involve descriptions of a diversity of suburban milieus – suburbia, Woolf seems to imply, is more interesting when presented as being a general symbol of complex societal changes than as a setting for a novel. It is precisely this sense of distance in Woolf's writing that bothered Richardson: she argued that Woolf viewed life as though “from a balcony, through a lorgnette,” her characters appearing like “pastiche of her own unhappy ruminations rather than people thoroughly known” (*Windows*

425).<sup>74</sup> Woolf's work, observes Richardson in 1941, features a "paralysis" of mind and spirit, which stems in large part from Woolf's "docility," a result of "upbringing in academic circles" (*Windows* 424-5).<sup>75</sup> In this sense, Woolf's interest in showing how suburbia fits within the context of a more hectic urban life prevents her from engaging more thoroughly with her characters' responses to distinct suburbs and implies that these settings possess less potential for producing the kind of drama she wished to portray in her work.<sup>76</sup>

By studying Richardson and Woolf's works in tandem I thus bring into focus the authors' reactions to each other's aesthetic projects, but also show how suburbia is portrayed in two very different, yet multi-layered ways in texts that concern themselves with intersections of gender and space. Furthermore, as the following analyses of the authors' respective works will emphasize, discussions of gender and suburbia are informed by discussions of class, for suburban locations were often markers of class identity. Both Richardson and Woolf were professional women who came from middle-class families, and one should keep in mind that their representations of suburbia, gender, and class are largely informed by and limited to concerns surrounding relatively independent women and, in Woolf's case, men.

### **Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage to and from Suburbia***

Woolf's comments concerning Richardson's development of feminine prose, quoted above, testify to the fact that the latter author's work was recognized to be groundbreaking by at least some of her literary peers.<sup>77</sup> Susan Gevirtz observes that Proust, Richardson, and Joyce were often "mentioned in the same breath" in early twentieth-century book reviews, as being proponents of a prose that unabashedly subverted the basic tenets of the realist mode of representation (526).<sup>78</sup> Like Joyce and Proust's texts, *Pilgrimage* is a *Künstlerroman*, but one written by a woman about a woman's development as an artist. Early *Pilgrimage* novels were in

fact ahead of their time: *Pointed Roofs* (1915), the first novel of the series, was written at the time when Joyce had not yet published *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and only a few years after Marcel Proust's first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913) was released in French (Rosenberg 70).

Comparisons of Richardson's techniques with those of Joyce or, in the case of this dissertation, Woolf, should not, however, obscure the fact that the former author rejects art as an organizing principle of life in a way that the latter two certainly do not.<sup>79</sup> Striving to portray Miriam's consciousness without "intervening artifice," Richardson not only "eschews Joyce's stylistic leaps from chapter to chapter" (Loeffelholz 60), but rejects the constant innovations with form and structure that can be witnessed in Woolf's *oeuvre*. This is not to say that Richardson did not revise her textual style over the course of the *Pilgrimage* series. Starting with the middle novels, Richardson introduced new ways of punctuating and arranging text on the page: one witnesses a resistance to paragraph breaks; very long descriptions of "apparently insignificant items"; and an unconventional setting of reported speech, which often appears with no quotation marks and in the middle of long passages (Mepham 454). In a forty-two-page-long passage in Chapter 3 of *The Tunnel*, for example, Richardson describes details of Miriam's seemingly interminable day at work and her attempt to redecorate her boss's office:

He was coming downstairs. Her hands went to the pile of letters and busily sorted them. Through the hall. In here. Leisurely. How are you getting on? Half amused. Half solicitous. The first weeks. The first day. [. . .] She glanced about at [the pictures], enclosed in her daily unchanging unsatisfying impressions – the green landscape plummy with meadow-sweet, but not letting you through to wander in fields, the little soft bright coloury painting of the doorway of St. Mark's – San Marco, painted by an Englishman, with a procession going in at the door and

beggars round the doorway, blobby and shapeless like English peasants in Italian clothes . . . bad . . . and the man had worked and studied and gone to Italy and had a name and still worked and people bought his things . . . and engraving very fine and small of a low bridge in a little town, quiet, sharp cheering lines . . .

(*Tn* 48-49)

In this passage, the dialogue is not set off by quotation marks or placed in new lines of text; sentence lengths vary from very short to extremely long, with few punctuation marks. On average, the sentence length is much longer in this novel than in Richardson's previous ones, and there is a more disorienting mix of people's actions, snippets of conversations, and Miriam's meandering thoughts. These stylistic changes, however, were introduced solely as a way of enabling Richardson to capture more effectively the ambiguities and patterns of Miriam's consciousness, which remain the sole structuring force throughout the series.

One wonders if Richardson's reluctance to vary her approach and her intense commitment to testing the syntactic and semantic boundaries of English, a "great flexible language" (*Tn* 131), contributed to the decline of scholarly interest in her work that occurred from the 1920s onwards. John Mepham records that Richardson's introduction of more radical, avant-garde stylistic features to her middle texts caused the reviews of her work to be far less positive and deterred many readers from engaging with the *Pilgrimage* novels (451). In 1921, for instance, Richardson observes in a letter to a friend that the voices of her reviewers are becoming "an almost unanimous groan of ennui" (*Windows* 52). It seems that she was aware that readers' disenchantment with her prose was at least in part connected to the ongoing stylistic innovations, for she abandoned some of the above-mentioned experimentation in the later novels, and in 1938, when she was preparing a new edition of *Pilgrimage*, significantly toned down the avant-garde aspects of *Interim* (1920) (Mepham 449-50).<sup>80</sup> Whatever the cause of Richardson's waning

reputation, it is certain that the decline was significant: as various journal databases and library collections show, the amount of scholarly work on Richardson's writing in the last eighty years is meagre compared with the volumes of studies on Joyce and Woolf's texts. Richardson's biographer, John Rosenberg, summarizes the author's literary fate most effectively when he observes that she "changed the course of the modern novel, only to become one of the great unread" (1).

My analysis of the innovative formulations of gender, space, and class that occur in Richardson's portrayal of suburbia is an attempt to address aspects of her writing that have been largely neglected, while emphasizing the importance of the author's *oeuvre* for feminist studies of literature. Although the majority of the *Pilgrimage* novels are set in central London, Miriam works in, lives in, visits, and has strong and changing reactions to numerous London suburbs throughout her early professional life.<sup>81</sup> Until the last novel of *Pilgrimage*, *March Moonlight*, Miriam's responses to suburban settings are predominantly negative and, in the case of lower-middle-class communities, coloured strongly by her bourgeois class prejudice. Although she frequently has what she perceives to be liberating experiences in several middle-class suburbs, she adamantly rejects the possibility of habitation in suburbia, viewing this style of living as being reflective of men's design to relegate women to a life of housework and conventionality. In my study of Richardson's *Backwater*, *The Tunnel*, and *March Moonlight*, however, I argue that it is precisely this overt contradiction between Miriam's positive experiences of suburban variety and her tendency to reject categorically all suburbia that indicates an ironic distance between the texts' narrator and the young heroine who is trying to discover and construct non-traditional forms of privacy. In a letter to a friend, December 1922, Richardson makes an observation about Proust's prose: "He is not, as has been said, writing through consciousness, but about consciousness, a vastly different enterprise and one which allows him to let himself go

completely and write, as he wishes” (*Windows* 64).<sup>82</sup> As Richardson’s biographer Gloria Fromm astutely observes, the author’s comment about Proust’s method suggests that “letting one’s self go” was not something she could do, “because her own novel stemmed from, or came into being through a young, still developing, and therefore limited consciousness” (Fromm 153). Richardson’s comment thus hints at a distance between Miriam and *Pilgrimage*’s narrative voice – a separation that a close reading of Miriam’s responses to suburban settings foregrounds.

Lefebvre’s notion of three types of space – *conceived/planned*, *perceived/experienced*, and *lived/imaginative* space – is particularly useful in exploring Miriam’s layered and contradictory view of suburban space as it relates to her quest for independence. For the majority of *Pilgrimage*, Miriam fails to acknowledge that the way in which space is conceived is not necessarily mirrored in the way people experience it in everyday life: knowing that the suburban organization of space reinforces the gendered division of labour, Miriam cannot see how this same model could be used differently. Coupled with Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of space as something that one *practices*, through which I analyze Miriam’s ultimate acceptance of suburban habitation in *March Moonlight*, Lefebvre’s theory also helps one explain why Miriam’s realization about the interactive reality of space coincides with the beginning of her writing process. Just as Miriam is ready and able to start constructing imaginative, or what Lefebvre would term “lived,” spaces in her writing, Richardson’s own fictional creation of the heterogeneous spaces of modernity comes to an end.

### ***Backwater: Suburban Non-Spaces***

Richardson’s second novel is the only one in her *Pilgrimage* series that takes place almost exclusively in the peripheries of London, alternating between Miriam’s middle-class family home in Barnes, a south-western suburb, and her workplace, a girls’ school, in a fictional

northern, predominantly lower-middle-class suburb called Banbury Park. From the opening pages, Miriam characterizes the latter location in negative terms, usually by comparing it with the more spacious southern setting. While she is being interviewed for the teaching post in the school owners' drawing room, she emphasizes the crowded nature of the room: it is "little," "full of old things," and "noisy" from the "disturbing" jingling of the passing trams (the working- and lower-middle-class citizens' primary means of public transport) (*Bw* 189). Banbury Park, as Miriam observes from the top of an omnibus (*not* a tram) that takes her away from the suburb, is filled with "small gardens" and "little grey houses," its roads cluttered with unattractive tram lines and "dingy blue" trams that lead off "in every direction" (*Bw* 189, 194). When the omnibus finally approaches a more affluent area of London, Miriam sits back and draws "a deep breath," relieved at the sight of "bright white-faced houses" and the "blue sky" (*Bw* 197).<sup>83</sup> Several pages later, her family home is portrayed through imagery of light and spaciousness: Miriam observes upon entering the property that "light shone through" the trees onto the "open garden" and the "large centre bed" of flowers; the front door of the house is wide open, letting in fresh air and sunlight (*Bw* 200).

Bronfen has observed the difference between Miriam's perceptions of the two suburban settings, noting that Banbury Park's exteriors seem to be rigidly demarcated from its interiors (14). By describing her impending move to Banbury Park (necessitated by her family's financial troubles) as a process of being "shut up and surrounded," Miriam indeed expresses her dislike of the lower-middle-class suburb in terms of constricted space (*Bw* 199). Once at her post, she fantasizes about an escape to "huge open space[s]" and repeatedly comments on her "desire for space" (*Bw* 288, 322, 323). Yet, Bronfen does not observe that Miriam expresses these yearnings as she strolls daily along Banbury Park's "clear green slopes in the flood of afternoon" light and enjoys the "solitary spring air": the suburb, although filled with relatively small houses and

gardens, also features nature and meadows (*Bw* 289). It seems as though Miriam's interpretation of "spaciousness" or "open space" is drastically different from the meaning attached to these terms in the Open Spaces Acts, which were passed by the British government in 1877, 1881, 1887, and 1906. The legislation charged local authorities with ensuring that the construction of housing was not performed on select stretches of land, so that these sites could be left for, among other things, walking and exercise. In Miriam's case, however, "space" does not denote a lack of housing in an area or an isotropic entity that can be measured, but refers primarily to her class-inflected perception of women's opportunities to escape the limits imposed on their gender. She thus positions herself as being someone who is opposed to the kind of planned space created by "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (Lefebvre 38), of which suburban model of separate, gendered spheres is an example.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, Richardson's choice of name for her protagonist, which means "their rebellion" in Hebrew, implies the young woman's resistance to convention (Jackson, *Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names*).

At the same time, Miriam is clearly unable or unwilling to recognize a potentially vast difference between planned space and space as it is practiced and experienced on a daily basis by various users. When two pupils are admonished by the older schoolteachers for running hatless in a park, for instance, Miriam thinks that "nobody had any right to interfere with them," but soon dismisses the thought from her mind: the "common" north London girls, she argues, are destined to grow up into materialistic north London women, so they probably "ought to be suppressed" (*Bw* 34 and 241). Miriam's bourgeois prejudice against the lower echelons of a fragmented middle class is obvious, but her disparagement of the north London population also seems informed by a perception that very few of the Banbury Park women can resist the stultifying conventions.

Although Miriam does not characterize lower-middle-class suburbia as being feminized, her descriptions of Banbury Park are in many ways reminiscent of the prevalent turn-of-the-century disparagements of suburban philistinism:

Off every tram-hunted main road, there must be a neighbourhood like this where lived the common-mouthed, harsh-speaking people who filled the pavements and shops and walked in the parks. To enter one of the little houses and peek and speak there to its inmates would be to be finally claimed and infected by the life these people lived, the thing that made them what they are. (*Bw* 289)

Miriam associates the north London suburb with scraping by on “twenty pounds a year,” as well as with people who have “street voices” and loudly scorn all that is not “materially profitable” (*Bw* 289, 298). Repeatedly, she differentiates herself from the Banbury Park residents:

Her feelings and thoughts, her way of looking at things, her desire for space and beautiful things and music and quietude would never be their desire. . . . North London would always be North London, hard, strong, sneering, money-making, noisy, and trammy. (*Bw* 322)

Even though she meets young women in this suburb who are kind to her and have distinct personalities, Miriam frequently characterizes them as being a monolithic group, stating, for example, that north London girls are “capable of anything in the way of horridness” (*Bw* 241).

Tamar Katz has pointed out that there is little “ambiguous distance, if any, between what the narrative endorses and what its protagonist asserts” in *Pilgrimage* (149). While this may be the case in certain portions of *Backwater*, the clear juxtaposition of Miriam’s diverse experiences in Banbury Park with her blatant generalizations and dismissal of its inhabitants suggests that Richardson is commenting on the character’s limited, strongly biased point of view, as well as on her lack of self-reflexivity. Miriam’s reference to infection in the cited passage recalls the

medically-inflected arguments of the middle-class citizens who sought to separate themselves from the dirty urban slums: thus she partakes in the kind of discourses that would have been used by scientists and planners in their conception of early bourgeois suburbia, clearly contradicting her earlier rejection of this dominant understanding of space.

Miriam's experience of her family abode throughout the first half of *Backwater* is, on the other hand, significantly different from her view of Banbury Park; the Hendersons' home is usually suffused with light and filled with young, vivacious visitors who flirt, dance, and wander in and out of the house. Increasingly bitter about the fact that she has to trade in her Barnes existence for an unfulfilling teaching position in a drab part of greater London, Miriam juxtaposes the two sites: "She was going to be shut up away from the grown-up things, the sunlit world, and the people who were enjoying it. . . . [In Banbury Park, it] would be cold English piano and dreadful English children – and trams going up and down that grey road outside" (*Bw* 199). According to Miriam, the residents of Banbury Park represent the majority of the English population, which is lower-middle-class, semi-educated, and materialistic; Miriam, on the other hand, aims to become a cosmopolitan, professional woman.

Boundaries between interiors and exteriors seem less clearly defined in Barnes, suggesting a movement across spaces and a potential for less conventional behaviour and thinking. It is here, for example, that Miriam smokes her first cigarette, an experience she finds to be both liberating and physically enjoyable. Nevertheless, over the course of the novel, she becomes gradually aware of and resistant to the conventions of the bourgeois society that lives in Barnes. She realizes that the power relations that structure the rhythms of a typical middle-class household are characterized by a suppression of women and their voices. Her father oppresses his wife by repeatedly commenting on the "gullibility of women" (*Bw* 234-5). Middle-class housewives, Miriam observes, spend their lives involved in petty gossip and matchmaking

schemes, and are unlikely to encourage their daughters to do anything else but marry. Most of Miriam's experiences in Barnes, furthermore, revolve around flirtations with various young men (*Bw* 286). After one of her holiday visits to the family home, she states that it is in fact better "to be alone and suffering and miserable" (and employed) in Banbury Park than to become a complacent and dependant suburban housewife in Barnes (*Bw* 286).

Realizing by the end of *Backwater* that both her Banbury Park and Barnes existences are lacking in what she perceives to be an adequate amount of "open space," Miriam begins to view all suburbia as being a stagnant backwater that stifles becoming. It is clear from the onset of the *Pilgrimage* series, however, that Richardson utilizes suburban settings to reveal Miriam's prejudices, insecurities, and lack of imagination in regards to how users can create "smooth" spaces. While the author clearly shows the limitations imposed upon women by suburban living, she also implies that suburbia is not as one-dimensional as its rebellious yet immature protagonist seems to think – a fact that becomes increasingly obvious in *The Tunnel*.

### ***The Tunnel: Suburban Locations and the Metaphor of Suburbia***

*The Tunnel* is the fourth novel of Richardson's *Pilgrimage* series, but it is the first one that takes place primarily in central London. After leaving her teaching posts at Banbury Park in *Backwater* and a country house in *Honeycomb* (1917), Miriam fulfils her dream of living independently in the city: she rents a room close to Euston Station and obtains a job as an assistant in a centrally-located dentists' office. Although she admits that her room is small and shabby, Miriam describes it using imagery of light and spaciousness. With its "brightness" and "unscreened happy little [window]panes," it is "better than any place she had known in all her wanderings"; the chapter ends with Miriam's shouts of joy (*Tn* 12, 16 and 23). As in *Backwater*, Miriam's sense of spaciousness has less to do with measured space and more with her subjective

experience of personal freedom: “I’m free – I’ve got free – nothing can ever alter that, she thought, gazing wide-eyed into the fire, between fear and joy” (*Tn* 76). Her reaction suggests the excitement and trepidation that late nineteenth-century women likely felt upon becoming a part of the busy, male-dominated urban centre.

The non-traditional nature of Miriam’s new lifestyle, however, lies not only in the fact of her entrance into the public sphere as a city worker, but also in her redefinition of privacy. Unlike the private sphere of the traditional familial home, which was becoming increasingly associated with suburban living and identified with femininity (but which rarely offered women time or space away from family obligations), Miriam’s room provides her with privacy in the individual sense: “No interruptions, no one watching or speculating or treating one in some particular way [. . .]” (*Tn* 17).<sup>85</sup> Miriam feels that her new existence in central London (in what Woolf might have called “a room of her own”) does not operate according to strict boundaries between interior and exterior spaces, for “London could come freely in day and night,” nor is it organized around gender difference, for to be in London is to be “not a woman” but “a Londoner” (*Tn* 16, 266).

Miriam’s comment about being “not a woman” but “a Londoner,” however, should be understood as being another dramatic generalization that the text does not necessarily endorse.<sup>86</sup> The gendered nature of public, urban space is, for instance, made clear in the passage in which Miriam’s sojourn is interrupted by a strange man’s greeting on the street:

Miriam had a moment’s fear; but the man’s attitude was deprecating and there was her song; it was partly her own fault. But why, why . . . fierce anger at the recurrence of this kind of occurrence seized her. She wanted him out of the way and wanted him to know how angry she was at the interruption. (*Tn* 96)

Miriam is so enthusiastic about her new-found independence that she chooses to ignore such events in her general estimation of London life. Relishing the limited opportunity for private reflection that strolls around London offer her, she wanders around the city in search of an A.B.C. café, often walking over to a flat rented by her friends, Mag and Jan, where she engages in effervescent conversations (*Tn* 75, 88).

Throughout the novel, Miriam's perception of her new style of living is defined by her rejection of suburban life. The boarding house in which she rents a room keeps her "secure from the world that [is] not London"; "not London," however, is earlier identified as being "the northern suburbs," which Miriam has "banished" from her life (*Tn* 77, 15). At first, it seems as though Miriam refers specifically to Banbury Park when she speaks of northern suburbia, but it later becomes obvious that she rejects all suburbs that lie in this direction. During a taxi ride with her activist friend, Miss Szigmondy, Miriam panics when she notices that the "hansom had turned into the main road and was going *north*"; she feels an overwhelming sense of "oppression" as they stop in front of a "small drab villa" in Hampstead (*Tn* 157). Although Richardson's novel takes place at the turn of the century, before the Hampstead Garden Suburb was designed by Raymond Unwin (the work began in 1907), the area had a long cultural history and was known for housing numerous artists and prosperous middle-class citizens, as is illustrated by T. W. H. Crosland's comment in a 1905 essay: "Over above its gates you shall read, 'Please refrain from entering unless you are possessed of some taste and at least five hundred a year'" (105).<sup>87</sup> Well-known personages such as the Earl of Chatham, several Lord Chancellors, as well as writers and philosophers such as John Keats, Wilkie Collins, John Galsworthy, H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence, and Sigmund Freud, lived in this area at some point during their lives (Weinreb and Hibbert 356). Nevertheless, Hampstead's special architectural, natural, and social character does not prevent Miriam from grouping it together with the likes of

Banbury Park into the category of the dreaded “north” suburbia. Because a northern suburb was the site of her past drudgery, the emotional Miriam, who is still trying to elaborate her identity in relation to ways of life she has known and rejected in the past, characterizes all suburbia lying in this general direction to be a monolithic site of conventionality and complacency.

While north London seems especially repugnant to Miriam, she often expresses a dislike of all suburbia, including the western and southern suburbs where her sisters reside with their respective (and respectable) husbands. Leaving her London room, she senses a multitude of familiar voices hovering on the outskirts of the city:

They were all out there, away somewhere, the very thought and sight of them, disapproving and deploring her surroundings. [. . .] There were their very voices, coming plaiting and reproachful with a held-in indignation, intonation that she knew inside and out coming on bells from somewhere beyond the squares – another church. (*Tn* 22)

Later, at her sister Harriet’s house, she meets and attracts a suburban man, Mr. Tremayne, whom she dislikes because “he could not be really happy with a woman unless he could despise her” (*Tn* 27). To Miriam, suburban living in general symbolizes binary thinking and gender inequity: her dentist employer, Mr. Hancock, a Hampstead man, “built his life up complacently on home and family life while saying all those things about women, lived on them and their pain, on their food, enjoyed the comforts they made” (*Tn* 222-3). Arguing that one is not gendered if one is a Londoner (a remark that ignores her experience of harassment as a female pedestrian in London), Miriam claims that clerks are also Londoners, “*unless* they lived in the suburbs” (*Tn* 266; my italics). The gender-inflected organization of suburbia is therefore unacceptable for Miriam,

whose London existence is liberating specifically because she perceives it as being more conducive to a woman's development of personal time and space.

Miriam's staunch prejudice against suburbia, however, exists simultaneously with some positive experiences in middle-class suburbs. During her visit to Alma Wilson, an old school-friend, and her husband Hypo, who live in one of London's outer suburbs, Miriam's dislike of Hypo's masculine preaching is overcome by her interest in the couple's artistic community and a sense that "[t]hese were her own people" (*Tn* 117). When she perceives Hypo's sense of superiority towards his auditors, she feels that one should not encourage him with one's attention; at the same time, however, she does not wish to leave: "[I]t was wrong to be here, it would be wrong to come again; but there was nothing like it anywhere else" (*Tn* 119). Miriam smokes one cigarette after another during her evening with the Wilsons, a habit she only practices in company in which she feels somewhat emancipated (*Tn* 117). Later in the novel, she attends numerous artistic events and "musical at-homes" in well-off "flowery suburbs" and enjoys the "cool rooms, gardens in the morning and evenings," even though her pleasure is somewhat spoiled by an observation that most artists are men who are followed around by various hostesses (*Tn* 165).

Most importantly, Miriam's bicycle excursion, which is one of the most climactic events in *The Tunnel* and which she experiences as being highly pleasurable and empowering (a "coming out into the light"), takes place in several suburbs, one of these being Marlborough:

She swung triumphantly up. The earth throbbed beneath her with the throbbing of her heart . . . the sky steadied and stood further off, clear, peaceful, blue, with light neat soft bunches of cloud drifting slowly across it. She closed her eyes upon the dazzling growing distance of blue and white, and felt the horizon folding down in a firm clear sweep round her green cradle. [. . .] Trees clumped in masses

round houses leading to villages that shut her into little corridors of hard hot light . . . the little bright sienna form of the hen she had nearly run over; the land stretching serenely out again, rolling along, rolling along in the hot sunshine with the morning and evening freshness at either end . . . sweeping it slowly in and out of the deeps of the country night . . . eyelids were transparent. (*Tn* 230-231)

Richardson's frequent use of ellipses in this section occasions a stretching of time: Miriam relishes every moment of liberating movement, while gazing at the "golden and green and shadowy" trees along suburban streets (*Tn* 231). At Marlborough, however, she hears a few men express their surprise that a woman is taking a bicycling trip alone, and retaliates with her ever-ready disparagements about suburban conventionality: "Marlborough thoughts rattling in all the heads [. . .] They did not know [. . .] what it was they liked. [. . .] They were fat and complacent because they did not know it" (*Tn* 234). Although Miriam's earlier encounter with an imposing male stranger on a London street was followed only by an irritation towards men, she reacts to the comments of a few Marlborough inhabitants by generalizing about an entire community. In other words, Miriam's experiences on London streets and at her workplace (where male doctors give orders to female assistants) reaffirm traditional gender norms in the same way that her encounters in suburbia do, but only in the latter cases does she correlate the patriarchal oppression of women with an actual style of habitation.

Since the spread of suburbia relegated many women to the isolation of the family home, the rows of familial houses in the suburbs could be viewed as being one of the most striking physical manifestations of the governmental organization and gendering of its subjects. Miriam's categorical rejection of suburbia in *The Tunnel* therefore reflects her need to find a concrete, visual symbol of gender inequity against which to define herself at a crucial stage in her quest for self-identity. Consequently, suburbia is represented in *The Tunnel* through a variety of physical

settings, some of which feature or enable non-traditional practices, and as Miriam's metaphor for widespread gender conventionality. By dismissing the suburban style of living, and instead seeking a way of life that would afford her personal privacy, Miriam is also affirming her class identity: as Gan reminds one, most early twentieth-century working- and lower-middle-class women experienced a move to suburbia to be liberating because it constituted an escape from cramped, urban-based living quarters and access to newer housing with better appliances; a quest for personal rather than familial form of privacy became a middle-class woman's mark of privilege (13). Suburbia therefore operates as a multifaceted site that is central to the author's interrogation of middle-class women's complex experience of modernity. The title of Richardson's fourth novel refers to Miriam's tunnel vision of suburbia, for not only does she make generalizations about suburban living that ignore the diversity and potential advantages that she herself witnesses, but she naïvely believes that one can resist an ostensibly oppressive setting *only* by not living in it – a view that will be altered significantly by the end of *Pilgrimage*.

### ***March Moonlight: Miriam's Re-Imagining of Suburbia***

Richardson wrote *March Moonlight* in the last decade of her life, but this final *Pilgrimage* novel was published ten years after her death, in 1967. Based on the author's testimony, she revised only the first three of its chapters; Kristin Bluemel observes that this text, consisting of approximately 40,000 words, is about 15,000 words shorter than any of its *Pilgrimage* predecessors, so that it was probably "little more than two-thirds" finished by 1957 (15). Nevertheless, the inconclusive ending of *March Moonlight* proves effective, for Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, as its ever-expanding length proved, was meant to last as long as Miriam's consciousness did and therefore required an end as sudden and arbitrary as that of a person's life.<sup>88</sup>

In the *Pilgrimage* novels that Richardson wrote after *The Tunnel* and before *March Moonlight*, suburbs continue to appear as a range of sites that Miriam visits and as a seemingly monolithic style of living that she rejects. Yet, towards the “end” of *March Moonlight*, Miriam rents a room first in a St. John’s Wood branch of the Young Women’s Bible Association (YWBA) and then in a family house in the same suburb. One of the oldest of London suburbs, St. John’s Wood started to develop in the early nineteenth century and was, even in the beginning of the twentieth century, renowned for its near-rural calm and the availability of relatively inexpensive housing (Panton 378). It was popular among artists, politicians, scientists, and philosophers, as well as among the “more prosaic members of the middle classes” (Weinreb and Hibbert 726). At one point it was home to the writer George Eliot and the naturalist Thomas Henry Huxley; influential political figures such as Napoleon III bought villas for their mistresses in this secluded suburb (Panton 378). St. John’s Wood thus had an established reputation as a trendy yet somewhat bohemian setting, which distinguished it from newer suburbs by its longer history, relative wealth of greenery, and popularity among well-known personages.

An aspiring artist, Miriam marvels at the beauty of this setting and revels in the privacy it affords her: “[T]his corner of St. John’s Wood . . . inexplicably begins to offer itself as my native heath. Yet every place I have stayed in, at home and abroad, has sooner or later so offered itself, but none with just this indefinable quality” (*MM* 656). Within this unique middle-class suburb, Miriam discovers a balance of community *and* solitude that allows her finally to start writing a novel about her personal pilgrimage, a fact that is semantically loaded because suburbia – and especially northern suburbia, of which St. John’s Wood is a part – was so consistently rejected by Miriam throughout the series. One must therefore look within *March Moonlight* to locate and analyze Miriam’s drastic change of perspective, which is at least partially linked to a new understanding of the relation between space and subjectivity.

Bronfen contends that Richardson's switch from third to first person narration, which occurs increasingly in the final novels of the *Pilgrimage* series (and especially in *March Moonlight*), suggests Miriam's "gradual transition from the experience of the materiality of the world to the recreation of recollected and imagined immaterial sites" (69). In the earlier texts, Miriam's sense of self is deeply influenced by various physical spaces she encounters, which she connects with non-spatial concepts such as freedom, complacency, or materialism; she fails to realize that spaces are "subject to change" or that they can be "partially accepted and partially rejected" (Bronfen 28, 124). Her development of a meaningful inner life and detachment from physical surroundings, Bronfen continues, is the reason that Miriam can finally exist (and even find charm) within middle-class suburbia, without feeling threatened by her environment (153). While Bronfen's argument certainly helps to explain the links between Miriam's developing confidence, interest in creative contemplation, and acceptance of a suburban setting (albeit one that is well-known for its middle-class character and bohemian flavour), it does not fully account for the character's rather lengthy descriptions of and engagement with the materiality of St. John's Wood. Bronfen's implication that Miriam's ability to accept this environment is a result of a withdrawal into self ignores both the intense interest the character has in the interpersonal dynamics of the two St. John Wood households she inhabits and the significance that the adoption of this specific suburb plays in Miriam's formulation of her identity as a middle-class writer.

At the beginning of *March Moonlight*, Miriam, possessed of enough money to pursue writing her first novel, plans on settling at Dimple Hill, the Quaker community featured in *Dimple Hill* (1938). Before embarking on this new adventure, however, she visits her friend Amabel, who resides in a suburban home she recently purchased with her husband. Although the move to suburbia has enabled the young couple to live in a more spacious and sanitary

environment than the one they had inhabited in central London, Miriam's reaction to their domesticity is, as usual, largely negative and expressed through generalizations about suburban life: gazing from a window at the "small characterless square akin to millions of its fellows destined to grow smaller with the introduction of cheap, pretentious suites," she feels an "oppressive sense, hanging so heavily over this sprawl of outer suburbia, of the shallows of life hurrying heedlessly along" (*MM* 596-97). Amabel may have decorated her rooms with a "riot of rich colour" that produces a striking beauty, but Miriam states that she will feel an "unconfessable relief of escape from suburbia, from the raw, unfinished road and the crudity of the small, uniform houses, into the Roscorla's life-fashioned, richly girt homestead" at Dimple Hill (597).

Miriam's rejection of suburbia is in this case effected through its unfavourable comparison with a rural setting. "Life-fashioned," a phrase Miriam uses to describe life at Dimple Hill, suggests that she rejects suburbia as being a planned, *man*-made space and instead escapes into a nostalgic fantasy of a community that is structured by the rhythms of nature.<sup>89</sup> The presence of electricity in Amabel's residence is an exciting sign of new technology, but Miriam responds to the electric light by imagining a "friendly glow" of evening in the countryside (*MM* 598). Later in the text, when she notices the presence of a "little kitchenette" in the guest room, she reads it as a symbol of Amabel's future entrapment within the domestic life: it shows her "caught, for life, in a continuously revolving machinery, unable to give, to anything else, more than a permanently preoccupied attention" (*MM* 602). Improvements in technology, which were frequently witnessed in the newly-built suburban homes and which, as Judy Giles observes, significantly improved women's daily lives, are characterized by Miriam to be ploys that lure women into heteronormative domesticity, so that they might forever rattle "behind the bars" (Giles 48; *MM* 602).

A soothing image of Dimple Hill is conjured by Miriam to fend off the discomfort that the gadget-savvy room has aroused in her:

At this moment in the roomy Dimple Hall kitchen, quiet, and dark save where at its far end the practical harsh light of the unshaded oil lamp falls upon the serene figure of Rachel Mary bent over the shabby ancient range, the fire's rosy glow stands against the blackness of the great flue starting on its journey up through the house into the open whose fading twilight is the promise of dawn. (*MM* 602)

Apart from the oil lamp, all sources of light in Rachel Mary's kitchen are natural (fire and dawn); the long, flowing sentence hints at or evokes the simple, comforting rhythms of rural life. Unlike Amabel, the woman in the Dimple Hill kitchen is "serene" rather than "caught," "preoccupied," and "uncertain" (*MM* 602). Miriam, however, seems oblivious to the irony of using an image of a woman who appears to be well-adjusted to domestic work to produce a critique of women's relegation to the private sphere in a modernized home: her fantasy hardly unsettles normative gender roles and actually romanticizes women's domestic labour in a rural setting.

Although Miriam states at the beginning of *March Moonlight* that the Quaker "way of handling life," the "business of minute to minute living in the spirit which gives them their perspective and their pose and serenity," is the best she has ever witnessed, she cannot agree with some of the puritan, conservative aspects of their existence: a "Quakerized world," she observes, would be "intolerable" (*MM* 605). Yet, she idealizes the rural setting when faced with Amabel's suburban domesticity, so that the initial descriptions of Dimple Hill in *March Moonlight* constitute Miriam's attempt to oppose symbolically what she perceives to be a blatantly patriarchal organization of space. When she finally arrives at her rural destination, Miriam revels naïvely in being "free from space and time," a comment that implies her experience in Amabel's suburban residence made her feel "trapped" (*MM* 613). The word "space," especially, operates as

a shifting signifier in Miriam's life, sometimes oppressing an individual with its "presence" and sometimes by the "lack" thereof. In *Backwater*, Miriam yearns for more "space" because "space" is synonymous with her opportunities for an unconventional life, while in *March Moonlight* she enjoys being free of it, because "space" implies a society's organization of people into genders and behaviours. Richardson's portrayal of Miriam's changing understanding of space and dramatic responses to suburban milieus thus once again highlights the character's lack of self-reflection and tendency to create callow, black-and-white visions of reality.

To claim, as Bronfen does, that Miriam is so withdrawn into contemplative life that material sites no longer have much effect on her moods is to ignore her vehement dislike of suburbia, which she expresses up until the last several chapters of *March Moonlight*. When she temporarily leaves Dimple Hill and seeks a room at the YWBA, she is disappointed that the organization happens to be located in a suburb: "Unattractive, chill, this vacancy they offer, far away in a suburban branch. St. John's Wood. That vague cricket-ground region on the way to Mr. Hancock's place in Hampstead. Far from the sheltering depths of London" (*MM* 629). As soon as she observes the details of her new residence in St. John's Wood, however, Miriam begins to describe its atmosphere in positive terms, focusing on its elegance, "spaciousness," and the "pure, fresh air" that flows through an "open window" (*MM* 630).

What makes this setting different from and more attractive to Miriam than the other suburban homes she has visited are its non-traditional domestic arrangements, which are conducive to the inhabitants' freedom of movement and development of personal privacy: "But one is not a guest. A boarder, free, within whatever may turn out to be the rules and regulations, to come and go without palaver. High above the street with the sky for company and a large house available to wander in, but not encroaching" (*MM* 630-1). The YWBA in St. John's Wood is an example of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century organizations that offered

individual rooms in combination with communal kitchens, drawing rooms, and laundry services to single, working women (Parsons 111-112).<sup>90</sup> Surprised by the fact that this establishment, which caters to women's personal privacy and nourishes a non-hierarchical community among the tenants, can prosper within a setting she has so long associated with patriarchal striation of its subjects, Miriam begins to realize that she can create a self-empowering domestic space for herself in St. John's Wood.

Deleuze and Guattari's characterization of space and subjectivity as being mutually-producing social processes, which Bronfen does not use in her analysis, enables one to assess Miriam's changing experience of suburbia in a particularly layered manner: not only in terms of the character's growing self-assurance and inner life, but as a development of her awareness that spaces are not in themselves resistant or oppressive, but are ultimately made so by people, who activate smoothing or striating potentialities in their environments. In short, space or time are not simply forces that exist before us or shapes us, but things that we 'do': utilizing Deleuze's notion of the folds on a large fabric, one could suggest that "interiority and exteriority are always being produced out of a single continuous textile" (West-Pavlov 234). Miriam's experience in the YWBA is thus characterized by a series of realizations about the possibilities for innovation that one can generate within one's physical and social environments. She exults in stimulating interactions with other women and the sense of freedom that the non-traditional domestic space affords her: "The formal basis of our joy, like the social joy of schooldays, is togetherness on neutral territory, keeping us independent in unity" (*MM* 634). The seclusion of a typical suburban household, which is far away from the cultural amenities of the male-dominated urban centre, Miriam realizes, can be used to inspire and nurture independent women's unconventional types of privacy and creativity. Although she knows that she could never practice the "routine life of enclosed suburban housewives," Miriam is aware by the end of *March Moonlight* that

living in a suburb does not equal being enclosed, especially if one chooses to use the privacy of a suburban abode to “draw unexpected results from his [or her] situation,” to create a “life-fashioned” existence within the structure of planned, artificial space (*MM* 645; Certeau 30). If it was not for the friendships she has formed at Dimple Hill, Miriam observes, she would “stay on indefinitely” in St. John’s Wood (*MM* 635).

This realization of one’s agency to practice space differently is experienced by the character at the beginning of an adventure: “Playing accompaniments, I felt all about me an awareness, conscious in the few, shared, like an infection, to some extent by all, of the strangeness of the adventure of being, of the fact of the existence, anywhere, of anything at all” (*MM* 638). Miriam’s use of the word “infection” echoes her much earlier description of lower-middle-class suburbia in *Backwater*; this time the term does not imply an insidious attack of a harmful agent on an individual, “to be infected,” but a sense of communal sharing of excitement that is directly related to a sense of being a modern, independent woman (*Bw* 286). The word creates a semantic link between the two passages and draws attention to Miriam’s new understanding of the relation between conceived and perceived spaces, as well as her recognition of the multifaceted styles of living present in suburbia.

When Miriam’s life at Dimple Hill becomes complicated due to a romantic entanglement and the Quakers’ disapproval of her conduct – an experience that shatters her recent idealization of rural life – it is unsurprising that she again seeks refuge in St. John’s Wood. The rented room in an ordinary middle-class household, Miriam observes, begins to offer itself as her “native heath” (*MM* 656). Miriam’s comments suggest an intense engagement with, rather an escape from, her material environment: “Here, the very sunlight, compared with the sunlight along the main roads, seems more mellow and leisurely. In the brief local roadways and odd passages people go about as if at home, at ease” (*MM* 656). Her habitation in St. John’s Wood is possible

not only because her complex inner life and a more formulated self-identity enable her mentally to create “a gathering of events which are temporally and spatially different” (Bronfen 28, 83), but also because her experience at the YWBA has made her aware of her ability to transform mere habitats into a “native heath” (*MM* 656).

Richardson’s use of the word “heath” – a large stretch of “open, uncultivated land” (*OED*) – recalls Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), in which the moors symbolize wild nature and the equally wild (anti)hero Heathcliffe. In Richardson’s novel, however, Miriam uses the word “heath” to describe not an actual rural setting, but any space that she can experience as being untamed, liberating, and adventurous.<sup>91</sup> Although she was initially hesitant to leave “the sheltering depths of London,” Miriam now relishes her long “ramble[s] from suburb to centre” (*MM* 629, 657). It is thus only when she realizes her own “spatial agency,”<sup>92</sup> that she can sit in her room in St. John’s Wood and contemplate, embarking on an imaginative “adventure into discovery” and flying off into “the furthest reaches of one’s being”; she thus begins to create what Lefebvre would term as imaginative, *lived* spaces that break down dominant spatial codes (*MM* 657).

While Miriam’s acceptance of St. John’s Wood as a suitable home reflects her realization that she can create “smooth” spaces within various settings, it does not mean that the character begins to approve of what she views to be a conventional suburban lifestyle: as mentioned above, Miriam still maintains that she could never be a “suburban housewife” (*MM* 645). Furthermore, it is implied by her comments concerning the specific qualities of St. John’s Wood that she would not be as confident in constructing innovative domestic arrangements in every other suburb: “All the gardens, every side road I passed, held trees. Large. Old. St. John’s *Wood*. Remainders, they must be, distinguishing it from other suburbs. Making it perhaps unique” (*MM* 631). It is not surprising that Miriam’s first, brief habitation in St. John’s Wood is the one

suburban experience which finally makes her realize that not all suburban lives have to be, or are, the same. Her tenancy in this specific suburb emphasizes her middle-class standing and complements her emerging identity as an aspiring artist.

Representations of suburbia in *Pilgrimage* clearly play a central role in Miriam's elaboration of individual privacy and meanings of "space," as well as Richardson's interrogation of the developing consciousness of a working middle-class woman. Although Miriam's response to lower-middle-class Banbury Park and, later, all suburbs, involves some rather typical disparagements about this style of habitation, the discrepancies between the protagonist's exciting experiences in diverse suburbs and her persistent generalizations about suburban life identify her responses as being deeply subjective and suggest that suburbia is repeatedly *misread* to be monolithic and one-dimensional. Richardson's focus on Miriam's responses to various suburban settings also highlights the key role that external spaces play in the development of a woman's consciousness; she thus subverts the notion of a sealed female interiority based on which early-nineteenth-century planners planned their ideal of suburban, familial, private sphere. In this sense, Richardson's portrayals of suburbia in the *Pilgrimage* texts "offer an endorsement or contestation of official representation of space" (Thacker 4) and testify to the experimental nature of her work.<sup>93</sup>

### **Virginia Woolf's Suburbs: Boring Settings and Exciting Symbols of Modernity**

Woolf's novels and shorter prose writings rarely take place in suburbia; she is well known for her interest in the dynamics of the urban centre, showcased most clearly in such works as *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *The Years* (1937). Thacker observes that the southern suburbs "float through Woolf's work as a kind of negative heterotopia, non-places that can never enter into literary representations but which are gestured to as dismal destinations for certain

lower-middle-class characters” in such works as *Jacob’s Room* (1922) and “Street Haunting” (1927). Since she chooses not to engage with specificities of diverse suburbs, it could be stated that Woolf’s representations of suburbia involve a degree of generalization on her part, a tendency about which Richardson was particularly critical (Richardson, *Windows* 424). Unfortunately, Thacker does not provide a thorough analysis of Woolf’s “gestures” toward the suburbs, and also fails to mention that other (mainly northern and middle-class) suburban settings, such as Highgate, do appear as semantically loaded sites in some of Woolf’s texts, most notably in *Night and Day*.

The indirect or brief appearances of various suburbs in the author’s works, whether positive or negative, are in fact crucial to the way in which she portrays spatial and temporal disorientations, or as Deleuze and Guattari would term them, “deterritorializations,” occasioned by rapid and diverse technological developments in the early twentieth century. As new modes of transport such as motor buses, trams, electric railways, and, later, automobiles were used to carry suburban commuters to and from London, and as daily movements of these commuting masses affected the experiences of urban pedestrians, Woolf repeatedly uses suburbia and suburbia-related imagery of transportation and movement to symbolize exciting changes associated with modernity. Thus, as Rachel Bowlby argues, Woolf’s “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” takes place during a railway journey on a suburban line from Richmond to Waterloo, which becomes “un unlikely setting for an argument against realism” (7).

Woolf’s ambulatory narrative voice, which moves between the minds of several young characters within central London in *Night and Day*, enables her to draw unexpected connections among suburbia, urban life, and a general destabilization of traditional understandings of space, gender, and class. Although Woolf’s focus is on the busy pavements of central London, where characters can frequently brush shoulders with each other, she is particularly interested in how

the movements of suburban commuters introduce female characters to habit-altering experiences and how the social mobility commonly associated with suburban, professional men can form grounds for a redefinition of traditional gender roles. Combining Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope of the road – which involves the drawing together of “the spatial and temporal paths” of the representatives of “various social classes, states, religions, nationalities, ages” – with Lefebvre's theory of the three types of space enables me to analyze how Woolf's tentative formal innovations are linked to her identification of connections among urban and suburban spaces and characters (Bakhtin 243).

### ***Night and Day: A Romantic Union of Suburbia and the City***

Literary critics have written less about Woolf's second novel, *Night and Day*, than about most of her other texts, and those who comment on this work usually find it to be disappointingly traditional: as Hilary Newman observes, it revolves around the topic of courtship, operates in large degree according to cause and effect, and features both an omniscient narrator and an abundance of dialogue (37). Writing shortly after the text's initial publication, Mansfield critiqued Woolf for failing to gesture towards the recent war and for adhering to the staid conventions of literary realism:

We had thought that this world was vanished forever, that it was impossible to find on the great ocean of literature a ship that was so unaware of what has been happening. Yet here is *Night and Day* fresh, new, and exquisite, a novel in the tradition of the English novel. (“A Ship Comes Into Harbour” 314)

Woolf seems to have been aware of laying herself “open to the charge of niggling with emotions that don't really matter”; explaining, however, that “the process of discarding the old, when one

is by no means certain what to put in their place, is a sad one,” she implies that *Night and Day* features an earnest and fraught quest for a new literary method (*Diary* 1: 259).<sup>94</sup>

Some critics have noted the tentatively innovative aspects of this early novel: Newman, for example, argues that it is through the portrayal of the characters’ inner lives, shifting moods, and indecisions that *Night and Day* “begins to seem more modernist,” while Ann-Marie Priest and Randy Malamud explore the text’s linguistic challenges to realist conventions (Newman 37; Priest 72; Malamud 38). As will be shown, unconventionally long and flowing sentences that carry a faint echo of Richardson’s more loosely structured prose are certainly prevalent in the novel and are used primarily to describe young characters’ mercurial thought processes and frequent dissatisfaction with the older generations’ stifling social norms. Woolf’s special focus on the consciousness of Katherine Hilbery, a sheltered, upper-middle-class young woman, and Ralph Denham, a young, suburban clerk whose unconventional opinions on love and marriage influence Katherine to rebel against her parents’ expectations, suggests that the author’s innovations take place within the larger context of her interest in reworking conventional gender relations. Suburban imagery and characters play a significant role in Woolf’s portrayal of emerging material and textual spaces, which challenge the stifling environment of the Hilbery household.

The plot of *Night and Day* is anchored to the geography and history of greater London. It follows characters as they move from the Hilberys’ spacious house in Chelsea to Ralph Denham’s much smaller family home in Highgate and workplace in Lincoln’s Inn; William Rodney’s residence in the southern part of a central, legal district called The Temple; Mary Datchet’s room by the Strand and office in Russell Square; and weekend excursion sites in Kew Gardens, Hampton Court, and Greenwich. Most of the action takes place in the Cheyne Walk house in Chelsea, which stands as a “religious temple of some kind” to Katherine’s maternal

grandfather, the poet Richard Alardyce: his writing table, pen, and spectacles are just some of the “relics” that the family preserves and shows to the visitors who flock to their house for afternoon teas and cultured conversation (*ND* 9-10). Chelsea, an area located on the north bank of the river Thames, two miles southwest of Charing Cross, had been a peripheral, aristocratic community populated by country-houses in the sixteenth century (otherwise known as “Village of Palaces”); since the eighteenth century it housed the Chelsea Porcelain Works and attracted a flow of artists, including painters James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and writers such as Jonathan Swift and Thomas Carlyle (Panton 100; Weinreb and Hibbert 144). At the time Woolf wrote *Night and Day*, however, Chelsea was considered to be a relatively central, respectable part of London that testified to the richness of the city’s artistic and literary past.

Andrea Zengulys records that London’s municipal authorities went to great lengths in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to create a “textual, material, and social project” that would make London into a literary and historic city (57, 60). This process involved the work of organizations such as the London County Council’s Historic Records and Survey committees and London Topographical Societies, which identified and put plaques on various historical sites in an effort to provide material evidence of “London’s imperial and national superiority” (Zengulys 60). Woolf’s placement of the Hilberys’ home in Cheyne Walk, the street that was once home to George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Meredith, emphasizes the family’s respectability and connections to eminent Victorian literary figures (Weinreb and Hibbert 151-2). It also draws attention to the fact that the geography and, often, the reputation of communities in greater London could change significantly during periods of urban expansion. In an age when suburban sprawl continually extended the limits of greater London, erstwhile suburbs could gradually become areas of the city proper; whether a district is considered “suburban” (and to what degree) depends not only on the way in which its space is organized, but on its geographic

and, in some degree, cultural relation (as in the case of St. John's Wood, for example) to the rest of the areas in and surrounding a city.<sup>95</sup> As the following pages will show, Woolf makes this especially clear through a contrast of Chelsea with the more peripheral Highgate, a predominantly middle-class suburb that housed many families of up-and-coming professionals in the early twentieth century.<sup>96</sup>

In *Night and Day*, Woolf critiques then-contemporary acts of commemoration of the literary past. Describing Katherine's complaints about living in a great man's house, she notes that "the conclusiveness of a great ancestor" ultimately "intruded too much upon the present, and dwarfed it too consistently, to be altogether encouraging to one forced to make her experiment in living when the great age was dead" (*ND* 35). Indeed Mrs. Hilbery, who idolizes her late father and aspires to write his biography, cannot complete her work as she has the "impression of living more in his shade" than ever (*ND* 37). Even though she occasionally produces beautiful, "nobly-phrased paragraphs," Mrs. Hilbery's method of "lighting now on this point, now on that" is rejected by both herself and Katherine since it does not accord to the chronological order of a conventional biography (37). In a house that operates like a museum for Richard Alardyce, it is difficult to subvert the realist traditions that have long determined how a writer should organize textual time and space. Rodney's attempts at writing poetry and drama, on the other hand, lead nowhere, for he is obsessed with traditional forms and "the supreme pearls of [past] literature," rather than with trying to express the realities of his own age (*ND* 142).<sup>97</sup> These stale ways of writing and idealizations of the great literary tradition, Woolf implies, are constricting in that they do not reflect the experience of living in the early twentieth century: as Katherine observes in thinking about her love life, "the traditional answer would be of no use to her individually" (*ND* 328).

The primary reason that Katherine finds her family's glorification of the past stifling and unproductive in terms of her search for emotional and intellectual self-fulfilment is that there are so few female voices in this tradition. Not only does the process of exalting the great men of letters suggest a superiority of men's intellect, it also, as Woolf so effectively argues in "Great Men's Houses" (1932), obscures women's domestic work. Thus, Thomas Carlyle's abode in Cheyne Row, a "great man's house," stands as a landmark of past artistic production and inspiration, but no one commemorates Jane Carlyle and her female servants' daily battles "against dirt and cold," which made Carlyle's work possible ("Great Men's Houses," *Essays* 5: 294-5). It is left up to Woolf to focus on the wear and tear of the "wide and dignified" stairs, so as to remind the visitor of the long-gone "feet of harassed women carrying tin cans" in a Victorian house with no electricity, running water, or gas fires, and to make visible the "battlefield" among the classes and genders that constituted the reality of the Carlyles and their servants' everyday lives (*Essays* 5: 294-5). In a much earlier essay, "Carlyle's House" (1905), Woolf describes the "cold and formal" atmosphere of the "forcibly preserved" abode: it is only in "Great Men's Houses," however, that she observes at length that shattering this controlled image is equivalent to revealing the obscured history of Jane Carlyle's struggles ("Carlyle's House" 3). Unlike Richardson's texts, which pose the difficulty of identifying the distance between the limited narrator and the frequently unreflective heroine who naturalizes women's domestic work in her fantasies of the rural, Quaker life, Woolf's prose writings clearly endorse a view of private life that recognizes and foregrounds women's experiences and their labour.<sup>98</sup>

"Great Men's Houses" reads like a continuation of Woolf's critique of the Hilberys' home in *Night and Day*, for it is in this early novel that the author shows how Katherine's daily management of the servants' preservation of the Alardyce "museum" paradoxically involves an erasure of the traces of any labour:

Katherine, thus, was a member of a very great profession which has, as yet, no title and very little recognition, although the labour of mill and factory is, perhaps, no more severe and the results of less benefits to the ward. She lived at home. She did it well, too. Anyone coming to the house in Cheyne Walk felt that here was an orderly place, shapely, controlled – a place where life had been trained to show to the best advantage, and, though composed of different elements, made to appear harmonious and with a character of its own. (*ND* 41)

As Zemgulys argues, Katherine prepares the house for display so perfectly that the arrangement is that of a “*tableau vivant*, an arrangement of life fixed in place” (68). The Hilberys’ house is run according to an organization and rhythm that seem natural or, as Miriam would say, “life-fashioned,” to its older inhabitants, but that are as stringently planned and informed by unequal power relations as the suburban model of separate, gendered spheres. With a slightly mocking tone, for example, Woolf describes how women leave men after dinner “as if by some religious rite” (*ND* 101). Katherine’s homelessness within her home, on the other hand, is emphasized by the fact that she lacks personal privacy and has to hide her studies of mathematics (an unwomanly occupation) even within her room (*ND* 42). It is only outside of the Cheyne Walk house that Katherine finds time and space for herself, as when she walks along the Embankment and indulges in “feelings and visions” that are “liberated from the constraints which the real world puts upon them” (*ND* 118). Even her fantasies, however, are shaped by notions of traditional romance and revolve around a saviour-like figure, a “magnanimous hero, riding a great horse by the shore of the sea” (*ND* 145, 118).

As noted earlier, Woolf chose to focus on an urban rather than suburban setting for strategic purposes: the central location allowed her characters closer proximity to a more dynamic, public, urban space in which to develop and express their thoughts. Yet, Woolf by no

means ignores suburban living in this text, nor does she represent the consequences of the mass popularization of the suburban ideal as being wholly negative. Although she focuses on urban locations and portrays Ralph's household in Highgate as hardly egalitarian in terms of its gender dynamics (Ralph's sister, Joan, runs the house and deals with "wearisome details of education and expense"), she identifies the changes associated with the spread of suburbia as being symbolic of the destabilization of power relations that inform Katherine's stifling domestic life (*ND* 21).

### **Ralph Denham and the Age of Suburban Meritocracy**

Ralph Denham, who represents significant demographic and geographic changes, instigates instability in the perfectly ordered Cheyne Walk household. From the onset of their acquaintance, he presents himself to Katherine as being less burdened by tradition specifically because he is from an ordinary "middle-class family, living at Highgate": "'You'll never know anything at first hand,' he began, almost savagely. 'It's all been done for you. You'll never know the pleasure of buying things after saving up for them, or reading books for the first time, or making discoveries'" (*ND* 13-14). One of the many clerks working in London's downtown offices who commute daily from and to their respective suburbs, Ralph is characterized as being someone who does not fit into the controlled atmosphere of the Chelsea drawing-room. When Katherine wonders how her mother's sophisticated tea party might look to an outsider, it is Ralph who flings open the door of the room and walks in (*ND* 3). Immediately, he sees through Katherine's polished manners and perceives that "she attended only with the surface skin of her mind" (*ND* 7). Taken over by a sudden desire to "shock her into life," he undermines the Hilberys' exultation of the past and their pedantic, yet sterile re-creation of Richard Alardyce's life: "'I hate great men. The worship of greatness in the nineteenth century seems to me to

explain the worthlessness of that generation” (ND 8, 15). His words direct Katherine’s attention away from the still life that is the Alardyce museum and towards the more dynamic present.

Although they are both middle-class, the location of Katherine and Ralph’s family homes is indicative of their families’ respective social status. When Ralph critiques her family for their stringent adherence to tradition and observes that his own family is ordinary and middle-class, Katherine responds: ““We don’t live in Highgate, but we’re middle-class too, I suppose”” (ND 13). Katherine’s comment suggests that there are many sub-categories within the middle class and that a location of a family’s home serves as an indicator of their specific social position. Drawing attention to the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century expansion and stratification of Britain’s middle-class population, Woolf thus uses her knowledge of the city’s real estate to convey the difference in Katherine and Ralph’s ancestry: Katherine’s upper-middle-class family has been in position of ““authority and prominence”” since the nineteenth century and owns a house in a relatively central and affluent district of London, while Ralph, whose grandfather ““owned a shop,”” is a member of a family that recently rose to middle-class status and purchased a house in suburbia (as many up-and-comers did) (ND 32-3, 28).

It would be naïve to suggest that Ralph represents the entire suburban populace or that his perceptiveness and unconventionality are Woolf’s endorsement of suburban living. London’s suburbia consisted of diverse settings and featured various inhabitants. Furthermore, Woolf’s representation of Ralph’s Highgate existence is hardly more favourable than her description of Katherine’s life in Cheyne Walk: his family home affords Ralph very little personal privacy and features yet another constricted female, Joan Denham (ND 22-28). Nevertheless, the emphasis on Ralph’s different social position and the identification of this position with a Highgate setting suggests that this young man’s entrance into Katherine’s life represents recent social and

material shifts, which are portrayed in the novel as possessing potential for exciting destabilization of the status quo.

In her essay “Oxford Street Tide” (1930), Woolf draws connections among consumer-oriented and transient spatial arrangements of the centrally-located Oxford Street, the proliferation of suburban living, and the subversion of those spatial codes that privilege (patriarchal) durability:

The charm of modern London is that it is not built to last; it is built to pass. Its glassiness, its transparency, its surging waves of coloured plaster give a different pleasure and achieve a different end from that which was desired and attempted by the old builders and their patrons, the nobility of England. [. . .] The places of Oxford street ignore what seemed good to the Greeks, to the Elizabethan, to the eighteenth-century noblemen; they are overwhelmingly conscious that unless they can devise an architecture that shows off the dressing-case, the Paris frock, the cheap stockings, and the air of bath salts to perfection, their places, their mansions and motor cars and the little villas out at Croydon and Surbiton where their shop assistants live, not so badly after all, with a gramophone and wireless, and money to spend at the movies – all this will be swept to ruin. (*Essays* 5: 285-6)<sup>99</sup>

Although the narrator satirizes the capitalists of Oxford Street for their desire to make durable their dominance by espousing a consumerist way of life that by its very reality mocks the concept of stability, the lively, almost breathless tone of the passage and the rapid succession of images hint at the exciting possibilities inherent in the rapid pace of contemporary life. The links Woolf makes in this essay between various sub/urban phenomena and spatial and social instability are already suggested in *Night and Day*, in which upper-middle-class characters imply that widespread suburban expansion exemplifies modern society’s destruction of all that is old

and stable. Katherine's interfering aunt, Millicent Cosham, a rather comic figure, observes that she once witnessed beautiful sunsets in suburban Woking and that Highgate's "pretty lanes blossoming with hawthorn" used to inspire long walks and romance among her Victorian contemporaries (*ND* 152-3). Carelessly addressing Ralph as Mr. Popham, she inquires: "'Where are the sunsets now?'... '[W]here is the hawthorn now?'" (152-3). Then she laments the loss of a beautiful, old, white house in Highgate: "'Ah, no; it must have been pulled down by this time with all the other old houses'" (153). Since the narrator presents Mrs. Cosham as being an overbearing conventional thinker, one cannot but read the character's comments as indicating the narrator's satire of the bourgeoisie's lack of imagination and general discomfort with increased social mobility.

Indeed, it is as a result of the expanding possibilities for young professionals that someone like Ralph is invited into the Chelsea house: he writes a legal article that Mr. Hilbery publishes in his scholarly journal. Like Mary Datchet, an ambitious suffragette with a room of her own, Ralph is portrayed as being a figure who in many ways embodies the emerging possibilities for personal, professional, and artistic "life-fashioning" and innovation occasioned by modernity.<sup>100</sup> As Katherine gradually separates herself from her parents' worldview by openly studying mathematics in her room and refusing to marry William Rodney (her class equal), she becomes increasingly interested in Ralph and Mary, whom she perceives to be unconventional and thus less restrained by social norms. When her male cousin's co-habitation with the mother of his illegitimate children sparks a family scandal and results in her aunt's invocation of the patriarchal woman-as-temptresses stereotype, Katherine reacts by wondering, "What would Mary Datchet and Ralph Denham say?" (*ND* 106).

Unlike Mary, however, Ralph is not someone who actively fights against gender inequity or always rejects patriarchal gender constructs: he critiques the "'feminine habit of making much

of details”]; objectifies and idealizes Katherine according to the discourse of romantic love; and betrays a degree of possessiveness when he admits that Katherine’s look of distance bothers him (*ND* 134-5, 19, 499). Nevertheless, Ralph is positioned as Rodney’s foil, a more liberal male who, Woolf suggests, will probably not prevent Katherine from fashioning her life in a manner that matches her interests and desires. In passages that clearly mock Rodney’s insecurity and tendency to indulge in lengthy preaching, he argues that women are “only half-alive” without marriage and worries about the fact that Katherine’s passions do not take the “normal channel of glorification of him and his doings”; in a novel in which London geography is of key semantic importance, Rodney’s habitation in The Temple, the central, legal district of London, connotes both his worship at the temple of past literary tradition and his repeated, yet clumsy attempts to set down conservative rules that Katherine must follow (*ND* 64-65, 256). Alternatively, Ralph bonds with the young woman by reading her math notes and tries to “piece together in a laborious and elementary fashion frames of belief, unsoldered and separate, lacking the unity of phrases fashioned by the old believers” (*ND* 519). Although Ralph may be bothered by Katherine’s detachment, she ultimately perceives that “he certainly did not hinder any flight she might choose to take” (*ND* 315).

Largely resistant to the conventions of defining or classifying people, objects, or ideas, Ralph sees and experiences things as though they possess flexible outlines, or wear “a halo almost perceptible to the physical eye” (*ND* 519). Ralph’s vision of this “encircling glow” brings to mind Woolf’s essay “Modern Novels” (1919), in which she outlines her notion of a new method of writing that would enable one to depict the ambiguous and chaotic nature of experience:

From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms, composing in their sums what we might venture to call life itself; and to figure further as the

semi-transparent envelope, or luminous halo, surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. (“Modern Novels,” *Essays* 3: 33)

The little figure that Ralph draws, which contains a small head and “blots fringed with frames” (a “luminous halo”) and symbolizes his – and Katherine’s – view of life, is thus an early indication of Woolf’s search for the means of representing the consciousnesses of people who live in a rapidly changing society (*ND* 513). It is significant that this doodle is created by the character who represents dramatic societal changes, especially the increase in social mobility and proliferation of housing estates that constantly blur (and, in the view of many citizens, blot) the peripheries of London.

Although *Night and Day* does not feature the kinds of formal experimentation that Woolf subsequently developed, Priest and Malamud observe, respectively, that the text is preoccupied with the failure of conventional phrases to represent the reality of the characters’ experiences and that it hints at a “budding potential for a new language” (Priest 72; Malamud 38). Unlike the more traditional characters (especially Rodney and Cassandra), both Katherine and Ralph find it hard to express their feelings in generic ways. Ralph explains, “I’m not telling you that I am in love with you”; Katherine wonders, “Why, after all, isn’t it perfectly possible to live together without being married?” (*ND* 312, 508). It is Ralph’s figure of the blots and flames that best encapsulates Woolf’s developing vision of new ways of writing and behaving, but it is only in her later texts that she formulates methods of embodying formally the experimental content of this spontaneous yet semantically significant doodle. Nevertheless, *Night and Day* is the one text in which Woolf is invested in interrogating alternative forms of masculinity. Unlike Richardson, whose submersion in the mind of a female character limits her from exploring male characters’ consciousness, Woolf is able to utilize a suburban male’s social and physical mobility to pose

questions about the effects of recent cultural developments and their effects on both human relations and artistic innovation.

### **Women's City Walks and Katherine's Dalliance with Kingsway**

Anne-Marie Priest contends that Katherine's planned marriage to Ralph suggests a subordination of the heroine to the hero, as in a dominant romance plot (78). Indeed, Ralph and Katherine's elders do not let them live together without marrying and the couple acquiesces to Mrs. Hilbery's orchestration of the marriage plot: they become engaged, whereupon the "civilization" that had been, according to Mr. Hilbery, "very profoundly and unpleasantly overthrown," is at least partially restored (*ND* 502). Although it is true that their official union implies an adherence to convention and emphasizes the limited nature of women's options (career or marriage, but not both), Woolf's creation of a more companionate marriage between Katherine and Ralph hints at a degree of positive development. More importantly, however, the novel is populated by descriptions of women's exciting walks in the city, many of which in fact undermine the more obvious romantic plot: they focus less on female characters' thoughts about men than on their opportunities for habit-altering interactions and experiences, some of which are related to changes associated with the popularization of suburban living.

Borrowing a term from Deleuze and Guattari, Soo argues that one's movements across the city can occasion "spatiotemporal revelations," for one experiences a defamiliarization from a conventional sense of self (194); fictionalized, this is a situation that can be particularly conducive to narrative investigations of a character's interactions with seemingly unrelated bodies and spaces. Soo's observation is especially relevant in relation to a key passage in *Night and Day* that she does not analyze and in which Katherine travels to Ralph's office in Lincoln's Inn Fields after she has missed their appointment. Once there, Katherine witnesses throngs of

commuters (most of whom are returning to their suburban dwellings) moving along the street. This is a dynamic image that stands in sharp contrast to the still-lives of the Hilbury household, and that spatially connects Katherine to various urban and suburban landscapes, institutions, and groups of people:

The great torrent of vans and carts was sweeping down Kingsway; pedestrians were streaming in two currents along the pavements. She stood fascinated at the corner. The deep roar filled her ears; the changing tumult had the inexpressible fascination of varied life pouring ceaselessly with a purpose which, as she looked, seemed to her, somehow, the normal purpose for which life was framed; its complete indifference to the individual, whom it swallowed and rolled onwards, filled her with at least a temporary exaltation. (*ND* 462-3)

Woolf's long sentences echo Richardson's, but the descriptions are more structured: there is no disorienting mix of dialogue, interior monologue, and actions, nor does Woolf break up her sentences with numerous ellipses and dashes to accentuate the scattered process of the character's thoughts. While the words "torrent" and "streaming" suggest Woolf's familiarity with Sinclair's review of Richardson's method, she uses these references to create a parallel between Katherine's rushing thoughts and movements of the vans and suburban commuters. Woolf thus emphasizes her interest in consciousness, but also her desire to create a more structured, "perceptib[ly] whole" depiction of reality than the one she perceives in Richardson's writing (Woolf, "*The Tunnel*," *Essays* 3: 11).

In their introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Locating Woolf: Politics of Space and Place* (2007), Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth provide a brief analysis of this passage. Observing that Kingsway, a recently-built thoroughfare, was opened in October 1905 following a major slum clearance in central London, Snaith and Whitworth contend that Woolf's

anchorage of Katherine's experience in this specific location draws attention to the text's central theme, that of the relation between the individual and larger social forces (Snaith and Whitworth 9). An extension of the Claire Market scheme, Kingsway was begun in 1899; the project was conducted in large part for the purpose extending the underground railway and tramway system that connected the city centre and various suburbs that supplied London with workers. Snaith and Whitworth read Katherine's fascination with Kingsway crowds as suggesting an excitement with public life of the city, but, more importantly, a fear that her identity will become lost within the context of over-rationalizing institutional discourses. In this sense, the Kingsway experience warns Katherine against marriage, an institution in which she could become submerged (Snaith and Whitworth 15).<sup>101</sup>

Snaith and Whitworth's observations, while emphasizing a major theme in Woolf's text, fail to account for the author's layered references to suburbia in this specific passage. They mention that the building of Kingsway was connected to London County Council's plan to improve the centre's connections with suburban lines, but they do not inform the reader that the Council became committed to a "wholly suburban policy" of re-housing the working-class people who were displaced by slum clearances exactly around the time that the thoroughfare was being built (Yelling 229). This fact would have been known to most of Woolf's contemporaries, for large suburban estates had already been built by the government in Norbury, Tottenham, and Tooting by the time the author wrote *Night and Day* (299). If the geographical location of the moving crowds in the Kingsway passage thus connotes the governmentalized state's management and classification of its populace, it also emphasizes the specific role early twentieth-century suburbia played in creations of what Henri Lefebvre would term "conceived," planned space. The passage creates semantic links and superimpositions among colonial,

commercial, and suburban spaces by connecting the British imperial projects with the Council's suburban answer to the "working-class housing problem."

One could say that Woolf creates what Bakhtin would term the "chronotope of the road" in the Kingsway passage (Bakhtin 245). Bakhtin observes that this feature involves a drawing together and intersecting of the temporal and spatial paths of individuals from diverse social groups, and an emphasis on the "sociohistorical heterogeneity of one's own country" (245). Woolf's synchronization of Katherine's walk in Kingsway with the daily movements of suburban commuters fuses the various individuals' paths at "one spatial and temporal point": the static space-time of the Hilbury's household meets the space-time of the predominantly male workers' routine movements, and, indirectly, the space-time of suburban housewives. Although Woolf's text critiques the artificial (and patriarchal) organization of reality such as that practiced in the Chelsea household (or the suburban model of housing), the narrator of *Night and Day* – unlike the Miriam of Richardson's pre-*March Moonlight* novels – explores how the intersections of diverse conceived spaces within the urban milieu can occasion an exciting experience for a sheltered woman and inspire the creation of a dynamic version of the chronotope of the road.

Katherine's experience of the Kingsway crowds is largely positive. Even though the presence of predominantly male suburban commuters testifies to the lasting influence of the patriarchal ideology of separate spheres, women's frequently-enforced domesticity, and the ideal of familial privacy, Katherine becomes excited by the moving crowds' "complete indifference to the individuals," which suggests her need to escape from her parents and their friends' constant conversations about literature and personal "feelings" (ND 149). To Katherine, the throngs are exciting because they symbolize impersonal forces of rationality, business, and the sheer energy of physical movement. Woolf's coupling of words and phrases such as "roar," "tumult," "ceaselessly," and "swallowed and rolled onwards," with "fascinated," "fascination," and

“exultation,” implies that Katherine enjoys the fact that her senses are being assailed by rapidly moving forms (*ND* 462-3). Standing on a street corner and watching the shifting crowds makes Katherine feel invisible and offers her personal privacy, which differs vastly from the type of family-oriented privacy that structures her home life and that ties her to a domestic existence because of her gender. Like a traditional suburban home, the Cheyne Walk household does not offer Katherine a “room of her own,” for her family members enter her bedroom without considering it could be a work space: such households do not feature a female equivalent of the male-designated study or library.

It is specifically because she is a woman who has been relegated to life in the domestic sphere, however, that Katherine experiences Kingsway as being an adventure, temporarily forgetting all about Ralph, the “romantic hero.” Walking among the crowds in central London, Victoria Rosner argues, enables Katherine the detachment necessary to see the “city as an abstract painter might, as lines of movement and force dotted with significant forms” (156). Woolf’s use of words such as “torrent,” “streaming,” “pouring,” “swallowed and rolled,” and “subterraneously” metaphorically presents the crowds and traffic of Kingsway in terms of a rushing, underground body of water or stimulated human consciousness that refuses to mould itself into a definite shape (*ND* 462-3). Katherine’s vision of Kingsway does not portray distinct outlines of individual objects: it reminds one of Ralph’s tendency to view the world in soft focus and is an example of an author’s re-organization of dominant space into a “lived,” symbolic space that tries to “make sense of the material spaces of modernity” (Thacker 3).

Woolf’s passage, therefore, depicts the changing dynamics of urban space that occurred in an age when drastic improvements in transportation and various class-related legislations popularized suburban living. As Ford Madox Ford reminds the reader in *The Soul of London* (1905), “[T]o the great majority of Londoners whose residence is not *arrière boutique* London

will remain a matter of a central highway, central tunnel or a central conduit, more or less long” (11). In her study of suburban commuters, Gail Cunningham argues that mass commuting created new ways of experiencing and understanding the city, a fact that has largely been ignored in critical discourse (“London Commuting” 8). Noting that city relations in modernity have usually been understood in terms of the figure of the *flâneur* who experiences alienation and anonymity, she contends that the commuter “provides not only an equally significant but also a more empirically grounded alternative figure through which to apprehend the relations between individual and city, the personal and the mass” (8). Commuter crowds are different than the crowds usually featured in urban modernism, for the former move with a purpose: “It is not the randomized, disconnected mass that occupies the ideal gaze of the *flâneur*” (12). Whatever the commuters’ chosen mode of transport, Cunningham argues, contemporaneous accounts testify to the fact that daily travel offered workers (primarily men) a “temporal interlude which creates a separate identity as well as a space for negotiation between the worlds of work and home, public and private, city and suburb” (22).

Woolf’s writings testify to the fact that she experienced commuting and its influence on the dynamics of central London to be a thought-stimulating new phenomenon – one that was especially interesting to a woman who is not a commuting worker. In “Street Haunting,” the meandering urban walker who sheds temporarily a habitual sense of self, characterizes suburban commuters as nomads wandering through various identities:

They are wrapt, in this short passage from work to home, in some narcotic dream, now that they are free from the desk and have the fresh air on their cheeks. They put on those bright clothes which they must hang up and lock the key upon the rest of the day, and are great cricketers, famous actresses, soldiers who have saved their country at the hour of need. Dreaming, gesticulating, often muttering a few

words aloud, they sweep over the Strand and across Waterloo Bridge whence they will be slung in long rattling trains, to some prim little villa in Barnes or Surbiton<sup>102</sup> where the sight of the lock in the hall and the smell of the supper in the basement puncture the dream. (488)

Woolf satirizes the office workers for their clichéd fantasies (most likely shaped by popular society magazines such as *Tatler*) and routine existence, but she also finds these throngs fascinating in their energy and their attempts at imaginative recreations of self-identity. She experiences the encounter as yet another London adventure that proves new forms of transportation and patterns of movement within a city can occasion opportunities for innovative descriptions of women's interactions with space.<sup>103</sup>

Susan Squier observes that *Night and Day* differs from a classic city novel, which expresses nostalgia for the rural past, because Woolf's text associates the city with honest work and virtue and the country with "worldly leisure" and "petty dishonesty" ("Tradition and Revision" 118). Although the characters go for a holiday in the countryside and find themselves stimulated by their respective "vision[s] of the country," they ultimately return to London having hurt their close friends or having failed to achieve their emotional goals (*ND* 166).<sup>104</sup> The countryside, associated as it is with idealized notions of simple life and a noble past, is presented as a soothing but static environment, not particularly conducive to the young characters' attempts at creating new ways of living and loving. Ultimately, London holds most possibilities for both women and men in terms of careers, stimulating interactions, and non-traditional styles of living. It is, however, by complicating the conventional dichotomy between the city and the country through an introduction of and references to semi-urban and semi-rural spaces (suburbia) that Woolf is able to depict vividly the adventure of living in early twentieth-century London. Her portrayal of the spread of suburbia and the increasing numbers of commuters in *Night and Day*

has important semantic significance in terms of her ongoing attempts to emphasize the complex nature of changing social space. In this early text, she did not find the formal means of representing what Thacker calls “disorienting, thrilling, and anxious kinds of experiences” (Thacker 7) of modernity, but a focus on suburbia and suburbia-related imagery locates the traces of her eager search for novel methods of writing.

### **Conclusion**

Unlike the majority of *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth-century literary authors and journalists, who portrayed suburbia (and “things suburban”) one-dimensionally to indicate a general feminization of British culture, Richardson and Woolf create a (hetero)trope of suburbia that inspires innovative artistic projects and discourses on gender, class, and space. While Richardson depicts a woman’s search for a non-traditional identity through descriptions of the character’s changing views of various suburbs, Woolf identifies the spread of suburbia as being a manifestation of more general cultural changes. The authors’ respective representations of suburban spaces testify to their similar interests and differing methods, as well as to the ways in which they influenced each other’s writing. Deborah Parsons observes that a writer is not simply a figure in, but a producer of the city, who adds “maps to the city atlas” that incorporate “myth, memory, fantasy, and desire” (*Streetwalking the Metropolis* 1); Richardson and Woolf’s texts offer views of a recent geographic, demographic, and discursive phenomena, thus grounding a very elusive and contested signifier at the intersection of gender politics, modernity, and modernism.

Although I have focused in this chapter on interrogating the connections among the texts of two modernist authors and a specific development of their time, my goal has not been to assume that “only one aesthetic” – that of “avant-garde innovation” – “is adequate to the truth of

the modern” (Felski 199). Female artists respond to modernity in various ways, and to ignore those texts that are (ostensibly) less formally innovative would be to turn a blind eye to sources of meaning that could tell us a great deal about women’s thoughts about and experiences of suburban living. Indeed, it is specifically those female authors who are less invested in subverting the conventions of realist narrative who chose to concentrate more substantially on suburban settings and the kinds of non-traditional lifestyles that many women could, and did, build in various suburbs. As I move to an analysis of Vita Sackville-West and Elizabeth Bowen’s prose in the next two chapters, my goal will be to establish links among their fiction and that of Richardson and Woolf as a way of emphasizing both the authors’ awareness of their female colleagues and the central role that suburbia played in several middle-class women’s general sense of expanding horizons.

### Chapter 3

#### A Woman's Suburban Idyll: Hampstead and the Country House Genre in Vita Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent*

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, when their friendship was at its peak, the aristocratic Vita Sackville-West was a more widely-read and established author than Virginia Woolf.<sup>105</sup> The publication of Sackville-West's poetry and prose by Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press, starting with the novel *Seducers in Ecuador* (1925), significantly increased the earnings of their publishing business; they sold approximately 30,000 copies of Sackville-West's *The Edwardians* (1930) within the first six months of the text's publication ("Lighting the Cave" 201). During Sackville-West's lifetime and until the mid-1970s, numerous commentators expressed a belief that scholarly interest in her *oeuvre* would continue long after her death.<sup>106</sup> Contemporary readers, however, would be hard pressed to find copies of Sackville-West's novels or poetry in local bookstores, nor has there been much criticism on the author's works since the 1960s.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, those who have written about Sackville-West in recent decades concern themselves primarily with her lesbian love affairs and relationship with Woolf: as Joss West-Burnham observes succinctly, "The interest in her has been fuelled by her own life rather than by her writing" (38).<sup>108</sup>

Although Sackville-West's novels do not feature the types of formal innovation that can be found in Woolf or Richardson's works – generally, she uses a third person, omniscient narrator to mediate the thoughts of characters who are involved in relatively conventional romantic plots – some of them articulate the author's intense investigation of women's responses to modern phenomena. Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent* (1930),<sup>109</sup> which deals with the elderly Deborah Holland, Lady Slane's quest for independence from traditional gender roles in Hampstead, warrants special attention primarily because of the layered manner in which the

author combines her investigation of gender politics with a fictional creation of an idyllic, suburban space-time.<sup>110</sup> As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, modernist authors such as Woolf or Richardson (as well as their male contemporaries) focused first and foremost on individuals' experiences of urban milieus. Their attention to suburban settings was peripheral, so that Sackville-West's decision to venture imaginatively into suburban territory in her exploration of a woman's response to modernity constitutes a form of innovation; it reminds readers of the exciting semantic possibilities and subtle experiments flourishing in the works of those authors whose texts could not be considered modernist.

Because Sackville-West was best known for writing about rural settings, her use of Hampstead for the purposes of creating an environment that closely resembles a country house but that challenges the patriarchal ideology underlying the organization of time and space in a country-house setting is fraught with exciting paradoxes. Utilizing Bakhtin's notion of the idyllic chronotope (which emphasizes cyclicity and continuity), I will show how Sackville-West revises the traditional country-house genre to foreground the importance of women's individual privacy, as well as how she uses pastoral imagery to emphasize the elderly protagonist's inevitable movement towards death. Carol Ames and Susan Bazargan have commented on Sackville-West's uses of the pastoral, but they do not focus on *All Passion Spent*; Lousa DeSalvo is the only critic who discusses the connection between the suburban setting and Sackville-West's critique of gender norms in this novel, but she does not make use of Bakhtin's idyllic chronotope to explore how the author both perpetuates and alters the conventions of the country-house novel through her structuring of literary space-time. In describing Lady Slane's connection to her house and its picturesque surroundings, Sackville-West draws upon the discourses of the "architecturalization of personal identity" (Archer 12). These theories, argues John Archer, stem from the Enlightenment period, especially the writings of John Locke, which "transformed the

private dwelling into one of the most effective media for (literally) constructing individuality” (4). Although such discourses inform the bourgeois conception of the suburban home as an embodiment of familial privacy and specific class identity, Sackville-West uses the Hampstead house to emphasize the importance of developing a space that enables a woman to detach herself from the traditional role of upper-middle-class mother and wife.

*All Passion Spent* is the only one of Sackville-West’s texts in which she writes about suburbia; it is thus important to consider why and how she presents Hampstead as being a particularly conducive environment for a woman’s construction of a “room of her own.” On the one hand, the author suggests that it is the special combination of suburban proximity to London, natural beauties, and lack of stringent country-house traditions that enables Lady Slane to create a safe, peaceful, yet ostensibly liberating type of privacy in Hampstead. On the other hand, Sackville-West presents Hampstead as having more in common with the rhythms of a simpler, rural past; with its rich history, defined by eminent, male inhabitants such as John Keats or Charles Dickens, Hampstead is very different from the sprawling, newer suburbs that were often associated with fast-paced modernity, architectural monotony, and philistine, lower-middle-class femininity. Furthermore, Sackville-West does not examine the class-related oppressions and complex socio-economic conditions that, ironically, both create and sustain the existence of Lady Slane’s “liberated” existence within Hampstead. Like her elderly protagonist, who overlooks material realities of life because she is privileged enough to leave them to the care of her household help, Sackville-West rebels against the status quo in a somewhat myopic manner and only along the axis of gender.

An investigation into the differences between *All Passion Spent* and Sackville-West’s other texts will also enable me to draw attention to the intensive exchange of ideas that existed between Woolf and herself; Woolf’s critiques of Sackville-West’s writing, on the other hand,

help one explore the limitations or “blind spots” of the latter author’s idyllic chronotope, especially her lack of investment in investigating issues of class relations. Finally, I will discuss Sackville-West’s focus on Hampstead and Hampstead Heath as being an example of the ways in which this specific suburb could inspire authors to engage creatively with the concept of the “rural.” In an era in which rural England was increasingly identified with Englishness, suburbia appears in early twentieth-century texts as both a sprawling menace that could destroy the very essence of English national identity – E. M. Forster’s character in *Howards End* (1910), for instance, wonders if a new rail station will lead into the “country” of “England or Suburbia” – and a terrain that enables a multifaceted fusion of traditional imagery and innovative gender politics (Forster 16) (see Figure 5).

### **Sackville-West’s Rural Traditions**

Sackville-West was introduced to Woolf by Clive Bell, Woolf’s brother-in-law, at a dinner party in 1922 (Glendinning 125).<sup>111</sup> Shortly after this meeting, Sackville-West sent Woolf a copy of *Knole and the Sackvilles* (1922), in which she details the history of her eminent family and their famous country estate, Knole (Woolf, *Diaries 2*: 225).<sup>112</sup> In the ten years that marked the most intense period of their friendship, DeSalvo reminds one, both women wrote their most commercially and critically successful texts: Sackville-West published *Seducers in Ecuador*, *The Land* (1926), *Passengers to Teheran* (1926), *The Edwardians* (1930), *All Passion Spent*, and *Family History* (1932), while Woolf produced *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), *The Waves* (1931), and numerous important essays (“Lighting the Cave” 195-7). Their relationship was characterized by an exchange of

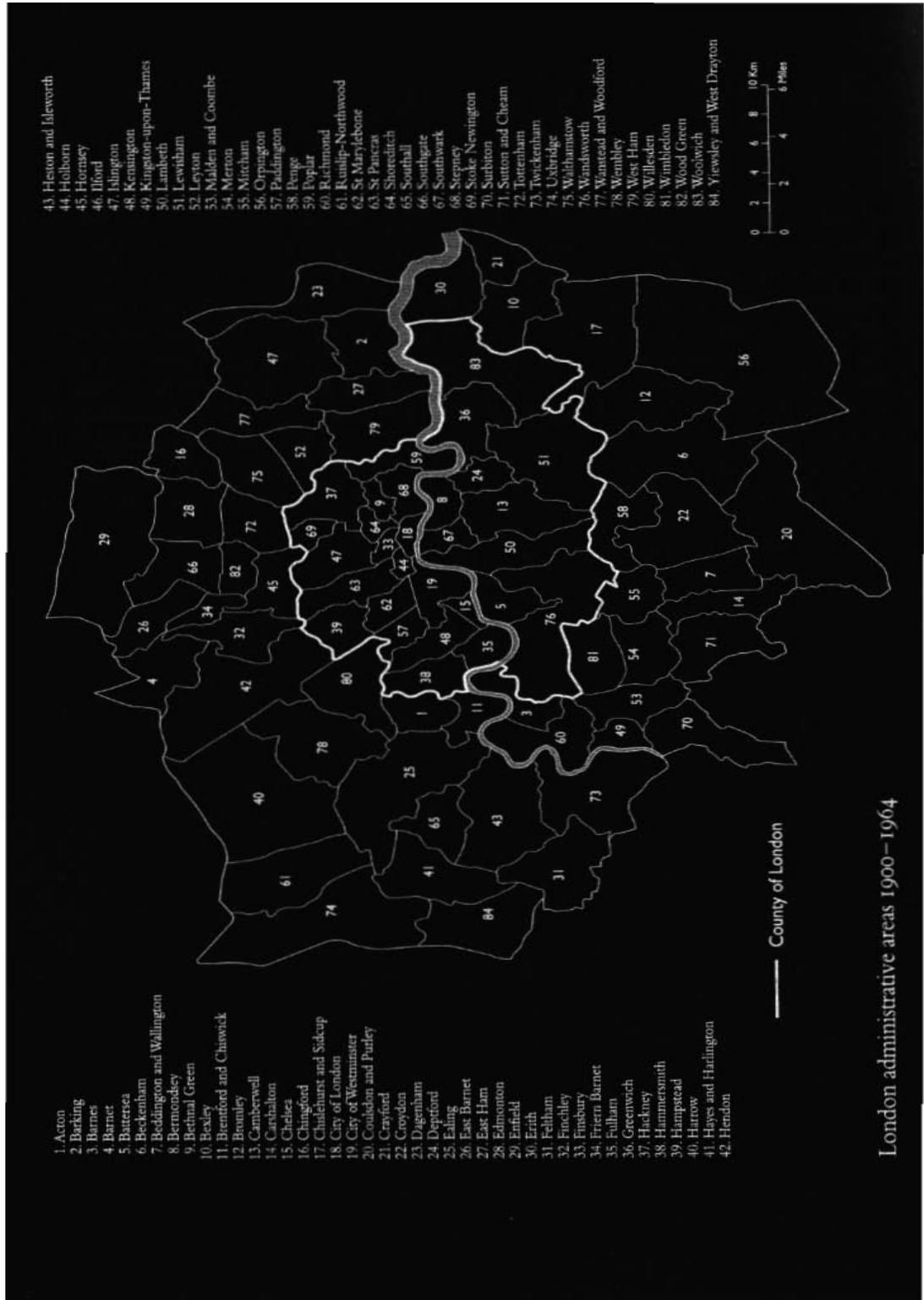


Figure 5: "London: Administrative Areas, 1900-1964" (White xvii).

ideas about literature and their respective works, mainly through long and frequent letters.

Woolf's formal experiments and her critique of patriarchal institutions certainly influenced Sackville-West's writing, especially in *The Edwardians*, *All Passion Spent*, and *Family History*, while Sackville-West's aristocratic and androgynous persona and torrid love life inspired Woolf to create the satiric story of the gender-fluid Orlando.<sup>113</sup> To understand the influence that Woolf had on her friend's writing and to draw attention to the relatively innovative nature of *All Passion Spent* within the context of the author's *oeuvre*, the next several paragraphs will briefly explore the common themes of Sackville-West's texts, especially her interest in rural life and her reputation as a "traditionalist."<sup>114</sup>

Hermione Lee observes that Sackville-West appeared almost like a replacement in Woolf's life after the January 1923 death of Katherine Mansfield, a friend and author with whom Woolf frequently discussed literature: Sackville-West aroused those emotions in Woolf that the relationship with Mansfield had "made ready" but never fully satisfied (493). Nevertheless, Woolf never experienced Sackville-West as being a literary rival, which is how she viewed Mansfield during her lifetime. She was fascinated by Sackville-West's sexuality and heritage but was also critical of the latter's intelligence: "All these ancestors and centuries, and silver and gold, have bred a perfect body. She is stag-like, or race horse-like, save for the face, which pouts, and has no very sharp brain" (*Diaries* 3: 306).<sup>115</sup> As their friendship intensified, Woolf began to critique Sackville-West's writing more openly in letters, especially her unwillingness to think outside of parameters prescribed by the Western literary tradition: "I think there are odder, deeper, more angular thoughts in your mind than you have yet let come out" (*Letters* 3: 321).<sup>116</sup>

Sackville-West's style is indeed far more traditional and direct than Woolf's, whose texts demonstrate her ongoing experiments with form and a desire to represent the chaotic flickering of human consciousness and subjective impressions of urban life. Most of Sackville-West's

novels deal with courtship, have clearly outlined plots, and utilize an omniscient narrator, thus presenting an ostensibly objective and unified view of reality. In novels such as *Heritage* (1919) and *Challenge* (1923), for example, Sackville-West's third-person narrator describes passionate affairs in which young individuals are torn between love and duty. The former text focuses on the character of Malory Westmacott, a "traveller with no dependents": this brooding figure of male independence and mobility reappears in most of Sackville-West's subsequent novels (Julian in *Challenge*, for example) and is modelled, as Glendinning argues, on the author's idea of "the man she would have liked to have been" (89). Sackville-West's tendency to focus on the points of view of male characters even in those texts that do not feature her "ideal male" (Mr. Chase<sup>117</sup> in *The Heir* (1922) is a timid bachelor) shows her initial lack of investment in narrating female characters' experience. It was not until *All Passion Spent* and *Family History* that Sackville-West uses Lady Slane and Evelyn Jarrod's subjective visions of the world as vehicles for an extended critique of patriarchal gender norms.

In her poetry, Sackville-West also resists the type of experimentation one could find in verse by high modernists. Her long narrative poem *The Land*, which won the prestigious Hawthornden Prize in 1927 and depicts the cycles of seasons in the English countryside, is written in regular iambic verse, and stands in sharp contrast to T. S. Eliot's fragmented vision of modern London in *The Waste Land* (1922).<sup>118</sup> Sackville-West makes a concerted effort in *The Land* to evoke old rural traditions (she used encyclopaedias of agriculture and farming treatises to collect archaic vocabulary and names of old places and fields), and her poem could be read as being a reaction to those changes associated with modernity that facilitated a disruption of both literary traditions and the "timeless" rhythms of rural life (Glendinning 166). In her non-fictional text *Country Notes* (1940), Sackville-West confesses that her ongoing interest in describing

natural processes such as the monotonous cycle of seasons stems from her yearning for “permanence in a changing world” (*Selected Writings* 196).

Many of Sackville-West’s other texts feature nostalgic returns to nature: *The Dragon in Shallow Waters* (1921) takes place in a small village in Fen country (mid-eastern England); *The Heir* depicts the process by which a middle-aged, urban professional falls in love with a country house; *Grey Waters* (1923) is set in a village called King’s Avon; *The Edwardians* portrays a grand country seat of an aristocratic family; and a significant portion of *Family History* is situated in rural Kent. These texts are structured, in various degrees, according to what Bakhtin terms the idyllic chronotope, in which space takes precedence over time: the spatio-temporal arrangement involves a “grafting down of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies, its familiar mountains, valleys, fields, rivers and forests, and one’s own home,” so that there is a stress on continuity, tradition, and a harmony of humans with nature (225-6). In the idyllic chronotope, life operates according to cyclical, natural rhythms, rather than the artificial, capitalist division of time that one witnesses in fast-paced urban centres.

Sackville-West’s idealization of the peacefulness and harmony of rural life, which revolves around the life of a country house, is most obvious in *The Heir*, in which Mr. Chase unironically discovers the core of Englishness within the small estate that he has inherited:

To part the house and the lands, or to consider them as separate, would be no less than parting the soul and the body. The house was the soul; did contain and guard the soul as in a casket; the lands were England, Saxon as could be, and if the house were at the heart of the land, then the soul of the house must indeed be at the heart and root of England, and, once arrived at the soul of the house, you might fairly claim to have pierced the soul of England. Grave, gentle, encrusted

with tradition, embossed with legend, simple and proud, ample and maternal.

Not sensational. Not Arresting. (73)

In this description, the narrator's voice is fused with that of Mr. Chase just as the country house fuses itself into the natural landscape: to ““melt into England,”” A. K. Weatherhead observes, is a great venture in Vita's aesthetic” (74).<sup>119</sup> Sackville-West, however, investigates neither the hardships of yeomen whose work sustains the country house nor, as DeSalvo observes, “the relationship of the private ownership of property to the patriarchal structure of society,” according to which women are identified with the nurturing land but are unable to inherit it (“Every Woman is an Island” 101).<sup>120</sup> In *The Land*, Bazargan contends, the yeomen also appear to be “the emblems of national identity,” but there is little investigation of socio-economic realities of traditional agricultural society (28). Furthermore, one might add that Sackville-West fails to account for the connections between the British Empire and rural England, which is most obvious in the way in which colonial wealth at least partially funded the lives of British aristocrats and their estates. She presents rural England as being a stronghold against urban alienation, pollution, and invasions of foreign people and cultures, rather than a mode of living that is interdependent with systems of capitalism and imperialism. In Raymond Williams's words, this rural England, ostensibly harmonious, “partly imagined and partly observed,” is a way of critiquing modern life that ignores the history of exploitation of rural and colonial labour – it is a spatio-temporal model that makes invisible and thus perpetuates the real conditions of labour in the capitalist system (*The Country and the City* 261).

Woolf was critical of Sackville-West's frequent literary idealizations and dehistoricizations of country life, first privately and then more openly in *Orlando*. While visiting Knole for the first time in the summer of 1924, Woolf was keenly aware of the social inequalities and hierarchies that such a grandiose country seat represented and bolstered: “There is Knole,

capable of housing all the desperate poor of Judd Street,<sup>121</sup> and with only one solitary earl in the kernel” (*Diaries* 2: 306-7). In *Orlando*, she connects the eponymous hero/ine’s “English disease, a love of Nature,” to his/her blindness regarding the harm that nature can inflict on those less fortunate (Woolf 137). When a Gypsy friend shows Orlando fingers that have been “withered by the frost,” Woolf reminds the reader how an aestheticization of natural landscapes can be implicit in obscuring the realities of unequal power relations, whether between “commoners” and the aristocracy, Empire and the colonies, or women and men; she thus identifies the ideological implications of images that are ostensibly apolitical and ahistorical (Woolf 137, 139). Hermione Lee is correct when she observes that *Orlando* was as much a “joke on Vita” as it was a “joke for Vita” (523).

Sackville-West at least partially understood and reacted to Woolf’s joke, as her texts in the late 1920s and early 1930s became more politically conscious.<sup>122</sup> In *The Edwardians*, which Glendinning believes was inspired by *Orlando* (213), Sackville-West’s affectionate portrayal of the “dignified,” and “elegant” country estate of Chevron is coupled with her satire of its superficial, self-indulgent aristocrats (*The Edwardians* 70).<sup>123</sup> This ambivalence is expressed primarily through Sebastian, Chevron’s heir, who both “detests his mother’s friends” and is “allured by their glitter”; his sister, Viola, cannot inherit because a woman and thus finds it easier to disassociate herself from what she believes to be an anachronistic institution (32).<sup>124</sup> Although Sebastian is a more complex figure than the male lovers of Sackville-West’s earlier novels such as *Challenge* and *Heritage*, the author’s focus on this brooding, restless character’s point of view suggests how her ongoing investment in exploring the experiences of the “ideal” male figure detracts from her development of a critique of the patriarchal system of inheritance. While Sebastian, the privileged heir, does not reflect on the ways in which Chevron’s traditions reaffirm unequal gender relations, a more thorough exploration of Viola’s situation and

consciousness would likely have resulted in a greater focus on the connection between the oppression of women and the country-house mode of living.

Furthermore, Carol Ames contends that *The Edwardians* perpetuates a conservative notion of a well-educated, responsible, and creative aristocrat as being the “person most capable of achieving a continuing, nurturing harmony with the natural environment” (117). Sackville-West characterizes the society of Sebastian’s mother’s friends as being superficial and self-indulgent, but also idealizes the love and responsibility that Sebastian feels towards Chevron. Even in her later novel, *Family History*, in which she begins more thoroughly to explore the limitations that patriarchal gender norms impose upon women, Sackville-West presents Miles Vane-Merrick, a liberal-minded owner of a country estate in Kent, as being the ideal landlord: she thus once again advocates “principles of stewardship, continuity, and union with nature’s yearly cycle” (Ames 121). In an appendix to *Knole and the Sackvilles*, which she wrote in later life, Sackville-West concludes that even though she understands that English country houses are “extravagant and traditional,” she continues to see the value in the stability and dignity of the old, feudal arrangement of life: “Yet in their growth they were organic, and in their creation they involved the cooperation of many a human life, the life of the craftsman who laboured, the stonemason, the carver, the carpenter, the builder of chimneys, and the life also of those who ordered and enjoyed” (*Selected Writings* 194). Most of Sackville-West’s texts betray a nostalgia for what Richard Gill calls the “happy rural seat”: the country house in these novels is not just a structure in which people reside but a “social, economic, and cultural institution,” which embodies the “spirit of *nobleness oblige* that made the old order, at its best, a truly organic community” (Gill 3-5).

Sackville-West’s nostalgic view of country life and her romanticization of educated male aristocrats can be read as being a reactionary response to the weakening of the gentry following

World War I: a large number of young heirs were killed, while death duties and augmented taxes on country estates significantly reduced aristocrats' fortunes (Humble 61). "Life was undergoing the process of being levelled up for everyone," notes Sackville-West in *Family History*, drawing attention to the fact that an increasing amount of English population was becoming middle-class (21). Indeed, Humble records that "more than half of all Cabinet posts in the years between 1916 and 1935, in both Labour and Conservative administrations, were held by middle-class politicians"; mass production of goods, including clothes, films, books, and, of course, suburban dwellings, was also creating a society in which an increasing number of people were not only economically but culturally middle-class (Humble 60, 88). It is thus hardly surprising that numerous novels of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s – such as Sackville-West's texts, Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* (1929), and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) – betray a longing for a way of life that was becoming obsolete.<sup>125</sup> These novels generally sold well: as Raitt observes, they "fed the nostalgic and snobbish hunger of the middle-class reading public to revisit and commemorate that decaying aristocratic order" (11).

During the early twentieth century, representations of suburbia played an integral role in discussions of the ostensibly simpler, more stable, rural past and in re-definitions of terms such as "rural" and "urban." Suburbia, Judy Giles observes,

despite being a phenomenon of modern society and despite its potential for the creation of new forms of everyday life, new fashions, and designs, new possibilities for community and new moralities, has been presented, for the most part, as simply a "bad" manifestation of the modernizing processes. (*The Parlour and The Suburb* 30)

This predominantly negative perception of suburban growth was inextricably linked to the popularity of the country-house novel and people's nostalgia for imagined rural simplicity and

innocence. The rapid transformation of fields and small villages into suburban lots was a visually striking symbol of the way in which nature and old ways of living were being eliminated. Thus, the beautiful country estate in Sackville-West's *The Heir*, which "lies at the very heart of peace," is under the threat of being ruined by speculative builders, a portion of its park split up into "building lots" (52, 48). It is surprising that Raymond Williams's study of the country and the city does not include an analysis of the way in which early twentieth-century suburbia became as representative of rampant capitalism and change as the city was. Indeed, imagery of uncontrollable growth, of "yeasty English expansions," characterizes descriptions of suburbia in this historical period and reaffirms, by contrast, the myth of a de-historicized, pristine rural life (Wells, *Tono-Bungay* 84). It is likely that S. P. B. Mais, a contemporaneous reviewer of Sackville-West's work who lauded her ongoing interest in the English countryside, refers primarily to suburbia when he identifies a need to "stem the foreign invasion" of rural England (144). Suburbia came to symbolize a foreign other, the opposite of all that is English: this dichotomy once again hides the interconnectedness of English rural life with British imperialist ventures and capitalist economy.

While negative representations of suburbia were preponderate in literature and journalism of the early twentieth century, John Carey observes that numerous authors of this period, such as Graham Greene, E. M. Forster, and Bernard Shaw, portray specific and more affluent suburbs, which were being altered by new housing developments, in nostalgic terms (Carey 47). These writers usually came from well-educated, middle-class families and grew up in older, greener suburbs that resembled closely the early nineteenth-century, bourgeois suburban ideal. In *The Happy-Go-Lucky Morgans* (1913), for example, Edward Thomas mourns the loss of his peaceful childhood suburb of Balham.<sup>126</sup>

Today the jackdaws at least, if ever they fly that way, can probably not distinguish Abercorn Street and Wilderness Street from ordinary streets. For the trees are every one of them gone, and with them the jackdaws. The lilies and carp are no longer in the pond and there is no pond. (4)

Writings such as these testify both to the diversity of suburban settings, both real and literary, and to the fact that authors incorporated imagery of rural peace and simplicity to describe settings that were not necessarily rural: these images have less to do with actual socio-historical or geographical realities, and more with the commentators' desire to create, through contrast, criticisms of those changes that were associated with modernity.

As the expansion of city limits pushed the countryside experience further and further out of the everyday reach of urban dwellers, certain older suburbs (such as Hampstead) came to embody a new form of "rurality" – an adulterated, but nevertheless a more accessible kind. Bart Keunen contends that in an age in which urban modernization processes occasioned a disruption of "cyclical time" that was associated with idyllic chronotope, certain other spaces, including suburban villas, came to embody the concept of "cyclical regeneration" (280). At the same time, various urban planners and visionaries, such as Raymond Unwin, continued to seek solutions to problems of urban overcrowding, shoddy suburban building, and class inequalities on the peripheries of cities by building low-density, quality suburban abodes and creating the Hampstead Garden Suburb, which incorporated communal kitchens, community centres, and houses of various costs and sizes (Unwin 4; Dentith 15-20).<sup>127</sup> Suburbia is thus simultaneously presented in early twentieth-century texts as being a symbol of "rapacious [capitalist] greed" (Fitzgerald 4), a revised version of the countryside, and finally, a territory that could hold the key to a more democratic, or at least healthier and more aesthetically pleasing, future: an aggressor, a

victim, and a solution, it played an integral role in how commentators and artists experienced a world in which the boundaries between the country and the city were constantly shifting.

*All Passion Spent* is semantically relevant to a discussion of early twentieth-century literary suburbia specifically because Sackville-West's portrayal of the aged Lady Slane's "emancipation" from societal norms in Hampstead provides a layered description of suburbia that responds in various degrees to the above-mentioned literary trends. Sackville-West formulates an effective critique of capitalist greed and patriarchal gender norms by contrasting the stringent hierarchies of country house and urban settings with ostensible freedom in Hampstead; on the other hand, she paradoxically presents Hampstead in idyllic terms, without analyzing the way in which capitalist relations make possible and bolster the anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal sentiments of its senior citizens. Nevertheless, the fact that Sackville-West does not structure this text according to the conventions of the courtship plot – which she uses in most of her novels, including her relatively political *Family History* – allows her to explore more freely an older woman's construction of a private idyll. This is the only one of her texts in which she fuses an in-depth critique of patriarchal institutions with a layered revision of a country-house environment, a combination that suggests the interconnectedness of gender relations and systems of capitalism and imperialism that create and sustain this frequently idealized mode of living. Her novel thus testifies to the relatively creative ways that female authors could respond to the diversity of suburban environments.

As mentioned above, Sackville-West's representation of Lady Slane's successful detachment from her previous identity as wife and mother involves a somewhat dehistoricized view of Hampstead and an obscuring of unequal class relations that make possible the elderly woman's actions. Simultaneously, this novel reflects the intensive exchange of ideas between Sackville-West and Woolf (especially in regards to women's role in society), and the ultimately

limited nature of Woolf's influence on the former author's style and politics. The following in-depth study of Sackville-West's novel will therefore both emphasize the semantic relevance of her most political text and pinpoint the more conservative aspects of its form and content, especially in relation to Woolf's writing.

### ***All Passion Spent: Sackville-West's Feminism and Venture into Suburbia***

Although *All Passion Spent* did not sell as well as Sackville-West's *The Edwardians*, it was lauded by many of her contemporaries and is considered by recent critics to be her most "feminist"<sup>128</sup> novel (Raitt 108; DeSalvo, "Lighting the Cave" 210).<sup>129</sup> *The Edwardians* features a brief critique of patriarchal inheritance laws in the shape of Sebastian's sister Viola, but Sackville-West does not focus at length on gender-related inequalities in this earlier text. It is in *All Passion Spent* that she first provides a substantial analysis of the ways in which women's freedom of choice is limited in a patriarchal society. Sackville-West elaborates her arguments through the story of Lady Slane, who spends most of her adult life repressing her artistic aspirations in order to fulfil the role of a dutiful wife and mother. After her eminent husband's death and at the advanced age of eighty-eighty, Lady Slane finally rebels against her children and society by choosing to live independently in Hampstead.<sup>130</sup>

Sackville-West's novel begins with an announcement of Lord Slane's death: "Henry Lyulph Holland, first Earl of Slane, had existed for so long that the public had begun to regard him as immortal" (*APS* 13). With his many distinctions ("Earl of Slane, K. G., G. C. B., G. C. S. I., G. C. I. E., etc. etc." (14)) and his rejection of modern technology (he does not use automobiles), Lord Slane is associated with the "old order" and its traditions; he is the symbol of the competitive, hierarchical, masculine world that Woolf critiques in *Three Guineas* (1938) (*APS* 13).<sup>131</sup> As the surname Slane is associated with Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), lord of the

manor of Chelsea and eminent physician, after whom Sloane Square, a fashionable square in central London, takes its name, Lord Slane and his family are immediately identified with London's nobility and its traditions (Room 509).<sup>132</sup> Sackville-West's narrative style does not at this point in the text challenge the conventional, realist mode. Her omniscient, third-person narrator explains authoritatively the significance of Lord Slane's passing to the reader: "Time seemed to have made a little jump forward, now that the figure of old Slane was no longer there with outstretched arms to dam it back" (*APS* 14). While there is no obliqueness in the narrator's method of communicating the message, the death of the old patriarch, occurring as it does at the beginning of the text, foreshadows instabilities in the status quo that the loss of this "old landmark" will occasion and suggests the greater dramatic potential of a changing world (13). It also implies that ostensibly "immortal" truths and norms – and ways of writing – will be questioned, and perhaps even abandoned (or "slain"), later in the text (13).

According to Lord and Lady Slane's children, one of the accepted "truths" of the old order is that their mother has operated as an "appendage" to her husband (*APS* 24). "After all," observes the eldest son, Herbert, "we must remember that her life is shattered. You know that she lived only for Father" (35).<sup>133</sup> Like an object that ceases to function once its owner is gone – "[l]ike the papers in Lord Slane's desk" – "Lady Slane must be cleared up" (57), or rather, "stowed away," and allowed to decay in one of her children's houses (23). Indeed, Lady Slane affirms that her life has been filled solely with "duty, charity, children, social obligations, public appearances," rather than with pursuits of personal interests (59). She is a more recent and arguably more passive version of Woolf's Judith Shakespeare: the latter character's raw talent for writing was likewise stifled by the gender inequalities of her time. Like Judith, the young Lady Slane wants to become an artist, envies her brother's "spaciousness" of "opportunity and experience" (154), and dreams of "escape and disguise," of "a changed name, a travestied sex,

and a freedom in some foreign city” (149). Although she communicates her desire to paint to Lord Slane early in their marriage, his reminder that “she would find plenty of other occupations to help her pass her days” makes her abandon her aspirations (164). Lady Slane’s quick acquiescence to her husband’s wishes suggests a passivity in her character, for it is only when this male figure leaves her life that she finds the courage to pursue her personal desires.<sup>134</sup> As in the case of the nurturing Mrs. Ramsay in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, whose life-force is “drunk and quenched by the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male” (53), Lady Slane’s energies come to revolve around her husband’s “need for reassurance” in the times of crises: these episodes leave her “with her hands lying limp, symbol of exhaustion” (APS 173).

Sackville-West portrayal of Lady Slane’s enervation furthermore echoes Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, especially its incisive and satiric description of the reality of traditional gender relations: “Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of men at twice its natural size. Without that power probably the earth would still be swamp and jungle” (44-46). Woolf might as well be describing the marriage of Lord and Lady Slane, for their relations fit the model of stringently-defined Victorian gender roles, which were delineated by nineteenth-century commentators such as John Ruskin. According to Ruskin, a man is a “doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender,” while the woman exists in order to provide her mate with “shelter” and “praise”: her main characteristic is that of “self-renunciation” (21-22). Ruskin’s definition of the conquering man draws attention to the fact that traditional Victorian gender roles were inextricably linked to the project of British imperialism, for the future health of the nation depended on the production of healthy, new generations (Ruskin 21). Consequently, the “spending” of Lady Slane’s energies for the purposes of filling the figurative “veins” of her husband, a government official, parallels the literal draining of resources (human and other) in the British colonies, a process that supports

and enriches the British economy and enables its men to continue “giving judgements, civilizing natives, making laws, [and] writing books” (*A Room of One’s Own* 46). The elderly woman’s move from the city to the suburb could thus be interpreted as suggesting a desire to escape symbolically the centre of male domination and British imperialism. Sackville-West’s novel implies that imperialism, violence, and patriarchy (which are structured according to the economy of male desire) are interdependent. Given the fact that Woolf later identifies traditional British husbands and fathers as being more subtle manifestations of the oppressive, imperialist “Hitler” figure in *Three Guineas*, it is possible that she was influenced in some degree by Sackville-West’s text.<sup>135</sup>

One of the most striking ways in which Sackville-West challenges literary conventions in *All Passion Spent* is by making an old woman her heroine. Until Lady Slane’s great granddaughter and namesake, Deborah, enters the house in Hampstead at the end of the novel, the reader is not introduced to any character below the age of sixty: Lady Slane’s youngest children, Kay and Edith, are in the seventh decade of their lives. Unlike a young, inexperienced woman, who is influenced by amorous ideals and entangled in romantic plots that reaffirm the significance of heterosexual, monogamous, and conjugal love, Lady Slane is able to analyze retrospectively the connections among gender inequality and traditions of courtship and marriage: “For Lady Slane was in the fortunate position of seeing into the heart of the girl who had been herself” (*APS* 148). She realizes that she has had to give up her entire life for Lord Slane, while “it appeared that in acquiring her he was merely adding something extra” to his (160). By “valorizing” old age as being a “condition of rebellion,” furthermore, Sackville-West produces a subtle critique of a society in which widowed women who are past their reproductive years are treated as though they were obsolete objects (Milczarek 100).<sup>136</sup> This is particularly relevant in terms of the present study, for, as Hilary Newman observes, old age was a “relatively

modern phenomenon” and the number of older women was steadily increasing: by focusing on the life of a female senior citizen, Sackville-West, the “traditionalist,” was responding creatively and positively to a significant societal change (28).

### **A Woman’s Suburban Rebellion**

Given that her heroine is a widowed woman of an advanced age, it is not surprising that Sackville-West chose Hampstead as the primary setting of her story: as Lady Slane explains to her children, ““Lots of old ladies live in retirement in Hampstead”” (*APS* 67).<sup>137</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, Hampstead was one of the older and more affluent London suburbs, which featured both a long history of famous, artistic inhabitants such as John Keats and Wilkie Collins and the 800-acre Hampstead Heath. The latter was an official public space, very popular among Londoners of all classes as a weekend destination and easily accessible after the opening of the Hampstead tube station in 1907. At the time when Sackville-West was writing *All Passion Spent*, Hampstead still contained some well-preserved, older houses from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as from the Victorian era.<sup>138</sup> Retirement in a suburb that featured a large senior population, picturesque architecture, and natural beauties would have thus been an apt choice for an affluent, older woman seeking a peaceful and aesthetically pleasing setting for the final phase of her life.

Sackville-West nevertheless presents Lady Slane’s decision to live independently in this suburb as being a courageous rebellion against societal expectations: ““Besides,”” Lady Slane explains to her children, ““I have considered the ways of the world for so long that I think it is time I had a little holiday from them”” (*APS* 66-7). Her move is concomitant with her adamant rejection of the nurturing grandmother and great-grandmother roles: she refuses to see anyone ““except those who are nearer to their death than to their birth”” (68). ““Such a hint of independence

was an outrage,” thinks Carrie, Lady Slane’s eldest daughter, “almost a manifesto” (64).

Indeed, Deborah, Lady Slane’s first name, refers to the Old testament character, a prophet and judge who inspired the Israelites to a victory over their Canaanite<sup>139</sup> oppressors (*Encyclopædia Britannica*); it also carries connotations of sweetness and diligence, as it, or its variant Devorah, means “bee” in Hebrew (Room 142). The elderly lady is therefore from the outset associated with a strong-willed, independent woman but also with a capacity for gentleness: the name suggests her ability to resist patriarchal pressures and hints at her contemplative, agreeable nature.

Hampstead, on the other hand, is from the beginning of this novel associated with unconventionality and opportunities for the destabilization of traditional gender norms. Specifically, it is the suburban location of this setting, which is far enough from the city centre to discourage frequent visits by Lady Slane’s urban relatives, but close and accessible enough in case of medical emergencies, that enables her to create a space in which she feels both liberated and safe. Sackville-West presents Lady Slane’s independent journey on the tube to Hampstead Station as being an excursion that reawakens the kind of feelings she used to have in her youth while dreaming about cross-dressing and travelling:

It was something of an adventure to Lady Slane to go alone to Hampstead, and she felt happier after safely changing trails at Charing Cross. . . . [G]oing to Hampstead alone, she did not feel old; she felt younger than she had felt for years, and the proof of it was that she accepted eagerly this start of a new lap in life, even though it be the last. (*APS* 78-9)

She ponders the pleasures that her new life will afford her while regularly noticing the names of the changing stations: Leicester Square, Tottenham Court Road, Goodge Street, Euston, Camden Town, Chalk Farm, and finally, Hampstead (78-85). By thus synchronizing Lady Slane’s

growing excitement with the train's steady movement away from the city center, Sackville-West indicates that, for the elderly woman, central London represents those patriarchal traditions and institutions that she is attempting to undermine (or at least escape).

At the beginning of her trip, Lady Slane contrasts her past life as a diplomat's wife with her later static habitation in central London: "An existence once limited only by the boundaries of Empire had shrunk since the era of Elm Park Gardens" (*APS* 78). This statement, however, is ironic because Lady Slane follows it with a lengthy reminiscence about the constrained nature of her actions during travels to various posts of the Empire: she paid visits to government officials, provided moral support for her husband, and took care of their children. While she may have literally moved from one boundary of the Empire to the other, her existence was as thoroughly limited during this time as it was later in Elm Park Gardens. This is perhaps why her trip to Hampstead, although short in duration, arouses more excitement in her than all the foreign landscapes that she has seen in her life (they left "little impression" upon her (79)).

Sackville-West thus suggests that physical movement could inspire a woman's subversion of stifling gender norms only if accompanied by her willingness to resist societal expectations; movement, in other words, does not equal resistance in and of itself. Furthermore, the relatively short length of the Lady Slane's trip to suburbia points to the fact that female authors frequently concerned themselves "with a smaller mapping of space" in their writings about travel, fictional or otherwise (Joyce 357). As Kelley Joyce argues, "their quests were less about opening new territories for their countries and more about opening new spaces for themselves and their readers at home" (358).<sup>140</sup> A trip or an actual move to suburbia in a novel such as *All Passion Spent* carries substantial semantic significance in terms of its female author's exploration of easily accessible spaces in which to practice potentially non-traditional ways of life.<sup>141</sup>

### **The Idyll of Hampstead**

Lady Slane's specific desire to live in Hampstead is related to a connection she feels with a house she saw in this suburb thirty years before: "I'm sure the house is still there,' she said, and her tone was a mixture between dreaminess and confidence, as though she had some secret understanding with the house, and it was waiting for her, patient, after thirty years" (*APS* 65-66).<sup>142</sup> Although Sackville-West never identifies the exact location of this building, the fact that Lady Slane reaches it fairly quickly on foot from the Hampstead Station, describes it as being one of a "red-brick row, with its garden behind it" (*APS* 87), and frequently walks to Hampstead Heath from there, indicates that it is located in the central, affluent part of old Hampstead (see Figure 6). Glendinning believes that the house "must surely" be in Church Row (237), a street that Weinreb and Hibbert describe in their encyclopaedia of London as being "the most attractive street in Hampstead" (160). In the first half of the twentieth century this street still contained numerous well-preserved, eighteenth-century houses of red brick and was once home to Wilkie Collins and H. G. Wells (Weinreb and Hibbert 160).<sup>143</sup>

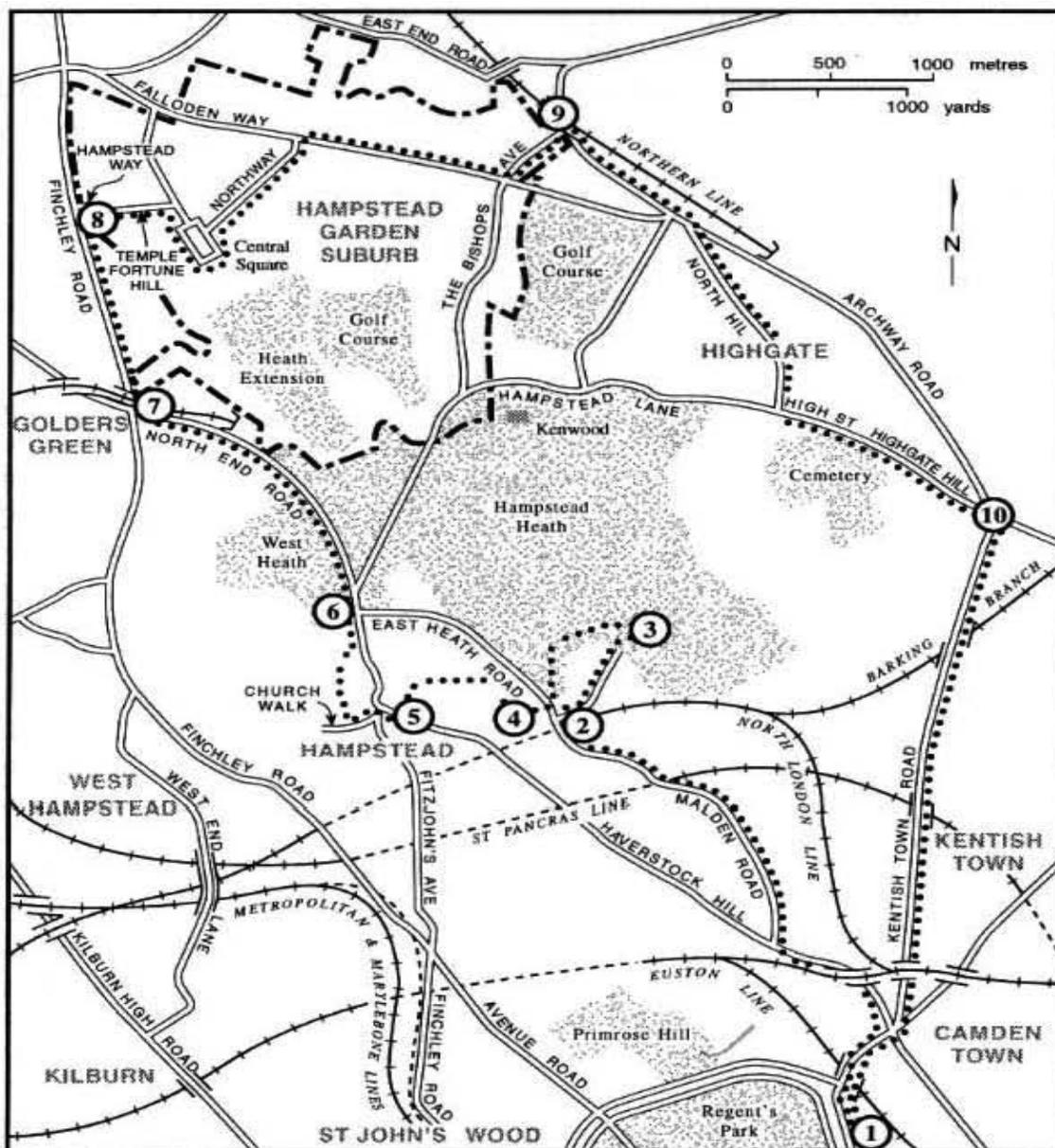
As A. K. Weatherhead reminds one, "In *All Passion Spent*, the house is a significant agency – more than a setting – of the development of the self of Lady Slane at the advanced age of eight-eight" (82). Lady Slane's occupation of the house, however, does not involve a development of middle-class, heteronormative, familial privacy, which is based on a gendered division of labour and which structures bourgeois, suburban space-time. Like Miriam Henderson in Richardson's *Pilgrimage* texts, Sackville-West's elderly protagonist uses the relative isolation of a suburb to create an individual privacy that she was unable to have during her life as a wife, hostess, and mother. Her description of the house as being an "entity with a life of its own"

betrays her desire finally to lead her life according to her personal interests and desires – in other words, to be an “entity” with a life of *her* own (APS 90).

Lady Slane’s new way of living, furthermore, does not involve a forceful imposition of her personality onto the space of her habitation, nor the creation of a stringent division between the outside and the inside:

She wanted to merge with the things that drifted into the empty house, though unlike the spider she would weave no webs. She would be content to stir with the breeze and grow green in the light of the sun, and to drift down the passage of years, until death pushed her gently out and shut the door behind her. (APS 92)

By responding tolerantly and imaginatively to her environment, she rejects the stringent rules that structure the life of traditional, familial households and limit the movements and behaviour of women within their own homes. Very few middle-class women, for example, had rooms that were the equivalent of men’s private libraries or studies, and it was customary even in the early 1930s for women to leave men alone to smoke and drink alcohol after dinner. Unlike the Hilburys from Woolf’s *Night and Day*, who protect their carefully arranged, traditional household from the outside world by “a thousand softly padded doors” (Woolf 4), Lady Slane blends into her surroundings as organically as does an English country house in many of Sackville-West’s other texts.



#### Legend

- |   |                            |     |                                 |
|---|----------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| 1 | To and from central London | 7   | Golders Green Station           |
| 2 | Hampstead Heath Station    | 8   | Hampstead Garden Suburb Gateway |
| 3 | Parliament Hill            | 9   | East Finchley Station           |
| 4 | Keat's Grove               | 10  | Archway Station                 |
| 5 | Hampstead High Street      | --- | Hampstead Garden Suburb         |
| 6 | Whitestone Pond            | --- | Conservation Area Boundary      |

Figure 6: "Hampstead" (Gayler 173).

Lady Slane's structuring of her private moments according to natural rhythms connects *All Passion Spent* with Sackville-West's earlier "rural" texts, such as *The Heir* and *The Land*. By moving to Hampstead, Lady Slane expresses her desire to indulge in reminiscence, an activity she considers "the last, supreme luxury" of her life (*APS* 145). As she sits in the sun near her Hampstead home, her "wistful" mental "wonderings" are reflected in the steady movement of the sun and the altering shadows of the natural objects (145). It is the peacefulness of this suburb that proves conducive to her leisured contemplation: "[H]ampstead seemed scarcely a part of London, so sleepy and village-like, with its warm red-brick houses and vistas of trees and distance that reminded her pleasantly of Constable's paintings" (185). Situated on "the highest hill on the rim of the London basin," Hampstead rises above London's yellow fog and has traditionally been considered as an oasis of cleaner air and clearer skies (White, "The Parents" 98). Not only does Lady Slane's description of Hampstead remind the reader of the suburb's rural-like character, but it also draws attention to the past artistic and literary depictions of Hampstead's natural beauties – in this case, the landscape works of John Constable, who painted the Heath numerous times in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>144</sup>

Indeed, descriptions of Hampstead and Hampstead Heath play an integral role in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts that seek to emphasize both the richness of metropolitan London's history and the superior beauty of the English natural landscapes. In his study of Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose family moved to Hampstead in 1852, Norman White observes: "Hampstead was at a crucial psychological height above and distance from central London. It was five miles from Trafalgar Square, near enough to be accessible by foot, horse, carriage, horse-omnibus, or train, but distant enough to be remote, a country refuge from the various urban oppressions" (White, "The Parents" 97). A "frontier between town and country" (Thomson 335), fictional Hampstead is a site where the history of a major cultural centre and its

many artists and writers fuses with ostensibly timeless simplicity of rural life. In *Some Hampstead Memories* (1909), for instance, Mary Adams observes: “Byron sought and found inspiration in its dells. Dickens and Forster and Maclise<sup>145</sup> loved it, perhaps more than any other place” (24). A health resort<sup>146</sup> since the seventeenth century, Hampstead was famous for being a meeting place of the literary and political Kit-Kat Club, whose members included Alexander Pope and Dr. John Arbuthnot (Weinreb and Hibbert 357-8). Later, this suburb became home to Leigh Hunt and John Keats, who were visited frequently by Lord Byron, Samuel Coleridge, and Charles Lamb (Adams 17-30). Early twentieth-century municipal organizations such as London Country Council’s Historic Records and Survey committees and London Topographical Societies consequently marked various addresses in Hampstead with plaques that indicated their historical significance; in 1925, for instance, Keats Memorial House was opened to the public (Burer 231). Thus, when Lady Slane and her friend Mr. FitzGeorge<sup>147</sup> take strolls around Hampstead, their routes and experiences are frequently coloured by their knowledge of the cultural history of various sites: “[T]hey revived memories of Constable, and even visited Keats’s house, that little white box of strain and tragedy marooned among the dark green laurels. Like ghosts themselves, they murmured of the ghost of Fanny Burney and of the passion which had wrecked Keats . . .” (*APS* 223).<sup>148</sup>

While these historical associations connect Hampstead’s story with that of metropolitan London, they also identify the suburb as being a part of a more aesthetically and culturally vibrant past. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers frequently describe Hampstead, and especially the Heath, using imagery of rural simplicity and charm, while mourning the alterations that modernity has inflicted upon the suburb.<sup>149</sup> “There are residents, still,” observes Anna Maxwell in her 1912 essay about Hampstead, “who once walked up the steep, narrow path, climbing over stiles to the top of Conduit Fields, where, at the spring of pure water, pails used to

be filled for a penny each, and the public water-carrier wore a wooden yoke like a milkmaid” (17). According to Adams, the Heath is an “oasis” of “a country of glorious hills, meandering walks, and shady nooks” (33). Sackville-West’s description of the “village-like,” historical Hampstead in *All Passion Spent* thus connects her text to the literary trend according to which a romanticization of the easily accessible, yet well-preserved suburb and its famous Heath signals an author’s desire to emphasize both the eminent history of London art and literature and the beauty of the English countryside.

Although commentators such as Fitzgerald and Maxwell, who wrote several decades before Sackville-West, record that “inevitable building” by various contractors was rapidly altering the character of the old suburb (Fitzgerald 94-5), the latter author de-historicizes Lady Slane’s Hampstead and portrays it as being an unchanging, isolated island of picturesque nature and architecture.<sup>150</sup> By focusing solely on the descriptions of old, “red-brick” houses in central Hampstead, as well as by referring to the suburb’s various historical personages, Sackville-West ignores the ongoing changes that were occurring in Hampstead in the early 1930s, the time of Lady Slane’s stay in the suburb. The increased popularity of the automobile, for instance, made Hampstead’s streets much busier than before and occasioned an influx of new residents, while many of the large Victorian houses in Hampstead’s main street, Fitzjohn Avenue, were divided into apartments (Borer 232). Although this limited view of Hampstead could be reflective of Lady Slane’s perspective and her desire for rest and peace, the fact that she finds the house of her dreams unchanged after thirty years suggests that Sackville-West characterizes Hampstead as being generally untouched by the modern world.

Lady Slane is able to create a nurturing community in this suburb that consists of her landlord Mr. Bucktrout, a handyman Mr. Gosheron, her friend Mr. FitzGeorge, and her maid Genoux.<sup>151</sup> In various ways and degrees, these individuals oppose the materialism and

suppression of one's individuality that Lady Slane associates with the world of her children and late husband. Although he was once a businessman, Mr. Bucktrout has retired from the "Brook of competition," because, as he explains to Lady Slane, he has learnt that "the pleasures of contemplation are greater than the pleasures of activity": "The world, Lady Slane, is pitiably horrible. It is horrible because it is based upon competitive struggle – and really one does not know whether to call the basis of that struggle a convention or a necessity" (*APS* 98-99). Somewhat paradoxically, Mr. Bucktrout is able to remove himself from the world of capitalism specifically because his successful life of capitalist relations allows him the freedom to do so. Nevertheless, unlike the majority of businessmen, and especially real estate agents, whom Carrie describes as being "dreadfully grasping people," Mr. Bucktrout is less concerned with turning a profit at this point in his life than in finding a tenant who will "suit" the house (104, 96). Sackville-West further emphasizes Mr. Bucktrout's seeming removal from the "competitive struggle" (121) by describing his adamant belief that the world will end in "two years' time" (97).

Like Lady Slane, Mr. Bucktrout has no patience for young people – they are "so tiring, so unsettling" – and it is no wonder that the two join forces to create a world of "repose," which consists of like-minded, elderly people: "All old, all eccentric, and all unworldly!" (*APS* 98, 205). It should be noted, however, that it is only the financially privileged characters such as Lady Slane and Mr. Bucktrout who "repose," while members of the working and artisan classes labour to ensure that their employers do not have to think about material realities of life: Genoux, who is in her eighties, takes care of the house, while Mr. Gosheron provides reasonably priced, quality services with a team of handymen who are "so old that Genoux was sometimes afraid they would fall off their ladders" (115). The only other person whom they allow to enter this "idyll of repose" is Mr. FitzGeorge, who is likewise an octogenarian. Although (and also

because) he is rich and careful with his money, this odd gentleman is “genuinely detached from social convention” (198), completely honest about his avarice, and infinitely capable of appreciating unconventional types of beauty: “Youth had no beauty like the beauty of an old face; the face of youth was an unwritten page,” ponders Mr. FitzGeorge, “Youth could never sit as still as that, in absolute repose” (209).

It is Lady Slane’s partial rejection of material wealth that most effectively testifies both to her knowledge of the connections among capitalist economy, imperialism, and patriarchy, and, somewhat ironically, to her tendency to overlook the material constraints that define the lives of people like her maid Genoux. The numerous jewels that have been given to her by eminent, international personages and her diplomat husband are products of British imperialist ventures in various parts of the globe, but also symbols of her role as a prized sexual object who is expected to bear the future generations of male rulers and conquerors. “Loaded” with rings that she can no longer be bothered to remove, Lady Slane observes that her hands seemed “as though they belonged to another person, or another piece of machinery”: she recognizes that the ostensibly innocuous emblems of feminine beauty, her gentle hands, are tiny cogs in a complex machine that reaches far beyond her literal grasp (*APS* 74-5). An innately intuitive and contemplative person, rather than a competitive and materialistic one, Lady Slane rebels against the system of power relations that creates her own suppression by giving her jewels to her children: “She had a sense of beauty, though none of value. The cost of these things, their marketable price, meant nothing to her” (75-6). Later, when Mr. FitzGeorge leaves his money and art collections (acquired from various parts of the Empire) to Lady Slane after his death, she simply gives them away to museums and charities, realizing some time later that the old gentleman was testing her resolve to resist material wealth and the relations that generate it. Nevertheless, Lady Slane’s rebellion is limited, for she still gives her jewels to the people who would have inherited them

and her money to various cultural institutions (and not to Genoux or to other working-class individuals), thus perpetuating the system of unequal class relations.

Lady Slane's small Hampstead community – friendships of an upper-class lady, an elderly, feisty servant, “an agent, a builder, and a connoisseur” (*APS* 205) – thus operates as an alternate reality that stands, albeit in a limited manner, in contrast with the restless, competitive, and conventional outside world:

But at Hampstead, thanks to Mr. Bucktrout and Mr. Gosheron, the proper atmosphere had been at last achieved. It was modest; there were no aides-de-camp, no princes, but though modest it was as warm, and affectionate, and respectful, and vigilant, and generous, just as it should be. (114-5)

Lady Slane, the centre of this community, uses intuition rather than reason in her interactions with others, and understands instinctively what people are saying, “better than they had understood it themselves” (131). In Georg Simmel's terms, Lady Slane's approach to life differs from the way of living created by the money economy, in which “money becomes the common denominator of all values,” and an individual is “reckoned like a number, like an element which is in itself indifferent” (“The Metropolis and Mental Life” 49). As Mr. Bucktrout observes, ““At present it seems to me, Lady Slane, that man has founded all his calculations upon a mathematical system fundamentally false”” (*APS* 121). In contrast with her “trying and striving” children – whose only explanation for Genoux's fondness for Mr. FitzGeorge is that he had probably “always given her a tip” – Lady Slane is happy “merely to *be*” (*APS* 134, 248, 134). Whereas she is unable or unwilling to “understand what a debenture was,” or to tell the “difference between ordinary and deferred stock” (*APS* 132), she practices what Michel de Certeau terms “the economy of the gift” (Certeau 26) or the “art of the weak” (37), a tactic by which “users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production” (xiv).

She does not trade, but simply gives (most of) her wealth away. Unlike her children, therefore, who “measure to generate relationships,” Lady Slane “implements relationships without measure,” refusing to evaluate her connections with people, things, space, and time based on formulae that obscure the complexity of a given interaction or duration (Deleuze, “Occupy Without Counting” 297). In a sense, the words “passion” and “spent” of the novel’s title refer to the ways in which the elderly woman challenges the society that produces her oppression by both choosing to be passionate about things other than material goods and by occasionally spending her possessions in ways that undermine the values attached to them by the (patriarchal) system of economic exchange.

Lady Slane’s Hampstead abode is similar to a country house with its tightly knit group of friends, natural beauties, and ostensible separation from a fast-paced, capitalist urban centre. Gill observes that “community” is one of the primary themes of country-house novels; a “certain kind of woman,” “intuitive [and] elemental” (like Mrs. Ramsay or Lady Slane), is a “recurring symbol used to convey the idea of community” in such texts (11, 13). In *All Passion Spent*, Sackville-West thus uses elements of the country-house genre, but revises the stringent rules of hierarchy and anachronistic customs that usually structure the life of country houses (and that she took for granted in earlier works such as *The Land* and *The Heir*).<sup>152</sup> Instead, she constructs and analyzes relatively casual relations between an unconventional older woman and her visitors and sets this community within a rural-like setting, creating a version of the idyllic chronotope which foregrounds rather than obscures issues of gender inequity. The unity of place and cyclicity of natural rhythms, which are the defining elements of the Bakhtinian idyllic chronotope (Bakhtin 225), create an opportunity for the fulfilment of a woman’s individual, non-traditional desires, rather than connote “property-owning inheritance, primogeniture, and other features of capitalist [and one might add, patriarchal] society” (Vice 208).

### Sackville-West's Feminine Chronotope

It is the isolated, peaceful nature of the Hampstead environment that enables Lady Slane to “wallow in old age,” and spend most of her time contemplating critically her youth, married life, and motherhood: “The girl walking beside the lake was unaware, but the old woman beheld the whole of adolescence, as who should catch a petal in the act of unfolding” (*APS* 68, 146). By revisiting past moments of her life, the octogenarian slowly explores the various ways in which middle- and upper-middle-class women are conditioned and pressured into the roles of domesticated, self-denying, and nurturing spouses and mothers. She recalls, for example, the day that Lord Slane proposed to her:

It was clearly impossible, to her mind, that she should accept. . . . That would mean that she must be Vicereine, and at the thought she had turned upon him the glance of a startled fawn. Instantly interpreting that glance according to his desires, Mr. Holland had clasped her in his arms and had kissed her with ardour but with restraint upon the lips.

What was a poor girl to do? Before she well knew what was happening, there was her mother smiling through tears, her father putting his hand on Mr. Holland's shoulder, her sisters asking if they might all be bridesmaids, and Mr. Holland himself standing very upright, very proud, very silent, smiling a little, bowing, and looking at her with an expression that even her inexperience could define only as proprietary. (144)

Even though she never utters a word of assent, her engagement is put into motion through a combination of her own timidity, Lord Slane's patriarchal assumptions about women, and her family's conventional investment in social hierarchies. The word “very” appears three times in

the last sentence and emphasizes both Lord Slane's imposing presence and the forceful way in which the young woman is being pushed in the direction of marriage by the expectations of others. She operates as a blank screen upon which individuals project their visions of ideal femininity and social success, so that her personal desires and interests are relegated to an imperceptible background; the repetition of the word "her" and the listing of people around her accentuate the young woman's entrapment within patriarchal traditions and the capitalist system of exchange, in which a woman is considered to be the property of her father and, later, her husband. The fact that the passage ends with the word "proprietary" suggests that she is "traded" like an object, to serve as an appendage to her eminent future husband (*APS* 24).

As Lady Slane analyzes various remembered scenes, sometimes in a non-chronological order, Sackville-West continually reminds the reader of the natural rhythms that structure the elderly woman's present life in Hampstead. Memories of a suppressed passion for painting are punctured by her attempts to chase the receding sunrays in her garden:

The sun, which had been warming her old bones and the peaches on the wall, crept westering behind a house so that she shivered slightly, and rising, dragged her chair forward on to the still sunlit grass. She would follow that bygone ambition from its dubious birth, through the months when it steadied and increased and coursed like blood through her, to the days when it languished and lost heart, for all her efforts to keep it alive. (149)

Fusing the "timeless" rhythms of nature in a rural-like setting with the "vagaries of personal recall," Sackville-West revises the country-house chronotope in order both to formulate a critique of traditional gender norms and to celebrate a woman's indulgence in leisurely contemplation (*Vice* 224). She merges the rural idyll with what Bart Keunen terms the "interiorized idyll": "Space often loses its 'natural' and cyclical character in the process, to make

way for an internal cyclicity of the recurrent and repeatable psychic processes of observing and remembering” (282). In other words, the spatio-temporal structure of the chronotope of the interiorized idyll is one in which the “spatial coordinates are provided by subjective observation and/or recollection, while a persona or fictitious biography informs temporal progression” (Keunen 283). By combining the two types of rhythms, Sackville-West creates what Sue Vice terms “the chronotope of the feminine,” which takes “account of gender as a third element of the fleshing-out process: not only [does] time become spatialized and space historicized, but the emptiness of these terms [is] filled with an account of how different open spaces, and domestic spaces, are for women and men” (218).

There is a sense of wistfulness to Lady Slane’s story, for the relentless passage of the sun in the sky reminds the reader that her ultimate emancipation from remembered oppressions and her creation of a private idyll has come about just as her life is “westering,” or rather, nearing its inevitable end; in fact, it is the very idyllic chronotope that reminds one of the cyclicity of all life and that continually evokes elegiac strains with the text (*APS* 149).<sup>153</sup> The title of Sackville-West’s text references the final lines of John Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* (1671), which describes the capture of Samson by the Philistines. At the end of the closet drama, after Samson’s destruction of the temple in which he is kept captive (and his concomitant self-destruction), there is a sense of catharsis. Sackville-West’s reference to Milton’s text draws attention to the fact that Lady Slane’s liberation, like Samson’s, comes only shortly before death. She is not a tragic figure in the same way that Samson is, however, for she does not experience a drastic reversal of fortune. Rather, Sackville-West’s meditative story about commonplace oppressions of women and their forms of resistance is more of an elegy: a story of death in an idyllic suburb. A suburban elegy instead of a pastoral one, it focuses on a strong-willed, newly-independent, and

optimistic woman who experiments with an alternative, relatively modern way of living rather than on a mournful shepherdess/shepherd in a rustic setting.

Several times during her reminiscences, Lady Slane's memories are so poignant that she feels as though she is transposed to her younger self. When she meets Mr. FitzGeorge and he reminds her of their brief spiritual connection during an encounter in India many years ago, Lady Slane "stood again on the terrace of the deserted Indian city looking across the brown landscape where puffs of rising dust marked at intervals the road to Agra" (*APS* 212). The superimposition of the spatio-temporal coordinates of her meandering, yet vivid memory onto those of the tranquil, suburban setting occasions what Deleuze and Guattari would term a process of becoming-young: the aged Lady Slane merges with a version of her younger self, thus creating a "zone of proximity or co-presence" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 273). This does not mean that Lady Slane is transforming into a young woman, but that she is extracting from her remembered, younger selves "the particles, the speeds and slownesses, the flows that constitute the youth of that age" (*TP* 277).

At the very end of the novel, just before Lady Slane's peaceful passing, her great-granddaughter and namesake Deborah visits and informs her about a recent decision to break off her engagement (into which she was pressured by her grandfather, Lady Slane's son) and pursue a career in music; she thus chooses to fulfil those dreams of artistic life that Lady Slane abandoned in her youthful days. The elderly woman experiences Deborah to be a "projection of herself," a living and breathing embodiment and culmination of her recent process of becoming-young: "Go on, my darling; you might be myself speaking" (*APS* 282). Like her great-grandmother, Deborah ostensibly rejects material wealth, and sides against the more conventional members of their family: "To her grandfather and her fiancé, wealth and so great a title measured a yard – two yards – a hundred yards – a mile. To her, they measured an inch –

half an inch” (284). Consequently, she decides to dedicate herself to music, which “could be measured by no terrestrial scale,” and which consequently seems to exist outside the realm of the capitalist money economy (284). Her great-grandmother’s renunciation of Mr. FitzGeorge’s millions, which would have made Deborah into an “heiress” and implicated her more obviously in the capitalist system by making her a more desirable conquest for various men, is thus experienced by the young woman as being a blessing of a kindred spirit: “[S]he was grateful to her great-grandmother for reducing her value in the worldly market” (284). In a sense, Lady Slane’s alternative form of disposing of, or rather “spending,” her income – both by giving up a portion of it and by using the rest of it to rent a house in Hampstead – encourages Deborah to choose to “spend” her life in pursuing her “passion” rather than following convention.

Sackville-West furthermore presents the moment of spiritual union between the two women, at the end of which Lady Slane dies quietly in her sleep, as being a passing of the elderly woman’s emancipation onto her descendant: her great-grandmother’s approval “sooth[es] [Deborah] like music” and strengthens her decision to break with convention (*APS* 290). While a “unity of place” in country house novels such as *The Heir* is maintained through a “continuation of generations” (Vice 208) and stringent, patriarchal laws of inheritance, in *All Passion Spent* Sackville-West creates a sense of cyclical renewal for a senior citizen that is not based on a capitalist, property-owning system and that privileges, rather than excludes or suppresses, the interests of women. This is a text in which events repeat themselves as they do in Bakhtin’s idyllic chronotope, but the basis of this cohesion is not the money economy or even the cyclicity of seasons, but a spiritual fusion of two women who are “so far removed in years, so closely attuned in [their] spirit” of rebellion (*APS* 291).

Sackville-West’s portrayal of women’s subversiveness as being something that is almost always inherited, however, is not based simply upon the logic of repetition; as Malgorzata

Milczarek astutely observes, it also implies progress, for the young Deborah already has the strength that her great-grandmother needed her whole life to develop (107). “This child, this Deborah, this self, this other self, this projection of herself,” observes Lady Slane, “was firm and certain” (*APS* 283). While it was “a poor look-out in eighteen-sixty for a girl to think of fame” (148), Sackville-West suggests that an increasing number of women in the 1930s have the opportunity to step outside of the roles prescribed to them by patriarchal society. If Judith Shakespeare had lived in this period, she would have had more opportunity to cultivate her talent and have it recognized.

Indeed, by the 1920s, the gradual change in women’s status was reflected in and made legally possible by various parliamentary acts. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1923, which decreed that adultery on either side was grounds for divorce, lessened the double standard by which male promiscuity was acceptable while women’s sexual activities were judged; the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1937, on the other hand, finally overturned the law according to which the husband’s rape of his wife – his property – was viewed as being an insufficient grounds for divorce (Collette 128-9). Sackville-West’s text, therefore, hints at a link between the broadening of women’s opportunities in England and the accumulated, eponymous “spent passions” of women from past generations, whose small acts of rebellion acted as “leaven” for future change (*APS* 288). Like the judge and prophet Deborah of the Old Testament, the two Deborahs of the Slane family are atypical women, their common name a nod both to the accumulated resistance of women throughout history and to the legal changes that resulted from their various acts of strength and subversions of patriarchal expectations.

### Sackville-West's Method: Innovations and Limitations

Although Sackville-West's writing style in *All Passion Spent* is relatively traditional, it occasionally acquires a "melliferous fluency" that, according to Raitt, "repeatedly echoes Woolf's characteristic inflections and rhythms" (90-91). These instances of unusually lyrical prose occur primarily during Lady Slane's process of "becoming-young" in Hampstead, and are especially poignant at those times when her rural-like surroundings enable her to achieve such peace and clarity that she perceives a bygone moment materializing before her eyes:

She remembered how, crossing the Persian desert with Henry, their cart had been escorted by flocks of butterflies, white and yellow, which danced on either side and overhead and all around them, now flying ahead in a concerted movement, now returning to accompany them, amused as it were to restrain their swift frivolity to a flitting round this lumbering conveyance, but still unable to suit their pace to such sobriety, so, to relieve their impatience, soaring up into the air or dipping between the very axles, combing out on the other side before the horses had had time to put down another hoof; making, all the while, little smuts of shadow on the sand, like little black anchors dropped, tethering them by invisible cables to earth, but dragged about with the same capricious swiftness, obliged to follow; and she remembered thinking, lulled by the monotonous progression that trailed after the sun from dawn to dusk, like a plough that should pursue the sun in one straight slow furrow round and round the world – she remembered thinking that this was something like her own life, following Henry Holland like the sun, but every now and then moving into the cloud of butterflies which were her own irreverent, irrelevant thoughts, darting and dancing, but altering the pace of the progression not by one tittle; never brushing the carriage

with their wings; flickering always, and evading; sometimes rushing on ahead, but returning again to tease and to show off, darting between the axles; having an independent and a lovely life; a flock of ragamuffins skimming above the surface of the desert and around the trundling wagon; but Henry, who was travelling on a tour of investigation, could only say, “Terrible, the ophthalmia among these people – I must really do something about it,” and, knowing that he was right and would speak to the missionaries, she had withdrawn her attention from the butterflies and had transferred it to her duty, determining that when they reached Yezd or Shiraz, or wherever it might be, she also would take the missionaries’ wives to task about the ophthalmia in the villages and would make arrangements for a further supply of boracic to be sent out from England. (*APS* 137-8)

In Western symbolism, butterflies are generally associated with the figure of Psyche (in ancient Greek, “soul”),<sup>154</sup> whose curiosity to see her husband Eros in his divine form leads to her punishment (*Encyclopædia Britannica*). This mortal character is consequently connected to the notions of “irreverent” thoughts, but also to spirituality: there is a suggestion that Lady Slane feels vividly alive while watching the butterflies’ dance but she will be inevitably reprimanded for or redirected from pursuing her interests. Readers would also be likely to think of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic studies of the human mind when encountering the word “psyche.” The butterfly is thus a particularly adept, layered symbol, one which suggests the overarching theme of the novel: Lady Slane’s exploration of her aged soul and mind. Furthermore, Sackville-West’s use of this specific insect to describe Lady Slane’s moment of insight and “being” – which is ended by a male figure who would designate the woman’s thoughts as being irrelevant, if not irreverent – shows how she employs a conventional motif to create a subtle critique of the limitations imposed upon women by patriarchy. The fact that Psyche only becomes immortal

after her reconciliation with Aphrodite, Eros's mother (who originally disapproves of the match), suggests that it is only through their association with distinguished male figures that women can gain power: Deborah obtains social distinction through her marriage to the eminent Lord Slane.

Sackville-West's description of Lady Slane's meandering thoughts in free indirect style is reminiscent of Woolf's portrayal of Katherine Hilbury's encounter with the suburban commuter: Woolf also uses a long, flowing sentence with numerous commas and semi-colons to suggest the rush of the young woman's impressions.<sup>155</sup> In Sackville-West's long sentence (the longest that can be found in this text and perhaps in her entire canon), the punctuation, as well as the repetition of words such as "now" and of present and past participles describing literal and figurative movements or processes – "flying," "returning," "flitting," "thinking," "moving," "darting, dancing," "brushing," "flickering," "evading" – create a lively, entrancing rhythm, and connect the patterns of Lady Slane's thoughts with the patterns of the butterflies' flight.<sup>156</sup> It is only when Lord Slane calls his wife's attention to their duty as administrators of "civilization" in a colonized country that the sentence – and the iridescent play of butterflies and thoughts – comes to an end. The passage hints at Sackville-West's tentative and temporary interest in exploring the ways in which a stretching of syntactical and grammatical rules can allow a writer to portray the wanderings of human consciousness – a concern that formed the basis of many of Woolf and, especially, Richardson's formal experiments.

This interest is also evident in Sackville-West's shorter, but equally poetic descriptions of Lady Slane's intuitive knowledge of a spiritual and emotional reality, "the shifting, elusive, iridescent play of life," that ordinary language cannot grasp: "Only in a wordless trance did any true apprehension become possible, a wordless trance of sheer feeling, an extra-physical state, in which nothing but the tingling of the finger-tips recalled the existence of the body, and a series of

images floated across the mind, un-named, unrelated to language” (*APS* 164, 175).<sup>157</sup> In Sackville-West’s text, this alternate reality stands in direct opposition to the rationality and materialism associated with the patriarchal, capitalist world: its physical embodiment is the ostensibly isolated, almost other-worldly suburb of Hampstead, where feminine forms of knowing and spiritual communion are allowed to prosper.

While the above-quoted passages suggest the influence of Woolf and then-contemporary modernists’ aesthetic projects on Sackville-West’s style, her description of Lady Slane’s vision of Hampstead and the past is, as Newman observes, ultimately less lyrical than most of Woolf’s writing: the “melliferous” passages are few and far between (28). A consideration of the dominant chronotopes in Sackville-West’s novel reminds one that the restrained lyricism of the text is related to the author’s general resistance to more radical forms of avant-garde discontinuity. As Keunen observes, in high modernist works there is no overarching chronotope that establishes a hegemony of a “particular world model,” for these texts are not dominated by either the “narrative characteristics of the realist-naturalist (linearity),” or the “unity of the aestheticizing observer” (286). In Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* or James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), for instance, there is no easily discernable, linear plot beyond that of the day-in-the-life intersections; both texts feature an explicit fragmentation of the “aesthetically unified world model” (Keunen 284). Sackville-West, on the other hand, arranges a simple plot in a predominantly linear fashion; presents the point of view of one woman, whose thoughts are usually filtered and organized by a third-person narrator; and unifies her vision through a creation of an idyllic, feminine chronotope (for both interiorized idyll and rural idyll are forms of the Bakhtinian idyllic chronotope).

DeSalvo contends that the “feminist” politics of *All Passion Spent* suggest that Sackville-West absorbed the “most important” lessons from Woolf’s *Orlando*, “lessons that extended her

consciousness of the exploitation of women beyond that which she had sketched in *The Land*, which is still basically an idyll of country life”: “[W]hether a woman lives in the city or in the country, her life is the same; it resembles the life of peasants, of yeomen” (“Every Woman is an Island” 106). According to DeSalvo, it is “no accident” that Lady Slane’s new abode is located in the suburb, “between the inimical city and the hostile country,” where she can “make of herself an invincible island” (110). While she is largely correct in attributing Sackville-West’s “feminism” to Woolf’s influence, and in identifying the novel’s suburban setting as being related to the author’s exploration of alternative ways of living, DeSalvo fails to comment on how Sackville-West both perpetuates and revises the pastoral imagery of her previous novels. In fact, DeSalvo’s comments regarding Sackville-West’s realization that the life of women is akin to that of “yeomen” inadvertently draws attention to a blind spot in Sackville-West’s politics: the author’s romanticization of Lady Slane’s individual privacy involves an obscuring of those power relations and class-related inequalities that make her last luxuries in Hampstead possible.

Lady Slane’s ability to make an island for and of herself is connected to the fact that she lives in Hampstead, which, like the rural setting in *The Land*, is essentially presented as being a de-historicized “idyll of country life.”<sup>158</sup> As mentioned above, Sackville-West’s Hampstead seems to be populated primarily by older, contemplative house owners whose rejection of capitalist materialism and competitiveness enables them to create a way of life that stands in sharp contrast with fast-paced urban existence. In her idealization of Hampstead’s peacefulness and long history Sackville-West (perhaps unconsciously) erases those parts of the suburb that would spoil its scenic character. Indeed, with its picturesque houses and the sprawling Heath, her Hampstead is akin to a “rural landscape emptied of rural labour and the labourer”: what is missing from this literary portrait is the work of speculative builders who built houses in Hampstead around the Heath and sold them based on their class and income; of property agents

and landlords who, unlike Mr. Bucktrout, strove to make a profit from their rentals; and of working-class people whose “spent” labour maintains houses or open spaces for the suburb’s inhabitants (Williams, *The Country and The City* 125). Missing also are the “sordid,” overcrowded houses that existed in various parts of Hampstead, or any mention of the sizable working-class districts such as those in the Belsize Estate (Thompson 366).

Although Lady Slane’s house – with its three bedrooms, one bathroom, two lavatories, three reception rooms, and “usual offices” – is taken care of by the octogenarian Genoux (with the occasional assistance of a char woman), Sackville-West does not describe the hard work that this elderly servant has to perform in order to provide Lady Slane with a life in which she does not have to worry about anything except how to enjoy her day or give away her money (*APS* 95).<sup>159</sup> It is only at the close of the novel that the readers are given some insight into Genoux’s opinion of Lady Slane’s refusal of Mr. FitzGeorge’s wealth. “Stuck with horror,” the former woman ponders the practical realities that such a decision will affect:

[S]he knew well enough what a million was, what two millions were, but in practical applications she decided only that she might now venture to ask Lady Slane for the charwoman three times a week instead of twice. Hitherto, in the interest of economy, she had not spared herself even when her rheumatism made her stiffer than usual. (261)

In their consequent conversation, Genoux reminds Lady Slane that it was not so good to be young if you came from poor parents, worked in a factory, or did not have much to eat – in other words, she implies that working-class women, whose personal lives are “spent” in the service of their “masters” and whose “passions” are limited by their social position, neither can nor want to reminisce about their youthful days (270). When Lady Slane realizes how class, compounded with gender, affects one’s cultivation of “personal life,” she chides herself for being an “egoistic

old woman,” but decides quickly that she “need not blame herself overmuch for the last indulgence,” since she “she also had given her life away to Henry” (273). Soon after their conversation, Lady Slane once again plunges into her newly acquired past-time – collecting her great-grandchildren’s photos from society pages and musing about their active lives.

One could argue that Sackville-West critiques Lady Slane in the passage just cited, but her mention of class inequalities is so brief, and her overall presentation of Hampstead so similar to her earlier depictions of innocent, rural tranquillity, that it is more likely the scene between Genoux and Lady Slane is Sackville-West’s attempt to excuse and, consequently, gloss over class inequities that support the idyll she constructs so carefully. This is also obvious in her unequivocal praise of Hampstead’s cultural and natural landmarks (Keats’s house or the Heath): like the administrative bodies that sought to emphasize the cultural and literary history of London, she reaffirms the “imperial and national superiority” of metropolitan London without questioning, as Woolf does in “Great Men’s Houses” or *Night and Day*, the types of inequalities such praise erases or obscures (Zemgulys 60).

At the same time, by presenting Hampstead as being separate from London and its activities, Sackville-West downplays the interdependence of the suburban life and British imperialist endeavours, which Lady Slane’s past as a Vicereine somewhat contradictorily brings to the foreground. Her comfortable life in a central, largely affluent area of Hampstead is supported by the income that her husband’s diplomatic career had generated (the relative financial stability of Lady Slane’s family also enables the young Deborah to pursue her artistic dreams). Her spiritual connection with Mr. FitzGeorge, on the other hand, stems from Fatehpur Sikri, India,<sup>160</sup> while resurrected scenes from various colonial outposts haunt her Hampstead environment as she ponders the past: “[W]as she on a hillside near Peking with Henry, a groom walking their horses up and down at a respectful distance; or was she alone, old, and dressed in

black, resting on a bench on Hampstead Heath?" (*APS* 192-3). This merging of a colonial scene, in which a hierarchy of race and class structures Lady Slane's walk on the hillside, with that of present-day Hampstead, belies Sackville-West's portrayal of the suburb's self-containment. At the same time, the author's mention that Mr. Bucktrout used to be a businessman before dedicating himself to the life of contemplation, ties his wealth, and thus, the existence of his house and rental contract with Lady Slane, to capitalist and, possibly, imperialist ventures (99). The idyll of Hampstead and the senior citizens' contemplative pleasures are made possible by the energy and money that has been "spent" previously. Indeed, the title of Sackville-West's text carries multiple connotations, hinting at various forms of oppression that sustain the patriarchal, capitalist society, at Lady Slane's resistance to the money economy, and at the ways in which she is nevertheless implicated in the very system that she resists. Although the elderly woman's surname, Slane, might be a play on the word "slain," patriarchy is certainly not defeated in this text: Lady Slane achieves a form of independence and empowerment but she does so by using the very capitalist system that she ostensibly rejects and by removing herself to the peripheries of the city, thus in a sense marginalizing herself from the rest of society.

Sackville-West's presentation of Hampstead as an isolated country idyll consequently involves a detachment of incomes and capital from their sources, and an emptying out of the labour that creates and bolsters the suburb. While the author presents Lady Slane's house and its community as being organic, it is in fact a place where "events prepared, continued elsewhere, transiently and intricately occur"; such a vision of Hampstead is designed to appeal to bourgeois artistic sensibility, as would an enclosed, scenic park (Williams, *The Country and the City* 249, 125). It is by analyzing how Sackville-West formulates her critique of patriarchal gender norms through a creation of an alternative space-time that one can identify the contradictions within her text and the shortcomings of her political commentary.

## Conclusion

Given the lack of multi-dimensionality and formal innovation in Sackville-West's political commentary, it is perhaps not surprising that her literary work has been relatively ignored in the last fifty years or that it has been investigated, like her life and letters, primarily for connections to Woolf. Most of her texts are indeed traditional in terms of both style and content: this is especially evident in her "country idyll" works such as *The Heir*, in which she fails to identify or imaginatively destabilize structures of dominance that inform the binary opposition between the country and the city. The subversion of the status quo that Sackville-West formulates in her most political text, *All Passion Spent*, is furthermore effected solely along the axis of gender. Nevertheless, a focus on the representation of suburban Hampstead in this text enables one to grasp the multiple ways in which "Vita matters," both in terms of her relation to and communication with modernist authors such as Woolf and in regards to the semantic relevance of suburban space-times in early twentieth-century women's fiction (Caws 5).

Especially relevant in terms of this study is a discussion of the way in which Sackville-West's use of a suburban setting suggests the creativity and adaptability with which female authors responded to the changing real and imaginative landscapes of metropolitan London. Bakhtin observes that the idyllic aspect is especially important in the novels of generations such as those of William Makepeace Thackeray, John Galsworthy, and Thomas Mann, where the dominant theme is "the destruction of the idyll, and of the idyllic-type family or patriarchal relationships" (233). In Sackville-West's work, however, the opposite occurs, for the idyll exists in contrast with conventional familial and patriarchal structures – it is feminine, anti-patriarchal, and created, rather than destroyed. One might argue, therefore, that a focus on the idyllic elements of *All Passion Spent* suggests the positive manner in which a female author experienced societal changes, one of which was the growth of suburban living. An ever-changing signifier – a

setting that is neither the country nor the city but that can be a combination of the two – suburbia proves to be the means through which a woman expostulates her vision of productive fissures in patriarchal structures and of the opportunities that such deterritorializations afford middle-class women. Once again there is proof that real and/or literary suburbia was hardly the monolithic phenomenon that many authors and commentators characterized it as being, for it permeates Victorian and early twentieth-century literature in various guises – Gothic, comedic, prosaic, and, finally, idyllic.

## Chapter 4

### Suburban Dreams and Nightmares: Elizabeth Bowen's Visions of Modernity

It is fitting that this dissertation should end with a chapter on Elizabeth Bowen's texts: some of the author's Gothic, suburban short stories echo Arthur Conan Doyle and Arthur Machen's detective texts, while her prose – apparently “too conservative for modernism, too idiosyncratic for traditionalism” – occupies a middle ground between Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson's experimental writings and Vita Sackville-West's more realist style (Ellmann 2).<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, Bowen's ongoing interest in the many aspects of what one of her characters terms a “decentralized” age, evidenced especially in *To The North* (1932) and “Attractive Modern Homes” (1941), makes her work integral to the study of early twentieth-century literary responses to London's ever-changing suburban landscapes.<sup>162</sup> Since Bowen published short stories and novels from 1923 to the late 1960s, an analysis of suburban spaces in her fiction represents the chronological end limit of this study: the beginning of World War II, when suburban sprawl ceased due to lack of resources (after the war, the Town and Country Planning Act (1947) established a green belt around London and enabled counties and boroughs to refuse the development of housing estates) (Jackson 317).<sup>163</sup> Exploring the representation of suburbia in two of Bowen's texts therefore links the works of the various authors discussed in this dissertation while reaffirming both the boundaries and semantic richness of the overall project.

During her lifetime, Bowen's reputation as a “major” Anglo-Irish writer was confirmed both by her inclusion in the “Who's Who” section of the *Companion of the British Empire* (1948) and by the honorary doctorate degrees awarded to her by Trinity College, Dublin and Oxford University, respectively, in 1949 and 1957 (Glendinning 170, 177, 201).<sup>164</sup> Her work was commercially successful on a consistent basis, with most of her major novels, such as *To the*

*North*, *Death of the Heart* (1938), and *The Heat of the Day* (1949), never going out of print.<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, there is a relative dearth of scholarly studies on the author's texts, which cannot be explained (as in the case of Vita Sackville-West) by her resistance to formal innovation: Bowen's works feature oblique prose, elliptical dialogue, and what Susan Osborn terms "thickened stylistic effects" (5).<sup>166</sup> Instead, Maud Ellmann contends, academia's "neglect" of Bowen is most likely occasioned by the fact that her style eludes easy classification: her prose hints at the type of self-conscious stylization that one usually associates with modernist aesthetic projects, while her use of omniscient, third-person narration and clearly outlined plots shows her adherence to conventions of the realist mode (16). Many of the critics who have written about Bowen's texts, therefore, attempt to "locate" her historically by speculating on her influences and comparing her to a wide range of well-studied authors such as Jane Austen, Henry James, and Woolf.<sup>167</sup> Although my analysis of Bowen's representations of suburbia in *To the North* and "Attractive Modern Homes" also allows me to connect the works of several authors, my foremost aim is to emphasize the special qualities of her nuanced responses to changing geographic and socio-economic conditions in interwar England.

John Coates identifies a strain of "unapologetic" conservatism in Bowen's *oeuvre*, which he attributes to her aristocratic, Anglo-Irish background and observes in the nostalgia for "rootedness and order" that permeates her texts (2, 6).<sup>168</sup> Indeed, Bowen often focuses on themes of alienation and aimlessness, which she views as resulting from an erosion of more structured ways of life, usually represented by the image of the country house: in *To the North* Cecilia Summers's widowhood and restlessness are described through the metaphor of a destroyed country house, while in *The Heat of the Day* the urban Stella Rodney's lack of stability becomes most obvious when she visits the cosy country abode in Ireland that her son has inherited. A. K. Weatherhead argues that Bowen's repeated use of country house imagery in her discussions of

modern rootlessness is typical of early twentieth-century Anglo-Irish writers, whose experience of the violent attacks on Anglo-Irish estates (commonly referred to as the “Big Houses”) by the mainly Catholic Irish nationalists resulted in their utilization of the country house as a particularly striking symbol of a vanishing order:

The English country house experienced the indignity of being taxed out of existence, sold to profiteers, turned into school or clubhouse, or casually demolished by contracted wreckers. At best it served as a lifeless museum for tourists. In Ireland, however, the end of the ‘Big House’ was more dramatically linked with revolutionary social change: the house passed away with the Anglo-Irish Establishment. . . . Even when it was not actually destroyed there was a sense of finality lacking in the decline of the house in England – a finality that gave a certain dignity, even tragedy, to its demise. Paradoxically, dying as a social actuality, the house was reborn, transfigured as a symbol. Divorced from the nagging injustices and complexities of its social history, the house came to represent a human order of culture and civility, a state of community beyond circumscription of nation or class. (122)

Members of the predominantly Protestant Anglo-Irish landowning class were torn between their identity as representatives of British rule of Ireland and their Irish roots.<sup>169</sup> In Bowen’s novel *The Last September* (1929), for example, an Anglo-Irish family living near Cork during the Easter Uprising of 1916 mingles with but also criticizes the English soldiers stationed nearby; at the end of the novel the family home is burnt by Irish rebels seeking independence from Britain.

Glendinning observes that Bowen, who lived in England with her mother and relatives during the time of the conflicts, “taught herself to imagine Bowen’s Court [her family’s seat] in flames” as a way of preparing for the worst (40). Even though Bowen lived in London for most of her life,

and set the majority of her novels in this part of Britain, numerous critics – including Weatherhead, Maria DiBattista, and Coates – observe that her Anglo-Irishness provided her with a charged, ready-made symbol through which to explore the themes of loss and displacement in an era of fast-paced geographic and socio-economic changes. “For Bowen,” observes DiBattista, “the Troubles troubled everything” (243).<sup>170</sup>

It is the villas on the peripheries of London that Bowen frequently identifies with the disintegration of older, more fixed ways of life. In her short story “The Disinherited” (1934), a new housing estate being built near a manor house is emblematic of the dysfunctional family relations of both the poor aristocrats and the bored suburban dwellers. Meanwhile, the stifling, highly feminized atmosphere of the Edwardian suburban villa in *The Heat of the Day* is shown to be at least a partial cause of Robert Kelway’s Nazi sympathies.<sup>171</sup> Undoubtedly, some of Bowen’s portrayals of suburbia are typical of the intelligentsia’s disdain for middle-class, suburban life (Carey 10). Her descriptions of Robert’s overbearing mother and that of the emasculating wife of a suburban murderer in “A Recent Photograph” (1926) are as misogynistic as George Orwell’s portrayal of a clerk who lives in a “semi-detached” and whose wife “ride[s] him like the nightmare” (*Coming Up For Air* 14). Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that Bowen’s texts feature only one-dimensional portrayals of suburbia. Suburbs appear repeatedly in her works in a variety of roles, some of which are multi-layered and deeply connected to her investigation of both gender inequality and the subversive potential of those changes that were associated with the development of new technologies.

Several critics of Bowen’s work have identified the complexities of her treatment of suburbia and modern restlessness. Hermione Lee claims that Bowen’s representation of provincial suburbs is ambiguous rather than negative; Wendy Perkins argues that women in *To the North* are presented as being “embodiments of modernity” when they are in the suburbs;

William Heath notes that the suburbs in the same novel are full of “admirable vitality” (Lee 133; Perkins 11; Heath 37). These scholars do not, however, focus on the subject of suburbia at any major length, nor do they discuss the varied portrayals of suburbs that appear across Bowen’s works. Luke Thurston and Diana Wallace’s analyses of the author’s “ghostly” stories are perhaps the only articles that concentrate on suburbs in Bowen’s short fiction: the former scholar’s contention, however, is that Bowen portrays suburban environments in a solely negative light, as being representative of the “dislocation and dispersal of former communities [that] had disturbed the ontological relation between human life and death,” while the latter commentator analyzes the short tales from a strictly psychoanalytic perspective (Thurston 11).

By contrast, through a materialist feminist perspective, I provide an in-depth exploration of Bowen’s representations of suburbia while being attentive to the semantically layered nature of suburban spaces in her fiction. In *To the North*, such a setting is highly conducive to the construction of female friendships and independence: the two main characters, sisters-in-law Cecilia and Emmeline Summers, share a household in St. John’s Wood that is characterized by harmony and mutual affection. By analyzing Cecilia and Emmeline’s home through Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia, I will show how Bowen creates space-times of alternative ordering to emphasize the women’s radical restructuring of the traditional family unit: their relationship is based on equality and independence rather than structured by a gendered division of labour or by stringent boundaries between public and private spheres. Even though Bowen presents the women’s general feelings of rootlessness and loss through the metaphor of a destroyed country house, she also characterizes the suburban settings that replace the great house as being ordinary yet vibrant spaces. Meanwhile, the suburban way of life is despised by the emotionally stunted London-dweller, Markie Linkwater, the man who seduces and discards Emmeline. In Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* novels, the author suggests Miriam Henderson’s

immaturity and limited spatial imagination by showing that the character views suburbia as being an embodiment and instrument of the patriarchal subjugation of women, which cannot be altered or lived differently through personal agency. Similarly, Bowen uses Markie's rejection of suburban life – or rather, his refusal to engage with what Henri Lefebvre terms the difference between planned/conceived space, the perceived space of people's everyday reality, and the creatively lived, representational space constructed by imaginative individuals – to emphasize his lack of interest in the variety of people's spatial practices (Lefebvre 39).

In “Attractive Modern Homes,” on the other hand, Bowen employs Gothic tropes of bodies and spaces in transition to highlight the excitingly destabilizing nature of an unidentified, outlying suburban setting: the eerie, isolated setting of a suburban estate that is still being built creates a defamiliarizing effect in a lonely housewife who consequently begins to question her conventional beliefs and values. Like Doyle or Machen, Bowen uses elements of the Gothic to portray the sense of dissolving boundaries that has been associated with suburban spaces since the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>172</sup> In contrast to the two male authors, however, Bowen focuses on women and their various responses to suburban space, rather than on deviant activities of various suburban males. As Diana Wallace argues, many female authors of Gothic fiction have utilized this genre to “explore deep-rooted female fears about women's powerlessness and imprisonment within patriarchy” (57).<sup>173</sup> Bowen is interested in showing how female individuals whose lives are, to a greater or lesser extent, still limited by patriarchal gender norms respond to rapid transformations of physical environments in creative or insightful ways that reveal space as a social product. Foucault's notion of heterotopia is again useful in an analysis of a short story that concerns individuals whose suburban surroundings are in a state of drastic flux or re-ordering.

Unlike Sackville-West, who uses a suburban setting in *All Passion Spent* (1932) to create a literary space that is special because it is non-traditional yet “idyllic,” Bowen describes various

suburbs in order to engage intensively with the multifaceted effects of modernity on physical environments, human psyches, and traditional power structures. In Bowen's fiction, the suburbs are representative of rapid changes rather than continuity or the "grafting down of life and events to a place" (Bakhtin 225). There is no "aesthetically unified world model" in these texts. Instead, one witnesses fragments of various space-times in an "artificial collage," a feature that recalls the "polychronotopias" of high modernist works (Keunen 284). This chapter will show how integral suburban settings are to Bowen's frequently ambivalent conceptions and descriptions of the "age of speed," as well as draw attention to the author's combination of innovative representations of space and relatively conventional narration and plotting (Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 4).

### **Bowen's Decentralizations**

Bowen and Woolf met in 1932 at a tea party hosted by a common friend, Lady Ottoline Morrell (Glendinning 99).<sup>174</sup> Although they did not immediately become close, they soon established a correspondence and sent each other their respective works.<sup>175</sup> Bowen greatly admired and sometimes reviewed the older author's texts, describing *To the Lighthouse* (1927) as being "the most humanly perfect of the novels"; Bowen's tendency to weave occasionally "in and out of [her characters'] consciousness," argues DiBattista, was inspired by Woolf's writing (*Collected Impressions* 75; DiBattista 239).<sup>176</sup> Meanwhile, Woolf, who never published a review of Bowen's work, frequently advised the younger author on her method. While praising *The House in Paris* (1935), for instance, she observes that it goes "deeper" than Bowen's other texts, but that it "composes" a little "too well": the reader, she notes, gets the impression that the author is imposing her own world view onto the novel (qtd. in Lee, *Virginia Woolf* 653).<sup>177</sup> Even though Woolf clearly found aspects of Bowen's writing to be intriguing, her letter suggests that she believed the latter needed to be more formally innovative. Bowen's limited degree of

experimentation – or rather, her unwillingness to abandon the conventional forms of storytelling – parallels her tendency to combine an exhilaration about the effects of modernity with a nostalgia for traditional forms of life. Indeed, a complicated, sometimes contradictory attitude towards change characterizes both the themes and style of her prose.

In a short column that she wrote for the women's magazine *Mademoiselle*, Bowen explains her belief that one should always resist “the word that springs to the mind too temptingly, too easily, and too often”:

Habitual turns of phrase, habitual words are the literary counterparts of besetting sins and they are certainly the enemies of expressions: they restrict or wither the freshness of our way of seeing. [. . .] Repetitive sentence-shapes and paragraph-patterns make for something worse than monotony: they become convention.

*(Pictures and Conversations 211-212)*

Although she does not argue that writers should abandon conventional plotting or do away with the presence of an omniscient, third-person narrator, Bowen suggests that writing which does not occasion some level of interpretive difficulty fails to stimulate thought in either the author or the reader. Frequently, she sought to introduce a level of stylistic obliqueness into her descriptions of characters' experiences of modern life. In *To the North*, she uses abstract, flowing prose to describe Emmeline's thoughts about Markie's written reminder that he cannot marry her, which takes place while they are flying to Paris:

Feelings of all kinds had stolen from her in this cold new reality of the cloudscape; conscious of the remoteness and uneagerness of his attitude she felt he, too, had written what he had written not on impulse, in urgency, but in a momentary coldness and clearness of feeling that was showing him where they stood. Stayed by this feeling of unimmediacy she reviewed one by one the

incidents of their friendship, each distinct from the other as cloud from cloud but linked by her sense of something increasing and mounting and, like the clouds, bearing in on her by their succession and changing nature how fast and strongly, though never whither, they moved. (TN 171)

The long sentences, barely controlled by frequent commas, hint at the character's wandering but distraught thoughts, while Bowen's addition of jarring negative prefixes to "eagerness" and "immediacy" emphasizes Markie's emotional numbness and his unwillingness or inability to fit into the role of a romantic hero. Furthermore, Emmeline's observations about the unconventionality of her love affair – the lack of a structured courtship that traditionally leads to marriage – are intertwined with her experience of transiently formed clouds; her interaction with new technology occasions her insight into the affair but also operates as a symbol for the tenuousness of modern relations. In this sense, Bowen's paragraph features both a "stylistic mobility" (Ridge 13) and a hint of yearning for a more structured, *grounded* way of life.

Bowen's portrayals of the Irish country house in novels such as *The Last September* and *The Heat of the Day* suggests that her view of a more traditional society was equally ambivalent. Although the Big House represents a more stable way of life, and "hospitality above all," it is often an oppressive space, especially for youths and women (Bowen, *Collected Impressions* 196). The young characters in *The Last September* find it difficult to establish their own identities amid the stringent customs and manners of the country house, while Stella's description of the peaceful Irish house in *The Heat of the Day* involves a description of domesticated "ladies" who have "gone not quite mad, not quite even that, from in vain listening for meaning in the loudening ticking of the clock" (174). To identify Bowen as a conservative author is thus to ignore the layered manner in which she explores the advantages and pitfalls of both change and tradition, movement and stasis.

Instead, Bowen's texts suggest her ongoing interest in the diversity of experiences that constitute modernity, especially the development of and human responses to the latest in technology and the growth of suburbia – two aspects of modern life that were frequently intertwined. Her portrayals of air and, especially, auto travel, most notably in *To the North*, reflect a society in which new modes of transportation were becoming a part of people's everyday lives. Indeed, the construction of airports such as Penhurst Airfield in 1916 and Croydon in 1920 testified to the growing prevalence of commercial air travel (Barratt 372). Meanwhile, developments in and greater rationalization of automobile production, as well as more effective distribution methods, resulted in lower car prices, so that ownership was extended beyond the most affluent members of society: the number of privately owned vehicles in Britain rose from 100,000 in 1918 to more than 2 million by 1939, when one in five families owned a motor car (Barratt 15, 19-20).<sup>178</sup>

Although the 1930s were a time of economic recession in England, the diversity of industries – the “continuing prosperity of the consumer durable, the expanding distributive trades, and uninterrupted growth in service and administrative jobs” – enabled a relatively quick recovery in the metropolitan centre: an ever-expanding number of Londoners continued to purchase the latest consumer items, including cars, throughout the decade (Jackson 101).<sup>179</sup> In *English Journey* (1934), J. B. Priestley, the English novelist, playwright, and broadcaster, describes this period through imagery of advancing technology and fast-paced consumerism that are altering England's landscapes and culture:

This is the England of arterial and by-pass roads, of filling stations and factories that look like exhibition buildings, of giant cinemas and dance-halls and cafés, bungalows with tiny garages, cocktail bars, Woolworths, motor-coaches, wireless, hiking, factory girls looking like actresses, greyhound racing and dirt tracks,

swimming pools, and everything given away for cigarette coupons. If the fog had lifted, I knew that I could have seen this England all around me at that northern entrance to London, where the smooth wide road passes between miles of semi-detached bungalows, all with their little garages, their wireless sets, their periodicals about film stars, their swimming costumes and tennis rackets and dancing shoes. (319-320)

Unsurprisingly, Priestley connects images of the latest technology with descriptions of burgeoning suburbia. The popularization of private car ownership, as well as extensions of railways to outer areas of London and electrification of almost all railways south of the Thames “to twenty or more miles from the centre,” propelled and were propelled by explosive suburban building between the wars (Jackson 213). Alan Jackson records that numerous builders purchased cheap land outside of London after 1919 even though there was no regular public transportation to these areas at the time: they hoped that extension of transport routes would be inspired by the growth of housing complexes. As a way to attract buyers, many of these builders privately sponsored transport services to their suburban estates (218-9). In 1933, the London Passenger Transport Board was established, with the aim to coordinate the increasingly complex rail, tram, and omnibus services in London and its expanding surroundings.

As distances were becoming less significant due to technological advancements, a greater number of areas surrounding London were accessible to professionals who sought to own a house and possess the latest technological gadgets; the growth of large-scale building firms at this time meant that large suburban estates could be completed at a faster pace, and low interest rates enabled an increasing number of individuals and families to obtain a house mortgage (Carey 47; Barratt 360). The *Evening News*, a London daily, issued a weekly page of illustrated home ads entitled “Homeseeker’s Guide” starting in February 1923, while the *Daily Express*

dedicated a full page every Saturday for the “Modern Homes Guide” beginning in January 1924 (Jackson 99, 202). Susan Barson observes that by the mid-1930s, there were approximately eight and a half million individuals living in greater London, with two and a half million of these being suburban commuters (104, 110). More and more people, furthermore, were moving to the outer rings of the London suburbs (51, 114). Imagery of the destruction of the English countryside was consequently evoked in early twentieth-century commentaries regarding both the developments of technology and the growth of suburbia. For instance, English philosopher and broadcaster C. E. M. Joad portrays auto enthusiasts as polluting the natural beauties of England with “explosive” noises and the “smell of oil and petrol,” whereas E. M. Forster employs the metaphor of “bricks and mortar rising and falling with restlessness” to describe the invasion of the countryside by suburban building in *Howards End* (1910) (Joad 17; Forster 45).<sup>180</sup>

The prevalence of suburban imagery in Bowen’s texts indicates that she was keenly aware of the symbolic role that continued building around cities played in discourses concerning technological advancements and the state of modern England. By having Lady Waters, one of the characters in *To the North*, describe the age in which she is living as being unprecedented because it is “decentralized,” Bowen suggests how *central* the phenomenon of suburban living was to her vision of modernity (212). Although Lady Waters, Cecilia’s relatively conservative aunt and the widow of a country squire, uses the term to critique the frantic, technology-enabled rootlessness of people surrounding her – the sense that “there is no knowing where anyone is” – Bowen’s word choice inevitably reminds one of the realities of urban decentralization that characterized the inter-war period in England (*TN* 212). The problems associated with modernity, according to Lady Waters, are symbolized by the parallel eradication of past ways of life and the unstable boundaries of London. Since Bowen presents Lady Waters

as being a well-intentioned but frequently misguided and imperceptive character, however, it is implied that this woman's negative view of "decentralization" is by no means one that is espoused by the text as a whole.<sup>181</sup> While a spectre of the country house haunts *To the North* and many of Bowen's other texts, the author's interest in stylistic experimentation, as well as her descriptions of modern women's unconventional experiences in suburbia, suggest that she often associated "decentralization" – "the weakening of central authority" (*OED*) – with potentially exciting challenges to gender norms.

In *To the North* and "Attractive Modern Homes," Bowen's examines the multifaceted relationship among tradition, modernity, and gender by creating imagery of "decentralization" primarily through interwoven descriptions of mobility and suburban landscapes. "Am I not manifestly a writer for whom places loom large?" asked Bowen in one of her autobiographical sketches, referring to the fact that scholars did not often pay attention to the importance of settings in her work: "As a reader, it is to the placement that I react most strongly: for me, what gives fiction verisimilitude is its topography" (*Pictures and Conversations* 34-36). To study Bowen's representation of suburbia, therefore, is to address what the author would have viewed as being a foundational element of her literary worlds: a recurring type of setting that gave her fiction a level of consistency, as well as enabled her to study human responses to those technological and topographical changes that could dramatically reorient one's perception of space and time. As the following analyses of *To the North* and "Attractive Modern Homes" will show, suburbs in Bowen's fiction appear as dynamic sites that contain both oppressive and emancipatory potential and that are open to new uses.

### ***To the North: The Speeding Women of Suburbia***

*To the North* was not a commercial success at the time of its publication, but it is a novel that is analyzed frequently in scholarly studies of Bowen's writing (Glendinning 82).<sup>182</sup> In this text, Bowen makes London and its environs the primary settings for the first time, in order to investigate the interplay between modern technology of transportation and the characters' multifaceted experiences of urban and suburban spaces. Critics such as Shafquat Towheed and Cline Magot have already drawn attention to the way in which *To the North* reflects Bowen's "lifelong interest in mental response to space," as well as her "fascination [with] speed" (Towheed 118; Magot 138-9).<sup>183</sup> Other scholars, however, have read these aspects of the novel as suggesting Bowen's critique of the "moral, spiritual, and social deracination" of a "disinherited," rootless society (Bates 70; Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 78).<sup>184</sup> These latter studies, however, do not take into account the fact that the author's focus on new modes of technology and the characters' constant movements around greater London are integral to her exploration of modern women's creation of innovative, suburban household units and forms of privacy.

Although Emmeline's fast driving and Cecilia's constant travels represent contemporary restlessness, the characters' movements also epitomize early twentieth-century women's increasing range of opportunities, which were legally manifested in the passing of the Qualification of Women Act (1918), Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919), and Equal Franchise Act (1928).<sup>185</sup> In fiction and autobiographical texts of this period, argues Wendy Parkins, women's "expanded domain of action is repeatedly associated with increased mobility," whether through descriptions of "wearing less constricting fashion," riding a bicycle, travelling, working, or driving a motor vehicle (15). There was indeed a steadily increasing number of women who drove, but only 12 percent of all licences in Britain were held by women in 1933: Bowen's association of movement with women in this text (Markie and Emmeline's male

business partner cannot drive) is less a reflection of reality than a metaphor for women's gradual emancipation from the private sphere (O'Connell 44, 46, 58, 50).<sup>186</sup> Consequently, Emmeline's ability to drive also indicates her independence and professional endeavours; she is a "shipping agent" who runs a "travel agency" and the first of Bowen's heroines to have a career. By naming her protagonist Emmeline, Bowen is likely referencing Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928), a well-known British political activist and suffragette (*TN* 24; Ellmann 101).<sup>187</sup> The young women's relatively extended range of opportunity, however, is most obvious in their re-fashioning of the private, heteronormative family unit. Like Miriam in Richardson's *March Moonlight* (1967), they set up a quiet household in St. John's Wood, where they establish a deeply affectionate yet non-possessive relation that is unique in the novel for its combination of emotional depth and harmony. Unlike the Ruskin-inspired image of home as a private, changeless world, which demands yet obscures women's domestic work, Bowen's fictional suburban home is permeated by its inhabitants' respective outside activities, as well as nourished by their mutual understanding of the other's desire for movement and social interactions.

One could read Emmeline's car crash, which kills both her and Markie, to be Bowen's condemnation of a fast-paced, unstable modern society, in which transient, undefined romantic relationships can occasion destructive levels of frustration and depression. As I shall demonstrate in the analysis of *To the North* that is to follow, however, Emmeline's unhappiness is caused less by her qualms about the non-marital nature of her relation with Markie than by his misogynistic views of women and adamant unwillingness to consider how creative uses of space can occasion moments of insight or pleasure. Ultimately, Emmeline's awakened sexuality proves deadly, which dramatizes the age-old, sexist dichotomy espoused by Markie, according to which women are either innocent or sexually destructive. As Lassner notes, Bowen emphasizes the fact that a "woman is driven to use her sexuality as an instrument of power because she possesses no other"

(58). It is thus not modernity but the lasting influence of stifling, patriarchal gender stereotypes that occasions Emmeline's desire to escape through speed. By setting the novel in the midst of fast-paced modern life but giving her heroines the limited choice of marriage or death – the young women's suburban union is ended after Cecilia's half-hearted decision to marry, which occurs only pages before Emmeline's fatal crash – Bowen implies that in some ways contemporary women's lives are as constricted as were the lives of their nineteenth-century predecessors. In my study of this novel, I will analyze the women's suburban privacy, trace the gradual breakdown of their "family" unit, and connect Markie's rejection of suburban life with his rejection of Emmeline, in order to emphasize the integral role that suburban spaces play in Bowen's portrayal of a historical period in which dramatic socio-economic changes often masked the insidious tenacity of patriarchal beliefs.

### **Cecilia and Emmeline: A Suburban Union**

Cecilia and Emmeline's suburban union is based primarily upon a mutual desire for stability after the untimely death of Henry Summers, Emmeline's brother and Cecilia's husband: "[A]round Oudenarde Road a kind of pale was put up against one kind of emotion: nothing on that scale was to occur again" (*TN* 184). Each of the women chooses not to probe too deeply into the other's life:

In their life together, as in a quiet marriage, Emmeline and Cecilia, inquiring less and less, each affectionately confronted the other's portrait of her own painting, finding it near enough to reality. It is this domestic confidence, this happy and willing ignorance of another heart that is most quick to suffer and least deserves betrayal. (184)

Cecilia is in fact one of the last characters to realize that Emmeline is having an affair with Markie, which suggests her extreme self-absorption but also a respect for Emmeline's privacy. While the above description of the young women's relations might imply a level of emotional placidity, Bowen makes it clear that a deep and unique current of affection forms the basis of this alliance: Cecilia's "regard for Emmeline" is the only thing that exerts a "strong backward pull" upon the "extravagances" of the former's behaviour, whereas Emmeline claims that she could "not imagine" herself without Cecilia (184, 218). When contrasted with Emmeline's intense yet destructive romance with Markie and Cecilia's tepid affair with a self-admitted "minor character," Julian Towers, the young women's relationship stands out as being the most emotionally rewarding one in the novel: "Mistrustful, tentative, uncertain whether to marry again, [Cecilia] was quite happy only in one relationship: with her young sister-in-law Emmeline" (*TN* 134, 8).<sup>188</sup> The link between the two women is emphasized by their shared last name, Summers, which references a warm, sun-filled season and implies the nurturing, relaxed quality of their bond.

In a text in which the characters' movements are so invested with meaning, it is significant that the story begins with Cecilia's journey *to the north* from Milan. She is heading towards Emmeline and her suburban house in London; once there, she experiences a "delicious sense of homecoming" at the first sight of her sister-in-law (*TN* 17). The house that the two women share is situated in St. John's Wood; judging by Bowen's descriptions of the suburb, argues Ellmann, as well as by the "anagrammic similarity between the names," the prototype for Oudenarde Road is a quiet, leafy street named Boundary Road, which runs close to the central Abbey Road (99) (see Figure 7). In her essay "Regent's Park and St. John's Wood" (1949), Bowen describes the latter area as being a "region of hills and declivities, ridgy skylines, and quietly rising and falling roads" that features "the further charm" of the earliest semi-detached

villa architecture in London and offers a degree of “romantic privacy” (104).<sup>189</sup> Bowen thus situates the young women in an accessible yet secluded and picturesque environment, while suggesting their upper-middle-class status. With its “pear-trees,” “acacias” that “whisper at nights round airy, ornate little houses,” and “laburnums falling between windows and walls,” the suburban setting both enables and reflects the women’s peaceful alliance (*TN* 29, 12). “From the first glance,” writes Bowen, “the house had smiled at them and was their own” (12).

The two women are thus able to create their comfortable suburban household because of their well-off backgrounds and the money Emmeline earns from her travel agency; motor vehicles, on the other hand, allow them to travel quickly to other areas of greater London for social and professional purposes. Most importantly, however, it is the lack of traditional family structures in their lives that inspires their relatively innovative living arrangements. Bowen implies the unusual nature of Cecilia and Emmeline’s suburban life by noting that Lady Waters, a character who frequently voices conservative attitudes regarding modern women’s lives, views this living situation with “an unshaken mistrust”: “Women could not live together,” thinks the older woman, “sisters-in-law especially” (*TN* 12).<sup>190</sup> Always quick to “detect situations that did not exist,” Lady Waters is repeatedly satirized by Bowen for her overly rigid way of thinking and continued attempts to control the members of the younger generation (10).

Nevertheless, because Emmeline is an orphan and Cecilia’s “never affectionate” mother lives with her new husband in the United States, the young women are not limited by the authority and demands of close family members in a way that Katherine Hilbury of Woolf’s *Night and Day* (1919) and Lady Deborah Slane of Sackville-West’s *All Passion Spent* (1931) are: “There is something Edenic about their orphanage,” observes Ellmann, “in that they seem absolute beginners” (*TN* 10; Ellmann 99). Cecilia and Emmeline’s suburban abode is thus the most striking manifestation of their relative freedom from patriarchal family structures.



*Figure 7: “View of Blenheim Road, taken from Abbey Road, St. John’s Wood” (Galinous 439). Most of the villas shown in this contemporary photograph of a central area of the suburb date back to Victorian and Edwardian times. Boundary Road, which is close to Blenheim Road, features similar architecture and tree lines.*

One might argue that Bowen’s depiction of Farraways (a country seat in Gloucester that Lady Waters has inherited from her first husband) implies both nostalgia for a simpler order of life and a critique of the less rigidly structured, fast-paced modern society. Indeed, Bowen describes the country house and its surroundings as being an oasis of natural beauties and hospitality to which characters retreat after the stresses of their respective lives: “The whole garden, tilting down to the west, gave to the afternoon sunshine its smooth mown lawns and May borders” (*TN* 69). This peaceful setting is contrasted with the “humming” of London and the noise of motorized vehicles (165). The vicar of the village that borders Farraways – a representative of this calmer way of life – critiques, just as Lady Waters does, the frantic speed of urban motorists who seem to be driven primarily by an “anxiety to be elsewhere” (78). Even Emmeline, whom Bowen describes as being the “step-child of her uneasy century,” thinks she

would ideally “like to live” in just such a setting: “Here – as though waking in a house over an estuary to a presence, a dazzling reflection: the tide full in – she had woken happy” (76-7). Rootless and restless as they are, members of modern society would, Bowen suggests, find the scenery and stability of country-house life psychologically refreshing. Closer analysis, however, shows that Bowen presents Farraways as being a space that fails to reflect the realities of modern women’s increasing range of professional and emotional opportunities. Associated with the conservative Lady Waters and the old-fashioned vicar, life at Farraways operates based on strict class divisions and patriarchal laws of inheritance and marriage. Cecilia and Emmeline are never there at the same time, which suggests that non-traditional relationships between women cannot prosper within the conventions of the country-house life. Moreover, Farraways, as its name implies, is representative of a distant, and, as the vicar’s passing emphasizes, dying ideal (*TN* 280).

Bowen thus uses the country house in *To the North* primarily as a potent metaphor for the characters’ occasional yearning for permanence and a slower pace of life rather than as an example of an actual place in which modern women could set up a comfortable household. This is most notable in Bowen’s description of Cecilia’s life after her husband’s death:

When a great house has been destroyed by fire – left with walls bleached and ghastly and windows gaping with the cold sky – the master has not, perhaps, the heart or the money to rebuild. Trees that were its companions are cut down and the estate sold up to the speculator. Villas spring up in red rows, each a home for someone, enticing brave little shops, radiant picture palaces: perhaps a park is left round the lake, where couples go boating. Lovers’ lanes in asphalt replace the lonely green rides; the obelisk having no approaches is taken away. After dark – where once there was silence, a tree’s shadow drawn slowly across the grass by

the moon, or no moon, an exhalation of darkness – rows of windows come out like lanterns in pink and orange; boxed in bright light hundreds of lives repeat their pattern; wireless picks up a tune from street to street. Shops stream light on the pavements, upon the commotion of late shopping; big buses swarm to the curb, small carts dart home to the garage, bicycling children flit through the birdless dark. Bright façades of cinemas reflect on to ingoing faces the expectation of pleasure: lovers laugh, gates click, doors swing, lights go on upstairs, couples lie down in honest beds. Life here is liveable, kindly and sometimes gay; there is not a ghost of space or silence; the great house with its dominance and its radiation of avenues is forgotten. (*TN* 122)<sup>191</sup>

In a passage that describes the decline of a country house and a subsequent birth of a suburban community, Bowen details the loss of something that is dignified and rare. At the same time, argues Coates, she emphasizes the incredible capacity of life to recover: what is gained is “cheerful and comforting” (Coates 73-4). Indeed, Bowen focuses on the destruction of the old house, the privilege enjoyed by a few, only in the first two lines, after which she shifts her attention to the lively details of the new scenery and its many inhabitants: descriptions of “brave little shops,” “radiant picture palaces,” and “lanterns in pink and orange” suggest an ordinary but vital kind of beauty (*TN* 122). The passage is furthermore replete with movement verbs – “swarm,” “dart,” “flit,” “swing” – that indicate Bowen’s attempt to emphasize the energy of the “liveable” scene (122). It is significant that a suburb springs up in the place of the old country house and that the communality and daily activities of this humbler way of life constitute a metaphor for hope of a reconstruction after a devastating loss. Suburban life thus represents the human capacity to adapt to rapid change and to begin anew, just as Cecilia and Emmeline have done in St. John’s Wood.

While Bowen presents Cecilia and Emmeline's restlessness as occasionally resulting in frustration and anxiety – the former is “tempted to feel she did not exist” when she is not talking on a telephone or visiting friends – the young women's respective physical and mental movements structure the space-time of their suburban privacy and emphasize the non-traditional, liberating nature of their union (*TN* 33). Lady Waters, sceptical of the young women's arrangement, asks Emmeline whether Cecilia's “perpetual rushing abroad and then home” is “disturbing” for her: Emmeline's response, that their time apart “makes variety,” suggests the non-possessiveness that forms the basis of her relationship with the latter woman (14). Unlike the stifling family relations in *Night and Day* and *All Passion Spent*, which tie Katherine and young Lady Slane to the traditions and expectations of their families, Emmeline and Cecilia's alliance is founded upon an understanding of the other's need for individual privacy and diversity of social interaction. Bowen emphasizes this most strikingly by showing that the private sphere of the St. John Wood's abode is permeated by the space-times of the young women's outside activities and travels: Cecilia wanders around the house, “her senses still running ahead from the speed” of her Italian journey, while Emmeline is always aware of what “the trains are doing all over Europe” (20, 287). Frequently thinking of “driving through St. John's Wood” during her social activities, Emmeline's time alone at home is filled with thoughts of “Cecilia's face sleeping against the cushions as the Anglo-Italian express tore into France from Switzerland on the return journey” (29). In other words, Cecilia and Emmeline's household is filled with the speeds of various technologically-enabled movements that populate the modernized world.

Numerous early twentieth-century authors have drawn attention to the way in which being in a moving vehicle has a defamiliarizing effect on one's perception of space and time: in Forster's *Howards End*, for instance, Margaret Schlegel loses “all sense of space” during one of her first car rides, while in Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) the eponymous hero/ine's drive inspires a

discussion of the “chopping up small of identity” that occurs when a moving self cannot perceive anything “from start to finish” (Forster 186; Woolf 293).<sup>192</sup> When in an automobile, observes Leena Kore Schroder, the self is positioned in a “fluid temporal interrelation with past, present, and future, as it is in the spatial interstices that forever open before, and close behind, the moving car”; rather than inert “backdrops of our existence,” space and time are “in constant interrelation with the perceiving self” (138-9). By elaborating her theories about the impact of movement on subjectivity through descriptions of female characters’ primarily excited or thought-stimulating responses to travel – Mrs. Dalloway or her daughter Elizabeth riding on top of an omnibus, or Orlando in the car – Woolf suggests a link between developing technology and women’s increasing range of opportunities in the age of modernity. Bowen was also interested in the effects of motorized movement on human consciousness and perception: “As I say speed is exciting to have grown up with. It alerts vision, making vision retentive with regard to what only may have been seen for a split second. By contrast, it accentuates the absoluteness of stillness” (*Pictures and Conversations* 44). In *To the North*, Bowen’s description of Cecilia and Emmeline’s home as being a continuation of their travels emphasizes the fact that the private sphere and its inhabitants are an effect of outside forces. If one recalls that the bourgeois notion of enclosed suburban privacy was reaffirmed by the gendered division of space and the identification of women with contained interiority, it becomes clear that Bowen’s representation of Cecilia and Emmeline’s suburban household subverts the traditional understanding of the relation between gender and space. Like Woolf, Bowen draws a connection between developments in transportation and a destabilization of gender conventions that allows modern women a chance to create spaces of alternative ordering: the fact that Emmeline responds to air travel with much greater excitement than Markie thus suggests both the difference in their

respective capacities for “spatial imagination” and emphasizes women’s more positive response to broader societal changes that developments in transportation symbolize.

Unlike Sackville-West, who shows Lady Slane’s Hampstead home to be a form of feminist utopia, a “reservoir of freedom,” Bowen emphasizes the links between the young women’s home and the social realities outside it; she presents their type of privacy as being extraordinary specifically because it exists within the everyday (Johnson 799). One could therefore analyze the St. John’s Wood home using Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia. Foucault describes heterotopias as being “different,” “other spaces” that “suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect”; these spaces are “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (“Of Other Spaces” 25). While Foucault’s notion of the heterotopia is somewhat vague and has, as a result, been applied by scholars to a “dazzling variety of spaces” (ranging from environmental installations to women’s colleges in the nineteenth century or Arab-Islamic architecture), Peter Johnson points out that it is particularly well-suited to a discussion of those sites that are simultaneously “mundane and extraordinary,” “embedding multiple meanings around a set of spatio-temporal contradictions or ambiguities” (796-7). This reading of Foucault’s concept proves very useful for the purposes of analyzing Cecilia and Emmeline’s abode: by juxtaposing a variety of spaces in a single location, Bowen explodes the notion of the private/public dichotomy that naturalizes the gendered division of work and perpetuates women’s oppression. In other words, Bowen’s home “unsettles” the traditional, bourgeois conception of suburban space-time (Johnson 796).

In his study of the representations of space in modernist texts, Andrew Thacker observes that many modernist authors sought to find a form that would be able to “register the incessant movement” of modern life (65). These writers, he claims, represent space as being a process of

connections and flux, rather than a static entity (71). Although Bowen's experiments with narrative form were limited, my study of her portrayal of suburban space suggests her investment in finding experimental ways in which to portray changes associated with modernity. In the next section of my analysis of *To the North*, however, I will show that Bowen views Cecilia and Emmeline subversive suburban space as being unsustainable in a world in which misogynistic stereotypes and patriarchal beliefs concerning female sexuality continue to limit the lives of most women.

### **Myth, Misogyny, and the Transience of Women's Suburban Homes**

"Houses shared with women," observes Bowen of Cecilia and Emmeline's broken home at the end of *To the North*, "are built on sand" (TN 257). The vulnerable and ephemeral nature of the young women's living arrangements is emphasized by the fact that the plot revolves, much like Woolf's *Night and Day*, primarily around the complicated dynamics of two heterosexual couples. Ultimately, the story ends with the union of the two pairs in, respectively, marriage (Cecilia and Julian) and death (Emmeline and Markie), while the women are separated from each other both physically and symbolically. At the close of the novel, Cecilia is at home in St. John's Wood with Julian, unaware of Emmeline and Markie's fatal car crash; the women's suburban home has already been taken over by the presence and demands of Cecilia's imminent marriage.

Several critics, including Lee, Lassner, and Harriet Blodgett, have commented on the over-determined nature of Bowen's plot, which leaves no possibility for the survival of a quiet intimacy between the two women. As Lee observes,

The strict formality of the plot – two women, two lovers, Henry Summers's death before the start and his sister Emmeline's, and Markie's, in conclusion, a journey to begin with and a journey to end with – undermine the characters' opportunities

for free choice, in the same way as the relentless patterning of the images which dominate them. (72)

Bowen's careful structuring of plot and imagery is best observed in her characterization of Emmeline and Markie's relationship, which she portrays as being akin to a mythic struggle between good and evil, or as Lassner terms it, a "melodrama of innocence betrayed by a 'satanic cad'" (55). Described by Bowen as being "square and stocky, clean shaven, thickish about the neck and jaw, with a capable, slightly-receding forehead, mobile, greedy, intelligent mouth and impassive bright quick-lidded eyes of an agreeable reptile," Markie is from the beginning of the novel associated with animalism and moral corruption (*TN* 3). Like the devil who tempts Eve in the form of a serpent, Markie – "the Frog Footman, shockingly globular" – causes the destruction of Emmeline's emotional peace and ousts her from the calm of her suburban Eden (131). Bowen's omniscient narrator is anything but impersonal in her portrayal of this character, observing in her initial description the "malevolence [that] sharpened his features": when Cecilia meets him on the train from Milan to London, Markie's gaze, "without sympathy," slides over her with a "cold material knowledge" (4).

A "rising lawyer" – a devil's advocate – Markie is a desensitized, urban male who understands his romantic relationships as being a strategic exchange of sensual pleasure: "His brain held his smallish, over-clear view of life in its rigid circle" (*TN* 86, 187). After Emmeline has sex with him for the first time, Markie – his idea of the heart being "hazy" – finds it "incredible" that she did not "show a better head" and "buy marriage" by withholding sex (*TN* 230). Markie's name derives from the word "mark," which means a "boundary" or, alternatively, a measure of weight of gold and silver: a capitalist in all senses of the word, Markie separates emotion from erotic desire and estimates what type of actions can prove "profitable" in all his relationships (*OED*). As Emmeline observes, Markie operates like an "an insurance company"

(*TN* 228). In then-current slang, however, the character's first name is also a reference to a person who is targeted for robbery, or to someone who is easily deceived or taken advantage of (*OED*). While the overly rational and calculating Markie could not be defined as being someone who is easily swindled in his everyday life, this meaning of the name could also refer to his ostensibly unreflective acceptance of patriarchal beliefs and capitalist practices, or, ironically, to the fact that he "takes advantage" of Emmeline by robbing her of what he views as being her most valuable property – namely, her virginity.

Markie's living arrangements with his sister in Lower Sloane Street, Chelsea, stand in sharp contrast to Emmeline's harmonious and affectionate suburban alliance with Cecilia, for his part of the house is "completely cut off" and the siblings "made a point of not meeting, cut each other's friends at the door, had separate numbers, and asked no questions": "One, in fact, might have lain gassed for days before the other became suspicious" (*TN* 80). Lower Sloane Street is located in Chelsea, the central London neighbourhood that is featured in Woolf's *Night and Day* as the home of the affluent, cultured Hilbury family.<sup>193</sup> This district has been historically linked with urban intelligentsia and the upper echelons of London's society, of which Markie, a successful lawyer, is part. Bowen thus associates this character's overly rational way of thinking with what Georg Simmel would identify as being an urban dweller's emotional detachment (48).<sup>194</sup> In Simmel's view, human beings who live in cities change both physiologically and psychologically: they develop an ability to react with their minds instead of their emotions as a way of protecting themselves against the overload of stimuli encountered in crowded, fast-paced urban centers (48). In other words, their "smallish, overly-clear" views of life are defence mechanisms, or rather signs that they are *marked* by their hectic surroundings (*TN* 187).

It is Emmeline's character, however, that draws attention most strikingly to the mythic overtones of Bowen's text. Described as being an "angel" by Lady Waters, Cecilia, and Markie,

frequently dressed in “white” or “silver,” and associated with the reflective surfaces such as glass and ice, Emmeline seems to be an entity from another realm (*TN* 13, 17, 86, 22, 296). Her detachment from many of the earthly goings-on is signalled by her myopia, for which she wears a pair of stylish glasses: “[S]urrounded by shadowy people,” states Bowen, “Emmeline watched slip past her a blurred, repetitive pattern she took to be life” (22, 296, 28). On the one hand, Emmeline is a modern young woman who adores facts (“the exact departure of trains”) and loves driving her car, but she is also an overdetermined symbol of purity and innocence (28). Once in love, she becomes a force of unrelenting desire that reaches almost epic proportions: “A split of ice in the heart is bombed out rather than thawed out” (56).

It is only Markie, the representative of all that is earthly, sensual, and materialistic, who can pull Emmeline down from her angelic heights. With him, she enters what Bowen defines as being “the region of the immoderate,” in which they are “more than [them]selves” (*TN* 229). Complete opposites in terms of their understanding of love and sex, these two characters are fated to destroy each other. Bowen emphasizes the pre-ordained nature of their relationship by foreshadowing the lovers’ deaths several times, most strikingly in their fast taxi ride in Paris, where they nearly crash with “two lorries” (185). Always excited by speed, Emmeline jokingly references Robert Browning’s “The Last Ride Together” (*TN* 182). This scene, Ellmann observes, also echoes the scene in Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856) in which Emma Bovary and her lover are driven around Rouen all day. The reference clearly links Emmeline with the narrative of the “fallen woman,” in which a woman’s pre- or extra-marital sexual activity is associated with punishment and death (Ellmann 104). Although they are products of the fast-paced modern world, the two lovers are thus also “more than themselves,” for their affair is a dramatization of easily recognizable plot conventions.

Emmeline, argues Lassner, is “an uneasy combination of psychological study and poeticized symbol,” who becomes a “goddess of death” once her sexual passion is unleashed (66, 55). Indeed, Lassner is correct in her claim that Bowen’s characterization amounts to a critique of a patriarchal society and its “still prevailing myth that every innocent virgin has as her counterpart a deadly Circe”: a woman is driven by male fears and desires to “fulfil her prophetic imperative” (Lassner 56). Markie is both attracted to Emmeline’s innocence and “afraid for himself” after he witnesses “the entirety of her surrender” during their first night together: “Innocence walks with violence,” observes the narrator, “violence is innocent, cold as fate” (*TN* 229-30). Nevertheless, Lassner does not explore how Bowen presents the misogyny implicit in the mythical stereotype of women’s sexuality as being a result of a more subtle, everyday sexism practiced by men like Markie, nor how this narrow-mindedness is connected to the unimaginative, rigid way in which Markie thinks about people and space in general.

Although he is a “voluptuary” who has had affairs with numerous women, Markie believes in the double standard according to which a woman should feel guilty about engaging in premarital sex: he is “shocked” and slightly repelled by Emmeline’s lack of shame, and fondly remembers his last lover, Daisy, who offered “just enough resistance to please and enough repentance to gratify” a conquering male (*TN* 185, 223). His resultant emotional distance from Emmeline causes her increasing frustration, until her awakening sexuality turns destructive during a car ride that takes place some time after the end of their affair. It is hardly surprising that Emmeline begins to have a “low view of herself” in the course of their relationship, for Markie’s repeatedly objectifies her and draws attention to her imperfections: even when he tells her she looks “lovely,” he suggests “just a bit of powder”; he also prefers her without her much-needed glasses (256, 128). Emmeline’s waning interest in the work that she was once passionate about is most indicative of her psychological deterioration: unable to focus on the

tasks at hand, she begins to leave her office early (235). Her changing attitude towards her profession is encouraged by Markie, who advises her to “sell out” of the agency (220). When Emmeline wonders what she would do with her time, Markie observes ““Why do anything special?””; he finds her question about his reason for working to be “silly,” revealing his entrenched views regarding the gendered division of labour (220-221).

Bowen emphasizes Markie’s rigidity of thought by juxtaposing his response to air travel to that of the more imaginative Emmeline. Like Woolf in her essay “Flying Over London” (1928), Bowen presents air travel as having the potential to destabilize a person’s habitual sense of time and space, and lead them to consider the relative, constructed nature of human beliefs and conventions.<sup>195</sup> To Emmeline, a view from an airplane reveals “some quiet new plan of life,” in which “no noise, no glass, no upholstery boxed her up from the extraordinary” (*TN* 168). Looking down upon a “flatter” version of Surrey and Kent, she observes with “intensity” the patterns in the “layout of gardens” that she could not see from the ground (168). For Markie, however, “the earth was good enough,” and he ignores Emmeline’s eyes “imploing him to look down and enjoy Surrey” (168). Emmeline’s willingness to “give up the earth” thus suggests her openness towards exploring new modes of living and loving, while Markie’s reaction emphasizes his close-mindedness.

A more subtle, but similar type of disconnection occurs between the lovers earlier in the text, during their discussion about Markie’s experience of outer suburbia, or rather the “impure country where London’s gentlest finger-tip touches the beech woods” (*TN* 68). Bowen describes the setting in third person but from Markie’s point of view:

Down there, by the dreary trunks of the beeches, houses lay like a sediment in the cup of the misty valley: great garbled carcasses, villas apeing a manor, belfried garages where you could feel the cars get cold. There were no lights, not a threat

of smoke from a chimney. Afternoon stupor reigned: there was nothing more that they wanted; down there they all sat in the dark.... To Markie the foreshortened villas appeared enormous, bloated as though by corruption. (68)

Words such as “sediment,” “carcasses,” “stupor,” “bloated,” and “corruption” indicate Markie’s association of suburban life with death and decay – an association that was, according to John Carey, commonly made by “self-respecting intellectual[s]” in the 1930s (10).<sup>196</sup> When the stillness is interrupted by a sound from a piano, Markie also defines the instrument as being “cold” and reacts by scratching his back “against a tree” to satisfy a “violent” itch (*TN* 68). Markie’s overtly negative view of the scene, as well as his visceral, animalistic reaction to a lively sound that contradicts his perception of death and stagnancy, suggest that his impression has less to do with the reality of the setting than with his preconceived notions about marriage and life in suburbia. Like Miriam in Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* novels, Markie views suburban life as being shaped by and shaping the needs of nuclear families to which he does not want to belong. Unable to see how planned space can be different from the space of people’s everyday reality, nor how one could create new ways of occupying space, Markie lacks spatial imagination (Lefebvre 39). His dismissive view of the suburban scene thus leads him to observe that “there was nothing more [these people] wanted from life”: his aggressive, dog-like scratch against a nearby tree is an assertion of an active, independent masculinity over the static, monogamous conformity he perceives around him (*TN* 68).

Conversely Emmeline, whose suburban home is testimony against Mark’s biased arguments, reveals her more flexible, creative view of space by failing to sympathize with his “retrospective anguish” (*TN* 69). Thinking that Mark’s story about suburbia “seemed to have no point,” Emmeline asks the now-silent Markie whether it is a ghost story and why it had made him “so angry”? (69). Because she is capable of understanding that people can create their own

ways of occupying suburbia, Emmeline is “surprised” by her lover’s “contempt for such placid pools in the life-stream” (69). Foreshadowing subtly Emmeline’s emotional disintegration and the end of the pair’s relationship, Bowen observes that Markie’s tale, mundane as it was, nevertheless “saddened her in the hearing” (69). The author’s representations of suburban life thus prove integral to her characterization of the central characters, their dynamics, and their respective responses to space.

Since Markie constantly treats Emmeline as an imperfect sex object and reminds her of the transient nature of their affair, this independent young woman begins to realize the limitations of being an unmarried yet sexually active female in a male-dominated society. Although she initially feels no shame in entering into a relationship with Markie, she later complains to Cecilia that “[n]obody wants to marry me,” and reminds her lover that everyone would consider her “ruined” if they found out about their illicit affair: “People in love like Cecilia and Julian, people married, have passports everywhere.... But you and I – wherever we go there is something to keep us separate” (*TN* 243, 261-2). Believing that Cecilia, who dislikes Markie, might judge her for the relationship, Emmeline does not discuss her romance with her sister-in-law. For the first time, she begins to voice a dissatisfaction with her living arrangements, observing to Markie that, “This house is Cecilia: when I come in I see her, simply. Whether she’s in or out. Nothing feels part of me, yet I live here too” (238). Cecilia also articulates concerns about their relationship when Emmeline becomes more distant than usual: although she admits that life without Emmeline would be “intolerable,” Cecilia reminds herself that “she is not my lover; she is not my child,” and observes that there is not much more than “the idea of company in [Emmeline’s] company” (164-5). The young women’s growing detachment results in Emmeline’s further psychological decline and Cecilia’s half-hearted engagement to a man who is only “half in love” with her (18).

Coates argues that the “unsocial and inhuman” Emmeline only develops a need for order and home when she meets Markie (84). While it is true that Emmeline gradually begins to crave the ostensible stability of a heterosexual marriage, Coates fails to analyze how the character’s resistance to Markie’s entrance into her suburban house reveals her strong attachment to the way of life she shares with Cecilia. Immediately before Markie’s visit, a “one-eared cat from next door, a noted *flâneur* in other gardens,” enters the young women’s property and “leer[s] at Emmeline,” thus anticipating the unexpected arrival of a sexually promiscuous male who has just spent a long night drinking with friends (*TN* 124). Coates identifies the presence of “deliberate echoes of the Miltonic Satan’s entry into Eden” in his analysis of the scene, but does not comment on the ambivalent nature of Emmeline’s reaction to the uninvited guest: “She exclaimed: “But I thought I had locked the side gate!”” (Coates 93; *TN* 126). Made excited and anxious by her lover’s presence, Emmeline quickly takes off her glasses and observes nervously the way Markie’s “glance,” “restless, aggressive, and quick,” inspects her previously quiet abode (126). Later in the text, she forbids Markie to telephone her at home, for she does not want “life here disturbed by a voice that was too beloved, or even alarmed by silences” (218). Although clearly smitten and generally yearning for Markie’s presence, Emmeline also seems protective of her suburban home and alliance with Cecilia.

The women realize and emphasize the depth of their emotional connection towards the end of the novel, when the nature of their respective affairs, as well as the imminent loss of their suburban co-habitation, become obvious. Emmeline chooses to cut short her unhappy country weekend with Markie after the arrival of a letter from Cecilia, in which the latter woman urges her to come back home. Although her sister-in-law does not mention the reason for the request, Emmeline is aware that it relates to an announcement of Cecilia’s impending marriage, and in turn feels as though “something slid down in her like a dead weight” (*TN* 257). Emmeline’s

decision to leave gives Markie an excuse to end their relationship, but she is too afraid of hurting Cecilia and too distraught by the image of her suburban home falling “to bits,” “[t]imber by timber,” that she decides to run the risk of her lover’s anger: “She thought: ‘My home, my home’” (257). Meanwhile, Cecilia, who cannot come up with a better explanation for her marriage than to state that Julian and herself are “‘easy together,’” clings to Emmeline and asks if she can “‘adopt’” her (265). Near the end of the novel, when the lonely Emmeline wonders down the “roads of St. John’s Wood or up to Hampstead, quickly, her hands in her pockets,” it is unclear which of the two she is mourning more: her relationship with Markie or her suburban life with Cecilia (277).

Both Cecilia and Emmeline’s lives are eventually shaped by the conventions that structure heterosexual romances; Bowen implies the vulnerability that characterizes women’s intimate relationships with each other. Although Cecilia is by no means possessed of mythic overtones – this witty, self-controlled character, argues Lassner, is a “counterthrust to the myth of women’s sexual volatility” – she is ultimately influenced by the dominant belief that marriage is a woman’s most convenient opportunity (58). Similarly, the failure of Emmeline’s romance and her last meeting with Markie are caused by the continuing prevalence of male sexism and society’s judgement of women’s pre-marital sexuality. Indeed, it is upon the insistence of the traditional Lady Waters – who does not know that Emmeline’s affair is over and worries about the “‘damage’” to the young woman’s reputation – that Cecilia and Julian reluctantly invite Markie to St. John’s Wood in order to discern the lovers’ situation (*TN* 274).

One should question the validity of Coates’s argument that Lady Waters’s meddling shows an admirable tendency of the older generation to “become involved with others” (Coates 79): this last meeting and the renewed attentions of the fickle Markie send an already depressed Emmeline into a suicidal state. Initially resistant to seeing her former lover, Emmeline offers to

drive him to a friend's house in Baldock (a market town in North Hertfordshire) at the end of their dinner. It is during this drive *to the north*, through "pretty suburban elegance," that the couple begin their final argument (*TN* 298). Markie, entranced by what he perceives as being Emmeline's "unforeseen beauty, her distance, and her renewed unconsciousness of himself," proclaims his love, while a wiser, disillusioned Emmeline resists his attempts at reconciliation: when he argues that her unresponsiveness makes him "go right to pieces," she, now aware of the gender inequity that structures their relationship, replies that this "can't be true," for he is a "man" (300). Instead, it is Emmeline and her suburban home that have "gone to pieces" as a result of her precarious overinvestment in a relationship that emphasized the limitations of being a woman in a patriarchal society.

Lassner argues that the lonely and desperate Emmeline "reforms herself into the mechanism by which to integrate her desperate need for symbiotic wholeness" when she speeds and crashes into an approaching vehicle during her last ride (69). Although it is true that Bowen describes this scene as though Emmeline were in the process of blending into or "becoming" the speeding machine – "speed streamed from her unawares" – the narrator also suggests that the character is motivated primarily by a desire to escape rather than by a need for symbiosis:

An immense idea of departure – expresses getting steam up and crashing from termini, liners clearing the docks, the shadows of planes rising, caravans winding out in the first dip of the desert – possessed her spirit, now launched like the long arrow. . . . She was lost to her own identity, a confining husk. . . . She looked into [Markie's] eyes without consciousness, as though in at the windows of an empty house. His throat tightened, the roof of his mouth went dry: she was not here, he was alone. Little more than his memory ruled her still animate body, so peacefully empty as not to be even haunted. (*TN* 304-5)

Emmeline's speeding is an instinctive reaction to Markie's fickleness, his "cold resolution to keep her and bitter enraged desire to throw her off"; what enflames her craving for "departure," her need to "feel nothing," is another reminder of her limited situation (303). In the process of "becoming-machine," Emmeline escapes her restrictive gendered identity and becomes something akin to what Donna Haraway would term as being a "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism" that resists identity politics (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 273; Haraway 2190-1). Emmeline "departs" through the motion of a motorized vehicle because this modern experience defamiliarizes one's sense of time, space, and identity, and reflects the character's tendency to embrace new ways of perceiving reality. In other words, Emmeline's resistance to the type of rigid thinking that is practiced by people such as Markie and Lady Waters is "metaphorized by transport" (Magot 138-9); unlike authors such as Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson, or numerous science fiction writers of the twentieth century, who situate the male body as the locus of science- and technology-based bodily transformations, Bowen uses the merging of modern transport and the female body and subjectivity to offer a powerful image of resistance to stifling gender constructs.<sup>197</sup> The title of the novel, which refers to Emmeline's fatal car ride, emphasizes the link that Bowen makes between the experiences associated with modernity and a woman's subversion of the notion of stable identity: "To the North," a sign that the couple sees immediately before their crash, not only signifies a direction, but also the process of modern women's resistance to stagnant patriarchal traditions and beliefs about female sexuality.

Although Emmeline's life is structured according to the narrative conventions by which women's sexual agency is associated with death, she is not a "fallen" woman, but one who "takes off." The fact that this "departure" through the speed of a machine takes place in the suburban landscapes of northern London draws attention to the integral role that suburban spaces

play in Bowen's portrayal of the links between gendered identity and modernity.

Furthermore, by setting Cecilia and Emmeline's innovative yet transient household in a suburb while associating the sexist Markie with urban, masculine intellectualism and the traditional Lady Waters with the fading life of country estates, Bowen suggests that suburban spaces symbolize modern women's limited, but slowly expanding, opportunities.

### **“Attractive Modern Homes”: Women and the Suburban Gothic**

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discussed how Doyle and Machen utilize Gothic tropes of bodies and spaces in transition to highlight degenerative possibilities inherent in the stringent division between public and private spheres that structures suburban space-time. Both of these authors were interested in examining the links between rapid suburban growth and a crisis of middle-class masculinity in their short stories about deviant suburban male commuters, bachelors, and scientists. While their works draw attention to the ways in which literary suburbia was used imaginatively to express bourgeois anxieties regarding perceived class- and gender-related instabilities in late-Victorian society, Doyle and Machen do not focus on the experiences of suburban women who were usually relegated to an isolated, domestic existence, nor do they question the gender inequality inherent in the ideology of separate spheres. Bowen, on the other hand, frequently mobilizes suburban spaces in an investigation of traditional gender constructs by examining women's multifaceted responses to suburban settings, whether in Gothic stories that feature murderous conflicts between frustrated married couples such as “The Cat Jumps” (1934) and “The Recent Photograph,” or in tales of suburban women's haunted loneliness in “The Disinherited,” “The Shadowy Third” (1923), and “Attractive Modern Homes.”

Although Bowen presents suburbia as being a feminized space that suffocates and emasculates its male inhabitants in “The Cat Jumps” and “The Recent Photograph,” her

description of bored, middle-class suburban housewives in the other tales involves a nuanced investigation of domesticated women's psychological angst. In the "The Disinherited," for instance, Bowen characterizes newly-built suburbia as being emblematic of modern rootlessness, but also provides an in-depth exploration of a housewife's search for romantic connections; meanwhile, "The Shadowy Third" concerns a lonely wife of a commuter, who senses that her marriage and suburban home are haunted by the presence of her husband's dead spouse. It is "Attractive Modern Homes," however, that proves to be most interesting for the purposes of this dissertation, for this story of a woman suffering from extreme isolation in a new, still-unfinished suburban estate features both an investigation of the psychological consequences of women's domesticity and an exploration of how spaces that are in the process of flux can inspire moments of insight. In this story, Bowen thus reimagines a new suburban estate as being an environment that can inspire women to question (rather than conform to) gender conventions.

While scholars such as Shannon Wells-Lassagne and Thurston point out that Bowen's Gothic writings were influenced by the work of Sheridan Le Fanu and by classic Victorian and Edwardian ghost stories, it would be more productive to analyze "Attractive Modern Homes" from a feminist perspective, as an example of the female Gothic (Wells-Lassagne 96; Thurston 11).<sup>198</sup> As Vanessa D. Dickerson and Wallace argue, female authors such as Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and the Brontë sisters have frequently utilized the Gothic mode to explore women's experiences of powerlessness and fears of imprisonment within patriarchy. The ghost story, for instance, provided women – whose relegation to the private sphere had rendered them "ghost-like" – with a special medium through which to study the "nature of female experience and the feminine self" (Wallace 57; Dickerson 150). Consequently, the supernatural writings of male Victorian writers (Dickens or Le Fanu) differ from those of their female contemporaries because the former tend to "be more diagnostic, clinical,

journalistic, vested in mensuration,” while the latter usually explore women’s emotional and psychological responses to “disabling dichotomies” of their culture (Dickerson 7, 150). Unlike Doyle and Machen, therefore, Bowen does not reaffirm traditional gender boundaries by creating brave, virtuous, male characters who detect and counter the degenerative elements of suburban settings. Instead, she uses Gothic tropes of spaces in transition to highlight the oppressive nature of stringent, gendered division of space and to suggest the constructed nature of the conventions that perpetuate this arrangement.

In his description of a troubled scientist’s suburban neighbourhood in “The Inmost Light” (1895), Machen’s narrator, Dyson, comments on the fact that suburbia at midday is “like a city of the dead” (117-8). Although he is clearly implying the loneliness that housebound suburban women feel during their husbands’ work hours, Dyson does not comment on any of the women in particular, nor does he critique the patriarchal beliefs that occasion women’s restricted scope of movement. Rather, Machen uses Dyson’s impressions to accentuate the eerie atmosphere of the setting and prepare the reader for the introduction of the deviant Mr. Black, whose experiments literally turn his wife into one of the living dead.<sup>199</sup> Bowen, on the other hand, presents her story from the point of view of the isolated Muriel Watson, thereby emphasizing her interest in exploring women’s responses to suburban living: “The empty promise of morning shot a pang through her heart to tell her she was awake again” (“AMH” 524). As Grace Duffield Goodwin observes in her short essay, “The Commuter’s Wife, A Sisterly Talk by One Who Knows Her Problems” (1909), suburbia during the day could be called “Lonelyville,” for women’s days in these settings were often “devoid of interest and companionship” (53). Her description of housewives who walk through “endless streets of houses” that are “tenanted by one lonely young woman and perhaps a maid or two” suggests that many middle-class women were bored specifically because the housework performed by the help left little for them to do

except pay visits and shop (53).<sup>200</sup> Mrs. Watson thus muses despondently on the fact that her husband enjoys the company of his co-workers at the office, while she, not knowing anyone in the new and relatively empty neighbourhood, is “alone all day”: “Almost no one passed, and nobody looked in” (“AMH” 523-4, 522). At night, her husband arrives home tired from his daily interactions and eager to lose himself in “reading,” listening to the wireless, and “gardening,” whereas her only contact with the outside world is the daily newspaper (524). Since buses run only several times a day (most likely, at times when it suits the departing or arriving commuters), Mrs. Watson is stranded in her new home (524). Through her description of the housewife’s loneliness, Bowen therefore draws attention to the way in which the daily rhythms and spatio-temporal arrangements of middle-class suburbia revolve around men’s needs and reflect and reinforce unequal gender relations. Such arrangements, argue Leonie Sandercock and Ann Forsyth, “serve women badly” (448).

Still in the state of being built, Mrs. Watson’s neighbourhood (located on the “far edge of the estate”) features an invasion of the countryside by suburban building that was occurring in many areas around London during the interwar period (“AMH” 521) (see Figure 3). The “row of elms” and a “field” beside the Watsons’ villa stand in sharp juxtaposition with “drain trenches,” “troughs of mud,” and “half-built houses with their skeleton roofs, scaffolding, tubs of mortar, stacks of piping” (521, 523). Although the new town has a “mellow, ancient core,” its lack of organic growth disturbs Mrs. Watson, who observes: “An estate is not like a village, it has no heart; even the shops are new and still finding their own feet. . . . Nothing has had time to flower in this new place” (522). In her old neighbourhood, she remembers, “everything had been complete for years” and they “had a lot of society” (522). Sequestered in what she experiences as being a strange, “unnatural” setting, Mrs. Watson begins to feel “queerish” and to “dread the country left dingily at their door”; in fact, she compares her family’s re-location to moving to

“the Colonies,” thus equating the “unfinished” suburban landscape with what she perceives as being an encounter with a foreign, less civilized environment (524).

Bowen’s portrayal of a suburban construction site that features an incongruity between nature and man-made elements echoes Machen’s description of his negative reaction to suburbia in the autobiographical *Far Off Things* (1922): “These are the places where the hedges are half ruined, half remaining, where the little winding brook is defined, but not yet a drain, where one tree lies felled and withered, while its fellow is still green” (*Far Off Things* 122-3). Unlike Machen, however, Bowen does not present this jarring contrast as being indicative of the Gothic otherness of suburban space, but suggests a direct link between a woman’s sense of isolation and powerlessness and her perception of the suburb’s eerie atmosphere. Mrs. Watson’s observation about feeling “queerish” in fact occurs immediately after her description of her husband’s active life outside their home; she reveals the subjectivity of her impressions by making an observation about his satisfaction with the new house and by complaining about the fact that her children are “delighted with their surroundings” (“AMH” 523). Consequently, what makes this environment nightmarish or Gothic is not the incongruence of nature and suburban building, nor the undefined quality of the construction site, but a woman’s realization of her desperate situation.

The Watsons are a conventional, middle-class family: the common last name – reminiscent of Doyle’s Dr. Watson – emphasizes their “everyman” status, but also hints that they might have potential to occasionally open themselves up to uncommon experiences or even adventures. Like thousands of people who moved into cheaply constructed suburban housing in early twentieth-century England, the members of this family live in a “box-like,” “semi-detached” villa that has “thin walls,” shaking stairs, and a “frail” structure (“AMH” 521). A somewhat pretentious and superficial suburban housewife, Mrs. Watson “enjoyed society and esteem and was dependent upon them as women naturally are” (522). Although Bowen’s use of



*Figure 8: “Estate Construction at Queensbury, 1935” (Jackson 160).*

the word “naturally” might imply a degree of essentialism in her thinking about gender, her critique of Mrs. Watson’s lack of self-reflexivity suggests that she is actually using the phrase ironically, to mock the housewife’s passive acceptance of gender stereotypes:

Up to now she had been happy without knowing, like a fortunate sheep or cow always in the same field. She was a woman who did not picture herself. She had looked into mirrors only to pat her perm down or smooth a jumper nicely over her bust. Everything that had happened to her seemed natural – love, marriage, the birth of Freddie, then Vera – for she had seen it happen to someone else. She never needed to ask what was happening really. (524)

Mrs. Watson’s move to a new, more isolated location – or “another field” – is thus characterized by Bowen as being akin to “stepping over a cliff”: “No sooner were the Watsons settled into their new home than Mrs. Watson was overcome by melancholy” (524, 521). As her sense of self had always been anchored in what she perceived as being stable physical and social

surroundings, the character begins to feel that her suburban environment is “unnatural” and disturbing: she enters long periods of silence and begins to take solitary walks in the nearby woods (525).

Mrs. Watson’s symptoms are similar to those of “suburban neurosis,” a women-specific disorder described by Dr. Stephen Taylor in an article that appeared in *Lancet* (a leading medical journal) less than a decade after “Attractive Modern Homes” was published. In this paper, Dr. Taylor observes a preponderance of various symptoms – ranging from “trembling, headaches, anxiety” to insomnia and swelling of the stomach – in young, middle-class, housebound wives, whose issues, he postulates, are a result of boredom and loneliness in isolated, badly-planned suburbs (759). Once they complete their daily domestic duties, he argues, these women do not have “enough to do” or “enough to think about” (760). While Dr. Taylor draws attention to the harmful psychological consequences of women’s isolation in expanding suburban areas, his analysis of the causes of and possible solutions for the “problem” is limited by his failure to question the patriarchal ideology that limits women’s opportunities for work outside the home. He only goes so far as to critique the unregulated practices of suburban “jerry building” and “ribbon-development,” and to suggest the establishment of communal “non-religious clubs,” cafeterias, day nurseries, libraries, and game rooms that would enable women to interact with each other (761).

Bowen, on the other hand, equates the symptoms that Dr. Taylor would use to define a woman as being “neurotic” with increased perceptiveness and insight. In fact, Mrs. Watson’s developing melancholy occasions her realization of the inequalities and arbitrary conventions that structure her life, and provides her with a level of rebellious energy. To her husband, she begins to look like a strange “Viking woman,” “with eyes remorseless” – a description that hints at her growing independence of thought (“AMH” 524). Mrs. Watson’s nascent self-reflexivity,

induced by her loneliness in a space that is both highly traditional in the organization of work and jarring because of its temporary, unfinished state, makes her question the beliefs and ways of life that she used to take for granted: “‘The way we live, we never know anyone,’” she tells her husband, “‘All that crowd back at home, they’ve forgotten us. It was all coming in for coffee, or else whist. It doesn’t get you anywhere, I mean, you get used to it, but that doesn’t make it natural’” (527). When Mr. Watson finds his wife lying “face down on the ground” in the woods near their house, and complains that it “‘isn’t decent’” for her to act in such a way so close to where they live, she responds, “‘What do you mean, live?’” (526) His wife’s act of lying prostrate on the ground is a doubly symbolic gesture: she is akin to a martyr on a cross suffering for the sins of patriarchy, but she also resembles a dead female body that has been abandoned in the woods. Mrs. Watson’s gesture thus emphasizes the fact that various forms of violence against women are very real by-products of a system that is organized around one gender’s domination over the other. In her opinion, an existence in a suburb is not an act of “living,” but a process of realizing the many small sacrifices or ways of dying that her society demands of women.

Although Mr. Watson dismisses his wife’s pensiveness as being a sign that she is “‘batty’” (or, as Dr. Taylor would term it, “‘neurotic’”), she argues that she is “‘just noticing’” things about her life: by stating that her son, who saw something that scared him in the woods, probably only “‘saw himself,’” Mrs. Watson shows that her process of self-reflection is directly linked to her new surroundings (“‘AMH’” 526). Once again, Foucault’s notion of heterotopia – a space that is related to other sites but that neutralizes or inverts some of the relations that it reflects – is useful in analyzing Bowen’s representation of suburbia. Life in the Watsons’ suburb is organized around the ideology of separate spheres but the unfinished, amorphous state of the settlement defamiliarizes or inverts Mrs. Watson’s sense of stable identity and calls attention to the process of construction by which ostensibly “‘natural’” beliefs, practices, and space-times are

created. In other words, Mrs. Watson no longer accepts the realities of her life as being “natural” because she is no longer grazing in “the same field” (“AMH” 524).

When Mrs. Watson finally meets and enjoys a friendly conversation with a female neighbour at the close of the short story, however, her observation that life is “really all habit” suggests that she will once again adapt to her limited conditions (“AMH” 528). It is unlikely, Bowen implies, that this specific housewife will pursue her questioning of established truths and ways of life. Nevertheless, Mrs. Watson’s temporary insight into the inequalities that inform the gender dynamics of her society shows that Bowen presents suburban spaces as being capable of inspiring moments of creative, independent thinking in even the most complacent of minds. As Johnson remind us, heterotopias are not stable but “contingent” entities in which energies of “emancipation or resistance” co-exist and constantly compete with repressive elements: Mrs. Watson’s unfinished suburb is both a space-time in which the forces of gender inequity limit women’s movements and a site that induces a lonely woman’s striking, but brief resistance (Johnson 799).

Although new suburban estates may have been common in interwar England, the suburb in Bowen’s “Attractive Modern Homes” functions as an unsettling, heterotopic space that exposes the “taken-for-granted mundane idea of social order that exists within society” (Hetherington 40). It should come as no surprise that Bowen selects a suburban setting for her Gothic tale of a woman’s encounter with what she perceives as being an eerie environment: like Woolf, Bowen argued that “[modern] ghosts” prefer “prosaic scenes” and “exploit the horror latent behind reality” (*Afterthought* 101-2).<sup>201</sup> Using the author’s own phrasing, one could say that the horror of gender inequality haunts Bowen’s short tale and that the constantly shifting suburban space inspires the usually imperceptive Mrs. Watson – and, hopefully, the reader – to acknowledge this very “credible” ghost (101-2).

## Conclusion

In “Men and Women” (1920), Woolf ends her discussion of the changing conditions of life in early twentieth-century England with an observation and a question: “Energy has been liberated, but into what form is it to flow?” (*Essays* 3: 195). Although Woolf was writing about women’s expanding social and economic opportunities, one could apply her statement to the projects of various early twentieth-century authors, who sought to find novel ways (or forms) of representing the reality of living in a fast-paced, technologically-driven world. While many of these writers, including Woolf and Richardson, elaborated their visions of modernity primarily through descriptions of crowded urban milieus, Bowen made the peripheries of London central to her portrayal of the above-mentioned “liberated” energies and her formulation of “forms” that could represent them. Indeed, in Bowen’s texts an ever-expanding suburbia is a symbol of both the destabilization and the reaffirmation of the status quo. An analysis of suburban spaces in Bowen’s works thus draws attention to the ubiquity of suburban living in interwar England and to the integral role that these sites could play in an author’s layered exploration of modern life.

While several of the Bowen’s novels and short stories (such as *The Heat of the Day* or “A Recent Photograph”) contain misogynistic portrayals of suburban femininity, her other works, such as *To the North* and “Attractive Modern Homes,” feature suburban spaces that produce and are produced by female characters’ resistance to traditional gender norms. Although not as formally experimental as Woolf or Richardson, Bowen was very responsive to the changing material realities of her society and sought to portray her surroundings in a manner that would unsettle conventional ways of thinking about spatialized genders and gendered spaces. To study Bowen’s combination of an oblique literary style, innovative representations of space, and conventional plotting and narration is thus to emphasize the unique methods of an oft-forgotten

author whose texts are replete with nuanced, thought-provoking reflections regarding life in an expanding metropolis. Finally, it is through an analysis of Bowen's texts that I have briefly revisited the works of all the authors who have been the focus of this dissertation, thus drawing attention to the ongoing and multi-dimensional dialogue about suburbia in British literature.

## Conclusion

My dissertation has shown that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century suburbia occasioned a multiplication of discourses in the fields of urban planning, cultural studies, journalism, and literature. Although most middle-class commentators associated the growth of suburban living with the debasement and feminization of English culture, and portrayed suburban landscapes as being spaces of monotonous conventionality, a close inspection of the varied uses of suburban imagery in the literature of this period belies the one-dimensionality of the more common portrait. As my chapters on Doyle and Machen, Richardson and Woolf, Sackville-West, and Bowen indicate, suburban privacy is represented as being deviant but also restorative, and specific suburbs can prove to be potentially transformative spaces for female characters. By studying authors who wrote in different decades, in a range of genres, and with various aesthetic projects in mind, I emphasize the fact that literary interest in suburban space and gender was both widespread and multifaceted.

While Mrs. Watson of Bowen's "Attractive Modern Homes" relocates to suburbia somewhat reluctantly, and Richardson's Miriam initially dislikes the suburban environments that she encounters, most of the female characters in the texts that I have studied move to suburbia by choice, seeking at least partially to escape the demands and surveillance of their relatives and wishing to construct non-traditional, non-familial forms of privacy. Rather than a space that conditions its inhabitants into complacent acceptance of patriarchal gender norms, suburbia is thus described as being a site of conscious resistance. Furthermore, even in those texts in which suburban habitation is not presented as being a woman's primary choice, the authors depict these shifting peripheral spaces as prompting moments of insight, or, in the case of Richardson, use the

diversity of suburban environments to suggest the slow but steady development of the protagonist's "spatial imagination."

Janet Wolff has pointed out that the literature of modernity is concerned primarily with the public sphere and the lives of men within it, and that additional attention needs to be paid to how modernity was experienced by women who were usually relegated to the life of domesticity. In my analysis of the integral role that representations of suburban spaces play in the works of several early twentieth-century authors, I not only study the way in which characters experience modernity in both its domestic and public aspects, but, perhaps more importantly, highlight how female characters create forms of privacy that involve less stringent boundaries between public and private spheres. In this way, figures such as Miriam Henderson, Lady Slane, or Emmeline and Cecilia Summers undermine the gendered, patriarchal division of space, and prioritize women's concerns in the construction of their surroundings; their actions show how users "reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production" for the very purposes of unsettling the norms that inform the conception of the said spatial models (De Certeau xiv).

Other than Bowen's Mrs. Watson and Woolf's Katherine Hilbury (who plans to marry a man from Highgate but who will likely not live in suburbia), the female characters studied in this dissertation create suburban households that do not revolve around a heterosexual union. Indeed, in Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent* it is the end of marriage that marks the beginning of a woman's suburban independence, while in Bowen's *To the North* the emerging heterosexual romances occasion a disintegration of women's peaceful living arrangements in St. John's Wood. The fact that none of these texts feature a description of a companionate marriage in suburbia, which would provide a woman with a "room of her own," implies that the authors create suburban spaces not only to resist patriarchal gender constructs but to explore

imaginatively ways of living that more obviously undermine traditional family structures.

These female writers develop innovative suburban spaces to investigate how women can benefit from living on their own or with other women; unlike the majority of canonical texts, which, according to Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, portray women only in relation to men, these "suburban" narratives are groundbreaking in that they foreground a woman's relation to self and to other women.

The frequency and speed (especially in Bowen's *To the North*) with which female characters venture outside of the domestic sphere is suggestive of women's expanding opportunities in the age of modernity. This process is frequently expressed through women's move to suburbia or, in Woolf's *Night and Day*, through a young woman's decision to marry a suburban man. In these texts, therefore, suburbia is not simply a sign of urban decentralization, but a symbol of a dismantling, or weakening, of dominant patriarchal power structures, which structure and limit women's lives. Whether the characters make a conscious choice to live independently in suburbia, or experience moments of insight in their encounters with suburban commuters (*Night and Day*) or an unfinished suburban estate ("Attractive Modern Homes"), their various forms of resistance to gender constructs are metaphorized by their interactions with suburban spaces.

My analysis of the selected texts also draws attention to the female authors' focus on elaborating critiques of the status quo that are primarily centered around the axis of gender. While Richardson and Woolf's texts contain more nuanced examinations of the intersections between various middle-class identities and gender, Sackville-West's creation of the Hampstead idyll involves an obscuring of class-related issues; on the other hand, Bowen's Anglo-Irish concerns, which influence the content, or at least the tone, of most of her texts, are relegated to the background in her investigations of suburbia and gender. This primacy of gender-related

issues in the female novelists' "suburban" works thus accentuates the inextricability of gender and suburban living (a link that is also obvious in Doyle and Machen's many writings).

By combining an examination of Richardson and Woolf's texts with that of Sackville-West and Bowen, I highlight the limitations and innovations of the authors' respective works. Woolf and Richardson's multifaceted explorations of gender and class accentuate, through contrast, Sackville-West and Bowen's more gender-centered forms of critique; on the other hand, Woolf and Richardson's tendency to focus primarily on urban environments suggests modernist writers' relative reluctance to provide in-depth examinations of suburbia and brings into relief Sackville-West and, especially, Bowen's more intense interest in and openness towards exploring non-urban styles of living. My "suburban lens" thus draws attention to the diversity of approaches by which female authors develop their critiques of patriarchy, as well as affirms the value of studying a range of literary modes through which writers responded to transformations associated with modernity.

For many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century authors suburbia was indeed a symbol of tumultuous changes besetting their society. The ever-shifting boundaries of London and the changing class make-up of many suburbs, as well as the association of suburban growth with the ongoing development in transportation, made this style of living a particularly apt representative of the dramatic shifts that the authors witnessed during their lifetimes. While Machen and Doyle present these changes as resulting in instances of male deviance, female writers respond in predominantly positive ways: they employ suburban imagery as a vehicle for a redefinition of those dominant spatial codes that relegate women to the domestic sphere and limit the ways in which they could live, work, and love. In Bowen's *To the North*, the link between fast-paced socio-economic changes and suburbia is embodied in the dangerous yet emancipatory movements of a speeding automobile and its female driver.

Thus one could suggest that investigating literary responses to suburbia provides insight into the way that people of specific social positions tried to grapple with the effects of modernity, whether in a reactionary or an open-minded manner. If one accepts Raymond Williams's claim that "powerful [literary] images of country and city have been ways of responding" to social developments (*Country and The City* 297) from the time of the Industrial Revolution, then one could argue that suburbia needs to be added into the equation: the dichotomy has to become a trichotomy, for suburbia-related imagery was so frequently employed to verbalize change. Furthermore, Foucault's observation that the "discursive explosion" regarding sex in the nineteenth century involved intensive discussions about sex and the concomitant exploitation of it as a secret (*History of Sexuality* 1: 7) reminds one that those subjects that are presented as being one-dimensional or requiring very little discussion are often a site of complex investigation and dialogue. The fact that so many late-Victorian and early twentieth-century authors repeatedly described suburbia as being a mundane space that is in fact not worth describing is thus particularly suspect, and it is no surprise that a closer study of suburban imagery in the texts of this period yields a cornucopia of semantic possibilities.

Although the expansion of suburbia slowed down significantly following World War II, London suburbs have continued to attract the attention of English authors in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Following the influx of numerous immigrants from areas that were previously the outposts of the British Empire (India, Sri Lanka, the Caribbean, Northern Africa), however, the typical suburban in late twentieth-century English literature is very often a member of a racial minority, as shown in Hanif Kureshei's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000). It is worth asking how my detailed examination of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary suburbia as a heterotopic space of gender-related deviance or transformation could add important dimensions to the study of these post-colonial

texts about suburban London, especially in terms of their representations of gender, race, and class. In this sense, my project is an effort to galvanize and enrich an ongoing discussion about the many meanings and guises of suburbia, as well as a reminder that in terms of the history of suburbia there is no last word.

## Introduction Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> After World War II, the Town and Country Planning Act (1947) established a green belt around greater London and made it more difficult for private builders to erect housing, thus slowing down or, in many cases, completely preventing suburban building.

<sup>2</sup> The Italian tradition of building country houses for the upper classes close to the city dates back to the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire. When Palladio was designing mansions for Italian aristocrats, the term referred to a “country estate” that was designed primarily for “haven and entertaining” (Saint and Harwood 7). J. C. Loudon’s 1838 book about suburban residences is aptly entitled *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*.

<sup>3</sup> Fishman notes that the emerging importance of the nuclear family was directly related to the rise of capitalism and people’s longer life spans. The importance of community ties and kin groups decreased while raising one’s nuclear family for purposes of emotional and material investment became the norm among the middle classes (Fishman 33-34).

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the Evangelicals favoured suburban living and built houses in the semi-rural community of Clapham near London in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

<sup>5</sup> I will refer to this book as *HS*.

<sup>6</sup> I will refer to this essay as “G.”

<sup>7</sup> Foucault observes: “Accordingly, we need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-governmentality” (“G” 219).

<sup>8</sup> Advertisements for the sale of new suburban houses and building land became prevalent in the *Times* after the 1850s: the 21 May 1855 edition features an ad entitled “Surbiton, Surrey: A Good Opening for Builders” (4); on 12 September 1855, there is a promotion of “Ealing-

Suburban Villas, Semi-Detached” (3); and an ad titled “Sutton, Surrey – Charming and Healthy Suburb” appears on 16 August, 1888 (12).

<sup>9</sup> There are numerous mentions of the developing railway system in the *Times* during the 1860s. An article entitled “Railway Schemes of the Metropolis and Suburbs,” which appeared on 24 March 1863, discusses the “increase of traffic and a continually recurring demand” that led to the “authorization and execution of a considerable length of railways in and surrounding the metropolis” (5).

<sup>10</sup> Beginning in the 1860s, various railway companies extended into suburbia. Metropolitan Railway, for instance, launched the Hammersmith and City Railway in 1864, and later extended into Middlesex, Hertfordshire, and Buckinghamshire by creating a line from Baker Street to Swiss Cottage (Barratt 189). In 1902, all the underground railway companies in London were amalgamated by the American tycoon Charles Yerkes into the Underground Electric Railways Company of London, commonly called the Underground or (among the public) the Tube (Barratt 191). Metropolitan Railway was completely electrified by 1905.

<sup>11</sup> In order to make the semi-detached houses seem more elegant and grandiose, the builders often constructed single pediments and elevations at the front and hid the entrances in “understated side bays” to give the appearance of a single, large house (Meile 48).

<sup>12</sup> Howard describes what a Garden City looks like in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1899). Purdom wrote several books regarding Garden Cities, including *The Garden City: A Study* (1913) and *The Building of Satellite Towns* (1935), in which he emphasizes the importance of decentralized living for the health of the imperial nation.

<sup>13</sup> Letchworth was planned in such a way that its inhabitants would be employed locally, but Simon Dentith observes that this settlement was often confused with the suburb even by its residents, many of whom “commuted to London from the outset” (25).

<sup>14</sup> The Arts and Crafts movement, initiated by Morris starting in the 1860s, emphasized traditional craftsmanship and folk styles of decoration. Morris also advocated economic and social reform.

<sup>15</sup> On 26 March, 1919, the *Times* published a letter by Howard entitled “Garden Cities and Suburbs,” in which he argues that the newspaper and the public need to stop confusing the Garden City with the Garden Suburb. The suburb, he observes, is like a “dormitory” for commuters, whereas a Garden City is a self-sustained and more organic entity (7).

<sup>16</sup> Sidney Low in his 1891 article, “The Rise of the Suburbs,” provides a study of mid- to late nineteenth-century censuses.

<sup>17</sup> At this time, subway railway routes were built, extended, and electrified (the Piccadilly Line, for instance, was extended west to Uxbridge and east to Cockfosters in the early 1930s). The period also witnessed the development of motorbus services, electric tramways, and automobile transportation (Jackson 29 and 212). Metropolitan Railway’s Publicity Department issued an annual guidebook between 1915 and 1932, entitled *Metro-Land*, which mainly consisted of advertisements for housing developments, especially in the areas of north-west Middlesex (Green, “Introduction”).

<sup>18</sup> The Old Age Pensions Act was passed in 1908; the Unemployment Insurance Act, in 1911; and rent control was introduced in 1915.

<sup>19</sup> The formation of the London Passenger Transport Board in 1933, which coordinated rail, tram, and omnibus travel in London and the surrounding areas (by standardizing scheduling and

branding), testifies to the fact that traffic issues in an increasingly busy and expanding metropolis were becoming more complex (Barratt 370-2).

<sup>20</sup> The Elementary Education Act (1870) set the framework for schooling of children of all genders and classes between the ages of five and thirteen in England; the Education Act (1918) raised the school leaving age to fourteen.

<sup>21</sup> Elaborated in writings such as T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919).

<sup>22</sup> See Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945). Frank argues that "modern literature, exemplified by such writers as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce," encourages readers to "apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than a sequence" (227).

<sup>23</sup> This essay was also published in a compilation of Bakhtin's works entitled *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975). Although Bakhtin produced many of his texts during the time that Richardson, Woolf, Sackville-West, and Bowen were writing their novels, his publications became well-known outside of Russia only after his death in 1975.

<sup>24</sup> I will refer to this text as *TP*.

<sup>16</sup> Hermione Lee records that Sackville-West and Woolf met in 1922, but Woolf would have heard of Sackville-West's writings and sexual escapades well before this time (487).

Throughout the 1920s, during their friendship and love affair, the two women were regular correspondents and critics of one another's work. Woolf based the androgynous protagonist of *Orlando* (1928) on Sackville-West, and Sackville-West dedicated *Seducers in Ecuador* (1924) to Woolf (Lee 494-6). Glendinning, who wrote biographies of both Bowen and Sackville-West, notes in her biography of the former author that Woolf and Bowen corresponded in regards to their family lives, and that "Virginia Woolf paid Elizabeth the tribute of taking her [writing] seriously" (99). Although there is no record of Richardson's friendship with Woolf, Sackville-

West, or Bowen, Lee records that Woolf took “tentative stabs” at reviewing Richardson’s work around the time she was developing her innovative methods in *Night and Day* and *Jacob’s Room* (377). While Woolf critiqued Richardson for being egoistic and too self-conscious in her writing (392), she was aware of her own sense of rivalry with the latter author (386).

#### Chapter 1 Endnotes

<sup>25</sup> Although some scholarly essays refer to the author as Conan Doyle, there is a more general tendency to use only the latter name, Doyle (as, for example, Marie-Christine Leps does in her analysis of “The Man With the Twisted Lip”).

<sup>26</sup> Because there are important continuities in the representations of suburbia between the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, discussions of the *fin de siècle* will encompass an analysis of several texts that were published as late as 1910.

<sup>27</sup> “The Man With the Twisted Lip” will be referred to as “MWTL” in parenthetical references; “NB” will stand for “The Norwood Builder”; “IL” for “The Inmost Light”; and “NIM” for “Novel of the Iron Maiden.”

<sup>28</sup> Whelan is the only scholar who has conducted a thorough study of the links among Victorian Gothic fiction and the popularization of the suburban ideal. Her main focus, however, is mid-century ghost stories by such writers as Oliphant and Riddell. Whelan claims that, after 1880, the Gothic was rarely utilized in representations of suburbia; she thus ignores the numerous works of Doyle and Machen. Only Kuchta briefly discusses both “The Man with a Twisted Lip” and “The Norwood Builder,” but does not mention Machen’s work.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Waxenberg’s essay on the legalities of Jonas Oldacre’s will is one of the rare scholarly studies devoted solely to Doyle’s “The Norwood Builder.” Scholarship on Machen, on

the other hand, is generally limited in number and topical scope: only Eckersley and Hurley refer to aspects of “The Inmost Light” in some detail, while there are no existing analyses of “Novel of the Iron Maiden.”

<sup>30</sup> George R. Sims’s *How the Poor Live* (1883), Andrew Mearns’s *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, an Enquiry into the Conditions of the Abject Poor* (1883), Charles Booth’s survey *Life and Labour of the London People* (1889), and Helen Bosanquet’s *Rich and Poor* (1896) sought to investigate and classify London’s East-End population, while texts such as James Greenwood’s *The Wilds of London* (1874), George C. Needham’s *Street Arabs and Gutter Snipes* (1884), Mrs. H. M. Stanley’s *London Street Arabs* (1890), and William Booth’s *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890) explicitly equated working classes with the colonial Other.

<sup>31</sup> “[W]hen we think how narrow and how devious this path of nature is,” Doyle observes, “how dimly we can trace it, for all our lamps of science, and how from the darkness which girds it round great and terrible possibilities loom ever shadowy upwards, it is a bold and confident man who will put a limit to the strange by-paths into which the human spirit may wander” (“Lot 249” 109).

<sup>32</sup> The rapid rise of suburbia was concomitant with the slow but steady decline of the British Empire, so that negative portrayals of the former increased as imperialist ventures disintegrated: the English man, who was once “an imperialist pioneer,” degenerated into a colonized “slave,” tamed by suburban conventionality and materialism (Kuchta 5, 9).

<sup>33</sup> Crosland comments that approximately 75% of suburban men could be characterized as “clerks” (44).

<sup>34</sup> The Corbetts have a cook, a “house-parlour maid,” and a “tow nurse” for their three children, Lancelot, Hugo, and Guinevere, but there is a clear suggestion that they belong to the same class as their servants (D’Arcy 66).

<sup>35</sup> Charles Dickens describes male doubleness in *Great Expectations* (1860) in mainly positive terms: Mr. Wemmick, a city clerk, maintains a strict division between his serious office persona and his romantic and imaginative private one. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, suburban identity-shifters were portrayed as being far more disturbing, a change associated with the rapid pace and extent of suburban growth and consequent blurring of class boundaries.

<sup>36</sup> In “The Red-Headed League” (1891), Holmes reveals that he is able to tell which country a client’s tattoo was created in based on the design and technique of the drawing (223).

<sup>37</sup> In “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” (1892), for example, Holmes deduces several important details about a random man’s identity by closely examining his hat (320).

<sup>38</sup> Eliot, however, was an acknowledged fan of Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories. See Grover Smith’s *T.S. Eliot’s Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meanings*.

<sup>39</sup> In “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches” (1892), Holmes argues that isolated houses in outlying bourgeois suburbs are more dangerous than London alleys: ““You look at these scattered houses, and you are impressed by their beauty. I look at them, and the only thought which comes to me is a feeling of their isolation, and of the impunity with which crime may be committed here”” (280).

<sup>40</sup> Holmes disguises himself in numerous short stories: he poses as a working-class “common loafer” in “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet” (374) and a tramp in “A Scandal in Bohemia.”

<sup>41</sup> “One of the fundamental tasks of the State,” Deleuze and Guattari argue, “is to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilize smooth spaces as a means of communications in the

service of striated space” (385). In each instance, “the simple opposition ‘smooth-striated’ gives rise to far more difficult complications, alternations, and superimpositions” (*TP* 481).

<sup>42</sup> In “The Man With the Twisted Lip,” Holmes mentions his cocaine habit and eccentricities after Dr. Watson encounters him in the opium den: “‘I suppose, Watson,’ said he, ‘that you imagine that I have added opium-smoking to cocaine injections and all the other little weaknesses on which you have favoured me with your medical views’” (141-2).

<sup>43</sup> Marck suggests that Holmes’s moments of perception during the course of the St. Clair case might have had something to do with having spent time in the opium den: considering he sat amidst the smoke and was in possession of a pipe when Dr. Watson encountered him, it is perfectly possible that Holmes was under the influence of the drug for hours after he exited the den (113).

<sup>44</sup> In “Scandal in Bohemia,” Dr. Watson informs the reader that Holmes “used to make merry over the cleverness of women” (15).

<sup>45</sup> In his 1903 letter to the editor of *Strand*, Doyle implies that, despite an “intense disinclination to continue,” monetary considerations are the primary reason for his continued engagement with Holmes. It was the generic nature of the detective stories that most displeased Doyle: “It is impossible to prevent a certain sameness and want of freshness” (*Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* 504).

<sup>46</sup> There are only a few essays dedicated to the study of this story, but Doyle himself viewed the tale as one of his more layered and clever ones: “The second, ‘The Norwood Builder,’ I would put in the very first rank of the whole series for subtlety and depth. . . . Take the series of points, Holmes’s deductions from the will written in the train, the point of the bloody thumb mark, Holmes’s device to frighten the man out of his hiding place & c., I know no Holmes story which has such a succession of bright points” (*Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* 504).

<sup>47</sup> Lower Norwood is a south-eastern suburb of greater London. In his collection of articles entitled *Suburban Homes of London* (1881), Spencer Clarke observes that this area contains very “diversified occupancy”: while members of the “labouring classes” are generally found on the eastern side of the railway, “those of the better sort” are further west (380). Clarke also notes that new roads and houses are in the process of being built on “new fields a little further away” in expectation of a railway extension (the Chatham and Dover line) (380).

<sup>48</sup> *The Great God Pan* recounts the story of an experimental scientist who penetrates the mystical realm of the ancient Greek god and inadvertently creates a demonic woman who haunts suburban neighbourhoods.

<sup>49</sup> During the course of his life in London, Machen inhabited houses in Wandsworth, Turham Green, Notting Hill, and St. John’s Wood (Machen, *Far Off Things* 83-115).

<sup>50</sup> Machen admired the character of Sherlock Holmes, stating that Doyle’s detective stories would be the “surviving [books] of the 1890-1914 generation” (*Arthur Machen and Montgomery Evans* 102).

<sup>51</sup> Both Fox and Valentine note that Machen’s interest in hidden reality and artistically inclined urban walkers made many late-Victorian commentators compare his work to that of the Symbolists and Decadents (Fox 58, Valentine 52). Because Machen never identified himself with either of these groups (he publicly disavowed any connections), and as this topic is not directly related to suburbia, I will not analyze the author’s detective characters as examples of urban aesthetes or decadent artists. Such an inquiry could constitute a chapter of its own.

<sup>52</sup> Machen was interested in mysticism throughout his life; a discovery of parallel dimensions and occult knowledges is the central theme of works such as *The Three Impostors*, *A Fragment of Life*, and “N.”

<sup>53</sup> The character's full name is never mentioned. As the rest of the young men in Machen's stories refer to each other using last names, it is assumed that Dyson is the character's family name. His lack of first name emphasizes the fact that this story does not concern the young man's private life, but his social persona.

<sup>54</sup> Dyson sees the demonic Mrs. Black while wandering through the suburb of Harlesden; Salisbury's walk on a rainy night results in a discovery of a strange piece of paper filled with chant-like words and a riddle; finally, Dyson chances upon a shop whose location and name match the riddle Salisbury had delivered to him, and is able to use the chant to obtain a box that turns out to contain Mr. Black's confession and a stone containing his wife's soul.

<sup>55</sup> See Anne Witchard's "'A Fatal Freshness': Mid-Victorian Suburbophobia" and Amanda Mordavsky Caleb's "'A City of Nightmares': Suburban Anxiety in Arthur Machen's London Gothic" for discussions of suburban instability and Gothic representations of the landscapes in nineteenth-century fiction. Although both scholars discuss Machen's work (albeit briefly in Witchard's case), they do not consider either of the two short stories studied in this chapter.

<sup>56</sup> In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault observes that the deployment of sexuality in the nineteenth century involved a thorough hysterization of women's bodies, by which "the feminine body was analyzed – qualified and disqualified – as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality" (104).

<sup>57</sup> There are no quotation marks around this quote because all of Mr. Black's narration is presented in the form of a diary rather than dialogue.

<sup>58</sup> This short story was written and published by Machen in 1890, but he later included it in his 1895 episodic novel, *The Three Impostors*, along with a short introduction entitled "The Decorative Imagination." Later editions of *The Three Impostors*, such as the ones by Arcane Wisdom (2009) and Chaosium Inc. (2007), contain both the short story and its introduction,

while others, such as Martin Secker's (1926), do not. "Novel of the Iron Maid" also appears as an independent piece in a collection of Machen's short stories, *Ritual and Other Stories* (1992), as well as in a short story anthology, *Short Stories of the 'Nineties* (1968). This chapter will treat the short story as an independent tale due to length constraints. An inquiry as to how the meanings of the story change when it functions as part of a larger narrative would likely yield interesting results, as it is one of the criminals (impostors) who tells the story in the novel.

<sup>59</sup> In his letter to Montgomery Evans 6 May 1925, Machen observes, "I saw Savage last Saturday with some of the others, and uttered a savage tirade against Dorothy Richardson and May Sinclair, since I hold it as a duty to overturn the tables of them that sell pups in the Temple of Literature" (*Arthur Machen and Montgomery Evans* 30). Although Machen's complaints about the authors may have been primarily aimed at the innovative nature of their work, the fact that he chose two female writers as his targets of criticism suggests their offences against the Temple might be more than a little related to their "inferior" gender. Many commentators felt that the works of Marie Corelli, who wrote commercially successful tales of mysticism between 1886 and World War I, were representative of the general feminization and debasement of English literature at this time. Even though her novels were read by all classes and admired by eminent personages such as Queen Victoria, William Gladstone, and Oscar Wilde, predominantly male critics characterized her writing as being "vulgar, sentimental, and melodramatic" (Federico 11); disapproving commentators ironically referred to her as the "idol of suburbia," indicating their dislike of the type of literature that appeals to the "masses" (1).

## Chapter 2 Endnotes

<sup>60</sup> Andrew Thacker discusses, albeit only in relation to E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910), the fact that modernism was "engaged in a diverse set of responses to the official representations of space in modernity, found in the forms of urban life such as the suburbs and transport systems, or in relation between the imperial capital and the colony" (20-21). The only other scholar to engage at length with representations of suburbia in modernist writings is Elisabeth Bronfen, who studies how various spaces are portrayed in Richardson's *Pilgrimage* novels. Both Thacker and Bronfen's ideas inform the work of this dissertation.

<sup>61</sup> In *Coming up for Air* (1939), George Orwell's suburbia reflects the general feminization of the British culture in the early twentieth century. Suburban men, Orwell suggests, are trained into submission and drained of their vitality by the corporations they work for and the materialistic women they punctually come home to: "Because, after all, what is a road like Ellesmere Road? [. . .] A line of semi-detached torture-chambers where the poor little five-to-ten pounds-a-weekers quake and shiver, everyone one of them with the boss twisting his tail and the wife riding him like the nightmare and the kids sucking his blood like leeches" (14).

<sup>62</sup> Although Richardson wrote the *Pilgrimage* series between 1913 and the late 1940s, her novels deal with the period between the late 1880s and 1913. I will refer parenthetically to *Backwater* as *Bw*, to *The Tunnel* as *Tn*, and to *March Moonlight* as *MM*. *Night and Day* will be cited as *ND* in parenthesis.

<sup>63</sup> Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* is a particularly thorough study of men and women's responses to dramatic societal changes at the turn of the century, one of which was the emergence of the New Woman and women's struggle for the vote. By studying literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gilbert and Gubar identify a crisis of "male dispossession and female self-

possession” occasioned by “dramatic achievements of a growing number of notable women” in fields ranging from literature, painting, music, political activism, anthropology, psychology, and theosophy (34).

<sup>64</sup> Eleven of Richardson’s thirteen *Pilgrimage* texts were initially published as individual novels: *Pointed Roofs* (1915), *Backwater* (1916), *Honeycomb* (1917), *The Tunnel* (1919), *Interim* (1920; serialized in *Little Review*), *Deadlock* (1921), *Revolving Lights* (1923), *The Trap* (1925), *Oberland* (1927), *Dawn’s Left Hand* (1931), and *Clear Horizon* (1935). *Dimple Hill*, Richardson’s last finished novel, was published for the first time in a four-volume collection of *Pilgrimage* texts by London, Dent and Cresset, 1938. The first three sections of her last (and ultimately unfinished) novel, *March Moonlight*, were published in *Life and Letters*, 1946; the novel was first published in its entirety ten years after Richardson’s death, in a four-volume *Pilgrimage* collection by J. M. Dent, 1967. While Richardson was working on the *Pilgrimage* series, Woolf wrote all but one of her novels and both of her long essays: *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob’s Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), *The Waves* (1931), *The Years* (1937), and *Three Guineas* (1938); *Between the Acts* (1941), Woolf’s last novel, was published shortly after her suicide.

<sup>65</sup> Since Richardson frequently uses ellipses or suspension marks in her writing, I will employ square brackets around those ellipses that indicate words or passages I have omitted.

<sup>66</sup> As Raymond Williams observes in *The Country and The City* (1973), qualities of the modern city were associated “with a man walking, as if one alone” (231).

<sup>67</sup> While the metaphor is still commonly used among critics of Richardson’s work (see Shiv Kumar’s essay), it should be noted that Richardson disliked it. In a letter to a friend in 1949 she

renames it “The Shroud of Consciousness” and congratulates herself on steering several young scholars away from the phrase (*Windows* 600).

<sup>68</sup> “Women and Fiction” was the title of Woolf’s manuscript for a series of lectures that she gave at women’s colleges at Cambridge University in October 1928. *A Room of One’s Own* is an extended essay based upon these lectures.

<sup>69</sup> Hermione Lee records that Woolf read parts of Joyce’s *Ulysses* in 1918 as it was being serialized in the *Little Review* and took detailed reading notes on his method, “which began with references to the novelist’s May Sinclair’s 1918 review of Dorothy Richardson” (391). Among Woolf’s diaries and letters, Sinclair’s name comes up only once in 1922, in a letter to Lytton Strachey. Woolf indicates that she is aware Strachey is reading Sinclair and observes that she might do so as well, although she would far prefer to read Strachey’s own works (*Letters* 2: 503). Lee, however, maintains that Woolf “tackled” Sinclair, along with Eliot, Joyce, Richardson, and Mansfield around the time she was writing *Night and Day*. Indeed, Woolf’s reference to “different streams of thought” in a passage that describes a character’s stroll in London in *Night and Day* suggests that she was familiar with Sinclair’s review of Richardson’s work and her use of the “stream of consciousness” metaphor (*ND* 282).

<sup>70</sup> Katherine Mansfield agreed with Woolf’s estimation of *Pilgrimage*’s shortcomings in her review of *Interim*: “Darting through life, quivering, hovering, exulting in the familiarity and the strangeness of all that comes within her tiny circle, she leaves us feeling, as before, that everything being of equal importance to her, it is impossible that everything should not be of equal unimportance” (“Dragonflies” 310).

<sup>71</sup> Richardson considered Woolf a “diluted male, wobbly and irrelevant” because, she implies, the latter failed to represent “life-as-experience” (Richardson, *Windows* 629).

<sup>72</sup> Woolf refused to review *Interim* (1920) for the *Times Literary Supplement* at the end of 1919 and a year later declined to review Richardson's *Deadlock* (1921), the sixth volume of *Pilgrimage* (*Diary* 1: 315; *Diary* 2: 93). Her refusal to review the former text was a reaction to Mansfield's negative review of *Night and Day*, in which the latter author critiqued Woolf's novel for being too traditional: "Today, bearing K. M. in mind, I refused to do Dorothy Richardson for the Supt. [. . .] The truth is that when I looked at it, I felt myself looking for faults; hoping for them. And they would have bent my pen, I know. There must be an instinct of self-preservation at work, if she's good then I'm not" (*Diary* 1: 315). Woolf's description of Leonard Woolf's comment about Mansfield's review of *Night and Day* echoes Woolf's concluding statement regarding Richardson's "successful failure" in her review of *The Tunnel*: "Leonard supposes that she let her wish for my failures have its way with her pen. He could see her looking about for a loophole of escape" (*Diary* 1: 314). These diary entries reveal both the fact that Woolf did consider Richardson worthy of rivalry and Woolf's awareness that her reviews of Richardson's texts might have been influenced by this sense of competition.

<sup>73</sup> While she responded to Joyce's writings in a similar manner as she did to Richardson's, Woolf was intrigued by the more itinerant narrative voice used by Mansfield, with whom she had a competitive and somewhat mercurial friendship. In a letter to Jacques Reverat in 1923, Woolf praises Mansfield's capacity to reproduce life's details vividly, but notes that the latter author cannot put feelings or subtleties into her characters "without at once becoming, where she's serious, hard, and where she's sympathetic, sentimental" (*Letters* 3:59). After Mansfield's untimely death, however, she admits that her writing was "the only writing I have ever been jealous of" (*Diary* 2: 227). Another author whose work had significant impact upon Woolf's prose was Marcel Proust, who "titillated" her "desire for expression"; she only began to read his

texts in 1922 (as did Richardson (*Windows* 64)), long after completing *Night and Day* (*Letters* 2: 525).

<sup>74</sup> I will refer to *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson* as *Windows*.

<sup>75</sup> When asked, Richardson refused to review Woolf's works, observing that Woolf's prose failed to "move" her (Richardson, *Windows* 425). When told by a friend in 1936 that Hogarth Press, owned by Virginia and Leonard Woolf, would have published her texts, Richardson reacted by commenting that she was always irked by "that group looking down their distinguished noses" at her (*Windows* 320). The *Pilgrimage* novels were published by Woolf's half-brother, Gerald Duckworth.

<sup>76</sup> Some time after Woolf's nervous breakdown in 1913, her husband Leonard, fearing that life in central London might prove over-stimulating to his psychologically fragile wife, initiated a move to Richmond, a well-off, middle-class suburb located in the southwest of the city (Wilson 90). Virginia Woolf's response to life in Richmond was at first tentatively positive: the setting was peaceful and picturesque, very unlike the sprawls of monotonous suburbs that one could witness around London. "Certainly it is the first of the suburbs by a long way," she observed, "because it is not an offshoot of London, any more than Oxford or Marlborough is" (*Diary* 1:31). By 1920, however, she describes a deep unhappiness with suburban existence, for she feels it isolates her from the excitement of public life and deprives her of artistic inspiration:

This may be life; but I doubt that I shall ever convert L. and now sit baffled and depressed to face a life spent, mute and mitigated, in the suburbs, just as I had it in mind that I could at last go full speed ahead. [. . .] Oh to be able to slip in and out of things easily, to be in them, not on the verge of them – I resent this effort and waste. [. . .] Also to catch trains, always to waste time, to sit here and wait for Leonard to come in, to spend hours standing at the box of type with Margery, to

wonder what its all for – when, alternatively, I might go and hear a tune, or have a look at a picture, or find out something at the British Museum, or go adventuring among human beings. [. . .] But now I'm tied, imprisoned, inhibited. [. . .] Forever to be suburban. (*Diary* 1: 250)

Her views are echoed in a more concise form less than twenty years later by Lewis Mumford, who observes that “in its various and many-sided life, in its very opportunities for social disharmony and conflict, the city creates drama; the suburb lacks it” (“What is a City?” 94). Woolf’s response to suburban living could be related to her lack of interest in setting her fiction in suburbia.

<sup>77</sup> Although both Woolf and Mansfield found flaws in Richardson’s method, they considered her experiments worthy of repeated discussion. Woolf reports in her diary, March 1919, that she and Mansfield had a stimulating conversation about Richardson’s work: “At once she flung down her pen and plunged, as if we’d been parted for 10 minutes, into the question of Dorothy Richardson; and so on with the greatest freedom and animation on both sides until I had to catch my train” (*Diary* 1: 257-8). Couched between two statements about Mansfield’s failure to answer Woolf’s earlier letter or apologize for this neglect, Woolf’s mention of the former author’s interest in Richardson hints that she herself has been slighted as a person and a writer. This feeling might have been further exacerbated by Mansfield’s highly critical review of *Night and Day*, which she wrote in October of the same year.

<sup>78</sup> In 1920, Richardson’s *Interim* (1920) was serialized in the avant-garde literary journal *Little Review*, alongside Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) (Parsons, *Theorists of the Modern Novel* 9).

<sup>79</sup> In her diary, Woolf makes a comment regarding the authors’ egoism (*Diary* 2: 13-14).

Although Woolf and D. H. Lawrence did not share similar aesthetic concerns, his comments on Joyce and Richardson in his essay “Surgery for the Novel – or a Bomb” (1923) bear a striking

resemblance to Woolf's view of the authors' works: "Through thousands and thousands of pages Mr. Joyce and Miss Richardson tear themselves to pieces, stringing their smallest emotions to the finest thread, till you feel you are sewed inside wool mattress that is being slowly shaken up and you are turning to wool along with the rest of the woolliness" ("Surgery for the Novel" 115).

<sup>80</sup> Mephram draws attention to the fact that the standard text of *Pilgrimage* used by contemporary readers is based on the 1938 edition, which means that most readers are not aware of how intensive Richardson's stylistic experimentation had been over the course of her novel series (453). The Virago edition of the *Pilgrimage* novels used in this dissertation is also based on the 1938 edition.

<sup>81</sup> While it would be naïve to read *Pilgrimage* from an autobiographical angle, it is worth mentioning that some of the plot elements in the texts mirror events in the author's life. A part of Richardson's childhood was spent in a spacious house in the suburb of Putney. Eager to earn money after her father's near-bankruptcy, Richardson left her family home at the age of seventeen to teach, first at a school in Germany and then at Finsbury Park, a lower-middle-class London suburb that developed around a railway interchange in the nineteenth century (Rosenberg 7, 15). After categorically rejecting the kind of heteronormative life that she witnessed in and associated with suburbia, she moved to central London, to act as an assistant in a dentist's office. Years later, however – shortly before she began her work on *Pilgrimage* – Richardson moved to St. John's Wood, a middle-class London suburb popular among artists (once home to George Eliot and George Henry Lewes), where she met her future husband, Alan Odle (Rosenberg 178).

<sup>82</sup> At this time, Woolf was also reading Proust, who had recently passed away. In a letter to Roger Fry in May 1922, she marvels at Proust's ability to create "astonishing vibration and saturation and intensification" in his prose (*Letters 2*: 525).

<sup>83</sup> It is interesting to compare Miriam's experience of travel atop the omnibus with that of Clarissa or Elizabeth Dalloway in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). While the ride inspires Clarissa's sense of spiritual expansion and connection with citizens of London, and Elizabeth's fantasies about various exciting paths her life could take, it arouses Miriam's class prejudices. These contrasting reactions are certainly a result of the characters' different financial standing – the Dalloway women come from an affluent household, whereas it is Miriam's father's bankruptcy that forces her to make the expedition to Banbury Park – but they also suggest Woolf's more consistent interest in how representations of new forms of transport could create the basis for innovative narrations of feminine interiority and portrayals of interconnected urban spaces and bodies.

<sup>84</sup> Bronfen employs the term “anti-spaces” in reference to Richardson's textual suburbia, but she does not utilize Deleuze and Guattari's theories in her analysis. It is interesting to note that Richardson describes Miriam's response to lower-middle-class suburbia using the same imagery of claustrophobia that characterizes Woolf and Lawrence's criticisms of Richardson and Joyce's methods. While Woolf refers specifically to Joyce's work in “Modern Fiction,” the comparisons she makes in her personal writings between Joyce and Richardson's techniques suggest that her description of Joyce's limiting method in this essay – which makes a person feel as though he or she is in a “strictly confined apartment” – could also be applied to Richardson's work (34). Lawrence, on the other hand, states that Joyce and Richardson's fiction makes one feel they are “sewed inside wool mattress that is being slowly shaken up” (“Surgery for the Novel” 115). As I will demonstrate, analyzing the representations of suburbia in *Pilgrimage* helps identify a distance between the texts' narrator and the young protagonist, which proves the existence of

more than one perspective within Richardson's novels. Perhaps Woolf and Lawrence reject *Pilgrimage* in the same hasty way in which Miriam rejects Banbury Park.

<sup>85</sup> This is a very different situation from the one experienced by a middle-class housewife in Richardson's short story "Tryst," in which the character describes her time away from home in terms of an illicit affair, or a tryst with a lover: returning quickly to her house, she ensures the comfort of her husband by finding his glasses and taking them to the library, the man's private room (*Journey to Paradise* 59). Woolf critiques the masculine privileges of "the study" in *The Voyage Out* (1915).

<sup>86</sup> Woolf would certainly disagree with Miriam's comment, as she repeatedly foregrounds the ways in which characters are gendered in urban centres in novels such as *The Voyage Out*, *Jacob's Room*, and *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the second text, the narrator's gender, for example, prevents her from following Jacob Flanders into his private London rooms. Furthermore, as Nadine Attewell observes, "[h]er gender, her vulnerability to sexual danger, and her intrusion in the space of her own narrative, all produce one another" (17). Woolf thus inscribes the realities of a woman's experience of urban space into the narrative in this early text.

<sup>87</sup> Writing in 1893, Percy Fitzgerald characterizes Hampstead as "the most original and enjoyable of [London's] suburbs" because of its pure air, magnificent views, and beautiful houses (94-5). The village of Hampstead was already being transformed in the early eighteenth century by fashionable members of society who built weekend homes in the area; during the nineteenth century, records Kenneth Panton, it became a full-fledged suburb and home to many wealthy businessman, politicians, writers, and artists (188-9).

<sup>88</sup> In a letter to her friend and fellow writer Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman) in October 1940, Richardson indicates that she was planning to continue the *Pilgrimage* series beyond *March Moonlight*: "The best I can do is to add to *March Moonlight* its successors" (*Windows* 411).

<sup>89</sup> Richardson was very interested in Quakerism: she spent time living in a Quaker community, wrote a book called *The Quakers Past and Present* (1914), and put together an anthology of works by the founder of the Quaker sect, George Fox (Fromm 74). Her letters reveal that what appealed to her about Quakers was their pacifism and more equal gender relations: in a letter to Bryher in 1941, she contends that the male need for dominance, which has “held the Western world back for centuries,” is absent only in Quaker communities and in Tibet; in “Women and the Future,” she observes that women’s capacity for “imaginative sympathy” will make her within “the council of nations what the Quaker is within the council of religions” (*Windows* 439; “Woman and the Future” 414). Woolf’s views on the connections between pacifism and gender norms are clearly expressed in *Three Guineas* (1938), and although she does not discuss Quakerism in her writing, she was certainly exposed to its ideologies through Quaker friend, Roger Fry, as well as through her aunt, Caroline Emelia, and friend, Violet Dickinson (Lee 67).

<sup>90</sup> YWBA operates as a fictional equivalent of organizations such as Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). The first YWCAs were formed in England and United States in the middle and late nineteenth century; the Association’s aim was to provide support networks for women and girls in a period of rapidly changing social conditions and women’s introduction into the public sphere (Sims 5). Most of these institutions ran programs to help women find jobs, organized recreational and education classes, and provided housing with libraries and community rooms (Sims 8-9).

<sup>91</sup> Richardson’s subtle reference to Brontë’s novel clearly situates Miriam within the English literary tradition that idealizes the countryside as the most “native” element of England. Unlike Woolf, however, Richardson is less invested in writing about Englishness: while the former author discusses, for example, the connections among imperialism, masculinity, and Englishness in *The Voyage Out*, *Orlando*, and *Between the Acts*, or investigates how the glorification of the

English men of letters reinforces gender inequity in *Night and Day*, Richardson's intense focus on only one woman's consciousness prevents her from exploring more general aspects of the English national identity.

<sup>92</sup> This is a phrase of my own making.

<sup>93</sup> Thacker does not discuss Richardson's work.

<sup>94</sup> Although their true opinions of *Night and Day* might have differed in various degrees with the ones they communicated to Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, and Ottoline Morrell praised the text in the personal letters they wrote to the author (Woolf, *Letters* 2: 394-398). In a letter to a friend in January 1920, Woolf acknowledges *Night and Day*'s "chequered career": "'The dullest book in the world,' Kitty Maxse. 'A great novel – particularly in its psychology,' Sir George Savage: and then this morning I had two others equally contradictory" (*Letters* 2: 416).

<sup>95</sup> In one of her early essays, "Carlyle's House," Woolf describes her trip to Chelsea to visit the house in Cheyne Row in which Thomas Carlyle lived until 1881 and which The Carlyle's House Memorial Trust acquired and opened to the public in 1895. She observes that Cheyne Row is filled with "stucco pillars" and the old fields of Chelsea "stamped out by the great municipal buildings of grey brick" ("Carlyle's House" 3). Only fifty years ago, she continues, "Chelsea must have been a spacious quarter," with "distinct rows of little eighteenth century houses, separated by fields"; what was once a relatively peripheral, almost suburban, area of London has in Woolf's time become a full-fledged part of the central city (3).

<sup>96</sup> While Highgate was often described with Hampstead as part of the picturesque "Northern Heights of London," Hugh Prince observes that the suburb attracted an increasing number of bankers, merchants, as well as clerks and shop assistants, by the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century (124-5). There was also a significant amount of house, flat, and road building in this area following the end of World War I (Borer 237). Nevertheless, the

centre of Highgate (the Grove and Pond Square) was preserved, and many houses dating back to the eighteenth-century village are still in existence.

<sup>97</sup> Woolf's narrator refers to William Rodney by his last name, even though she calls the other young characters by their first names; this strategy emphasizes Woolf's characterization of Rodney as being exceedingly formal and traditional in his views about art and women. This dissertation will follow her example and refer to the character by his last name.

<sup>98</sup> Thus, in "Carlyle's House" Woolf's narrator, who is visiting the author's preserved house in Cheyne Row, focuses primarily on analyzing the expression of Jane Carlyle's face in a photo and thinking about Mrs. Carlyle's feelings and thoughts (Woolf 4).

<sup>99</sup> In "Oxford Street Tide," Woolf mentions suburban living only once, but the comment is situated at a crucial moment in her discussion of modernity, consumer culture, and changing understandings and practices of space and architecture. Soo provides a thorough and effective analysis of Woolf's representations of space in this essay, noting that the author shows Oxford Street as consisting of diverse discourses and practices, and as an "ambiguous and flexible place pregnant with infinite ambiguities, conflicts, and change, at once oppressive and liberating" (8); she does not, however, comment on Woolf's mention of suburbia and its relation with emerging, more flexible spatial codes.

<sup>100</sup> Full of physical and intellectual vitality, Ralph is a far cry from *Howards End's* suburban clerk, Leonard Bast, whom E. M. Forster describes as a frail descendent of sturdy farmers in a novel that also deals with interactions among affluent urban intelligentsia and suburban up-and-comers: "Hints of robustness survived in him, more than a hint of primitive good looks, and Margaret, noting the spine that might have been straight, and the chest that might have broadened, wondered whether it paid to give up the glory of the animal for a tail coat and a couple of ideas" (109).

<sup>101</sup> Woolf pursued the theme of a woman's submersion in marriage in many of her novels, most notably in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In her first novel, *Voyage Out* (1915), Woolf's young protagonist, Rachel Vinrace, dies shortly after her engagement: her death could be read as being an escape from or a symbol of the obliteration of women's private life that occurs within traditional marriages in a patriarchal society.

<sup>102</sup> Both of these suburbs are located near the river Thames, in the southwest part of London.

<sup>103</sup> Rachel Bowlby provides a very effective study of the implications that the train setting creates in the author's "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown":

By this time, the imagery of public transport had become literally a common place for suggesting the repetitive and banal "types" of realist fiction, as with the standardized "man on the Clapham omnibus." Woolf, on the contrary, alters the terms – by putting the novel into the carriage with her subject, and by using the public space as a sign of strangeness rather than predictability. (2)

Woolf suggests that both literary modes of representations and train schedules need to change in order to accommodate women's needs and creative outlooks: she does so by placing her argument about a need for artistic innovation in a train that usually carries male workers and by focusing on the inability of male, realist writers (John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, and H. G. Wells) to portray effectively a female passenger (Bowlby 16).

<sup>104</sup> Mary is put off by a realization that Ralph loves Katherine, as well as by his passionless proposal; Ralph deludes himself into thinking that it would be best to give up his pursuit of Katherine and marry a friend to whom he is not attracted; and Katherine fails in her attempt to break off her engagement to Rodney (*ND* 166).

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<sup>105</sup> Their love affair was at its most intense between 1925 and 1928, but they remained friends until Woolf's suicide in 1941. Sackville-West's poem, "In Memoriam: Virginia Woolf," was published in *The Observer* in April 1941 (*Selected Writings* 330).

<sup>106</sup> In a 1938 review of Sackville-West's work, Florence Booclever draws attention to the author's eminent literary reputation: "Perusal of her own writings and estimates of her by others have led to a belief in her superiority in the fields of poetry, fiction, and literary criticism. . . . Without assuming the role of prophet, it seems likely that *The Land* [1926], *All Passion Spent* [1931], and *The Edwardians* are destined for some sort of posterity. *Saint Joan of Arc* [1938], fresh from the press, will be read with interest for a long time" (93). Michael Stevens, whose biography of Sackville-West appeared in 1973, was also optimistic about the future of scholarly interest in her work. He observes that there had been a dearth of studies on her texts since her death in 1962, but attributes this to the "usual lull in interest that follows the death of a writer" (83).

<sup>107</sup> Most studies of Sackville-West's texts that can be found in the University of Toronto are housed in the Virginia Woolf Collection at the E. J. Pratt library, Victoria College, which testifies to the fact that Woolf's rising literary reputation eclipsed and then largely subsumed that of her friend and lover.

<sup>108</sup> See Susanne Raitt, *Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf*; Louise A. DeSalvo, "Lighting the Cave: The Relationship Between Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf." As Hermione Lee observes, "Few people now read *The Edwardians* or *The Land*, compared with the number who visit Sissinghurst and Knole, or who watched *Portrait of a Marriage* or *Orlando*" (487). Sissinghurst was Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson's country house, with extensive gardens; Knole was the ancestral home of the

Sackville-West family. *Portrait of a Marriage* (1973), published by Sackville-West's son Nigel Nicolson, is Sackville-West's secret, autobiographical manuscript of her love affair with Violet Trefusis, which was adapted into a BBC series in 1990.

<sup>109</sup> *All Passion Spent* will be cited *APS* in parenthesis.

<sup>110</sup> Sackville-West refers to this character as Lady Slane; this chapter will follow the text's example.

<sup>111</sup> There is no record of this meeting in Sackville-West's diary, but Woolf's first impression of the former woman was not very complimentary: "Not much to my severer taste – florid, moustached, parakeet coloured, with all the supple ease of the aristocrats, but no wit of the artist" (*Diaries* 2: 216).

<sup>112</sup> Records of Knole reach as far back as 1281. The Sackville family was given the title of Earl of Dorset in the sixteenth century and the Kent country house, Knole, by Elizabeth I (Ames 118). Victoria Glendinning records that well-known poets such as Alexander Pope, John Dryden, William Congreve, and many others stayed at Knole as guests of the poetic Earl of Dorset, Charles Sackville (10, 12).

<sup>113</sup> Photographs of Sackville-West as Orlando were featured in the first edition of *Orlando* (Glendinning 185).

<sup>114</sup> She is listed in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography: British Novelists 1890-1929: Traditionalists*, edited by Thomas F. Staley.

<sup>115</sup> It was their private joke that Sackville-West was "dumb, dense, a 'donkey'"; Woolf was the one "with the head," while the former woman was the one with "the legs" (Lee 485).

<sup>116</sup> The only text of Sackville-West that Woolf was very enthusiastic about was *Seducers in Ecuador*, a story of a traveller who puts on dark spectacles that completely alter his view of reality. Woolf found Sackville-West's play with the characters' changing perspectives

refreshingly imaginative, and admitted that it is “the sort of thing I should like to write myself” (*Letters* 3: 131). Sackville-West dedicated the text to Woolf, which hints at the fact that she credited the latter author with inspiring her to be more innovative. *Seducers in Ecuador* was reviewed in the United States in the same issue of *The New York Evening Post’s Literary Review* as Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*: the former novel was very positively reviewed at the top of the page, while Woolf’s text received a “cooler reception” from another critic in a review below (Glendinning 141).

<sup>117</sup> Sackville-West does not provide the first name of this character.

<sup>118</sup> Sackville-West opens *The Land* with the following lines, which suggest her interest in “age-old” rhythms and traditions of rural life:

I sing the cycle of my country’s year,  
I sing the tillage, and the reaping sing,  
Classic monotony, that modes and wars  
Leave undisturbed, unbettered, for their best  
Was born immediate, of expediency. (3)

<sup>119</sup> In *English Country Houses* (1944), Sackville-West suggests that the English country house is unique among European rural abodes in its tendency to blend into the surrounding natural environment: “Irrespective of grandeur or modesty, it should agree with its landscape and suggest the life of its inhabitants past or present; it should never overwhelm its surroundings. The peculiar genius of the English country house lies in its knack of fitting in” (7-8).

<sup>120</sup> Sackville-West was unable to inherit Knole because of her sex.

<sup>121</sup> A street in central London. Woolf had just recently visited London’s slums when she wrote this note (Lee 496).

<sup>122</sup> DeSalvo suggests that losing Knole after her father's death in 1928 significantly changed Sackville-West's view of aristocratic traditions and made her more critical of patriarchal institutions ("Every Woman is an Island" 100).

<sup>123</sup> Sackville-West's descriptions of Chevron and its aristocratic inhabitants were based in large part on her experiences of Knole. At the beginning of the novel Sebastian's mother distributes Christmas presents to the estate's children in the Great Hall at Chevron, a tradition that Sackville-West witnessed her mother performing during her childhood at Knole (Glendinning 9). The term "chevron" has associations with heraldry and thus nobility: it is a "charge or device on the escutcheon," which is a shield or shield-shaped emblem displaying a coat of arms (*OED*).

<sup>124</sup> Viola eventually marries Leonard Antequil, an explorer whose "democratic instincts" are at odds with the Chevron traditions; it is through these two rebellious and politically liberal characters (who reappear in *Family History*) that one can first discern Woolf's influence on Sackville-West's politics (*The Edwardians* 70). The names of the siblings Sebastian and Viola are a reference to William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1601-2). Although Shakespeare uses the fraternal twins to accentuate the constructedness of gender roles, Sackville-West, who frequently practiced cross-dressing in real life, does not focus on the same issues in this novel.

<sup>125</sup> While Sackville-West critiqued the patriarchal structure of society, her romanticization of country life and numerous comments made to friends and lovers in private writings show that she was relatively traditional in her views concerning class and democracy. Unlike the Woolfs, for example, she was not "in sympathy with the strikers" during the General Strike in 1926 (Lee 500). Her conservatism became more pronounced in later life; she reacted angrily to the announcements regarding the Beveridge Report (1945), which proposed significant post-WWII reforms to the system of social welfare. In a letter to Harold Nicolson, her husband, Sackville-West complained about the fact that the report offered too much charity: "My Manifesto: I hate

democracy. I hate *la populace*. I wish education had never been introduced. I don't like tyranny, but I like an intelligent oligarchy. I wish *la populace* had never been encouraged to emerge from its rightful place. I should like to see them as well fed and well housed as T. T. cows, but no more articulate than that. (It's rather what most men feel about most women!)" (Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 2*: 433).

<sup>126</sup> This suburb is located in the south-west part of Greater London; numerous bourgeois families started to build large country retreats in Balham in the eighteenth century.

<sup>127</sup> The Housing Act (1919) was passed to allow the building of new, state-owned housing complexes after World War I. Crafted in large part by Raymond Unwin, the legislation promoted low-density housing as being key to healthy and aesthetically pleasing suburban living. This act contributed significantly to the growth of suburbs between the wars.

<sup>128</sup> Sackville-West did not identify herself as being a feminist, although she thought that many of Woolf's writings were feminist (Glendinning 201). Her negative reaction to Woolf's arguments about gender in *The Three Guineas* will be addressed in a subsequent note.

<sup>129</sup> When the novel was published at the end of May 1931, Sackville-West's husband called it a "lovely book" (Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 1*: 69). Leonard Woolf thought it was her best novel (Glendinning 242). Indeed, it brought her more fan letters than *The Edwardians* did a year earlier (242).

<sup>130</sup> In Spring 1929, when she started working on *All Passion Spent*, Sackville-West was broadcasting for BBC with Harold Nicolson on the topic of women and marriage, and it is likely that discussions about the programme inspired some of her critiques of patriarchal society in the novel (Glendinning 103). Sackville-West and her husband often disagreed concerning the roles of women in society; this is obvious in their radio debates and especially in their personal writings. In a diary entry Nicolson observes: "V. says that in every revolution there is a

transitional stage. That women have for centuries been suppressed and that one cannot expect them to slide quite naturally into freedom. This saddens me. I know that there is no such thing as equality between the sexes and that women are not fulfilling their proper function unless subservient to some man” (*Diaries and Letters* 1: 171). Regardless of Nicolson’s traditional views concerning gender norms, his marriage with Sackville-West was highly unconventional according to the standards of their society. Both gave the other the freedom to pursue sexual and romantic partners of her/his own sex; Sackville-West was in fact having an affair with Hilda Matheson, the producer of their BBC debates (Glendinning 103).

<sup>131</sup> Glendinning observes that “there is a connection between the ideas of *All Passion Spent* and those of Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*, which was conceived in 1931 but not published until 1938” (237). These connections will be discussed more extensively later in the chapter.

<sup>132</sup> A common 1970s and 1980s nickname for the fashionable, upper-class young women from London was “Sloane Rangers” – the term is derived from Sloane Square, which is to this day one of the trendiest and wealthiest areas of the city (Room 509).

<sup>133</sup> Lady Slane has six children. I refer to her “children” as a monolithic group because they are characters who appear only a few times in the novel and operate primarily as symbols of conventionality (Sackville-West inverts the literary convention according to which the traditions of the older generation limit the aspirations of the younger one). Lady Slane’s youngest daughter, Edith, is somewhat different from her siblings, for she perceives that her mother does not want to be treated as someone who is “shattered” by the death of her husband (*APS* 48). Since Edith is a relatively minor character, however, I will not single her out each time I mention Lady Slane’s offspring.

<sup>134</sup> I will discuss how Lady Slane's passivity is linked to her complicity in perpetuating unequal class relations later in the chapter.

<sup>135</sup> Although similar critiques of patriarchal institutions exist in *All Passion Spent* and *Three Guineas*, Lee claims that Woolf did not admire Sackville-West's novel; she does not elaborate (615). I have found no such mention of the novel in Woolf's diaries or letters. On the other hand, when *Three Guineas* was published, Sackville-West was critical of Woolf's call for pacifism among women (DeSalvo, "Lighting the Cave" 214). Judging by Sackville-West's critiques of patriarchy and the oppression of women in *All Passion Spent*, however, it is likely that her negative response to *Three Guineas* stemmed primarily from her patriotic feelings on the eve of World War II.

<sup>136</sup> It is interesting to note that in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, both Clarissa Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay are considered to be old even though they are in their fifties. Mrs. Dalloway's age, for instance, is emphasized by her existence in a solitary room – she is a woman who is well past her reproductive years and who has had a near-death experience during her bout with influenza. In both these texts, Woolf is investigating the social construction of older women; unlike Sackville-West, however, Woolf does not explore old age or widowhood deeply, nor does she investigate these conditions as being conducive to the development of female resistance to patriarchal traditions.

<sup>137</sup> Hampstead census statistics show that 822 males were classified under "Gentlemen, independent, annuitants, retired from business" in 1921; 213 women were registered under this category in the same year (Thompson 438-442). In her personal writings, Woolf repeatedly satirized the "clean, decorous, uncompromising and high minded old ladies and old gentlemen" of Hampstead (*Diaries* 1: 83, 313).

<sup>138</sup> Because the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century houses that made up the core of old Hampstead were built very close together, there was little room for further development, and portions of these central, picturesque area remained untouched during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Borer 216). One major alteration was made to the old part of Hampstead in 1875, when Spencer M. Wilson created a plan for a new, wide, tree-lined thoroughfare (a southward extension of Heath Street) that came to be called Fitzjohn Avenue. The plan entailed a tearing down of some of the old town for the purposes of simplifying the main intersection; in 1887, another big portion of the cramped, old town was cleared away after the passing of the Metropolitan Streets Improvement Act (Borer 224). Numerous large, fashionable houses were built around the new intersections and streets, many of which came to be occupied by artists and rich businessmen and their families, and some of which were still in existence during the 1930s (223).

<sup>139</sup> People who lived in the Promised Land (later Palestine).

<sup>140</sup> Sackville-West wrote several travelogues. Being a privileged and unconventional woman of her time, she made frequent extended trips to visit her diplomat husband or to explore new countries with her various lovers. *Passenger to Tehran* (1926) is one of Sackville-West's better-known travelogues, a collection of diary entries written during a trip to Iran.

<sup>141</sup> In Woolf's essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1923), a woman's trip on a train along a suburban line is an inspiration for brainstorming about the ways in which the realist mode of representation fails to capture the nuances of character or to show the chaotic workings of human consciousness. While Sackville-West is not as concerned with formal innovation in her description of Lady Slane's ride on the tube, she nevertheless describes a similar experience in order to create a critique of gender norms. See also Chapter 2, n. 103.

<sup>142</sup> While Sackville-West was writing *All Passion Spent*, she and her husband were in the process of purchasing and then renovating a new country house, Sissinghurst, Kent. Glendinning records that the author fell in love with the house – or rather, the ruined castle with seven acres of land of “muddy wilderness” – from the moment she saw it (223). This estate was especially appealing to Sackville-West because it used to be a home of Sir John Baker, whose daughter, Cecily, married Thomas Sackville-West in 1554; as Nicolson states in a letter to his wife, “through its veins pulses the blood of the Sackville dynasty” and, more importantly, “it comes through the female line” (*Diaries and Letters* 1: 47).

<sup>143</sup> According to Norman White, Hampstead was already established as the place for artists to live and work in by 1852 (101).

<sup>144</sup> John Linnell (1792-1882), an English landscape and portrait painter, also lived in Hampstead, where he painted many landscapes of the Heath (Norman White 101).

<sup>145</sup> Daniel Maclise (1806-1870), an Irish painter and illustrator, lived in London for most of his professional life.

<sup>146</sup> In 1698, it began to be rumoured that the springs at Hampstead Heath had medicinal properties (Weinreb and Hibbert 357).

<sup>147</sup> Sackville-West does not provide the first name of this character.

<sup>148</sup> Over the course of their friendship, Sackville-West and Woolf made several expeditions to Hampstead, most notably to see Keats’s house (Glendinning 214).

<sup>149</sup> In William Morris’s futuristic utopian novel *News From Nowhere* (1890), Hampstead is one of the only areas of greater London that is not destroyed by the socialist revolution. Morris’s main critique of then-contemporary society is related to the urban overcrowding and “shabby” suburban building, so that his description of Hampstead as being “an agreeable and well-built town” suggests that this suburb stands apart from the rest of contemporary London (58).

<sup>150</sup> While various parts of residential Hampstead were torn down or had become more crowded – in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries the areas around the Heath were filled with rows of houses – the Heath did not decrease in size since the municipal authorities officially saved it for public use in 1871 (Thompson 335; Weinreb and Hibbert 358). In fact, eight more acres were added to this open space in 1905, after the Heath Extension Committee purchased the Wydles estate from Eton College (Borer 227).

<sup>151</sup> The author does not provide the first names of any of these elderly characters.

<sup>152</sup> In *The Heir*, Sackville-West's narrator praises the traditions of the country house life: "Because the laws were unalterable they were not necessarily stagnant. They were of a solemn order, not arbitrarily framed or admitting of variation according to the caprices of mankind" (65).

<sup>153</sup> By 1933, *All Passion Spent* had been made into a play entitled *Indian Summer*. It would be interesting to compare Sackville-West's description of Lady Slane's sojourn in Hampstead to John Galsworthy's portrayal of Old Jolyon's last days in suburban Robin Hill in *Indian Summer of a Forsyte* (1918), which was repurposed for *The Forsyte Saga* (1922).

<sup>154</sup> In English, "psyche" once meant a "butterfly" or a "moth." This usage of the word is now rare (*OED*).

<sup>155</sup> Woolf's narrator observes: "The deep roar filled her ears; the changing tumult had the inexpressible fascination of varied life pouring ceaselessly with a purpose which, as she looked, seemed to her, somehow, the normal purpose for which life was framed; its complete indifference to the individuals, whom it swallowed up and rolled onwards, filled her with at least a temporary exaltation" (*ND* 462).

<sup>156</sup> In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf's describes the pattern of a woman's thoughts using the motif of a fishing line that is dropped into a "stream": "It swayed, minute after minute, hither and thither, among the reflections and the weeds, letting the water lift it and sink it until – you know

the little tug – the sudden conglomeration of an idea at end of one’s line: and then the cautious hauling of it in, and the careful laying of it out?” (6) While it is possible that Sackville-West’s use of animal imagery and her description of “darting” movements to portrayal Lady Slane’s thoughts were influenced by Woolf’s work, the latter author seems more invested in exploring both the patterns of thoughts and the process of thought formation as it relates to levels of consciousness; her mention of a “stream” references May Sinclair’s use of the term “stream of consciousness” in a review of Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* texts.

<sup>157</sup> Raitt argues that Sackville-West’s free indirect style in *All Passion Spent* owes a great deal to Woolf’s experiments in *To The Lighthouse* (91). There are also many echoes of Woolf’s Mrs. Ramsay in Lady Slane: the former character intuits the existence of an alternative reality that exists beyond language during a dinner with her guests in the first part of *To The Lighthouse*: “[T]here is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out . . . in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again tonight she had the feeling she had had once today already, of peace, of rest” (142).

<sup>158</sup> Raitt comments on the continuities between Sackville-West’s earlier country house texts and *All Passion Spent*, but she does not provide a thorough study of the later novel.

<sup>159</sup> In French, Genoux means “knees,” which one could read as being a reference to the elderly woman’s strenuous physical labour and subservience to Lady Slane’s demands. Given that Sackville-West’s own maid was called Louise Genoux, however, her choice of name for Lady Slane’s housekeeper does not necessarily indicate an intended critique of class relations (Glendinning 191).

<sup>160</sup> In many of Woolf’s texts, “India” operates as a symbol of patriarchal and imperial power. Thus, in *Three Guineas*, she connects patriarchal oppression at home with imperialist oppression abroad; in *The Waves*, India is the place where Percival dies, but it also represents dominant

power relations according to which subjects are measured and categorized by race, class, and gender.

#### Chapter 4 Endnotes

<sup>161</sup> Hermione Lee argues that Bowen was not a “traditionalist and anti-modernist,” a point that she also makes in her earlier, influential study of Bowen’s novels (*Virginia Woolf* 587). Mary Loeffelholz contends that Bowen was, like Sackville-West, more “at home in forms closer to classic realism than with Woolf’s experimental modernism” (86). Bowen was not acquainted with Sackville-West, although she was a close friend of the author’s cousin, Edward Sackville-West, who inherited Knole; she also wrote several complimentary reviews of Harold Nicolson’s books (Glendinning 109; Bowen, *Collected Impressions* 141-143).

<sup>162</sup> I will refer to *To the North* as *TN* and “Attractive Modern Homes” as “AMH” in parenthesis.

<sup>163</sup> Bowen’s first published work was the short story collection *Encounters* (1923), while the last was *Eva Trout*, a novel (1968).

<sup>164</sup> The first extended study of Bowen’s fiction, by Jocelyn Brooke (1952), was published during the author’s lifetime (Osborn 1).

<sup>165</sup> *The Heat of the Day* (1949), Bowen’s most commercially successful novel, sold 45,000 copies immediately after its release (Glendinning 154).

<sup>166</sup> Bowen’s texts are rarely featured on university syllabi.

<sup>167</sup> Phyllis Lassner notes that Bowen’s theme of courtship and focus on upper-middle-class characters suggest her links with the realist literary tradition and authors such as Jane Austen and George Eliot, while her nuanced descriptions of characters’ psychological states hint at Henry James’s influence (141, 145). Glendinning, on the other hand, observes that many of Bowen’s

marked stylistic effects (which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter) suggest the impact of Woolf's formal innovations (1).

<sup>168</sup> Bowen was born in Bowen's Court, her family's country house near Cork, Ireland; unlike Sackville-West, she inherited the house after her father's death in 1930 (Glendinning 5). Due to high maintenance costs, however, she sold Bowen's Court in 1959 and the whole house was demolished a year after by its new owner, Cornelius O'Keefe (4).

<sup>169</sup> Ellmann describes the "split-mindedness toward Bowen" that exists in Ireland: the Aubane Historical Society's *North Cork Anthology* (1993), for instance, includes an entry on Bowen, but her name has been crossed out, with the explanation that "Bowen was an English writer illegitimately lodged in County Cork" (10). The Anglo-Irish, Ellmann argues, could be said to "exist under erasure" in Ireland (10). Bowen's sense of her bifurcated identity is most obvious in her discussion of literature: she observes that Irish writers excel in writing short stories and dramas because of their propensity for "the showy," while the more "placid" English are better novelists (*Pictures and Conversations* 23). Being a short story writer *and* a novelist, Bowen aligns herself with both the Irish and English, observing that it was most likely her time in England that "made me a novelist" (23).

<sup>170</sup> Bowen's *The Last September* and part of *The Heat of the Day* are set in Ireland, as are many of her short stories. She also wrote *Seven Winters* (1942), a forty-eight-page description of Dublin from her childhood, and *Bowen's Court* (1942), a history of the Bowen family in Ireland (Glendinning 159).

<sup>171</sup> Nicola Humble argues that the Kelways' home in *The Heat of the Day* symbolizes the rise of a "brisk, no-nonsense form of femininity," while Robert's betrayal of his country is an "attempt to reintroduce a culture of masculinity, and to take revenge on a nation that has become indistinguishable from a particular form of feminized middle-class identity" (102).

<sup>172</sup> See Anne Wichard, “‘A Fatal Freshness’: Mid-Victorian Suburbophobia” and Lara Baker Wheelan, *Class, Culture, and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era* for discussions of Victorian Gothic, suburban stories.

<sup>173</sup> Also see Vanessa D. Dickerson’s *Victorian Ghosts at Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural*. Dickerson observes that ghost tales afforded “women a special space” to explore critically “the disabling dichotomies that informed female culture” (150).

<sup>174</sup> Lady Ottoline Morrell (1873-1938) acted as a patron to many artists and writers, including T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, and the painter Dora Carrington. In a diary entry written soon after meeting Bowen, Woolf records that she thought the other woman to be “conventional,” but does not elaborate on the reasons for this opinion (*Diaries* 4: 86).

<sup>175</sup> In a letter written in July 1932, for instance, Woolf thanks Mrs. Cameron (Bowen) for sending her *To the North* and promises to read it (*Letters* 5: 79). Later, they become more intimate: Woolf visited Bowen’s Court once, while Bowen stayed twice at the Woolfs’ Rodmell residence, with her second visit occurring only a few weeks before Woolf’s suicide (Lee, *Virginia Woolf* 100).

<sup>176</sup> Charles Ritchie, a Canadian diplomat who was Bowen’s lover during World War II, observes in one of his diary entries that Woolf was certainly a “great influence in [Bowen’s] life” (*Love’s Civil War* 30). Bowen, however, disliked what she considered to be Woolf’s “aggressive,” “doctrinal” feminism, manifested in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938) (*Collected Impressions* 81). Meanwhile, Woolf was critical of Bowen’s “moral ancestors,” who have taught her to “repress” (*Diaries* 4: 208).

<sup>177</sup> This letter, dated 26 September 1935, does not appear among the collected letters of Virginia Woolf. Lee observes that it is a part of a private collection. Most of Bowen’s correspondence has not been published and exists in various collections at locations such as the Harry Ransom

Humanities Research Center at University of Texas, Austin; the Library of the University of Sussex; and the Library at the University of Durham. Many other of Bowen's letters are in private hands (Glendinning 241).

<sup>178</sup> These changes in transportation were reflected in the legislation of the period: the Road Traffic Act (1930) and Road and Rail Traffic Act (1933), for example, were passed to regulate and classify motor vehicles and driving offences.

<sup>179</sup> By 1931, there were nearly 3 million unemployed people in Britain, but it was primarily the manufacturing industries in the Midlands and the North that were affected by the economic problems (Barratt 360). Most recession-proof jobs, such as those in government, banks, offices, and retail, were located in London (360).

<sup>180</sup> Woolf was also critical of increased car use, commenting in "The Cheapening of Motor-Cars" (1924) that the popularization of motoring marks "another step towards the ruin of the country road" (*Essays* 3: 440). After she and Leonard bought a car in 1927, however, Woolf's comments about this type of travel became far more positive: in both *Orlando* (1928) and "Evening Over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car" (1930), she describes the way in which driving can occasion new perceptions of time, space, and subjectivity. Various legislation, such as the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act (1935) and Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act (1938), were passed by the municipal government to try to stymie the suburban sprawl and preserve London's rural perimeter; World War II finally put a stop to the rapid growth of suburbia, after which the government passed the Town and Country Planning Act (1947), endowing the counties and boroughs with the right to refuse building and thus making it harder for builders to resume the same pace of development as before (Jackson 317).

<sup>181</sup> The older woman, observes Bowen, was "quick to detect situations that did not exist" (*TN* 10).

<sup>182</sup> With this novel, Bowen changed her American publisher to Alfred A. Knopf and British publisher to Gollancz; Glendinning notes that this change reflected the fact that new firms were vying to publish her work for she had become a “prestige commodity” (80).

<sup>183</sup> Towheed observes that Bowen’s novel features the earliest recorded use of the word “claustrophobic” as an adjective in English fiction: Emmeline describes herself using this term (118).

<sup>184</sup> Also see Wendy Parkins’s *Mobility and Modernity in Women’s Novels, 1850-1930s: Women Moving Dangerously* and Harriet Blodgett’s *Patterns of Reality: Elizabeth Bowen’s Novels*.

<sup>185</sup> The Qualification of Women Act gave women 21 years and over the right to stand for election as MPs even though only some women 30 and older were given the right to vote according to the Representation of the People Act (1918). The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919) abolished restrictions upon the admission of women into professions and civic positions; and the Equal Franchise Act (1928) extended the right to all women and men 21 and older.

<sup>186</sup> Because cars were originally associated with powerful technology and racing, they were identified with active, adventurous masculinity. Nevertheless, as more women obtained driving licences during and after World War I, there was an outpouring of articles commenting on the feminization of car culture and the prevalence of “neurotic” female drivers in various motorists’ magazines. These opinion pieces had more to do with male anxieties surrounding women’s changing social status than with an actual preponderance of women who drove (O’Connell 67).

<sup>187</sup> Charlotte Bates observes that imagery of travel in the novels, films, short stories, and travelogues of the 1930s is indicative of the “increasing ease and economy of foreign travel after the First World War, and the growth of tourism within England itself” (70). Not only were cars

cheaper at this time, but there was an expansion of commercial airlines; plane tickets were sold by the increasingly popular figure in the tourism industry – the travel agent (Ellmann 101).

<sup>188</sup> Julian’s surname, Tower, which implies strength and dominance, is ironic given his diffident, Prufrockian personality. Both his first and last name, however, could be interpreted as being apt in light of the character’s strong moral sense: not only does he “tower” morally above everyone else in the novel, but his first name is associated with various minor Christian saints. Julian is also a name given to women (for instance, the Christian mystic, Julian of Norwich), which suggests the character’s gentleness and difference from the ultra-masculine Markie.

<sup>189</sup> In this essay, Bowen mentions the fact that many British novels feature St. John’s Wood as their setting (104). Although she does not reference specific texts, it is likely that she is referring to literary works such as Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1859), Doyle’s “A Scandal in Bohemia” (1891), and John Galsworthy’s *The Man of Property* (1906).

<sup>190</sup> At various times, Lady Waters critiques Cecilia for being “restless” and believes that Emmeline’s ostensibly “glacial manner” is “unfortunate in a girl” (TN 15).

<sup>191</sup> In W. B. Yeats’s poem “Coole Park, 1929,” for example, he celebrates Coole Park, the estate belonging to Lady Gregory, an Anglo-Irish aristocrat.

<sup>192</sup> In “Evening Over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car” (1930), Woolf also discusses the splitting of identity that occurs during the act of driving.

<sup>193</sup> The name Sloane is similar to the last name of the eminent, urban-dwelling Lord and Lady Slane in Sackville-West’s *All Passion Spent*, which testifies to the fact that it carries connotations of social prestige.

<sup>194</sup> Markie’s last name, Linkwater, is as unsuitable for this character as his first name is apt: he is someone who resists being linked to other human beings.

<sup>195</sup> In Woolf's essay, an imaginary flight in an airplane enables the narrator to experience modern London not as a centre of the world, but as a symbol of a relatively recent civilization that was once conquered by ancient Romans, who saw only a "hill shaggy with wood with the rhinoceros digging his horn into the root of rhododendrons" (446). From such a high vantage point, all human beings on the ground look the same, like "insects": one cannot tell "which was an employer, which was a working man," so that the very idea of social hierarchy begins to seem illogical (449).

<sup>196</sup> While Carey provides proof of many early twentieth-century authors' disparagements of suburban life, his study is limited in its scope: apart from his discussions of Woolf's intellectual elitism, he does not discuss any female writers. On the other hand, Carey's analysis of the misogyny of notable male writers of this time, such as H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, links the authors' prejudice against what they perceived as being a feminization of culture with their criticism of philistine suburban masses.

<sup>197</sup> Magot draws a connection between Bowen's work and that of Italian Futurists such as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, but does not emphasize the significant difference between Marinetti's association of technology with what Andreas Huyssen terms "powerful masculinist mystique" (55) and Bowen's technology-related critique of traditional masculinity and identification of transport with women's expanding opportunities.

<sup>198</sup> Sheridan Le Fanu was a well-regarded nineteenth-century Irish writer of Gothic tales, best known for works such as the closed-room mystery *Uncle Silas* (1864) and the vampire story *Carmilla* (1872). In his mention of classic ghost stories, Thurston is most likely referring to writers such as Charles Dickens, Margaret Oliphant, Charlotte Riddell, as well as Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Mary Louisa Molesworth, and Henry James, all of whom authored popular ghost stories in the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

<sup>199</sup> Markie's characterization of suburban landscape as being dead in *To the North* echoes Dyson's impression of women-inhabited suburbia; it suggests that Bowen's innovative portrayals of suburbia were a response to well-established, misogynistic stereotypes.

<sup>200</sup> Although Goodwin's essay raises awareness about women's loneliness, she does not argue for any change in gender norms. At the close of her article, she instead focuses on reminding the readers about the health benefits of suburban life and urges women to be proud of being commuters' wives (54).

<sup>201</sup> In her essay "The Supernatural in Fiction" (1918), Woolf also defines the contemporary ghost as being a creature that is horrifying specifically because it is directly linked to one's modern reality: what terrifies are not the ghosts of the dead, she argues, but the ghosts that are "living within ourselves" (294).

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