

Public Spaces, Private Spheres:
Spaces of Alienation and the Politics of Otherness in Modernist Women's Writing

By

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Introduction

The turn of the twentieth century saw not only the emergence of literary modernism but the growing entrance of women into the public spaces of the European city. Literary depictions of the urban are representative of both the stylistic fragmentation and preoccupation with alienation and displacement characteristic of modernism; Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane's seminal book *Modernism: 1890-1930* identified how cities were often "novel environments, carrying within themselves the complexity and tension of modern metropolitan life, which so deeply underlies modern consciousness and modern writing" (Bradbury 96). The imperial cities of London and Paris have come to be regarded as landmarks in the geographical topography of modernism, as Bradbury points out, "when we think of Modernism, we cannot avoid thinking of these urban climates and the ideas and campaigns, the new philosophies and politics, that ran through them" (96). Many classics of modernist literature are inextricably linked to the urban landscape, as Andrew Thacker maintains in *Modernism, Space and the City*: "we can note the streets and buildings of the metropolis as the setting for many key modernist texts, such as the perambulations of Leopold Bloom in Dublin, or of Clarissa Dalloway in London" (6). The emergence of the city as the preferred setting for modernist literature reflects thematic concerns with chaos, disillusionment and social decay in the aftermath of World War I, as well as the displacement and alienation resulting from the anonymous convergence of different occupations, ages, genders, races and nationalities. Although more recent research has illuminated the role rural modernisms played in defining the movement's characteristic themes and styles, early twentieth century literature foregrounded the industrial landscape of cities as the preferred setting for the modern with a prominence no genre had previously.

Although literature of the urban has long been recognized as the domain of male writers, feminist critics have begun to consider women's emergence into the public sphere within the context of the thematic concerns of displacement and liminality representative of modernist writing. As Elizabeth F. Evans contends: "Literary modernism is preoccupied with liminal identities and places.... Middle-class women's presence in London's innovative urban spaces and once-forbidden streets challenged conceptions of gender, class and race that were based on recognized spatial divisions" (11). Claiming that "Modern urban women and their associated spaces are central to British literature and culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," Deborah Parsons examines how "London's threshold spaces produce class and gender identities that are often ambivalent" (4, 3). Despite the reputation of newly independent and liberated women as emblematic figures of modernity, she suggests that most scholarship on the modern urban landscape has concentrated on male writers such as James Joyce and T. S. Eliot: "That the city has been habitually received as a male space, in which repressed or disobedient marginal presences, has resulted in an emphasis in theoretical analysis on gendered maps that reflect such conditions" (Parsons 2). Interpreting literary depictions of urban space within the context of the public places increasingly inhabited by women can thus illuminate the seminal role female writers played in reconfiguring the city as a liminal space of alienation, displacement and fragmentation characteristic of literary modernism.

Central to the depiction of the modernist urban woman is the literary archetype of the "New Woman." Coinciding with the emergence of women into the workforce during the years of World War I, the New Woman famously worked outside the home, adopted a more daring and revealing style of fashion, and maintained a degree of economic, social and sexual independence. As women increasingly began to access educational, economic and political spaces, they also

began to appear alone in public, a change that was particularly noticeable in the imperial cities of London and Paris. In doing so, they transgressed the boundaries of the “feminine” private sphere and entered into the “masculine” public sphere for the first time. This shift undermined the Victorian ideology of separate spheres, famously advocated by cultural critic John Ruskin, who claimed in his 1864 speech “Sesame and Lilies” that women were naturally equipped for the private or domestic realm, while men were more suited for the active and intellectual domains of public life. Ruskin argued that women did not enter into the public sphere out of necessity; rather, privileged women were willfully giving up their domestic position within the home where they were “protected from all danger and temptation,” instead going out into the “peril and trial” of the “open world” (136). The emergence of women in public space resulted in two contrasting depictions of the New Woman in literary modernism, that of the daring, independent *flâneuse* and the sexually marginal urban dweller forced to wander the city streets.

My thesis investigates the disjunction between these two opposing portrayals of modernist urban women in the works of interwar writers Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes and Jean Rhys. I posit that even as urban space offered women new opportunities for freedom and exploration, it reinforced their marginality in the public sphere by forcing them to confront lingering social attitudes about women’s domestic duties and the sexual availability of lone female streetwalkers. Although I argue for the existence of a modernist *flâneuse*, I contend that female characters are forced into the role of a *flâneur* because their marginality prevented them from fully participating in public life. I also examine how these characters’ intersecting identities exacerbated their isolation, namely Woolf and Rhys’s preoccupation with nationality and exile, Rhys’s depiction of marginalized class identity, and Barnes’s portrayal of lesbian sexuality. Woolf’s anti-nationalist politics, Barnes’s identity as a lesbian expatriate and Rhys’s status as a

socially and financially disenfranchised Creole woman displaced from home forced them to navigate a patriarchal imperialist culture that contributed to the Othering of their bodies and experiences. Rhys and Barnes further alienate their characters from domestic respectability by depicting sexual intercourse outside the bounds of marriage. The *flâneuse* may therefore wander and observe, but the streets prove to be a precarious rather than grounding space for her. Liberated from the confines of the home but prevented from full participation in public life, these women were forced to inhabit the liminal space between the public and the private. The topography of the urban metropolis thus represents the marginality and resistance interwar women continued to encounter as they began to assert their place within modernism.

As Andreas Huyssen and Sandra Gilbert have pointed out, “hordes” of women’s bodies appeared to flow into the streets during the early part of the twentieth century (Emery 80). They accessed the spheres of education, industry and politics, but they also worked in low-paying jobs as typists, clerks, shopgirls, mannequins, artists’ models, actresses, and prostitutes. Mary Lou Emery contends that “Like [Jean] Rhys’s geographically and spatially displaced heroines, they appeared without escort in business offices, matinee audiences, cafes, and bars. They trespassed on territory traditionally reserved for men, or at least for male control, and threatened to disprove, visibly, the lingering nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres” (80). Working women, by participating in public life as citizens, violated the ideology of separate spheres that governed the social organization of both gendered labor and gender identity (Emery 81). Commenting on the “female transgressor as public spectacle,” Mary Russo observes of the subversive nature of women in public: “... in the everyday indicative world, women and their bodies, certain bodies, in certain public framings, in certain public spaces, are always already transgressive—dangerous, and in danger” (12). Russo further posits that female transgressors of

the public space have visibly rendered themselves as socially marginal, because their longings for “adventure have made them transgressors of public spaces, and they fear making spectacles of themselves... Nevertheless, while their presence on the streets, in bars, and in cafes becomes disturbing to others, they feel exposed and threatened. Even their efforts at alliance with other marginalized people bring great risk” (12). The term “public woman” retained its older association with prostitution during the interwar period and made sexually suspect the middle-class women who advocated for reforms and women’s rights (Emery 82). Furthermore, a woman alone on the streets could be subject to forced investigation, sexual harassment, or public scrutiny and scorn. In this context, single women alone in the public spaces of the imperial city literally became “streetwalkers,” associated with loosened morality. Although working women had been forced out of necessity to traverse public space for centuries, upper-class women had little legitimate reason to independently navigate the streets and were regarded as suspect in comparison. Woolf’s financially privileged women walk for enjoyment but rarely stray from designated paths, while Barnes and Rhys’s transient and intermittently employed characters wander aimlessly instead of strolling purposefully to a job or back home.

Emery identifies the marginality of these characters as an inherent condition of their public existence, observing that single women alone on the streets in the 1920s and 1930s, unlike in the Victorian era, could no longer be arrested as suspected prostitutes, but “they were not granted the rights and privileges of men or even the respected status of an obviously married woman. They became sexually marginal, threats to an already besieged social morality” (82). Instead, they were “condemned and harassed by purity crusaders, exploited by sexually adventurous men, denied job opportunities after the war that had demanded women’s labor,” leading them to experience “a specific kind of female displacement and alienation” (83).

Suggesting that sexual marginality coexists with colonial exile in the work of Jean Rhys, she argues that the dichotomy of public/private also encodes “dualities of civilized/foreign, reason/emotion, white/black, masculine/feminine, outer/inner, and citizen/mass,” heightening female characters’ sense of alienation due to their nationality, sexual orientation, unmarried status or disadvantaged class identity (Emery 83). As Emery suggests, “If all women by virtue of their sexual positioning as Other are marginalized,” single female characters “experience a doubled marginality in their exile from the homes of men who could grant them lives of feminine domesticity and sexual respectability” (86). Lacking money, friends and family, they fall victim to poverty and sexual barter, and lacking the comforts of domestic space, inhabit the streets by necessity instead of by choice: “They climb the stairs to a room somewhere on the Left Bank or in Bloomsbury, perhaps alone, perhaps not. They inhabit, for the most part, the streets, cafes, bars, and, if they can afford it, dress shops of European cities where no one knows where they come from or even their names” (47). Instead of presiding over their own households and families, “They wander almost aimlessly, living in between the gendered urban spaces of early twentieth-century England and Europe.” (47). Unlike the narrator of Virginia Woolf’s essay “Street Haunting,” they never return from their twilight wanderings to “their own doorstep again ... to feel the old possessions, the old prejudices, fold us round; and the self which has been blown about at so many street corners... sheltered and enclosed” (25). Helen Carr similarly cites Virginia Woolf as an example of the “modernist *flâneuse*,” who after her street-haunting “returns to a welcoming domesticity,” comparing her with Rhys, the “postmodernist migrant [who] can only go back to her temporary and friendless lodging” (59). Not all women walking the streets alone are marginalized, but marginalized women are more likely to be forced to inhabit the public spaces of the city.

I argue that through their solitary travels through urban space, modernist female characters began to inhabit the role of the *flâneur*, a literary archetype previously reserved for men. In his unfinished work *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin borrows the concept of the *flâneur* from nineteenth-century poet Charles Baudelaire, an archetype generally understood to be a bourgeois French male observer of the Parisian demi-monde who has since been redefined as “an increasingly expansive figure who represents a variety of ‘wanderings,’ in terms of ambulation, nationality, gender, race, class, and sexuality” (Parsons 4). With this expanded definition, critics have examined the way modernist female characters conform to the practice of *flânerie*, which Kakie Urch defines as “the ability to gaze, to observe, to in some way be part of the crowded spectacle without being the object of desire” (24). In “The Invisible Flâneuse,” Elizabeth Wilson defines the *flâneur* as “a new kind of public person with the leisure to wander, watch and browse... an archetypal occupant and observer of the public sphere in the rapidly changing and growing great cities of nineteenth-century Europe” (93). As female wanderers of metropolitan space, the characters of Woolf, Rhys and Barnes have been identified as the female counterpart, or *flâneuse*, to Baudelaire’s archetypal *flâneur*, for whom “far-off times and places interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment” (Benjamin 419).

The concept of the *flâneuse* is controversial, with feminist critics such as Janet Wolff going as far as to call it “non-existent” (41). Arguing that it is “rendered impossible by the sexual divisions of the nineteenth century,” Griselda Pollock dismisses the concept of the *flâneuse* due to the fact that “women did not enjoy the freedom of incognito in the crowd. They were never positioned as the normal occupants of the public realm,” and therefore “did not have the right to look, to stare, scrutinize or watch” (100). However, more contemporary critics have begun to challenge this assumption, with Wilson observing that women were “emerging more and more

into the public spaces of the city at the turn of the century, meaning that binary distinctions between male/female and public/private space are no longer relevant for considering modern articulations of urban experience” (134). Furthermore, in *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, Deborah Parsons argues that modernist women writers’ narratives of urban life provide overwhelming evidence for the existence of the literary *flâneuse*, tracing the strategies writers use to articulate “a female city consciousness alternative to that of the male” (7). Responding to these characters’ frequent alienation from their surroundings, Parsons suggests that they be reconsidered as a “subset of the *flâneur*; [they are] placeless but still [have their] feet on the ground, walking through particular cities” (136). I wish to challenge Wolff and Pollock’s assumption that the concept of the modernist *flâneuse* is nonexistent while acknowledging that the newfound freedom offered by the public sphere often exacerbated women’s marginality. I argue that the displacement and alienation experienced by women in these spaces is represented by the narrative techniques of fragmentation and dissociation characteristic of high modernism. Adopting an innovative stream-of-consciousness style allowed female writers to plumb the rich interiority of women’s minds to demonstrate their intelligence and autonomy, a narrative perspective often ignored by male modernist authors. The disconnected and fragmented nature of this narrative style is also indicative of the chaos and disillusionment of interwar Europe, which when adopted by female writers allowed them to participate in a modernist aesthetic previously represented in male writers’ depictions of the displacement of war. Navigating these liminal and overlapping spheres, that of the feminine/masculine, public/private, and colonial/European, allowed women authors to access the spaces of literary modernism.

I investigate this idea through several textual strands. The first chapter, “Street Hauntings: Empire and Domesticity in Virginia Woolf” will examine the portrayal of the

flâneuse in Woolf's literary essays and her novels *Night and Day* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. I explore how streetwalking provides her characters with a welcome escape from the daily demands of domestic life, yet acknowledge that their routes are predetermined by errands and duties that facilitate the maintenance of a household. Therefore, for Woolf's middle and upper-class protagonists, *flânerie* is more of an exciting diversion than a true engagement with the landscape of urban life given these women's confinement within class and gendered roles. Streetwalking offers *Night and Day*'s archetypal New Women Mary Datchet and Katharine Hilbery a sense of independence, yet Mary consistently returns to the comfortable domestic space of "a room of her own," while Katharine remains subject to constricting expectations of Edwardian marriage. I explore how Woolf's change of narrative perspective throughout *Mrs. Dalloway* both intersects with and places in contrast her protagonist Clarissa's perspective with the parallel experiences of the male walkers Septimus Smith and Peter Walsh. Building upon the intersection of Woolf's feminism and anti-nationalism in her essays "Three Guineas" and "A Room Of One's Own," I also examine the role empire and nation-building play in upholding the alienating architecture of the imperial city, and how Woolf's portrayal of the liberating nature of streetwalking was complicated by her anti-nationalist beliefs that occasionally alienated her from the landscape of her beloved London.

In "In Between Worlds: Jean Rhys's Sexual and Colonial Exile," I examine the intersecting roles national, gender and class alienation play in Jean Rhys's portrayal of her wandering deracinated protagonists in her literary quartet *Voyage in the Dark*, *Quartet*, *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, and *Good Morning, Midnight*. Identified by critics as "postmodern migrants" or "negative *flâneuses*," her expatriate characters are forced to inhabit the unwelcoming streets and cheap hotels of London and Paris due to their poverty and societal

alienation. Contending that these characters' marginalization is exacerbated by their precarious economic and social positions, I argue that Rhys utilizes the narrative techniques of fragmentation and dissociation to gradually make unreal the landscape of the imperial city. Unlike Woolf's protagonists, who joyously roam through the London streets, the Parisian architecture is hostile and frightening to Rhys's protagonists, heightening their national and social displacement. This chapter will continue the discussion of national identity raised in Woolf while placing Rhys, long considered a literary outsider, in conversation with more canonical female modernist writers.

The final chapter, "Those Who Turn Day into Night: Fragmentation and Surreality in Djuna Barnes," examines the geographical and psychological landscape of Barnes's *Nightwood*, considered one of the most experimental high modernist novels. *Nightwood* is a portrayal of a carnivalesque night city inhabited by outsiders and vagrants, where characters who suffer from the "disease of modernity" behave as "those who turn day into night." The novel depicts a night world that parallels but differs from the fabric of the daytime world; suggesting that the urban map of the night city is of a different reality to that of the day. I use this doubled reality to examine the novel's treatment of lesbian sexuality; characters such as Robin Vote feel at home in the nighttime queer café society, while Nora Flood finds it degrading and abnormal, alienating both women from the other's experience of reality. Barnes uses the narrative technique of fragmentation and the Surrealist imagery of sleepwalking and dreaming to disrupt and deconstruct the modernist city, whereas her claim that modernist writers "turn day into night" examines the thematic nature of modernism itself as an exploration of the sordid, hidden or controversial sides to human existence.

Although women's contributions to modernist urban literature have been critically understudied, further examination of the role of *flânerie* in the work of Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys and Djuna Barnes can illuminate not only modernist fascination with the urban but the overarching cultural shift that occurred when women began to enter public space en masse for the first time. Their participation in the anonymity of urban crowds and consumer culture was critical to the development of modernist aesthetics, but while most prior scholarship on the female *flâneuse* has centered on the liberating act of streetwalking, I complicate this analysis by examining how the ways that autonomous navigation of public space continued to ostracize and alienate women walkers. I argue that the continued marginality women faced in the public sphere contributed to their thematic concerns with alienation and displacement, as well as their adoption of the narrative techniques of stream-of-consciousness, fragmentation, defamiliarization and dissociation. Rather than detract from the predominance of male writers' depictions of the imperial city, an enhanced understanding of women's experiences in the urban sphere can illuminate some of the most central themes and concerns of modernism. A closer examination of these writers' dual preoccupations with class, nationality and sexuality will also exacerbate our understanding of the myriad of ways that women were marginalized in the public sphere. I examine how the city is both constructed and gradually deconstructed throughout these texts, and how female characters' ambivalent relationship to the urban resulted in literary portrayals of gendered alienation and displacement that conversely allowed them to access the male-dominated canon of high modernism.

Chapter One: Street Hauntings: Empire and Domesticity in Virginia Woolf

“London... like a vast electric light, casting radiance upon the myriads of men and women who crowded round it. And here she was at the very center of it, that center which was constantly in the minds of people in remote Canadian forests and on the plains of India, when their thoughts turned to England.” Virginia Woolf, *Night and Day*, pp. 35.

In a diary entry from May 1928, Virginia Woolf wrote: “London itself perpetually attracts, stimulates, gives me a play and a story and a poem, without any trouble, save that of moving my legs through the streets” (*Diary* 2 20). Born and raised in London, Woolf’s love for her native city gave rise to its recurrence as the setting for much of her fiction, a multifaceted metropolis of bustling streets, shops and homes inhabited by characters whose multiplicity of perspectives formed her innovative stream-of-consciousness narrative technique. The liberating act of streetwalking captured in her essay “Street Haunting” (1927) figures heavily throughout the urban landscape of her novels, particularly in her transitional Edwardian novel *Night and Day* (1919) and high modernist classic *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). However, her upper-class female protagonists inhabit a cloistered domestic sphere seemingly detached from the hustle and bustle of the urban streets, a reality that is reflective of the tension that characterized women’s emergence into the public sphere. Woolf herself appears to undermine her famous feminist statement, “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction,” when she invokes the significance of streetwalking to women’s happiness, independence and creative process (*A Room of One’s Own* 2).

To address this apparent disjunction between the liberation of private space and the freedom of participation in public life in Woolf’s novels, I will argue that the act of streetwalking serves as an exciting diversion from the demands of domestic life, yet does little to enable independence or freedom for her female characters. The act of walking alone, where the sight of

passerby or familiar landmarks allows her protagonists to envision alternate futures or lifestyles for themselves or slip into memories of the past, is nonetheless predetermined by errands or household duties, after which her female characters subsequently return to the domestic sphere. Woolf's characters are invigorated, but not liberated, by their public travels, which typically follow a set path and uphold the management of a household, involve dutiful visits to family or suitors and defer to symbols of empire. Lisbeth Larsson observes that the movements of Woolf's characters are determined by the "strong but invisible" forces of place, time, class and gender, yet "The walk, the movement, is, however, always liberating" (3). In *Night and Day* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, the dual forces of patriarchy and empire influence and control female characters' paths throughout the city, suggesting that their journeys through the urban landscape are constricted by the greater forces of gender, class and nationalism. The complexity of her characters' travels through London are mapped in detail by Woolf, allowing us to compare the relatively controlled and restricted nature of women's movements with the freer and more spontaneous paths of their male counterparts. A close analysis of streetwalking in *Night and Day* and *Mrs. Dalloway* suggests that women's movements were largely confined to the expectations of their gendered role, where their return to the homes of their husbands and fathers reinforced their duties in the domestic sphere. The joyful freedom espoused by "Street Haunting" is therefore complicated by Woolf's novels—while the constrictions placed on women's movements are symbolic of the restrictive Edwardian marriage plot in *Night and Day*, they are more explicitly mapped in the scheduled routes of the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Woolf's female characters largely share her enthusiasm for the simple pleasures of strolling through city streets, as she remarked in her diary in 1925: 'I like this London life in early summer—the street sauntering & square haunting' (*Diary* 3 11). Critics such as Rachel

Bowlby have identified Woolf as an example of the modernist *flâneuse* for her embrace of the newfound freedom offered by the urban map, enjoyment derived from her explorations of London's streets, and witty observation of the passing crowds. Borrowing its name from Woolf's ruminations on "street sauntering" and "square haunting," her 1927 essay "Street Haunting" follows an unnamed narrator during one of the "moments when we are set upon having an object, an excuse for walking half across London between tea and dinner" (1). Under the pretext of buying a lead pencil, the narrator sets off to "indulge safely in the greatest pleasure of town life in winter—rambling the streets of London" (*SH* 1). Proposing that "to escape is the greatest of pleasures; street haunting in winter the greatest of adventures," the narrator's enthusiasm captures another ordinary moment of joy Woolf derived from the hustle and bustle of London on a March day in 1930: "A fine spring day. I walked along Oxford St. The buses are strung on a chain. People fight & struggle. Knocking each other off the pavement. Old bareheaded men, a motor car accident, etc. To walk alone in London is the greatest rest" (*SH* 1, *Diary* 3 234).

Woolf's diary captures the newfound autonomy of the modern urban woman, to whom the bustling city streets offer not a heightened sense of danger but adventure and excitement. Woolf sets a number of preconditions—"The hour should be the evening and the season winter"—in order to "shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room" (*SH* 1). To truly derive joy from street haunting, Woolf suggests, one must be able to blend into the anonymity of the crowd, something only possible when women began to enter public space en masse as participants in the workforce and consumer culture. Traversing the streets of the city, the narrator's encounters with anonymous strangers cause the spatio-temporal boundaries of the urban map to dissolve, and she becomes a *flâneur* for whom "far-off times and places

interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment” (Benjamin 419). Imagining scenes that take place behind the walls and closed curtains of buildings, the narrator envisions offices with “desks where clerks sit turning with wetted forefinger the files of endless correspondence,” a drawing room inhabited by “the figure of a woman, accurately measuring out the precise number of spoons of tea,” and “gold beaters and accordion pleaters” lodging in “the top rooms of these narrow old houses between Holborn and Soho” (*SH* 5, 6). The narrator also finds herself able to suddenly transgress into scenes from her own past, envisioning herself “leaning over the Embankment on a summer evening” wondering “For if we could stand there where we stood six months ago, should we not be again as we were then—calm, aloof, content?” (*SH* 12). Imagining the lives of strangers she encounters on the street allows the narrator to envision alternate lives, to “put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others. One could become a washerwoman, a publican, a street singer” (*SH* 12). Finished with her errand, the narrator approaches her own doorstep to feel the comfort of “the old possessions, the old prejudices, fold us round; and the self, which has been blown about at so many street corners, which has battered like a moth at the flame of so many inaccessible lanterns, sheltered and enclosed” (*SH* 13).

The narrator’s ramble through the winter streets of London is that of an archetypical *flâneur*, an aimless stroll that allows her to derive pleasure from the sights of the urban landscape and envision the lives of passing strangers before her financial security enables her to return to the comfort and safety of her own home. Here, Woolf establishes a paradox of the woman walker which will occur throughout her fiction—her upper-class *flâneuse* is invigorated by her urban adventures, but the exciting diversion only serves to distract her before she is compelled to retreat to her domestic duties. Woolf’s street-haunting woman has been identified as one of the earliest and most explicit examples of the literary *flâneuse*, but rather than an aimless observer,

she is a writer in her own right whose aimless wandering is in fact essential to the process of creation: “The piece dramatizes the evening walk through the streets of London of a narrator constantly fabricating or recording the stories around her; walking the streets becomes, in effect, the background or ground for story-making” (Bowlby 20). Rachel Bowlby suggests that by portraying walking as central to women’s writing, Woolf examines women’s freedom to navigate public space, which is both “access to something regarded as neutral, and subversion of something defined as normative and masculine” (Bowlby 4). Although the anonymous narrator’s delight in traversing the wintry London streets is presented as an ordinary occasion, Woolf’s portrayal of an aimless female observer places her within the male-dominated act of *flânerie*, advocating a “female street-walking or street writing [which deviates] from any expected routes” (Bowlby 19). The act of walking was likewise essential to Woolf’s own creative process, where the topography of the streets translated into the growing development of her narrative technique. She viewed the act of *flânerie* as conducive to creative inspiration, and first conceived of the idea for *To the Lighthouse* while walking in Tavistock Square: “I keep thinking of different ways to manage my scenes, conceiving endless possibilities; seeing life, as I walk about the streets, an immense opaque block of material to be conveyed into its equivalent of language” (*Diary I* 214). As Bowlby suggests, Woolf’s process is not as much about walking as writing as it is about writing as walking: “writing as women’s access to public discourse, or writing as a subversion of women’s access to public discourse” (8). Woolf’s characters, by trespassing into the public space of imperial London, thereby enable their author to enter the male-dominated sphere of modernist urban literature, while their walking parallels Woolf’s process of inspiration by allowing them to reflect on their own thoughts. Woolf’s evolving construction of interiority began to surface in her formal process during the writing of *Mrs. Dalloway*, as a diary entry from November 1923

relates: “It took me a year’s groping to discover what I call my tunneling process... this is my prime discovery so far” (*Diary 2* 272). Woolf’s “tunneling process,” what she identified as her innovative stream-of-consciousness technique, was characterized by digging “caves” out from behind her characters into their pasts to create “tunnels” through which they merge and connect at specific moments (*Diary 2* 263). This narrative device was gradually developed throughout Woolf’s earlier fiction and was most prominently realized in *Mrs. Dalloway*, where her characters cross paths in both geographical and psychological space.

Woolf’s second novel *Night and Day* has been critically understudied, widely considered a more conventional example of the Edwardian marriage plot than her subsequent transitional novel *Jacob’s Room* (1922), which developed the experimental stream-of-consciousness technique that characterizes her later fiction. Nevertheless, *Night and Day*’s examination of the societal limitations placed on women is embodied in its depiction of streetwalking, where characters wander aimlessly, direct others’ movements and frequently cross paths in urban space, a narrative device that presages her “tunneling process” in *Mrs. Dalloway*. More explicitly than *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Night and Day* exposes the extent to which female characters’ movements in the public sphere are controlled and limited by men, symbolizing the stasis that characterizes their domestic lives. The novel closely examines the social expectations of love and marriage placed upon women while depicting the emergence of the independent “New Woman” who pursued paid employment and advocated for women’s rights. Published in 1919, the same year women earned the right to vote in England, *Night and Day* portrays the end of the prewar Edwardian era, where the Victorian ideology of separate spheres still prevailed in middle and upper-class households.

The novel follows the friendship between Katharine Hilbery, the daughter of a wealthy literary family, and Mary Datchet, a middle-class suffragist, as well as their suitors William Rodney and Ralph Denham. Both Katharine and Mary undermine the era's gender roles; Mary lives alone in central London and works in a women's suffrage office, while Katharine, uninterested in the literary reputation of her family, secretly studies mathematics in her room at night. Yet Katharine also dutifully conforms to her family's expectations, helping her mother complete a perpetually unfinished biography of her grandfather, a celebrated Victorian poet, and frequently entertaining guests in the family home. When the novel opens, Katharine, "in common with many other young ladies of her class," is pouring out tea for her father's guests (*ND* 9). The door opens to admit a young lawyer and acquaintance of her father's, Ralph Denham, who enters with "the omnibuses and cabs still running in his head, and his body still tingling with his quick walk along the streets and in and out of traffic and foot-passengers" (*ND* 10). To Ralph, disorientated by the long walk from his lower middle-class neighborhood of Highgate to Katharine's upper-class home on Cheyne Walk, it was "as if a thousand softly padded doors closed between him and the street outside. A fine mist, the etherealized essence of the fog, hung visibly in the wide and rather empty space of the drawing-room, all silver where the candles were grouped on the tea-table, and ruddy again in the firelight" (*ND* 10). The closing of the door on the street outside explicitly demarcates the contrast between Ralph and Katharine: Katharine as a representative of the upper-class, domestic, female sphere and Ralph as a working-class, active, male agent, who in entering the Hilberys' home literally brings in the outside with him in the lingering form of fog (Larsson 42).

The class difference between Ralph and Katharine is exposed when Katharine takes Ralph to view the "relics" of her illustrious grandfather, the renowned poet Richard Alardyce.

Ralph accuses Katharine of belonging to “one of the most distinguished families in England,” adding “I read it all in some magazine” (*ND* 17). Indeed, the narrator confirms that “Whatever profession you looked at, there was a Warburton or an Alardyce, a Millington or a Hilbery somewhere in authority and prominence... and when one of them dies the chances are that another of them writes his biography” (*ND* 36-37). The Hilberys’ project to preserve Richard Alardyce’s legacy reinforces the demands of both patriarchy and empire, part of the extended family’s mission to continue producing generations of “distinguished men” (*ND* 26). Noting that “The source of nobility was, of course, the poet, and his immediate descendants, therefore, were invested with greater luster than the collateral branches,” the narrator observes that “the quality of her birth oozed into Katharine’s consciousness from a dozen different sources as soon as she was able to perceive anything,” enlisting her in the endless project to preserve her ancient family line of “conspicuous judges and admirals, lawyers and servants of the State” (*ND* 37, 38, 36). As a woman prevented from pursuing a distinguished career, and as someone interested in mathematics rather than her family’s literary legacy, Katharine is forced to take a passive role in this preservation of ancestral honor rather than achieve greatness herself. Ralph perhaps hits too close to home, therefore, when he declares “I hate great men. The worship of greatness in the nineteenth century seems to me to explain the worthlessness of that generation” (*ND* 21). Despite Ralph’s denigration of the Hilberys’ Victorian values, he soon becomes fixated on Katharine as a symbol of his own upward mobility, placing him in competition with William Rodney. A young lawyer and amateur poet, William is considered a suitable match for Katharine because his admiration of Shakespeare and the national literary tradition align with the family’s own enshrinement of imperial patriarchal ideals. While Katharine passively accepts the engagement

to defer to her parents' authority, Ralph begins to actively pursue Katharine, narrative developments that are mirrored in their overlapping journeys around London.

Ralph's movements are frequently quick and decisive, exemplified in his walk home from the Hilberys', where he "walked up the street at a great pace, cutting the air with his walking-stick" (*ND* 23). Throughout the novel, the act of walking serves as a psychological conduit for Ralph to process his own thoughts and emotions, spending his lunch hour every day "pacing the gravel paths in Lincoln's Inn Fields," and "when he came back to his work after lunch he carried in his head a picture of the Strand, scattered with omnibuses, and of the purple shapes of leaves pressed flat upon the gravel, as if his eyes had always been bent upon the ground" (*ND* 126). Covering the greatest amount of geographical distance in *Night and Day*, Ralph's intensive thought process during his walks directly influences his decision-making, and his *flâneur*-like qualities are revealed when he chooses the meditative qualities of a nighttime walk over a convenient Tube ride: "His thought was so absorbing that when it became necessary to verify the name of a street, he looked at it for a time before he read it; when he came to a crossing, he seemed to have to reassure himself by two or three taps, such as a blind man gives, upon the curb; and, reaching the Underground station, he blinked in the bright circle of light, glanced at his watch, decided that he might still indulge himself in darkness, and walked straight on" (*ND* 23-24). It is on this walk that Ralph first identifies Katharine as a romantic option: "She'll do... Yes, Katharine Hilbery'll do... I'll take Katharine Hilbery" (*ND* 24). This revelation marks a turning point in the novel where Ralph is drawn again and again toward central London not only due to his desire for social mobility but his attraction to Katharine. Like the *flâneur*, Ralph begins to purposefully wander through Katharine's neighborhood and pass by her house, reflecting on a walk to Mary's "How absurd Mary would think me if she knew that I

almost made up my mind to walk all the way to Chelsea in order to look at Katharine's windows" (ND 208). In a significant scene reminiscent of Peter Walsh's pursuit of a female stranger in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Ralph spends an evening following Katharine and William around the isolated Embankment at night. Like the narrator of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," he becomes an anonymous, unseen spectator observing their actions:

The couple in front of them kept their distance accurately, and appeared, so far as Denham could judge by the way they turned towards each other, to be talking very constantly. He observed that when a pedestrian going the opposite way forced them to part they came together again directly afterwards. Without intending to watch them he never quite lost sight of the yellow scarf twisted round Katharine's head, or the light overcoat which made Rodney look fashionable among the crowd. At the Strand he supposed that they would separate, but instead they crossed the road, and took their way down one of the narrow passages which lead through ancient courts to the river. Among the crowd of people in the big thoroughfares Rodney seemed merely to be lending Katharine his escort, but now, when passengers were rare and the footsteps of the couple were distinctly heard in the silence, Denham could not help picturing to himself some change in their conversation. The effect of the light and shadow, which seemed to increase their height, was to make them mysterious and significant, so that Denham had no feeling of irritation with Katharine, but rather a half-dreamy acquiescence in the course of the world (ND 97).

Ralph has stumbled upon the scene of William's misogynist proposal of marriage, telling Katharine "Why, you're nothing at all without it [marriage]; you're only half alive; only using half your faculties, you must feel that for yourself" (ND 66). When Katharine unconsciously

draws a parallel between him and Ralph's tendency to lecture her, William warns "But you mustn't marry him, though" (*ND* 67). The relative candor of the characters' speech can be attributed to the location of the darkened Embankment, the newly constructed footpath that ran from Blackfriars Bridge to Battersea Bridge and, as Lisbeth Larsson has suggested, was one of the few unsupervised public places in the Edwardian era that "upper- and middle-class men and women could meet" (*ND* 56). Ralph similarly describes the privacy of the Embankment as a place best suited to serious conversation with Katharine: "The Strand was too busy. There was too much risk, also, of finding an empty cab. Without a word of explanation he turned to the left, down one of the side streets leading to the river. On no account must they part until something of the very greatest importance had happened" (*ND* 240). The setting of the nighttime walk again becomes an opportunity for characters to process and communicate their feelings, while their geographical convergence provides a convenient opportunity for all three to mutually analyze their earlier interactions in a narrative device that foreshadows the "tunneling process" in *Mrs. Dalloway*. However, the walk ends in frustration for Ralph, William and Katharine. Despite Katharine's protestations that she will walk home, William forces her into a cab, exercising a patriarchal influence that hinders her movements and sends her straight from the realm of his authority to her father's home. Meanwhile, Ralph crosses paths with William, and they are free to walk together and discuss Katharine as long as they wish.

Ralph's deliberate pursuit of Katharine during this scene can be contrasted to his aimless wanderings after he discovers Katharine is engaged. Rather than engaging in unseen observation of others, Ralph fears having his own damaged feelings exposed by public observation, and his walking acquires a purposelessness and directionless quality: "Finding himself, after a few minutes, no longer under observation, and no attack delivered, he slackened his pace, the pain

spread all through him, took possession of every governing seat, and met with scarcely any resistance from powers exhausted by their first effort at defense” (ND 126). He deflects from his straightforward route home to wander aimlessly around the city in order to contemplate this turn of events, embodying the archetype of the masculine *flâneur* Baudelaire describes in *The Painter of Modern Life*, whose undirected strolling contrasts to Ralph’s typically purposeful stride:

He took his way languidly along the river embankment, away from home rather than towards it. The world had him at its mercy. He made no pattern out of the sights he saw. He felt himself now, as he had often fancied other people, adrift on the stream, and far removed from control of it, a man with no grasp upon circumstances any longer... For the substantial world, with its prospect of avenues leading on and on to the invisible distance, had slipped from him, since Katharine was engaged. Now all his life was visible, and the straight, meager path had its ending soon enough. Katharine was engaged, and she had deceived him, too... His life seemed immeasurably impoverished (ND 126).

This scene is a direct contrast to Ralph tailing Katharine along the Embankment; while earlier he moved purposefully and was gratified when she rejected William’s proposal, his discovery that she has accepted his offer of marriage disrupts his accustomed route and sends him into a geographical and psychological tailspin. Ralph feels suddenly adrift and disconnected from public life, identifying with downtrodden strangers such as “Old battered men loafing at the doors of public-houses” (ND 126). The revelation quite literally knocks him off his stride, sending him into a pattern of aimless wandering rather than his directed strolls past Katharine’s house, on the Embankment, and throughout central London. Ralph’s mental and topographical disorientation will only be resolved through his long walks with Katharine, which align their

movements and give him a purposeful direction again. As Larsson points out, Ralph's aimless, drifting *flânerie* covers by far the greatest amount of geographic distance in the novel, and like Woolf, his reflections while walking prove to be a conducive process for the improvement of his circumstances. His aimless wanderings allow him the space to ruminate on his love for Katharine, an act that separates him from William's directed movements and controlling actions. Walking with Katherine, Ralph is able to find a purposeful direction to channel his thoughts and feelings, while traversing the map of her upper-class neighborhood together allows him to enter into her social sphere while approaching her on equal terms. By the end of the *Night and Day*, Ralph has left his starting place in Highgate, where he gazes at central London from his bedroom window, and moved there permanently, symbolizing his professional and social advancement. His geographical progress can be contrasted, therefore, with the female walkers Mary and Katharine, whose own intensive walking only returns them to their starting points. While walking may be an act of liberation for Ralph, Woolf subversively indicates the presence of the unseen forces of patriarchy and empire acting upon the novel's female characters, constricting their progress even as they appear to move forward in time and space.

In comparison to Ralph, Mary and Katharine have less control over their movements throughout London; while Mary's are mainly determined by work, Katharine's are guided by her male escorts. Elizabeth F. Evans contends that for its female characters, *Night and Day* "represent[s] urban walking as creating a relationship to the city in which interior development takes place hand in hand with urban explorations... it portrays physical movement and psychological development as intertwined and contrasts the freedom of *flânerie* with the physical and psychological restrictions of the family home" (22). H. Porter Abbott similarly posits that "The novel's threshold qualities are articulated through new habitues of city streets, those I had

termed new public women,” identifying the connection between characters’ walking and Woolf’s narrative style and suggesting that “the passages of aimless wandering” are significant in how they interrupt “the orderly procedures of the novel of manners and the romance plot” (241). Both Mary and Katharine’s journeys through the city, despite their limitations, disrupt typical expectations of woman walkers: Mary’s represent her independence and autonomy as a single, working woman, while Katharine’s long walks with William and Ralph allow her to navigate her romantic entanglements, eventually choosing the less conventional path of marriage to Ralph. Analyzing the routes of Katharine and Mary, as two contrasting urban female walkers, can illuminate the ways gendered expectations limited women’s movements despite their growing efforts to assert their agency in the public sphere.

As Anna Snaith observes, Mary and William are the novel’s most stationary characters: “Their walks take place within a restricted area and they each follow a determined route. Mary and William have chosen their direction; they know what they want” (48). Mary walks north to the women’s suffrage office in Russell Square, across Lincoln’s Inn Fields and along the newly constructed Kingsway into Bloomsbury, the cultural capital of modernist art and writing. The straightforward, practical route reflects Mary’s identity as a self-possessed and serious modern worker, as do her ambitious thoughts while walking to her job: “And directly she had crossed the road at Holborn, her thoughts all came naturally and regularly to roost upon her work... She was thinking all the way up Southampton Row of notepaper and foolscap, and how an economy in the use of paper might be effected” (*ND* 50). Identifying with the working-class shopkeepers she sees on her morning route, Mary’s sense of identity is not predicated upon her status as an unmarried woman or even as a female worker but as one of the faceless masses of laborers representative of modern culture. Her thoughts, unlike the novel’s other characters, are not

focused on love or marriage but on the value of work under capitalism and her activism for women's suffrage: "she forgot that she was, properly speaking, an amateur worker, whose services were unpaid, and could hardly be said to wind the world up for its daily task, since the world, so far, had shown very little desire to take the boons which Mary's society for woman's suffrage had offered it" (*ND* 119-120). Although Mary recognizes that her work as an unpaid suffrage worker would be unlikely to be regarded as a meaningful contribution to the masculine world of politics, law and business, her participation in the workday routine grants her a degree of independence and participation in modern culture not afforded to other women at the time, allowing her to blend into the urban crowd. Deborah Parsons writes that by merging into the faceless, surging mass of laborers, Mary "deny[s] the role of woman as spectacle" (134):

Out in the street she liked to think herself one of the workers who, at this hour, take their way in rapid single file along all the broad pavements of the city, with their heads slightly lowered, as if all their effort were to follow each other as closely as might be; so that Mary used to figure to herself a straight rabbit-run worn by their unswerving feet upon the pavement. But she liked to pretend that she was indistinguishable from the rest, and that when a wet day drove her to the Underground or omnibus, she gave and took her share of crowd and wet with clerks and typists and commercial men, and shared with them the serious business of winding-up the world to tick for another four-and-twenty hours (*ND* 71).

Mary's efforts to blend into the crowd illuminate the challenges facing women attempting to navigate the enduring nature of separate spheres ideology at the end of the prewar period—she seeks to become one with the masculine workforce, finding liberation in anonymity because it resists the commodification and sensational spectacle associated with the "public woman." The

practicality of her daytime workday routine contrasts sharply to the conversational nighttime walks of Ralph, Katharine and William, representing her focus on politics and work over romance. Yet the crowd is composed of male office workers who would not likely respect women's labor or the value of suffrage work. Even within this mass of laborers, Mary walks alone, separated from the respectability of the workday routine by the reality of women's economic inequality.

Mary's room is represented in a similar manner to her walking, as a place of stability that serves as a gathering and meeting place for other characters. Mary is Woolf's archetypal New Woman with a "room of her own," comfortably supported by a private income and providing a vibrant social gathering place where men and women can meet and engage in literary and artistic debate on equal terms. Providing a shelter in the hustle and bustle of London, the privacy of the room also enables Mary to engage in sensitive conversations with other characters, as opposed to Ralph's crowded family home and Katharine's parents' house where they lack privacy and freedom. However, as Parsons suggests, the room increasingly becomes a space that emphasizes Mary's loneliness, illustrating her social isolation as a single woman rejected by Ralph and who exists peripherally to Katharine, William and Ralph's romantic relationships. Because of her isolation, Mary is perhaps the most aware of her identity as a solitary city dweller, particularly one who occupies a liminal space in the imperial city of London. Privileged enough to live alone and entertain guests as a single woman, she also exists outside the patriarchal system of marriage governing the lives of other upper-class women such as Katharine. In a passage reflecting on the paradoxical nature of her solitude, Mary positions herself within the wider sphere of London and the British colonial empire to evaluate her purpose within the universe:

But she was perfectly conscious of her present situation, and derived some pleasure from the reflection that she could rejoice equally in solitude, and in the presence of the many very different people who were now making their way, by diverse paths, across London to the spot where she was sitting... in the wonderful maze of London, which still seemed to her, in spite of her constitutional level-headedness, like a vast electric light, casting radiance upon the myriads of men and women who crowded round it. And here she was at the very center of it all, that center which was constantly in the minds of people in remote Canadian forests and on the plains of India, when their thoughts turned to England. The nine mellow strokes, by which she was now apprised of the hour, were a message from the great clock at Westminster itself (*ND* 71).

Invoking the wilderness of the far-flung colonies of Canada and India, Mary places herself at the heart of the British empire, where her proximity to the chimes of Big Ben aligns her with authoritative structures. As a single woman alone in the city, Mary is marginal to these systems of power, so identifying herself as an inhabitant of imperial London is imperative to reclaiming her sense of agency. Such a perspective at first appears to undermine Woolf's anti-nationalistic beliefs, specifically her famous statement in *Three Guineas* that "As a woman I have no country." Mary nuances this belief, however, as someone who is actively working to change national policy to advocate for the country's politically disenfranchised women. She advocates a primarily humanistic perspective, as when she proclaims her affection for her fellow city-dwellers: "London's a fine place to live in. I believe I could sit and watch people all day long. I like my fellow-creatures..." (*ND* 135). A few pages later, however, Mary idly imagines exerting her will over passerby in the square: "In her absurd mood of lustful arrogance, Mary looked at the little figures and thought, 'If I liked I could make you go in there or stop short; I

could make you walk in single file or in double file; I could do what I liked with you” (ND 139). This minor display of power illuminates that like the *flâneur*, Mary longs to exert her control over London pedestrians, perhaps in order to prove her work is making a tangible difference, and leading her to become more conscious of physical markers of empire. Her powerlessness is exposed, however, by her deference to symbols of national pride and power, which remind her of how she is disenfranchised by asserting either her political or romantic agency. Like Woolf herself, Mary is a proud inhabitant of London who nonetheless questions the imperial project of nation-building, whose tireless advocacy for women’s rights undermines the empire’s reliance upon patriarchal structures. Her contemplations of national identity serve as a gateway to further ruminations on gender, labor, and love, a cycle of thinking which quite literally alters her patterns of walking. Like Ralph, Mary’s walks lead her to evaluate her own place within the universe, but she is unable to enact control over her surroundings in the face of the overwhelming forces of patriarchy and empire.

Mary explicitly recognizes the oppressive patriarchal structure of nation-building in a scene where, instead of returning to her office one day, she takes a detour into the British Museum. Although her actions appear random, her stroll through the controlled layout of the museum mirrors the prescribed movements of an itinerary, through which she encounters the collected and carefully curated propaganda of imperial expansion. She is suddenly overwhelmed by the silent beauty of the Elgin Marbles, some of the most recognizable symbols of British conquest, which cause Mary to temporarily lose her sensible demeanor: “after she had gazed at the Ulysses for a minute or two, she began to think about Ralph Denham. So secure did she feel with these silent shapes that she almost yielded to an impulse to say ‘I am in love with you’ aloud. The presence of this immense and enduring beauty made her almost alarmingly conscious

of her desire, and at the same time proud of a feeling which did not display anything like the same proportions when she was going about her daily work” (ND 123). Notably, these symbols of imperial conquest inspire Mary to take pride in the idea of romantic love instead of her work, a patriarchal belief opposed to her personal ideals. The realization that she is in love with Ralph jolts Mary out of both her grounded thought process and directed movements, after which she walks “rather aimlessly” through the galleries. Upon seeing statues of Assyrian bulls, she imagines “herself traveling with Ralph in a land where these monsters were couchant in the sand,” before “conjur[ing] up a scene of herself on a camel’s back, in the desert, while Ralph commanded a whole tribe of natives” (ND 124). As Kathy J. Phillips observes, Mary slips into the prevailing colonial and patriarchal attitudes espoused by the museum which she normally rejects; gazing upon the spoils of conquest leads her to romanticize herself and Ralph as colonizers. Only the grounding nature of walking through the city streets shakes Mary out of this pattern of thought: “as she walked along the street to her office, the force of all her customary objections to being in love with any one overcame her. She did not want to marry at all” (ND 124). Here, Woolf demonstrates how women’s freedom of movement is directly tied to their freedom of intellectual thought: in the controlled, imperial layout of the museum, Mary succumbs to patriarchal and nationalistic fantasies, while in the open air of the urban streets, she is able to reclaim her independence and feminist identity.

Like Ralph, Mary displays qualities of the *flâneur* in that walking helps her process her thoughts and emotions, embodied in her extended train of thought as she walks down Charing Cross Road after recognizing that Ralph does not love her: “Strange thoughts are bred in passing through crowded streets should the passenger, by chance, have no exact destination in front of him, much as the mind shapes all kinds of forms, solutions, images when listening inattentively

to music. From an acute consciousness of herself as an individual, Mary passed to a conception of the scheme of things in which, as a human being, she must have her share” (*ND* 210). Once again, Mary encounters a symbol of empire that prompts her to ruminate on her place in Ralph’s life—sitting down “opposite the statue of one of London’s heroes upon the Embankment,” she contemplates “where was he [Ralph] to be placed in the new scale of life” (*ND* 211). Her romanticized and heroic vision of Ralph now seems as anonymous to her as the nameless statue, whose nationalistic purpose also serves to advance an idealized vision of masculinity which conforms to the patriarchal structure of marriage underlying Britain’s nation-building project. Contemplating her future without Ralph’s love, Mary fears that she has lost the “essential thing,” or the spark she sees in the eyes of others, discovering that she has developed a new indifference to the bustling urban life around her: “Would she mind, for example, if the wheels of that motor-omnibus passed over her and crushed her to death? No, not in the least; or an adventure with that disagreeable- looking man hanging about the entrance of the Tube station? No; she could not conceive fear or excitement” (*ND* 209). As Evans suggests, “for a woman outside the marriage market, masculine public life, whether exposed as motor omnibus, a street lurker, or a hero’s statue, has little to offer, certainly not happiness” (118). For both Mary and Katharine, the streets provide only a limited sense of freedom by emphasizing that they are interlopers in the public sphere and have little control over their own lives.

Katharine’s walking routes indicate the lack of agency in her movements—while she engages in intensive walking during the novel, she fails to progress from her starting point, and many of her walks are dictated by her parents or men. Katharine typically walks straight across the Strand to visit William or Mary, and her longer walks are often interrupted or controlled, her stymied movements symbolizing her lack of freedom. Katharine’s walks take her toward the

central part of London, but she often changes direction or breaks off her route, and returns to her starting place at her parents' house in Cheyne Walk, symbolically unable to reach her final destination in the city center. As Snaith observes, "The geographically scattered, fragmented and repetitive pattern subsequently traced on the map of London by Katharine's walks reveals a human being desperately searching for something that she can neither identify nor locate" (62). In some cases her walks are directly disrupted and her wishes for freedom ignored, such as when Katharine and William, after arguing on the Embankment, see a taxicab approaching them. Despite Katharine telling him, "Don't call that cab for me, William. I shall walk," he responds "Nonsense, Katharine; you'll do nothing of the kind. It's nearly twelve o'clock, and we've walked too far as it is" (*ND* 52). Katharine responds by laughing and walking so quickly that he struggles to keep up with her, saying "Now, William, if people see me racing along the Embankment like this they WILL talk. You had far better say good-night, if you don't want people to talk" (*ND* 52). The scene blatantly demonstrates that William attempts to exert his control over Katharine by limiting her movements, an act Katharine resists by refusing his efforts and quite literally outwalking him. Yet her attempts are unsuccessful: William beckons with a "despotic gesture" and "brought Katharine to a standstill, telling her "Don't let the man see us struggling, for God's sake!" he murmured. Katharine stood for a moment quite still" (*ND* 52). Here, William overtly reveals his obsession with upholding patriarchal methods of control, using a pretense of concern for Katharine's safety as an excuse to force her into the cab. Katharine mocks and subverts this misogynist attitude when she turns his own words against him by warning him that "people will talk," prompting him to reveal that he is more concerned with the taxi driver's perception of their relationship than her comfort and safety.

Throughout *Night and Day*, not only William but Ralph control Katherine's movements as means of exerting their patriarchal authority. Although Katharine does embody qualities of *flânerie* in her frequent wanderings and desire to walk independently, this ability is largely limited by the forces of patriarchy and social class (Larsson 3). "Katharine was once more irresistibly drawn to gaze upon an imaginary map of London, to follow the twists and turns of unnamed streets," Woolf writes before Katharine sets off on one of her few independent journeys, suggesting that her heroine's romanticized vision of the city is detached from the everyday reality of the topographical map. Finding herself in Kingsway at teatime, Katharine is stranded outside her parents' sphere of influence, realizing that she does not know anyone in the neighborhood besides Mary and beginning the walk to the suffragists' office in Russell Square. Seeking the advice of another woman, Katharine makes only this singular short walk without the direction of her parents or men, prompting Snaith to observe that "she has left the path of the patriarchal marriage plot and is walking where she pleases," leading her "to the bastion of the struggle for women's rights and to another woman" (ND 58). However, the walk's unrealized possibilities for independence are quickly interrupted by Ralph, who drags Katharine onto a passing bus, quite literally cutting short her freedom. Their ensuing conversation only exposes the differences between them: Katharine compares the jolting bus to boat tours of Venice canals, to which Ralph aggressively responds that he has never been able to afford to travel there. Unlike with William, however, Katharine is also to successfully assert her independence and abruptly ends the conversation by getting off the bus. The discussion, which hinges on the freedom of movement, illuminates the depth of the class and gender disparity between them: while Katharine fails to recognize Ralph's inability to travel due to his financial circumstances, Ralph

is unable to comprehend that as a woman, Katharine does not always have the freedom to walk where she pleases.

This dynamic later recurs in a scene where Ralph invites Katharine to a family tea party, and Katharine is forced to accompany him because she is unfamiliar with the neighborhood: “She assented, having very little notion whether Highgate was next door to Regent’s Park or not... They proceeded with dogged determination through the winding roads of Regent’s Park, and the Sunday-stricken streets of the neighborhood, in the direction of the Tube station. Ignorant of the way, she resigned herself entirely to him, and found his silence a convenient cover beneath which to continue her anger with Rodney” (*ND* 308). Katharine’s class privilege leaves her ignorant of the district, not having traveled or socialized in Ralph’s lower-class neighborhood of Highgate. However, Ralph exploits both this class difference and his masculine authority over Katharine to force her to accompany him, returning her to the domestic sphere of his family home, which subtly indicates his desire to marry her. This disparity of class and gender is only resolved later in the novel through the bridging of geographic distance, particularly the long walks Katharine and Ralph take together that allow them to enter into each other’s spheres. As Evans points out, walking in each other’s neighborhoods, Katharine in Highgate and Ralph in Cheyne Walk, affords them the mobility and freedom to conduct their “cross-class romance.” The psychological experience of the walk, which exists outside of the social expectations of the domestic sphere or the demands of the workforce, also allows them the privacy to reflect on and discuss their growing relationship. At the end of the novel, Ralph reveals his desire to stand outside and gaze at Katharine’s windows, to which she replies “But it was foolish to stand outside and look at the windows. Suppose William hadn’t seen you. Would you have gone to bed?” He counters her criticism “with wonderment that a woman of her age

could have stood in Kingsway looking at the traffic until she forgot.” “But it was then I first knew I loved you!” Katharine exclaims (*ND* 414). Katharine’s directed routes and practical strolls are an extension of her mathematical thinking, so her independent walking leads to her rational realization that she loves Ralph. Just as walking functions as a construction of interiority for Woolf’s narrator in “Street Hauntings,” the process of entering into each other’s spheres and engaging with each other on equal terms allows Ralph and Katharine to transcend their differences and form a more equitable partnership.

At the end of the novel, Katharine and Ralph leave family dinner at Cheyne Walk and wander the city aimlessly until they find themselves outside Mary’s house, staring up at the light in her window. Ralph suggests that they visit her, but Katharine objects, asking “Why should we interrupt her? What have we got to give her? She’s happy too. She has her work.” Katharine interprets the light in the window as “a sign of triumph”—perhaps viewing in Mary a realization of her own unexpressed mathematical ambitions (*ND* 415). Ralph and Katharine stand “looking at the illuminated blinds, an expression to them both of something impersonal and serene in the spirit of the woman within, working out her plans far into the night—her plans for the good of a world that none of them were ever to know” (*ND* 415). This scene appears to envision Woolf’s future argument in *A Room of One’s Own*, suggesting that Mary’s happiness arises not from romantic love but from her passion and dedication to her work. However, the scene also implies that marriage and professional satisfaction are mutually exclusive: while Mary has the freedom and security of her own room, she fails to gain Ralph’s love, and while Katharine has married for love, she has simply escaped the confines of her parents’ home into the domestic expectations of marriage, after spending much of the book struggling to free herself from the patriarchal control of Ralph and William. In this way, both Katharine and Mary are prevented from truly achieving

self-fulfillment, as they are still forced to exist under a patriarchal social structure that limits women's ability to pursue both marriage and a professional career. The incompletely resolved ending of *Night and Day* may indicate the transitional ground Woolf was treading—signifying a crucial turning point in the development of her style, her attempt to revise a New Woman novel into a modernist novel presaged the stylistic liberation she would achieve exploring the consciousness of the modern urban woman. If the modern woman would achieve true liberation, however, was yet to be seen. The twisting circuitous routes of *Night and Day* unsettle the plot conventions of the typical Edwardian marriage novel, representing women's rational thinking as an unexpected form of freedom. Although Mary and Katharine could not yet fully exert their agency under the patriarchal structure, they could envision an alternate future, one that parallels Woolf's exploration of interiority in her depiction of "walking as writing" to suggest that they may soon be able to forge new paths for themselves.

Mrs. Dalloway is a realization of the narrative techniques Woolf began to develop in *Night and Day*, considered the pinnacle of her high modernist style. While *Night and Day*'s characters cross paths on the busy London streets and the movements of women are directly limited by the male characters, *Mrs. Dalloway* captures the unseen forces of patriarchy and empire acting upon her characters as they cross paths in psychological and geographical space. Woolf's "tunneling process" is achieved in her innovative stream-of-consciousness technique that switches between perspectives as her characters encounter each other on the topographical map of London and in the psychic space of memory and chance association. Like *Night and Day*, *Mrs. Dalloway* employs the dual forces of patriarchy and empire to influence and control women's walking, and by comparing the *flâneuses* Clarissa and Elizabeth Dalloway to the male walkers Peter Walsh and Septimus Smith, it becomes possible to illuminate the ways imperial

and patriarchal structures intersect. While Clarissa and Elizabeth derive joy from their brief sense of adventure before returning home to the domestic sphere, Peter's journey is an attempt to establish rather than escape control, but the movements of all four characters intersect with each other through engagement with symbols of empire. The act of walking in *Mrs. Dalloway* is often organized and timed around London's imperial landmarks, whether the chiming of Big Ben, a passing military parade or statues of generals in Trafalgar Square. Scott Cohen contends that "imperialism's representation of a global empire within the metropolis" had a distinct influence on the development of the modernist novel, claiming that by locating the empire within the city, Woolf represents the reach of empire on ordinary life, portraying "heat and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa... wherever in short the climate or the devil tempts men to fall from the true belief which is her own" as operating and coming into contact with the daily lives of the city's inhabitants (100). The novel's archetypes also represent this "geography of empire": the ideal English hostess Clarissa, the statesman Richard Dalloway, the imperialist Lady Bruton, and the expatriate colonial administrator Peter Walsh come into contact with the Scottish immigrant Maisie Johnson, the Irishwoman Molly Pratt, and Septimus's young Italian wife Rezia. The travels of these respective characters throughout *Mrs. Dalloway* mirror the limitations placed upon their movements by British society: while Peter's freedom of movement aligns with his authority as an agent of colonialism, Septimus's constricted route reflects his experience with PTSD as a war veteran at the mercy of imperial powers, and Rezia's status as a wife and an immigrant chaperoning her husband symbolizes her powerlessness within the patriarchal empire.

Cohen further suggests that the very experience of engaging in public life is critical to imbuing monuments with historical and nationalistic sentiment, contending that spectacles as Empire Day celebrations and Imperial Exhibitions were successful because they were "spaces in

movement, shaped at least in part by the crowds who passed through them” (Cohen 102). If, as Phillips asserts in *Virginia Woolf Against Empire*, Woolf “associates empire making, war making, and gender relations in a typical constellation” and “links the items in a complicated and shrewd critique,” then Woolf views colonialism and the patriarchy as implicitly intertwined forms of oppression (vii). Woolf overtly associates the oppression of imperialism with the oppression of women’s rights, claiming women are stateless in a nation in which they are politically disenfranchised: “As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world” (*Three Guineas* 197). This comparison is overtly reinforced in Woolf’s treatment of female immigrants such as Molly, Maisie and Rezia, who are literally rendered stateless by their expatriation, a dual form of marginalization that excludes them from possessing any agency within the narrative. By examining the ways objects of empire influence the characters’ movements, specifically the routes of the female walkers Clarissa and Elizabeth, I will argue that Woolf constructs the imperial architecture of London as a patriarchal structure limiting the freedom of women.

Through the character of the upper-class housewife Clarissa Dalloway, Woolf introduces the archetypical *flâneuse* whose ramblings around London are one of her main sources of joy. Mrs. Dalloway’s famous offer to buy the flowers herself, even though she occupies a privileged social position where such an errand could be delegated to the servants, arises out of a simple desire to exist in the public sphere. “I love walking in London,” are her first words in the novel. “Really, it’s better than walking in the country” (*MD* 7). Like the narrator of “Street Hauntings,” Clarissa loves observing the life of the city. As Bowlby posits, she is the *flâneuse* incarnate, “a woman who likes to dally along the way” (7). *Mrs. Dalloway* opens with Clarissa leaving her home in her affluent neighborhood west of Westminster Palace and waiting to cross Victoria

Street towards Bond Street to complete her errand. Both Victoria and Bond Streets were bustling, modern city streets that serve as emblems of modernity as well as symbols of wealth, power and tradition embodied in the British empire. Clarissa's immediate landscape is dominated by these imperial symbols: Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Big Ben, where the chiming of the clock grounds her and prompts her to engage in observation of her surroundings, deriving joy from the hustle and bustle of city life around her:

First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life. In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June (MD 4).

Clarissa conceives as herself foremost as an inhabitant of the imperial city, someone who plays a vital role in the daily life of London: "Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? But that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived" (MD 6). Although Clarissa is immersed in her own thoughts about her family, her former suitor Peter Walsh, and her upcoming party as she strolls through the city

streets, the landscape of the imperial city emerges in the background, such as the crowd admiring “Victoria billowing on her mound” at Buckingham Palace, and traffic disruptions that alter the flow of the narrative (*MD* 22). As an imperial car presumed to be carrying a member of the royal family passes, traffic comes to a standstill, and all classes of people mingle to watch the procession go by and imagine the queen or king being conveyed down the street: “there could be no doubt greatness was seated within; greatness was passing, hidden, down Bond Street, removed only by a hand’s-breadth from ordinary people who might now, for the first and last time, be within speaking distance of the majesty of England, of the enduring symbol of the state” (*MD* 17). The event equally disrupts the routines of upper-class Clarissa and working-class Septimus Smith, as the accumulation of traffic quite literally brings the narrative to a halt:

Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body. The sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry’s shop window; old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; here a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs Dalloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in inquiry. Everyone looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated (*MD* 22).

Woolf’s exaggerated tone that emphasizes the stasis of the royal procession satirizes the patriotic, jingoistic language attached to representations of royalty as symbols of national pride, but the royal procession, like the chiming of Big Ben, has a tangible effect on the characters’ movements and thus on the flow of the narrative. The ability of the car to bring the lives of ordinary citizens to a standstill illustrates the power even a presumed symbol of empire exerts over the narrative. The scene also complicates Woolf’s portrayal of the imperial city, particularly

in her contradictory love for London's urban life and dislike of nationalistic sentiment. A journal entry written at the time of the London Blitz exposes Woolf's complicated relationship with the imperial architecture of London: "Odd how often I think with what is love I suppose of the City: of the walk to the Tower: that is my England; I mean, if a bomb destroyed one of those little alleys with the brass bound curtains & the river smell & the old woman reading I should feel well, what the patriots feel" (*D5* 263). Here, Woolf suggests that she conceives of herself as a citizen of London rather than the British empire but exposes the contradiction she explores in *Three Guineas* of the futility of rejecting patriotism and disclaiming her country when she has been enlisted in the apparatus of nation-building since birth. Woolf's class privilege further renders her a beneficiary of the British empire even as she seeks to undermine a national ideology limiting women's freedoms. Clarissa's class privilege, like Woolf's, further complicates her ability to occupy space on the London streets. As the perfect English hostess and a privileged upper-class white woman, Clarissa has the freedom to stroll around her affluent neighborhood, symbolically claiming space within the imperial city. However, as an upper-class wife responsible for the management of domestic space, Clarissa's sense of "freedom" is severely limited. Unlike working women such as Mary, Clarissa has little legitimate reason to walk alone, and thus perceives her wanderings as adventurous in part due to their novelty. Rather than wander aimlessly through the streets like the narrator of "Street Hauntings," Clarissa turns around at Bond Street after finishing her errand and dutifully retreats to the safety of the household sphere.

Clarissa's constricted movements can be directly compared to her narrative "double," Septimus Smith, a young clerk and shell-shocked World War I veteran whose journey around the city is a mirror of Clarissa's. Contrary to Clarissa's privileged position as the wife of a statesman,

Septimus is a clear victim rather than a beneficiary of the empire. While Clarissa blithely reflects that “the War was over, except for someone like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed,” Septimus was a naïve and eager young volunteer influenced by nationalistic sentiment who went to war to “save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare’s plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square” (*MD* 4, 130). Lacking mental healthcare and government support to treat his post-traumatic stress disorder, memories of war constantly intrude on Septimus’s daily routine. As Snaith points out, Septimus and Clarissa will never meet, but their routes converge at the corner of Bond and Brook Streets, the location of Clarissa’s florist and where Septimus and his wife Rezia stop on their walk toward Harley Street and 12pm appointment with the psychiatrist Dr. Bradshaw (a name reminiscent of a popular railway and travel guide series of the period, which suggests the strict itinerary Septimus and Rezia follow) (109). Their routes are not complementary but rather mirror each other; at the street corner, Clarissa turns around to walk home, while Septimus and Rezia walk in the opposite direction north to Regent’s Park. Scholars have often interpreted the unified lines on the map as a link between their opposing perspectives, where Septimus is Clarissa’s alter ego and represents a rebellious aspect to her personality that she suppresses. Snaith points out that they both “suffer from the same inability to combine the past with the present, are equally unable to think ahead and are both, above all, emotionally mute” (111).

As Septimus navigates the physical landscape of London, his involuntary flashbacks to the war intrude, creating a metropolitan spatial crisis where imperial landmarks and events trigger his memories of the trenches, Septimus’s own experience of the horrors of empire. Septimus is unable to temporally locate himself within the oppressive space of the city, where the landscape of the past and present fails him, an ominous predicament embodied in the obscurity

of his class position and common name as well as his experience as only one of many shell-shocked war veterans: “London has swallowed up many millions of young men called Smith” (*MD* 84). While Septimus was once one of Mary’s idealized prewar workers, he does not share her perception of the crowds as invigorating but is overwhelmed by the congested streets around the royal procession; like the *flâneur*, different times and places interpenetrate his experience of reality. Septimus’s actions are frequently stymied by immobility and stasis—he “found himself unable to pass, heard [Edgar J. Watkiss announce the presence of the gray car]... Everything had come to a standstill” (*MD* 14). The approaching car with its imperial resonance quite literally stops Septimus in his tracks, and he is seized by fear and guilt not unlike what he may have experienced on the battlefield: “It is I who am blocking the way, he thought,” embarrassing Rezia, who drags him away (*MD* 39). Rezia can be contrasted to the upper-class *flâneuses* Clarissa and Elizabeth—disenfranchised by her gender, class, and immigration status, her role is to shepherd her husband around the city rather than forge a path of her own, her movements dictated by the need to fulfill her wifely duty to Septimus. As an immigrant, Rezia acutely feels the pressure to conform to the image of the loyal British citizen; upon her arrival to London, she and Septimus visit imperial landmarks: “They went to the Tower together; to the Victoria and Albert Museum; stood in the crowd to see the King open Parliament” (*MD* 89). Although Rezia feels like an outsider because of her nationality, Septimus perceives himself as an outcast because his experience of war separates him from the lived experience of those around him, claiming that he alone “knew the meaning of the world,” but only from “straying on the edge of the world, this outcast, who gazed back at the inhabited regions, who lay, like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world” (*MD* 66, 93). Invoking the geographic isolation of the struggling

sailor, Septimus emphasizes his psychological distance and inability to connect to the lives of others around him.

Connecting the geographic routes of Septimus and Clarissa, Woolf suggests that each character has their own mental map that influences and is triggered by their navigation of the physical landscape. As Septimus's landscape of war intrudes on his journey around London, Clarissa's long-ago memories of Bourton punctuate her everyday movements. In creating individual psychic maps that underlie the city's physical landscape, Woolf suggests that Septimus and Clarissa are intertwined not only by their routes but by greater societal forces, particularly the all-encompassing reach of empire. Their journeys will converge late in the novel—Septimus's abrupt suicide caused by his suffering from PTSD sets in motion a chain of events that interrupt other characters' movements, causing a doctor who arrives on the scene of his death to be late to Clarissa's party. Clarissa is unaccountably horrified by the news of his suicide, appearing to subconsciously recognize a connection between them. This scene, where Septimus's death disrupts the flow of the wider narrative and reverberates in Clarissa's life, mirrors the scene where both characters observe the passing of the royal procession, a shared experience that brings the narrative to a standstill around them. Clarissa's national pride and Septimus's inexplicable fear at that moment, caused by the reverberating effect of patriotic sentiment, mirror the shockwaves caused by his death, but in the latter case Clarissa reacts with horror. The shared effect emphasizes that both characters are victims of empire, unable to successfully navigate the landscape of the imperial city. The mutual forces of patriarchy and empire coincide at this moment—Clarissa's movements are limited by prescribed gender roles, while Septimus's experiences of the imperial city are haunted by the empire's failure to protect him.

Another “double” of Clarissa is her seventeen-year-old daughter Elizabeth, who unlike her mother serves a less significant role in the maintenance of her household but is still expected to uphold her parents’ standards of respectability. Like Clarissa, Elizabeth derives enjoyment from the urban life of London; unlike her mother, however, her journey is not dictated by a household errand, and she deviates from her expected route. Having escaped from her overbearing tutor Miss Kilman, her spontaneous adventure is one of the brief routes women take in *Mrs. Dalloway* that are not directed by other characters or arise from the fulfillment of domestic duties. Boarding the public bus—a distinctly modern form of transportation—transforms her from the Dalloways’ privileged and restricted daughter into the one of the faceless industrial laborers emblematic of the modern city, suggesting that she is a modern woman looking ahead into the future. Elizabeth asserts her autonomy by “most competently board[ing] the omnibus, in front of everybody” and imagines herself as an “impetuous creature—a pirate—for a pirate it was, reckless, unscrupulous, bearing down ruthlessly, circumventing dangerously, boldly snatching a passenger, or ignoring a passenger, squeezing eel-like and arrogant in between, and then rushing insolently all sails spread up Whitehall” (*MD* 134). Rejoicing in the fresh air and her freedom from Miss Kilman, Elizabeth pictures herself as “the figure-head of a ship, for the breeze slightly disarrayed her; the heat gave her cheeks the pallor of white painted wood; and her fine eyes, having no eyes to meet, gazed ahead, blank, bright, with the staring, incredible innocence of sculpture” (*MD* 135). Casting herself in the adventurous, masculine role of a pirate, Elizabeth switches to overtly imperialistic language when she discusses her ventures up Fleet Street and the Strand: “She walked just a little way towards St. Paul’s, shyly, like someone penetrating on tiptoe, exploring a strange house by night with a candle, on edge... For no Dalloways came down the Strand daily; she was a pioneer, a stray,

venturing, trusting” (*MD* 136). Flinging off the patriarchal structures of her household by venturing outside of her family’s domain, Elizabeth claims the nationalistic language of the “pioneer” in order to imbue her wanderings with grandeur and adventure, justifying her right to occupy space exploring the city.

Like Clarissa, Elizabeth displays qualities of the *flâneur* in her curious observations of bustling city life. She notices “the feet of those people busy about their activities, hands putting stone to stone, minds eternally occupied not with trivial chatterings... but with thoughts of ships, of business, of law, of administration...” (*MD* 136). Like the other characters, she comes into contact with the noise of the military parade: “the noise was tremendous; and suddenly there were trumpets (the unemployed) blaring, rattling about in the uproar; military music; as if people were marching; yet had they been dying...” (*MD* 136). Elizabeth thinks “It was so serious; it was so busy,” and likes “the geniality, sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood of this uproar. It seemed to her good” (*MD* 185). She longs to participate in the hustle and bustle of modern life; the association with business, law, and administration inspires her desire “to have a profession. She would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament if she found it necessary, all because of the Strand” (*MD* 136). By participating in the workday life of the modern city, Elizabeth embodies the desire of the “New Woman” to take advantage of the increasing professional opportunities available to her. As Shari Benstock points out, Elizabeth’s ambition derives not from a deeply held goal but from the city itself, how “buildings without architects’ names” and “commuting crowds of people” have a visceral “power... to stimulate what lay slumberous, clumsy, and shy on the mind’s sandy floor to break surface” (*MD* 137). Openly participating in public life allows Elizabeth to visualize alternate possibilities open to her. This dazzling glimpse of her future is obscured, however, when she remembers “But it was later than

she thought. Her mother would not like her to be wandering off alone like this,” and turns back down the Strand (*MD* 148). At this moment, the physicality of the scene changes: “the faces faded; the omnibuses suddenly lost their glow” (*MD* 138). Although she has glimpsed the tantalizing promise of a new future, she must return dutifully, like her mother, to the domestic sphere and her submissive role in the Dalloways’ household.

The character with the most freedom to traverse the streets is Peter Walsh, who scholars have sometimes interpreted as a link between the “doubles,” Clarissa and Septimus. A failed colonial administrator returning to London to seek a divorce, Peter has seemingly failed to fulfill the patriarchal and nationalistic values of marriage and colonialism: “All India lay behind him; plains, mountains; epidemics of cholera; a district twice as big as Ireland; decisions he had come to alone—he, Peter Walsh; who was now really for the first time in his life, in love” (*MD* 56). Yet Peter’s role in the narrative is primarily to uphold these values of empire. In this sense, Peter’s movements can be seen as both a geographic and thematic connection between Clarissa and Septimus—covering the most distance, with the greatest freedom and agency of movement, Peter’s spontaneous wanderings through the London streets reveal the oppressive forces of patriarchy and empire respectively at play upon Clarissa and Septimus. His freedom of movement can largely be attributed to the authority he enjoys as a white male colonial administrator, who more than any other character embodies the imperial forces of empire.

Peter can be interpreted as the archetype of the male *flâneur* in his undirected wanderings through the city and observation of the urban life around him. Having just arrived from India, his native city seems unfamiliar, and he pictures himself as an urban ethnographer observing the local environment. Such a perspective places him directly within the imperialist frame, casting London as a space of conquest and study, where his experience of the city is also influenced by

maps of the historical past. Peter's journey after his unsuccessful visit to Clarissa takes him through a space overburdened with symbols of English nationalism and imperialism. He walks down Whitehall toward Trafalgar Square, "glared... at the Statue of the Duke of Cambridge," the hero of the Crimean War, and imitates the military lock-step of the young soldiers (*MD* 54). Peter reaches Trafalgar Square and its gigantic statues of military heroes, where he stops and contemplates three monuments with statues of the military commanders Nelson, Gordon and Havelock. He then crosses the street to examine the statue of his childhood hero General Gordon: "poor Gordon, he thought" (*MD* 56). This imperial symbol allows Peter to recognize his role as an agent of the British empire, and both his triumphs and his failures to uphold its values. Peter Childs writes that Woolf implies "how imperialism relied upon the 'disciplining' of masculinity in order for it to operate"; patriarchy and empire converge here when Peter is presented with a tangible example of a masculine role model dedicated to the service of empire (165).

Peter's imperialist perspective is intertwined with his patriarchal attitudes toward women, particularly his former love interest Clarissa. His contemplation of the imperial monuments in Trafalgar Square is interrupted when he spots a young woman, who he follows up Piccadilly and Regent Street until the chase ends when she arrives at home. This pursuit is enabled by his ability to move freely through the urban streets, and he even imagines the physical landscape of the city aiding his path: "he started after her to follow this woman, this excitement, which seemed even with its back turned to shed on him a light which connected them, which singled him out, as if the random uproar of the traffic had whispered through hollowed hands his name, not Peter, but his private name which he called himself in his own thoughts" (*MD* 53). Unlike Clarissa and Elizabeth's leisurely strolling, Peter doesn't respond to the landscape of the city with sensory excitement or curiosity at encountering various types of people. Rather, his colonial and

patriarchal authority blinds him to the experiences of others, and he personifies even the landscape of the city to support his own imperial ambitions. Peter describes the act of following the woman in language reminiscent of the conquistador: “But other people got between them in the street, obstructing him, blotting her out. He pursued; she changed... he was an adventurer, reckless, he thought, swift, daring, indeed (landed as he was last night from India) a romantic buccaneer, careless of all these damned proprieties, yellow dressing-gowns, pipes, fishing rods, in the shop windows; and respectability and evening parties and spruce old men wearing white slippers beneath their waistcoats. He was a buccaneer.” (*MD* 53)

Childs claims that Peter rebels against the prevailing male role when he abandons his youthful ideals of war and wanders off to follow the passing woman. However, Peter abandons the nationalistic narrative of war only to step into another stereotypical masculine role of the romanticized buccaneer and obsessive lover. By contending that the transition from his imperial role to a patriarchal role continues Peter’s attempts at dominance, I will challenge Cohen’s view that “Peter’s northward voyage out of Trafalgar Square in pursuit of the mysterious woman wearing a red carnation is clearly framed as a mockery of the imperial picaresque” (99). He claims that “his movement figures as a deferral if not outright renunciation of the zone of imperial administration,” his abandonment of Trafalgar Square replicating “his withdrawal from the colonial periphery in order to secure a divorce for his lover and employment for himself as well as his most recent interaction with Clarissa Dalloway when he intrudes on a scene of imperial domesticity” (99). However, the pursuit of the strange woman proves to be nothing more than another method of colonial dominance. As he chases the woman up the street he ominously touches the knife in his pocket. Phillips observes “With his knife as both phallus and weapon, sexuality becomes for Peter an exercise in ego, practiced with a woman whose own

personality must be unknown and idealized, while colonization yields a vicarious sexual thrill as power over weaker countries” (17). Transposing the colonial language of “buccaneer” onto his pursuit of the woman reiterates the connection between patriarchal and imperial control. By the time his pursuit leads him to Great Portland Street, Peter has traveled over a mile, passing dozens of imperial public buildings and memorials including the headquarters for the Canadian Government, the Canada Club of Great Britain at 29-31 Trafalgar Square, the Archway, the Colonial Office, and the India Office (Cohen 99). His stalking of the woman is thus implicitly rooted in the landscape of colonial conquest, of which Peter is an emblematic representative.

Peter’s perspective conjures Baudelaire’s depiction of the archetypal male *flâneur*, to whom women are not pedestrians in their own right but rather passive *passantes* who are subject to the male gaze. The mysterious stranger is Baudelaire’s archetype of a *passante* in that she possesses little of her own agency and is simply a vessel to be objectified by men in the urban environment. Parsons notes Peter’s “visual possession of the woman with an ironic twist,” as her anonymity allows him to transpose a sense of control onto her image. His perception of the woman is influenced by his own subjective desires, which he acknowledges in his characterization of her: “it was half made up, as he knew very well; invented, this escapade with the girl; made up, as one makes up the better part of life, he thought—making oneself up; making her up” (*MD* 70). Peter’s desire to exert dominance over the woman after his failed visit with Clarissa is simply an extension of his desire to control his former love interest, who seems indifferent to his intentions. The same passivity that he transposes onto the stranger he hypocritically criticizes in Clarissa: “Here she is mending her dress; mending her dress as usual, he thought; here she’s been sitting all the time I’ve been in India; mending her dress; playing about; going to parties; running to the House and back and all that, he thought, growing more

and more irritated, more and more agitated, for there's nothing in the world so bad for some women as marriage, he thought; and politics; and having a Conservative husband, like the admirable Richard. So it is, so it is, he thought, shutting his knife with a snap" (*MD* 47).

This scene illustrates Peter's distinctly patriarchal and sexist attitude toward Clarissa—he criticizes her for "frivolous" role as a housewife, but fails to understand she is simply inhabiting a role that the empire he serves demands of her. As a colonial administrator, Peter is an agent of the empire; the statesman's wife Clarissa, by organizing social gatherings, also plays a key role in supporting imperial conquest. Peter believes his role as a colonial administrator entitles him to bend others to his will, but fails to successfully exert control over any female character. He regards his new bride with little attention; his interactions with Clarissa are characterized by his failure to marry her. In his pursuit of the anonymous woman, Woolf satirizes the image of the male *flâneur*, suggesting that it is really about the desire for control. Furthermore, his perception of the passive *passante* he pursues can be compared to the sensory and psychologically rich walking experiences of Clarissa and Elizabeth, indicating that public objectification of women arises from a patriarchal male perspective and presenting an alternate narrative of women's complex interior consciousness. Peter's freedom of movement throughout Mrs. Dalloway is representative of his authority and desire for dominance, power that is directly tied to his role as an enforcer of patriarchal and colonial values.

Although Woolf celebrates the invigorating nature of urban streetwalking in "Street Hauntings" and *Mrs. Dalloway*, a close analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Night and Day* reveals the role of patriarchal and colonial values in constricting women's freedom to exist in the public sphere. These dual forces of dominance and control limit the movements of characters such as Katharine Hilbery and Clarissa and Elizabeth Dalloway, whose walks are often directed by

family members or men and who are compelled to return home after fulfilling their domestic responsibilities. Although walking alone through the urban streets often allows these characters to come to realizations or envision new paths for themselves, this sense of freedom typically disappears at the end of the journey. Katharine's movements are directed, controlled, and even interrupted by Ralph and William, and while Ralph's movements lead him to progress to his destination of central London over the course of the narrative, Katharine experiences the stasis of being stuck in place. While Clarissa and Elizabeth's movements are limited by their gendered role, the narrative doubling between Clarissa and Septimus demonstrates the way the dual forces of patriarchy and colonialism impact their agency, while Peter Walsh's *flânerie* through the London streets demonstrates his authoritative perspective as an agent of patriarchy and colonialism. Although the walk presents itself as a liberating act to Woolf's female characters, actual liberation is still far from reality. Mapping the movements of Woolf's characters through the imperial city reveals how the forces of patriarchy and imperialism work together to counteract the autonomy of the New Woman, revealing the challenges women continued to face as they began to emerge into the public sphere.

Chapter Two: In Between Worlds: Jean Rhys's Sexual and Colonial Exile

“The place I live in is terribly important to me, it always has been, but now it is all I have. The table, the chair, the tree outside, my bed upstairs, it is all I have.” Jean Rhys, *Smile Please*, pp. 164-165.

“Loneliness is a part of writing, isn't it?” Jean Rhys told *The Paris Review* in 1979, during the last year of her life. Born in 1890 on the Caribbean island of Dominica, educated in England and spending much of her early adulthood in Paris, Rhys's writing is characterized by a profound sense of alienation and displacement mirrored in the protagonists of her four interwar novels. Like Marya Zelli, Julia Martin, Anna Morgan and Sasha Jansen of *Quartet* (1928), *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1931), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), Rhys herself was “a displaced colonial and outsider for whom everything on her arrival to the foreign shore of the home country became strange” (Dell'Amico 1). After leaving Dominica to attend school in England at the age of sixteen, Rhys worked as a chorus girl, married her first husband Jean Lenglet in Holland in 1919, lived in Paris and Brussels, and regularly traveled across Europe before returning to London in 1927 (Savory xxii). Such frequent upheaval, as Elaine Savory notes, resulted in Rhys's “intense ambivalence towards both the Caribbean and England and was, in her culturally complex identity... unable to entirely belong anywhere” (3). Encountering not only postcolonial displacement as women from the colonized West Indies living in European imperial capitals, Rhys's protagonists also face a compounded sense of alienation due to their status as single, economically disadvantaged women. The complex, intersecting identities inhabited by Rhys's characters complicate the perception of the modernist woman in the public sphere, one that results in an increased experience of alienation due to their marginalized national, sexual and class status.

In the introduction to *Jean Rhys: The Complete Novels*, her editor Diana Athill claims that Rhys “was a conscious and dedicated artist who wrote novels, not a woman displaying, or brooding over, her own experience in the form of autobiography” (vii). Yet Rhys’s novels are often read as inherently autobiographical, as Elizabeth Vreeland notes: “The chief character is almost all her work is a woman who seems to follow in her creator’s path step by step: from a West Indian childhood, through the ordeal of life in the provincial theater in pre-World War I England, to an elderly solitude in the English countryside” (220). As Rhys herself admitted, “You see, there’s very little invention in my books. What came first with most of them was the wish to get rid of this awful sadness that weighed me down. I found when I was a child that if I could put the hurt into words, it would go” (Vreeland 22). Beginning in the 1980s, however, critics have started to examine Rhys’s work within the wider context of Caribbean and postcolonial literature, as Ashley Stockstill contends: “Rhys’s placement within a female alternative modernist canon is well-established; recently, though, critics have recognized and expressed her marginality *within* that revised tradition” (137). As a white Creole expatriate woman who fails to conform to either the Black culture of the West Indies or the repressive culture of interwar British society, and an outsider among the literary expatriate community in Paris, Rhys is what Shari Benstock calls “an outsider among outsiders,” unable to truly belong anywhere (448). These dual Othered identities have positioned Rhys within the sphere of feminist and postcolonial criticism, one expounded upon by Mary Lou Emery in *Jean Rhys at “World’s End”: Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile*. Emery examines Rhys’s “plural and often conflicting outsider identities as West Indian writer, European modernist, and woman writer at the closing of the era of empire, and the ways in which she occupied the spaces between such identities,” while Bonnie Kim Scott also identifies the “doubly marginal status” of Rhys as a

woman writer and as “a colonial,” two identities that predominantly influence contemporary perceptions of her work (8, 5).

Rhys’s status as a peripheral modernist writer can be attributed to her gendered and national alienation from the male-dominated European literary movement, leading Emery to suggest that Rhys’s four interwar novels “remain marginal to even alternate modernist canons of women’s and West Indian literature” (xi). Having fallen into obscurity after World War II, Rhys’s work was not rediscovered until 1966 with the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and as Helen Carr observes, “For decades the fact that her fiction had first appeared in the context of modernist writing was forgotten” (1). Furthermore, Rhys’s literary reputation carries less weight than more canonical female modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf, leading Andrew Thacker to argue that decent scholarly issues of Rhys’s work have yet to be produced, leaving much of the cultural and geographic complexity of her works unacknowledged (Zimmerman 32). This erasure is due in part to the exclusion of most female writers within the modernist canon, as Scott argues in *The Gender of Modernism* (1990): “Modernism as we were taught it at midcentury was perhaps halfway to truth... [as it] was unconsciously gendered masculine” (2). Modernist writers such as Ezra Pound overtly linked modernity with masculinity, claiming that what belongs to men are “the ‘inventions,’ the new gestures, the extravagance, the wild shots, the new bathing of cerebral tissues,” while women are left with “the accumulation of their hereditary aptitudes,” or rather, the gendered traditions of the Victorian ideology of separate spheres (De Gourmont 169). However, Rhys’s aptitude as a writer was recognized both by critics in her own time and theorists today. Emery posits that Rhys utilizes the conventions of modernist style to heighten her characters’ sense of displacement. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of internal dialogization, she argues that her fragmentary stream-of-consciousness narration uses the

Caribbean-inspired motifs of dreaming, masquerading and masking to disrupt traditional narrative structures. Although contemporary modernist critics such as Ford Maddox Ford commended her modernist style and “singular instinct for form,” which he wrote was “possessed by singularly few English writers and almost no English women writers,” Rhys’s marginality is likely due to her ostracization as a woman from the colonized West Indies and her desperate financial situation that alienated her from the other expatriate writers within the Left Bank community, which Benstock has described as Rhys “living outside the bounds of society” (Vreeland 226, Benstock 448).

Rhys adopts the fragmentary stream-of-consciousness technique of European modernism to emphasize her characters’ dislocation from society, but she also incorporates the Caribbean motifs of dreaming and the racial Other to subvert these narrative conventions and emphasize her characters’ displacement from the imperial city. Writing within a modernist style enables Rhys to access the largely white and male-dominated spheres of literary modernism, but her alienation from both her Caribbean origins and elite European literary circles is evident in her utilization of the techniques of defamiliarization and fragmentation, exiling her characters from recognizable topographical landscapes of the city. I will expand on the work of earlier critics such as Emery to argue that Rhys’s themes of desperation and exile not only parallel her own life experiences, but suggest that her expatriate identity allowed her to merge distinct Caribbean and European forms to give a unique voice to the alienation and displacement of the outsider woman. This exile results not only from expatriation but from the frequent movement between place and the disorientating slippage between time as Rhys’s protagonists navigate the frightening and treacherous streets of the imperial capitals of London and Paris, the in-between spaces of urban modernism that function as places of colonial and sexual exile. In the public streets and the

semi-public, semi-private cafés and hotels of London and Paris, her characters “wander almost aimlessly, living in between the gendered urban spaces of early twentieth-century England and Europe” (Emery 47). In *Good Morning, Midnight*, Sasha’s entire existence is spent moving between “cafés where they like me and cafés where they don’t, streets that are friendly, streets that aren’t, rooms where I might be happy, rooms where I never shall be, looking-glasses I look nice in, looking-glasses I don’t” (*GMM* 46). Rhys’s depiction of the depressing rooms her characters inhabit can be seen as an extension of the threatening streets, providing them with temporary shelter but reinforcing their entrapment within the semi-public space of hotels and leaving them subject to eviction and homelessness. Moving between their navigation of the hostile streets to the liminal space of hotels, Rhys’s protagonists wander the urban sphere not by choice but as an outcome of the state and economic forces that disenfranchise and alienate them.

The alienation of Rhys’s protagonists is heightened by their status as migrants, leaving them marginalized as what Zimmerman terms “deracinated women” without definitive national or cultural identities (119). This sense of colonial anxiety stems from the alienation and discrimination Rhys faced as a Caribbean woman in Britain, as her editor Diana Athill describes: “Ever since Jean had come to school in England she had felt that the English misunderstood and despised West Indians, and here was a West Indian woman so totally misunderstood and despised that she was presented as a monster” (Athill xiii). The exile of Rhys’s protagonists is heightened by their spatial and cultural displacement—Anna Morgan as a West Indian immigrant in England, and Marya Velli, Anna Martin and Sasha Jansen as British expatriates in Paris. Adrift and forced to rely on their own devices, they lack the social structures and connections of respectable British women of the period. As Zimmerman suggests, Sasha, the “deracinated narrating-protagonist, exists at the peripheries of Paris and London, perpetually journeying

through a series of urban streets, hotels, cafés, and public toilets. With an ambiguous class identity, an unsteady financial income, and an estranged family, Sasha has no choice but to inhabit these transient spaces, which all confuse secure notions of private and public, interior and exterior, homely and unhomely space” (119). Sasha’s deracinated marginality obliterates her sense of identity, as she describes herself: “I have no name, no face, no country. I don’t belong anywhere” (*GMM* 44).

Although it is ambiguous whether all of Rhys’s protagonists share her Caribbean origins, they are all culturally and geographically displaced, casting them as Homi Bhabha’s “unhomely” subjects for whom “the borders between home and world become confused” and preventing them from securing spaces of belonging within the imperial city (9). As Zimmerman puts it, “Intersecting with this landscape of European modernity is a crisis of national identity and colonial exile. None of Rhys’s female protagonists seems to be European—a crucial factor that intensifies their vexed relationship with the city” (75). Like Rhys herself, her characters defy categorizations of national and racial identity and are unable to return home, rendering their “position within the imperial city constantly unsettled” (Zimmerman 75). Anna’s Dominican origins and white Creole heritage position her outside of British national identity, while Julia’s mother is Brazilian, associating her with the colonial Other. Julia herself has had a “career of ups and downs [which] had rubbed most of the hall-marks off her, so that it was not easy to guess at her age, her nationality, or the social background to which she properly belonged” (*ALMM* 11). Sasha and Marya further obscure their English identities by marrying foreign men; Sasha takes her Dutch husband’s last name of Jansen, while Marya takes her Polish husband’s name Zelli. Furthermore, Sasha has changed her name from Sophia, an unusual choice that is a diminutive of the Russian male name Alexander, further obscuring her gender and national identity. This

“violent deracination had profound effects on their understanding of space, place, and belonging, and this is reflected in their fiction in their obsessive return to questions of dispossession” (Zimmerman 30). This “profound, sometimes tragic, sense of dispossession” (Zimmerman 30) confuses other characters they encounter, such as Heidler, who questions Marya, “But you are English, aren’t you?” (*Quartet* 5). Marya’s ambiguous national origins and marriage to a Polish man further alienate her from the Anglophone community in Paris. Her admission that “I don’t know any of the English people in Paris,” is emblematic of her disconnection from a national community and a visible manifestation of her Otherness (*Quartet* 2).

The deracinated, ambiguous national origins of Rhys’s protagonists compound the marginalization of their precarious economic status. While single women alone on the streets continued to be seen as sexually marginal, transgressive figures, Rhys’s female walkers carry none of the class status or economic privilege that allowed upper-class women such as Woolf to enjoy their solitary navigations of public space. Without the security of money, friends or family, the characters walk the streets out of necessity rather than leisure or exploration. Emery contends that “We have only to compare Rhys’s homeless protagonists to May Sinclair’s Mary Olivier or to Woolf’s Clarissa Dalloway or even Lily Brisco, with her nearby father and ties to upper-middle-class gentility, to see the differences in class and kinship that isolate them and that prohibit even the illusion of an enclosed and sheltered self” (48). Isolated from both family relationships and married life, public space becomes a form of heightened marginalization rather than liberation for the economically disadvantaged, single woman. Without the security of domestic ties, “the heroines of Rhys’s novels contend with the violence of feminized poverty and sexual barter. They do not stay at home; nor do they go home at night. They climb the stairs to a room somewhere on the Left Bank or in Bloomsbury, perhaps alone, perhaps not. They inhabit,

for the most part, the streets, cafes, bars, and, if they can afford it, dress shops of European cities where no one knows where they come from or even their names” (Emery 46). Unlike Woolf, for whom traversing the public space is a leisurely form of exploration indulged in before returning to the safety and comfort of home, the alienation of Rhys’s protagonists in the public sphere arises directly from their disadvantaged and often desperate class status.

Recognizing these class differences, Carr argues that in comparison to Woolf’s upper-class “modernist *flâneuse*,” Sasha of *Good Morning, Midnight* is a “postmodernist migrant” (56). In response, Deborah Parsons instead suggests that she be reconsidered as a “subset of the *flâneur*; [s]he is placeless but still has his feet on the ground, walking through particular cities” (136). To further examine the way Rhys’s protagonists hold power within public space, critics have examined the way they conform to the archetype of the *flâneur*, which Elizabeth Wilson defines as “a new kind of public person with the leisure to wander, watch and browse... an archetypal occupant and observer of the public sphere in the rapidly changing and growing great cities of nineteenth-century Europe” (93). Just as Sasha thinks of the city in terms of “rooms, streets, streets, rooms” (GMM 91) with flashes of memory triggered by the sight of familiar places, the *flâneur* perceives the city as being “now a landscape, now a room” (Benjamin 10). Rhys’s protagonists occasionally recall carefree wanderings through Paris that demonstrate the qualities of *flânerie*. In *Quartet*, Marya, who is described as “reckless, lazy, a vagabond by nature” is prompted by the sound of a concertina to remember wandering around the familiar side-streets of Paris, filling her with “the same feeling of melancholy pleasure as she had when walking along the shadowed side of one of those narrow streets full of shabby *parfumeries*, second-hand book-stalls, cheap hat-shops,” and “bars frequented by gaily-painted ladies and loud-voiced men” (9). In *Good Morning, Midnight*, Sasha recalls the pleasure of a

brief “health-stroll round Mecklenburgh Square and along the Gray’s Inn Road. I had looked at this, I had looked at that, I had looked at the people passing in the street and at a shop-window full of artificial limbs” (11). More significantly, however, these are memories from happier times in Marya and Sasha’s lives, who at the time of these recollections have fallen into poverty and desperation. Bereft of the stability of marriage and in desperate financial straits, the metropolitan streets now present themselves as threatening and disorientating rather than intriguing and inviting. Unable to make any tangible impact on their surroundings, Rhys’s protagonists feel detached from the physical reality of the streets. This sense of dislocation results in Anna’s sensation of fading away—“I didn’t want to talk to anybody. I felt too much like a ghost” (*VD* 98)—while Julia feels like “an importunate ghost” (*ALMM* 71). Upon returning from visiting her husband in prison, Marya also feels “like a gray ghost walking in a vague, shadowy world” (*Quartet* 46).

Rhys’s “negative *flâneuse*” cannot orientate herself on the streets of the hostile foreign city, but as an alienated migrant is forced to wander the public sphere until she can escape into the liminal semi-private/semi-public space of the hotel or boarding house, which functions not as a home but as an extension of the unsettling and entrapping streets. *Good Morning, Midnight* (1937) exemplifies the ways migrants and socially and economically disenfranchised women are forced to navigate the public sphere—instead of wandering at will like the bourgeois *flâneur*, they are forced to cycle repeatedly between the exposed and hostile streets and the confinement of temporary hotel rooms. Parsons argues that “whereas Richardson and Woolf’s characters used the urban street and room to manifest independence and assert a place on the urban map,” Rhys’s protagonists instead “choose to inhabit streets and rooms that allow them hiding-places; that conceal them from the urban map. The purpose of their walks is largely retreat, anonymity from

others and themselves” (125). Rhys’s characters feel a sense of hostility and paranoia on the streets, exacerbated by anxieties surrounding their age, ambiguous nationality and lack of money, an experience that aligns with Pollock’s argument that women “are positioned as the *object* of the *flâneur*’s gaze,” meant to be controlled or dominated (100). This anxiety about being perceived in the public sphere is manifested in a conversation Sasha overhears in a public café, where a young woman asks “Qu’est-ce qu’elle fout ici, la vieille?” (“Why is she here, the old woman?”) (GMM 54). Sasha, perceiving this as a slight toward herself, is both mystified and distressed. Her anxiety impacts her future travels throughout the city, assigning positive or negative qualities to public spaces, such as her decision that “I make no mistake this time. We go to the neutral café” (GMM 56). Reflecting on the voyeuristic aspects of the public sphere, Sasha ruminates on the way the perception of strangers reinforces her penniless and isolated state:

That’s the way they look when they are saying: ‘Why didn’t you drown yourself in the Seine?’ That’s the way they look then they are saying: ‘Qu’est-ce qu’elle fout ici, la vieille?’ That’s the way they look when they are saying: ‘What’s this story?’ Peering at you. Who are you, anyway? Who’s your father and have you got any money, and if not, why not? Are you one of us? Will you think what you’re told to think and say what you ought to say? Are you red, white or blue – jelly, suet pudding, or ersatz caviare? (GMM 76-7)

Sasha’s perception of the woman’s hostility projects her own fears and anxieties onto her failure to belong to the French nation-state: her age, her lack of money and family connections, and her ambiguous nationality and deracinated origins. Unable to align herself with the “red, white and blue” of the French flag, the racial connotations indicated by those colors, or the recognizably French and British cuisine of “jelly, suet pudding, or ersatz caviare,” Sasha is left

without definable national origins with which to identify herself. In addition to the hostility, real or imagined, Rhys's protagonists encounter, the streets themselves become a bewildering wilderness, leading them to become what Erica Johnson and Rachel Bowlby have respectively described as the "failed" or "negative" *flâneuse* (52, 53). The hostile architecture of the European city confuses and disorients the expatriate wanderer, leading her to lose her way. To the Caribbean immigrant Anna in *Voyage in the Dark*, the modern streets of Paris and London are flat and meaningless in their anonymous repetition, with "the houses all exactly alike, and the streets going north, south, east, west, all exactly alike" (VD 152). This recurring description is reminiscent of Rhys's admission in her autobiography that she initially found the streets of London "all the same, long, straight, gray, a bit disappointing" (*Smile Please* 150). Although Haussman's renovation of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century resulted in the network of identical streets her protagonists encounter, their identity as colonial subjects also renders the architecture of imperial Europe unfamiliar and frightening, something Zimmerman describes as inherent to Rhys's experience as a migrant: "modern urban experience is always linked to colonial identity, something deeply rooted in [her] troubled personal history" (35). The scene where Sasha recalls getting lost while working as a tour guide reveals the role her marginalized status as an expatriate plays in her disorientation: "Standing in the middle of the Place de l'Opera, losing my head and not knowing the way to the Rue de la Paix. North, south, east, west... they have no meaning for me" (*GMM* 26). As Zimmerman points out, the Place de l'Opera and the Rue de la Paix are minutes away from one another on foot, a fact likely familiar to the well-traveled or educated reader of Rhys's day but not to Sasha as an urban dweller herself (154). Similarly, in the beginning of *Good Morning, Midnight*, Rhys conflates the urban architecture of Paris and London by locating the entrance to the 1937 Exposition Internationale in Paris inside of a

subterranean London Tube station, a disorientating dreamscape that suggests Sasha is unable to differentiate between even the most obvious landmarks of urban European geography. Her lapse in geographic knowledge symbolizes her marginality within the city, rendering her no less a visitor than the tourists she guides around.

Physical features of the streets that block or impede entrance also present an apt metaphor for Sasha's sense of entrapment and confinement. The impasse Sasha sees outside the window of her hotel room is a physical manifestation of her feelings of desperation: "The street outside is narrow, cobble-stoned, going sharply uphill and ending in a flight of steps. What they call an impasse" (9). The impasse both literally and metaphorically blocks off a path of escape for Sasha, symbolizing the hopeless cycle of her lifestyle and her endless journeys through the Parisian streets. As Chris GoGwilt notes, "this feature of Parisian street architecture also figuratively evokes the 'impasse' of Sasha Jansen, trapped in her social position by cultural alienation, relative poverty, and sexual dependence" (67). Maintaining that the word "impasse" encapsulates the predicament of almost all of Rhys's female protagonists, he connects the barriers that her characters facing navigating both the public streets and private interiors they inhabit, thus "finding themselves trapped in the double-bind of private and public metropolitan space" (GoGwilt 68). The personification of hostile architecture is mirrored in Sasha's paranoid fantasies of Parisian houses as monstrous predators, where just as with the hostile glances and remarks she fears are directed at her on the streets, she "is no longer an urban observer, but is herself observed" (Zimmerman 178):

Walking in the night with the dark houses over you, like monsters. If you have money and friends, houses are just houses with steps and a front door, friendly houses where the door opens and somebody meets you, smiling. If you are quite secure and your roots are

well struck in, they know. They stand back respectfully, waiting for the poor devil without any friends and without any money. Then they step forward, the waiting houses, to frown and crush. No hospitable doors, no lit windows, just frowning darkness. Frowning and leering and sneering, the houses, one after another. Tall cubes of darkness, with two lighted eyes at the top to sneer. And they know who to frown at. (*GMM* 28)

Sasha's fear of the hostility of Parisian architecture is a stark contrast to the inviting streets traversed by Woolf, and her reflection that houses only leer at those with no "money and friends" is symbolic of her marginality. In addition to the threatening appearance of the imperial city to the wandering migrant, "the streets are shown to be volatile spaces replete with haunting memories" (Zimmerman 154). The conflation of physical space with the psychological states of Rhys's protagonists demonstrates that not only do the overt hostility and disorientating architecture of the city pose a real and significant threat, the simple appearance of the streets has the potential to trigger a flood of overwhelming memories, reminiscent of Charles Baudelaire's observation that "far-off times and places interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment" (Benjamin 419). This narrative technique is heavily utilized in *Good Morning, Midnight*, which is "shaped by frequent disruptions in temporal linearity, stylistic negotiations of memory, and distinct fragmented typography" (Zimmerman 76). As *Good Morning, Midnight* progresses, Sasha's memories increasingly affect her ability to navigate the city, as traumatic events from her past punctuate her everyday actions and routines. The sites of failed jobs, threatening romantic encounters and other milestones triggers repressed trauma such as her broken marriage, abusive past employers, the death of her infant son, and her subsequent breakdown and suicide attempt. Like the shell-shocked war veteran Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Sasha is disorientated and overwhelmed by the psychogeographical map of collective urban memory, where physical

landmarks trigger traumatic flashbacks to her past. Zimmerman argues that “Whereas Sasha consciously recalls some of these memories, others interrupt unconsciously, manifesting themselves structurally as instances of narrative flashback. It is useful to think of these two forms of remembering as examples of voluntary and involuntary memory—two concepts powerfully evoked by Marcel Proust in his momentous *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913–27)” (86). Borrowing Proust’s concept of involuntary memory triggered by a particular sight, sound, smell, taste or other sensation, she contends that traversing the Parisian streets becomes a treacherous experience because of their ability to unearth disturbing repressed memories. As the narrative progresses, Sasha is plunged back into the past through a series of disorientating flashbacks and involuntary memories, forced to relive traumatic events through her memory. During these moments of “narrative analepsis,” Rhys narrates the past in the present tense, disrupting the linear flow of the narrative and spatiotemporally displacing Sasha (Zimmerman 84). The blurring of temporal boundaries between past and present further disorients the reader, mirroring the nonlinear stream of Sasha’s memories and allowing them to experience her disintegration.

This continual movement between past and present is representative of the fragmentation and defamiliarization Andreas Huyssen identifies as emblematic of modernist narratives, with narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness and rhythmic prose patterning relying on “mythic patterning as an organizing structure” and the rejection of “the straight chronological ordering of its material, and the use of a reliable, omniscient and intrusive narrator” (Lodge 481). Often beginning in *media res* and lacking a clear resolution, modernist narratives are typically disjointed and disruptive to accepted narrative structures. David Lodge suggests that the modern novel “plunges us into a flowing stream of experience with which we gradually familiarize ourselves by a process of inference and association; its ending is usually ‘open’ or ambiguous,

leaving the reader in doubt as to the characters' final destiny" (Zimmerman 71). Rhys employs this fragmented narration as part of a broader modernist preoccupation with urban movement, one that results in "an overwhelming sense of fluidity across spaces, a proliferation of transitions across thresholds and boundaries" in a cityscape comprised of physical spaces that reflect the psychological states of their inhabitants (Short 31). As Emery writes, this form is often emblematic of the landscape of the city itself, placing "alongside the narratives made possible by European modernism a difference of place and identity that alters the structure of even modernist narrative conventions. The alterations may appear as stutterings, interruptions, or silences" (60). As Thacker writes of the in-between spaces of modernism, the spaces themselves embody the distance and temporality characteristic of postcolonial alienation: they "cannot, it seems, be kept apart: rooms bleed into streets, anguished minds migrate to lands overseas" (7). A passage which begins with Sasha in her hotel room, for instance, shifts into a memory of an earlier hotel that eventually finds her back in the street, remembering the loss of her deceased child:

I get up into the room. I bolt the door. I lie down on the bed with my face in the pillow.

Now I can rest before I go out again. What do I care about anything when I can lie back on the bed and pull the past over me like a blanket? Back, back, back...

... I had just come up the stairs and I had to go down them again.

'No, no, your room's not ready. You must come back, come back. Come back between five and six.' 'What time is it now?' 'It's half-past ten.'

...I stop a taxi. The man looks at me and hesitates. Perhaps he is afraid I may have my baby in his nice new taxi. What a thing to happen! (*GMM* 49)

The use of ellipses and line breaks is representative of Rhys's fragmented typography that works to create a formal "sense of spatio-temporal disjunction and disorientation" (Zimmerman

88). This stylistic choice suspends the reader outside of the narrative, leaving them unsure of their spatio-temporal location. While the passage initially begins with Sasha in the present, her conscious choice to “lie back on the bed and pull the past over me like a blanket” leads to a series of ellipses, indicating a temporal change occurs. “I had just come up the stairs and I had to go down them again,” is narrated in the past perfect tense, indicating that Sasha continues to voluntarily recall this event. However, the actual flashback does not occur until the next sentence, when the ellipses and change to present-tense narrative voice signals a spatio-temporal switch. The sentence “I stop a taxi” physically removes Sasha from the space of the hotel room, indicating her regression into the landscape of memory. Although the death of Sasha’s child is never explicitly mentioned, it is subtly indicated through the absence of the baby she recalls in her memory. As Zimmerman suggests, Rhys “stylistically represents this rupture of memory through disorientating tense switches that are never quite aligned with the fragmented typography, thereby creating an uncanny slippage into narrative flashback” (Zimmerman 89). This continual jump between the past and the present makes it more difficult for the reader to locate the narrative coordinates of the novel, creating a disorientating reading experience that mirrors the confusion Sasha experiences. The visual nature of Rhy’s textual experimentation is especially evident in the fragmentation of her later novels, as she “disrupts temporal linearity and stylistically negotiates urban memory through distinct fragmented typography; including varying combinations of blank spaces, single sentence paragraphs, multiple section breaks, ellipses, and asterisks” (Zimmerman 122-3). According to Anthony Vidler, writers such as Rhys responded to the “dislocating shocks of urban modernity” by employing “vocabularies of displacement and fracture, torquing and twisting, pressure and release” that reflect the anxieties of urban modernism, especially evident in the fragmented style of the high modernist novel (10).

The fragmented interior monologue that characterizes Sasha's perspective in *Good Morning, Midnight* is mirrored in Rhy's earlier novels, both in the fragmentation of Anna's interior voices in *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), the cyclicity of Julia's journey through the streets in *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1931), and the disconnection of the narrative voice in *Quartet* (1928). The beginning of *Quartet*, which employs traditional realist conventions to introduce the protagonist Marya—"Marya Zelli, aged twenty-eight years, British by birth, Polish by marriage. . . . And so on, and so on"—deteriorates along with her fragmented consciousness as Marya becomes increasingly detached from her surroundings, shifting between a traditional third-person narrative and an interior monologue (*Quartet* 35). Just as the increasing fragmentation of *Good Morning, Midnight* coincides with Sasha's increased psychological isolation and paranoia, so too do the narrative techniques of fragmentation and tense switching in *Quartet* occur as Marya becomes more and more displaced. As Emery argues, "the detachment of voice and identity from speaker, the question of place or position" shapes Rhy's narrative technique, and "the positioning (or posturing) of voices and bodies, taking up or inhabited by various points of view, is precisely what concerns Rhy's narrative technique in *Quartet*" (273-4). The blurred boundaries of these characters' spatial and temporal existence also results in them moving in a cycle reminiscent of their circular thoughts that continually fluctuate between past and present, unable to break free of their psychological distress. In *Good Morning, Midnight*, Sasha reflects on the interchangeable nature of the street and the room, as well as the interchangeable nature of past and present: "This damned room—it's saturated with the past. . . . It's all the rooms I've ever slept in, all the streets I've ever walked in. Now the whole thing moves in an ordered, undulating procession past my eyes. Rooms, streets, streets, rooms. (*GMM* 91)"

Here, the use of the ellipsis fragments the passage to disrupt temporal and narrative linearity, indicating the circular passage of time. By evoking the repetition of “rooms, streets, streets, rooms,” Sasha directly associates the stagnation of her circumstances with the architecture of urban sprawl, suggesting that the twists and turns of the labyrinthine streets parallel the circular and convoluted path of her own mental distress. Sasha realizes she is unable to break the circuitous pattern of her existence: “It doesn't matter, there I am, like one of those straws which floats around the edge of a whirlpool and is gradually sucked into the center, the dead center, where everything is stagnant, everything is calm” (*GMM* 44). Instead, Sasha is destined to continue her monotonous existence of moving between the exposed public exterior of the city streets and the semi-private, isolated space of the hotel room: “Walking in the night. Back to the hotel. Always the same hotel. You press the button. The door opens. You go up the stairs. Always the same stairs, always the same room...” (*GMM* 28). Rhys’s migrants must take refuge in the temporary shelter of hotels, which are all universally alike in their anonymity and monotonous routine, as Sasha bleakly summarizes: “Eat. Drink. Walk. March. Back to the hotel. To the Hotel of Arrival, the Hotel of Departure, the Hotel of the Future, the Hotel of Martinique and the Universe... Back to the hotel without a name in the street without a name... Always the same stairs, always the same room” (*GMM* 97). Similarly, in *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, Julia returns from Paris to stay in a hotel near her childhood home in London and realizes that “predestined, she had returned to her starting point in this little Bloomsbury bedroom that was so exactly like the little Bloomsbury bedroom she had left nearly ten years before” (*ALMM* 48). The similarity between the two rooms in both layout and décor triggers Julia’s realization that “her life had moved in a circle” and she has failed to move forwards (*ALMM* 48). Short suggests that these passages indicate that “even if these characters are able to escape one particular hotel, the

next will be exactly the same, and they will never be able to break free of the monotonous cycle in which they are trapped” (145).

The marginality and hopelessness experienced by these characters in the public spaces of the city causes their retreat into the semi-private spaces of the hotel, which Wendy Gan suggests provides the female subject with privacy and “a crucial respite to momentarily protect her from the impact of change, to pause and reconsider her place in modernity” (3). A significant recurring motif through Rhys’s novels, the hotel occupies a liminal space between the public and private sphere, providing shelter to the “marginalized subjects of modernity, those who do not belong or are excluded from the more dominant spaces of the public and private” (Short 1). Because the hotel occupies a space between the public/private and masculine/feminine spheres, it offers a paradoxical sensation of both freedom and confinement to its inhabitants. Descriptions of hotel rooms open both *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* and *Good Morning, Midnight*, providing a refuge for the characters to return to throughout the narrative. However, due to the marginalized economic class, status as unmarried women and ambiguous national identities of Rhys’s protagonists, they occupy hotels by necessity rather than choice, reconfiguring them as spaces of entrapment and confinement. By examining the role hotels play as places outside of both the public sphere and the domestic conventions of private homes, as well as a refuge occupied by Rhys’s “deracinated” migrant woman, I will explore how the liminal space of the hotel complicates the treatment of social class, domesticity, and national identity.

Gender and social class are explicitly intertwined in determining women’s occupation of hotel rooms. As single, working-class women, Rhys’s wandering protagonists are forced to occupy “cheap hotels” such as the gloomy room Julia Martin inhabits in the opening of *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*. By occupying a “room of one’s own” away from the sphere of domestic

duties, Emma Short suggests that the hotel can be interpreted as a place of freedom and liberation for women, representing their independence and empowerment and “restor[ing] a sense of agency to its female guests through enabling them to perform an active resistance to domestic routine and drudgery” that characterized the lives of married middle and upper class women of the era (157). However, lacking the domestic stability of home and family, single working women are forced to inhabit hotels due to their social isolation, where they are “ostracized from mainstream interwar society as a result of their Otherness, and, as marginalized bodies, are placed in the distinctly marginal spaces of the run-down hotel” (Short 153). Rhys’s protagonists are wandering migrants who must travel often for their jobs; their poorly paid occupations as artists’ models, mannequins, chorus girls and shop girls are also stigmatized due to their association with promiscuity and prostitution. The temporary nature of the hotel also creates a sense of displacement and paranoia for the protagonist, who can either be evicted when her funds run out, or in the case of boarding houses, dismissed for the perceived violation of domestic and social norms, such as when Anna is evicted by her landlady for being a “tart.” The uncertain permanence of the space they occupy further reinforces the characters’ marginality in interwar society, one that is determined both by their disadvantaged economic status and violation of feminine expectations of marriage and domesticity.

Like Rhys, who never saw her family again after moving to England at the age of sixteen, her protagonists lack the stable family relationships to financially support them as unmarried women or propel them into acceptable marriages. Although they occasionally receive money from relatives in England, the transaction is always accompanied by a certain amount of derision and scorn. Anna is ostracized by her English stepmother for her identification with her West Indian childhood and disapproval of British culture, while Julia faces rejection and criticism

from her sister and uncle upon returning to England, and her dying mother cannot even recognize her daughter. One of Sasha's relatives, who she refers to as an "old devil," once asked her: "We consider you as dead. Why didn't you make a hole in the water? Why didn't you drown yourself in the Seine?" (*GMM* 41-42). After this shocking remark, the relative announces that Sasha is to receive a small fund that includes a weekly annuity and "a room off the Gray's Inn Road," a "place to hide in" (*GMM* 42). No longer wishing to be loved or successful, Sasha wants only to be left alone and to shut "the lid of the coffin . . . with a bang" (*GMM* 41). Reflecting that "a room is a place where you hide from the wolves," Sasha finds refuge in the small room that she cannot find from marriage or family. However, her departure for Paris signals the final rejection of her remaining connection to her family, exacerbating her stigmatized reputation and ensuring her continued isolation from society.

With no family to rely on, lacking the wealth and social connections to make an acceptable marriage and with intermittent employment, Rhys's protagonists turn to sexual affairs with men to support themselves. As Mr. Mackenzie reflects about Julia, "Going from man to man had become a habit. One day she had said to him, 'It's a very easy habit to acquire'" (*ALMM* 10). The apparent willingness of the women to exchange their sexuality for their livelihood has irritated critics such as Peter Wolfe, who contends that if Anna had "more fiber," she might have kept her "honor" (Wolfe 117). However, Wolfe's analysis ignores the few economic opportunities available to foreign-born single women at the time. Rhys's "reluctant free agents" are forced to "find their own jobs and create their own social relations outside of family constraints or protection. Though socially independent, they find few opportunities for economic independence" (Emery 234). In her analysis of the barriers facing Rhys's protagonists (especially Anna, during the period before World War I created a greater demand for women in

the workforce), Emery acknowledges that “Even typing and office work did not become available to more than a few women until the 1920s, and these women, like the chorus girls of the time, were vulnerable to sexual advances and exploitation. Women earned less than half, often closer to one-third, of wages paid to men in the same jobs, and many full-time women workers failed to earn subsistence wages. In these conditions, prostitution becomes a possibility, though not a clearly defined one, since the operating distinctions blur between terms such as ‘kept woman’ or mistress, ‘tart,’ and prostitute” (235). Rhys herself has noted the difficulty in finding a suitable job, especially as an Anglophone migrant facing language barriers in Paris: “In those days, if you were English, or supposed to be English, and you were in Paris and didn’t know French well, it was pretty well impossible. I mean what job could you get?... In England you could get some sort of job, but in Paris it wasn’t so easy. You might get a job as a mannequin, or in a shop, but then you wouldn’t know the prices, or anything” (Vreeland 227). Furthermore, the women’s lack of family relationships suggests to strangers a subversive quality in their very existence. Anna’s father has died, her stepmother has abandoned her, and her uncle has given up responsibility. Lacking someone to give her away in marriage, “no exchange between families can take place, and she is thrust into the world on her own” (Emery 235). The independence of Rhys’s protagonists, therefore, is less of a commentary on the role of the New Woman in the public sphere, a position which carries a certain amount of economic privilege, and more on the desperation of precariously employed single women without stable careers.

The space of the hotel, which exists between the public and private sphere and outside of the realm of the domestic, provides an ideal space for Rhys’s protagonists to explore their sexual desires. Responding to Douglas Tallack’s analysis of the hotel as “a semi-public gateway to private places” (6), Short conceives of the “enclosed space of the hotel room, and its semi-

privacy,” as offering “a far more suitable location in which to explore their sexual drives and desires” (68). Away from prying eyes, the hotel provides a place for unmarried women to safely experience sexual intimacy apart from the home, where “the insidious surveillance of family, friends and neighbours played a significant role in encouraging people to adhere to the norm of the stable family home with a married couple at its heart” (Short 68). Short separates the space of the hotel from the comparable one of the boarding house, which “is revealed to be closer to the familial setting of the home, and is therefore implicitly governed by those same moral standards that safeguarded the concept of the family in interwar Britain” (74). Surrounded by domestic belongings and guarded by the watchful eye of the landlady, characters in boarding houses must submit to their host’s moral expectations. This contrast is vividly illustrated early in *Voyage in the Dark*, when Anna is suddenly evicted by her landlady, who tells her “I don’t want no tarts in my house, so now you know” (18). The domestic moral standards of the boarding house are reinforced in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, when Julia Martin worries about the consequences of her lover Mr. Horsfield accompanying her back to her room: ““But if anybody sees you? (117). Most fittingly, Anna’s loss of virginity and ongoing affair with Walter Jeffries takes place in a hotel, after she discovers a half-hidden door to a bedroom in a wall of the room where they are dining. Although Jeffries’s intentions toward Anna are unsurprising and somewhat coercive, the liminal, temporary space of the hotel also provides a space for her to act as an active agent for her own desires. Later in their affair, while the two characters are again staying in a hotel, Walter imitates Anna, saying, “Let’s go upstairs, let’s go upstairs. You really shock me sometimes, Miss Morgan” (*VD* 55). Only in the privacy of the hotel is Anna permitted to voice desires that would be considered inappropriate to enact in either a public or domestic setting.

The hotel's subversive association with sexual affairs also provides a neutral space away from the strict moral judgments governing early twentieth century life. Walter's choice of a hotel for his and Anna's first meeting clearly communicates his sexual expectations: "You can now and you can see what it's like, and why not?" (*VD* 20). Existing within the space of the hotel and Walter's clearly prescribed expectations frees Anna from value judgments at the same time it confines her to a role as his mistress, setting up a dichotomy that persists throughout the novel. As a chorus girl, Anna's sexuality is inherently suspect because of the occupation's association with promiscuity. Labeled "the Virgin" by her fellow chorus girls for her lack of experience, Anna is praised by fellow chorus girl Maudie for her ladylike appearance, to which she jokingly responds "Oh God, who wants to look ladylike?" (*VD* 5). Despite her nonchalance, Anna obsesses over her appearance and her ladylike qualities, clinging to conventions such as remembering to put on gloves before entering the street. She is also perceived by outsiders to be more virginal and innocent, such as when an acquaintance of her friend Laurie, trying to seduce her, ironically asks "Why do you go around with Laurie? Don't you know she's a tart?" (*VD* 79). Anna's response reveals her lack of concern with the sexual expectations British society places on women: "Why shouldn't she be a tart? It's just as good as anything else, as far as I can see" (*VD* 79). This double standard persists even among the chorus girls, such as when Maudie comments on a book Anna is reading: "I know, it's about a tart. I think it's disgusting. I bet you a man writing about a tart tells a lot of lies one way and another" (*VD* 5). When Anna herself is condemned as a "tart" by her landlady because of her profession, she must face the censure of both her fellow chorus girls and polite society. Perceived as too prudish and virginal by the chorus girls and too "loose" by married women, she is displaced between two opposing spheres of femininity and sexual autonomy. Anna's conventional middle class morality distances her

from the freer sexual behavior of her colleagues, but the salacious reputation of the theater alienates her from respectable marriage prospects. As such, Anna is perfectly positioned to enter into a relationship that exists outside the boundaries of heterosexual marriage or casual sexual encounters, as a mistress of a wealthy man. Anna's affair with Jeffries seems almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy, and she is resigned to belong nowhere but with her lover. However, even with him Anna's desires are rarely considered from the moment she is first coerced into sex. Her fear of being perceived engaging in promiscuous behavior in public and desire for privacy is ignored, such as when she tells him "Oh no, not here. Just imagine if anybody saw us" (49). Instead, Anna longs to escape into the anonymous space of the hotel, the only place where the subversive nature of her affair is accepted.

The association between shameful sexual affairs and the space of the hotel is further reinforced by its physical description within the public sphere. Zimmerman suggests that in *Quartet*, "The street's red light suggests the status of a woman shuttered out of houses and left to walk alone in the public streets. It foreshadows Stephan's final condemnation of her [Marya] as *une grue*—'loose woman'" (269). Set adrift from her marriage, Marya returns to the same situation she faced when she and Stephan first met: "No money. Nothing at all. . . . My father and mother are both dead. . . . I owe for the dress I have on" (*Quartet* 19). Instead, "The long, winding Parisian streets that had previously promised adventure now reveal to Marya her sexual vulnerability and represent the social preconditions to her dispossession of character (Zimmerman 270). The "red light" of the street, which simultaneously suggests danger and eroticism, is reflected in *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, when Julia sexually rejects Mr. Horsfield outside of her hotel: "If all this had happened in daylight he would had been shamefaced and would have left her as soon as he decently could. But this deserted street, with its shabby, red-lit

hotels, cheap refuges for lovers, was the right background for what she was saying” (58). This “unpretentious—even mediocre” hotel is a reflection of Julia herself—Mr. Horsfield reflects that like its inhabitant, the hotel has seen better days.

The description of Julia’s “gloomy” room with its “depressing quality” that opens *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* is paralleled in *Quartet*, when Marya’s married lover Heidler deposits her in a room in the Hôtel du Bosphore with “an atmosphere of departed and ephemeral loves” and “vaguely erotic” wallpaper with large mauve flowers, features appropriate for a room in which Marya is to be kept as a mistress (87). However, this hotel is not a liberating escape from the moral conventions of the domestic sphere, given that Marya’s and Heidler’s affair was conducted in his house under the watchful eye of his wife. Nor is it a source of independence for Marya, who is penniless and financially dependent on Heidler. Unable to leave and with nothing to do but wait for Heidler, Marya realizes that he is “forcing her to be nothing but the little woman who lived in the Hôtel du Bosphore for the express purpose of being made love to” (*Quartet* 92). As she grows increasingly depressed, the appearance of the room also changes, with Marya reflecting “a bedroom in hell might look rather like this one. Yellow-green and dullish mauve flowers crawling over black walls” (*Quartet* 93). As Marya weakens both through illness and to Heidler’s demands, she can only lie “quivering and abject” in Heidler’s arms, “like some unfortunate dog abashing itself before its master” (*Quartet* 102). When she realizes she is being kept in the hotel for the specific purpose of serving as Heidler’s mistress, the room appears to embody the experiences of “all the women who had lain where she was lying. Laughing. Or crying if they were drunk enough” (*Quartet* 93). Short argues that by placing her in the hotel room away from the domestic space he shares with his wife, Heidler uses Marya “as place, as home, thus rendering her homeless” (100). The gendered power dynamics of the hotel are

reflected in the initial description of Sasha's hotel room in *Good Morning, Midnight*, which features two beds, "a big one for madame and a smaller one on the opposite side for monsieur," so that a lover could visit her whenever he wants (1). Like the menacing houses of the Parisian street, Sasha's hotel room appears to speak to her, taking on a frightening humanlike quality: "'Quite like old times,' the room says. 'Yes? No?'" (*GMM* 1). Trapped due to their financial dependence on men and unable to leave, the hotel room thus becomes a place of confinement rather than freedom and liberation for Rhys's protagonists.

Although Rhys critiques the dynamics of entrapment present in sexual affairs, she contends that the domestic roles of marriage present an even more confined existence. Julia and Sasha have left their husbands, and while Marya's marriage to Stephan Zelli is an existence in which "for the first time in her life she was very near to being happy," that relationship too dissolves through her affair with Heidler while Stephan is imprisoned (*Quartet* 6). Instead, Rhys suggests that marriage is only a continuation of financial dependence on men, one that further destroys women's chance to develop a stable or secure identity. The "conditions" of marriage in the early twentieth century include "the estimation of women as inferior to men, the economic dependence of women on men or on family, the restrictions of women to spheres of life concerned primarily with emotional ties, sexual repression and lack of outlets for expansiveness, which destroy women's chances "to establish secure and confident identities or to develop their own voices and points of view" (Emery 292). Instead, through financial and social dependence on their husbands, married women become further susceptible to manipulation and control. The dynamics of control present in heterosexual marriage disenfranchise both Lois, Heidler's wife, and Marya, who is shunted into a role as a mistress or the "other woman." Lois, "who enjoys no other sexual relation, has no children, believes women to be inferior to men, and depends on

Heidler economically, emotionally, and socially,” competes with Marya for Heidler’s affection and support while at the same time emulating him by manipulating and abusing Marya in an attempt to regain control (Emery 286). Marriage controls women’s sexual and emotional lives even within its bounds, confining Lois and Heidler but most of all Marya, who fits the “erotically ambiguous figure of a marginalized woman” (Emery 305). Trapped by Heidler and despised by Lois, Marya “finds her place but loses her point of view within a tormented and oppressive marriage” (Emery 306). The failure of both her marriage to Stephan and Heidler’s marriage to Lois is blamed on Marya, as the marginalized woman who has invaded the sanctity of the domestic sphere.

The central irony of the affair in *Quartet* results from Marya’s inability to belong within either the public or domestic sphere. Although she is “used to a lack of solidity and fixed backgrounds,” Marya is taken in by the Heidlers after they determine she is no longer allowed to stay in the hotel by herself or wander the streets, (“it wouldn’t do to leave the girl trailing round Montparnasse looking as ill as all that”), to see her own friends, or stay with Stephan upon his release (*Quartet* 8). Instead, Marya is taken into the domestic sphere of the Heidlers’ home, where her affair with Heidler subverts and destroys the domestic paradigm, yet she remains tightly under their control. As Emery observes, “A loose woman, she’s been tightened up, regulated, controlled. The ambiguous threat she once posed to the Heidlers’ marriage as a helpless and available woman no longer subverts the rules of their game” (303). This alienation is exacerbated when Marya is exiled in the hotel room by Heidler away from the home he shares with his wife, yet remains financially dependent on him and is unable to leave or exert her independence. Heidler also prevents Marya from returning to Stephan, who rejects her and prepares to leave the country alone when he discovers her infidelity. Unable to establish stability

in marriage, an affair or on her own, trapped between the two men, Marya is unable to find a sense of belonging anywhere. Her sense of dislocation that results from her movement between the hotel and home, and her marriage and the affair, mirrors Sasha's constant moves between countries and hotel rooms early in her marriage, where her memories of the "room at the Steens" in Holland is followed in quick succession by "the room in the hotel in Amsterdam that night" and "the room in the Brussels hotel" (*GMM* 65-68). Unable to differentiate between the anonymity of the hotel rooms beyond the minute differences in décor, unable to further recognize any as "home," Sasha recognizes the rootlessness and instability at the heart of her marriage: "A room is a place where you hide from the wolves outside and that's all any room is" (*GMM* 19).

As modernity's marginalized subjects, Rhys's protagonists are forced to inhabit the liminal margins of society, the temporary hotel rooms and disorientating streets that form the "public and private spaces" that "exclude those who do not conform to the powerful societal norms concerning gender, race, class, and age which are sustained and enforced through discourse" (Zimmerman 53). As homeless urban wanderers, they are prevented from accessing spaces of belonging due to their status as economically disadvantaged single women and migrants with ambiguous national identities. Because Rhys's protagonists are unable to find a home within the domestic sphere, their marginalized identities position their trespass of public space as one of further alienation and isolation. Moving away from Woolf's depiction of public space as a source of illusive liberation yet subtle confinement for upper-class women, I argue that the disadvantaged class and national identities of Rhys's protagonists that force them to permanently wander through urban space further unsettle notions of women's role in the public sphere, marking them as visibly Other and exacerbating their marginalization. Instead, these "silenced 'foreign' and female voices, inhabiting marginalized and usually urban social spaces,

speak and signify their lives in ways that have profoundly engaged and disturbed the novels' readers" (Emery 11). Traversing these in-between spaces, however, profoundly illustrates discourses about the intersecting nature of gender, class and expatriation as well as the role of the imperial city in shaping fragmentary narratives of modernism, illuminating the unique role Rhys's marginal colonial subjects play in shaping understandings of migration and identity.

Chapter Three: Those Who Turn Day into Night: Fragmentation and Surreality in Djuna Barnes

“And it’s the same with girls, those who turn the day into night, the young, the drug addict, the profligate, the drunken and that most miserable, the lover who watches all night long in fear and anguish. These can never again live the life of the day. When one meets them at high noon they give off, as if it were a protective emanation, something dark and muted. The light does not become them any longer.” Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*, pp. 101.

Djuna Barnes’s avant-garde classic *Nightwood* occupies a liminal place within the canon of high modernist literature. Praised by her contemporaries, the novel was nonetheless censored by its editors and denigrated by critics until rediscovered by feminist scholars. Dylan Thomas called *Nightwood* “one of the three great prose books ever written by a woman,” while William S. Burroughs described it as “one of the great books of the twentieth century” (Winterson ix). Barnes’s editor T. S. Eliot also praised the novel’s lyrical, Gothic prose, writing in his introduction to *Nightwood* that “A prose that is altogether alive demands something of the reader that the ordinary novel-reader is not prepared to give... Miss Barnes’s prose has the prose rhythm that is prose style, and the musical pattern which is now that of verse” (Eliot xviii). However, *Nightwood* was soundly rejected by publishers and heavily censored, published only after Eliot had expurgated more than two-thirds of its content, eliminating anticlerical sentiment and explicit depictions of lesbian sexuality and rage (Benstock 428). English critics widely praised the novel, but it was condemned in the American press, with reviewers such as Philip Rahv of *New Masses* dismissing the book as elitist and limited to “those minute shudders of decadence developed in certain small ingrown cliques of intellectuals and their patrons, cliques in which the reciprocal workings of social decay and sexual perversion have destroyed all response to genuine values and actual things” (Benstock 428). Barnes herself later wrote of *Nightwood*’s controversial reception: “There is not a person in the literary world who has not heard of, read and some stolen from *Nightwood*. The paradox that in spite of all the critical work

flooding the press since 1936, not more than three or four have mentioned my name. I am the most famous unknown of the century! I can't account for it, unless it is that my talent is my character, my character my talent, and both an estrangement" (Benstock 234). Barnes correctly surmises that both her "character," her queer identity, and her "talent," *Nightwood's* famously ornate and "unreadable" prose, can be attributed to the novel's precarious position in the modernist literary tradition. As Laura K. Wallace observes, "*Nightwood* has lived intersecting lives as a modernist novel and a lesbian novel," although it has also been viewed as a representative of high modernism by critics "criticizing its nihilism, decadence, and pretentiousness" (72). Although groundbreaking for its time, *Nightwood's* original readers would have been unable to reconcile the novel's explicit and sympathetic treatment of same-sex desire with its cultural association with "social decay and sexual perversion," which demanded that the offending characters be morally punished for their transgressions (Wallace 73).

Barnes's participation in the Left Bank literary community of the 1920s has led many to locate her legacy within the genre of expatriate memoir, where her depiction of a depraved night city inhabited by a subcultural queer community sensationalized her work within the context of Parisian salon society. This narrow categorization, however, ignores the considerable influence of Surrealist methods and motifs upon her work, which shape the novel's Gothic prose, twisting and experimental narrative and recurring symbolism of sleeping, dreaming and the "Other." *Nightwood* is a portrait of a carnivalesque night city inhabited by outsiders and vagrants, where characters who suffer from the disease of modernity "turn day into night" (Barnes 94). The novel depicts a night world that parallels but differs from its daylight reality; suggesting that the topographical map of the night city forms a different reality to that of the day. I will use this doubled reality to examine the novel's treatment of lesbian sexuality; characters such Robin Vote

feel at home in the nighttime queer café society, while Nora Flood finds it degrading and abnormal, alienating both women from the other's experience of reality. Barnes uses the narrative technique of fragmentation and the Surrealist imagery of sleepwalking and dreaming to disrupt and deconstruct the modern city, examining the thematic nature of modernism as an exploration of the sordid, hidden or controversial sides to human existence (Barnes 101). This narrative technique expands the formal possibilities of high modernist literature, setting *Nightwood* neither within Woolf's imperial city nor Rhys's fragmented urban space but within a mutable dreamscape disconnected from spatiotemporal boundaries. I will argue that the night city functions as an inverse, or a photographic negative, of the daytime map, a landscape that "is at once geographic and psychological, a mythic perception translated onto the streets and spaces of bohemian Berlin, Paris, Vienna, and New York in the 1920s" (Parsons 80). When Robin returns again and again to the streets of the night city, desperately searching for something she cannot locate, she engages in a form of *flânerie* through Paris's salons and cafés, but her actions are compulsive and cyclical rather than liberating. Her lover Nora, who desperately follows Robin, finds Robin's identification with the depravity of the night world shocking and degrading. I will expand upon Deborah Parsons's analysis that "Barnes portrays the woman in the squalid city wasteland as a victim, less helpless than Rhys's protagonists but still degraded in the urban landscape" (80). Although Barnes's characters inhabit a subcultural space that can be viewed as an alternative to heteronormative society, such a landscape does not liberate them but further marginalizes them within the doubled exile of expatriation and lesbian identity.

In *Nightwood*, Barnes's characters are Othered due to both their displaced nationality and queer sexuality. Nora and Robin would have experienced this doubled form of marginality, in addition to their displaced nationality as American expatriates, a concept Robert L. Caserio

explores in his essay “Queer Modernism”: “In the wake of queer modernism, citizenship... comports best with cosmopolitan exile. The citizen queer can belong to no modern country because his experience exceeds the scripts that define public life and that remain attached to aggression rather than peace” (10). Like Rhys’s exiled protagonists, they wander the forbidding foreign streets of Paris, constantly moving between cities and countries, yet their sexuality forces them into hiding, able to inhabit only the subcultural space of the night world. Their habitation of the subterranean night world of Paris, a space where the physical and social boundaries of conventional society melt away, locates their marginalized national and sexual identities within the queer subcultural space of the city. Robin and Nora’s expatriate status dislocates them from the preconceived expectations and social roles of early twentieth century American femininity, allowing their exiled status to not only parallel but enable their embodiment of a queer identity. Locating her characters within the alienating night world of Paris, Barnes elucidates the connection between national exile and sexual marginality, a doubled identity that enables them to traverse subcultural queer spaces disconnected from both the conventional topographical map and preconceived expectations of heteronormativity. The idea of queer statelessness, where queer characters are alienated from the dominant heterosexual culture in the same manner expatriates are isolated from the societies of both their native and adopted countries, can be viewed as an extension of Virginia Woolf’s conception of female statelessness in *Three Guineas*: “As a woman I have no country” (Woolf 197). In both cases, woman and queer characters are Othered from the dominant patriarchal and nationalist culture.

The community of displaced outsiders in *Nightwood* is therefore representative of the doubled exile of nationality and sexuality; Jeannette Winterson claims that “All the characters are exiles of one kind or another—American, Irish, Austrian, Jewish. This is the beginning of the

modern diaspora—all peoples, all places, all change” (xi). Louis Kannenstine calls *Nightwood* a “distillation of the despair and estrangement of expatriation,” suggesting that expatriation even more than queer sexuality embodies the displacement the characters experience throughout the novel (42). The psychogeographical borders of 1920s Paris were disturbed by the aftermath of World War I, where national boundaries shifted and citizens were displaced. Such disorder is characteristic of the erratic mental state of the characters, prompting another character to suggest that Robin is “in mourning for something taken away from her in a bombardment in the war,” where the looming specter of battle is presented as the upheaval of both physical and psychic landscapes (Barnes 121). This depiction also locates *Nightwood* within the fraught sociopolitical context of the interwar period by, as Shari Benstock suggests, providing “a catalog of Hitler’s intended victims and an analysis of the secret fears such outcasts instill in the larger culture” (426). Matthew identifies these visible markers of Otherness when he describes “those who turn the day into night”: “the young, the drug addict, the profligate, the drunken and the most miserable, the lover who watches all night in fear and anguish. These can never live again the life of the day” (Barnes 101). Chronicling the hidden lives of society’s outsiders—the queer community, Jews, and the mentally and physically disabled, all of whom Hitler would later define as the *Untermenschen*—the novel foreshadows their destruction under the impending rise of Fascism. Barnes’s sympathetic portrayal of these characters, therefore, was critical to providing an alternate perspective to Fascist propaganda, one that would challenge the narrative of “depravity” assigned to cultural outsiders.

The historical and political framework of *Nightwood* is established by the birth of Robin’s future husband Felix in 1880 Vienna, born to an Italian Jewish father Guido and Viennese mother Hedvig. Guido is a stateless man haunted by the past: although he adapts

Christian customs, he “had lived as all Jews do, who, cut off from their people by accident or choice, find that they must inhabit a world whose constituents, being alien, force the mind to succumb to an imaginary populace” (Barnes 5). Marginalized by the Austrian power structure that prizes nobility and tradition, Guido reinvents himself as a baron of an ancient Austrian family, converts to Christianity, invents a noble lineage for himself (“producing, to uphold his story, the most amazing and inaccurate proofs: a coat of arms that he had no right to and a list of progenitors... who had never existed”), and conceals his Jewish identity from his wife, who “became a Baroness without question” (Barnes 3, 5). Nevertheless, Guido is haunted by “racial memory” and his vulnerability within the Austrian state and tries to imitate his wife’s “goose-step of a stride” while secretly carrying a handkerchief in remembrance of the Medici ordinance of 1468 that singled out Jews for death (Barnes 3). Similar to his father, Felix regards himself as an outcast and becomes obsessed by the aristocratic traditions of Old Europe. Having “hunted down his own disqualification” among the royal families, Felix is forced to settle for the false pageantry of the circus world, inhabited by misfits like himself (Barnes 9). Despite his wealthy background and frequent wanderings, Felix is unable to find a community where he belongs: “No matter where and when you meet him you feel that he has come from some place—no matter from what place he has come—some country that he has devoured rather than resided in, some secret land that he has been nourished on but cannot inherit, for the Jew seems to be everywhere from nowhere” (Barnes 10). Here, Guido’s Jewishness can be read as a metaphor for queerness—Judaism is a diasporic religion that cannot trace its roots back to an original language or nation, leaving him displaced from the prevailing Christian culture. Because same-sex attraction is not inherited genetically, queer people are thus dislocated from their surrounding communities, unable to trace their roots to a pre-existing lineage or heritage.

Nightwood exacerbates this effect by making its queer characters literal exiles—Matthew O'Connor is an Irish-American gynecologist who traverses national boundaries; his status as a gay cross-dresser additionally transgresses both expected norms of sexual orientation and gender expression within the dominant heteronormative culture. In his multiplicity of identities as an Irishman from San Francisco residing in Paris, Matthew's habitation of manifold roles can also represent a plurality of sexual identities—gay man, early representative of transgender identity, and even queer mother who “helped to bring [Nora] into the world” (Barnes 21). The seemingly omniscient “Watchman” of the narrative, Matthew is able to achieve this objectivity through his ability to transgress boundaries of gender, sexuality, and nationality; although he functions as a unifying force for disparate characters throughout the narrative, he also delineates racial and national distinctions, as when he remarks to Felix that “the Jew and the Irish, the one moving upward and the other down, often meet, spade to spade, in the same acre... All right, Jews meddle and we lie, that's the difference, the fine difference” (Barnes 34). Casting Felix as a representative of Judaism who is “a supreme and marvelous meddler” and “racially incapable of abandon” plays into prevailing racial stereotypes of the time, one that threatens to undermine Barnes's message of sympathy toward outsiders (Barnes 34, 41). These stereotypical delineations suggest a lack of solidarity among the community, leaving each character alienated from even other outcasts. This clearly defined sense of difference also characterizes the navigation of romantic relationships within the novel—Felix, Nora and Jenny Petherbridge all compete for Robin's love; there is little sense of queer solidarity or community among Robin, Jenny and Nora. In her portrayal of national origins as either ambiguous, alienating, or nonexistent, Barnes suggests that statelessness might be interpreted as a distinct form of queer exile.

As American expatriates, Nora and Robin serve as contemporary interlocutors to the Old World traditions of Europe, an identity that represents both new possibilities and the corruption of innocence. When the doctor asks Felix what nationality he would choose for a wife in order to raise a son who feels as he did about the “great past,” Felix responds “The American. With an American anything can be done” (Barnes 42). Felix seeks to marry Robin in large part because of her American nationality, in order to inject new blood into the dying Austrian aristocracy and as a “blank slate” to inscribe with his veneration of European nobility. When Felix criticizes the doctor’s dismissal of aristocratic tradition, telling him “But you are American, so you don’t believe,” the doctor responds “because I’m American I believe anything, so I say beware!” (Barnes 44). This invocation of American national identity as characteristic of gullible innocence suggests it can then be corrupted and depraved. Robin and Nora embody the corrupted naïveté of American society, particularly Nora, who is “known instantly as a Westerner,” with an association with savagery, rugged individualism and Christian values: “Looking at her, foreigners remembered stories they had heard of covered wagons; animals going down to drink... with heavy hems the women becoming large, flattening the fields where they walked; God so ponderous in their minds that they could stamp out the world with him in seven days” (Barnes 56). At Nora’s salon meetings “one felt that early American history was being re-enacted” (Barnes 56). As Benstock suggests, Nora can be interpreted as the puritanized and purified representative of American moral values, who is unable to reconcile her conventional perspective with the depraved decadence of the Parisian nighttime café society (261). Whereas Robin appears unknowing or indifferent to these values, Nora is chained to them through “cultural efforts to deny her access to knowledge of and pleasure in her own body” (Benstock 262). Robin is able to access the instinctual pleasures of the night world, adopting the more

worldly perspective of a transatlantic wanderer, while Nora's inability to accept her lover's inclinations is rooted in her own culturally repressed worldview.

Nora's "strangest salon in America" is her first gateway into the night world (Barnes 55). Based out of her New York country home, the salon caters to disenfranchised members of society: "it was the paupers' salon for poets, radicals, beggars, artists, and people in love; for Catholics, Protestants, Brahmins, dabblers in black magic and medicine" (Barnes 55). Like Felix, Nora also inhabits the artificial and decadent world of the circus, what Felix deems "sham salons" full of a "splendid and reeking falsification" where outcasts survive "in an alien element" (Barnes 13). Nora's experience of salon society can be contextualized within the bohemian Left Bank society Barnes inhabited, where expatriate women were able to live openly as lesbians, yet subject to the prejudices of wider society. As Shari Benstock explains in *Women of the Left Bank*, "Same-sex love was part of the 'mad gaiety' of belle epoque life, where men and women alike sought new and exotic pleasures.' As one famous salon hostess of the period commented, 'all the noteworthy women are doing it'" (47). She contends that the freedom of salon society was a double-edged sword for lesbian women: it offered the illusion of free expression, but sexual stereotyping and homophobia resulted in the majority of women being ostracized from their community. Benstock writes that "As a subgroup of an already excluded and resented societal category (women), lesbians were particularly vulnerable to abuse by both men and women. In general, heterosexual women adopted the attitudes of their husbands and fathers toward female homosexuals: they were objects of ridicule, an embarrassment to their sex" (50). Early twentieth-century society did not recognize the autonomy of women's desire, so lesbianism was instead viewed as a means to escape men out of frustration or fear (Benstock 54). Because women were generally considered to be innocent and incapable of sexual "depravity," French

society regarded married women engaged in same-sex relationships as both naïve and morally pure. This contradictory perspective can contextualize the different ways in which Robin, Nora and Jenny are characterized: Robin as the married woman who seeks out women as an expression of her voracious hunger for life, Nora as the morally innocent woman corrupted by Robin, and Jenny as the depraved and avaricious older woman who seeks to claim Robin for herself. In *Nightwood*, salon society is not the welcoming enclave it may appear—instead, it features insidious stereotypes, divisions and jealousies that pit the women against each other.

If *Nightwood* forms an “interior landscape... an anatomy of the night,” as Kannenstine suggests, it is a record of the ways in which women are oppressed by the alienating landscape of the patriarchal city (10). Barnes’s early journalism on the suffrage movement and her poetry chapbook *The Book of Repulsive Women* both examine the ways in which women are mistreated in Western society; the decadence and depravity of the female characters in *Nightwood* is an outcome of their alternate ostracization and objectification by men such as Felix. As Kannenstine writes, “the novel’s fantasticality persistently yields an impression of beauty and barbarity or degradation,” yet this corruption is revealed as an effect of the night itself, turning the daylight world threatening and perverse after dark (23). The urban dreamscape of the night city is revealed to be both a psychological and geographical construction, disorientating and alienating its characters in an effect Carolyn Burke describes as characteristic of Barnes’s writing: “to focus on the predicament of the modern woman adrift in the urban wasteland, where her new freedoms (which proved to be only relative) culminated in psychic disillusionment, spiritual lassitude or... in real or imagined suicide” (72). Matthew O’Connor is the “watchman of the night” who describes its landscape to Nora, constructing a night city that parallels but differs from the conventions of the daytime world. This doubled reality is characteristic of the shifting nature of

modernity, where the topographical map remains the same, but the landscape of the city changes its meaning: bars, restaurants and clubs move, reopen, and service a different clientele, transforming the night city into a different reality to that of the day. This inverse can be viewed as a photographic negative of the daytime city; it also parallels the sexual “inversion” of Barnes’s characters who are forced to inhabit this subterranean nighttime world. While Robin finds the nighttime queer café society lively and inviting, responding to a “darkness” that already lives within herself, Nora finds it abnormal and degrading.

As Annette Kolodny observes, *Nightwood* “is not a novel written to explore the world of perverts, as some of its earliest critics insisted, but instead a novel which explores the psyches of those who inhabit and perceive what is to the ‘normal’ reader an inverted version of his own highly conventionalized sexual and social reality” (83). The characters only truly come alive during their nighttime wanderings, where the night both shields and enables the enactment of their “inverted” sexual identities. Nora’s interpretation of this “sordid” night city is infused with the moral values of her middle-class American upbringing, where the behavior of other queer characters appears abnormal and she is forced to interpret her own desire as a form of perversion, alienating her from her own identity (Benstock 261). Although the “life of the night” embodies the stigmatized desire of *Nightwood*’s misfits, it does not liberate its characters from the conventions of heteronormative society but instead reproduces them through Nora’s perspective. Although Nora herself is an inhabitant of the night world, she vocalizes the heteronormative values of the reader’s “highly conventionalized sexual and social reality” when she condemns Robin’s sexual cruising and initially responds with shock upon discovering the doctor dressed in women’s clothing. Rather than providing refuge to the displaced and outcast denizens of *Nightwood*, the night instead signifies the inversion and disruption of the daylight order, where

its corrupted and sordid elements are visible effects of society's condemnation of those who fail to adhere to heteronormative roles of gender and sexuality.

Having established the psychogeographical space of *Nightwood*, I will interpret it within Dianne Chisholm's theory of "queer space," which she argues constitutes both the physical landscapes inhabited by the queer community—certain neighborhoods such as Greenwich Village or the Left Bank, for example—as well as the enactment of same-sex desire. In *Queer Constellations: Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City*, Chisholm further theorizes a queer "counterpublic" embodied by the experience of subcultural urban space, one that Catharina Landström describes as "mobiliz[ing] the sexual marginal that heteronormativity defines as deviant and dangerous and that thrives in the spaces obliterated in 'urban renewals'." Barnes's characters can be read as citizens of this queer counterpublic, inhabiting a subcultural urban space paralleling, yet largely invisible to, the lives of the city's heterosexual community. Chisholm theorizes that this "queer space designates a more fluid conceptualization of the queer occupation of urban space. Deriving its sense from post-structuralism rather than empirical history, queer space demarcates a practice, production, and performance of space beyond just the mere habitation of built and fixed structures. Against the domination of space by abstract constructs of urban planning and the implantation of technologies of social surveillance, queer space designates an appropriation of space for bodily, especially sexual, pleasure. Queer spatial practices, including cruising and parading, may lead to the creation of 'hetero-topias'" (10). Chisholm singles out Paris as a central location for the occupation and practice of queer space that emerged in the works of Baudelaire and Benjamin and was later adopted by modern urban theorists, as well as the queer Parisian underworld prominently featured in the works of French

writers Colette, Marcel Proust, André Gide, and Jean Genet. The *flâneur* is presented as an emblematic queer figure able to navigate these shifting topographical dimensions of space.

In *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Spaces, Sites of Resistance*, Jean-Ulrick Désert asserts: “Queer space crosses, engages, and transgresses social, spiritual, and aesthetic locations, all of which is articulated in the realm of the public/private, the built/unbuilt environments... A queer space is an activated zone made proprietary by the occupant or *flâneur*, the wanderer. It is at once private and public” (29). Chisholm expands on this argument by theorizing “the cruising *flâneur* is piqued with desire—desire that the city itself has induced with its intoxicating promenade of commodities. Unlike the classical *flâneur*, famed for his aloof observations, the cruising *flâneur* loses composure (or decomposes) with exposure to the city’s erotic spectacles” (46). Contrary to Baudelaire’s aimless man-about-town, “the cruising *flâneur* is on the outlook for love... A city lover, as much as a lover of his or her own sex, the cruising *flâneur* gravitates to the city’s erotic hot spots in search of a companion” (Chisholm 46). Robin can be interpreted as a variant of Chisholm’s cruising *flâneur*, who wanders the city in search of female lovers. Moving between the bohemian worlds of Paris, New York, Vienna, and Berlin from the 1880s to the 1920s, *Nightwood* is recognized by Chisholm as articulating “the distance between ‘*flâneur* realism’ and ‘lesbian realism,’ between the city of surrealist revolution and the state of lesbian exile: a queer space” (171). While Chisholm’s concept of the cruising *flâneur* is valuable for understanding the spatiotemporal boundaries of *Nightwood*, she assumes that queer space is always liberating. *Nightwood* instead illuminates the underside of subcultural queer space—in their *flânerie* through the Parisian night world, both Robin and Nora lose their sense of identity, become increasingly more alienated from each other, their conception of self and other characters and become spatiotemporally dislocated.

Benstock characterizes the expatriate Barnes herself as a *flâneur*: “She passed frequent afternoons and many evenings at the cafes along the Boulevard du Montparnasse; she was apparently well known at the Dome, the Coupole, and the Rotund, but preferred the less Americanized Café de Flore on the boulevard St. Germain des Pres. Dressed in a long opera cape originally owned by Peggy Guggenheim, Barnes spent long hours lost in her own thoughts, watching street activity” (230). Nora, who is often read as a representation of Barnes, becomes a *flâneur* only through her desperate, endless search for her lover. Running her salon out of her home and longing to create the perfect domestic space for Robin, Nora moves through Europe with the socially acceptable occupation of a publicist for the circus, and it is only her love for Robin that draws her into the seedier elements of society and in conflict with her own values. To Nora, the night world that so entrances her lover is fraught with a sense of danger: “the walking image of Robin in appalling apprehension on Nora’s mind—Robin alone, crossing streets, in danger” (Barnes 62). As Chisholm observes, Robin is “less a free spirit than a haunted soul” and her night walks are conducted in an absent-minded trance, as she desperately seeks to free herself from the limitations of bourgeois society. Yet Robin’s wildness is also what originally attracts Nora, who is fascinated by her “primitive innocence” and possessed by the desire to tame and reform her (Barnes 62). Robin increasingly identifies with the marginalized streetwalkers, singing “like a practiced whore” and describing Nora to “a poor-wretched beggar of a whore” as a puritanical missionary sent to reform them (Barnes 57, 144). While Robin wanders the streets with abandon and unconscious of her public reputation, following her traps Nora within a recurring cycle of misery, repression and alienation. Both women’s streetwalking therefore dislocates and alienates them, emphasizing their sexual marginality on the forbidding streets of the foreign city.

Robin Vote is characterized as a sleepwalker, or a “*somnambule*... who lives in two worlds—meet of child and desperado” (Barnes 35). Her wanderings begin during her unwanted pregnancy as a means to escape the confines of her marriage and of motherhood: “Strangely aware of some lost land in herself, she took to going out; wandering the countryside; to train travel, to other cities, alone and engrossed. Once, not having returned for three days, and Felix nearly beside himself with terror, she walked in late at night and said that she had been halfway to Berlin” (Barnes 44). Her night walks resume after moving in with Nora, as Robin seeks to free herself from the domestic stability of their partnership: “In the years that they lived together, the departures of Robin became slowly increasing rhythm. At first Nora went with Robin; but as time passed, realizing that a growing tension was in Robin, unable to endure the knowledge that she was in the way or forgotten, seeing Robin go from table to table, from drink to drink, from person to person, realizing that if she herself were not there Robin might return to her as the one who, out of all the turbulent night, had not been lived through, Nora stayed at home, lying awake or sleeping” (Barnes 64). Although Nora longs to provide Robin with stability, Robin’s absence nonetheless becomes a “physical removal, insupportable and irreparable” to Nora, and she “would go out into the night that she might be ‘beside herself,’ skirting the café in which she could catch a glimpse of Robin” (Barnes 64). Like the archetypal *flâneur*, Robin’s wanderings are presented as an aimless act with meditative qualities, where the very act of walking serves to dislocate her in space. She endlessly cycles between the home she shares with Nora and the nighttime café society, avoiding choosing between the two worlds:

Once out in the open Robin walked in a formless meditation, her hands thrust into the sleeves of her coat, directing her steps toward that night life that was a known measure between Nora and the cafés. Her meditations, during this walk, were a part of the

pleasure she expected to find when the walk came to an end. It was this exact distance that kept the two ends of her life—Nora and the cafés—from forming a monster with two heads. Her thoughts were in themselves a form of locomotion. She walked with raised head, seeming to look at every passer-by, yet her gaze was anchored in anticipation and regret. A look of anger, intense and hurried, shadowed her face and drew her mouth down as she neared her company; yet as her eyes moved over the façades of the buildings, searching for the sculptured head that both she and Nora loved (a Greek head with shocked protruding eyeballs, for which the tragic mouth seemed to pour forth tears), a quiet joy radiated from her own eyes; for this head was remembrance of Nora and her love, making the anticipation of the people she was to meet set and melancholy. So, without knowing she would do so, she took the turn that brought her into this particular street. If she was diverted, as was sometimes the case, by the interposition of a company of soldiers, a wedding or a funeral, then by her agitation she seemed a part of the function to the persons she stumbled against, as a moth by his very entanglement with the heat that shall be his extinction is associated with flame as a component part of its function. It was this characteristic that saved her from being asked too sharply ‘where’ she was going; pedestrians who had it on the point of their tongues, seeing her rapt and confused, turned instead to look at each other (Barnes 65).

Robin’s “formless meditation” suggests the aimless wandering of the *flâneur*, where her thoughts “as a form of locomotion” indicate the meditative qualities of walking as a form of processing. Robin’s *flânerie* is suggested by her gaze at passerby and seemingly unconscious and disorientating routes down different streets, where other pedestrians perceive her anxiety and confusion. However, Robin’s cyclical journeys in fact have two clearly defined end points, the

“two ends of her life—Nora and the cafés,” suggesting her routes are in fact repetitive and unvarying, guiding her in between the separate worlds she inhabits. Despite Nora’s distress at Robin’s absence, Robin in fact reflects on her love for Nora during her night walks, suggesting that she believes her domestic life and the night world are not mutually exclusive—their favorite piece of statuary serves as a reminder of “Nora and her love, making the anticipation of the people she was to meet set and melancholy.” Rather than an aimless *flâneur*, Robin can be viewed as a self-possessed wanderer, not as “lost” as Nora believes but rather a negative image of her lover, one equally at home in both domestic space and the subcultural night world.

In contrast, Nora lacks any agency within their relationship, desperately trailing Robin around the city. The doctor perceives her as a religious woman who has lost her faith: “Out looking for what she’s afraid to find—Robin. There goes mother of mischief, running about, trying to get the world home” (Barnes 66). Her movements are purposefully stymied—she desperately searches for Robin in the passing crowds, yet avoids the locations she knows Robin haunts for fear of what she might find: “Looking at every couple as they passed, into every carriage and car, up to the lighted windows of the houses, trying to discover not Robin any longer, but traces of Robin, influences in her life (and those which were yet to be betrayed), Nora watched every moving figure for some gesture that might turn up in the movements made by Robin; avoiding the quarter where she knew her to be, where by her own movements the waiters, the people on the terraces, might know that she had a part in Robin’s life” (Barnes 66). “Returning home, the interminable night would begin,” as Nora lies awake in bed, conscious of every noise outside that might indicate Robin’s return (Barnes 66). Even alone, Nora’s movements mirror her lover’s—she begins pacing around the house, almost in an intimation of Robin’s movements, in hopes it will bring her back: “At times she would get up and walk, to

make something in her life outside more quickly over, to bring Robin back by the very velocity of the beating of her heart” (66). Both Nora and Robin are desperately searching for something they cannot articulate—Nora, to return Robin to the safety of the home and rescue her from the depravity of the night world, and Robin, to escape the confines of domestic partnership and exert her sexual freedom among strangers in the debauched café society.

The contrast between the disorientating, corrupt exterior world and stifling, repressive interior space in *Nightwood* can be attributed to Nora and Robin’s opposing views of queer liberation and domesticity. Nora intends to create a home for Robin and to keep her safe, while Robin finds freedom only in the dissolute nightlife of the forbidding city. Nora’s primary objective in their relationship is to recreate the domestic roles exemplified by heterosexual marriage, fulfilling the values instilled in her by conventional society. Although they travel to Munich, Vienna and Budapest, Nora intends to settle down with Robin in Paris and closes her house in New York. Robin had told Nora “only a little of her life, but she kept repeating in one way or another her wish for a home, as if she were afraid she would be lost again, as if she were aware, without conscious knowledge, that she belonged to Nora, and that if Nora did not make it permanent by her own strength, she would forget” (Barnes 60). Displaced from her homeland, husband and child, Robin lacks any form of stability except her relationship with Nora. Unlike Felix, who prizes aristocratic wealth and tradition, Nora attempts to create a home that emphasizes the unity of their relationship: “In the passage of their lives together every object in the garden, every item in the house, every word they spoke, attested to their mutual love, the combining of their humors. There were circus chairs, wooden horses bought from a ring of an old merry-go-round, venetian chandeliers from the Flea Fair, stage-drops from Munich, cherubim from Vienna, ecclesiastical hangings from Rome, a spinet from England, and a

miscellaneous collection of music boxes from many countries; such was the museum of their encounter, as Felix's hearsay house had been testimony of the age when his father had lived with his mother" (Barnes 61). The "museum" of their house, which Nora carefully curates, quickly becomes symbolic of the constructed nature of their relationship. In this way, Nora's attempt to control the direction of Robin's life resembles Felix, who Barnes describes as "the slowly and tirelessly milling Jew [who] once more becomes the 'collector' of his own past" (13). This obsessive need for control, however, only drives the two women further apart. When Robin leaves Nora alone she begins to suffer "from the personality of the house, the punishment of those who collect their lives together. Unconsciously at first, she went about disturbing nothing; then she became aware that her soft and careful movements were the outcome of an unreasoning fear—if she disarranged anything Robin might become confused—might lose the scent of home" (Barnes 61). Nora's attempt to construct the perfect home obfuscates her vision of what a home truly is, instead curating a controlled interior that disguises her fear Robin will lose interest in their relationship and leave her.

Throughout *Nightwood*, the domestic interiors of the characters' homes represent their failure to achieve a mutually supportive and stable relationship—although they appear to offer refuge from the streets outside, the houses quickly become a trap. The ending of Nora's relationship with Robin is foreshadowed when she dreams of her grandmother's house, whose neglect and decay symbolizes the disintegration of their love: "Nora dreamed that she was standing at the top of a house, that is, the last floor but one—this was her grandmother's room—an expansive, decaying splendor; yet somehow, though set with all the belongings of her grandmother, was as bereft as the nest of a bird which will not return" (Barnes 67). The stillness of the house, hung with portraits of Nora's dead relatives, seems to resemble death, and Nora

looks “down into the body of the house, as if from a scaffold” (Barnes 67). Robin wears the eerie style of an “only survivor,” and appears to recede farther from Nora, “as if Robin and she, in their extremity, were a pair of opera glasses turned to the wrong end, diminishing in their painful love; a speed that ran away with the two ends of the building, stretching her apart” (Barnes 68). Nora invites Robin upstairs, yet recognizes the bedroom is “taboo,” perhaps because of the forbidden possibility of integrating lesbian love into the heteronormative sphere of her grandmother’s house. Yet Nora realizes that the room has the liminal quality of a dream, functioning as a queer space that resembles the nighttime inversion of the daylight city—failing to manifest in a physical form yet holding deep symbolic meaning. It is the “absolute opposite of any known room her grandmother had ever moved or lived in, was nevertheless saturated with the lost presence of her grandmother, who seemed in the continual process of leaving it” (Barnes 68). Waking, Nora begins to pace and looks out into the garden, where she sees “a double shadow falling from the statue,” unable to determine whether this is another element of her dream: “Nora saw the body of another woman swim up into the statue’s obscurity, with head hung down, that the added eyes might not augment the illumination; her arms about Robin’s neck, her body pressed to Robin’s, her legs slackened in the hang of the embrace” (Barnes 70). The sighting of the dream figure is the shock of confrontation Nora requires, indicating the subconscious presence of another woman and that her relationship with Robin is doomed to fail.

The presence of the shadow woman signifies the arrival of Jenny Petherbridge, a withered and avaricious widow who Matthew describes as a “little, hurried decaying comedy jester, the face on the fool’s-stick, and with a smell about her of mouse-nests” (Barnes 98). Jenny is a “‘looter,’ and eternally nervous” (Barnes 98). Matthew perceives that Jenny “has a longing for other people’s property, but the moment she possesses it the property loses some of its value,

for the owner's estimate is its worth" (Barnes 98). Although wealthy and obsessed with material objects, she possesses little taste, and has taken to "appropriating Robin's mind with vulgar inaccuracy, like those eighty-two plaster virgins she bought because Robin had one good one; when you laugh at the eighty-two standing in a row, Jenny runs to the wall, back to the picture of her mother, and stands there between two tortures—the past that she can't share, and the present that she can't copy" (Barnes 98). Jenny is a "squatter by instinct" in both her romantic desire and her hoarding—she has "stolen or appropriated the dignity of speech, so she appropriated the most passionate love that she knew, Nora's for Robin" (Barnes 75). Instead of the carefully curated interiors that reflect Nora and Robin's life together, her house is filled with stolen goods, a simulacrum of a home where Jenny lives like a museum. Her house is thus a "perverted" version of Nora and Robin's love:

Her walls, her cupboards, her bureaux, were teeming with second-hand dealings with life.

It takes a bold and authentic robber to get first-hand plunder. Someone else's marriage ring was on her finger; the photograph taken of Robin for Nora sat upon her table. The books in her library were other people's selections. She lived among her own things like a visitor to a room kept "exactly as it was when—" (Barnes 72).

Rather than as an innocent victim of the night world, Jenny is portrayed as a depraved "bold and authentic robber" who steals the love of others, and who has quite literally robbed Nora of her lover in the form of her photograph of Robin. She is unable to feel at home among her plunder of other people's lives, and lives among her collections not as Robin and Nora live comfortably in their collaboratively curated and refined home, but rather as a visitor to a museum or an inhabitant of a dead person's rooms. Nora perceives Jenny's house, like Jenny herself, as ugly, depressing, and vaguely Gothic in appearance. She remembers that the stairs "were of

brown wood, and the hall was ugly and dark, and her apartment depressing. No one would have known that she had money. The walls had mustard-coloured paper on them as far as the salon, and something hideous in red and green and black in the hall, and away at the end, a bedroom facing the hall-door, with a double-bed” (Barnes 108). The “something hideous in red and green and black in the hall” evokes the creeping depression and horror of the house, while the “mustard-colored paper” is reminiscent of the decaying yellow wallpaper in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s titular story, a symbol of female entrapment, repression and insanity. The decay and disorder of Jenny’s house is symptomatic of the night world, a horrifying inverse of the welcoming home that Nora tries to provide. In its grotesque appearance and variety of hoarded goods, it resembles Matthew’s poverty-stricken hovel Nora perceives as belonging to one “condemned to the grave,” filled with a bewildering array of medical equipment and women’s accessories:

“A pile of medical books, and volumes of a miscellaneous order, reached almost to the ceiling, water-stained and covered with dust. Just above them was a very small barred window, the only ventilation. On a maple dresser, certainly not of European make, lay a rusty pair of forceps, a broken scalpel, half a dozen odd instruments that she could not place, a catheter, some twenty perfume bottles, almost empty, pomades, creams, rouges, powder boxes and puffs. From the half-open drawers of this chiffonier hung laces, ribands, stockings, ladies’ underclothing and an abdominal brace, which gave the impression that the feminine finery had suffered venery. A swill-pail stood at the head of the bed, brimming with abominations. There was something appallingly degraded about the room, like the rooms in brothels, which give even the most innocent a sensation of having been accomplice; yet this room was also muscular, a cross between a chambre à

coucher and a boxer's training camp. There is a certain belligerence in a room in which a woman has never set foot; every object seems to be battling its own compression—and there is a metallic odor, as of beaten iron in a smithy" (Barnes 85).

Like Jenny's house, Matthew's room is an inversion of domestic order. Although Nora observes ironically that a woman has never set foot in the room, the doctor is in bed dressed in a women's nightgown, wig and makeup. The room is a liminal space where the boundaries of the day and nighttime worlds fall away, what Chisholm describes as disconcerting combination of "interior and exterior and its queer assemblage of bedchamber, surgery, and closet," the decay and disorder of which she contends is emblematic of the turmoil of modernity (190). Nora views the doctor's dress as that of a man in agony, telling herself "Is not the gown the natural raiment of extremity? What nation, what religion, what ghost, what dream, has not worn it— infants, angels, priests, the dead; why should not the doctor, in the grave dilemma of his alchemy, wear his dress?" (Barnes 86). The gown embodies the doctor's authentic queer identity that he is more free to inhabit at night, yet the disorder of his room also reveals the public and private "destitution of modernity" (Chisholm 190). The confusion of the forceps, scalpel, and medical instruments with the "feminine finery" suggest that the doctor's pursuit of gynecology is his only legitimate avenue to inhabit feminine roles, while the brace indicates Matthew's view of himself as a broken man. But the rusty and broken medical instruments, empty perfume bottles and "swill-pail... brimming with abominations" suggest the decay the doctor lives in and his failure to either uphold professional standards or achieve his sexual desires (Barnes 86). The brothel-like quality of the room is another element of the degraded night world Nora encounters, yet the disorder of its contents are representative of the doctor's psychic state, supporting his allegation that "the night does something to a person's identity" (Barnes 87). The degradation of

Jenny and Matthew's rooms thus represents a negative image of Nora's carefully curated and refined home, a frightening glimpse into the depravity and decadence of the queer underworld.

Just as the subcultural space of the night world queers the text, so does Barnes's fragmented, Surrealist style. As Kannenstine points out, although Barnes's work shares affinities with modernist style, it does not conform wholly to its aesthetic, and the perception that her writing exists outside the confines of genre has sometimes resulted in a lack of understanding of its experimental methods (xvi). Her poetry and prose have often been interpreted as eccentric, inverted forms of modernism, which draw on diverse genres of earlier literature as well as events from Barnes's own life to address themselves to a select audience. Benstock claims that it is "precisely Barnes's relation to literary tradition that so troubles assessments of her work: readers do not know where to 'place' her" (242). She has been criticized for both ignoring major modernist poets such as Eliot and Ezra Pound and unsuccessfully "imitating" a Joycean style (242). Both misreadings strip Barnes of her agency as an experimental female writer and attempt to locate her work within pre-existing forms. Instead, *Nightwood* can be interpreted as subverting both traditional and modernist forms, embodied in its "trans-generic" qualities and "generic mutability" (Kannenstine 96, 109). *Nightwood* demonstrates that the categories assigned to gender and sexuality are socially constructed, questioning the moral values associated with queer society and reflecting "the inversion and subversion of sexual coding through the dislocation and disruption of literary genre" (Benstock 262). Early critics likely found *Nightwood* inaccessible because understanding it meant entering into its queer space, one that presented an inverted version of the values of heteronormative society. Barnes's contemporaries often considered her style "perverse," likely a misreading of her subject of what was then called "female sexual perversion" (Benstock 245). However, Margaret Gillespie has suggested that

ornate style of *Nightwood* is in fact a purposeful technique of camp aestheticism that queers the text, “troubling” both gender and genre in the “sexual-textual” expression of Othered sexuality. As Annette Kolodny has suggested, *Nightwood* itself blocks its readers from entering by placing them “in precisely that situation in which the main characters of more recent women’s fiction find themselves: that is, embroiled in the hopeless task of trying to decode or decipher a strange and incomprehensible reality” (44). The “problem of style” in *Nightwood* has resulted in misogynist literary criticism that compared the novel to a woman’s body which must be broken into (i.e. deciphering its style or code) to be controlled and explained. Benstock explains that reading is thus compared to rape, “a submission of the text (woman) to patriarchal (critical) priorities” (246). Such a practice condemns the depiction of decadence and homosexuality in *Nightwood* rather than turning to a critical eye to its causes, casting Robin as the perpetrator of evil and depravity rather than its victim.

To enter into the queer space of *Nightwood*, Barnes first queers the text’s style through the narrative techniques of fragmentation and Surrealism. *Nightwood* is a dreamscape where the boundaries of the tangible world disappear, leaving the narrative dislocated in time and space. Depicting the degraded wasteland of the modern city, *Nightwood* is fragmentary in its narrative style, frequently shifting between time, place, and narrative perspective. Its spatiotemporal boundaries are influenced more by the multidimensional and intangible dreamscape, one that disrupts traditional narratives and introduces major plot developments through the guise of dreaming, than linear time. Similarly, *Nightwood* demonstrates a Surrealistic awareness of “the unconscious or emotional or irrational life,” influenced by French avant-garde artists such as André Breton (Parsons 178). Barnes adapts the surrealist motifs of dreaming and the Other, two symbols that recur throughout the development of the narrative. Chisholm argues that *Nightwood*

also functions as an example of “obscene modernism,” one that subverts heteronormative ideas of literary obscenity to elude censorship and subvert the legal definition of artistic transgression. As Chisholm claims, the novel is a conglomeration of style; it “traverses, combines, and juxtaposes American puritanism and French pornography, French surrealism and American realism” (171). Although *Nightwood*’s sexual decadence is often analyzed, its use of obscenity as artistic transgression often goes ignored, overlooked by censors who adhered to Eliot’s introductory remarks to regard its offensive language as a form of shocking poetics (Chisholm 171). Yet the subversive nature of obscenity also queers the language of the narrative, setting it apart from heteronormative literary convention. By exposing the “obscene” frame of speech associated with same-sex sexuality, *Nightwood* challenges the epistemological association of homosexuality with moral failure. Such a narrative choice also helps ensure *Nightwood* would escape censorship, by eschewing realist depictions of homosexuality and portraying it as a form of narrative style and literary eccentricity, elevating it into the category of high modernism that distinguishes it from “obscene” literature. *Nightwood*’s obscenity is therefore a necessary literary device that evaded literary censorship of same-sex desire, leading Leigh Gilmour to controversially contend that “Barnes’s readers did not ‘see’ the lesbianism of Nora and Robin... because it was presented neither through a medical discourse nor in terms of narrative realism,” due to Barnes’s deployment of literary technique to detract from the two primary realist modes of representation, medical definitions of the “invert” or conventional moral narratives that demanded characters be punished for their transgressions (616). Although it seems unlikely Barnes’s readers did not perceive her explicit depiction of same-sex relationships, separating *Nightwood* from the moralist proselytizing or medical discourse surrounding depictions of queer characters allowed Barnes to eschew the obsession with sexual categorizations to plumb the

interiority of Nora and Robin's relationship. By locating *Nightwood* in a subterranean, subcultural space, Barnes is able to represent lesbianism as both a form of doubling and inversion, one that can only exist in a surreal version of reality.

The narrative style of fragmentation is utilized to obscure not only the portrayal of the explicitly queer night world but the spatiotemporal boundaries of the narrative. As Deborah Parsons writes, "Djuna Barnes struggles to record the experience of her urban night world through a language of allusion, fragmentation, fantasy, and ultimately silence" (182). Certain dates appear, such as Felix's birth in Vienna in 1880 and Nora's joining of the circus in the fall of 1923, but such landmarks are random and disconnected from the flow of the narrative, barely establishing the linear framework of the daytime world the characters reject in favor of the night. The textual narrative itself resembles the fragmentary conditions of the modern city, moving between time, place and narrative perspective, beginning with Felix—a character peripheral to the narrative's main love triangle—and moving to Matthew, then Robin, from there to Nora. Different voices narrate different parts of the text, with Matthew's campy, dramatized language detracting from the third-person narration, and flashbacks are only partially explained by the omniscient watchman. The disparate plotlines of *Nightwood* are revealed and connected in sudden flashes of illumination, resulting in a disorientating effect. In many ways, the narrative resembles Robin's aimless walking patterns or Nora's pacing, causing Parsons to comment that it seems to "proceed, take short cuts, turn onto a side street, return to the main thoroughfare, retrace its steps, and be bombarded with various shock experiences," reminiscent of Robin's frequent diversions and tendency to "without knowing she would do so, [take] the turn that brought her into this particular street" (Parsons 182, Barnes 65). The reader is led through the text as Robin leads Nora through the dark city—blindly, aimlessly and only as cognizant of events as the

speaker at that point in the narrative—without learning anything further from Robin. It is this twisting narrative that has led T.S. Eliot to suggest that the final chapter is superfluous, or critic Catherine Hollis to argue that before narrative revision, Barnes originally intended that the chapter “Night Watch” to be immediately followed by “Watchman, What of the Night?” and then “The Squatter” (236). Barnes uses these “fragments” of the past, like the objects Nora carefully curates and collects, to craft a Surrealist style that shifts as the characters navigate the psychogeographic space of the night world (Parsons 182).

Barnes adapts the Surrealist motifs of dreaming and sleepwalking, building on the Freudian theory that dreaming exposes emotions repressed by social convention, where “dreams have only the pigmentation of fact” (Barnes 92). Emerging in Paris in 1924 with the publication of André Breton’s *First Manifesto of Surrealism*, Surrealism prioritized the unconscious and the dream state over the fabric of reality, transcending national boundaries to encompass diverse practices of visual and literary creation around the globe. The dislocation of dreaming is alluded to in the Surrealist concept *dépaysement*, or the state of being unlanded, which Surrealists believed would allow them to arrive at a new vantage point of awareness. *Dépaysement* also refers to the political and social upheaval of displaced citizens, exiles, and diasporic communities, representing the dislocated psychogeographic queer space of *Nightwood*. The novel hinges on the many denizens of the night world drawn to Robin, the *somnambule* or sleepwalker, and her ability to navigate the landscape of the dream world. By understanding the night, Nora seeks to understand the fundamental differences between Nora and herself, telling Matthew “I used to think that people just went to sleep, or if they did not go to sleep that they were themselves, but now I see that the night does something to a person’s identity, even when asleep” (89). This identity distinguishes Nora, a citizen of the daytime world, from Robin, who

inhabits the subversive night world, leading her to ask “I never thought of the night as a life at all—I’ve never lived it—why did she?” (Barnes 89).

For answers, Matthew identifies Robin as an individual whose identity is fundamentally changed by her exposure to the night world. Robin is one of the girls who “turn the day into night, the young, the drug addict, the profligate, the drunken and that most miserable, the lover who watches all night long in fear and anguish. These can never again live the life of the day. When one meets them at high noon they give off, as if it were a protective emanation, something dark and muted. The light does not become them any longer” (Barnes 101). Matthew claims that like a sleepwalker, Robin is forced to continuously wander the darkened streets, victimized into perpetuating the evil of the night world: “The dead have committed some portion of the evil of the night; sleep and love, the other. For what is not the sleeper responsible? What converse does he hold, and with whom?” (Barnes 92). He encourages Nora to think of the night world through the medium of dream, a life of distinctly “French nights” that attracts the *flâneur* or erotic voyeur drawn to the depravity of café society: “Have you thought of the night, now, in other times, in foreign countries—in Paris?” (88). Just as expatriates inhabit the foreign streets of Paris, the sleepwalkers congregate on the forbidding streets of the night city. In Matthew’s soliloquy, the sleepwalker enters a land their lover cannot follow: “The sleeper is the proprietor of an unknown land. He goes about another business in the dark—and we, his partners, who go to the opera, who listen to gossip of café friends, who walk along the boulevards, or sew a quiet seam, cannot afford an inch of it; because, though we would purchase it with blood, it has no counter and no till” (Barnes 93). To be a *somnambule* is to be an exile of the daylight world, just as expatriates are exiled from their country. *Nightwood* explores the psychic boundaries of the night world and

the instinctual identity one has while dreaming or sleepwalking, inaccessible to one's conscious and controlled identity during the day.

By conflating the sleepwalker who strolls the landscape of the night city to an expatriate in a foreign land, Matthew suggests that Robin inhabits a space where traditional spatiotemporal boundaries cease to exist, dislocating her from the conventions of reality. This comparison is explicitly queered when Matthew invokes the “cities of the plain,” Sodom and Gomorrah, whose biblical downfall is overtly associated with same-sex desire: “Take history at night; have you ever thought of that, now? Was it at night that Sodom became Gomorrah? It was at night, I swear! A city given over to the shades, and that’s why it has never been countenanced or understood to this day” (Barnes 92). Locating this mythical story within the realm of the queer underworld allows Nora to situate her desire within the subcultural history of the wider queer community, shedding light on hidden parts of lesbian existence within literary history—Matthew likely also references one of the most prominent twentieth-century works of gay fiction, Marcel Proust’s *Sodom and Gomorrah*, Volume 4 of *In Search of Lost Time*. As Matthew states: “And do I know my Sodomites? And what the heart goes bang up against if it loves one of them, especially if it’s a woman loving one of them. What do they find then, that this lover has committed the unpardonable error of not being able to exist—and they come down with a dummy in their arms. God’s last round, shadow-boxing, that the heart may be murdered and swept into that still quiet place where it can sit and say: ‘Once I was, now I can rest’” (Barnes 100). Invoking the nonexistence of the shadow lover’s presence, Matthew implies that Nora will never truly be able to reach Robin, who has been lost to the dream world. Nora’s queerness forces her, too, to inhabit this dream world—her frenzied pacing at home mirrors the cyclical movements of Robin walking the streets; her sleeping patterns are disrupted by thoughts of

Robin's arrival. Nora enters this dream world when she first envisions the ominous "double shadow" of "the body of another woman swim up into the statue's obscurity, with head hung down, that the added eyes might not augment the illumination; her arms about Robin's neck, her body pressed to Robin's, her legs slackened in the hang of the embrace" (Barnes 70).

The sight of this shadowy figure is a visible manifestation of the Freudian concept of the Other, a symbol also featured in Surrealist art and writing. The Other is the mystery of the unconscious that influences our conscious lives but eludes our perception and explanations, commonly understood to be the object of desire or the "dream lover." By subverting the heterosexual Other through portraying the inversions and subversions of lesbian desire, Barnes further complicates this image of the Other, which is both an object of desire and a mirror of the self. She suggests that the search for a soulmate is really a search for a twin self or a confirmation of one's identity through the double (Benstock 247). In *Nightwood*, Barnes subverts prominent sexual theories of the day, notably that homosexuality was an "inversion" of gender roles and attraction to one's own "twin" (Benstock 247). Such an idea was also explored in lesbian writing, notably in French writer Colette's study of same-sex desire, *The Pure and the Impure*, where the lesbian underworld is defined "less by its depravity than by its enforced secrecy, the need to play doubled roles—inside and outside the lesbian community" (Benstock 54). Matthew directly responds to this theory of inversion when he claims that finding self-identification in others is the answer to true love: "What is this love we have for the invert, boy or girl? It was they who were spoken of in every romance that we ever read... They are our answer to what our grandmothers were told love was, and what it never came to be; they are the living lie of our centuries. When a long lie comes up, sometimes it is a beauty; when it drops into dissolution, into drugs and drink, into disease and death, it has a singular and terrible attraction"

(Barnes 136-37). At the same time, however, the Other possesses this “singular and terrible attraction.” It offers a fantasy of unity and complete understanding, but at the same time it is nothing but a false mirror of the self, impossible to ever reach.

The figure of the Other recurs throughout *Nightwood*; firstly as Robin’s mentally disabled son Guido who is called “the shadow” of his father’s anxiety and tails him around the city, one who “eats a sleep that is not our sleep” and is “estranged” from everyday existence (Barnes 108, 121). Barnes positions Robin as Nora’s Other when she identifies the doubled nature of their relationship, unable to separate from each other without part of their own identities: “She stayed with Nora until the mid-winter. Two spirits were working in her, love and anonymity. Yet they were so ‘haunted’ of each other that separation was impossible” (60). Nora overtly views Robin as her “other self” and thinks that walking beside Robin she is “beside herself.” Robin’s divided identity, however, turns her into the shadowy Other, making it impossible for Nora to reach her or unite with her: “I tried to come between and save her, but I was like a shadow in her dream that could never reach her in time... she was like a new shadow walking perilously close to the outer curtain” (145). This doubled self of the lesbian lover is suppressed by society and forced to live in the night world of the unconscious mind (Benstock 257). Just as the night city functions as a depraved inverse of the daylight metropolis, in *Nightwood* the female Other is a negative, threatening presence. Unable to understand this presence, Nora tries to control Robin, but her efforts are futile. Her attempts to command and reform her lover, who she sees made in her own self-image, not only alienates her from Robin but leads her further into alienation from herself.

A tangible representation of the Other in *Nightwood* is the image of the doll, which symbolizes childhood innocence but also the death of self. The doll is a reflection of not only the female Other but of the death of Robin and Nora’s relationship, likely inspired by a real incident

where Barnes's lover Thelma Wood smashed a doll she had given Barnes in a fit of rage (Benstock 260). Having also been given a doll by Robin, Nora knows she has identified Jenny as Nora's new lover when she sees a doll on her bed: "We give death to a child when we give it a doll—it's the effigy and the shroud; when a woman gives it to a woman, it is the life they cannot have, it is their child, sacred and profane; so when I saw that other doll... What part of monstrosity am I that I am always crying at its side!" (Barnes 152). This image of a dead child mirrors Robin's disinterest toward her real child Guido, symbolizing her rejection of domesticity. Just as Felix catches Robin holding baby Guido upside down as if to drop him, Nora finds Robin holding the doll in an identical manner. The image of the dead child not only represents their inability to legitimize their union in the eyes of society through childbearing, but also the "self" that has been killed in Nora (Benstock 260). This image of the dead self mirrors Matthew's explanation of how the lover of the "invert" loves a dummy unable to reciprocate affection: "What do they find then, that this lover has committed the unpardonable error of not being able to exist—and they come down with a dummy in their arms" (Barnes 100). It can be compared to the image of the trapeze artist sewn into her costume, who is "unsexed" under the male gaze: "The stuff of the tights was no longer a covering, it was herself; the span of the tightly stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as unsexed as a doll. The needle that had made one the property of the child made the other the property of no man" (Barnes 13). To Matthew, the doll is the invert who represents the Othering of self, who mirrors the lover but is unable to reciprocate their affection: "The last doll, given to age, is the girl who should have been a boy, and the boy who should have been a girl!" (157). Nora and Robin's relationship is thereby represented as death—as mirrors of each other, they are doomed to failure: "Only the impossible lasts forever; with time, it is made accessible. Robin's love and mine was always impossible, and

loving each other, we no longer love. Yet we love each other like death” (Barnes 148). This “inverted” relationship is fated to end because Robin and Nora will never arrive at a point of convergence, as the nighttime wanderings that liberate Robin entrap Nora:

“She would come back to me after a night all over the city and lie down beside me and she would say, ‘I want to make everyone happy,’ and her mouth was drawn down. ‘I want everyone to be gay, gay. Only you,’ she said, holding me, ‘only you, you mustn’t be gay or happy, not like that, it’s not for you, only for everyone else in the world.’ She knew she was driving me insane with misery and fright; only,” she went on, “she couldn’t do anything because she was a long way off and waiting to begin. It’s for that reason she hates everyone near her. It’s why she falls into everything, like someone in a dream. It’s why she wants to be loved and left alone, all at the same time. She would kill the world to get at herself if the world were in the way, and it is in the way. A shadow was falling on her—mine—and it was driving her out of her wits.” She began to walk again. “I have been loved,” she said, “by something strange, and it has forgotten me” (Barnes 165).

Robin represents the paradox of the doubled self—she wants to be loved and left alone; she believes her lover cannot have happiness while she is satisfied. The image of Nora’s shadow falling on Robin both emphasizes their doubleness and Nora’s looming desire to control Robin, pushing her even further away. Their relationship is doomed in part because Nora represents the moral values of heteronormative culture and can only blame Robin’s behavior on herself, rather than a society that condemns women like them. Nora is doomed to suffer because she both loves and fears Robin; she romanticizes her own vision of her while simultaneously fearing the version of Robin who brazenly subverts heterosexual values. However, Nora also fears Robin because she boldly questions the moral and ethical assumptions Nora has learned to accept. Nora’s

repression prevents her from embracing the liberated night world of women's sexuality, unlike Robin, who "stands outside society's definitions, and that is her salvation; Nora Flood, society's representative in this novel, tries to keep Robin within society's reach—in her life, in her bed—and that is her damnation" (Benstock 255). Nora's attraction to Robin as her Other arises both out of self-love and self-discovery; she "becomes hopelessly fascinated by the depravity suppressed by the Puritan ethic" (Kannenstine 119). As Chisholm suggests, Nora recognizes herself in Robin; she is as fascinated by "Robin's depravity and its reflection of her own unadmitted desires as she is concerned with retaining their relationship itself" (183). Robin represents both the known and subconscious aspects of Nora's personality; she considers herself depraved because she is attracted to Robin's depravity: "She is myself. What am I to do?" (Barnes 127). In Robin, Nora recognizes the expression of her unconscious, repressed, more "primitive" self in the female Other: "A man is another person—a woman is yourself, caught as you turn in panic; on her mouth you kiss your own. If she is taken you cry that you have been robbed of yourself" (Barnes 143). But the discovery of herself in Robin does not reinforce her sense of lesbian identity; instead, Nora only becomes more alienated from herself and her lover.

To truly understand Robin, Nora decides she must psychically become her. Instead of engaging in a literal search for her lover, she begins to search for whatever Robin was seeking in the dark streets: "In the beginning, after Robin went away with Jenny to America, I searched for her in the ports. Not literally; in another way" (Barnes 166). Realizing that Robin has become "forbidden" because she had loved her without understanding her, Nora "must go against nature to find love" (Barnes 166). Nora becomes the wandering, dissolute *flâneur* who seeks Robin "in Marseilles, in Tangier, in Naples, to understand her, to do away with my terror. I said to myself, I will do what she has done, I will love what she has loved, then I will find her again. At first it

seemed that all I should have to do would be to become ‘debauched,’ to find the girls that she had loved; but I found that they were only little girls that she had forgotten. I haunted the cafés where Robin had lived her nightlife; I drank with the men, I danced with the women, but all I knew was that others had slept with my lover and my child” (Barnes 166). Denying her sense of self and attempting to imitate Robin only leads Nora further into self-alienation. Her *flânerie* forces her to deny her own identity, losing herself in the depraved nightlife and coming no closer to finding Robin. Nora’s search for her lover thus symbolizes her attempt to discover the depths of her own queer desire, but because she cannot depend upon Robin to mutually return her love, her transgression of subcultural urban space only renders her more alienated from not only her lover but the broader queer community.

Barnes’s characters inhabit the subterranean night world of Paris, a psychogeographic queer space that exists outside the boundaries of conventional society, yet this space does not liberate as much as it binds. The characters’ stigmatized national and sexual identities alienate them not only from the heteronormative community but from each other, representing the queer night world not as a place of solidarity but as a forbidding foreign city that oppresses its marginal characters. An autonomous lesbian *flâneur*, Robin is nonetheless forced to cycle continuously between the stability of her domestic relationship and the debauched Parisian nightlife, unable to belong in either of the two worlds. Nora becomes alienated not only from the queer night world her lover inhabits, precipitating the downfall of her relationship, but from her self-identity. In depicting the liminal boundaries of the night city, Barnes queers the conventions of urban modernist literature by invoking the marginalized diasporic voices of national exile and queer sexuality, suggesting that to be queer is to be in exile not only from oneself but from one’s country. In doing so, she approaches the category of the *flâneur* from a distinctly queer angle, a

figure able to transgress boundaries yet who is disoriented and alienated by the urban sphere. *Nightwood* is a realization of the subversive possibilities of high modernist literature, in which the city is neither realist nor fragmented but exists within a dislocated dreamscape. In portraying the reality of lesbian relationships through her bold, experimental form, Barnes illuminates the doubled forms of marginality women encountered in the urban space.

Conclusion

“I am extremely happy walking on the downs... I like to have space to spread my mind out in,” Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary on September 5, 1926, during her process of writing *To the Lighthouse* (*Diary 3* 132). For Woolf, as for Jean Rhys and Djuna Barnes, walking was a form of psychological processing that cultivated creative inspiration. The female narrators of these novels, however, complicate the seemingly liberating act of urban women’s streetwalking. Although exercising their freedom to walk alone embodies interwar women’s increasing emergence into the professional and political sphere, women’s freedom to traverse public space was often limited by the structural forces of not only patriarchy but nationalism, classism and homophobia. Contending with these compounded forms of marginalization reconfigures these characters as not confident *flâneuses* but marginal dwellers of the city streets, forced by necessity to occupy the often hostile or threatening public sphere and severely limited in their autonomous movements. This thesis examines the paradox of agency represented by urban women’s walking—it nuances the widespread critical belief that urban space was always a source of liberation for the modernist woman and examines how the prevailing social structures of patriarchy and nationalism replicated themselves not only in the domestic space but in the public sphere to limit and control women’s movements.

Critical analysis of female *flânerie* has undergone an evolving shift since the emergence of feminist literary theory in the 1970s. Although early critics such as Janet Wolff and Griselda Pollock argued against the existence of a female *flâneur* given that women were subject to the male gaze and did not enjoy the right to freely occupy public space, later theorists have challenged this view by expanding the traditional definition of the *flâneur*. Instead, critics such as Elizabeth Wilson and Elizabeth F. Evans have argued that modernist women’s writing such as

Virginia Woolf's "Street Haunting" provide compelling evidence for the existence of a literary *flâneuse*, reflecting women's increasing emergence into the public sphere and engagement in social and political life. Comparatively little attention has been paid, however, to the ways the space of the imperial city replicates restrictive patriarchal and nationalist structures. The prevailing image of the *flâneuse* continues to be a married upper-class white woman such as Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway who confidently strolls through her neighborhood, without recognizing the ways she is limited by her class and gendered roles. There is little critical analysis of how poor and working-class women, homeless women, immigrant and expatriate women, and queer women have been forced to navigate the public sphere, compounded forms of marginalization that exacerbated their experiences of alienation. Shedding light on the way diverse types of women inhabited urban space illuminates the histories of modernism's underrepresented voices and re-examines the imperial city as a hostile and alienating space.

Although Clarissa Dalloway's famous walk in *Mrs. Dalloway* has been much examined by critics, less so are the ways in which her route limits and constricts her movements. Analyzing the intertwined structural forces of patriarchy, class and nationalism within the text, I re-examine her walk not as a source of freedom but rather as an extension of her domestic duties. Comparing the dual forces of patriarchy and nationalism in both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Night and Day* offers a new way of looking at how women's walking was often directed by the topographical map of the imperial city, the presence of national monuments, and the movements of men. Although some male characters such as Peter Walsh and Ralph Denham are able to exert their agency under these structures, they serve to oppress and control the movements of the novels' female protagonists Clarissa, Elizabeth, Katharine and Mary, while other marginalized characters such as Septimus Smith also suffer from the spatiotemporally dislocating effects of the imperial city.

Considering Jean Rhys's work within the context of feminist and postcolonial theory also opens up further possibilities for examining how the forces of patriarchy, class and nationalism alienate her characters. Unmarried, expatriate and socially and financially disenfranchised, Rhys's protagonists perceive the urban sphere as a hostile and threatening space that exacerbates their manifold forms of marginalization. Centering these underrepresented voices of modernism, Rhys expands the image of a *flâneuse* from Woolf's confident, strolling city-dweller to the displaced migrants who inhabit the edges of the imperial city. Like Woolf, she adopts a fragmented stylistic approach in her depiction of a city of spatiotemporal memory that dislocates and disorients her protagonists, emphasizing their alienation. Djuna Barnes further fragments and defamiliarizes the landscape of the city in her portrait of a Surrealist queer underworld in *Nightwood*, foregrounding the silenced voices of modernity's queer citizens. Woolf, Rhys and Barnes all contended with gendered forms of oppression as women writers, but examining how the multiplicitous and intersecting national, class and sexual identities of their characters heightened their alienation in the public sphere may illuminate productive avenues for further research and critical analysis.

One promising avenue for further research could be urban modernist writing produced by poor and working-class women, non-Western women, and women of color. Although this thesis attempts to mine the significance of the multiplicitous forms of marginalization faced by women writers, the voices of working-class and non-white women are underrepresented in the modernist canon and often critically ignored. Not only would this research illuminate the individual voices and experiences of these disenfranchised groups, it would shed new light on how the image of the *flâneuse* has evolved and is continually being reinterpreted. Because lower-class and non-white women have been forced to traverse the public sphere out of necessity for centuries,

does this reality exempt them from the act of *flânerie*, or could a further exploration of their perspectives and experiences illustrate the role they have played in expanding and subverting the prevailing white, male, bourgeois archetype of the *flâneur*? Foregrounding the voices of non-Western women could also offer productive avenues to investigate how the stylistic conventions and thematic concerns of European modernism functioned outside of imperial cities such as London and Paris. Not only would it nuance the growing opposition to nationalist politics that emerged in modernist writing, it would illuminate how women navigated urban space within specific racial and cultural contexts. This research could further explore the role Septimus Smith's Italian wife Rezia plays in challenging our understanding of the *flâneuse*, examine Jean Rhys's complex treatment of Dominican racial and cultural identity, or theorize the racial challenges of navigating the urban sphere in modernist novels such as Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929), a classic of the Harlem Renaissance centering on the lives of Black women "passing" as white in 1920s New York and Chicago. This additional perspective of racial identity heightens their experience of the city as a disorientating and hostile place; Larsen's characters not only contend with gendered oppression but navigate both the "Black" and "white" social communities depending on the perception of their racial identity, raising intriguing questions about the way modernist women weaponized and controlled these fluid identities to gain agency in the public sphere. Overall, an exploration of the underrepresented racial and class identities of modernist women could facilitate new understandings of how modernity's marginalized subjects navigated the imperial city.

Although feminist criticism of Woolf, Rhys and Barnes has illuminated the significance of modernist women's emerging navigation of urban space, it often fails to recognize the imperial city as a structural agent of oppression, and theories of female *flânerie* have yet to

encompass the manifold national, sexual and class identities that exacerbated women's alienation within the public sphere. This thesis aims to expand upon earlier discourses of *flânerie* in order to complicate popular perceptions of the liberating act of streetwalking, arguing instead that modernist women writers' preoccupation with thematic concerns of alienation and displacement reflected the continued oppression and alienation they faced in the public sphere and influenced their adoption of the narrative techniques of stream-of-consciousness, fragmentation, defamiliarization and dissociation. A closer analysis of the way this marginalization was exacerbated for expatriate, lower-class and queer women will not detract from the agency of the *flâneuse*, but rather nuance our understanding of the challenges faced by "public women" and illuminate the role underrepresented voices played in contributing to the development of emblematic modernist narrative techniques and themes. Ultimately, this thesis aims to explore the critical role female writers played in shaping depictions of the imperial city by giving voice to central concerns of alienation and displacement at the heart of modernist literature.

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