READING THE BATHROOM

IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY WOMEN'S WRITING

by

MATILDA BLACKWELL

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English Literature
School of English, Drama and Creative Studies
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
June 2021

Abstract

In this thesis, I use the ubiquitous yet often overlooked space of the bathroom as a lens through which to explore the ambivalent social and cultural position of a range of women - from the aging, penniless spinster to the suburban housewife - in the early twentieth century. Enmeshed within a complex discourse of social and moral anxieties, bathrooms are bound up with questions of class, age, gender and sexuality, and, as such, are key sites of meaning and importance for women and women's writing. Offering valuable insight into the bathroom's own overlooked place in literature, this thesis generates new readings and rereadings of a myriad of narratives by and about women within the context of historically specific discussions of women's identity, access to public and private space, and their sense of belonging or existing in modernity.

Building on a growing body of research from the fields of material culture, social history and literary studies, I investigate the different ways that access to everyday bathroom spaces across the urban and domestic spheres played into women's lives. By examining several unique bathroom spaces - the cafe and restaurant lavatory, the hotel bathroom, the shared lodging-house bathroom, the middle-class family bathroom, and the therapeutic bathroom - this thesis demonstrates why, and the ways in which, a focus on the bathroom in the early twentieth century is of particular relevance and interest. This thesis forms a survey of how a plethora of key spaces within the city and the home - all broadly defined as bathroom spaces - are written into the literature of this period, and, by merging cultural histories and literary representations of specific bathroom spaces, offers fresh readings of women's experience of and place in modernity.

Contents

Introduction: A Monograph on Lavabos

In the lower cloakroom, there was always escape.[1]
Dorothy Richardson, *Deadlock*

A familiar lavabo, and luckily empty [...] here I am, sane and dry, with my place to hide in.[2]
Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*

Charting the life of an independent woman at the turn of the century, Dorothy Richardson's semi-autobiographical novel-sequence, *Pilgrimage*, is littered with lavatories. Across the thirteen-volume series, Miriam Henderson, Richardson's protagonist, documents the many bathroom spaces of her life as a New Woman: her shared lodging-house bathroom, the lavatory of her office in Wimpole Street, the school washrooms in Germany, the bathroom of her friend's seaside villa, her bedroom washstand. Punctuating the narrative, these spaces form an overlooked and often unremarkable backdrop to her everyday life.

In the late 1890s, Miriam visits the British Museum with her 'strange new friend' Michael Shatov, a character based on fellow lodger and long-time friend Benjamin Grad.[3] Filled with 'nervousness and excitement', though she will later go on to reject his marriage proposal after a brief romantic entanglement, she first makes her way to the ladies' cloakroom to gather her thoughts.[4] Miriam finds herself amongst the 'lunching ladies' in the upper cloakroom who are

> comfortably eating lunch from sandwich tins and talking, talking, talking, to the staff moving endlessly to and fro amongst the cages of hanging garments; answering unconsciously. The mysterious everlasting work of the lunching

[1] Dorothy Richardson, *Deadlock*, in *Pilgrimage* (London: Virago, 1979), III, pp. 9-230 (p. 56).
[2] Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 10.
[3] Gloria Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 134.
[4] Richardson, *Deadlock*, p. 49.

> ladies. [...] They seemed to have no sense of the place they were in, and yet were so extraordinarily at home there.[5]

Almost oblivious to the setting, the cloakroom is an unnoticed backdrop for the women's comfort and convenience. The 'lunching ladies' feel so 'at home' perhaps because it is such a ubiquitous space in their everyday lives, or perhaps because they are at ease in the safety of this female-only room.[6] Miriam, in contrast, 'was always on her guard' here, not wanting to be caught up in their 'unfailing flow of talk, the mysterious basis of agreement with other women, the same discussions of the weather, the cases in the newspaper, their way of doing this and that'.[7] While they are 'talking, talking, talking', she thinks:

> It was jolly [...] to wander through the out-branching hall to where the lame commissionaire held open the magic door, and fly along the passage and break in here, permitted, cold and grimy and ruffled from the street, and emerge washed and hatless and rested, to saunter down the corridor and see ahead, before becoming one of them, the dim various forms sitting in little circles of soft yellow light under the high mysterious dome. But in one unguarded moment in this room, all these women would turn into acquaintances.[8]

Through language of transition and ritual, Richardson imbues the cloakroom with a transformative potential. The lavatory attendant holds open the 'magic door' leading the way to a mysterious or hidden space, a counterpoint to the 'unknown privacies' of the men's lavatory 'at the other end of the corridor'.[9] Richardson's rolling sentences, made up of multiple clauses and peppered with prepositions, echo Miriam's movement down the passage. The verbs of movement transform, too, as Richardson syntactically slows down the pace to mimic Miriam's gradual relaxation. At first, Miriam flies down the passage, before emerging 'rested' to 'saunter' into the library. Her movements become slower, more controlled and relaxed after she has washed away her tensions

[5] Richardson, *Deadlock*, p. 55.
[6] Richardson, *Deadlock*, p. 55.
[7] Richardson, *Deadlock,* p. 55.
[8] Richardson, *Deadlock*, p. 55-56.
[9] Richardson, *Deadlock,* p. 55.

and anxieties, as well as 'the foggy grime and the dusty swelter of London'.[10] Despite the women's incessant chatter, the momentary solitude of the cloakroom allows her to gather her thoughts before becoming 'one of them', an anonymous part of the crowd milling about the museum, library and city streets.

Craving an 'escape', Miriam makes her way into the quieter lower cloakroom, or the lavatory proper.[11] In this room, shielded from the main library by multiple doors and the more respectable upper cloakroom, Miriam finds a moment of mental and physical privacy. Richardson writes:

> In the lower cloakroom, there was always escape; no sofas, no grouped forms. To-day it stood bare, its long row of basins unoccupied. She turned taps joyously; icy cold and steaming hot water rushing to cleanse her basin from its revealing relics. They were all the same, and all the soaps, save one she secured from a distant corner, sloppy. Surveying, she felt with irritated repugnance, the quality, slap-dash and unaware, of the interchange accompanying and matching the ablutions.[12]

Encroaching upon her kinaesthetic joy at the rush of the 'icy cold' and 'steaming hot' water, and on her moment of privacy and solitude, Miriam cannot ignore the 'revealing relics' of past users who have left unwanted traces of their own ablutions in the basin. Infusing the scene with subtle connotations of abject bodily fluids, waste and dirt, Richardson describes how Miriam is filled with 'irritated repugnance' as she struggles to find any soap not left 'sloppy' by countless wet hands. These bodily traces are a symbolic intrusion into Miriam's moment of 'tranquillity', filling her with literal (at the physical dirt) and metaphorical (at the mental disturbance from the 'lunching ladies' that these 'relics' symbolise) disgust.[13]

[10] Richardson, *Deadlock*, p. 56.
[11] Richardson, *Deadlock*, p. 56.
[12] Richardson, *Deadlock*, p. 56.
[13] Richardson, *Deadlock*, p. 57.

Inspired by the remnants of other's 'ablutions', Miriam's disgust is a feeling often attached to this dirty space.[14] Bathroom spaces, as sites of bodily cleansing and hygiene, are suffused with literal and metaphorical connotations of dirt and contagion that bring into question 'the boundaries of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable' at individual and societal levels.[15] Housing negotiations between what or who is considered dirty, bathrooms are sites in which anxieties around gender, class, aging, sexuality and belonging are located, policed and disciplined. We see this at work in Jean Rhys' novel *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), where Sasha Jansen - one of these socially dirty people - seeks anonymous, semi-private spaces in which to hide from the publicness of the city streets. For Sasha, Paris is mapped out in lavabos. In the opening scene, lavatories from her travels across Europe are imagined as minute microcosms of society:

> Lavabos… What about that monograph on lavabos - toilets - ladies?… A London lavabo in black and white marble, fifteen women in a queue, each clutching her penny, not one bold spirit daring to dash out of her turn pass the stern-faced attendant. That's what I call discipline… The lavabo in Florence and the very pretty fantastically dressed girl who rushed in, hugged and kissed the old dame tenderly and fed her with cakes out of a paper bag. The dancer-daughter?… That cosy little Paris lavabo, where the attendant peddled drugs - something to heal a wounded heart.[16]

Amplifying the subdued 'discipline' of the cold, marbled London lavatory, Rhys describes the obedient queue of women that wait, each 'clutching' their penny, under the 'stern-faced' attendant's watchful gaze. In contrast, the lavatories of Florence and Paris stand for freedom: freedom from British social norms and class boundaries; freedom of expression, emotion and intimacy; and freedom from the 'stern-faced

[14] Richardson, *Deadlock*, p. 56.
[15] Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner, eds., 'Introduction: The Private Life of Public Conveniences', in *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), pp. 1-32 (p. 3).
[16] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 10.

attendant', who is replaced here with a drug-peddling 'old dame' promising to heal her 'wounded heart'.

Traipsing around Paris, however, Sasha feels like a social outsider and evokes (or at least imagines she does) feelings of disgust in those around her. One such moment occurs in a cafe when, 'unable to stop crying', she flees to the lavatory:

> I stayed there, staring at myself in the glass. What do I want to cry about?… On the contrary, it's when I am quite sane like this, when I have had a couple of extra drinks and am quite sane, that I realize how lucky I am. Saved, rescued, fished-up, half-drowned, out of the deep, dark river, dry clothes, hair shampooed and set. Nobody would know I had ever been in it. Except, of course, that there always remains something. Yes, there always remains something… Never mind, here I am, sane and dry, with my place to hide in. What more do I want?… I'm a bit of an automaton, but sane, surely - dry, cold and sane. Now I have forgotten about dark streets, dark rivers, the pain, the struggle and the drowning… Mind you, I'm not talking about the struggle when you are strong and a good swimmer and there are willing and eager friends on the bank waiting to pull you out at the first sign of distress. I mean the real thing. You jump in with no willing and eager friends around, and when you sink you sink to the accompaniment of loud laughter.[17]

Finding herself unable to sustain her capital in the sexual marketplace as she ages, Sasha is metaphorically 'drowning' in a 'deep, dark river' of poverty and isolation. Her retreat to the lavatory here is not one of personal choice, unlike Miriam, but reflects her feelings of marginalisation in the urban sphere. And unlike Miriam's craving for silence away from the crowds of chatty women, and who in 'one unguarded moment in this room' might turn all of them into 'acquaintances', the lavatory is a space of discipline for Sasha, a space where she must remake her exterior social mask before returning to the public arena of the cafe.[18]

Reading these scenes together, we see that these semi-public bathroom spaces are experienced in very different ways by the two women, whose emotions, thoughts and behaviours within them are heavily influenced by social factors like class,

[17] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 10.
[18] Richardson, *Deadlock,* p. 56.

age and economic status. For Sasha, the aging, penniless, single woman, the Parisian lavabo poses an uneasy refuge: a space where she can remake her exterior whilst she attempts to control the socially unacceptable interior - and the tears - that broke through. For Miriam, the younger, more respectable, intellectual woman, the cloakroom of the British Museum offers her a real moment of privacy away from the bustle of crowds outside, but this solitude is encroached upon by the 'revealing relics' left in the basin.[19] Neither fully private nor fully public, both bathroom spaces ultimately fail to deliver the privacy and solitude that Miriam and Sasha seek.

These scenes also reveal the ambivalent nature of bathroom spaces. While they may be functionally similar - both containing toilets, basins, hot and cold water, and both plumbed into larger hygiene systems - the system of anxieties attached to them, and experienced by the women within them, differ. Both are semiotically difficult spaces, embedded within a unique and complex discourse of implicit social and moral anxieties. As such, these bathroom spaces are important literary settings not just in Rhys and Richardson's narratives, but play a key part, more widely, in a myriad of narratives by and about women. In fiction, bathrooms are spaces in which writers locate their discussions of women's identity, access to public and private space, and a sense of belonging or existing in modernity, and my thesis sits alongside recent feminist studies which focus on women's evolving identity and social position in the early twentieth century, as I explore later in this introduction.[20] Through this seemingly

[19] Richardson, *Deadlock,* p. 56.

[20] Ruth Emma Burton, 'Single Women, Space, and Narrative in Interwar Fiction by Women' (unpublished thesis, University of Leeds, 2015); Wendy Gan, *Women, Privacy and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century British Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Judy Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-50* (London: Macmillan, 1995); Terri Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses in Interwar Women's Literature: Alternative Domestic Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2017); Victoria Rosner, *The Architecture of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Emma Short, 'No Place Like Home: The Hotel in Modernist Women's Writing' (unpublished thesis, Newcastle University, 2011); Emma Zimmerman, 'Architexture: space, form, and the late modernist novel' (unpublished thesis, University of Nottingham, 2016).

inconsequential space, this thesis will examine how an array of women writers constructed, fictionalised and understood new and alternative identities, and how the bathroom became an important space in the city and the home for the exploration and formation of these - liberated, maturing, constrained or sexualised - selves. This thesis uses fictional bathroom spaces as a lens to think through the ambivalent social and cultural position of women at this time, as well as how the dominant ideologies of gender, class, age and sexuality built into the very walls of the modern bathroom control, police and demean them.[21]

The bathroom in the early years of the twentieth century was a highly complex and ambivalent space, yet it was one around which women's everyday lives were mapped. Because this ubiquitous, largely forgotten, and often unspoken space housed dirty actions and dirty objects, it was embedded in discussions of privacy, propriety and taboo. In her defining work on the subject, Barbara Penner suggests that the bathroom is the 'hinge between private and public realms, the place where bodies, technologies, domestic interiors and urban systems most intimately interact'.[22] Bathrooms, as Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner argue,

> permit private moments away from public surveillance; they provide a space for communication, solidarity, or resistance, especially among women; and they act as repositories of behaviours and fantasies that can destabilize norms or social categories.[23]

While they may provide the privacy needed for 'communication, solidarity and resistance', as Miriam observed in the communion of chatty women, many of the bathroom spaces that this thesis investigates also oscillate between their opposites,

[21] I use the general term 'bathroom spaces' for ease of representing all of the different bathroom spaces in my thesis. This term efficiently groups together several unique and historically specific spaces which will be explored in more depth in each chapter. What all of these bathroom spaces have in common, however, as I will set out in this introduction, is their semi-private spatiality and their importance in the everyday lives of women.

[22] Barbara Penner, *Bathroom* (London: Reaktion, 2013), p. 10.

[23] Gershenson and Penner, p. 10.

and this renders them highly gendered and class-specific spaces.[24] As a space where the body (often female) is exposed, demeaned and disciplined, bathrooms are always policed by the threat of heteropatriarchal control. This inherent ambiguity explains why bathrooms, spaces saturated in anxiety, act as important hinges that negotiate the boundaries between public and private, dirt and cleanliness, control and vulnerability.

Infused with connotations of transformation, contamination and pollution, bathrooms are also liminal spaces in which both mundane daily ablutions and ritual acts of grooming, cleansing and creating can take place.[25] In her work on threshold spaces, Terri Mullholland asserts that it is in these liminal spaces that 'transformation occurs, making them key sites for identity formation'.[26] These architectural interstices offered women new spaces of physical and mental privacy from the modern world. Public lavatories, as we will soon come to see, enabled women to be physically present in the city more than ever before, while increasing numbers of private domestic bathrooms became small sanctuaries in the family home. Thinking back to Richardson and Rhys' texts, however, we know that these liminal spaces are never truly private; with the threat of patriarchal control beating at the door, the bathroom's boundaries are under perpetual threat. By centring these liminal spaces, this thesis charts how women navigated public and private space at a time when the bathroom was emerging as an important space in the city and the home.

[24] Gershenson and Penner, p. 10.

[25] Stemming from the Latin word for threshold, *limen*, the term *liminal* arrived in the English vocabulary in the late nineteenth century as an early scientific term relating to the point beyond which a sensation becomes too faint to be experienced. In cultural anthropology, liminal relates to the transitional or intermediate state between culturally defined stages of a person's life, often marked by rituals or rites of passage. For more on liminality in relation to modernism and women writers specifically see: Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

[26] Terri Mullholland, 'Between Illusion and Reality, "Who's to Know": Threshold Spaces in the Interwar Novels of Jean Rhys', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 23, 4 (2012), 445-62 (p. 448).

Focusing specifically on women's experience of these everyday spaces, this thesis considers the unique way that women's access (or lack of access) to physical and mental privacy played into the construction of their sense of self at this time. Privacy is integral to an individual's understanding of themselves as a modern subject, yet historically women have had less access to private space than men.[27] In the late nineteenth century, Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote that 'such privacy as we do have in our homes is family privacy, an aggregate privacy; and this does not insure - indeed, it prevents - individual privacy'.[28] This move towards familial privacy can be traced through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as men increasingly sought refuge from the public sphere of work and the city, retreating 'into the private world of domesticity to drop his social masks and evade the pressures of social conformity'.[29] While privacy was 'standard practice for a man', as Wendy Gan argues, women had few spaces of privacy in the domestic sphere, despite historic associations of the house and home with women and femininity, and even fewer in the masculine metropolitan sphere.[30] So although a move towards familial privacy can certainly be traced 'through changes in domestic architecture and the rise of suburbia, the journey towards individual privacy and in particular women's right to solitude is less consistent'.[31]

Bathroom spaces are enmeshed in this narrative of privacy as, though they may appear to provide 'private moments away from public surveillance' and, indeed, many

[27] Wendy Gan, *Women, Privacy and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century British Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 3.
[28] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 258. See also: Gan, p. 5; Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 4.
[29] Gan, p. 4.
[30] Gan, p. 73.
[31] Gan, p. 6.

actually do temporarily, they are never truly private spaces.[32] Because of their liminality, as well as their inherent and insidious publicness, which will be explored further in each chapter, the bathroom's privacy is always relational, contingent, and often comes at a cost that many women cannot afford. Yet it is in these marginal or interstitial spaces that women like Miriam Henderson and Sasha Jansen are able to take a moment to 'process the upheavals of modernity'.[33] My thesis sits in line with Gan's argument that these types of spaces offered women moments to breathe within the modern urban and domestic environment, as well as, related to the bathroom more specifically, spaces for women to perform actions that could not be done publicly. At this time, women began seeking 'physical space to accompany the inner space of refuge', Gan notes, suggesting that:

> Given this increased consciousness of the importance of space in daily life and modernity, the critique of existing forms of privacy and the pursuit of privacy by women for themselves were to take on a more physically spatial dimension.[34]

The bathroom sits within a larger network of semi-private material spaces - the hotel room, the lodging house, the cafe - that offer women temporary moments of relief from the public sphere. In the bathroom, women are able to lock the door, touch up their make-up, find female company, or clean and comfort their bodies. These almost-private spaces allow women to safeguard some sense of autonomy, whilst also providing (albeit temporary) refuge from the demands of the home, employment or modern life.

Focusing on several unique bathroom spaces - the cafe and restaurant lavatory, the hotel bathroom, the shared lodging-house bathroom, the middle-class family bathroom, and the therapeutic bathroom - this thesis demonstrates why, and

[32] Gershenson and Penner, p. 10.
[33] Gan, p. 3.
[34] Gan, p. 68, 73.

the ways in which, attention to the bathroom in the early twentieth century is of particular relevance and interest. In my first chapter, I examine how the highly classed and gendered space of the cafe and restaurant lavatory acts as an important literary device for writers like Olivia Manning, Jean Rhys and Virginia Woolf to explore women's identity and sense of belonging in society. Their depictions of these bathroom spaces are sensitive to the intricate web of social anxieties surrounding ladies' lavatories at the time, whilst also understanding how these anxieties echo the experience of the aging, working-class woman as she navigates the city alone. The cafe and restaurant are enmeshed in the changing nature of women's identity as they reject or realign themselves with changing domestic roles, transitioning into new urban spaces outside of the family home. As my close readings of Olivia Manning's *The Doves of Venus* (1955), Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), and Virginia Woolf's short story 'The Watering Place' (1941) and its unpublished earlier draft 'The Ladies Lavatory' will show, these bathroom spaces are fruitful literary settings in which these writers locate their protagonist's negotiations with aging, self-image and identity, and, as such, reveal important hidden histories of women's everyday life in the city.

Moving from the cafe to the hotel in my second chapter, I continue to interrogate women's struggle to find a room of their own in the city. Here, the hotel 'room with bath' - an emblem of imprisonment and a space for female transgression - becomes a small, temporary space in which women can negotiate a sense of privacy, homeliness or shelter.[35] The bathroom scenes of Henry Green's *Party Going* (1939), Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) and Christina Stead's *The Beauties and Furies* (1936) present the hotel 'room with bath' as a space where women can explore their sexual

[35] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 29.

desires away from the moral constraints of the home or public demands of the city.[36] These writers use hotel bathroom spaces to implicate their protagonists in the performative economy of the hotel, examining the ways in which money and the male gaze controls and regulates the behaviour of the women who inhabit them, rendering them under constant surveillance as they attempt to live socially and sexually fulfilling lives outside of the institution of marriage.

In my third chapter, I use lodging-house bathroom spaces - the washstand and the shared bathroom - to facilitate new readings of older women's everyday lives.[37] As an intimate space suffused with social anxieties around moral and physical cleanliness, the lodging-house bathroom is a useful container in fiction for explorations of otherness, cleanliness and propriety - anxieties that also surround the aging, unmarried woman. Through a series of close readings of Storm Jameson's *A Day Off* (1933), Olivia Manning's *The Doves of Venus* (1955) and Virginia Woolf's *The Years* (1938), this chapter will consider the economic and social hardships that women face in a life outside the family home, by revealing how the lodging house's often overlooked bathroom spaces are useful literary settings for these writers to think through questions of aging, class and marginalisation. By bringing together these two dirty subjects - aging and the bathroom - this chapter shows how attention to these ubiquitous yet often forgotten spaces, characters and narratives facilitates fresh readings of the precarious position of unmarried, older women in the early twentieth century.

[36] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 29.

[37] John Benson, *Prime Time: A History of the Middle Aged in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 16; Kathleen Williams Renk, '"Blackberrying in the Sun"? Modernism and the Ageing Woman in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent*', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27, 3 (2016), 317-28 (p. 318).

In my fourth chapter, we move out of the city and into the suburban family homes of Dorothy Canfield Fisher's *The Home-Maker* (1924) and Radclyffe Hall's *The Unlit Lamp* (1924). For these writers, the middle-class family bathroom is not a space of privacy, but one invaded by children, husbands, servants, and the never-ending labour of cleaning and childcare. Both writers use the family bathroom as a device through which to explore the conflict that many women felt between the domestic roles expected of them at this time and their burgeoning sexual, social and economic freedom, using it to subvert expected domestic narratives. While these new, everyday spaces facilitated new ways of using and being in domestic space, with technologies like gas, plumbing and electricity improving quality of life across the social strata, for many women they also reinforced how their sense of self is moulded by the limited versions of femininity available to them. The writers in this chapter reveal how potentially liberating spaces like the family bathroom are often irrevocably tied to these gendered domestic roles and, for many women, come to stand for the confinement caused by the threat of an oppressive suburban domesticity.

My final chapter turns to the therapeutic bathroom spaces of asylums and spas. Refusing to fit neatly into urban or domestic categories, these are institutional spaces with domestic guises, housing those society has rejected. In three maddeningly overlooked texts - Emily Holmes Coleman's *The Shutter of Snow* (1930), Katherine Mansfield's 'Epilogue III: Bains Turcs' (1913) and Antonia White's *Beyond the Glass* (1954) - we see writers unsettle the traditional patriarchal control of hydropathic treatments, transforming the therapeutic bathroom into a space of personal resistance and female community. In their vivid and, at times, horrifying depictions of hydrotherapy, these writers destabilise heterosexual expectations of love and

sexuality, and construct, in their place, moments of queer desire and female intimacy facilitated by the female-only bathroom spaces.

Though many of the bathroom spaces in this thesis share common features, be that the toilets and bathtubs plumbed into wider hygiene systems, or the array of social anxieties that surround this dirty space, each chapter explores a unique bathroom space with its own specific cultural and material history. Each chapter delves further into the unique spatial boundaries of each bathroom space and the different women who use them, as well as their manifestations, connotations and effects in literature. In the next section, I will briefly investigate the history of these different bathroom spaces, before examining how they get taken up as examples of modern spaces in women's writing.

The Modern Bathroom

> He says he never saw anything like that bath-room, neither could he have imagined it. It was worth the whole adventure just to have seen it once. He could have spent hours in it, going round and looking at things. It was all white tiles, white porcelain, and silver fittings. There was a great porcelain bath in one corner, and a shower-bath in another, with white-silk mackintosh curtains all round it; and a recess all fitted up with sprays - rose sprays, and needle sprays that you could direct on to any part of you you chose. There was a couch where you could lie and be massaged; oh, and an immense linen cupboard let into the wall, with hot water-pipes running up and down it.[38]

Fleeing from the obsessive celebrity 'collector' Mrs Folyat-Raikes at an upper-class London dinner party, suburban draper's son turned 'celebrated' writer Watt Gunn finds himself hiding in the bathroom of his host's opulent Georgian townhouse.[39] Running through 'twisty corridors, and little staircases where you least expected them', Watt Gunn's 'escape' from Mrs Folyat-Raikes' 'feelers' - the 'long, wriggling, fibrous threads' that told him 'she was after him' - had led him to 'Mrs Abadam's boudoir', the 'most

[38] May Sinclair, 'The Collector', *The Century Magazine*, 87, 3 (January 1914), 321-30 (p. 327-38).
[39] Sinclair, p. 322.

secret, the most absolutely safe position, in the whole house, where, without incurring grave suspicion, he could lock himself in'.[40] In this 'impregnable' room, which May Sinclair constructs as a temple of 'great white peace and purity', Watt Gunn finally relaxes, knowing he is safe from his pursuer's advances.[41] When Mrs Abadam's maid arrives to run her evening bath, however, risking Watt Gunn's sanctuary, he is filled with an 'ungovernable impulse' to make use of the 'beautiful white porcelain bath' himself.[42] Though he later suggests this was to 'account for being there', he also admits that the 'rushing of the hot water covered him, and made him feel so safe' by washing 'those infernal feelers off his spine'.[43] After 'splashing' and soaking in the 'big bath, he tried the shower-bath, just to see what it was like', before donning Mr Abadam's dressing-gown and attempting to escape the party, unsuccessfully, undetected.[44] Luckily for him, his friends come to his rescue and he is escorted out 'down the back stairs, through the basement' disguised in the butler's 'covert-coat'.[45]

In this amusing short story, first published in 1914, May Sinclair reveals, through the unbelieving eyes of her working-class protagonist, the luxury of early twentieth-century upper-class bathrooms. Filled with silks, 'silver fittings' and swathes of 'white porcelain', and afforded the modern technologies of hot water, shower-baths and needle-sprays, the Abadams' bathroom, most likely one of many installed in their newly-renovated house, is representative of 'an era which excelled in the creation of beautiful bathrooms, an era in which *Vogue* declared that bathrooms looked more expensive than any other room in the house'.[46] For the past hundred years, Britain

[40] Sinclair, p. 327.
[41] Sinclair, p. 327, 328.
[42] Sinclair, p. 328,
[43] Sinclair, p. 328.
[44] Sinclair, p. 328.
[45] Sinclair, p. 330.
[46] Sinclair, p. 328; Adrian Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), p. 171.

had ‘led the world in sanitary technology and infrastructural innovations’, earning a ‘reputation for artistic and beautiful bathrooms, arranged like furnished rooms with chairs, carpets, beautifully decorated tiles and ceramic ware encased in fine woods’.[47] Writing in his famous essay ‘Plumbers’ (1898), Adolf Loos argued that the plumber was ‘the first artisan of the state’, where ‘every English washbowl with its faucet and casting is a sign of English progress’.[48] This was, indeed, the case Barbara Penner affirms in her comprehensive bathroom history, as although water-closets had been ‘a regular feature of aristocratic homes since the last decades of the eighteenth century’, they ‘were expensive items that required the installation of cisterns, tanks and pumps to supply a steady water supply’.[49] Over the course of the nineteenth century, this began to change with the installation of ‘water-carriage systems’ bringing ‘a reliable water supply’ to a greater number of houses.[50]

By the turn of the twentieth century, as plumbing and sewage systems developed across Britain, so did the domestic bathroom, gradually becoming available to larger sections of society and ‘bringing higher levels of cleanliness and privacy to those even lower down the social scale’.[51] Paralleling a rise in a consumer economy and an ideology of hygiene, domestic landscapes in Britain and America were permanently altered by these emerging spaces. By the twenties, many private households had a standardised, plumbed bathroom (though this was unlikely to reflect the opulence of the Abadams’), and although ‘the majority of social housing projects

[47] Penner, *Bathroom*, p. 83.
[48] Adolf Loos, ‘Plumbers’, in *Plumbing: Sounding Modern Architecture*, ed. by Nadir Lahiji and D. S. Friedman (New York: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 15-19 (p. 18).
[49] Penner, *Bathroom*, p. 51.
[50] Penner, *Bathroom*, p. 51, 52.
[51] Penner, *Bathroom*, p. 130.

still relied on communal bathing facilities, some began to introduce private indoor toilets and bathrooms'.[52] Indeed, in April 1925, Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary:

> I'm out to make £300 this summer by writing, and build a bath and hot water range at Rodmell. But hush, hush - my books tremble on the verge of coming out and my future is uncertain.[53]

The following spring, with money from her writing, a bath, sink and lavatory were installed at Monk's House, 'squeezed', according to Hermione Lee, 'on either side of the chimney breast in the little room above the kitchen'.[54] Highly dependent on class, geography and other social factors, domestic bathrooms were often architectural afterthoughts installed - or 'squeezed' - in small, incidental spaces, like the stairwell 'landing' of Leopold Bloom's terraced house, at a later date.[55]

Public lavatories, particularly those for women, were also often squeezed into the urban environment, built out of plain sight or underground to moderate their associations of dirt and disorder. Though public conveniences for men were a source of 'municipal pride', the provision of facilities for women 'remained a rather suspect innovation'.[56] Men's toilets were seen as necessary for their active lives in the city, but women were thought to be 'better able to exercise self-control' or at least 'too pure, angelic and modest to require public toilets'.[57] Because of these popular myths, respectable 'women and children were thought to be at particular risk from the immoral

[52] Penner, *Bathroom,* p. 126. For more see: David Inglis, *A Sociological History of Excretory Experience* (Michigan: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), p. 277.
[53] Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: Triad Grafton Books, 1978), p. 101.
[54] Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 425.
[55] Lee, *Virginia Woolf,* p. 425; James Joyce*, Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 65.
[56] Lee Jackson, *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight Against Filth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 165.
[57] Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, p. 174, 178.

influence of public lavatories', which were seen as a 'potential source of disease' and a 'threat to morals'.[58]

There were some supporters for facilities for women, however. In Britain, Joseph Bazalgette, designer of London's new sewage system, emphasised the need for ladies' lavatories to provide 'relief' in an 1849 letter on the 'Establishment of Public Conveniences Throughout the Metropolis'.[59] Similarly, James Stevenson, Medical Officer of Health for Paddington, wrote the 'Report on Necessity of Latrine Accommodation for Women in the Metropolis' in 1879. He argued that a lack of facilities for women caused 'mental and physical distress'.[60] Alongside these male advocates, the Ladies' Sanitary Association, founded in 1857, launched a 'Lavatories for Women' campaign. Whilst, in 1884, the Ladies' Lavatory Company opened its first establishment in Oxford Circus. Following decades of public health campaigning, after the first conveniences were installed by George Jennings at the Great Exhibition of 1851, by the end of the nineteenth century women were finally able to make use of newly constructed lavatories across London, even if, unlike the men's urinals, they had to pay for the privilege.[61]

In America, the public bathroom was shrouded in similar fears of physical and moral dirt and disorder. Erica R. Meiners and Therese Quinn highlight a history of 'bathroom anxiety' that can be traced back to the early twentieth century, an anxiety bound up in racial, economic and sexual prejudice.[62] They highlight the fact that in the

---

[58] Deborah Brunton, 'Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections: Public Conveniences and Private Interests in the Scottish City, 1830-1870', *Social History of Medicine*, 18, 10 (2005), 187-202 (p. 197-98).
[59] Brunton, p. 189. For more see: Joseph Bazalgette, *Letter of Mr J. W. Bazalgette on Establishment of Public Conveniences throughout the Metropolis* (London: Metropolitan Commission of Sewers, 1849).
[60] Brunton, p. 189. For more see: James Stevenson, *Report on the Necessity of Latrine Accommodation for Women in the Metropolis* (London, 1879).
[61] Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, p. 180.
[62] Erica R. Meiners and Therese Quinn, 'Toilet Trouble', *Windy City Times* (December 2015) <https://bit.ly/3kpLLmS> [accessed 26 February 2021].

1930s many 'African Americans used the Negro Motorist Green Book to locate welcoming accommodations in a segregated country, yet knowing they would be denied the use of public restrooms, often carried containers or portable toilets in their car trunks'.[63] Bathroom spaces continued to be a point of contention during the Civil Rights movement of the fifties and sixties, and Eileen Boris notes that the fear of catching diseases, particularly venereal diseases, in the newly desegregated facilities resulted in protests.[64] Indeed, Penner writes that it

> should not be forgotten that one of the first deaths of the American civil rights movement occurred when black activist Samuel Younge Jr tried to use a whites-only restroom at a filling station in Alabama: he was shot and killed by the attendant, who was subsequently cleared by an all-white jury.[65]

What this short history reveals, then, is that 'bathroom arrangements and divisions change according to the prevailing social structure', and this, Penner argues, 'underscores the reality that there is nothing "natural" about them': they are culturally and historically specific, and determined by the social anxieties and ideologies of the society in which they are located.[66] On both sides of the Atlantic, the bathroom has a documented history of associations with dirt, immorality and contamination - anxieties that will be teased out in my thesis as I explore the presence of these fears in early twentieth-century fictional bathrooms. In the rest of this introduction, I will show how I am positioning bathroom spaces within the wider culture of modern space and everyday life, and how these are being articulated in women's writing.

---

[63] Meiners and Quinn.

[64] Eileen Boris, '"You Wouldn't Want One of 'Em Dancing With Your Wife": Racialized Bodies on the Job in World War II', *American Quarterly,* 50, 1 (1998), 77-108 (p. 93-95). For more see: Penner, p. 19, 22; Gershenson and Penner, p. 7.

[65] Penner, *Bathroom,* p. 22. For more see: James Forman, *Sammy Younge, Jr: The First Black College Student to Die in the Black Liberation Movement* (New York: Open Hand Publishing, 1968).

[66] Penner, *Bathroom,* p. 18.

Modernity, Women's Writing and Modern Spaces

The 'history of the toilet', Ian Scott Todd argues, parallels the 'development of modernity and the modern city', and is a space in which society's 'intensely fraught' debates about the body, promiscuity or propriety can be located throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[67] In this thesis, I reflect on these debates in a range of early twentieth-century texts that cross the boundaries of experimental modernism, middlebrow and domestic fiction.[68] The myriad writers in this study often resist clear definitions - mirroring the space of the bathroom - as many sit at the uneasy boundary between genres, refusing to fit neatly into clear literary categories.

In her critical anthology *The Gender of Modernism*, Bonnie Kime Scott argues that modernism has been 'unconsciously gendered masculine'.[69] Alongside the publication of this anthology, one of the first of its kind to focus on previously neglected women writers, many feminist scholars have noted the exclusion of women from the modernist canon.[70] This thesis reads genres often coded feminine alongside

---

[67] Ian Scott Todd, 'Dirty Books: Modernism and the Toilet', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 58, 2 (Summer 2012), 191-213 (p. 192, 193).

[68] The categories of highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow are highly contested, and have been since the term middlebrow came into play in the early twentieth century. In her defining work on the topic, Nicola Humble argues that the terms are permeable categories and that 'many texts shifted their status from one to the other, or were uneasily trapped in the no-man's land in-between' (Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 26). In her essay on the subject, Virginia Woolf wrote: 'If any human being, man, woman, dog, cat, or half-crushed worm dares call me "middlebrow" I will take my pen and stab him, dead' (Virginia Woolf, 'Middlebrow', in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), pp. 152-60 (p. 160)). For more see: Sophie Blanch and Melissa Sullivan, eds., 'The Middlebrow - Within or Without Modernism', *Modernist Cultures* (Special Issue), 6, 1 (May 2011); Kristin Bluemel, ed., 'Introduction', in *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 1-18; Rosa Maria Bracco, *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War, 1919-1939* (Providence and Oxford: Berg, 1993), p. 21; Erica Brown, ed., 'Investigating the Middlebrow', *Working Papers on the Web* (Special Issue), 11, 2008 <https://bit.ly/2R3xVfA> [accessed 26 February 2021]; Lucy Gallagher, 'The Contemporary Middlebrow Novel: (Post)Feminism, Class and Domesticity' (unpublished thesis, Newcastle University, 2011).

[69] Bonnie Kime Scott, ed., 'Introduction', in *The Gender of Modernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 1-18 (p. 5).

[70] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Women Writer in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989); Gillian E. Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers, *Writing for their Lives: The Modernist Women, 1910-1940* (New Hampshire: Northeastern University Press, 1988); Maroula Joannou, "*Ladies, Please Don't Smash These Windows": Women's Writing, Feminist Consciousness and Social Change 1914-1938* (Oxford: Berg, 1995); Maroula

modernist texts to redress this gender imbalance, whilst also emphasising the importance of both middlebrow and modernist fiction in the study of women in the early twentieth century. My choice of writers and texts, many of whom, like Henry Green and Antonia White, could be described as marginal or tangential to major accounts of twentieth-century literature, just like the spaces my thesis focuses on, challenges the denigration of the middlebrow and genre fiction, pushing back on the boundaries of canonical modernism.[71]

Bathroom spaces repeatedly appear in the narratives of middlebrow or popular writers, with texts like Olivia Manning's *The Doves of Venus* and Christina Stead's *The Beauties and Furies* providing an important counterpoint to the infamy of James Joyce's modernist bathroom scenes. When read alongside the bathroom scenes of more "highbrow" or modernist writers a reciprocal relationship occurs: this juxtaposition offers fresh readings of canonical texts, elucidating new and alternative ways of reading work by Katherine Mansfield, Jean Rhys and Virginia Woolf. By reading across genres and literary styles, my thesis not only resituates the writing of those women who sit within or on the threshold of literary modernism but also reclaims the work of writers who have been forgotten or neglected almost entirely, as in my readings of Emily Holmes Coleman's radical modernist novel *The Shutter of Snow* and Dorothy Canfield Fisher's feminist polemic *The Home-Maker*, and attempts to redress the lack of critical attention given to their work. Through this repositioning, and by reconsidering previously overlooked aspects of key texts, my thesis reveals the

Joannou, ed., 'The Woman Writer in the 1930s', in *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 1-15; Bonnie Kime Scott, ed., *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

[71] Though several other male voices infiltrate this thesis, Henry Green is the only male writer whose work forms a part of my core texts. While this thesis focuses on women's writing and women's lived experience, Green's depiction of his female protagonist in the hotel bathroom forms an interesting counterpoint to Christina Stead and Jean Rhys' novels in my second chapter, and this warranted its inclusion.

ubiquitous nature of bathroom spaces across women's writing - from the modernist works of Dorothy Richardson and Emily Holmes Coleman to the realism of Olivia Manning and Antonia White - and, significantly, emphasises the physical and psychological importance of the bathroom as a space for women and women's identity in the early twentieth century.

Focusing solely on writing by or about women, my thesis concentrates on women's experience and identity through the bathroom spaces they encounter every day. My choice to focus exclusively on women's experience reflects the importance of the bathroom space for women. On a practical level, a lack of public toilets restricted women's access to the city because, as Erika Rappaport argues, 'either ladies didn't go out or ladies didn't "go"'.[72] Access to bathroom spaces revolutionised women's ability to exist in the public sphere, yet, as Gershenson and Penner point out, these spaces came with a struggle:

> Sanctioning the women's lavatory effectively sanctioned the female presence in the streets, thus violating middle-class decorum and ideals of women as static and domestic.[73]

Alongside this practical reading, bathroom spaces also held strong semiotic and symbolic associations for women, as spaces 'bound up with urbanization, the rise of sanitary reform, the privatization of bodily functions, and the gendered ideology of the separate spheres'.[74] The question of practical access, coupled with the intricate web of social and moral anxieties, posits bathroom spaces as significant sites for feminist analysis, loaded with what Patricia Cooper and Ruth Oldenziel identify as 'powerful

[72] Erika Rappaport, 'Either ladies didn't go out or ladies didn't "go"', in *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 79-85 (p. 79).
[73] Gershenson and Penner, p. 5.
[74] Gershenson and Penner, p. 5.

meanings that reinforce and sometimes resist cultural norms'.[75] The anxieties located in bathroom spaces position them as sites that both reaffirm and police sexual, social and economic difference, and this renders them key sites for gendered cultural analysis. The bathroom spaces in this thesis act as levelling devices, then, allowing me to effectively read across genre, class and geography, and push back against many of the elitist divisions that have often limited women and women's writing.[76]

My work on the bathroom focuses on its unstable and changing boundaries, as it is defined and redefined in early twentieth-century culture, and how ramifications of this uncertain definition play out in literature, aligning with Victoria Rosner who suggests that these liminal spaces 'compose a kind of grid of social relations that shifts and slips, often upending the individuals who traverse it'.[77] Griselda Pollock, too, hails 'marginal or interstitial spaces', like drawing-rooms, bedrooms and private gardens, as modernity's key spaces; because of their liminal boundaries, their porosity of private and public, and their ever-changing 'grid of social relations', these spaces become sites 'where the fields of the masculine and feminine intersect and structure sexuality within a classed order', inherently aligning them with women and women's experience of modernity.[78] This focus on slippery, often interstitial spaces confronts the more canonical spaces of modernity - the city and the street - and posits them as equal sites of meaning and importance. As such, my thesis sits alongside a growing number of

[75] Patricia Cooper and Ruth Oldenziel, 'Cherished Classifications: Bathrooms and the Construction of Gender/Race on the Pennsylvania Railroad During World War II', *Feminist Studies*, 25, 1 (Spring 1999), 7-41 (p. 8).

[76] While this thesis reads across Western geographies, predominantly focusing on British and American bathroom spaces with occasional travels to Europe, it does not include non-Western writers as this would require different bathroom cultural and material histories beyond its scope. An international survey of bathrooms, in line with Ian Scott Todd's thesis 'Bathroom Readings: Modernism and the Politics of Abjection' (2013), which included Indian writer Mulk Raj Anand, would be an interesting future project.

[77] Victoria Rosner, *The Architecture of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 2.

[78] Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity', in *Vision and Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 50-90 (p. 70); Rosner, p. 2.

scholars working on the twentieth century's overlooked spaces: Leon Betsworth on the cafe, Scott McCracken on the tearoom, Terri Mullholland on the lodging house, Barbara Penner on the kitchen, and Emma Short on the hotel.[79] By pushing back on the canonical spaces of modernity, as well as canonical writers, these alternative spaces are revealed as fruitful sites for reading women and women's writing.

This thesis is also situated within two key strands of studies of modernity: the urban and the domestic. The city has often been seen as the paradigmatic site of literary modernity.[80] Home to the ragpicker, the flâneur and the dandy, the city embodies all that is modern:

> Spatially, the city becomes the site for these changes, for the renouncing of the old and the embracing of the new. But while the city represents the cutting edge of capitalism, technology and ideas, and excites the senses with its spectacles and opportunities, it is also a place of anomie and alienation.[81]

Up until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, women were often denied access to the city and, as a result, women's urban experience was often excluded from the history or literature of this time. By the turn of the century, however, as Deborah Parsons suggests, women were 'achieving greater liberation as walkers and observers

[79] Leon Betsworth, 'The Café in Modernist Literature: Wyndham Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Jean Rhys' (unpublished thesis, University of East Anglia, 2012); Scott McCracken, 'Voyages by Teashop: An Urban Geography of Modernism', in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 86-98; Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*; Barbara Penner, 'The Flexible Heart of the Home', *Places* <https://bit.ly/3sGy1af> [accessed 2 March 2021]; Emma Short, 'No Place Like Home: The Hotel in Modernist Women's Writing (unpublished thesis, Newcastle University, 2011).

[80] Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), p. 4. For more on the importance of the city for modernism see: Scott McCracken, 'Imagining the Modernist City', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. by Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gąsiorek, Deborah Longworth and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 637-54; Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009); Morag Shiach, 'Modernism, the City and the "Domestic Interior"', *Home Cultures*, 2, 3 (2005), 251-67; Iain Boyd Whyte, *Modernism and the Spirit of the City* (London: Routledge, 2003). For an analysis of women's relationship to the city, see: Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2, 3 (1995), 37-46.

[81] Gan, p. 11.

in the public spaces of the city'.[82] My thesis focuses on the urban experience of a range of city-dwellers, from Henry Green's wealthy socialite found bathing 'among the wreaths of sweet steam' at a London train station hotel, to Virginia Woolf's anonymous lavatory attendant, whose 'memories' of a life in the Brighton restaurant's 'fluctuating water world' have 'never been written'.[83] By reading these seemingly disparate figures, urban bathroom spaces in cafes, hotels and lodging houses are revealed to be important sites of mental and physical refuge for women in the city. These urban interstices give women a temporary mental release from the modern metropolitan sphere, as well as a practical space for bodily comfort that grants them access to the city for longer periods of time. But, as we saw in the contrast between Miriam Henderson and Sasha Jansen's experience of the urban lavatory, public bathroom spaces are not singularly utopian locations. What will become clear is that these bathroom spaces never provide complete privacy. By their very definition they are spaces that straddle the public and private divide, and it is this liminality that renders them simultaneously liberating, dangerous, secure, policed or sheltered to different women at different times.

In her work on modern domestic spaces, Morag Shiach argues that our focus on the city as the key critical paradigm of modernity has led to the marginalisation of certain aspects of living and writing in the early twentieth century, namely that of the domestic interior.[84] The privileging of the flâneur more specifically, Shiach contends, 'has led to a concentration on particular relations to public space, and specifically to the urban street, as expressive of the innovative qualities of modernity'.[85] Whilst the

[82] Parsons, p. 5-6.
[83] Virginia Woolf (Heather Levy), 'Appendix A: "The Ladies Lavatory"', in *The Servants of Desire in Virginia Woolf's Shorter Fiction* (London: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 197-200 (p. 198, 199).
[84] Shiach, 'Modernism, the City and the Domestic Interior', p. 252.
[85] Shiach, 'Modernism, the City and the Domestic Interior', p. 253.

significance of the flâneur for the history of modernism is clear, Shiach, amongst others, argues that new critical work 'seems to be moving towards the articulation of domestic interiors as part of the landscape of the modernist city and also as a crucial imaginative and social resource for modernist cultural production'.[86] My thesis sits alongside feminist scholarship by Emily Cuming, Wendy Gan, Judy Giles, Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei which argues that, 'far from being a feminized zone or a separate sphere of seclusion, the domestic interior and the home are illuminating sites for understanding historical change and the conditions of modern life for women as well as men', and asserts the importance of reading both urban and domestic bathroom spaces.[87]

The domestic sphere, like the city, is an inherently modern concept that arose, according to philosopher and critical theorist Walter Benjamin, from the early nineteenth-century distinction between 'living space' and the 'space of work'.[88] In his exploration of domesticity in modern art and architecture, Christopher Reed reinforces its importance in our understanding of modernity, suggesting that 'if we isolate the values that comprise the notion of domesticity - separation from the workplace, privacy, comfort, focus on the family - we find that each has been identified by

[86] Shiach, 'Modernism, the City and the Domestic Interior', p. 255. For recent discussions of the importance of domestic interior in early twentieth-century literature see: Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, *Domestic Modernism, the Interwar Novel and E. H. Young* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Elisabeth Bronfen, *Dorothy Richardson's Art of Memory: Space, Identity, Text* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Gan; Christopher Reed, 'Introduction', in *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), pp. 7-17; Christopher Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Rosner.

[87] Emily Cuming, 'Boarding and Lodging Houses: At Home with Strangers', in *Housing, Class and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 73-122 (p. 12). For more see: Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, eds., 'Introduction: Living with Strangers', in *Living with Strangers: Bedsits and Boarding Houses in Modern English Life, Literature and Film* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), pp. 1-24; Gan; Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*.

[88] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1973), p. 167.

historians as a defining feature of the modern age'.[89] Just as modern conceptions of the city challenged 'society's hierarchies and institutions', the 'ambiguous and polyvalent concept' of the domestic sphere destabilised the 'already uncertain borders' of the 'private and public spheres to encompass non-traditional ideas of home such as scientific laboratories, prison cells, the family car, or the heterotopic "other" spaces of gardens, boarding schools and rest homes'.[90] As my thesis will reveal, the domestic bathroom is one of these important 'non-traditional' spaces that can challenge or destabilise social hierarchies, divisions and expectations.[91]

But, as my thesis will also reveal, though domestic bathroom spaces are often seen as private sanctuaries, as we will see in Enid Bagnold's *The Squire* (1938), they do not 'invariably extend autonomy to those who dwell within its doors'.[92] The privacy offered by domestic bathroom spaces is highly mutable, dependent on factors such as class, gender, age or appearance. Implicated in these social categories, the bathroom becomes a useful lens through which to analyse the ambivalent ramifications of these 'uncertain borders' for women in the domestic realm.[93] By giving detailed attention to both domestic and urban bathroom spaces, then, this thesis contributes to readings of women's experience of and place in modernity. This thesis synthesises two key fields of modernist studies - modern urban and domestic space with the importance of the everyday - by focusing on neglected spaces at the heart of these modern spaces: the everyday bathroom spaces of the cafe, hotel, lodging house, suburban family home and therapeutic institution. More specifically, as the next section of this introduction will explore, my thesis emphasises the importance of focusing on the everyday

[89] Reed, 'Introduction', p. 7.
[90] Briganti and Mezei, *Domestic Modernism*, p. 19.
[91] Briganti and Mezei, *Domestic Modernism*, p. 19.
[92] Rosner, p. 5.
[93] Briganti and Mezei, *Domestic Modernism*, p. 19.

woman's everyday experience of everyday life in the early twentieth century, a specifically gendered historical narrative that, much like the bathroom itself, has often been overlooked.

The Importance of the Everyday

In her early novel *The Voyage Out* (1915), which follows twenty-four-year-old Rachel Vinrace as she embarks on a trip to South America, Virginia Woolf explores the idea of the everyday, particularly as it relates to the lives of women represented in literature. On this journey, Rachel meets Terence Hewett, an aspiring writer, the man with whom she will fall in love, and, in her eyes, a possible escape from the 'rigid bars' of her middle-class life.[94] During one of their discussions, Terence mulls over his inability to comprehend the everyday life of women:

> "I've often walked along the streets where people live all in a row, and one house is exactly like another house, and wondered what on earth women were doing inside," he said. "Just consider: it's the beginning of the twentieth century, and until a few years ago no woman had ever come out by herself and said things at all. There it was going on in the background, for all those thousands of years, this curious silent unrepresented life."[95]

Terence acknowledges that men, of course, have always written about women, 'abusing them, or jeering at them, or worshipping them; but it's never come from women themselves'.[96] Terence's imagination draws a blank when it comes to the real 'lives of women of forty, of unmarried women, of working women, of women who keep shops and bring up children'.[97] This conversation causes Rachel to meditate on her middle-class 'past life' before her journey abroad, dwelling on the 'dingy' and 'dull' family home that had contained her life between the 'four rigid bars' of breakfast, lunch,

[94] Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 222.
[95] Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, p. 226.
[96] Woolf, *The Voyage Out,* p. 225.
[97] Woolf, *The Voyage Out,* p. 226.

tea and dinner.[98] Terence is fascinated by these everyday, mundane details, which are rooted in Rachel's mind in the 'dumb waiter' and the 'pot of ferns' that inhabit her family's drawing-room, and which are so different from the markers of his own life.[99] The everyday space of the bathroom is an effective lens through which to explore the aspects of women's lives that Terence declares to have gone 'unrepresented', then, and the 'terrors and agonies' of what it is like to be a woman, as Rachel categorises all of the very ordinary 'things like grains of sand falling, falling through innumerable days, making an atmosphere and building up a solid mass, a background'.[100]

Women's sense of identity, privacy, independence and belonging are tied to everyday spaces in the material world, like the family home Rachel Vinrace has left behind. This thesis reinforces the importance of capturing the 'infinitely obscure lives' of women that 'remain to be recorded', as Woolf would later write in her feminist polemic *A Room of One's Own* (1929), by focusing on the 'accumulation of unrecorded life' of women across the lower and middle-classes:

> whether from women on the street corners with their arms akimbo, and the rings embedded in their fat swollen fingers, talking with a gesticulation like the swing of Shakespeare's words; or from the violet-sellers and match-sellers and old crones stationed in doorways; or from drifting girls whose faces, like waves in sun and cloud, signal the coming of men and women and the flickering of shop windows.[101]

As Woolf's essay alludes to here, the early twentieth century saw a new focus on the idea of the everyday and an interest how it could be represented in literature. In her work on daily time and everyday life, Bryony Randall argues that literature's renewed interest in the everyday was a result of 'rapidly evolving technologies' that had redefined society's experience of daily time, for example, lighting and travel, as well

[98] Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, p. 222, 223.
[99] Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, p. 224.
[100] Woolf, *The Voyage Out,* p. 227.
[101] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, in *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. by Michèle Barrett (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), pp. 3-104 (p. 81).

as forces of 'social modernisation', a term she takes from Michael Levenson, such as the 'First World War, the rise of the women's movement, and the development of psychology'.[102] In *Everyday Stories,* Rachel Bowlby takes this point further, stressing the difference between the ways that early twentieth-century and late nineteenth-century writers explored everydayness in their work, citing a new interest in a more bodily everyday that followed the publication of James Joyce's notoriously fleshy *Ulysses*.[103] As Michael Bell argues, this 'question of living is crucial' during this period because writers were so 'often concerned with the question of how to live within a new context of thought, or a new worldview'.[104] And, because writers were interested in capturing a more material, bodily experience, twentieth-century depictions of the everyday are highly gendered and dependent on social factors such as class, age and sexuality.[105]

Bathroom spaces are central to our lives, whether or not we even notice their importance in our daily routines today. In the first decades of the twentieth century, women were often only the first or second generation to have access to new types of bathroom spaces that went beyond the rudimentary bathtub in front of the kitchen fire. For the first time, bathroom spaces, like the indoor, fully-plumbed family bathroom or the cheaply available cafe lavatory, were accessible to women across the social strata,

[102] Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 6, 1-3. For more on the everyday see: Rachel Bowlby, *Everyday Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Michael Levenson, *The Humanities and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Scott McCracken, 'Introduction: Modernism and the Everyday', *Modernist Cultures*, 2, 1 (May 2006), 1-5; Leena Kore Schroder, *Modernism and the Idea of Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[103] Bowlby, *Everyday Stories*, p. 76.

[104] Michael Bell, 'The Metaphysics of Modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. by Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 9-32 (p. 10). For more see: Sara Blair, 'Modernism and the Politics of Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. by Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 157-73 (p. 164).

[105] Rachel Bowlby focuses on Woolf's gendered interest in the everyday (Bowlby, *Everyday Stories*, p. 77). See also: Bryony Randall, p. 5-6.

and, as such, played a central role in the organisation of their everyday lives. The bathroom, then, is an ideal device through which to expand our thinking about the time, shedding light on often mundane or quotidian, yet nonetheless important, elements of women's 'infinitely obscure lives', as Woolf puts it.[106] As a ubiquitous yet often overlooked space, the bathroom reveals key issues that plagued the everyday life of women in the twentieth century: the conflict between their public and private selves; the discord between the socially prescribed and often limited domestic roles and their burgeoning social, economic and sexual independence; and the struggle to craft a sense of home, homeliness or belonging as a marginalised individual.

The bathroom, as an inherently ambivalent, liminal space, reflects the position of women like Rachel Vinrace, dreaming of a yet unrealised autonomy in Woolf's novel *The Voyage Out*, who often found themselves caught between opposing or contradictory identities. Many scholars have noted the conflict surrounding women's identity and place in society in the first few decades of the twentieth century: women were caught in an ambivalent and liminal position between their emerging freedom and the 'dominant ideology' that aligned femininity with the often limiting home, family and domestic sphere.[107] In her important work on early twentieth-century women writers, Maroula Joannou notes the prevalent 'struggle within the self' that played out both on and off the page.[108] Joannou writes that much of women's writing at this time was 'concerned with the expression of cultured and gendered identities in ways

[106] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, p. 81.
[107] Terri Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House: Female Transient Space in the 1930s (unpublished thesis, University of Oxford, 2011), p. 5. Martha Vicinus outlines the nineteenth-century evolution of the separate spheres and women's place within them (Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1994)). Maroula Joannou and Terri Mullholland build on Vicinus' work to bring this discussion into the twentieth century. For more on this see: Maroula Joannou, *Women Writers of the Thirties: Gender, Politics, History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1970-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1984); Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).
[108] Joannou, *Ladies, Please Don't Smash,* p. 191.

appropriate to the new social conditions in which women found themselves'.[109] In her recent thesis on women and boarding houses, Terri Mullholland builds on Joannou's work to argue that, because of the 'newly created opportunities of employment in the cities' as a result of World War I, many women were able to

> explore a greater number of identities that had to be negotiated through the conflicting social expectations and definitions of femininity that shared an uneasy coexistence in the period.[110]

After World War I, however, pre-war traditional roles were 'reasserted and often given the force of law'.[111] Women were 'actively encouraged back to a domestic role', Mullholland argues, noting that

> The Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act of 1918 returned jobs to men and further legislation, such as expanded marriage bars, restricted women's employment.[112]

This tension has been explored by a number of scholars, in particular by Jane Lewis in her study of women in England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, who notes that the 'socioeconomic changes which might logically have been expected to result in the blurring of sexual divisions were often balanced by attitudes and beliefs which served to reinforce those divisions'.[113] Women's experience of modernity, then, reflects

> a lag between the ostensibly expanded public roles of women - their greater access to education, their right to vote, their greater opportunities for employment - and public acceptance of such expanded roles for women.[114]

Mullholland goes so far as to suggest that the twentieth century was 'defined' by this conflict, arguing that:

---

[109] Joannou, *Ladies, Please Don't Smash*, p. 191.
[110] Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House', p. 4, 5.
[111] Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zinsser, *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present* (New York: Harper, 1988), p. 207.
[112] Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House', p. 4-5.
[113] Lewis, *Women in England*, p. xi.
[114] Stella Dean, 'Emily Hilda Young's *Miss Mole*: Female Modernity and the Insufficiencies of the Domestic Novel', *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 30, 3 (2001), 351-68 (p. 355).

> Life for women at the time has been retrospectively defined by its contradictions; the increasing independence of women and greater opportunities outside the home contrasted with a dominant ideology, transmitted through the press and advertising, that placed increased importance on domesticity, the idea of "home" and women's place within the familial structure.[115]

Women writers, including Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Christina Stead, Virginia Woolf and many of the others that this thesis explores, use bathroom spaces to think through women's ambivalent social, economic and sexual position, situating important discussions of identity or belonging within its walls. As such, the bathroom is a key space for us as scholars to include in our understanding of the 'contradictions' that 'defined' women's everyday lives.[116]

Perhaps the most famous, or infamous, example of this use of everyday space occurs in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which he describes his protagonist using the lavatory:

> He kicked open the crazy door of the jakes. Better be careful not to get these trousers dirty for the funeral. He went in, bowing his head under the low lintel. Leaving the door ajar, amid the stench of mouldy limewash and stale cobwebs he undid his braces, before sitting down he peered through the chink up at the nextdoor window. The king was in his countinghouse. Nobody.[117]

Considered one of the most important works of modernist literature, Joyce's narrative charts the everyday life of a handful of Dubliners in June 1904, paving the way, as many scholars have argued, for new ways of capturing the quotidian.[118] In this scene, we follow Leopold Bloom, the novel's Everyman protagonist, into his outdoor lavatory - the 'jakes' - for his morning ritual:

> Midway, his last resistance yielding, he allowed his bowels to ease themselves quietly as he read, reading still patiently that slight constipation of yesterday quite gone. Hope it's not too big to bring on piles again. No, just right.[119]

---

[115] Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House', p. 5.
[116] Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House', p. 5.
[117] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 66.
[118] Bowlby, *Everyday Stories,* p. 77.
[119] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 66.

We watch on aghast as, for the first time in modern literature, we see a man defecate. No detail is spared as Leopold Bloom sits 'calm above his own rising smell', contemplating the inner-workings of his bowels and reading an article in the *Tit-Bits* magazine which he will later use to wipe himself clean.[120]

That one of literary modernism's most famous scenes occurs in such a mundane space is ironic, and, in playing with the boundaries of acceptability, Joyce elevates the everyday to the epic. In her reading of this toilet scene, Bowlby describes this process of imbuing the ordinary and the mundane with new significance by paradoxically revealing the previously unrealised absence of this everyday space and everyday act from literature:

> This emptying event, quintessentially everyday, is a first in literature. In reality, it generally goes without saying, or thinking, let alone writing, whether it occurs in Bloom's back yard or indeed anywhere, any time, in most of history. But set down as a subject of story on the page and as part of a written day, it takes on a new significance. This one man sitting on the toilet on a June day in 1904 exposes the absence - and so, it then seems, the omission - of any such activity in all the stories written before, even those that deal with regular aspects of daily life.[121]

Bowlby goes on to argue that, in writing this scene and, indeed, *Ulysses* more widely, Joyce began to 'change the norms for what would subsequently count as representations of ordinary life'.[122] By writing this toilet scene into his modernist epic, and, in turn, rendering previously unexplored aspects of the everyday epic in their own right, Joyce paved the way for other writers to do the same. Writers could begin to use their own writing to, as Bowlby suggests, 'challenge or endorse the conventions for what should or could appear in literary words'.[123] When writers like Radclyffe Hall, Olivia Manning and Katherine Mansfield choose to locate their exploration of women's

[120] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 66.
[121] Bowlby, *Everyday Stories,* p. 76.
[122] Bowlby, *Everyday Stories,* p. 76.
[123] Bowlby, *Everyday Stories,* p. 77.

identity and lived experience within the bathroom spaces around which their lives, even unconsciously, are mapped, they reveal, like Joyce, the epic of women's everyday life. The mundane space of the bathroom acts as a useful lens, then, refocusing our attention onto writers, texts, spaces and lived experiences that challenged the conventions of what could or should be portrayed in literature in new or transgressive ways yet were, unlike Joyce, often overlooked. In the final section of this introduction, I will consider the bathroom's dirty associations, reified by Joyce's scatological text, to emphasise the bodily aspects of many of my readings and to situate my thesis within the emerging field of toilet studies.

Dirty Spaces and Dirty Bodies

Our experience of everyday life is inextricably tied to the physical - our bodily needs and processes - and the bathroom, as the space where our sense of social identity confronts this physical reality, is the locus of this intersection. In the early twentieth century, the bathroom was perhaps the only space, particularly in everyday life, where a woman could confront her naked body behind the privacy of a locked door. And while the houses a woman inhabits might change, the domestic bathroom, with its unchanging toilet, bathtub and basin as constant features, would look relatively similar, save only for the level of luxury it provides, proving to be a surprisingly consistent space throughout a woman's lifetime. The bathroom and, in particular, the bathroom mirror witness the physical changes that are marked on a woman's body as she ages or progresses into or out of poverty, poor health or other social changes. As such, it becomes a space where the bodily, physical and corporeal intersect with the mental, emotional and social, revealing both women's changing relationship to her body and her identity throughout her lifetime.

In her exploration of the everyday, Bowlby reinforces this point, highlighting the fact that everyday processes, like using the bathroom, are often overlooked in both literature and literary criticism in favour of more socially important or acceptable events. Bowlby makes a comparison between the ways in which ingesting and excreting are represented in fiction and, indeed, marked by us in society more widely, noting that:

> The consumption of food and drink, which is subject to all manner of social or familial or personal customization, is also a matter of everyday physiological events: of processes of ingesting, digesting, and excretion. Because it is bound up with special events and regular social occasions, food naturally figures, if only as a backdrop, in stories of every kind. But excretion - just as much a natural and repeated event of every day - is generally unmarked, even though it too may be ritualized as part of a daily routine.[124]

By writing these 'natural and repeated' actions into their fiction, as in the case of Joyce, writers 'give these previously unregarded things a new value and interest'; bringing overlooked and 'unregarded' everyday actions, spaces and writers - like Emily Holmes Coleman, Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Antonia White - into academic criticism, my thesis reveals new aspects of early twentieth-century women's writing and lived experience.[125] Building on Bowlby's argument about the physicality of the everyday and the idea of privileging certain socially acceptable spaces and actions, this section explores the social significance of the body and its actions in the bathroom, considering how the bathroom is aligned with the more unmentionable aspects and actions of our everyday lives.

The body is, as Elizabeth Shove argues, 'a reliably constant source of pollution', and the bathroom is the space where we go to clean up, control or dispose of these bodily messes.[126] It is a space inextricably linked to bodily waste, which is seen as a

[124] Bowlby, *Everyday Stories,* p. 76.
[125] Bowlby, *Everyday Stories,* p. 2.
[126] Elizabeth Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), p. 148.

contaminating and uncontrollable bodily substance that threatens the idea of the self as a powerful entity in control of its corporeality. Julia Kristeva considers this idea in her influential work *Powers of Horror*, in which she states that 'excremental abjection' is the 'most striking example of the interference of the organic with the social'.[127] Excrement, urine and other bodily substances are at once part of the body, coming from within, and yet remain distinctly separate. The socially taboo actions that occur in the bathroom reveal the boundaries of the self, then, and force us to confront our own inherently dirty bodies. This collision of nature and culture occurs in the bathroom, as a space designed by society for the control and management of natural bodily waste.

In the bathroom, the boundaries between the self as a physical body and the self as a social subject are blurred, made indistinct by the culturally constructed taboos that envelop both the bathroom and the dirty body. In her work on taboo, Mary Douglas argues that the body is a key site for the exploration of the social taboos around dirt and the body:

> The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries that are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures.[128]

Using Douglas' argument to draw together dirt, the body and the bathroom, Remo Gramigna conceptualises the bathroom as a 'boundary' place.[129] In a passage that aligns with my earlier discussion of the bathroom as a liminal space, Gramigna contends that:

> A boundless world is unimaginable. Boundaries delimit, demarcate, contain and mediate. In so far as markers of semiotic differentiation, boundaries are at the

[127] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 108, 75.
[128] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 142.
[129] Remo Gramigna, 'Toilet Cultures', *Things in Culture, Culture in Things*, ed. by Anu Kannike and Patrick Laviolette (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2013), pp. 256-79 (p. 267).

> heart of each culture as well as of each existence [...] A culture creates its own boundaries in order to differentiate identity and alterity, the inner from the outer space, life from death, the sacred from the profane, black from white, purity from dirt, text from extra-text, culture from non-culture.[130]

Gramigna argues that dirt refuses social systems of classification; as a matter out of place, dirt becomes an affront to the social system. Dirt, as a form of disorder, is characterised by 'ambiguity and in-betweenness'.[131] Symbolically, it is 'anything that threatens established cultural categories, such as male and female, human and animal, public and private'.[132] Indeed, Ruth Barcan argues that any 'people or objects' that 'threaten the purity of categories can function like cultural pollutants to be expelled or purified'.[133] Society's obsession with dirt and cleanliness, then, is inherently bound up with the idea of symbolic pollution: dirty objects, dirty people, dirty actions.

Bathrooms are sites specifically designed to control the spread of dirt, and, as Barcan argues, they 'aim to keep at bay not only literal contamination but the *cultural* contagion for which literal dirt so often serves as a metaphor'.[134] Developing this point further, Barcan states that traditionally 'contagion is a key mechanism by which moral values and social rules are held in place'.[135] In the early twentieth century, as is still often the case today, bathroom spaces were loaded with ambiguous associations that rendered them at times contagious, contaminating or socially and morally repugnant spaces. Designed to stop the spread of both literal and metaphorical contagion, bathrooms are key sites through which to explore what society considers dirt to be, as well as the boundaries of what is physically and socially dirty.

---

[130] Gramigna, p. 267.
[131] Gramigna, p. 270.
[132] Ruth Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces: Communication and Contamination in Men's Public Toilets', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 6 (June 2005), 7-23 (p. 9).
[133] Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces: Communication and Contamination', p. 10.
[134] Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces: Communication and Contamination', p. 8.
[135] Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces: Communication and Contamination', p. 8.

Building on this positioning of the bathroom as a dirty space, my thesis is situated within the field of toilet studies more widely, which straddles the fields of material culture, social history and literary studies. There has been a surge in interest surrounding the bathroom in cultural and social studies in recent years, and this thesis draws on recent multidisciplinary research on gender, space, and how women's bodies interact with these categories, offering new perspectives on women's literature in the early twentieth century. Prior to the twenty-first century, there were relatively few impactful studies of bathroom spaces, with the exception of two pioneering twentieth-century works.[136] The first is Siegfried Giedion's *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948) which examines the effects of mechanisation and technology on everyday life. The bathroom in Giedion's study sits alongside disparate innovations such as the slaughterhouse, assembly lines, the Yale lock, tractors, ovens, and furniture design. In his section on 'The Mechanization of the Bath', Giedion traces its development from the ancient world to present day, giving particular attention to the ideas of regeneration associated with bathing in many cultures - a key idea in my final chapter.[137] Almost two decades later came Alexander Kira's *The Bathroom* (1966) which examines the design history of arguably the 'most important private place in the house'.[138] Kira was concerned with the bathroom's functionality and attempted to rethink bathroom design in line with more ergonomic and economic principles.

[136] There are a range of books focusing on specific aspects of bathroom spaces, particularly the toilet itself, written from the 1960s onwards. These were often published by small, independent publishers and had little impact on wider research by social, material and cultural historians until the recent surge in interest in the twenty-first century. For example: Francis Celoria, *Water-Closets: Past, Present and Future* (Stoke-on-Trent: Gladstone Pottery Museum, 1981); Julie L. Horan, *The Porcelain God: A Social History of the Toilet* (New Jersey: Carol, 1996); Roy Palmer, *The Water-Closet: A New History* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973); Lawrence Wright, *Clean and Decent: The Fascinating History of the Bathroom and Water-Closet* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960).

[137] Siegfried Giedion, 'The Mechanization of the Bath', in *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (London: Norton, 1969), pp. 628-713.

[138] Alexander Kira, *The Bathroom* (London: Viking Press, 1976), blurb.

More recently, Barbara Penner's monograph *Bathroom* (2013) chronicles the bathroom's evolution in the Western world to consider how and why it became a symbol of key modern values: cleanliness, order and progress. Alongside this study, Penner edited *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender* (2009) with Olga Gershenson, a collection of essays that reads bathroom spaces widely across the social sciences and humanities by focusing on their material, social, symbolic and discursive complexity, with specific focus on gender. Following on from this, Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén edited a collection of essays also concentrating on public bathroom spaces; *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing* (2010) considers how lavatory design development plays into our experience of the modern public toilet, and contains key essays on dirt by Ruth Barcan, Victorian morals by Terry S. Kogan, and the legacy of Alexander Kira's influential 1966 study of the bathroom by Barbara Penner.[139] This recent turn also includes several key articles and book chapters, namely Remo Gramigna's chapter 'Toilet Cultures: Boundaries, Dirt and Disgust' (2013), and Helen Molesworth's 'Bathrooms and Kitchens: Cleaning House with Duchamp' (1997), the latter part of an important early study on plumbing design and its symbolism.[140]

Bathrooms are becoming increasingly important spaces in contemporary culture, particularly in the fight for transgender rights and the debate around gender

[139] Ruth Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces: Separation, Concealment, and Shame in the Public Toilet', in *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, ed. by Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 25-42; Terry Kogan, 'Sex Segregation: The Cure All for Victorian Social Anxiety', in *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, ed. by Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 145-64; Barbara Penner, 'Entangled with a User: Inside Bathrooms with Alexander Kira and Peter Greenaway', in *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, ed. by Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 229-52.

[140] Helen Molesworth, 'Bathrooms and Kitchens: Cleaning House with Duchamp', in *Plumbing: Sounding Modern Architecture*, ed. by Nadir Lahiji and D. S. Friedman (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), pp. 75-92.

neutral bathrooms in Britain and America.[141] More widely, bathrooms repeatedly appear in contemporary magazines and newspapers as spaces that seem to capture the public imagination, no doubt related to their association, even today, with the taboo.[142] In the past year, we have seen new reverberations of our understanding of hygiene and hygienic spaces, including bathrooms, emerging as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic.[143] This continued interest in bathroom spaces has given rise to

[141] For more on this see: Taunya Lovell Banks, 'Toilets as a Feminist Issue: A True Story', *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law and Justice*, 6, 2 (1991), 263-89; Brian S. Barnett, Ariana E. Nesbit and Renée M. Sorrentino, 'The Transgender Bathroom Debate at the Intersection of Politics, Law, Ethics, and Science', *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 46, 2 (June 2018), 232-41; Patricia Leigh Brown, 'A quest for a restroom that's neither men's room nor women's room', *The New York Times* (March 2005) <https://nyti.ms/3el35bN> [accessed 8 March 2021]; Kath Browne, 'Genderism and the bathroom problem: (Re)materialising sexed sites, (re)creating sexed bodies', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 11, 3 (2004), 331-46; Clara Greed, 'Creating a nonsexist restroom', in *Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, ed. by Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 117-41; Clara Greed, 'Join the queue: Including women's toilet needs in public space', *The Sociological Review*, 67, 4 (2019), 908-26; Clara Greed and Jo Anne Bichard, '"Ladies or gents": Gender division in toilets', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 19, 4 (2012), 545-47; Charlotte Jones and Jen Slater, 'The toilet debate: Stalling trans possibilities and defending "women's protected spaces"', *The Sociological Review*, 68, 4 (2020), 834-51; Stephen Craig Kerry, 'Hypospadias, the "Bathroom Panopticon," and Men's Psychological and Social Urinary Practices', in *Masculinities in a Global Era*, ed. by Joseph Gelfer (New York: Springer, 2014), pp. 215-28; Terry Kogan, 'Sex-separation in public restrooms: Law, architecture, and gender', *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law*, 14 (2007), 1-54; Gail Ramster, Clara Greed and Jo Anne Bichard, 'How inclusion can exclude: The care of public toilet provision for women', *Built Environment*, 44, 1 (2018), 52-76. In line with this, Matt Houlbrook offers an important in-depth examination of the ways some gay men used public lavatories in his monograph: Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[142] Some recent examples include: Mary Jo Bang, 'Self-Portrait in the Bathroom Mirror', *The Paris Review* (Spring 2016) <https://bit.ly/3tdPas3> [accessed 6 January 2021]; 'Bank Hill toilet and Seaburn ladies' lavatories listed', *BBC News* (2 September 2020) <https://bbc.in/3bzSibQ> [accessed 5 September 2020]; Mary Beard, 'From one lav to another', *The Times Literary Supplement* <https://bit.ly/2OkysZi> [accessed 11 March 2021]; Matthew Bown, 'Toilets of our time: Where art meets defecation', *The Times Literary Supplement* (23 August 2019) <https://bit.ly/38suBAw> [accessed February 22 2021]; Mikaella Clements, 'The slow clean: Mikaella Clements on the role of baths in twentieth-century literature', *The Times Literary Supplement* (6 September 2019) <https://bit.ly/3t6nrK3> [accessed 7 September 2019]; Stephen Halliday, 'On (and In) The Sewers (and Sewage) That Transformed Paris: The Secret of a World Class City', *Literary Hub* <https://bit.ly/3exKwRI> [accessed 6 January 2021]; 'Lift the Lid: A Zine About Toilets', *Around the Toilet* <https://bit.ly/3cq3OWD> [accessed 3 February 2018]; Phoebe Parke, 'This Viral Story About A Woman Crying In A Bathroom Stall Will Make You Weep', *Grazia* (22 August 2019) <https://bit.ly/3bAdUEY> [accessed 28 August 2019]; Larissa Pham, 'A Bathroom of One's Own', *The Paris Review* (March 2019) <https://bit.ly/2OKf1cs> [accessed 11 March 2021]; Mabel Victoria, 'Toilet graffiti: secrets, support and solidarity in the women's restroom', *The Conversation* <https://bit.ly/2OECuvw> [accessed 30 January 2021].

[143] For more see: Steve Calechman, 'How risky is using a public bathroom during the pandemic?', *Harvard Health Blog: Harvard Medical School* (14 July 2020) <https://bit.ly/3tbanDi> [accessed 24 August 2020]; Simon Clarke and Rebecca Pow, 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): letter to councils on the re-opening of public toilets and tips', *gov.uk* (28 June 2020) <https://bit.ly/3l5co0V> [accessed 11 March 2021]; Amy Fleming, 'Keep it clean: The surprising 130-year history of handwashing', *The Guardian* (18

Mary Foltz's new study of human waste in American literature from the 1960s onwards - perhaps an interesting addendum to my thesis, which focuses on texts in the five or six decades prior.[144] Foltz's monograph, which evidences the ongoing development of toilet studies, was launched at the inaugural event of the International Literary Waste Studies Network in 2021. The emergence of the Literary Waste Studies Network demonstrates how toilet studies can create important cross-disciplinary connections between scholars of other forms of waste, contributing to important historic and contemporary social discussions. Significantly, the Network's founder, Rachele Dini, is currently editing a collection of essays on *Queer Waste and Feminist Excretions: New Directions in Literary and Cultural Waste Studies*, due to be released in 2022, which emphasises the continued importance of reading bathroom spaces in relation to female and queer subjects, like my own thesis, as a way to redress outdated notions of literary value and the canon.

In studies of early twentieth-century literature, attention to the bathroom is a much rarer occurrence. Aside from Leopold Bloom's scatological enjoyment of his morning ritual, bathroom spaces and their place in society play on the mind of another of modernism's famous flâneurs, Peter Walsh. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Peter muses on the increasing presence of the lavatory in modern public discourse:

> Those five years - 1918 to 1923 - had been, he suspected, somehow very important. people looked different. Newspapers seemed different. Now for

March 2020) <https://bit.ly/38w4lVF> [accessed 18 March 2020]; Sarah Gibbens, 'Could flushing a public toilet really spread COVID-19?', *National Geographic* (22 June 2020) <https://bit.ly/3clHwFh> [accessed 5 November 2020]; Lora Jones, 'Coronavirus: What's behind the great toilet roll grab?', *BBC News* (26 March 2020) <https://bbc.in/2ODSI89> [accessed 11 March 2021]; Joanna Partridge and Sarah Butler, 'Toilet roll sales rise by more than a fifth amid new UK Covid-19 restrictions', *The Guardian* (22 September 2020) <https://bit.ly/3t7Ykqa> [accessed 11 March 2021].

[144] Mary Foltz, *Contemporary American Literature and Excremental Culture: American Sh*t* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

> instance there was a man writing quite openly in one of the respectable weeklies about water-closets. That you couldn't have done ten years ago.[145]

Yet despite Woolf's acknowledgement of the increasing acceptance of 'water-closets' in 'respectable weeklies', very little work has been done on the importance of bathroom spaces in literature in the first half of the twentieth century. It is in relation to Woolf herself that bathroom spaces are often discussed, usually regarding her infamous lodging-house bathroom scene in *The Years*, which receives extended attention in my third chapter.[146] Alongside Woolf, significant work has also been done on Jean Rhys' lavabos, most notably by Helen Carr, Erica L. Johnson, Elaine Savory, Ian Scott Todd and Emma Zimmerman.[147] In his thesis, the only other thesis to centre bathroom spaces, Todd argues convincingly for a scatological turn in modernist writing, as many queer or outsider writers and artists, such as Mulk Raj Anand, Christopher Isherwood and Jean Rhys, use this space as a site of resistance. Todd's work highlights the 'intensely fraught' debates about the body, promiscuity, propriety, contagion and sexuality that occur in bathroom spaces - debates that play out in my own thesis, though in different ways.[148] So, while we have witnessed a turn towards other urban

---

[145] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2012), p. 71.

[146] David Bradshaw, 'Hyams Place: The Years, the Jews and the British Union of Fascists', in *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History*, ed. by Maroula Joannou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 179-91; Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), p. 310; Steven Connor, 'Virginia Woolf, the Baby and the Bathwater' <http://goo.gl/pKWjAC> [accessed 21 February 2021]; Tracey Hargreaves, '"I Should Explain He Shares My Bath": Art and Politics in *The Years*', *English: The Journal of the English Association*, 50 (2001), 183-98; Phyllis Lassner, '"The Milk of Our Mother's Kindness has Ceased to Flow": Virginia Woolf, Stevie Smith, and the Representation of the Jew', in *Between "Race" and Culture: Representations of "the Jew" in English and American Literature*, ed. by Bryan Cheyette (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 129-44; Hermione Lee, 'Virginia Woolf and Offence', in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. by John Batchelor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 129-50; Maren Tova Linett, *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*.

[147] Helen Carr, *Jean Rhys* (London: Northcote House, 2012); Erica L. Johnson, *Home Maison Casa* (London: Associated University Press, 2003); Elaine Savory, *Jean Rhys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Todd, 'Dirty Books'; Ian Scott Todd, 'Bathroom Readings: Modernism and the Politics of Abjection' (unpublished thesis, Tufts University, 2014); Emma Zimmerman, '"Always the same stairs, always the same room": The Uncanny Architecture of Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 38, 4 (Summer 2015), 74-92.

[148] Todd, 'Dirty Books', p. 193.

and domestic spaces in literary studies of the period - the boarding house, the cafe, the department store - the bathroom still remains significantly overlooked.[149]

Throughout my thesis, I build on this growing body of research, delving deeper into the different ways access to everyday bathroom spaces across the urban and the domestic spheres played into women's lives. Using bathroom spaces as a lens enables this thesis to explore how women's social identity and physical reality intersect, allowing the following chapters to examine new or previously 'unregarded' aspects of women's everyday lives.[150] In what follows, I consider how spaces like the shared lodging-house bathroom, the cafe lavatory or the family bathroom are bound up with questions of class, age, gender and sexuality. This thesis forms a survey of how a plethora of key spaces within the city and the home - all broadly defined as bathroom spaces - were written into the literature of the early twentieth century, and, by merging cultural histories and literary representations of specific bathroom spaces, I offer fresh readings of women's experience of modernity, through the emerging field of toilet studies.

[149] Betsworth; Rachel Bowlby, *Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000); Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House'; Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses.*
[150] Bowlby, *Everyday Stories*, p. 2.

The Ladies' Lavatory

> The hour of the dentist approached. Daisy sought the boudoir where ladies who have eaten at Lyons' restore themselves to beauty, finding taps of running water, mirrors before which to comb the hair disordered by swallowing and to powder the face disarranged by biting. Also, since it was the dentist, she brushed her teeth.
>
> Having by these attentions made of herself a better figure in the world's eyes and in her own, she ventured once more into the streets, plunging into a world which, in her mood of sharp receptivity, seemed to be intolerably dominant, harsh and neglectful.[1]

For Daisy Simpson, the thirty-year-old protagonist of Rose Macaulay's novel *Keeping Up Appearances* (1928), the lavatory of the Lyons' tearoom is a small space of refuge from the disorder of a day in the city, and a space where, hidden from the public urban gaze by its semi-privacy, she is able to recreate a 'better figure in the world's eyes and in her own'. The small 'attentions' she performs in the 'boudoir' 'restore' both her 'disarranged' appearance and her 'mood', allowing her to return into the city with a renewed sense of 'sharp receptivity'. Macaulay's novel, as the title implies, centres around these small 'attentions' that Daisy gives her appearance and on the effect that the 'world's eyes', glimpsed briefly here in the lavatory, have on her sense of self and self-worth.[2] Despite barely turning thirty, Daisy's worries about aging define the narrative, which follows her futile attempts to construct a younger - meaning also 'more elegant' and 'better looking' - version of herself to 'shelter behind'.[3] We find out halfway through the novel, however, that the woman we had thought was Daisy's half-sister, twenty-five-year-old Daphne, is merely a figment of her imagination, created to provide some protective 'armour' in a society that is always 'against women'.[4]

---

[1] Rose Macaulay, *Keeping Up Appearances* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 69.
[2] Macaulay, p. 69.
[3] Macaulay, p. 2.
[4] Macaulay, p. 70, 69.

Forming an undercurrent to this lavatory scene, these interweaving anxieties - aging, appearance and identity - are central to this chapter, which examines how this highly classed and gendered space acts as an important literary device for writers like Olivia Manning, Jean Rhys and Virginia Woolf to explore women's identity and sense of belonging in society. Their literary representations of these bathroom spaces are sensitive to the complex web of social anxieties surrounding ladies' lavatories at the time, whilst also understanding how these anxieties echo the experience of the aging, working-class woman as she tackles the 'spatial, economic and sexual constraints' of 'living alone in the city'.[5]

Transforming the early twentieth-century city street, cafes and restaurants were particularly important urban spaces for women. These spaces were bound up, as this chapter will show, in the changing nature of women's identity as they rejected or realigned themselves with changing domestic roles, migrating into new urban spaces outside of the family home.[6] They were spaces that provided the facilities to allow women to spend longer in the city; they were spaces for working women to socialise as many took up new employment opportunities; and they were spaces for precariously or unemployed women, turfed out of their lodgings during the day, to shelter from the cold London streets. Offering women like Daisy Simpson, Miriam

[5] Terri Mullholland, 'Between Illusion and Reality, "Who's to Know": Threshold Spaces in the Interwar Novels of Jean Rhys', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 23, 4 (2012), 445-62 (p. 448).

[6] Scott McCracken, 'Voyages by Teashop: An Urban Geography of Modernism', in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 86-98 (p. 86). For more on the history of the cafe see: Leon Betsworth, 'The Café in Modernist Literature: Wyndham Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Jean Rhys' (unpublished thesis, University of East Anglia, 2012); Peter Bird, *The First Food Empire: A History of J. Lyons & Co.* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2000); Steve Bradshaw, *Café Society: Bohemian Life from Swift to Bob Dylan* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1978); Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2008); Aytoun Ellis, *The Penny Universities: A History of the Coffee-Houses* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956); Markman Ellis, *The Coffeehouse: A Cultural History* (London: Orion, 2011); Scott McCracken, 'Embodying the New Woman: Dorothy Richardson, Work and the London Cafe', in *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality*, ed. by Avril Horner and Angela Keane (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 58-74; Scott McCracken, *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

Henderson and Sasha Jansen a valuable space outside of the 'stuffy dusty room' or 'dark empty street', cafes and restaurants, particularly chains like the A.B.C. or Lyons' tearoom, were relatively respectable - if rather 'dowdy', as Miriam describes them - and, more importantly, cheap, with standardised pricing and an affordable menu enabling even the most meagre purse strings to stretch to a cup of tea.[7] These small urban 'interstices' provided women with a space in which, according to Scott McCracken, for the first time it was 'possible to stop, look, think, read and write, even if, in the busy city, the time, money and opportunity for intellectual activity [was] always limited'.[8] These unassuming spaces became 'places of refuge' for single, working-class women, facilitating new forms of mental and physical freedom.[9]

Though 'largely open and egalitarian', cafes and restaurants were not wholly utopian spaces, particularly for the marginalised individuals at the centre of this chapter.[10] In his work on the modernist cafe, Leon Betsworth argues that these spaces are highly 'codified, regulated, and ritualised'.[11] Like the bathroom, cafes and restaurants are implicated in an intricate network of social anxieties and implicit power structures that, at times, work to police, exclude or regulate. Embroiled in debates around women's increasing urban mobility, cafes and restaurants often reveal the boundaries of their social, sexual and economic freedom.[12] These anxieties are

[7] Dorothy Richardson, *The Tunnel*, in *Pilgrimage* (London: Virago, 1992), II, pp. 9-288 (p. 180, 177, 150).
[8] McCracken, *Masculinities*, p. 3. For more see: Yaffa Claire Draznin (2001). *Victorian London's Middle-Class Housewife: What She Did All Day* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 154.
[9] McCracken, *Masculinities*, p. 3. For more on this see: Bridget Chalk, 'The Semi-Public Sphere, Maternity, and Regression in Rhys and Mansfield', *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 28, 3 (2017), 217-37 (p. 220); McCracken, *Masculinities*, p. 93.
[10] Betsworth, p. 16.
[11] Betsworth, p. 16.
[12] Bridget Chalk, amongst others, has noted that women's increased physical and social mobility often actually amplified social anxieties about 'normative gender roles and expectations' (Chalk, p. 218). For more on the anxieties surrounding single women in the public sphere see: Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004); Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jane Garrity, *Step-Daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary* (Manchester: Manchester

compounded in the ladies' lavatory, which, while it provided young Daisy Simpson with a temporary refuge, does not guarantee 'escape or solace from the difficulties of navigating other public urban spaces'.[13] Rather, as Ian Scott Todd argues, for many women the lavatory becomes yet another 'public space in which women face potential judgment or insult by other women' - or, indeed, by themselves.[14] These urban lavatory spaces are inherently ambivalent, then, as though they offer moments of mental and physical comfort, they are never truly private, always invaded by the watching eyes and social judgments that police women living alone in the city.

In their novels, Olivia Manning, Jean Rhys and Virginia Woolf play with the social anxieties surrounding the ladies' lavatory, using this highly-charged literary setting to situate questions of social and sexual currency, and, as we will come to see, emphasise the need for moments and spaces of privacy, refuge and autonomy for their marginalised characters - the aging, unmarried, working-class woman - in the urban realm. Through a series of close readings of Olivia Manning's *The Doves of Venus* (1955), Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), and Virginia Woolf's short story 'The Watering Place' (1941) and its unpublished earlier draft 'The Ladies Lavatory', this chapter will consider how these urban bathroom spaces are fruitful literary settings in which early twentieth-century writers locate their protagonist's negotiations with aging, self-image and identity, and, as such, reveal important hidden histories of women's everyday life in the city.

University Press, 2003); Molly Hite, 'The Public Woman and the Modernist Turn: Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* and Elizabeth Robins's *My Little Sister*', *Modernism/modernity*, 17, 3 (2010), 523-48; Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[13] Ian Scott Todd, 'Dirty Books: Modernism and the Toilet', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 58, 2 (Summer 2012), 191-213 (p. 200).

[14] Todd, 'Dirty Books', p. 200.

> While the dusting was being performed Miss Cruttwell was energetic, angry, and contented, the natural rancour of a single woman of sixty living on a small pension flowing easily from her like a sweat. But by eleven o'clock, when all was over, and the brooms and brushes and dusters put away in the ottoman, it was an even hazard whether her pride or her weariness would conquer, whether she would look round with a toss of the head, saying to herself: "Well, if any one comes, it's ready for them," or, suddenly prostrated by a longing for a cup of tea, stare at the gas-ring and remember how lonely she was, how old, and how neglected, and how, all her life long, she had kept the lady-standard flying, had been scrupulously clean, scrupulously honest, scrupulously refined, and nothing had come of it save to be old and neglected and lonely.[15]

Written at a time when Sylvia Townsend Warner herself was teetering on the edge of middle age, the short story 'The Property of a Lady' (1935) details the pitiful life of a 'single woman of sixty' living in meagre two-room lodgings in London. Filled with the 'natural rancour' of a woman whose 'small pension' seems to flow 'easily from her like a sweat', the story epitomises the struggle of life as an unmarried, working-class woman in the city. With her struggle stemming from her loneliness, Miss Cruttwell becomes increasingly bitter as the narrative progresses. 'Why should I stay alive?' she proclaims to the 'polite voice' on the wireless, her only friend in the 'empty room'.[16] She continues:

> Why, indeed, to buy herrings and the cheapest China tea, to mend old nightdresses, take circulars from the letter-box, dust two rooms daily which no one entered but herself. No one noticed her, she glided through the wet streets unscanned. No one would notice if she died, she said to herself.[17]

These markers of her socioeconomic status - from the cheapest tea to the patches on her nightdress - are compounded by her lack of social interaction, augmenting the physical and emotional emptiness of her life.

[15] Sylvia Townsend Warner, 'The Property of a Lady', in *Selected Stories* (London: Virago, 1990), pp. 311-16 (p. 311).
[16] Warner, 'The Property of a Lady', p. 312.
[17] Warner, 'The Property of a Lady', p. 312.

To prick the consciences of her ‘false friends’, Miss Cruttwell hatches a plan to ‘claw her way into those easy minds which could forget her, a living woman’.[18] Having first rejected the idea of committing suicide, though not until she has tearfully written ‘several farewell letters’ and crushed a bottle of aspirins into a ‘drink, chalky white, deadly white’, Miss Cruttwell settles on a plan to ‘get into the papers’: she is going ‘to steal, to be a shop-lifter’.[19] Making her way ‘lightly and elegantly’ to the high street, she chooses Whiteley’s department store, as if to spite the ‘composition women whose hair never needed cutting, who never felt the cold’ and who are adorned with silk stockings, fox furs and scent-sprays, standing illuminated in its shop windows.[20] Once inside, Miss Cruttwell loses herself amongst the store’s sumptuous display:

> Under the floodlit central dome everything was warm and luxurious and orchid-like. The air was sweet, the carpets were soft, the lights, like sharp amorous caresses, pinched little gasps of reflected light from cut-glass bottles and crystal powder-bowls and sleek virgin boxes of cosmetics and rich sleepy cakes of soap.[21]

Here, Warner’s repeated polysyndeton emphasises both the luxury and the excess of the up-market department store, a ‘glittering jungle’ from which Miss Cruttwell’s limited income has prevented her from previously exploring.[22] Slowly walking around, ‘her mind licking the smooth soaps, the flasks of scent, the powder puffs and the rejuvenating face-creams’, she slips these luxury feminine items into her handbag.[23] Finally, when she remembers that she needs to get caught, she starts ‘parading herself’ and ‘making a slow motion of the theft’.[24] But, when she leaves the store:

> She waited. She waited. People went in and out, but no one noticed her. [...] She waited. But no one came, no one noticed her.[25]

---

[18] Warner, ‘The Property of a Lady’, p. 313.
[19] Warner, ‘The Property of a Lady’, p. 313, 314.
[20] Warner, ‘The Property of a Lady’, p. 313, 314.
[21] Warner, ‘The Property of a Lady’, p. 314.
[22] Warner, ‘The Property of a Lady’, p. 314.
[23] Warner, ‘The Property of a Lady’, p. 314.
[24] Warner, ‘The Property of a Lady’, p. 314.
[25] Warner, ‘The Property of a Lady’, p. 315.

Unnoticed even with a handbag overflowing with stolen goods, Warner's story reveals the cultural invisibility of the aging woman in a society that privileges youth and beauty. Ignored by the youthful gaze of the shop assistant, who merely sees her as an old woman, Miss Cruttwell epitomises the 'older female body [that] is both invisible - in that it is no longer seen - and hypervisible - in that it is all that is seen'.[26] It is her aging appearance that makes her hypervisible, seen only as an 'old' 'single woman of sixty', albeit a 'scrupulously clean, scrupulously honest, scrupulously refined' 'lady', as she takes pains to point out.[27] And her shoplifting goes unnoticed because of this, as her age renders her, paradoxically, also an invisible figure, 'neglected' by friends and strangers alike.[28]

The cultural invisibility of women like Miss Cruttwell encapsulates the loss of social and sexual power that women, in particular, suffer as they age. In her comprehensive survey of age studies, Julia Twigg argues that while 'male power' resides:

> in money, status, social dominance, so that early signs of aging such as gray hair are read as marks of maturity and authority. Many older women report becoming socially invisible, no longer the focus of male attention, sidelined in the power stakes, and finding no reflection of their situations in the cultural imagery of advertising or the media.[29]

Kathleen Woodward reinforces this in her work on performing age and gender, suggesting that the aging women's loss of power is rooted in a patriarchal, capitalist society in which:

[26] Julia Twigg, 'The Body, Gender, and Age: Feminist Insights in Social Gerontology', *Journal of Aging Studies*, 18 (2004), 59-73 (p. 62).
[27] Warner, 'The Property of a Lady', p. 311.
[28] Warner, 'The Property of a Lady', p. 311.
[29] Twigg, p. 61.

> age and gender structure each other in a complex set of reverberating feedback loops, conspiring to render the older female body paradoxically both hypervisible and invisible.[30]

In order to pass the scrutiny of the public gaze, which defines and is defined by dominant culture (that is, youth and patriarchal culture), the aging woman must perform a socially acceptable masquerade of youthful femininity that disguises the bodily markers of her age. This performance, which I call the public facade to emphasise its implications of pretence and appearance for the public gaze, is an attempt to accrue or retain social and sexual currency. Building on Woodward's work, Jeannette King argues that this facade becomes 'increasingly apparent as it becomes increasingly remote from reality'.[31] That is, in attempting to portray an image of youth, the aging woman actually emphasises her real age to the viewer (just as Miss Cruttwell cannot escape her hypervisible identity as an older woman, which brands her simultaneously invisible), which, in a culture that perceives age as 'decline', renders her invisible or ignored or, at most, pitied.[32]

The cultural invisibility of the aging woman is an inherent part of our consumer culture, which, as Twigg notes, is 'quintessentially youth culture in that it presents and promotes youthfulness as the ideal'.[33] Mike Featherstone locates the foundation of our contemporary consumer culture in the first decades of the twentieth century, which he associates with the 'new media of motion pictures, tabloid press, mass circulation magazines and radio extolling the leisure lifestyle, and publicising new norms and standards of behaviour'.[34] Cynthia Port and Margaret Morganroth Gullette, amongst

---

[30] Kathleen Woodward, 'Performing Age, Performing Gender', *National Women's Studies Association*, 18, 1 (Spring 2006), 162-89 (p. 163).
[31] Jeanette King, *Discourses of Ageing in Fiction and Feminism: The Invisible Woman* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 175.
[32] King, p. 175.
[33] Twigg, p. 61.
[34] Mike Featherstone, 'The Body in Consumer Culture', in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Mike Featherstone and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 170-96 (p. 172).

others, agree with Featherstone that the twenties was a 'crucial decade in the formulation of the new bodily ideal'.[35] Noting the association of the aging woman with 'unmitigated decline' during this decade, Gullette argues that society's perception of aging had 'never started so early in the life course or [been] made so central to identity and mental accomplishment'.[36] Indeed, while the distinct boundaries of middle and old age are 'subjective', John Benson suggests that 'during the course of the twentieth century, middle age was redefined so that those in their forties and fifties were seen as increasingly homogenous'.[37] The middle-aged and older 'became associated in the public mind with the same curious combination of decay and anxiety, collapse and complacency'.[38]

Moreover, for the first time aging was seen as an individual responsibility, with the idea that 'those who aged badly had largely - if not only - themselves to blame' gaining increasing popularity.[39] Both Featherstone and Benson agree that 'consumer culture latches onto the prevalent self-preservationist conception of the body, which encourages the individual to adopt instrumental strategies to combat deterioration and decay'.[40] Through his survey of contemporary magazines, Benson evidences how this

---

[35] Featherstone, 'The Body in Consumer Culture', p. 180. For more see: Margaret Morganroth Gullette, 'Creativity, Aging, Gender: A Study of Their Intersections, 1910–1935', in *Aging and Gender in Literature: Studies in Creativity*, ed. by Anne M. Wyatt-Brown and Janice Rosen (Virginia: University of Virginia Press 1993), pp. 19-48; Cathy McGlynn, '"No One Noticed Her": Ageing Spinsters and Youth Culture in Sylvia Townsend, Warner's Short Stories', in *Ageing Women in Literature and Visual Culture*, ed. by Cathy McGlynn, Margaret O'Neill and Michaela Schrage-Früh (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 111-28; Cynthia Port, '"Money, for the night is coming": Jean Rhys and Gendered Economies of Ageing', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 12, 2 (2001), 204-17; Cynthia Port, 'Ages are the Stuff!: The Traffic in Ages in Interwar Britain', *National Women's Studies Association*, 18, 1 (Spring, 2006), 138-61; Kathleen Williams Renk, '"Blackberrying in the Sun"? Modernism and the Ageing Woman in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent*', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27, 3 (2016), 317-28.

[36] Gullette, 'Creativity, Aging, Gender: A Study of Their Intersections, 1910-1935', p. 44.

[37] Charlotte Greenhalgh, *Aging in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), p. 6; John Benson, *Prime Time: A History of the Middle Aged in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 16.

[38] Benson, p. 16.

[39] Benson, p. 19.

[40] Featherstone, 'The Body in Consumer Culture', p.170.

> attack on middle age was presented as a joint enterprise to be undertaken by manufacturers, advertisers, retailers and consumers, with the medical, pharmaceutical, beauty and fashion industries particularly keen to stress the growing opportunities for remedial action.[41]

This growing notion of individual responsibility had particularly negative effects for women, for whom the ideal of youth was, and still is, closely tied to an internal biological clock, a pervasive idea in an early twentieth-century context that aligned childlessness or a rejection of motherhood with a specifically female form of failure. In this context, Port argues that 'the consequences of aging' are 'often experienced as particularly dire for women, whose sense of self-worth and of evaluation by others is so frequently tied to youthful beauty and fertility'.[42] This is because, as Kathleen Williams Renk writes, 'if we are viewed as old, we are old, and hence we are the "other"; we are relegated as inferior and redundant; we are no longer in service to biological reproduction and, therefore, are considered of no use at all'.[43]

The cultural invisibility of aging women is a key part of this chapter, then, which forms part of a feminist gerontology that refocuses attention on these often overlooked individuals in the first half of the twentieth century. To this extent, this chapter is situated within 'a wider emancipatory project', alongside recent work by Charlotte Greenhalgh, Cynthia Port and Kathleen Williams Renk, that aims to 'challenge dominant perceptions by starting from the perspective of the lives of the marginalized and oppressed: in this case, the old'.[44] Building on their work, this chapter offers fresh perspectives on work by Olivia Manning, Jean Rhys and Virginia Woolf by using the lens of everyday urban spaces - the cafe and restaurant lavatory - to examine the

[41] Benson, p. 20.
[42] Port, 'Ages are the Stuff!', p. 144. For more on this see McGlynn.
[43] Renk, p. 318.
[44] Twigg, p. 62.

ways in which writers actively centre narratives of female aging under the pressures of the public urban gaze.

The Ladies' Lavatory and the Public Gaze

> Yesterday in the ladies lavatory at the Sussex Grill at Brighton I heard: She's a little simpering thing. I don't like her. But then he never did care for big women. (So to Bert) His eyes are so blue. Like blue pools. So's Gerts. [...] They were powdering & painting, these common little tarts, while I sat, behind a thin door, p--ing as quietly as I could.[45]

Writing in her diary in late February 1941, Virginia Woolf draws a 'disgusted and disgusting' sketch of a couple of 'common little tarts' gossiping in front the lavatory mirror.[46] Noting Woolf's 'vitriolic mixture of fury and disgust' towards the two women, Alison Light calls this scene 'visceral', 'violent' and vindictive.[47] Woolf's disgust at being 'closeted' with these lower-class women spills over into Fuller's tearoom where, later that afternoon, she observes two 'fat white slugs' gobbling up 'rich cakes':

> Then at Fuller's. A fat, smart woman, in red hunting cap, pearls, check skirt, consuming rich cakes. Her shabby dependent also stuffing. [...] Something scented, shoddy, parasitic about them. Then they totted up the cakes. And passed the time o'day with the waitress. Where does the money come from to feed these fat white slugs? Brighton a love corner for slugs. The powdered the pampered the mildly improper.[48]

Looking down her nose at the 'shabby dependant' of the smartly though rather gauchely dressed woman, Woolf notes that their perfume (or perhaps their body odour) is too strong, their manner too friendly, and their look too cheap, too inferior, too 'shoddy'. These two snippets illustrate the intricate network of social anxieties and expectations that infuse women's experience of the modern city. Woolf's inherent classism, sizeism and lookism emphasises the highly gendered and classed nature of

---

[45] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1936-1941*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), V, p. 356-57.
[46] Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 754; Woolf, *Diary*, *1936-1941*, p. 357.
[47] Alison Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants: The Hidden Heart of Domestic Service* (London: Fig Tree, 2007), p. xix, 273.
[48] Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants,* p. 273; Woolf, *Diary*, *1936-1941*, p. 357.

cafe spaces, whose comfort and privacy are undermined by the implicit social hierarchies of the public sphere.

Despite taking up only a few lines in her diary, Woolf's observations become the focal point of one of her last short stories, 'The Watering Place', and its unpublished earlier draft 'The Ladies Lavatory'.[49] In these stories Woolf turns the 'old women' of her diary into the 'shelly' inhabitants of a fictional seaside town, swapping the 'fat' woman's 'red hunting cap' for men in 'riding breeches' and women in 'little high heeled shoes'.[50] Woolf's condescending tone remains, as does the woman's pearl necklace, only in fiction it has turned into a shell-like version of its former pearly glory:

> Even the inhabitants had a shelly look - a frivolous look as if the real animal had been extracted on the point of a pin and only the shell remained. The old men on the parade were shells. Their gaiters, their riding breeches, their spy glasses seemed to make them into toys. They could no more have been real sailors or real sportsmen than the shells stuck onto the rims of photograph frames and looking-glasses could have lain in the depths of the sea. The women too, with their trousers and their little high heeled shoes and their raffia bags and their pearl necklaces seemed shells of real women.[51]

Mingling shelly metaphors with the seaside town's sense of artificiality, Woolf describes its inhabitants as 'shells of real women'. Their 'real animal' - that kernel of authenticity, individuality or autonomy - has been 'extracted on the point of a pin' like a winkle from its shell. Much like this common seaside foodstuff, the shelly women she observes are also working-class, dressed in cheap, cheerful holiday clothes that imitate 'real sailors' and 'real sportsmen'. Woolf mocks the women's vanity when she sees them shopping in their 'little high heeled shoes', amplifying the judgmental tone

[49] Though both remained unpublished at the time of her death a month after the initial diary entry, her short story 'The Watering Place' was later published by Susan Dick in 1985, and her unpublished earlier draft 'The Ladies Lavatory' can be found in The Berg Collection at The New York Public Library. Unfortunately, due to the travel restrictions resulting from COVID-19, I was unable to consult the copy of 'The Ladies Lavatory' in The Berg Collection, so have based my analysis on the transcribed copy in Heather Levy's book *The Servants of Desire*.

[50] Virginia Woolf, 'The Watering Place', in *The Complete Shorter Fiction,* ed. by Susan Dick (London: Triad Grafton, 1985), pp. 393-94 (p. 393); Woolf, *Diary*, *1936-1941*, p. 357.

[51] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 393.

of her diary. In her fictional reimagining of the seaside town, the women have a 'frivolous look', indeed, 'everything seemed frivolous' - a highly classed and gendered value-judgement that emphasises their vapidity, vanity and superficiality.[52]

The seaside restaurant - the Sussex Grill in her diary - is where this 'frivolous' 'frail varnished shell fish population clustered together' for lunch.[53] The restaurant is 'pervaded' by a 'fishy smell':

> The smell pervaded even the room that was marked Ladies on the first landing. This room was separated by a door only into two compartments. On the one side of the door the claims of nature were gratified; and on the other, at the washing table, at the looking-glass, nature was disciplined by art. Three young ladies had reached this second stage of the daily ritual. They were exerting their rights upon improving nature, subduing her, with their powder puffs and little red tablets.[54]

Woolf has reworked her diary into fiction, here, as the now anonymous narrator silently watches the 'three young ladies' at the 'washing-table, at the looking-glass' disciplining 'nature' with their 'powder puffs and little red tablets' of rouge. The women's gossip fills the lavatory with 'a very strong smell', their 'words had a strong savour of decaying fish'.[55] This smell 'infects everything'.[56] Woolf writes:

> As they did so they talked; but their talk was interrupted as by the surge of an indrawing tide; and then the tide withdrew and one was heard saying:
>
> "I never did care about her - the simpering little thing… Bert never did care about big women… Ave you seen him since he's been back?… His eyes… they're so blue… Like pools… Gert's too… Both ave the same eyes… You look down into them… They've both got the same teeth… Are He's got such beautiful white teeth… Gert has em too... But his are a bit crooked… when he smiles…"
>
> The water gushed… The tide foamed and withdrew. It uncovered next: "But he had ought to be more careful. If he's caught doing it, he'll be courtmartialled…" Here came a great gush of water from the next compartment. The tide in the watering place seems to be for ever drawing and withdrawing.[57]

[52] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 393; Virginia Woolf (Heather Levy), 'Appendix A: "The Ladies Lavatory"', in *The Servants of Desire in Virginia Woolf's Shorter Fiction* (London: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 197-200 (p. 197). Hereafter referenced as Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory'.
[53] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 393.
[54] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 393.
[55] Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory', p. 199.
[56] Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory', p. 199.
[57] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 393-94.

The conversation is interrupted by the 'surge of an indrawing tide' whose rhythmic 'drawing and withdrawing' echoes the perpetual flushing of toilets, which, like the women's endless stream of chatter, forms an aural backdrop to the scene. Woolf writes that the 'great gush of water from the next compartment':

> uncovers these little fish; it sluices over them. It withdraws, and there are the fish again, smelling very strong of some queer fishy smell that seems to permeate the whole watering place.[58]

Woolf's narrative is infused with double entendre. The 'great gush of water' reveals the 'little fish' in the toilet bowl (the remains of the women's 'claims of nature' being flushed away), and the 'little fish' of snippets of gossip occurring in front of the lavatory mirror. The former literally smells, while the latter has a more symbolic 'very strong' 'queer fishy smell' that reflects the narrator's value-judgement of the women's frivolous gossiping.[59]

In this double entendre, Woolf identifies the rituals that coincide in the 'two compartments' of the ladies' lavatory:

> On the one side of the door the claims of nature were gratified; and on the other, at the washing table, at the looking-glass, nature was disciplined by art.[60]

The cubicle door acts as a literal and symbolic boundary segregating the private sanctum (and dirty actions) of the toilet cubicle from the semi-public (and socially cleaner) arena in front of the looking-glass. The 'thin' door marks the boundary between the two 'compartments': one for gratifying the bodily functions of the private self and the other for remaking the image of the public self.[61] Neither action can occur in the other compartment. In her work on public toilets, Ruth Barcan emphasises the

[58] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 394.
[59] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 394.
[60] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 393.
[61] Woolf, *Diary*, *1936-1941*, p. 357; Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 394.

importance of this divide in strikingly similar language to Woolf, suggesting that, as women, after we

> unmake our interiors, releasing in the cubicles that which is, in the way of all abject things, neither completely of us nor separate from us, we remake our exteriors. This external remaking seems never to occur before the internal, psychologically cleansing, release, nor does it ever seem to occur in the seclusion of the cubicle - at least, as far as one can tell. Public toilets thus separate private, "natural" functions from public, social ones - indeed, in so doing, they actively constitute our idea of the natural and the social.[62]

Reinforcing the divide between the 'natural' and the 'social', Barcan suggests that the ladies' lavatory is a heightened space marked by boundaries that mitigate real or perceived dirt, and this reflects Woolf's designation of the two lavatorial spaces as 'nature' versus 'art'.[63]

What Woolf's diary and stories reveal, however, is that the perceived boundaries between clean and dirty, public and private are actually porous, imagined and socially constructed. The boundary between these two lavatorial spaces is rendered 'precarious' by the smells, sounds and sights that escape under the door.[64] This porosity is symbolised in the pervasive fishy smell that Woolf emphasises in her use of the verbs 'pervaded', 'infects', and 'permeate', forming subtle connections between the scene's sounds and smells and her earlier value-judgement of the 'common little tarts'.[65] Sitting unnoticed in the toilet cubicle, Woolf is absorbed in the women's conversations on the other side of the door, and this, as Heather Levy suggests, becomes an almost 'sensual experience' for the narrator, for whom the women's voices mingle with the lavatory's sounds and smells in the 'for ever drawing

[62] Ruth Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces: Separation, Concealment, and Shame in the Public Toilet', in *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, ed. by Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 25-42 (p. 32).
[63] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 393.
[64] Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces: Separation, Concealment, and Shame in the Public Toilet', p. 33.
[65] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 393-94; Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory', p. 199; Woolf, *Diary*, *1936-1941*, p. 357.

and withdrawing' tide.[66] Woolf's imagination lingers over the lower-class women who, in turn, 'linger over each other and their own reflections', all within close proximity to the dirt of the lavatory, behind the door of which Woolf and her narrator are literally 'p--ing'.[67] This metaphor of porosity and permeation epitomises Woolf's gaze in the lavatory, which seeps through the cubicle door like the sound of the 'great gush of water from the next compartment'.[68] From her hiding place she is able to observe and imagine the women's actions on the other side of the door, and this reflects, more widely, the omnipresence of an inescapable policing, judgemental or regulating gaze in the public sphere. In these stories, Woolf's gaze symbolises the constant surveillance that women and other marginal individuals are under in the public sphere, and which I will interrogate in more detail as this chapter unfolds. As a married, middle-class woman, Woolf's privilege allows her to escape some of the pressures of this surveillance, while her 'visceral' reaction to and judgement of the 'common little tarts' is more reflective of the policing gaze under which the aging, working-class women in Olivia Manning and Jean Rhys' novels struggle for autonomy, privacy and social acceptance in the modern city.

The Public Facade

Virginia Woolf had mused on the importance of this public urban gaze in one of her earlier 'experimental' short stories in which she invented 'a hypothetical never-to-be-written novel about a woman seen on a train'.[69] In 'An Unwritten Novel' (1920), the life of an anonymous woman dubbed Minnie Marsh is the narrator's focal point, around

[66] Heather Levy, *The Servants of Desire in Virginia Woolf's Shorter Fiction* (London: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 39; Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 394.
[67] Levy, *Servants of Desire*, p. 39; Woolf, *Diary*, *1936-1941*, p. 357.
[68] Woolf, 'Watering Place', p. 394.
[69] James King, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994), p. 316; Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 406.

which she constructs a story based on, as Hermione Lee suggests, the 'classbound details of Minnie's outer life - a patronising sister-in-law, a sick mother, an old dog, cruets, aspidistras, gloves, drapers' shops, commercial travellers, the price of eggs, hatpins, mackintoshes'.[70] Minnie's imagined biography is constructed solely through the gaze of the narrator, and its limits are 'defined by very specific social markers' that lock her inside the 'caricature of lower-middle-class gentility'.[71]

While this story says much about ways of writing fiction or biography, or constructing authentic female narratives, it also emphasises the omnipresence of the public gaze. The 'human eye', as Woolf calls it, is the lens through which an individual's social markers are filtered, processed and judged.[72] And while Minnie Marsh's story ends happily (she gets off the train into the arms of her son, rather than the patronising sister-in-law Woolf's narrator imagined), it reminds us that in public spaces, particularly for marginal individuals, the 'eyes of others' can be their 'prisons'.[73] For lower-middle-class or working-class women like the 'common little tarts' in the lavatory, then, semi-public urban spaces like cafe lavatories do not provide the comfort or privacy (or the literary inspiration) that they do for more privileged individuals (like Woolf's narrator). Instead, society's ever-present policing gaze serves to remind them of the importance of their public facade - the specific set of social markers that are constantly judged and measured by the public urban gaze.

In recent years, much work has been done on the importance of this gaze in relation to women's experiences of public space in the early twentieth century.[74] In

[70] Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 406.
[71] Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 407.
[72] Virginia Woolf, 'An Unwritten Novel', in *The Complete Shorter Fiction,* ed. by Susan Dick (London: Triad Grafton, 1985), pp. 151-64 (p. 158).
[73] Woolf, 'Unwritten Novel', p. 158.
[74] For more on the public urban gaze see: Betsworth; Joyce Davidson, *Phobic Geographies: The Phenomenology and Spatiality of Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003); Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003); Emma

their work on cafes and hotels, Leon Betsworth, Emma Short and Emma Zimmerman have noted the inescapability of the gaze for women in semi-public spaces, calling it 'a trap from which these women cannot escape judgement'.[75] Building on work by Michel Foucault and Jeremy Bentham, particularly their focus on panopticism, these scholars argue that the gaze becomes an 'insidious and persistent presence' in the city.[76] More specifically for this chapter, Betsworth argues convincingly that the cafe is a space in which 'surveillance, observation, and regulation are inscribed in both the physical structure and the hierarchical specular networks within it', and notes the constant surveillance of cafe's usually male 'patrons, waiters, and habitués' on the women in Jean Rhys' novels *Quartet* (1928) and *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930).[77] For Rhys' aging, unmarried, working-class women, as well as for their literary sister in Olivia Manning's novel, the public gaze simultaneously 'objectifies' and 'alienates, disturbs and threatens', rendering them always vulnerable to the 'value judgements of others in the public sphere'.[78]

We see the omnipresence of this public gaze in Jean Rhys' novel *Good Morning, Midnight*, in which the 'cruel eyes' of others haunt the urban wanderings of its protagonist.[79] The novel follows the aging and unhappy Sasha Jansen around Paris where she hopes to be 'saved, rescued, fished-up, half-drowned, out of the deep, dark river' of her past, with a suitcase of new clothes, 'hair shampooed and set', and

---

Short, 'No Place Like Home: The Hotel in Modernist Women's Writing' (unpublished thesis, Newcastle University, 2011); Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', *New Left Review*, 1, 91 (1992), 90-110; Emma Zimmerman, '"Always the same stairs, always the same room": The Uncanny Architecture of Jean Rhys's Good Morning, Midnight', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 38, 4 (Summer 2015), 74-92.

[75] Betsworth, p. 168.

[76] Short, p. 107. For more see: Jeremy Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. by Miran Bozovic (London: Verso, 1995); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977).

[77] Betsworth, p. 166, 168.

[78] Davidson, *Phobic Geographies*, p. 76; Short, p. 173.

[79] Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 81, 25.

resolutions not to drink too many apéritifs.[80] But the city is filled with inescapable watching eyes: 'everywhere are looks - blank, sly, amused, pitying, severe'.[81] For Sasha, for whom 'looking is judging', Carole Angier contends that the public gaze is always 'a challenge and an invasion'.[82] The novel opens with one of these judgemental looks, this time from Sidonie, a friend who implies that Sasha is 'getting to look old'.[83] Lending Sasha the money for her Parisian sojourn, Sidonie hopes it will give her the change of scene she needs to get back to feeling herself again. As the novel progresses, however, we see that Paris contains too many traces of her former life there, and all of the loneliness and despair that she has bottled up since.

Rhys encapsulates the judgemental or policing gaze in the character of Mr Blank, the owner of the Parisian dress-shop in which Sasha had worked many years before. In her memory of their brief interaction, this intimidating figure asserts his power over her younger self with his eyes, which openly appraise her body: 'down and up his eyes go, up and down'.[84] In the dress-shop, the pair 'stare at each other'; 'plat du jour - boiled eyes, served cold', Sasha thinks, as Mr Blank looks at her 'with distaste', 'as if [she] were a dog'.[85] And when she is unable to carry out a simple task he gives her in French, Sasha walks 'blindly' - Rhys' choice of visual adverb reinforcing the pair's imbalanced power dynamic - through the building's maze-like corridors, each passage ending in a lavatory.[86] All Sasha wants to do is 'run, run away from their eyes, run from their voices, run'.[87]

---

[80] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 10.
[81] Carole Angier, *Jean Rhys* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1990), p. 380.
[82] Angier, p. 380.
[83] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 11. Angier suggests that this friend, Sidonie, is based on Rhys' friendship with Germaine Richolet, from whom Rhys had already borrowed money (Angier, p. 366).
[84] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 18.
[85] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 23, 25, 24.
[86] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 22.
[87] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 24.

With his ‘ha-ha eyes’, Mr Blank is the ‘archetype of all those forces which hold her hostage’, suggests Thomas Staley, who goes on to argue that:

> The malignancy of the faceless and nameless oppressor is seen more clearly by Sasha than by any of Rhys’s other heroines. From this combination of paranoia and insight, Sasha recognizes those forces in society which turn her into a weak and helpless figure who simply cannot get on.[88]

As his name suggests, Mr Blank’s gaze stands in for all of the men who have ever ‘humiliated and degraded her’.[89] Mr Blank represents ‘Society’, of which Sasha is an ‘inefficient member’, ‘slow in the uptake, uncertain, slightly damaged in the fray’.[90] Mr Blank’s gaze infects the rest of Sasha’s stay in Paris, as she begins to feel the threat of other’s ‘boiled eyes’.[91] Strangers seem to turn their ‘cruel eyes’ upon her until this menacing gaze becomes all-engulfing.[92] Soon, even rooms and houses begin to threaten her:

> 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.[93]

Detached from their human form, these eyes leer and sneer at her in the street. Sasha repeatedly thinks: ‘I hate their eyes, I hate the way they laugh’.[94]

Throughout the novel, Sasha protects herself from the threat of this judgemental gaze by constructing a public facade: a personal form of armour composed of cosmetics and clothes that projects a socially acceptable image of youth, beauty and femininity to a world that judges her as an aging, unmarried, working-class woman. Sasha’s marginalisation, particularly the intersection of age and class, as well

---

[88] Thomas F. Staley, *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1979), p. 86.
[89] Jesse Munoz, ‘*Good Morning, Midnight*: Masks and Consequences’, *The Artifice* <https://bit.ly/3t9fELA> [accessed December 20 2020].
[90] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 25.
[91] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 25.
[92] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 81.
[93] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 28.
[94] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 144.

as her ambiguous racial identity, renders her an almost abject figure in a society that valorises youth and beauty.[95] Sasha constructs a cosmetic mask to temporarily disguise her waning looks, which are a visual measure of her social and sexual capital, enabling her to create an 'image of the self' that keeps 'the past and present contemporaneous in order to maintain value in the sexual marketplace', and this temporarily protects her from public gaze.[96]

In her article on the gendered economies of aging, Cynthia Port writes that the 'inter-relations of gender, value, age and expenditure' are articulated in Rhys' fiction, which depicts 'the economy of investment and loss that women face as they age'.[97] Wolfgang Haug calls this patrolling of female aging a 'vicious functional circle' enforced by a system that reifies youthfulness and a 'cosmetic self which is in turn commoditized', or, as Port describes it, the vicious economic cycle of 'investment and loss'.[98] Sasha repeatedly invests in make-up, clothes and hair treatments to transform her aging appearance and working-class socioeconomic markers into a socially acceptable image - she uses them to treat the 'loss' of social and sexual capital her aging body suffers - and these, in turn, become a form of mental protection from the pervasive threat of watching eyes:

---

[95] For more see on the colonial context of Rhys' novel see: Yanoula Athanassakis, 'The Anxiety of Racialized Sexuality in Jean Rhys'*, Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, 13, 2 (December 2016), 1-18; Christina Britzolakis, '"This way to the exhibition": Genealogies of Urban Spectacle in Jean Rhys's Interwar Fiction', *Textual Practice*, 21, 3 (2007), 457-82; Helen Carr, *Jean Rhys: Writers and their Work* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 2012); Carol Dell'Amico, *Colonialism and the Modernist Moment in the Early Novels of Jean Rhys* (London: Routledge, 2005); Mary Lou Emery, *Jean Rhys at World's End: Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Coral Ann Howells, *Jean Rhys* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1991); Delia Caparoso Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms: Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys and the Aesthetics of Dislocation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Elaine Savory, *Jean Rhys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Sue Thomas, *The Worlding of Jean Rhys* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999).

[96] Port, '"Money, for the night is coming"', p. 204.

[97] Port, '"Money, for the night is coming"', p. 204.

[98] Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society,* trans. by Robert Bock (London: Polity Press, 1986), p. 90-91; Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 101; Port, '"Money, for the night is coming"', p. 204.

> I try to decide what colour I shall have my hair dyed, and hang on to that thought as you hang on to something when you are drowning.[99]

Rhys' narrative is peppered with such moments. Sasha buys a hat, but the sense of calm does not last long, so she tells herself that she will buy a dress the next day, anything to keep up the 'transformation act'.[100] Rhys directly links this increased investment in commodities with aging:

> Now, money for the night is coming. Money for my hair, money for my teeth, money for shoes that won't deform my feet (it's not so easy now to walk around in cheap shoes with very high heels), money for good clothes, money, money. The night is coming.[101]

The 'night' of Sasha's life is coming, encroaching on her youth and beauty like the 'deep, dark waters' that threaten to drown her. She needs increasingly more money to keep up the masquerade of an unchanging or youthful appearance, and her money worries articulate what Port identifies as the

> necessary efforts to project beauty and desirability in an oppressive economy of visual display and exhibition are threatened not only by the women's poverty (on the contrary, their poverty and shabbiness mark them as vulnerable and sexually available), but also by the exhaustion and depletion of their bodies over time and through the effects of experience.[102]

Building on Port's work, Rishona Zimring argues that Sasha's cosmetic mask symbolises her 'alienation in a market economy that thrives on women's commodification and consumption'.[103] The constant application and maintenance of this mask, often touched up in the cafe lavatory, becomes Sasha's shield against a hostile world, whilst simultaneously revealing her entrapment within this pervasive cycle of commodity and consumption.

---

[99] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 44.
[100] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 53
[101] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 120.
[102] Port, '"Money, for the night is coming"', p. 206.
[103] Rishona Zimring, 'The Make-up of Jean Rhys's Fiction', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction,* 33, 2 (Spring 2000), 212-34 (p. 220).

Sasha is not naive to her position in this cycle, nor to her relationship to other's surveillance. While make-up and clothes offer 'some means of self-assertion', more often than not, Sasha is unable to continually and consistently fulfil the ideals of femininity through this 'purchasable' beauty, particularly when it comes to disguising her age.[104] Standing in front of a mirror, Sasha tells herself:

> it isn't my face, this tortured and tormented mask. I can take it off whenever I like and hang it up on a nail. Or shall I place on it a tall hat with a green feather, hang a veil on the lot, and walk about the dark streets so merrily?[105]

This purchasable, paintable public facade is a buffer against the humiliation and loneliness that follow older women in the city, and the feelings of shame that accompany them. But this buffer is only temporary. The 'tortured and tormented' mask represents the inescapable and increasing financially and emotionally painful process of recreating youth and beauty to fit an unachievable ideal of female beauty that might give her the social and sexual capital needed to secure financial stability - either through a man or a respectable job.

Caught in this endless cycle of 'investment and loss', Sasha's anxieties about presenting the correct image of youthful femininity become more desperate as she ages, reflecting, more widely, the attitude of society towards aging women at this time.[106] In our consumer culture, as Twigg argues, the body, and particularly the aging body, 'becomes a project to be worked upon, fashioned and controlled'.[107] As aging individuals are seen by dominant culture as 'a disruption of the visual field', their aging

---

[104] Zimring, p. 216.

[105] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 37-38.

[106] Port, '"Money, for the night is coming"', p. 204.

[107] Twigg, p. 61. For more see: Mike Featherstone and Mike Hepworth, 'The mask of ageing and the postmodern life course', in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 371-89; Chris Gilleard, 'Women, ageing and body talk', in *Cultural Gerontology*, ed. by Lars Andersson (Westport: Auburn House, 2002), pp. 139-60; Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, *Culture of Ageing: Self, Citizen and the Body* (London: Prentice-Hall, 2000).

visual markers must be disguised - or, at least, that is what Sasha believes.[108] Charlotte Greenhalgh reinforces the widespread nature of this outlook amongst women across the social strata in her history of aging in the twentieth century, noting the increasingly common use of rouge and powder to disguise the signs of aging.[109] From the thirties, Greenhalgh suggests that 'older women wearing lipstick were more likely to be praised for maintaining a dignified portion of sexual appeal'.[110] In a telling response to a Mass Observation directive about personal appearance, a sixty-three-year-old woman describes the 'forlorn hope' that cosmetics give her in the quest to magically 'rejuvenate the depressing spectacle that confronts [her] whenever [she looks] in a mirror', even if this is in fact a 'complete illusion'.[111] The cosmetic aspect of her public facade gives her a 'temporary feeling of confidence', she writes, 'one's face *feels* younger; even if it doesn't look it for long, and the moral support this induces gives one a pleasanter, more refreshed expression'.[112] For women of all ages, then, constructing this public facade has a 'fantastical' aspect that allows them to temporarily reinvent or escape their 'less-than-perfect lives'.[113]

Sasha, like the anonymous woman in the Mass Observation archive, constructs her public facade to rejuvenate or fabricate an image of a 'respectable woman' with the social and sexual economy to attract (and keep) a man who would financially secure her future.[114] Yet, for both women, the 'fantastical' aspects of the public facade reveal it to be a 'complete illusion', exposing this masquerade to be fallible.[115] For

[108] Twigg, p. 61. For more see: Frida Furman, 'There are no old Venuses: Older women's responses to their ageing bodies', in *Mothertime: Women, Ageing and Ethics*, ed. by Margaret Urban Walker (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), pp. 7-22.
[109] Greenhalgh, p. 127.
[110] Greenhalgh, p. 128.
[111] Directive Respondent (9141), reply to July 1950 Directive, Mass Observation Archive.
[112] Directive Respondent (9141), reply to July 1950 Directive, Mass Observation Archive.
[113] Greenhalgh, p. 129.
[114] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 88.
[115] Directive Respondent (9141), reply to July 1950 Directive, Mass Observation Archive.

Sasha, the public facade is revealed as fallible in the ladies' lavatory itself. The mirror becomes an extension of the policing gaze, implicitly augmenting Sasha's alienation by revealing the discrepancies between her cosmetic mask and the reality of her reflection. No matter what mask she paints on her face, the mirror, like the humiliating stares of strangers, reveals the truth behind the illusion:

> You imagine the carefully pruned, shaped thing that is presented to you is truth. That is just what it isn't. The truth is improbable, the truth is fantastic; it's in what you think is a distorting mirror that you see the truth.[116]

Upon entering 'another' Parisian lavatory that she knows - or, rather, remembers - very well, she is faced with her reflection in 'another of the well-known mirrors'.[117] The personified lavatory mirror speaks to Sasha:

> "Well, well," it says, "last time you looked in here you were a bit different, weren't you? Would you believe me that, of all the faces I see, I remember each one, that I keep a ghost to throw back at each one - lightly, like an echo - when it looks into me again?"[118]

This uneasy friend reminds Sasha of her fading looks, despite her meticulous cosmetic mask, and reflects back to her a ghost, a memory of a younger self, which Sasha sees as an 'echo' dancing 'lightly' in front of her eyes.

The Ghost in the Mirror

Ghostly reflections are a key symbol in Olivia Manning's novel *The Doves of Venus*, in which ideas of pretence and deception are interwoven into a narrative where, much like in Rhys' novel, 'women survive through trading on their good looks or on their social privilege'.[119] Written in the mid-fifties, though based on her life in London in the thirties, Manning's novel follows young Ellie Parsons as she escapes her provincial

[116] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 63.
[117] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 142.
[118] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 142.
[119] Dierdre David, *Olivia Manning: A Woman at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 221.

country life in search of independence and employment in the city, while naively falling in love with an older, wealthier and worldlier gentleman along the way.[120] While we will revisit Ellie's story in my third chapter, it is not the main focus here, as this chapter concentrates instead on her narrative foil, Petta Bellot, the middle-aged and unhappily separated wife of Ellie's lover Quintin Bellot. Manning herself was in her mid-forties when she began writing this novel, which, according to her biographers June and Neville Braybrook, is obsessed with themes of 'youth and age, innocence and experience'.[121] They write that Manning had:

> set the boundary between middle age and old age surprisingly early, at forty-five. In later years she was to maintain that she thought middle age the most difficult period in a woman's life.[122]

Indeed, in a candid interview with journalist and writer Kay Dick, fifty-five-year-old Manning admitted that she despised getting old: 'I hate seeing my face go to pieces. A lot of the excitement goes out of life as you get older'.[123] Through Petta, then, who obsessively worries about aging, Manning explores the struggle to retain a lover's affection (and his wallet) as a woman's wrinkles deepen and her charm fades.

In the novel's opening chapters, Quintin observes Petta's fading beauty when, after a night with his young lover, he receives a telephone call from a stranger who has just found her 'balancing on the parapet of Westminster Bridge'.[124] Arriving rather disgruntled to the milk bar where Petta has been taken to calm down, Quintin notices her 'pathetic' appearance:

---

[120] David, p. 237.
[121] Neville Braybrook and June Braybrook, *Olivia Manning: A Life* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2004), p. 165.
[122] Braybrook, p. 165.
[123] Kay Dick, *Friends and Friendship: Conversations and Reflections* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1974), p. 36.
[124] Olivia Manning, *The Doves of Venus* (London: Virago, 1991), p. 7. For more on milk bars see: Kate Bradley, 'Rational Recreation in the Age of Affluence: The Cafe and Working-Class Youth in London, c. 1939-65', in *Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Britain*, ed. by Erika Rappaport, Sandra Trudge and Mark Crowley (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 71-86.

> She gave him a quick, uncertain glance, then, making a movement coquettish and pathetic, turned away. She had been crying. Looking down at her head, he noticed among the filmy fairness of her hair a sort of dust of grey hairs. Her whole appearance had taken on a kind of lifeless dryness as though during the months she had been away, she had been pressed colourless like a flower in a book. Her lipstick had come off. In this light, her lips were mauve.[125]

In the late-night light of the milk bar, Quintin observes that Petta's 'lipstick had come off' so that her lips appear 'mauve': a pale, greying, middle-aged purple. Though Manning might not have intended, this colouring has an implicit meaning, too. As the first synthetic dye prepared by William Perkin in 1856, this colour amplifies her artificial appearance, much like the frivolous women in Virginia Woolf's story. Petta's usual coquettish tricks appear to Quintin, perhaps for the first time, 'pathetic' as he observes the fine dusting of grey hairs now on her head. Prone to invading airways and tickling throats, the imagery of dust aligns her age with dirt or debris, an association that will be explored in greater depth in my third chapter. Like this 'colourless' substance, Petta embodies a 'kind of lifeless dryness'. Her age has rendered her brittle, with the words 'filmy fairness' and 'colourless' suggesting she is almost translucent, growing increasingly invisible. In this moment, Quintin sees both her beauty and her presence in his life as fading, like a pressed 'flower in a book'.

Quintin notices these cracks in Petta's facade when, later that night, they return to his flat. He observes her 'critically':

> For years she had looked much younger than her age; now the mask of youth was fading. She behaved as if she was unaware of this.[126]

Though it is hard to believe that Petta is 'unaware' of her 'fading' looks, it is not until sometime later that Petta comprehends the true extent of her deterioration. This moment of realisation occurs at a dinner party at a 'big hotel' with Tom Claypole and

[125] Manning, p. 8-9.
[126] Manning, p. 10.

Alma, the former an old roué and the latter a rich, elderly woman whom Quintin is attempting to swindle through false affection (the affection that Petta desperately craves).[127] In this restaurant scene, Manning lays bare the connection between a performative public facade and economic power as Petta watches Quintin perform - or rather flirt - for the richer Alma, reversing the vicious gendered cycle in which Petta and the other women in this chapter are trapped. Manning writes:

> Petta watched him touching Alma's hand, gazing into her face, talking directly at her while his eyes watched, his voice held that emotional note he could emulate so perfectly. She had seen this act often enough before, but never performed for a plain woman of fifty odd.[128]

In the hope of securing Alma's fortune, despite his own relative financial security, Quintin carries on the 'act' of the doting younger lover in a moment that ironically echoes Petta's own behaviour throughout the novel.[129]

Unable to stomach his performance, Petta attempts to 'make her escape somehow', and we follow her across the restaurant and upstairs to the ladies' lavatory:

> Crossing the enormous Aubusson carpet, beneath the glitter of chandeliers, Petta moved with the elation of pure anger. In this mood she felt, as she could so seldom feel, freedom from all restraining fears, especially the fear of solitude. She was self-sufficient, as independent of the world as a disembodied spirit. She ran up the stairs like a girl.[130]

Her movement is filled with aggressive, energetic excitement. Striding across the restaurant with the 'elation of pure anger', she is filled with exhilaration, momentarily forgetting the 'fear of solitude' that plagues her everyday life: the fear of loneliness and financial insecurity in her old age that drives her to desperately attach herself to men who can financially, even if not emotionally, support her. Leaving these 'restraining fears' behind, she becomes temporarily 'self-sufficient' and 'independent'.[131] By

[127] Manning, p. 74.
[128] Manning, p. 86.
[129] Manning, p. 86.
[130] Manning, p. 86-87.
[131] Manning, p. 87.

following her own desire and abruptly leaving the table, Petta is, for once, satisfying her own needs instead of those of the man who is controlling her bank balance. This frisson of angry energy conjures up the ghost of her youth, as she becomes a 'disembodied spirit'.[132] This incorporeality allows her to be independent, free from others' control. Petta is no longer constrained by her aging, fading body which she has repeatedly moulded into a veneer of fresh-faced beauty for the visual pleasure of men like Quintin and Tom. Her metaphorical transformation into a 'disembodied spirit' is inextricably linked to her youth, as capturing her anger and elation allows her to revert to the (imaginary) ephemeral body of a young 'girl'.

Upon entering the restaurant lavatory, Petta is surrounded by youthful debutantes, who suffuse the cloakroom with a patina of energy:

> On the upper floor she was caught up among other girls, the young and delicious creatures who had drawn Claypole's eyes earlier in the evening. They seemed to be everywhere. They crowded the cloak-room. The air was heavy with the scent of their flowers and powder and young, warm bodies. Ball dresses fluted and swayed about them like the skirts of a *corps-de-ballet*.[133]

Petta is 'caught up' in the crowd of girls. With their petal-like 'fluted' ball dresses swaying about them, Petta and the debutantes move in unison 'like the skirts of a *corps-de-ballet*'. Their 'young, warm bodies' are ripe with floral fragrance, too, and the lavatory is filled with a heady 'scent of their flowers and powder and young, warm bodies'. Petta imagines she is one of the 'young and delicious creatures'. Her momentary transformation into a 'disembodied spirit' enables her to forget her aging body and, surrounded by smiling youthful faces, she embraces the female communality of the lavatory. Manning writes:

> A whisper of laughter moved them like electricity in the air. Petta caught their excitement. By the door a girl was re-arranging gardenias in the dark hair of a friend. Passing them, Petta smiled and they smiled back, eagerly yet shyly.

[132] Manning, p. 86-87.
[133] Manning, p. 86-87.

> Petta looked round, smiling, at the smoothly curved rose-petal youth of all these faces. Her own face seemed to her reflected in theirs, a white rose among pink roses.[134]

The floral metaphor continues as Petta sees herself as a 'white rose among pink roses'. Reflecting their 'round, smiling' faces, her smile is not painted on for the purpose of ensnaring a man, but becomes one of shared female pleasure. Seeing herself in the 'smoothly curved rose-petal youth of all these faces', Petta is transformed into a blossoming flower, no longer 'pressed colourless' 'in a book'.[135]

But her reflection in the mirror of their youth is unreal and temporary. Making her way to the actual lavatory mirror, reality destroys her temporary fantasy:

> As the skirts parted to give her space beneath the make-up lights over the dressing-tables, she moved forward confidently, unprepared. As she met herself emerging from among the petal-smooth girls, her smile went. Flushed and moist from the heat of the room, she seemed to have grown old in a moment.
>
> Her face shocked her. It had an appalling pathos. She looked round at the girls as though there might be an explanation of this change in her. They showed no surprise. She was a middle-aged woman. They accepted her age, just as they accepted their own youth.[136]

Having instilled her with confidence in the intimacy of the female-only lavatory, the unity of the young girls had allowed her to temporarily escape the demeaning public gaze, and this leaves her 'unprepared' for the reflection she sees in the mirror. Seeing a 'middle-aged woman' in the mirror, Manning presents Petta with the reality of her aging appearance, with the mirror symbolising the public gaze that sees her as an 'old' woman.

Amongst the young debutantes, Petta undertakes what Mike Hepworth and Julia Twigg describe as mirror scrutinising.[137] Mirror scrutinising is the point at which the public social gaze is internalised by an individual and, according to Maricel Oró-

[134] Manning, p. 87.
[135] Manning, p. 8-9.
[136] Manning, p. 87.
[137] Mike Hepworth, *Stories of Ageing* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), p. 44; Twigg, p. 61.

Piqueras, 'is the result of a society based on constant production and consumption in which youth is valued'.[138] Twigg argues that 'self-monitoring and surveillance' is more acute in spaces where the body is on display, like the bathroom, as these 'allow for a new form of reflexive self-scrutiny' towards the body and its changes.[139] Hepworth notes that examples of women using mirrors to examine their aging appearances are rife in literature, suggesting that this is a common trope because in the mirror 'we see ourselves as others see us'.[140] This public gaze is imbued with the ideals of youthful consumer culture which, in Manning's novel, is amplified by the young debutantes that share the restaurant lavatory. On the cusp of womanhood, these young girls are coming out to society and entering the marriage market, an economic exchange based on social and sexual currency, of which youth and beauty play a large part. This is significant for Petta as she has ultimately failed to succeed in the marriage market: her marriage to Quintin is over (indeed, he openly rejected her for Alma only moments ago) and, as an older woman, she is now struggling to secure another partner to support her in her old age.

As Woolf declared in *A Room of One's Own* that women have functioned as mirrors 'reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size', then, in Manning's text the debutantes act as a mirror to the aging Petta, reflecting her back at half her size.[141] Looking 'round at the girls as though there might be explanation of this change in her', Petta is 'shocked' at her reflection, and the 'appalling pathos' of her middle-aged

[138] Maricel Oró-Piqueras, 'The complexities of female aging: Four women protagonists in Penelope Lively's novels', *Journal of Aging Studies*, 36 (2016), 10-16, p. 14.
[139] Twigg, p. 61
[140] Hepworth, *Stories of Ageing*, p. 44, 45.
[141] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, in *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. by Michèle Barrett (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), pp. 3-104 (p. 32). For more on this see: Kathleen Woodward, 'Introduction', in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. ix-xxix (p. xii).

appearance is augmented amongst the 'rose-petal youth of all these faces'.[142] Leading to this moment of recognition, Manning uses the self-reflexive lavatory mirror to turn the public gaze on to Petta who, for the first time in the novel, sees herself through the eyes of others.

In their work on women and aging, Kathleen Woodward and Nancy K. Miller affirm the mirror's importance for this moment of realisation, and argue that after the initial 'shock of recognition' the aging individual undergoes a process of denial, disguise or acceptance.[143] We see this play out in Manning's narrative, as Petta violently covers her face with make-up to combat the shock of her middle-aged reflection:

> She slapped her puff over her face, trying to obliterate it with powder. Lifting her chin, she gave herself a brief glance through half-closed lids, then left the glass. No more smiles for the girls. She collected her coat and went.[144]

The earlier 'elation of pure anger' which had resulted in feelings of 'freedom from all restraining fears' and, unusually for Petta, self-sufficiency and independence, is now transformed into anger towards herself and her aging appearance.[145] Slapping her powder puff across her face, the cosmetic ritual becomes imbued with violence as if 'trying' to 'obliterate [her aging face] with powder'.[146] Applying her make-up becomes an assault and, afterwards, she is barely able to look at herself in the glass, checking the result 'through half-closed lids'.[147] Now unable to return the young debutantes' 'smiles', she hurriedly leaves the lavatory.[148]

---

[142] Manning, p. 87.
[143] Nancy K. Miller, 'The Marks of Time', in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 3-19 (p. 5). For more see: Oró-Piqueras, p. 14; Kathleen Woodward, *Aging and its Discontents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 65.
[144] Manning, p. 87.
[145] Manning, p. 87.
[146] Manning, p. 87.
[147] Manning, p. 87.
[148] Manning, p. 87.

After this moment of recognition in front of the lavatory mirror, Petta is haunted by her aging reflection. In the ‘solitude’ of the ‘indifferent’ street, her ‘self-sufficiency faltered’ and:

> her old desolation came down on her, she was troubled by a memory that had often recurred since that night before the war when, the centre of a party of friends, she had gone to the Chelsea Arts Ball. It was the usual crowded, noisy occasion, when you might glimpse a person on the floor or in a passageway and not see them again all evening. She had been oddly haunted all night by a woman, dressed as a pierrot, wearing a green wig. It was the wig she noticed when she first saw the woman getting out of the car beneath the Albert Hall portico. Petta had glanced back at her and seen the green woolly wig, the large ear-rings, the satin suit, the red balloon in hand, surrounding, with a sinister incongruity, a despairing face - a face of lost beauty, peaked out of recognition by discontent. As she and her two companions, a man and woman, followed Petta’s party up the steps, Petta heard the woman’s voice, tiny, tinny, querulous, demanding some attention of some sort from the man.[149]

Petta is ‘haunted’ by this memory of the ‘old woman’ from a party years ago, which merges in her mind with the image of her aging reflection in the lavatory mirror into a ghost of her future self.[150] The woman is a pitiful figure; unlike Petta’s own beautiful ‘marquise’ costume, she is dressed as a ‘pierrot’, a stock figure in French pantomime.[151] Throughout the night, her gaudy costume had repeatedly drawn Petta’s eye, leaving her 'unaccountably disturbed’ and unable to escape it.[152] This light-hearted costume holds ‘sinister’ connotations for Petta, who finds its comedy incongruous with the woman’s ‘despairing face’, which ironically echoes the (usually comically) morose clown costume.

These ‘sinister’ undertones are the result of a flicker of ‘recognition by discontent’ that passes between the two women. Still a young beauty herself at the time of the party, Petta garners the attention that the Pierrot seeks, as Manning describes how people ‘step aside for her and gaze after her and speak their admiration

[149] Manning, p. 88.
[150] Manning, p. 89.
[151] Manning, p. 88.
[152] Manning, p. 88.

aloud'.[153] In an extravagant act, a young student even climbs up to her box to hand her a rose, describing how all of the other women 'are all faded, except you'.[154] Yet even as the man gives her this complement, the green Pierrot's wig floats into Petta's eyeline and she thinks: 'There but for the grace of God…'.[155] Here, the ellipsis indicate that Petta knows one day soon she will be the fading flower, a real life Pierrot like the woman in the clown costume, with a 'tiny, tinny, querulous' voice 'demanding some attention' (the repeated determiner 'some' emphasising the pathos of her desperation) from her male companions. Manning's use of the image of the faded flower is poignant, as it echoes the floral imagery of the lavatory scene. Moments earlier, Petta had realised that she was now a 'white rose' (the colour perhaps reminiscent of the Pierrot's traditionally white painted face) amongst 'pink roses', no longer one of the 'young and delicious creatures' for whom young men 'speak admiration aloud' or, indeed, shower with roses.[156]

Walking the 'cold and lonely dark' streets, Petta remembers the last time she saw the Pierrot as she was leaving the party:

> she looked back, seeking something, and saw what she sought: the woman in the green wig moving alone among the dancers, fluttering her hands and singing to herself in a voice like a wail.[157]

In this final image of loneliness, pity and pain, Petta is left wondering why she had 'never forgotten her'.[158] This 'old woman, a wreck of a human creature', had 'entered her mind years ago and now had a permanent place there', trapped in a 'dark' area of her mind 'peopled with ghouls'.[159]

---

[153] Manning, p. 88.
[154] Manning, p. 89.
[155] Manning, p. 89.
[156] Manning, p. 87, 88.
[157] Manning, p. 88, 89.
[158] Manning, p. 88-89.
[159] Manning, p. 89. This image of the wreck is a popular metaphor for aging and the aging body. It is also used by Susan Sontag in her 1997 essay 'The Double Standard of Aging' where she suggests that

We see why this memory haunts Petta as the novel draws to a close. Through the moment of realisation in the lavatory mirror, Petta recognises that if she 'were not always vigilant to skirt it, she stumbled in and was lost' to the 'dark' place in her mind where the memory of the old woman is 'trapped'.[160] Manning tense choice is apt, here. Manning chooses not to use the hypothetical future tense ('if she were not always vigilant', *she would stumble* in and be lost), which would leave some uncertainty in the narrative as to whether Petta would follow the same fate as the old woman.[161] Instead, Manning uses the past simple tense ('she stumbled'), suggesting that it has already happened, and this subtly foreshadows Petta's future.[162] We see this towards the end of the novel when Petta thinks:

> Now that she had realised she was no longer young, she did not know how she should behave. She had become a stranger in her own life.[163]

By the end of the novel, then, Petta has 'stumbled in' to this 'dark area of her mind' - she has gradually lost her sense of self along with her hopes of a financially and emotionally stable old age.[164] It is her final mention in the novel, however, that reveals the reality of her future as an aging, unmarried woman who has built a life trading on her looks. In a throwaway line from Quintin, we are told that she is 'carrying on some squalid liaison somewhere. The usual thing'.[165] This final image - carrying on her 'usual' 'squalid' liaisons - reveal that Petta is trapped in an unending cycle of sexual

---

'advanced age [...] is a shipwreck, no matter with what courage elderly people insist on continuing the voyage' (Susan Sontag 'The Double Standard of Aging', in *The Other Within Us: Feminist Explorations of Women and Aging*, ed. by Marilyn Pearsall (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 19-24 (p. 19)). Kathleen Williams Renk argues that the idea of the wreck - symbolising that women are 'assumed to be worthless to the society in which we live' - was a fruitful metaphor for early twentieth-century women writers like Jean Rhys (Renk, p. 318). Renk argues that their writing allowed later generations, like Sontag, to 'begin to understand and confront the "shipwreck" of old age for women' (Renk, p. 326).

[160] Manning, p. 89.
[161] Manning, p. 89.
[162] Manning, p. 89.
[163] Manning, p. 294.
[164] Manning, p. 89.
[165] Manning, p. 312.

charades, with the (age related) failure of her public facade reflecting her economic and social precarity. Almost forgotten by the novel's close, Petta embodies the culturally invisible figure she had worked hard to escape.

The Invisible Woman

Haunted by the threat of cultural invisibility, Petta's anxieties about aging stem from the youthful consumer culture in which she lives, and which exists, as we have seen throughout this chapter, in the form of a judgemental public gaze. It is the threat of this gaze that requires the aging, working-class woman to construct a public mask to disguise her aging features and recreate a facade of youth and beauty that will give her the social and sexual currency to attract or retain the affection of the men who will provide her with financial security in their old age. The failure of the public mask, however, revealed to Petta through a moment of realisation in the lavatory mirror, reflects the widespread cultural invisibility of the aging woman; by the end of Manning's novel, Petta is abandoned and ignored, reduced to a couple of careless comments by her ex-husband. The public gaze demarcates the boundaries of the public facade and, when her cosmetic mask and aging appearance fail to meet the requirements, the aging woman is rendered a figure of pity, disgust or irrelevance.

These texts reveal that the aging woman comes to occupy an increasingly liminal social position, then, as she is both invisible and 'hypervisible'.[166] In the public spaces of cafes and restaurants, older women are always under surveillance - the public gaze is continually judging their public facade - yet they are also ignored because of their aging appearance. The invisibility of the aging, working-class woman is epitomised in the ghost-like figure of the lavatory attendant in Virginia Woolf's story

[166] Woodward, 'Performing Age, Performing Gender', p. 167, 163.

‘The Ladies Lavatory’, who is perhaps a literary incarnation of the imagined futures of Manning and Rhys’ protagonists. The lavatory attendant, who remains nameless throughout Woolf’s unpublished draft and is cut entirely from her short story ‘The Watering Place’, is ignored by the gossiping ‘young ladies’ touching up their make-up in front of the mirror.[167] As unremarkable and ubiquitous as any other piece of lavatory furniture, Woolf writes that ‘as usual, there was an attendant - one of those women who are forever opening doors’.[168] The lavatory attendant’s life is defined by the tidal coming and going of women, much like the aural and olfactory tides ‘for ever drawing and withdrawing’ from the toilet cubicles.[169]

With the ‘human race’ ‘always running in hastily’, like the soundtrack of gushing and flushing, the lavatory attendant is privy to the endless gossip of the ‘common little tarts’ that Woolf had observed in her diary.[170] Unlike Woolf’s salacious excitement as she sat ‘p--ing’ quietly behind the ‘thin’ cubicle door, however, the lavatory attendant’s ‘expression’ is ‘weary’ as she has heard this gossip before:

> The lavatory attendant had heard them when the Regiment was all the rage. And long before that. [...] You might think that the swish she makes was the break of some channel wave: that nothing changes in human nature: that Bert is a perennial figure: that accounts for the expression on the face of the lavatory attendant.[171]

Her weary expression is poignant as it signals that the lavatory attendant has overheard many stories like the one about Bert and Gert’s sexual transgressions. Noting the connections between this story and a similar one told in Woolf’s *Between the Acts* (1941), a novel written at around the same time as the short story, based on the real-life assault of a young woman in a British barracks, Heather Levy suggests

[167] Woolf, ‘Watering Place’, p. 393.
[168] Woolf, ‘Ladies Lavatory’, p. 198.
[169] Woolf, ‘Watering Place’, p. 394.
[170] Woolf, ‘Ladies Lavatory’, p. 198; Woolf, *Diary*, *1936-1941*, p. 357.
[171] Woolf, *Diary*, *1936-1941*, p. 357; Woolf, ‘Ladies Lavatory’, p. 199.

that Woolf subtly imbues this moment with undertones of sexual violence.[172] In doing so, Woolf implicitly underscores the prevalence of the sexual threat facing women across the social strata. More importantly, by separating the gossiping tarts and the weary lavatory attendant through the unspoken boundaries of the lavatory compartments, Woolf emphasises that fact that working-class women in particular do not have the protection of money, marriage or social status, and are more likely to occupy dangerous urban spaces, like a public lavatory, than their middle-class counterparts gossiping in front of the mirror, and this imbues the lavatory scene with subtle class tensions.

Woolf emphasises this class difference further when she dwells on the fact that the lavatory attendant remains anonymous to the women rushing into the lavatory 'with their minds on the meal awaiting them' outside.[173] Levy notes that this sets up an 'important class bound distinction' between the middle-class diners and the working-class attendant.[174] Unlike the diner's hurried visits to the lavatory, the

> lavatory attendant is always there and so there is no urgency in her ablutions. No meal is ever awaiting her in the dining room. Perhaps she may have some kitchen scraps at the end of her shift in a back room.[175]

The lavatory attendant is 'disconnected' from the lives of those inside the restaurant by both her physical association with the lavatory space - she is separated from the diners by the perpetually 'opening' and 'shutting' doors - and by her social status.[176] Woolf considers the life of lavatory attendant to be demarcated by the four walls of the lavatory itself, imagining that she 'lives in this room':

> They When, in old age, they look back through the corridors of memory, [...] their part must be different from any other. It must be cut up: disconnected. [...] They The door must be always opening: and shutting. They can have no settled

[172] Levy, *Servants of Desire*, p. 166.
[173] Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory', p. 198.
[174] Levy, *Servants of Desire*, p. 165.
[175] Levy, *Servants of Desire*, p. 165.
[176] Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory', p. 198.

> relations with their kind. The memories of the lavatory attendant have never been written.[177]

Here, Woolf's repeated use of the pronoun 'They' reinforces both the lavatory attendant's invisibility and her hypervisibility. The use of 'They' renders her invisible, as her specific, individual identity is no longer seen. At the same, she is hypervisible, because her aging, working-class body is all that is seen, situating her in a homogenous group of working-class women trapped (even if just metaphorically) by the economic reality of their lives (symbolised by the four walls of the lavatory).

Receiving 'no empathy' or attention from the 'common little tarts' at the mirror, the lavatory attendant 'does not ever really escape her economically deprived life'.[178] Indeed, Levy argues that as 'your economic status dictates the size of rooms that you will sleep in for the rest of your life', the lavatory attendant will merely trade the small enclosed space of the lavatory for an equally small space on retirement.[179] As such, the lavatory attendant inhabits a:

> fluctuating water world [...] like a piece of seaweed that floats [...] this way, then that way. [...] tossed up and down like a piece of seaweed [...] The rush of water is always floating her up and down.[180]

Suspended in this watery world, permanently unsettled and 'fluctuating', Woolf imagines the lavatory attendant as a 'piece of seaweed': a slippery, slimy, ugly sea-plant, tethered to a rock (a metaphor for her inescapable social situation) or 'floating' with the tide.[181] Through these images, then, Woolf constructs the lavatory attendant as an unimportant, forgotten figure and, by cutting her from 'The Watering Place' altogether and refusing to imagine her future in either story, Woolf reinforces the unbreachable divide between the lives of working and middle-class women. In this

[177] Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory', p. 198, 199.
[178] Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory', p. 199; Woolf, *Diary*, *1936-1941*, p. 357; Levy, *Servants of Desire*, p. 168.
[179] Levy, *Servants of Desire*, p. 168.
[180] Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory', p. 199.
[181] Woolf, 'Ladies Lavatory', p. 199.

moment, Levy argues that 'the narrator suggests that they even have different memories and that the corridors of old age they walk will be different'.[182] While Levy sees this as an example of Woolf's 'callous indifference and prurient absorption in the working class woman's body', Woolf's subtle handling of this overlooked space and character actually enacts subtle negotiations between the lavatory attendant's autonomy and homogeneity, and, more importantly, centres the narrative of the aging, working-class woman.[183]

Writing in her diary some five years earlier on the day her optician had suggested she 'was not as young as [she was]', Woolf had mused on what it 'means that one now seems to a stranger not a woman, but an elderly woman' - that is, what it means to be seen as part of a homogenous group of older women.[184] Later that day she writes:

> I was in a queer mood, thinking myself very old: but now I am a woman again - as I always am when I write.[185]

For Woolf, it is the process of writing - using her mind in contrast to her 'wrinkled & aged' body - that rejuvenates her, returning her to the youthful category of 'woman' again.[186] In their writing, Manning, Rhys and Woolf have emphasised the importance of capturing this period of a woman's life, often overlooked, as indeed the texts in this chapter have been, in dominant historical narratives.[187] Their texts have offered

[182] Levy, *Servants of Desire*, p. 163.
[183] Levy, *Servants of Desire*, , p.163
[184] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1925-1930*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1980), III, p. 230.
[185] Woolf, *Diary, 1925-1930,* p. 231.
[186] Woolf, *Diary, 1925-1930,* p. 230.
[187] In recent years, Jean Rhys' novel *Good Morning, Midnight* has garnered more academic attention than many of her female peers, as the introduction to this thesis discussed. While Virginia Woolf is considered a canonical modernist writer, these particular short stories have received virtually no critical attention, with the exception of Heather Levy's monograph. In particular, Olivia Manning's *The Doves of Venus* has been overlooked in favour of her more political novel, *Fortunes of War* (1960), despite the former's equally political and feminist themes. Yet Manning, Rhys and Woolf's texts all paved the way for later generations of women writers to continue to centre narratives of aging, which Mike Hepworth

important ways of understanding aging women by centring their myriad subjective experiences, despite the cultural invisibility of these individuals in early twentieth-century society. In doing so, their texts have confronted, or encouraged us to confront, the ways in which ageism and sexism intersect to marginalise the middle-aged woman in the first half of the twentieth century, whose experience of public space is defined by the social anxieties around class and aging. Sitting alongside work by Charlotte Greenhalgh, Maricel Oró-Piqueras and Kathleen Williams Renk, then, this chapter has investigated how these writers offer important or unusual perspectives on the aging woman by 'disturbing the ageist gaze by exploring its effects and insisting on the complex emotional lives of the ageing characters, making their invisibility visible'.[188] Significantly, as Maroula Joannou suggests, 'simply acknowledging the importance of moments of being and incandescence in the life of a character, who might otherwise be represented as wholly pitiful, can in itself be a mark of respect'.[189]

Focusing on the ladies' lavatory has been a useful way to critique the intersections of age, class and gender as it is an everyday urban space that reflects the anxieties and limitations that defined women's lives at this time. In this chapter, I have used this bathroom space as a lens through which to refocus critical attention on literature's underexplored figures and their everyday lives: the aging, unmarried, often penniless woman. By turning my attention to literary representations of the ubiquitous cafe and restaurant lavatory in the first of the twentieth century, I have read texts whose exploration of aging woman paved the way for fiction writers and academic scholars of later decades, as bookshelves gradually 'expanded to hold books on

notes increased from the seventies. Hepworth provides a useful bibliography that charts the increase in novels centring women's aging from the 1970s (Hepworth, *Stories of Ageing*, p. 23).

[188] Sarah Falcus, 'Unsettling Ageing in Three Novels by Pat Barker', *Ageing and Society*, 32, 8 (2012), 1382-98 (p. 1386).

[189] Maroula Joannou, "*Ladies Please Don't Smash These Windows": Women's Writing, Feminist Consciousness and Social Change, 1918-38* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), p. 85.

feminists getting older'.[190] In their novels and short stories, Olivia Manning, Jean Rhys and Virginia Woolf use the ladies' lavatory not merely as a mimetic backdrop for their narratives of female aging, but as an imaginative literary device through which to think through women's identity and their sense of place or belonging in society. These texts reveal an awareness and sensitivity to both the complex web of social anxieties that defined the ladies' lavatory at this time - anxieties still prevalent today - and the ideological conflicts that defined the everyday experience of the aging, working-class woman. In writing narratives that centre these culturally invisible women, Manning, Rhys and Woolf reclaim and resituate the older woman's overlooked narratives and redraw the critical map of women's everyday lives as they attempt to carve out a space for themselves in the modern city.

[190] Lynne Segal, *Out of Time: The Pleasures and Perils of Ageing* (London: Verso, 2015), p. xii.

The Hotel Bathroom

> These hotels are not consoling places. Far from it. Any number of people had hung up their hats on those pegs. Even the flies, if you thought of it, had settled on other people's noses. As for the cleanliness which hit him in the face, it wasn't cleanliness, so much as bareness, frigidity; a thing that had to be. Some arid matron made her rounds at dawn sniffing, peering, causing blue-nosed maids to scour, for all the world as if the next visitor were a joint of meat to be served on a perfectly clean platter. For sleep, one bed; for sitting in, one arm-chair; for cleaning one's teeth and shaving one's chin, one tumbler, one looking-glass. Books, letters, dressing-gown, slipped about on the impersonality of the horse-hair like incongruous impertinences.[1]

In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), the hotel is one of the many urban spaces that Peter Walsh ponders during his stay in London. Returning to England after five years abroad, Peter wants his hotel room to be a private space in which he can process his daily activities and observations, but he quickly comes to realise that it is 'far from' the 'consoling' place he had been hoping for. Instead, the hotel's 'impersonality' reinforces his sense of unsettledness in a country irrevocably different to the one he left behind. This unsettledness is amplified by the 'bareness, frigidity' of the intricately replicated rooms, each with 'one bed', 'one arm-chair', 'one tumbler' for the single person who will use it that night. Retaining the traces of 'any number of people' who had 'hung up their hats on those pegs', these everyday items seem 'incongruous' to their faux-domestic surroundings. Even the flies, Peter notes, had 'settled on other people's noses'.[2]

In his essay 'The Hotel Room', D. J. van Lennep argues that these 'traces' are a constant reminder of our lack of autonomy in hotel rooms. For Lennep, the sight of the empty wardrobe, which he opens 'to see whether the towels are indeed clean', reminds him:

---

[1] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2012), p. 157.
[2] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 157.

> from the first moment that only a few hours before *my* room was someone else's room. Who slept in this bed, washed himself in this sink, used this glass? The room has been made up, the traces carefully removed, the room is fresh and if everything is all right, then there is no "smell" [...] The hotel room is *for anybody* who can pay for a night's rest, and thus it is for noone.[3]

Lennep articulates the feeling that Peter Walsh experiences when he sees the single bed, arm-chair, tumbler, noting that these are 'one of tens or hundreds which have been purchased simultaneously'.[4] This detachment from familiar objects, furniture and spaces offers Lennep a liberatory anonymity that echoes the 'impersonality' that Peter Walsh identified, and this imbues his actions with 'a freedom, a "looseness," a "being free from everything"'.[5] For Lennep, unlike for Peter, however, the anonymity of the impersonal hotel room is transformative:

> I am here in a completely different mode of existence. I am free from part of my social obligation. I am a stranger, a "number" in a numbered room.[6]

Existing as a 'number' in the 'impersonal hotel room', Lennep is able to escape his everyday 'obligations and traditions', temporarily transforming his sense of self through the room's anonymity and impersonality.[7]

Building on Lennep's idea, this chapter posits the modern hotel 'room with bath' as a temporary space outside of everyday life.[8] Neither fully public nor fully private, much like the interstitial cafe lavatory, the hotel room is a space in between the publicness of the city and the privacy of the home. In their work on the hotel as a site of transition and transgression, Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan suggest that it is always 'out-of-time' and 'out-of-place', a 'betwixt transitory space' that enables new

[3] D. J. van Lennep, 'The Hotel Room', in *Phenomenological Psychology: The Dutch School*, ed. by Joseph J. Kockelmans (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), pp. 209-15 (p. 212).
[4] Lennep, p. 212.
[5] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 157; Lennep, p. 213.
[6] Lennep, p. 212.
[7] Lennep, p. 214, 213.
[8] Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 33.

opportunities for 'adventure'.[9] While focusing primarily on contemporary hotels, Pritchard and Morgan's research speaks more widely to hotels since the nineteenth century when they assert that these 'liminal' spaces are important sites where 'dominant discourses and wider hegemonic socio-cultural relations are resisted, contested or affirmed'.[10] Echoing Lennep's essay, they suggest that 'whilst the hotel is subject to the same laws and mores which govern our lives elsewhere, it is also seemingly a place of anonymity where guests can "disappear" and where the normal social conventions can be challenged and flouted'.[11] This association with anonymity or impersonality has important implications for the way individuals experience and write about the hotel, facilitating opportunities to flout the social expectations of the dominant spaces of the city or the home.

In her thesis on the early twentieth-century hotel, one of the most extensive studies of this space, Emma Short takes this point further, arguing that the liminal hotel room, aligned in the cultural imagination with 'sex and, more specifically, with sexual transgression', was a particularly important space for women, who, for perhaps the first time, had a space in which they could explore their sexual desires away from the moral constraints of the home or public demands of the city.[12] In this chapter, my

[9] Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan, 'Hotel Babylon? Exploring Hotels as Liminal Sites of Transition and Transgression', *Tourism Management*, 27 (2006), 762-72 (p. 764, 763). For more on hotels and liminality see: Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Hotel Lobby', in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 173-85; Joanna Pready, 'Liminality in a London Hotel: Henry Green's *Party Going* and the Impact of Space on Identity', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, 7, 1 (March 2009) <https://bit.ly/3aI19rj> [accessed 21 April 2020]; Joanna Pready, 'The power of place: re-negotiating identity in hotel fiction' (unpublished thesis, University of Nottingham, 2009); Emma Short, 'No Place Like Home: The Hotel in Modernist Women's Writing' (unpublished thesis, Newcastle University, 2011); Douglas Tallack, '"Waiting, Waiting": The Hotel Lobby', *Irish Journal of American Studies*, 7 (1998), 1-20.

[10] Pritchard and Morgan, p. 763.

[11] Pritchard and Morgan, p. 764.

[12] Short, p. 61. For a wider hotel history see: Charlotte Bates, 'Hotel Histories: Modern Tourists, Modern Nomads and the Culture of Hotel-Consciousness', *Literature and History*, 12, 2 (2003), 62-75; Molly Berger, *Hotel Dreams: Luxury, Technology, and Urban Ambition in America, 1829–1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Mary Cathcart Borer, *The British Hotel Through the Ages* (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1972); Bettina Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting in Early*

readings of the modern hotel, and specifically women's experience within it, are situated in the context of changing attitudes towards female sexuality and identity during the first few decades of the twentieth century, and reflect the limited range of sexual identities available to women outside of - and even within - marriage.[13] Women who wanted to fulfil their sexual desires outside of heterosexual relationships were seen to deviate from the norm, with society refusing to accommodate or imagine female sexuality and agency outside of the privacy of marriage. The liminality or, as Lennep sees it, 'freedom' of the modern hotel is important, then, as it gave women the space and opportunity to explore these taboo desires and, as such, provided writers like Jean Rhys, Christina Stead and Henry Green with a useful narrative space in which to examine women's social, sexual and economic constraints.[14]

Through a series of close readings of three interwar novels - Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), Christina Stead's *The Beauties and Furies* (1936) and Henry Green's *Party Going* (1939) - this chapter explores how writers play with this liminal spatiality, which infuses the hotel bathroom spaces of their novels with simultaneously transgressive, imprisoning and liberating connotations. Building on Homi K. Bhabha's work on the radical potential of liminal spaces, Short argues that these are

---

Twentieth-Century German and Austrian Literature: Checking in to Tell a Story (London: Camden House, 2006); Paul Slattery, *The Economic Ascent of the Hotel Business* (Oxford: Goodfellow Publishing, 2009); Albert Smith, *The English Hotel Nuisance* (London: D. Bryce and Son, 1855); Derek Taylor, *Ritzy* (London: Milman Press, 2003); Derek Taylor and David Bush, *The Golden Age of Hotels* (London: Northwood, 1974); Arthur White, *Palaces of the People* (London: Rapp and Whiting, 1968).

[13] For more on this see: Katherine Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage: Singleness in England, 1914-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1997); Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1970-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984); Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); Terri Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House: Female Transient Space in the 1930s (unpublished thesis, University of Oxford, 2011).

[14] Lennep, p. 213.

> spaces in which the marginalised can fight against the discursive norms that operate to oppress them. Equally, however, liminal spaces are uncanny, threatening and dangerous, promising nothing but the unknown.[15]

This contradiction sits at the heart of this chapter, which, by dissecting three narratives that play with the hotel's liminality, will reveal it to be a useful literary setting for discussions of belonging, marginality and liberation.[16] In what follows, I investigate how the impersonal hotel room and bathroom in Rhys, Stead and Green's novels reflects feelings of claustrophobia and marginalisation, whilst simultaneously providing a space for female transgression and self-exploration. In doing so, this chapter considers the extent to which the hotel room and bathroom were one of the few spaces in the modern city in which women could express or, at least, explore their sexual desires.

The Impersonal Hotel

The 'most luxurious luxury hotel on earth' proclaims Arnold Bennett, describing the wonders of London's Savoy hotel as 'an easy first among the hotels of Europe - first in expensiveness, first in exclusiveness, first in that mysterious quality known as "style"'.[17] Dubbed the 'Palace on the Thames' by *The Observer*, the Savoy hotel promised levels of luxury not yet seen in Britain outside of the private home.[18] Opening in 1889, and bringing a new 'vigour and vim' to the hotel scene, the construction of the Savoy was 'a triumph', seen by all as 'a world record made by British labour backed by British capital in the capital of Britain'.[19] The hotel was lavished with stylish architectural features and new technologies:

---

[15] Short, p. 51-52; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 148.
[16] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 33.
[17] Arnold Bennett, *Imperial Palace* (London: Cassell, 1931), p. 105; Arnold Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 16.
[18] George R. Sims, 'Savoy Hotel: World Record', *The Observer* (30 October 1910), 1-8 (p. 1).
[19] Sims, 'Savoy Hotel', p. 4.

> the restaurant was panelled in mahogany, there were several private dining-rooms, a billiards-room, smoking room and ballroom, and there were five hydraulic lifts.[20]

Responding to the Savoy's refurbishment and extension, the *British Architect* hailed 'the drainage and plumbing system' 'one of the most complete sanitary schemes carried out in recent years', going on to exclaim 'that never before have so many plumbers been employed within one building'.[21] These plumbers were needed to provide the hotel with sixty-seven fully-plumbed bathrooms when it first opened, shared between two hundred guest rooms.[22] The last luxury hotel that opened before the Savoy in London, the Hotel Victoria on Northumberland Avenue, had only four fully-plumbed bathrooms to two hundred bedrooms.[23] The Savoy's unusual but forward-thinking ratio apparently 'compelled the builder to enquire whether it was anticipated that the guests would be amphibious'.[24]

The Savoy was a key part of a thriving hotel scene. Throughout the nineteenth century, London and other major cities had witnessed the rise of luxury hotels when the development of the railways had had a shattering effect on British industry. Acting as a catalyst for a prosperous tourism industry, railways sparked a transport and tourism revolution.[25] An 1864 article in *The Observer* notes that:

---

[20] Borer, p. 209.
[21] 'Savoy Hotel Extension', *British Architect*, 61, 19 (6 May 1904), 342-43 (p. 342).
[22] With thanks to the Savoy hotel archivist, Susan Scott, for this information.
[23] With thanks to the Savoy hotel archivist, Susan Scott, for this information.
[24] Taylor and Bush, p. 99.
[25] The history of railway hotels is key to the development of the modern hotel. Railway hotels offered a growing middle class their first taste of luxury, setting high standards of comfort and convenience that were facilitated by Britain's increasing economic prosperity. The late-eighteen thirties into the forties and fifties saw grand hotels opening at most London stations. One of the earliest was The Grosvenor at Victoria station, the setting for Henry Green's *Party Going*, which opened a century earlier in 1839. These early railway hotels set the standard for luxury and style that was to be associated with hotels for the next century. For more see: David Bowie, 'Innovation and 19th century hotel industry evolution', *Tourism Management*, 64 (2018), 312-23; A. B. Granville, *Spas of England and Principle Sea-Bathing Places* (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1841); Charles George Harper, *The Old Inns of Old England* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1906); Jack Simmons, 'Railways, Hotels, and Tourism in Great Britain, 1839-1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19, 2 (April 1984), 201-22.

> The rapid development of the railway system, however, from all parts of the kingdom to the metropolis, and the facilities afforded for expeditious locomotion thereby, has naturally led to what may be truly termed a national taste for travelling, a movement which has also had the effect of producing a complete and corresponding revolution in the general character of hotel accommodation.[26]

Hotel development was bound up in evolving transport networks, a rising consumer economy and a flourishing tourism industry, coupled with a huge increase in population during the second half of the nineteenth century, which more than doubled in the years between 1837 and 1901.[27] In her history of the British hotel, Mary Borer suggests that 'despite the millions who were too poor to travel anywhere, hundreds of thousands of people were becoming increasingly prosperous and able to enjoy the opportunities now offered to them of comfortable travel and hotels'.[28] By the turn of the century, the proliferation of luxury and railway hotels, and, in turn, other commercial accommodation, had initiated a 'change in the social life of London': new ways of eating, drinking, partying and using public space were born.[29]

Despite the profusion of luxury and modern commercial hotels during the first few decades of the twentieth century, the Savoy remained the most luxurious of all. Under César Ritz's management, no hotel in Europe could compete with the Savoy 'for decor and service, cuisine and an atmosphere of sumptuous luxury'.[30] In 1926, when his name was transformed into an adjective - 'ritzy' - by Sinclair Lewis' novel *Mantrap* (1926), Ritz and his hotels became a signifier for all that was 'stylish, glamorous, classy' in society.[31] Set in a fictional reimagining of the Savoy, Arnold

[26] 'The Metropolitan Hotel Movement', *The Observer* (16 October 1864), p. 5.
[27] Borer, p. 178.
[28] Borer, p. 177-78.
[29] Simmons, p. 204.
[30] Borer, p. 208.
[31] 'ritzy, adj.', *Oxford English Dictionary Online* <https://bit.ly/2zK0t1U> [accessed 4 December 2020]; Sinclair Lewis, *Mantrap* (London: Cape, 1926), p. 20. Lewis uses the adjective to describe some 'real Ritzy dancing-pumps' (Sinclair, p. 20).

Bennett's novel *Imperial Palace* (1930) builds on these connotations, presenting the Savoy as a cornucopia of luxury, overflowing with plush interior design. The hotel rooms are suffused with a sense of extravagance, where even the soft light is 'yielding' and 'acquiescent' to the customer's wishes. Nestled amongst an abundance of silk, heavy curtains and 'brocaded upholstery' were a 'multiplicity of lamps, multiplicity of cushions, multiplicity of occasional tables; everywhere a yielding, acquiescent softness'.[32] Outside, the corridor is described in similar terms:

> broader, more deeply carpeted, more richly decorated, its ceiling loftier. The corridor alone sufficed to establish in every heart of the conviction that wealth abounded and that no price could be too high for tranquillity and the perfection of silent and luxurious service.[33]

Bennett augments this sense of abundance, with the opulent decoration becoming a signifier of the hotel's 'perfection' and 'luxurious service'. Yet Bennett is doing more than merely describing the obvious opulence of the Savoy hotel, here. There is an almost tongue-in-cheek undercurrent to his narrative:

> Salt of the earth, these wealthy residents in the largest and most luxurious luxury hotel on earth, deferentially served by bowing waiters, valets, maids! They pressed magic buttons, and their caprices were instantly gratified.[34]

He gently mocks the 'caprices' of the hotel's wealthy guests, who, served by 'magic buttons', are 'instantly gratified' by obsequious waiters, valets and maids. Bennett ironically collocates the wealthy guest with the hotel staff, juxtaposing the two very different worlds of the 'most luxurious luxury hotel'.[35]

Exploring the hotel's underbelly, Bennett describes a space filled with endless unadorned corridors, the 'commonplace' laundry and the 'frenzied' kitchens.[36] Bennett's narrative sharply contrasts the 'decorated and gaudy world of mirrors and

---

[32] Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, p. 239.
[33] Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, p. 239.
[34] Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, p. 105.
[35] Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, p. 105.
[36] Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, p. 203, 93.

gilt and luxury' with the 'bare stone' and 'narrow corridors' of the staff quarters, to subtly reveal a disjoint within the luxury hotel, stripping away layers of its facade.[37] Bennett describes the latter, here:

> They were in the Imperial Palace, but it was another Imperial Palace: no bright paint, no gilt, no decorations, no attempt to please the eye, little or no daylight, electric lamps but not lampshades, another world in which appearances had no importance and were indeed neglected.[38]

Away from the guest's watching eye, 'appearances had no importance'. Rather than plush furnishings, Bennett's narrative turns its attention to the technologies, machines and labour of the hotel, playing into what W. Sydney Wagner, of the firm George B. Post and Sons, architects for the large Hotel Statler Company and other early hotel chains, described in 1923 as the hotel's 'usefulness as a service machine in providing for the comfort of the guest'.[39] Bennett's descriptions of the hotel as a workplace are saturated with mechanical metaphors that emphasise the systems and technologies at work behind the facade of luxury. Describing the 'transition from indolent luxury to feverish labour' of the kitchen, Bennett writes:

> You passed through an open door, hidden like a guilty secret from all the dining-tables, then up a very short corridor, and at one step you were in another and a different world: a super-heated world of steel glistening and dull, and bare wood, and food in mass raw and cooked, and bustle, and hurrying to and fro, and running to and fro, and calling, and even raucous shouting in French and Italian: a world of frenzied industry [...] A world of racket, which racket, reverberating among metals and earthenware, rose to the low ceilings and was bounced down again on to the low tables and up again and down again.[40]

Though proximately close to the hotel's public arena, the kitchen is 'hidden like a guilty secret' by doors and corridors, and, crossing the threshold, the polarity of this 'different world' is immediately obvious. Instead of the earlier silks and brocaded upholstery, the

---

[37] Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, p. 212, 203.
[38] Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, p. 203.
[39] W. Sydney Wagner, 'The Hotel Plan', *Architectural Forum*, 39 (November 1923), 211-18 (p. 218); Lisa Pfeuller Davidson, '"A Service Machine": Hotel Guests and the Development of an Early-Twentieth-Century Building Type', *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 10 (2005), 113-29 (p. 113).
[40] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 93.

kitchen is sparse and hygienic, filled with ‘steel’, ‘bare wood’, ‘metals’ and ‘earthenware’. Bennett’s use of the word ‘mass’ juxtaposes with his earlier ‘multiplicity’ as a short, sharp, hard one-syllable word befitting the ‘raucous’ kitchen setting. His syntax is jumpy and full of conjunctions: ‘to and fro’, ‘raw and cooked’, ‘and calling’, ‘and hurrying’, ‘and running’. This combination steeps the text with the ‘frenzied’ atmosphere of the kitchen, with Bennett’s syntax ‘reverberating’ on the page like the syllables bouncing off the tiled walls.

This contrast between the luxurious public-facing facade and the hidden mechanised underbelly, which Bennett gives equal textual weight, amplifies the fact that the luxury hotel, with ‘everything that the caprice of infinite power might demand’, stands in total ‘emptiness, a total absence of individuality, of humanity’; it is an impersonal urban space that, while often mirroring the domestic realm, lacks the unique human touch of a personally decorated home.[41] Inspecting one of the luxurious suites, Violet Powler, the head housekeeper of the Imperial Palace, thinks:

> Not a sign of habitation in the bathroom either. It might have been a dehumanised bathroom in a big furniture store.[42]

The ‘dehumanised’ hotel bathroom is as generic as a furniture store - albeit a particularly high-class furniture store. It is an unhomely space, detached from the lived-in domestic spaces that the Savoy’s luxurious suites try to mimic. Bennett’s exploration of the mechanical underbelly of the Savoy, as well as his emphasis on the disconcerting hotel rooms devoid of real human habitation, reveals a disjoint between the facade of luxury and the impersonal and commercial reality that lies beneath. This juxtaposition illustrates how the modern hotel’s impersonality is actually, paradoxically, amplified by its disconcerting or ‘incongruous’ facade of luxury, which is exposed

[41] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 239.
[42] Bennett, *Imperial Palace,* p. 38.

through its identical rooms, expensive, unhomely technologies and, in a society increasingly moving away from live-in help, the presence of the 'arid maid' that caused Peter Walsh so much displeasure in *Mrs Dalloway*, making her rounds 'as if the next visitor were a joint of meat to be served on a perfectly clean platter'.[43]

The Facade of Privacy

Writing in his weekly column in *The Spectator*, Harold Nicholson, writer, politician and husband of Vita Sackville-West, describes a few weeks spent in an old-fashioned, suburban hotel: a hotel that 'enjoyed a transitory gaiety during the Edwardian epoch' when its corridors 'echoed to the laughter of young and wealthy guests'.[44] Nicholson notes that, though striving to adapt its Victorian building 'to a changed world', the hotel's success of 'a hundred years ago' was a mere memory now housed within its walls.[45] Taking Nicholson back to 'memories of a simple childhood' after 'all these twentieth-century years', his article questions the tension between modern technologies and an increasing impersonality towards the customer, suggesting that the modern age should retain some space for the 'more solid comforts of the nineteenth century'.[46] Nicholson sees these nineteenth-century comforts in the 'old-fashioned washing-stand', the sound of a 'full basin being emptied into the slop-pail', and the 'friendly voice of an old-fashioned housemaid bringing in the steaming can'.[47] In contrast to Bennett's fascination with hotel technologies, Nicholson writes:

> How strange it is that, with the advent of central heating and of running water, the whole procedure of hotel service should have also become mechanised and inhuman.[48]

[43] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 157.
[44] Harold Nicholson, 'Marginal Comment', *The Spectator* (12 March 1948), p. 12.
[45] Nicholson, p. 12.
[46] Nicholson, p. 12.
[47] Nicholson, p. 12.
[48] Nicholson, p. 12.

Nicholson aligns the advent of modern technologies, such as hot running water, with a decrease in the more personal aspects of a hotel: the 'charm' of the hotel housemaids with their 'bright interest in one's private and public affairs'.[49] How different his memories of hotel staff - like Peter Walsh's 'arid maid' - are from the 'sullen servitude' he has to put up with in the 'mechanised establishments of modern days'.[50] Praising the halcyon hotel stays of years past, Nicholson laments that the guest is now 'just a number on a door or on a key-ring', no longer a 'human being with a personality of one's own'.[51]

Striking a similar tone to Nicholson, though writing twenty years earlier, sociologist Norman Hayner had also argued that a hotel guest's status was becoming increasingly judged by their 'outward appearance' and, of course, how much they could tip.[52] Hayner writes that:

> In the metropolitan hotel the guest is only a number. His mark of identification is a key and his relation to the host is completely depersonalized.[53]

This sense of impersonality is emphasised further in Hayner's article by the testimony of a woman who had 'resided transiently in some three hundred hotels and stayed for brief periods in about two hundred more'.[54] Echoing Peter Walsh, this anonymous woman contends that in a hotel room:

> One may be ill and die without producing a ripple on the surface of the common life. One loses his identity as if a numbered patient in a hospital or a criminal in prison.[55]

[49] Nicholson, p. 12.
[50] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 157; Nicholson, p. 12.
[51] Nicholson, p. 12.
[52] Norman Hayner, 'Hotel Life and Personality', *American Journal of Sociology*, 33, 5 (March 1928), 784-95 (p. 789).
[53] Hayner, p. 789.
[54] Hayner, p. 789.
[55] Hayner, p. 789.

Hayner goes on to suggest that the 'personal hospitable relation between landlord and guest in the inns and taverns of the past has been replaced by impersonality and standardized correctness', and, although they may have 'all the comforts and luxuries that science can devise', these modern hotels have lost the 'friendly individuality' of earlier days.[56] What Hayner fails to pick up on in this anonymous woman's testimony, however, is the allusion to hospitals and prisons: authoritative and controlled institutional spaces which render the 'patient' or 'criminal' powerless. For many women, the modern hotel was not just an impersonal space, but an entrapping one, too.

We see this struggle for a room of one's own play out in Jean Rhys' novel *Good Morning, Midnight*, a hotel narrative that offers an important counterpoint to Arnold Bennett's depictions of luxury and comfort. Having explored Sasha Jansen's Parisian sojourn in my previous chapter, we know that she is marginalised for her age, dwindling sexual currency and financial precarity. In their work on the novel's colonial context, Christina Britzolakis, Elaine Savory and Emma Zimmerman, amongst others, have noted that, like many of Rhys' women, she is also a deracinated character whose connection to her 'ambiguous cultural origins' has been 'severed': she has no roots, or at least none recognised by British society.[57] Existing as what Zimmerman calls an

[56] Hayner, p. 789.

[57] Emma Zimmerman, '"Always the same stairs, always the same room": The Uncanny Architecture of Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 38, 4 (Summer 2015), 74-92 (p. 82). For more see on this context: Yanoula Athanassakis, 'The Anxiety of Racialized Sexuality in Jean Rhys', *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, 13, 2 (December 2016), 1-18; Christina Britzolakis, '"This way to the exhibition": Genealogies of Urban Spectacle in Jean Rhys's Interwar Fiction', *Textual Practice*, 21, 3 (2007), 457-82; Helen Carr, *Jean Rhys: Writers and their Work* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 2012); Carol Dell'Amico, *Colonialism and the Modernist Moment in the Early Novels of Jean Rhys* (London: Routledge, 2005); Mary Lou Emery, *Jean Rhys at World's End: Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Coral Ann Howells, *Jean Rhys* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1991); Delia Caparoso Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms: Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys and the Aesthetics of Dislocation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Elaine Savory, *Jean Rhys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Sue Thomas, *The Worlding of Jean Rhys* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999).

'unhomely subject', Sasha's 'liminal existence' in a string of impersonal hotel rooms prevents her from 'ever being able to locate and inhabit a secure space of belonging'.[58] Indeed, Sasha's experience of Paris is book-ended by hotels of 'Arrival' and 'Departure', with her 'Future' inseparable from the unhomely hotels of her past:

> 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. You press the button and the door opens. This is the Hotel Without-a-Name in the Street Without-a-Name, and the clients have no names, no faces. You go up the stairs. Always the same stairs, always the same room.[59]

Blurring with earlier memories of Paris, memories that include the loss of her husband and her baby, the hotel rooms of her present become increasingly claustrophobic, which Rhys amplifies in her amalgamation of theoretical hotel names, spliced with hyphens and short, scant sentences. Lacking any real intimacy, these spaces provide only temporary privacy and shelter - both physical and mental - before being relentlessly invaded, like the cafes of my previous chapter, by watching eyes, morals and social expectations.

In her 'awful' hotel, located on a 'narrow, cobble-stoned' 'impasse', and which 'smells' like the 'stale sweat' of 'a very cheap Turkish bath', Sasha inhabits a 'dim room' on the fourth floor.[60] The hotel room, much like the lodging-house rooms explored in my next chapter, is invaded by sounds and smells that reinforce its liminality. Looking directly into the room opposite, Sasha's window opens onto the 'socks, stockings and underclothes' of the woman across the narrow street.[61] From within the hotel itself, Sasha feels threatened by her neighbour - the 'commis voyageur' - who knocks on her door dressed in his 'immaculately white' dressing-gown, and then

[58] Zimmerman, 'Always the same stairs, always the same room', p. 75.
[59] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 120.
[60] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 30, 9, 31.
[61] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 30.

skulks in the corridors like ‘a ghost’.[62] But this lack of privacy is felt most acutely in the shared bathroom, located on the ground floor near the patron’s bureau:

> The bathroom is on the ground floor. I lie in the bath, listening to the patronne talking to a client. He says he wants a room for a young lady-friend of his. Not at once, he is just looking around.
>
> “A room? A nice room?”
>
> I watch the cockroaches crawling from underneath the carpet and crawling back again. There is a flowered carpet in this bathroom, two old arm-chairs and a huge wardrobe with a spotted mirror.
>
> “A nice room? Of course, une belle chambre, the client wants. The patronne says she has a very beautiful room on the second floor, which will be vacant in about a month's time.[63]

While lying in the tub, Sasha imagines that there are watching eyes on the door as conversations between the guests and the patron’s wife, Marthe, invade what is usually a private and intimate act. To Sasha, the patron seems like a ‘fish, lording it in his own particular tank, staring at the world outside with a glassy and unbelieving eye’.[64] Like the many ‘cruel eyes’ that we explored in my previous chapter, he stares at Sasha with a ‘gloomy, disapproving look’ that signals her inability to present an adequate socioeconomic facade.[65] From the bathtub, Sasha observes the cockroaches ‘crawling from underneath the carpet and crawling back again’; these boundary-crossers symbolise the (metaphorical) invasion of surveillance by the hotel staff who police the shared bathroom for signs of impropriety or anti-social activity. Scurrying under carpets and between rooms, these cockroaches are manifestations of the patron’s watching eyes, and are synonymous with the bathroom’s inability to provide Sasha with the privacy or refuge she craves.

The permeability of the bathroom in this scene reveals it to be a ‘contested’ space where ‘guests are subject to surveillance and scrutiny, despite the discourse of

[62] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 28, 30, 31.
[63] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 29.
[64] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 13.
[65] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 14, 81.

anonymity, which pervades the hotel experience'.[66] Because 'surveillance saturates the discourse of activities in these seemingly anonymous places', Pritchard and Morgan argue that the hotel's liminality is complex in that it reflects the 'differing power dynamics of the public places of the hotel, which are differentially negotiated by differentially empowered groups and individuals'.[67] For a deracinated, marginalised woman like Sasha, her experience is 'overlain by social relations of gender' that merge with other social factors like class and marital status in the hotel, a space 'shaped by socio-political and economic relations', to 'reproduce existing patterns of inequalities and differences'.[68] In her study of hotels in early twentieth-century literature, Bettina Matthias takes this further by arguing that 'even the most remote, seemingly private corners of the hotel cannot completely escape the capitalist reality that time and space can only be had for a certain price'.[69] Matthias suggests that money 'regulates the hotel guest's relationship to the social environment'; because guests know that their status, privacy and, to an extent, their identity within the hotel setting is only available at a set price, 'they make sure to display the corresponding socio-economic facade convincingly enough to be given access'.[70]

This social scrutiny takes on a specifically gendered aspect because, as Fiona Jordan argues, both formal and informal surveillance in hotels is irrevocably connected to the 'sexualised performative gaze' which polices and excludes women.[71] Enjoying the privilege of an 'autonomous place in society', men are 'much less vulnerable to the effects of the semi-anonymous and capitalist nature of hotels, a place in life that

[66] Pritchard and Morgan, p. 768.
[67] Pritchard and Morgan, p. 768.
[68] Pritchard and Morgan p. 770, 769.
[69] Matthias, p. 27.
[70] Matthias, p. 84.
[71] Fiona Jordan, 'Gendered discourses of tourism: The experiences of mid-life women travelling solo' (unpublished thesis, University of Gloucestershire, 2003), p. 184.

women are generally denied'.[72] Women, on the other hand, often struggle with the constant need to produce and maintain the socioeconomic facade needed to navigate the modern hotel world. Not only are women under stricter surveillance in the hotel's public spaces, a relic of leftover Victorian propriety, but

> as objects of desire in a male-dominated, money-ridden society [...] women struggle to find a legitimate place without losing themselves in the ongoing display of social masks and exchange of social performances.[73]

At the time Rhys was writing, women often only entered hotels 'as dependants, as daughters, relatives, lovers, or as brides-to-be, waiting to trade their family-based identity for similar status as another man's dependent', and, as such, hotel rooms were, more often than not, paid for by men and policed by men.[74] Because of this relational identity, many women, particularly those without an independent income, like Sasha, struggled to find (or afford) the privacy needed to escape the intense pressures of maintaining a public facade in the urban sphere.

Directly after this bathroom scene, Rhys writes one of these failed social performances into Sasha's narrative. Seeking to escape the threatening presence of the commis, who, wearing only a 'flannel night-shirt scarcely reaching his knees', had blocked her passage in the corridor, Sasha goes in search of a 'room with bath' at another more 'respectable' hotel.[75] At the reception, Sasha is greeted by a 'grey-haired woman and a sleek young man' who raise their eyebrows and stare when she asks for a 'light room'.[76] Feeling 'ill and giddy' while listening 'anxiously' to the pair's whispered conversation, she thinks:

> I shall exist on a different plane at once if I can get this room, if only for a couple of nights.[77]

---

[72] Matthias, p. 118.
[73] Matthias, p. 102.
[74] Matthias, p. 118.
[75] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 30, 33.
[76] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 31, 32.
[77] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 32.

Their conversation is coded, however, as they implicitly discuss her unsuitability for this beautiful room. The 'sleek young man' speaks 'out of the side of his mouth': 'Of course you know that number 219 is occupied,' he says.[78] In this moment, Sasha realises that her public facade has failed. She is rejected by the hotel staff as they see through her facade (which masks the fact that she cannot afford the room), and instead is offered a darker, cheaper room overlooking 'a high, blank wall' - another 'impasse'.[79]

Rushing out of the hotel after realising she might 'sound a bit crazy', Sasha's narrative merges into an epimonic stream circling around the elusive room with a bath:

> A beautiful room with bath? A room with bath? A nice room? A room?… But never tell the truth about this business of rooms, because it would bust the roof off everything and undermine the whole social system. All rooms are the same. All rooms have four walls, a door, a window or two, a bed, a chair and perhaps a bidet. A room is a place where you hide from the wolves outside and that's all any room is. Why should I worry about changing my room?[80]

This set of phrases had been used earlier in the novel, acting as a tattoo that haunts the narrative:

> That's the way it is, that's the way it goes, that was the way it went… A room. A nice room. A beautiful room. A beautiful room with bath. A very beautiful room with bath. A bedroom and sitting-room with bath. Up to the dizzy heights of the suite. Two bedrooms, sitting-room, bath and vestibule. [...] Swing high… Now, slowly, down. A beautiful room with bath. A room with bath. A nice room. A room…[81]

Charting the hotel's economic layers, Sasha imagines rooms that vary from the cheap one she herself inhabits to a 'bedroom and sitting-room with bath' to 'the dizzy heights of the suite', before the narrative arcs 'slowly, down' as she is brought back to her reality: a room. This set of phrases takes on an almost chant like quality in the narrative, repeating in different forms:

---

[78] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 32.
[79] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 33, 9.
[80] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 33.
[81] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 29.

> A room? A nice room? A beautiful room? A beautiful room with bath? Swing high, swing low, swing to and fro… This happened and that happened.[82]

This repetition, invoking a syntactical epimone, plays into the narrative's fragmented temporality that renders Sasha detached from the present moment as memories of previous hotel rooms (also without a bath) bubble to the surface of the text. This repetition imbues the text with a sense of semantic satiation, by which the phrase 'a room with bath' becomes bereft of meaning, a technique that emphasises the negative effects of the hotel's impersonality. Fading into the silence of an ellipsis, both sets of phrases are shrouded in uncertainty that mimics Sasha's increasing feelings of social and economic precarity. Here, Sasha experiences what the anonymous woman in Norman Hayner's article calls the imprisoning nature of modern hotel life - the sense of losing her autonomy and identity within its walls - in which social acceptance is predicated on a set of highly gendered and classed social factors. In her depictions of the modern hotel, then, Rhys embeds feelings of impermanence and unhomeliness, which become emblems of Sasha's loneliness and confinement, and amplify both her marginalised identity and existence in the modern city.

Performance, Privacy and Female Transgression

For the protagonists of Henry Green's *Party Going* and Christina Stead's *The Beauties and Furies*, however, the hotel room and, in particular, the hotel bathroom are transformative spaces that allow them to explore and experiment with their body and sexual desires. Unlike Sasha, these characters revel in the liminal spatiality of the hotel bathroom, as Green and Stead use it as a space in which female sexuality and bodily desire can be explored. While Sasha is marginalised by her age, class and ambiguous heritage, and although Amabel and Elvira snub traditional social roles through their

[82] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 118.

overt sexuality and rejection of marriage, using their sexuality in a transaction that pays for a hotel room (and bathroom) of their own, they are both protected by their middle-class, verging on upper-middle-class or 'bourgeois', status, the economic stability of their husband or family, and their youthful beauty (even if, like Sasha, this will soon begin to wane).[83] Dubbed a 'money snob', Amabel in particular is independently wealthy, though whether this is from her family or just her celebrity status is never made entirely clear.[84] This economic and social security enables them both to experience the hotel room and bathroom as a transgressive space in which they can knowingly play with ideas of male objectification, self-objectification and scopophilic desire through performative acts of bodily pleasure, without the worry of cockroaches - those watching eyes - scuttling under the door. The hotel bathroom becomes a key literary space for these transgressive acts to take place, as Green and Stead subvert its commercialised impersonality into a (temporary) space of female power.

In *The Beauties and Furies*, Christina Stead's protagonist Elvira Western - the 'runaway wife' - escapes her boring marriage to bourgeois English doctor Paul and decides, on a whim, to elope to Paris with her student lover Oliver, a 'handsome youth' five years her junior.[85] Elvira is described by the men in her life as 'all that is woman'; she is 'beautiful' and knows 'by experience' the effect her 'female powers' have on the opposite sex.[86] Unlike Oliver, who comes from 'that working-class family', Elvira is used to the comfortable middle-class life provided by her husband.[87] Stead's novel offers a biting account of volatile romantic bliss enacted in the streets, hotels and cafes

[83] Christina Stead, *The Beauties and Furies* (London: Virago, 1982), p. 374.
[84] Henry Green, *Party Going*, in *Loving, Living, Party Going* (London: Pan Books, 1982), pp. 383-528 (p. 464).
[85] Stead, p. 7-8.
[86] Stead, p. 7, 13, 28, 29.
[87] Stead, p. 34.

of Paris between the wars, as Elvira comes to realise that life in a string of impersonal hotel rooms with a young, flighty lover is not as exciting or, indeed, fulfilling, as she expected.

Arriving in Paris, Oliver takes Elvira to their 'first home' together in 'an old-fashioned hotel, with high, grand, elegant rooms'.[88] Their room has 'long French windows' which overlook, 'through blue brocade curtains', the bustling rue de l'Odeon.[89] Yet Elvira disregards its 'elegant' features, instead finding the hotel room a claustrophobic and musty reminder that they are just another illicit couple stealing away to Paris. Elvira observes:

> the yellow-plated bedstead, the wallpaper covered with red palm-leaves, the red carpet, the red and grey chairs, and murmured "It's so trite, isn't it? It depresses me so: couldn't we have found something not so much like a hotel bedroom?" She laughed. "Think of all the couples who have slept here before us! They make it stale, don't they?".[90]

Lacking originality and freshness, it could be any 'trite' hotel room in any city, albeit a much more luxurious affair than the one Sasha inhabits in the same city. Echoing the words of Peter Walsh, Elvira decides that the space is made 'stale' by its very definition as a hotel room, rented by the night to anyone able to afford the fee, and this is implicitly reinforced by the 'yellow-plated' bedstead and 'red' furnishings, colours that hold connotations of the bodily fluids of all of the 'couples who have slept here before'. Taking this impersonality further, Elvira compares the hotel room to the mechanised process of lace manufacturing, thinking:

> Life's a pattern, and we're just shuttles rushing in and out thinking we are making jerks up and down freely.[91]

[88] Stead, p. 13, 12.
[89] Stead, p. 13.
[90] Stead, p. 29.
[91] Stead, p. 29.

An important leitmotif in Stead's novel, lace manufacturing is associated with the lace artist Coromandel, the woman who Oliver later goes on to have an affair with, as well as several other characters. In her introduction to the text, Margaret Harris argues that Stead uses this imagery 'to enunciate a tension between romantic dreams and fate', as well as 'signalling that these characters lack agency'.[92] In this scene, the metaphor conjures the image of an automated manufacturing process that mimics the couples filing in and out of the hotel room, night after night. The hotel room, and the couple within it, are part of a mechanised system, like 'shuttles' forced into a predetermined pattern of movement.

When Oliver leaves for a day at work in the archives, however, the hotel room is transformed. In this newly private enclosed space, Elvira is free to explore her body and her sexual desires away from the gaze of her lover, husband and, more widely, society. The hotel 'room with bath' becomes a hyper-liminal, almost heterotopic space which seemed to be 'suspended' from the rest of the hotel; it is a space, as Pritchard and Morgan suggest, 'out-of-time' and 'out-of-place' that holds a transformative potential.[93] For Elvira,

> everything was dark, she was very tired and was soon wrapped in a warm half-slumber, wherein she dreamed of nothing, but seemed suspended, a full-blooded great body in a dark scene where an obscure tower or veiled monument took the centre of a vast colourless plain. She opened her eyes placidly for a few moments, imagining she had heard the door click; then she closed them, and obscure images hopped into her mind's eye.[94]

Lying in a phantasmagoric state, Elvira imagines she is watched by an 'obscure tower or veiled monument' which stands in the 'centre' of the hotel room.[95] Looming over her body as she slumbers, this 'monument' has phallic connotations, symbolic of her lover

[92] Margaret Harris, 'Introduction to the new Text Classic edition', *The Conversation* <https://bit.ly/3qnFdGO> [accessed 2 November 2020].
[93] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 33; Stead, p. 69; Pritchard and Morgan, p. 764.
[94] Stead, p. 69.
[95] Stead, p. 68.

or husband's ever-watchful eye. The tower remains 'obscure' or 'veiled' to Elvira, an unclear, unknown or concealed entity that, like the male gaze, watches over Elvira - that is, until Oliver leaves the hotel room.

When Elvira believes she is truly alone, hearing the door 'click' shut behind Oliver, her dream of 'nothing' morphs into a series of 'obscure images'. Writing a dream-sequence littered with yonic symbols, Stead's imagery suggests Elvira is exploring her sexual desires within the privacy of the hotel room:

> She saw a rod with two headless snakes emerging from a dusky ivory egg, jagged lightning issuing from the great letter O, flame coming from a periwinkle's shell, a lake at the end of a row of dark clipped trees, a sea-lion creeping slowly towards her with melancholy head, a mushroom turning into a silver pheasant, a long stretch of yellow and black strand with the fringed sea invading it on one side and the black coarse grass on the other. She saw two cranes drinking from a soaring fountain, an hour-glass in the form of two swans embracing two eggs, a snake swallowing a blindworm twice wrapped round a bundle of wheat, a headless tree growing out of a thousand-fibred root like a peacock's-tail, a white hand balancing on empty retort, and many dull images impossible to recognise.[96]

This passage is imbued with duality, seen explicitly in the 'two eggs', 'two cranes', 'two swans' and echoed in the image of the 'invading' sea and grass which threatens the 'yellow and black strand'. Stead's repeated use of a pattern of two suggests a boundary or threshold, indicative of Elvira's exploration of the physical limits of her body, as well as the implicit boundaries of her sexuality set by society. Stead takes this duality further by contrasting the yonic with phallic imagery. This juxtaposing phallic imagery, as in the 'rod' emerging from the 'ivory egg' or the 'lightning issuing from the great letter O', is overshadowed by the potential of the yonic imagery, suggesting a tussle in Elvira's mind between her desire to explore her own body and sexuality in the privacy of the hotel room, and the taboo surrounding this outside of marriage or the family home.

[96] Stead, p. 69.

As the dream continues, the phallic symbols are emasculated: the snakes are 'headless', the trees are 'clipped' and 'headless', the worm is 'blind'. These phallic images are overpowered by symbols of feminine power, particularly one suggestive of rebirth and regeneration: 'fringed sea invading', 'fountain soaring', 'flame coming from a periwinkle's shell'. Stead imbues this yonic symbolism with a transformative potential. Her use of verbs such as 'emerging', 'issuing', 'creeping', 'turning', 'embracing', 'balancing' adds a sense of movement to the passage, as each of Elvira's imagined actions are in-transition. Stead combines this repetitive phrasing with long sentences and asyndeton, syntactically echoing the experience of the dream-sequence and imbuing the passage with an expansive potential, rolling and transforming for the reader as they are drawn into the ever-changing imagery of Elvira's stream of consciousness.

In the liminality of the hotel room, Elvira experiences a sense of out-of-placeness that shields her from the rest of the hotel, with its seclusion (which is amplified when she walks 'languidly' into the hotel bathroom, as we will shortly come to see) enabling her to explore her body and bodily desires.[97] Reading the hotel bathroom scenes of Henry Green's novel, which, like Stead's narrative, uses the bathroom to examine his female protagonist's 'self-admiration', Valentine Cunningham calls the hotel bathroom a 'solipsistic enclosure' for Green's self-obsessed protagonist.[98] Yet Cunningham overlooks the fact that for both women this setting facilitates more than just their solipsism, it also enables them to explore forbidden or taboo desires that are otherwise given no space in the public and private spheres. Rather than merely providing the space for their protagonist's narcissism (though in a

[97] Stead, p. 69.
[98] Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 6.

society that repudiates women's solipsism, this could be radical in itself), these hotel rooms and bathrooms enable transgressive or liberating performances of self-defined female bodily pleasure.

We see this transgressive pleasure in Green's *Party Going*, too, which, set in The Grosvenor Hotel at Victoria station, follows a group of upper-middle-class party-goers 'killing time with tea, whisky, gossip, and endless much ados about elusive nothings' when fog delays their train.[99] Green's novel is a comedy of manners about Max Adey, his two competing lovers - wealthy socialite Amabel and 'helpless' Julia Wray - and their friends and acquaintances.[100] Despite Max's best efforts to break off his relationship with Amabel, to whom he pretends he has gone to the airport rather than the train station so that she would not show up and 'make a scene', it does not take her 'long to find out where Max was hiding'.[101] Having got so 'dirty' on her hurried walk to the station, Amabel shocks the group by 'ordering a bath' and inviting fellow party-goer Alex to 'come and talk to [her] through the door' in a ploy to make Max jealous.[102] The rather prim Angela is left wondering

> if Amabel was going to let him see her in her bath. But surely not in front of her maid, she thought, without noticing how this would make it better in one sense, even if it could not make it right.[103]

From our first introduction to Amabel, then, we see how the hotel bathroom has the potential to be a transgressive and empowering space and, as the narrative progresses, Green builds on these connotations to craft a private, personal space for her own (and her male admirer's) fantasies.

[99] Robert S. Ryf, *Henry Green* (Columbia and New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 15.
[100] Green, p. 415, 437, 402.
[101] Green, p. 401, 458.
[102] Green, p. 460.
[103] Green, p. 468.

Despite Alex's presence outside the bathroom door, imagining 'her where she lay, pink with warmth and wrapped around with steam', the bathroom provides a cocoon of privacy for Amabel, who

> kicked her legs and splashed and sent fountains of water up among the wreaths of sweet steam, and her hands with rings still on her fingers were water-lilies done in rubies.[104]

Green's narrative evokes symbols of regeneration and rebirth through the use of natural and mythological imagery. Kicking her legs in the bathtub, Amabel sends 'fountains' into the air, an act reminiscent of the Greek goddess Hebe whose associations with vitality and renewal are symbolised in the fountain of youth. This image of the fountain aligns with Stead's yonic imagery as a feminine, life-creating source from which the continuous flow of water offers the potential of rebirth. Coupled with this, the 'wreaths of sweet steam' reiterate this sense of cyclicality, and, typically made of evergreen, echo the regenerative potential of the fountain. In the bathtub, Amabel is transformed as she is washed by 'fountains' of water and 'wreaths' of steam, and her rings become 'water-lilies' floating on the surface of the bathwater. Like Elvira's dream-like reverie, Amabel, too, has entered a transitional or transformational state.

It is in this transformational state that we see Elvira take her bath, picking up where we left off in *The Beauties and Furies*. Having undergone a symbolic rebirth during her dream-like reverie, Elvira becomes an artist sculpting her own body in a scene that sees Stead reframe and reimagine the male gaze. Stead uses the metaphor of an artist or sculptor here, as we see Elvira walking 'languidly to the dressing-table',

[104] Green, p. 469.

in front of which, like an artist making initial sketches of their muse, she 'undressed and made poses before the long mirror'.[105] Stead writes:

> She spent a long time in the bath, massaging herself, washing herself over and over with love for her soft skin.[106]

Massaging her skin, Elvira's actions echo an artist moulding and manipulating their raw materials. Thinking back for a moment to my previous chapter, and with Jean Rhys' aging protagonist in mind, it is interesting to consider the way that Stead positions Elvira's 'massaging' as an act of 'love'. For Elvira, the young, beautiful woman, this bodily love comes easily because her 'soft skin' conforms to accepted standards of beauty. Because she is only 'twenty-eight', she has a confidence and contentment with her appearance that forty-year-old Sasha lacks, and this moment of bodily self-love in the bathroom amplifies more than just the physical differences between the pair; because of her class, Elvira has been afforded the time and money (which, in turn, gives her access to the privacy of the bathroom that Sasha craves) to look after her own body, and this helps to keep her skin looking supple and youthful.[107] And while Elvira returns to her husband by the end of the novel, securing the financial and social stability of her future, when reading this scene alongside the urban bathroom scenes of Rhys, Manning and Woolf's novels we are left to wonder whether there would be so much 'love' or, indeed, actual opportunities to perform this bodily self-love when her body no longer conforms to society's values. From her position of (financial and youthful) privilege, however, Elvira is able to temporarily unsettle or escape the pressures of the public gaze in the privacy of the hotel bathroom.

[105] Stead, p. 69.
[106] Stead, p. 69.
[107] Stead, p. 226.

Taking this metaphor of the artist further, Stead describes the ways in which Elvira continues to explore her body 'over and over':

> She wandered about the room, giving her body hundreds of small attentions, using ear and nose syringes, sponges, files, scissors, chamois leather, swan's-down puffs, sticks of orange-wood, creams, powders, and the rouge that Oliver had bought her home.[108]

We see similar imagery at work in Green's text, too, as Amabel is 'polishing' and 'moulding' her skin, which pales from 'red into pink and then suddenly it would go white' under her touch.[109] Like artists in their studios, the hotel room and bathroom give Elvira and Amabel the physical space and mental freedom to explore their bodies. Away from the public gaze of the rest of the hotel and hidden from her husband and lover, Elvira is able to give her body 'hundreds of small attentions', chiselling away at her raw material like the stages of a sculpture or painting. The 'syringes, sponges, files, scissors, chamois leather, swan's-down puffs, sticks of orange-wood' are the artist's tools, and each one has a different purpose and a different effect on the body. The smooth 'chamois leather', traditionally used for polishing, echoes Green's text in which Amabel uses a 'huge' bath towel to rub 'every inch of herself' 'as though she were polishing'.[110] For both women, the act of polishing their skin is one of self-care, reframing the (often sexualised) touching of female bodies as one of creativity and autonomy.

In Green's novel, the liminality of the hotel bathroom is accentuated by its mirrored walls, which amplifies the room's sense of out-of-placeness. Unlike windows, which provide a link to the outside world, the bathroom's mirrored walls reflect Amabel's beautiful body as she luxuriates in the bathtub.[111] And unlike in the lavatory

---

[108] Stead, p. 70.
[109] Green, p. 480.
[110] Green, p. 480.
[111] Henry Green's hotel bathroom is based on a bathroom designed by Paul Nash in 1932 for the Austrian dancer and film star Tilly Losch, in which the walls were covered in mirrors. For more on this,

mirror of Olivia Manning's novel, which saw Petta experience a moment of horror at the recognition of her aging appearance, a reflection which haunted her for the rest of the narrative, Amabel revels in the sight of her youthful body. On these mirrored walls, Amabel signs her name, like an artist's signature, claiming the reflection as her own:

> Amabel was drying [her toes] on a towel. The walls were made of looking-glass, and were clouded over with steam; from them her body was reflected in a faint pink mass. She leaned over and traced her name Amabel in that steam and that pink mass loomed up to meet her in the flesh and looked through bright at her through the letters of her name. She bent down to look at her eyes in the A her name began with, and as she gazed at them steam or her breath dulled her reflection and the blue her eyes were went out or faded.[112]

The steam, an entirely liminal substance in itself, becomes a metaphor here for the transformative process both Amabel and Elvira undergo in the hotel bathroom. Both women are able to explore, sculpt and experiment on their bodies as they massage their soft skin, supple from the bath. Amabel and Elvira revel in the acts of moulding, polishing and painting their naked bodies away from society's judgmental gaze that symbolises the confines of their sexuality or desires outside of marriage. The bathroom's liminal spatiality - connoted by the thresholds between the mirrored reflection and reality, steam and water, public and private - becomes a space which they can temporarily inhabit, and which allows them to transform, regenerate and experiment with their bodies and desires.

Green's narrative plays with this duality symbolised by the mirror, subverting its associations with public performance, facade and masquerade that we saw in my previous chapter, and imbuing Amabel's character with new depths and agency. Green writes:

> She rubbed with the palm of her hand, and now she could see all her face. She always thought it more beautiful than anything she had ever seen, and when she looked at herself it was as though the two of them would never meet again,

see: 'From the Surreal to the Decorative', *Tate Etc* <https://bit.ly/3ebdPt7> [accessed 5 March 2021]; 'Tilly Losch's bathroom', *V&A Collections* <https://bit.ly/3kLNhQo> [accessed 5 March 2021].

[112] Green, p. 479.

> it was to bid farewell; and at the last she always smiled, and she did so this time as it was clouding over, tenderly smiled as you might say good-bye, my darling, darling.[113]

Taking on the role of sexual partner or lover in the mirror, Amabel admires her 'beautiful' reflection. As the steam begins to cloud over again, she bids her reflection 'farewell' 'as though the two of them would never meet again', 'tenderly' saying goodbye and calling her reflection 'my darling, darling'. This tenderness, as well as the term of endearment, creates the impression of a romantic coupling between her body and her reflection, subtly unsettling the male (now female) scopophilic gaze.

In her influential article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Laura Mulvey describes the idea of the scopophilic male gaze, arguing that scopophilic pleasure 'arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight'.[114] Mulvey goes on to suggest that, in a society defined by

> sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.[115]

Here, we see Amabel subvert this scopophilic male gaze by both appropriating the 'active/male' position and redefining the 'passive/female' position through her exhibitionistic display for her own gratification, which she both watches and performs in the mirror. Green writes:

> She leaned over and traced her name Amabel in that steam, and that pink mass loomed up to meet her in the flesh and look through bright at her through the letters of her name. She bent down to look at her eyes in the A her name began

[113] Green, p. 479.
[114] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16, 3 (Autumn 1975), 6-18 (p. 10). For more on this see: Jonathan Metzl, 'From scopophilia to Survivor: A brief history of voyeurism', *Textual Practice*, 18, 3 (2004), 415-34; Laura Mulvey, *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times* (London: Reaktion, 2019).
[115] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 11.

> with, and as she gazed at them steam or her breath dulled her reflection and the blue her eyes were went out or faded.[116]

Amabel's actions blur the boundaries of traditionally acceptable female sexual expression and bodily pleasure. Rather than the sexualising gaze of Alex, talking to Amabel from the other side of the closed bathroom door, here it is her own gaze that takes pleasure in her own naked body, its 'pink' blurry outline seen through the 'letters of her name' scrawled in the steam. In the capital "A" of her name, Amabel makes eye contact with herself; her eyes and her initial both markers of her identity, in this moment Green shifts the focus from the scopophilic gaze which looks upon the female body as an object of sexual desire to a self-defined erotic gaze deriving pleasure from her own performance. As her breath blurs her reflection, creating a metaphorical pneuma, Amabel reappropriates the male gaze to reclaim a much-needed space of privacy.

This subversion is echoed in Stead's narrative as Elvira uses a mirror to take on a new gaze, much like that of a lover, to observe her body from new and unusual perspectives. Stead writes that Elvira

> watched herself floating in the green water, like a strange sensuous water-animal, and got out to get her hand-glass so that she could see how she looked to strange eyes.[117]

Stead's syntactic construction situates Elvira as both the subject and object of the sentence, reinforcing her earlier metaphor which positioned her protagonist as both artist and artist's muse. Taking on the 'sensuous' body of a 'water-animal' in the bathtub, Elvira enacts a form of self-anthropomorphisation by using a handheld mirror to explore her body with 'strange eyes'. Using the mirror to reveal new (visual and noetic) perspectives, this moment in Stead's narrative echoes Petta's self-realisation in the lavatory mirror explored in my previous chapter, amplifying the importance of

[116] Green, p. 479.
[117] Stead, p. 69-70.

age, class and social security in controlling or, at least, unsettling the effects of the dominant public gaze. For both Elvira and Amabel, mirrors, an integral part of the bathroom furniture, facilitate these new ways of looking and experiencing the body.

Building on these fantastical images, Stead's narrative takes on a filmic quality, which emphasises the alternative women-centred perspectives being explored. Stead imbues her writing with a montage technique, first seen in Elvira's dream-sequence in the hotel bedroom and continued here. Before entering her bath, Elvira undresses and makes 'poses before the long mirror'.[118] These different poses, like that of an artist or photographer's model, are spliced together and captured by the 'strange eyes' of the mirror. This technique continues when, upon leaving her bath, Elvira

> examined her head, neck and breast, grimaced to see how she looked when she was crying. She got out of the bath with reluctance, letting the water run slowly off her limbs, held up her arms in the warm air to see how slowly they dried, put her hands beneath her breasts and so carried them, glad to feel their weight, into the bedroom. She folded her hands round her waist, passed them round her thighs and looked at the profile of her belly. She glanced sideways at her olive shoulder and kissed it. She kissed her arms, tried to reach her breasts with her mouth, but could not.[119]

Stead uses multiple verbs of seeing - 'examined', 'see', 'glanced', 'looked' - suggesting the multiple perspectives that have been opened up by the use of the mirror; Elvira is now able to see parts of her body her eyes cannot usually reach. Building on this, Stead's use of phrases like 'looked at the profile', 'held up her arms in the warm air to see' and 'glanced sideways' represent Elvira's body as seen from new angles. These terms of perspective offer different impressions of height, depth, width and position that Elvira, along with the reader, is exploring. Stead captures these fragments of action in repetitive sentences, all taking the construction 'She got', 'She examined', 'She folded', with each sentence recalling the one previous and looking forward to the

[118] Stead, p. 69.
[119] Stead, p. 70.

next. This simple syntactic structure clips the fragments of action together as Stead crafts a filmic, sensual scene centred on Elvira's personal pleasure and creativity. In these bathroom scenes, neither Elvira nor Amabel are rendered passive sexual objects. Seeing themselves through these 'strange eyes', the privacy of the bathroom setting allows them to mould and imagine a version of themselves that gives them pleasure as they explore, express and perform their body and bodily desires in new ways.

Elvira and Amabel's transgressive performances - the massaging and sculpting of their bodies, and the reimagining and reclaiming of their bodily desires - reappropriate the scopophilic or objectifying gaze that had confined the aging women of Rhys and Manning's novels, imbuing them with a sense of power and autonomy that is facilitated by both the semi-privacy and the out-of-placeness of the setting. The bathroom's liminality gives Elvira and Amabel a stage on which to explore their sexuality and sexual desires, as well as the privacy to do so away from the policing male gaze of their lovers, husbands or hotel proprietors, and this setting provides a useful narrative space to think through and potentially offer a riposte to women's social, sexual and economic constraints at this time. By playing with perspective and gaze in these bathroom scenes, Green and Stead emphasise the metaphors of surface and depth at work in their narratives - the images of mirrors, steam and skin, as well as the literal and imagined boundaries of propriety and privacy - and, through this, reveal the hotel room and bathroom to be an important liminal space in which their protagonist can transgress, escape or reappropriate social expectations and constraints.

The Limits of the Hotel Room and Bathroom

Implicit in Stead and Green's narratives, however, is the wider economy of the modern hotel in which privacy, comfort and acceptance is dependent on social factors like

class, age, appearance and financial security. It is interesting to read Henry Green, as a male writer writing the female experience, alongside Stead and Rhys, particularly when it is clear that his protagonist's experience of the hotel room and bathroom is so different to Elvira and Sasha's experience, as we will soon come to see, even if this is in large part down to her wealthy upper-class background which allows her to escape many of the social mores that governed women in the public sphere. Though Elvira does temporarily revel in its privacy, Amabel gains a new sense of social and sexual power from her time in the bathroom that the other women are unable to sustain. We see this in the effect she has on Max, her on-off lover, in the moments after her bath:

> Max leaned his forehead against a shut window tormented by his dreams of Amabel, daydreams brought on by her voice, by her being so near, by her choosing to be undressed behind that door and because she used another voice when she wore no clothes, she mocked.[120]

Still damp from her bath, Green describes how Amabel 'tortured' Max, using her sexuality to manipulate the man who at the beginning of the novel had rushed to the train station in an attempt to escape her clutches.[121] By the end of the novel, the pair have once again begun the tussle for 'control' that is their relationship, but we are left wondering how much longer it can realistically last.[122]

Though Green imbues Amabel with the power to control or coerce her male lover, his narrative is astute to its gendered and highly performative nature, as well as the ways in which her wealth and celebrity status allow her to circumnavigate many of the expectations and limitations society places on women. This is perhaps most evident in the way that Amabel interacts with Alex, the man with whom she has been flirting to make Max jealous. Alex 'found that when Max was not there to look she lost

[120] Green, p. 483.
[121] Green, p. 487.
[122] Green, p. 526.

interest and would hardly bother to answer him'.[123] Through this acknowledgement of her performativity, and the performative nature of her sexual power, Green, like Stead and Rhys, subtly reveals its limits: the point at which Amabel, having earlier subverted the male scopophilic gaze in the bathroom mirror, now succumbs to women's 'traditional exhibitionist role' of '*to-be-looked-at-ness*' in order to maintain her lover's affections.[124]

Unlike Amabel, whose wealth is the driving force of her liberation, Elvira is dependent on both her husband and her new lover for the money to purchase the privacy these hotel rooms afford. As the novel progresses and her once intoxicating love affair sours, we see Elvira's freedom and happiness curtailed, particularly when she discovers she is pregnant with her lover's child. After 'reckoning up their accounts' and realising it would be 'fearfully inconvenient' to have a baby, Elvira decides to have an abortion, paid for with the money her husband still sends, despite her adultery.[125] Using her husband's money, rather than relying on her flighty lover, she consults a 'first class *sage-femme*' to undergo this 'illegal' operation, after which she develops 'metritis'.[126] While Oliver is consorting with prostitutes and wooing his latest lover, Coromandel, we see Elvira recovering alone in their hotel room, 'listening to the noises of the hotel, slow to go to sleep'.[127] Echoing the impersonal hotel in *Good Morning, Midnight*, the space that had once provided so much excitement for the young lovers is now a claustrophobic reminder of Elvira's loneliness and physical pain.

Through the thin walls permeates the 'familiar sounds' of other couples that exacerbates her isolation.[128] That night it felt as if 'she only was alone', 'alone and

[123] Green, p. 513.
[124] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 11.
[125] Stead, p. 119.
[126] Stead, p. 119, 120, 238.
[127] Stead, p. 236.
[128] Stead, p. 236.

disgraced here'.[129] With the sound of 'a thousand bedded lovers, millions of murmurs in the dark rooms' around her, she is 'unable to bear it any more':

> New pains, a spasm coming every ten minutes, had begun early in the evening and were now intense: the back of her head throbbed, her heart beat heavily and she was fevered. [...] Pure tears of suffering fell down her face. She got back into bed shivering somewhat with fever. When she got back to bed the torments of the bedridden and helpless returned to her.[130]

No longer a space of bodily pleasure, the hotel room is transformed by her physical and emotional pain. Where earlier the privacy and seclusion of the hotel room had liberated her, now it feels oppressive, its emptiness signifying her future alone without either a husband or a lover. She thinks:

> how can I stay in this miserable gloomy room a month? I feel now as if the four walls were pressing down on me: I can't bear it, I can't bear it.[131]

Soon after this scene, the pair realise that their affair must come to an end and Elvira writes to her husband notifying him of her return to England: 'I miss you and our home: it is not so easy to break up a marriage, is it?'.[132] Rather than liberating her from the confines of a conventional marriage, her failed affair merely reinforced her reliance on men, leaving her feeling like 'everyone's footstool'.[133] By the end of the novel, Elvira has taken 'up her life with Paul exactly where she laid it down'.[134] She is, once again, 'just an ordinary little house-woman, with some foolish social and personal pretensions'.[135]

This ending to what started out as a salacious story of illicit but liberatory love speaks to the wider social mores of the time, which placed emphasis on conventional marriage and women's place in the home. Stead herself 'firmly' believed that

[129] Stead, p. 237.
[130] Stead, p. 236-38.
[131] Stead, p. 120.
[132] Stead, p. 287.
[133] Stead, p. 351.
[134] Stead, p. 372.
[135] Stead, p. 373.

'committed love (ideally marriage) was a wonderful liberation for women', giving them the key to 'sex, love, motherhood, and social respectability'.[136] In Stead's biography, Hazel Rowley goes so far as to claim that Stead saw women's unmarried years as wasted years - we see this in *The Beauties and Furies* when Oliver calculates how many 'loving' nights Elvira 'lost' waiting 'for Paul till [she] was twenty-one', and when Elvira admits that 'a woman sleeps until she marries' - arguing that Stead 'firmly believed in a link between sexual deprivation and madness'.[137] Though hyperbolic, this latter point is perhaps relevant to think about in relation to my final two chapters, which turn to women driven to madness (or at least anxiety and neurosis) by their inability to construct self-defined identities in a society that places them in prescribed roles. Throughout this thesis, it is clear that these archetypal identities - unmarried virgin, ideal housewife, perfect mother - confine women to highly gendered, classed and ageist positions in society, often without room for self-expression, independence or autonomy.

Stead's writing echoes the conflict between women's public and private selves at this time, then, fictionalising the discord between their socially prescribed roles and their burgeoning social, economic and sexual independence when, despite Elvira's initial rebellion, by the end of the novel she has returned to her husband in the 'frozen grey suburbs' of London, 'exposed, in the end, as a dull woman' with, like her fictional twin in Stead's later novel *Miss Herbert* (1976), 'an ordinary suburban face and ordinary suburban remarks'.[138] While Elvira temporarily transgresses the boundaries of 'social respectability', revelling, like Amabel, in her own sexual pleasure in the privacy of the hotel bathroom, the novel's ending reveals how, like Sasha, she is

[136] Hazel Rowley, *Christina Stead: A Biography* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1993), p. 105, 53.
[137] Stead, p. 96, 315; Rowley, p. 53.
[138] Stead, p. 381; Rowley, p. 520; Christina Stead, *Miss Herbert* (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 305.

ultimately unable to craft a meaningful sense of independence or autonomy, because of her gender and economic reality without a committed partner, a fact exacerbated by the ultimately unhomely and impersonal hotel setting.[139]

In their novels, Christina Stead and Jean Rhys both use this setting as a metonym for women's liminal social position and as a useful material lens through which to explore the everyday lived experience of this liminality for their female protagonists. As a space outside of the everyday - neither fully private nor fully public - the hotel 'room with bath' is 'uniquely positioned to provide insight into both spheres', opening up, as Emma Short argues, 'discussions of marginality, alienation and liberation'.[140] Like Sasha, Rhys herself struggled to construct a real sense of belonging throughout her life, often sinking into the depths of loneliness, depression and alcoholism. We only have to look at the index in her edited collection of letters to see a list of more than seventy entries under the heading 'depressed, lonely, tired, unwell', evidence that, as Lilian Pizzichini argues, Rhys wrote 'about long periods of nothingness with an insight born of bitter experience'.[141]

Shortly after her trip to Paris in 1937 in which *Good Morning, Midnight* was conceived, and reflected in the 'startling, hallucinatory and disorienting' ending of the novel, Rhys suffered 'some kind of breakdown' and was hospitalised in a clinic near Versailles.[142] This friction is submerged in the ambiguous closing scene of *Good Morning, Midnight*, in which Sasha willingly or, perhaps, not so willingly has sex with the commis, the intimidating travelling salesman who she often meets in the hotel

[139] Rowley, p. 105, 53.
[140] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 33; Short, p. 63.
[141] Jean Rhys, *Letters 1931-1966*, ed. by Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly (London: Andre Deutsch, 1984), p. 308; Lilian Pizzichini, *The Blue Hour: A Portrait of Jean Rhys* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 116.
[142] Pizzichini, p. 219.

corridor and who leaves her feeling 'frightened as hell'.[143] Like the voices that permeate the walls of Elvira's hotel room as she lies in wait for her lover, this man's voice invades Sasha's private space with his shouted insults of 'sale vache', 'colloquially translated as "nasty/dirty cow" or "slut"', reminding her of the 'relentless proximity of other hotel guests'.[144] Yet this lack of any real privacy, where the hotel proprietor's omnipresence might be expected to protect a woman from the unwanted advances of other guests, does not protect her in the final scene when, worried that her and René, the gigolo, have been overheard together in her hotel room, she is made vulnerable by the setting and her proximity to the other hotel guests.

In the final few pages, Sasha is lying naked on her bed imagining that the 'sweet gigolo' who she had just rejected is 'turning into the end of the street', coming back to her hotel where she has left the 'door a little open' in anticipation.[145] Instead, standing over her with 'his mean eyes flickering', is the commis who has entered her hotel room:

> I look him straight into his eyes and despise another poor devil of a human being for the last time. For the last time…
>
> Then I put my arms round him and pull him down on to the bed, saying: "Yes - yes - yes…"[146]

The ambiguity of Sasha's last words - 'Yes - yes - yes…' - are the narrative's last transgression as Rhys lets readers decide if they symbolise a moment of 'resigned acceptance of a force against which she cannot fight' or, like James Joyce's Molly Bloom, a 'rebirth and a transcendence of the self'.[147] This moment reflects the

---

[143] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 31.
[144] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 126; Short, p. 129.
[145] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 156, 158.
[146] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 159.
[147] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 159; Laura de la Parra Fernández, 'Subversive Wanderings in the City of Love: Constructing the Female Body in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*', *ES Review: Spanish Journal of English Studies*, 39 (2018), 215-32 (p. 229); Katharine Streip, '"Just a Cérébrale": Jean Rhys, Women's Humor, and Ressentiment', *Representations*, 45 (Winter 1994), 117-44 (p. 125). For more on these two opposing interpretations see: Mary Lou Emery, *Jean Rhys at "World's End": Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp. 145-46. For more on this moment as a symbol of rebirth see: Pierrette M. Frickey, *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys.*

ambiguity and ambivalence of everyday life for women like Sasha and Elvira who attempt to live and love outside of the confines of marriage or a committed relationship. In this moment, Rhys emphasises the ambiguity at the heart of the hotel 'room with bath'; it can be a unique, even transformative space where female sexual desire can be performed or realised, if, like Amabel, you or your lover can afford the privacy and anonymity it promises.[148] Yet its impersonality and unhomeliness also reveal, on a wider level, the impossibility of sexual and social freedom for women like Sasha and Elvira in the first half of the twentieth century.

(Washington: Three Continents Press, 1990); Thomas F. Staley, *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1979).

[148] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 33.

The Lodging-House Bathroom

> Assuring Mrs Bailey that she remembered the way to the room, she started at last on the journey up the many flights of stairs. The feeling of confidence that had come the first time she mounted them with Mrs Bailey returned now. She could not remember noticing anything then but a large brown dinginess, one rich warm even tone everywhere in the house; a sharp contrast to the cold, harshly lit little bedroom in Mornington Road.[1]

First published in 1919, though set two decades earlier, the fourth part of Dorothy Richardson's novel-sequence, *The Tunnel*, sees Miriam Henderson move into the attic room of Mrs Bailey's Bloomsbury lodging house. The opening pages capture the 'smeariness' and 'dinginess' of the 'faded and worn' building, its 'dark landings' and 'gloomy heights' 'filled with dust' and 'cracks'.[2] For Miriam, however, this dingy house symbolises the liberatory potential she locates in living independently:

> But there was no *need* to do anything or think about anything… ever, here. No interruption, no one watching or speculating or treating one in some particular way that had to be met.[3]

The rented room, which she sees as a container for 'her untrammelled thoughts', is free from 'interruption', familial expectation and 'watching' eyes, and finally gives her a space in which to write away from the domestic distractions of everyday life.[4]

In contrast to the oppressive family home where Miriam had previously lived as a governess and where it had been 'impossible to read or think or play', Richardson imbues her descriptions of the lodging house with a sense of rhythm that mimics the literal coming and going of people, conversations and ideas:

> The large dusty house, the many downstair rooms, the mysterious dark-roomed vault of the basement, all upright in her upright form; hurried smeary cleansings, swift straightening of grey-sheeted beds, the strange unfailing water-system, gurgling cisterns, gushing taps and lavatory flushes, the wonder of gaslight and bedroom candles, the daily meals magically appearing and disappearing; her

[1] Dorothy Richardson, *The Tunnel*, in *Pilgrimage* (London: Virago, 1992), II, pp. 9-288 (p. 11).
[2] Richardson, *Tunnel*, p. 12, 11, 17.
[3] Richardson, *Tunnel*, p. 17.
[4] Richardson, *Tunnel*, p. 21.

> knowledge of the various mysteriously arriving and vanishing people, all beginning and ending in her triumphant, reassuring smile that went forward outside beyond these things, with everybody.[5]

Miriam sees the lodging house as an interconnected mechanism, with the 'gurgling cisterns' and 'gushing taps' creating a symbiotic connection between her and the other 'mysterious' lodgers.[6] The landlady's domestic labour, like the 'unfailing water-system', forms an unseen backdrop to the house, captured here in the multiple clauses, adverbs and gerunds that add a repetitive motion to the text. Richardson's focus on material systems, all working independently but concomitantly like the individual lives of the lodgers, sets up the lodging house as a complex community linked by the sounds and smells of washing, cooking and cleaning.[7]

For Miriam, the lodging house is infused with 'shabby happy corners' that symbolise her escape from the suffocation of suburbia.[8] One of these perhaps surprising happy corners is the shared lavatory, which 'became this morning one of her own rooms':

> The little lavatory with its long high window sending in the light from across the two sets of back-to-back tree-shaded Bloomsbury gardens, its little shabby open sink cupboard facing her with its dim unpolished taps and the battered enamel cans on its cracked and blistered wooden top, became this morning one of her own rooms, a happy little corner in the growing life that separated her from Wimpole Street.[9]

Richardson, as before, emphasises the shabbiness and grubbiness of the lodging house's smallest room: the taps are 'dim' and 'unpolished', the enamel cans 'battered' and the wooden top is 'cracked and blistered'. Yet this dinginess is a marker of difference from the suburban family home, and one that Miriam relishes. Unlike the

[5] Richardson, *Tunnel*, p. 17; Dorothy Richardson, *Interim*, in *Pilgrimage* (London: Virago, 1992), II, pp. 289-453 (p. 428).
[6] Richardson, *Interim,* p. 428.
[7] Richardson, *Interim,* p. 428.
[8] Richardson, *Tunnel*, p. 157.
[9] Richardson, *Tunnel*, p. 217.

‘drab’ suburban houses with ‘no touch of life or colour anywhere’, the ‘little lavatory’ is soaked in sunlight from the back-to-back gardens, and becomes a ‘happy little corner’ that she can call her own.[10] Connected to the rest of the house by intricate plumbing systems, as well as the sounds and smells of her fellow lodgers, and connected to London by the open windows, Miriam is able to carve out a space for herself and her ‘growing life’ in the lodging house.

For the older woman, however, who has a life of economic instability and grotty lodging houses behind her, these spaces do not always have such a liberatory potential. Haunting the streets, rented rooms and lodging houses of early twentieth-century London, the aging, unmarried woman is perceived, as we will come to see, as a socially dirty figure who, unable to work or earning very little, no longer able to produce children, and increasingly losing her sexual appeal, is a burden to a society that privileges youth. For these women, some of whom we met in my first chapter, the lodging house symbolises a social and economic precarity that seeps into all aspects of their lives. Interrogating this precarity, this chapter focuses on the hardships of a life outside the family home, demonstrating how the lodging house’s often overlooked bathroom spaces act as useful literary settings for writers to think through questions of aging, class and marginalisation.

Building on recent work on lodging houses, rented rooms and bedsits by Emily Cuming, Terri Mullholland, Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti, this chapter forms part of a ‘feminist scholarship’ that posits that, ‘far from being a feminized zone or a separate sphere of seclusion, the domestic interior and the home are illuminating sites for understanding historical change and the conditions of modern life for women’.[11] In line

[10] Richardson, *Tunnel*, p. 157.
[11] Emily Cuming, *Housing, Class and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 12.

with this, I use lodging-house bathroom spaces - the washstand and the shared bathroom - to facilitate fresh readings of older women's everyday lives at a time when they are seen, thinking back to my first chapter, as an 'inferior and redundant' "other" associated with 'decay' or 'collapse'.[12] The shared bathroom is an intimate space suffused with social anxieties around moral and physical cleanliness, and as such amplifies the bodily reality of its users, reminding them of both their proximity to others' (or "other's") dirt and their unnerving lack of privacy or autonomy in this domestic space. Because of these unspoken associations, the lodging-house bathroom is a useful container in fiction for explorations of otherness, cleanliness and propriety - anxieties that also surround the aging, unmarried woman.

We see this in Storm Jameson's *A Day Off* (1933), Virginia Woolf's *The Years* (1937) and Olivia Manning's *The Doves of Venus* (1955), which use these bathroom spaces to explore marginalised characters, as well as the position of women more widely at the time. While Miriam revels in the sounds and smells of the lodging house - the 'gushing' and 'gurgling' - because it symbolises her new life in the city and all of its associated freedoms, in Jameson, Woolf and Manning's novels this porosity serves as a constant aural and olfactory reminder of the closeness of others, their bodies and bodily wastes, and the (moral and literal) dirt that comes with living in shared spaces with strangers.[13] In bringing together these two dirty subjects - aging and the bathroom - this chapter will show how attention to these ubiquitous yet often forgotten spaces,

[12] John Benson, *Prime Time: A History of the Middle Aged in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 16; Kathleen Williams Renk, '"Blackberrying in the Sun"? Modernism and the Ageing Woman in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent*', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27, 3 (2016), 317-28 (p. 318). See my first chapter for an in depth discussion of this.

[13] For more on Dorothy Richardson's use of the symbolism of porosity see: Melinda Harvey, 'Dwelling, Poaching, Dreaming: Housebreaking and Homemaking in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*', in *Inside Out: Women Negotiating, Subverting, Appropriating Public and Private Space*, ed. by Teresa Gomez Reus and Aránzazu Usandizaga (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 167-88.

characters and narratives facilitates fresh ways of thinking about the precarious social position of unmarried, older women in the early twentieth century.

The Lodging-House Bathroom

> Here was an old mansion formerly belonging to some great nobleman. Relics of marble mantelpieces remained. The rooms were panelled and the banisters were carved, and yet the floors were rotten, the walls dripped with filth; hordes of half-naked men and women had taken up their lodging in the old banqueting-halls.[14]

In her biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel, Virginia Woolf captures the 'filth' of London's mid-nineteenth-century lodging houses through the eyes of Flush, her fictional version of the Victorian poet's 'loving friend'.[15] Having been stolen from his upper-middle-class neighbourhood by Mr Taylor, a gang leader notorious for returning a pet's 'head and paws' in 'a brown paper parcel', Flush witnesses the slum's dirt, disease and debauchery:

> He found himself in chillness and dampness. As his giddiness left him he made out a few shapes in a low dark room - broken chairs, a tumbled mattress. Then he was seized and tied tightly by the leg to some obstacle. Something sprawled on the floor - whether beast or human being, he could not tell. Great boots and draggled skirts kept stumbling in and out. Flies buzzed on scraps of old meat that were decaying on the floor.[16]

In the images of waste and decay, Woolf encapsulates the extreme poverty and dire living conditions of the urban working classes, and amplifies the immorality associated with this way of living. The rotting floorboards and crumbling marble mantelpieces, both coated in a thick layer of dirt, embody what historian Lee Jackson identifies as 'the very fabric of slum houses'.[17] Invariably 'decrepit and filthy', these highly populated urban areas were made up of 'ancient buildings on the verge of collapse, let and sublet

[14] Virginia Woolf, *Flush* (London: Vintage Classics, 2018), p. 50.
[15] Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'To Flush, My Dog', *Poetry Foundation* <https://bit.ly/3uiQvzg> [accessed 21 February 2021].
[16] Woolf, *Flush*, p. 52, 53.
[17] Lee Jackson, *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight Against Filth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 181.

to the verge of extinction - soot, grease and grime omnipresent - the legacy of decades of neglect by heedless landlords and impoverished, transient tenants'.[18] Loaded with social anxieties, not just 'grease and grime', lodging houses were embroiled in Victorian debates about moral decay and disorder.[19]

Five years after Flush's kidnapping, local authorities were granted the power to regulate slum areas through the Common Lodging Houses Act of 1851, an extension of the 1848 Public Health Act, which saw a fixed maximum capacity imposed along with increased cleaning, lime-washing and reporting of infectious diseases.[20] For the first time, lodging houses were regularly inspected by police or, following a reorganisation of London's local government in 1855, dedicated Medical Officers and Sanitary Inspectors, in an attempt to curb both the rapid spread of diseases and their inhabitants' immoral habits.[21] But with accommodation ranging from 'from filthy, overcrowded thieves' dens' to 'reasonably comfortable boarding-houses for artisans, commercial travellers, clerks and students', authorities struggled to implement these regulations effectively, and lodging houses continued to be seen as 'the great source of contagious and loathsome diseases, the hot-beds of crime and moral depravity'.[22]

To middle-class observers, who were, according to Leonore Davidoff, 'hypersensitive to social boundaries', lodging houses signified a dangerous anti-domesticity that 'implied a casualness of relationships, the mixing of age, sex and social groups' that opposed the nuclear family, as well as the cleanliness and order

[18] Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, p. 181.
[19] Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, p. 181.
[20] 'Lodging Houses', *UK Parliament* <https://bit.ly/2Ml0wLk> [accessed 21 February 2021].
[21] Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, p. 201. For more on this see: Anthony Wohl, *The Eternal Slum* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 147.
[22] Burnett, p. 63; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1852-3, LXXVIII, Common Lodging House Act, Report to the Secretary of State for Home Department, p. 528. For more on the failure of sanitary reforms see: Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, p. 211.

that it signified.[23] In a similar vein, Sharon Marcus argues that lodging houses 'served as a metonym for much that was wrong with the urban landscape' in nineteenth-century social discourse, noting that 'almost every book about London published between the 1840s and the 1870s singled out lodging houses and lodgings as exemplars of urban dirt, disease, crowding, and promiscuity'.[24] With their associations of 'impermanence' and urban decay implying social, moral and domestic disorder, as well as denoting literal dirt, lodging houses and their inhabitants carried 'moral opprobrium' that continued long into the twentieth century.[25]

The state of London lodging houses, particularly for the poorest in society, had not vastly improved by the turn of the century, and this problem was compounded by an increasingly mobile urban population exerting demand on the market.[26] In their recent study, Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti note that 'after both world wars, housing shortage was one of the most critical issues facing Britain, resulting in the proliferation of communal, often inconvenient, dwelling spaces'.[27] And although the Victorians' virulent reaction towards lodging-house living had somewhat diminished, rented rooms

[23] Leonore Davidoff, 'The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century England', in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. by Sandra Burman (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 64-97 (p. 71). For more on lodging houses as anti-domestic spaces see: Cuming, p. 75; Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). For a history of lodging houses see: John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1970* (London: Methuen, 1986); Terri Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses in Interwar Women's Literature: Alternative Domestic Space*s (London: Routledge, 2017). For an overview of different types of shared living space see: Kate MacDonald, 'The Use of London Lodgings in Middlebrow Fiction, 1900–1930s', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, 9, 1 (March 2011) <https://bit.ly/3qR38iY> [accessed 23 February 2021].

[24] Marcus, p. 104.

[25] Davidoff, p. 68. For more see: Cuming, p. 75.

[26] Lee Jackson argues that at the turn of the century 'after a hundred years of slum reform, the poorest in society remained firmly in the grip of the slum landlord, surrounded by dirt and decay' (Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, p. 211).

[27] Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, eds., 'Introduction', in *Living with Strangers: Bedsits and Boarding Houses in Modern English Life, Literature and Film* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), pp. 1-24 (p. 1). By the thirties, London had seen a fifteen percent increase in those living in rented accommodation, like hotels, bedsits and lodging houses, than ten years earlier (*Census of England and Wales 1931: General Tables* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1931), p. 112). Terri Mullholland notes the difficulty of accurately capturing accurate numbers of lodgers due to their often transient lifestyles and the informal nature of many lodging houses (Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*, p. 7).

were still associated with social precarity, loss of respectability and the mingling of genders, classes and social groups, which renewed anxieties about both physical and metaphorical dirt and decay. Indeed, Clair Wills argues convincingly that, in the first half of the twentieth century, the rented room

> signaled the precariousness of the hold on respectability, pitched as it was halfway down a rackety descending scale - down the staircase - from home ownership down through the serviced flat, a set of rooms with cooking facilities, a room in the landlady's house, the hire of a bed in a privately owned house, and a bed in a public hostel (a Rowton House or the Salvation Army Hostel), to no bed at all.[28]

Rather than explicit 'hot-beds of crime and moral depravity', lodging houses became, instead, 'arenas of social encounter' or 'contact zones for those precariously positioned on the margins'.[29]

These associations are heightened in the lodging-house bathroom, which, as an intimate space shared by strangers and infused with unspoken social codes, embodies this idea of a contact zone. We see it become a frequent point of tension in early twentieth-century fiction, where it is often used to subtly comment on a lodger's social, economic or domestic precarity. We see the effect of extra hot water costs in Jane Oliver and Ann Stafford's *Business as Usual* (1933), a semi-autobiographical account of a working woman's life in interwar London. Determined to support herself on her meagre earnings from the Everyman's department store - Selfridges in disguise - Harriet Fane is forced to forgo a bath when her weekly earnings are used up. In a letter to her husband-to-be back in Scotland, Harriet writes that 'when one uses hot baths as pick-me-ups in the evenings and for practical purposes in the mornings as well, it begins to come expensive'.[30] When she later moves into a Ladies-only lodging

[28] Clair Wills, 'Digs and Lodging Houses: Literature, Ruins, and Survival in Postwar Britain', *Éire-Ireland*, 52, 3 (Fall/Winter 2017), 57-74 (p. 59).
[29] Wills, p. 60, 59.
[30] Jane Oliver and Ann Stafford, *Business As Usual* (Bath: Handheld Press, 2020), p. 62.

house she is relieved to find that the bath, as well as the gas-fire and electric lights, 'mercifully' work on a 'penny-in-the-slot' basis.[31]

More than just an economically privileged space, the lodging-house bathroom was repeatedly used by writers to signal their characters' lack of control or autonomy. For Lettice Cooper's Ellen Lister, her novel's spinster aunt, and a young Jean Rhys just arrived in England, the bathroom is a highly regulated space, always monitored by the watchful eye of a landlady who is ready to revoke access at a moment's notice. In Cooper's *The New House* (1936), control of the bathroom is enmeshed in the unspoken power-play between tenant and landlady, the latter snidely telling Ellen that the bathroom is out of bounds in case the sound of running water wakes up her other lodgers, forcing Ellen to wash her 'lean, elderly body' in the cold water of her washstand.[32] Revealing her naivety to these inferred social mores in her autobiography *Smile Please* (1979), Rhys recalls how, in her first week in a 'boarding-house somewhere in Bloomsbury', she filled the tub with hot water, happily imagining that she could 'turn the hot tap on again' at her own will - that is until she is interrupted by the 'loud voice' of her landlady telling her to 'turn that tap off at once'.[33] Unaware that she had used up the whole house's hot water supply - 'English plumbing was a mystery,' she says - Rhys is scolded by her aunt, who

> then explained the ritual of having a bath in an English boarding-house. You had to ask for it several days beforehand, you had to be very careful to take it at that time and no other, and so on and so on.[34]

This lack of autonomy over when and how an individual could use the 'shining tiled sanctuary' is frequently alluded to by writers who play on its liminal spatiality,

[31] Oliver and Stafford, p. 66.
[32] Lettice Cooper, *The New House* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 281-82.
[33] Jean Rhys, *Smile Please* (London: Penguin, 1981), p. 99.
[34] Rhys, *Smile Please*, p. 99.

amplifying its murky designation as neither a fully private nor a fully public space.[35] Unlike the sanctity of the family bathroom, which will be disputed in my next chapter, this domestic space is shared by any number of lodgers, each performing some of the most intimate daily acts behind its door. Because of this, its users become hyper-sensitive to the proximity of other people's bodies and bodily waste, as well as the associated uneasiness around their promiscuity or cleanliness. Indeed, the protagonist of Edith Wharton's short story 'Full Circle' (1909), Geoffrey Betton, remembers the reality of this unease from the comfort of his 'great porcelain bath' now drawn by his valet in the adjoining dressing-room, his private 'blue and white temple of refreshment'.[36] Geoffrey remembers

> the horror of the communal plunge at his earlier lodgings: the listening for other bathers, the dodging of shrouded ladies in "crimping"-pins, the cold wait on the landing, the reluctant descent into a blotchy tin bath, and the effort to identify one's soap and nail-brush among the promiscuous implements of ablution.[37]

In this short passage, Wharton captures the combination of personal exposure, embodied by the sounds and sights of 'other bathers', and the horror of their bodily traces, seen in the 'blotchy' tub and array of 'implements of ablution' (the latter's collocation with the adjective 'promiscuous' further augmenting the bathroom's seedy or indecent connotations), that renders the shared bathroom such an intensely fraught space.

Dirty Old Women

These anxieties coalesce in the lodging-house bathroom belonging to Ellie Parsons, Petta Bellot's youthful foil in Olivia Manning's *The Doves of Venus*, whose disgust at

[35] Edith Wharton, 'Full Circle', in *Tales of Men And Ghosts*, *Project Gutenberg* <https://bit.ly/2P6Bpgf> [accessed 21 February 2021].
[36] Wharton, 'Full Circle'.
[37] Wharton, 'Full Circle'.

the (older) bodily reality of others (particularly the marginalised "other" of the aging woman) fuels the eviction of an elderly fellow lodger. Desperate for a bath before a date with Quintin Bellot, the philanderer we met in my first chapter, Ellie rushes home from work to her 'sliver of a room' in Chelsea.[38] In a scene reminiscent of Rhys' earlier mistake, Manning writes:

> She had not been able to have a bath all week. An absurd old woman, a newcomer to the house, had, apparently, taken leave of her wits. Ellie had seen her once - a little, elderly woman in a yellow kimono, descending the stairs as though she feared she might be seized by a dangerous animal. Early each evening this woman would lock herself in the bathroom and the house would become full of the sound of cisterns emptying themselves. Once Ellie, hoping for a bath, had stood outside the door and heard the water pouring away, the precious hot water, enough for two or three baths: and when the woman at last burst from the bathroom and fled, all the hot taps ran cold.[39]

This disturbing scene reveals Ellie's repulsion towards the 'absurd old woman', which proliferates as she monopolises the shared bathroom. When Ellie makes her way downstairs for her bath on this occasion, she hears the 'scurrying' (like a beetle or mouse, perhaps) 'steps of the old woman in the dark bathroom passage, the click of the bolt, then the furious rush of water'.[40] At Ellie's disappointed calls and no doubt eager to avoid 'complaints from the lodgers', the landlady

> shook the bathroom door until the lock broke. When the door fell open, Ellie could hear above the rush of the water the old woman's gasp of horror at discovery.[41]

Here, the old woman is the abhorred "other" of Wharton's short story, the sound of whose ablutions had reminded Geoffrey (and now Ellie, too) of the proximity of the stranger's dirty body sharing this 'communal' space.[42] Hearing her 'gasp' at her 'discovery', the old woman mirrors Geoffrey and Ellie's 'horror' as the landlady's

[38] Olivia Manning, *The Doves of Venus* (London: Virago, 1991), p. 19.
[39] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 57.
[40] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 58.
[41] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 58
[42] Wharton, 'Full Circle'.

breaching of the bathroom's hypothetical boundaries shatters the woman's illusions of propriety and privacy.[43] But it is the young Ellie who is left feeling 'so menaced' by the 'incident' that, 'even at the distance of her youth, she felt the threat of lonely, maniac old age'.[44]

Ellie feels such vitriolic disgust in this scene not just because she witnesses (albeit from the 'upper landing' where she shamefully hides 'so that she need not see the old woman come out') another lodger in the bathroom, though, of course, this carries with it a certain level of unease, but because the lodger she witnesses is an 'absurd' or 'maniac' old woman, and because she realises that her visceral reaction - one of disgust and repulsion - directly furthers the woman's marginalisation when she is promptly evicted.[45] As we saw in my first chapter, Manning's novel is saturated with fears of aging, with the old or aging woman becoming something of a leitmotif that haunts the narrative. Reading Manning alongside Jean Rhys and Virginia Woolf, my first chapter examined how the middle-aged and older became associated with both 'decay and anxiety, collapse and complacency', their bodies seen as an 'inferior and redundant' "other".[46] In the early twentieth century, but particularly in the interwar years, intense scrutiny was placed on the aging body, as the devastating loss of young men during the war collided with a growing consumer economy positing youthfulness as a precious commodity.[47] As the British public developed an aversion to growing old, ideals of youth entered the national narrative as a symbol of virility and vitality, and

[43] Wharton, 'Full Circle'.
[44] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 59.
[45] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 58, 57, 59.
[46] Benson, p. 16; Renk, p. 318. My first chapter also noted that, while written in the 1950s, Manning's novel is largely based on her life in London in the 1930s, which makes it an appropriate companion novel for Rhys and Woolf's novels.
[47] Cynthia Port, 'Ages are the Stuff!: The Traffic in Ages in Interwar Britain', *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, 18, 1 (Spring 2006), 138-61 (p. 138).

became the version of national identity that the nation sought to portray.[48] Though, for the first time in history, it became 'normal to grow old', as Pat Thane points out, due 'to the rapid decline, from the later nineteenth century, in infant mortality rates, and in deaths among adults in middle life', this actually resulted in society, particularly the younger generations, viewing the elderly as a burden which they would have to support.[49]

This shift in mentality during the interwar period had particularly dire consequences for women, whose identity and sense of self-worth is often associated with youth, beauty and fertility. This fed the eternal problem of maintaining an acceptable youthful, feminine facade, explored in more depth in my first chapter, and played into what Susan Bordo calls the 'pursuit of an ever-changing, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity - a pursuit without a terminus, requiring women to constantly attend to minute and often whimsical changes in fashion'.[50] What is more, as Charlotte Greenhalgh and Pat Thane highlight, women throughout the twentieth century were more likely to be poor in old age, both in terms of their finances and their health.[51] Women were more likely to be dismissed from their jobs earlier than men, faced greater workplace discrimination, and often left employment to take up the role of family caregiver.[52] As a result, older women, especially those who were not economically independent, came to be seen as a particular type of burden on society;

[48] Port, 'Ages are the Stuff', p. 138.
[49] Pat Thane, 'Old Women in Twentieth-Century Britain', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2001), pp. 207-31 (p. 207); Pat Thane, 'Women and Ageing in the Twentieth Century', *L'Homme*, 17, 1 (2006), 59-74 (p. 60).
[50] Susan Bordo, 'The Body and Reproduction of Femininity', in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 165-84 (p. 166).
[51] Thane, 'Women and Ageing in the Twentieth Century', p. 62; Greenhalgh, p. 8-9; John Macinol, *The Politics of Retirement in Britain, 1878-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 31.
[52] Greenhalgh, p. 9; Thane, 'Women and Ageing in the Twentieth Century', p. 62.

no longer producing, and often barely consuming, they added nothing to a consumer-driven, capitalist and patriarchal culture that favoured the traditional nuclear family.

This culturally marginalised figure is aligned with the idea of 'decay' in the public mind because, as Lise Isaksen contends, with both physical and mental faculties beginning to fail, old age is seen as 'dirtier than youth'.[53] This sits in line with the work of Mary Douglas, who argues that dirt and dirty things are seen as 'matter out of place'.[54] Characterised by 'ambiguity and in-betweenness', dirt is an affront to the social system, something that we, on an individual and societal level, feel the need to clean up, eradicate or flush away. [55] As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, Remo Gramigna builds on this idea, arguing that, because dirt is seen as matter out of place, it must be controlled by symbolic or literal boundaries used to 'delimit, demarcate, contain and mediate' dirt and disorder.[56] As a society, we create our 'own boundaries in order to differentiate identity and alterity, the inner from the outer space, life from death, the sacred from the profane, black from white, purity from dirt, text from extra-text, culture from non-culture'.[57] In their recent work on dirt, Ben Campkin and Rosie Cox similarly reinforce the notion that 'cleanliness and contamination, pollution and prohibition, are part of a classificatory system, used by all cultures, to police

[53] Benson, p. 12, 16; Lise Widding Isaksen, 'Masculine Dignity and the Dirty Body', *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 10, 3 (2002), 137-46 (p. 143). For more on this see: Mike Featherstone, 'The Body in Consumer Culture' in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S Turner (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 170-96; Margaret Morganroth Gullette, 'Creativity, Aging, Gender: A Study of Their Intersections, 1910-1935', in *Aging and Gender in Literature: Studies in Creativity*, ed. by Anne M. Wyatt-Brown and Janice Rosen (Virginia: University of Virginia Press 1993), pp. 19-48; Lise Widding Isaksen, 'Toward a Sociology of (Gendered) Disgust, *Journal of Family Issues*, 23, 7 (October 2002), 791-811; Cynthia Port, '"Money, for the night is coming": Jean Rhys and Gendered Economies of Ageing', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 12, 2 (2001), 204-17 (p. 206); Kathleen Woodward, 'Performing Age, Performing Gender', *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, 18, 1 (Spring 2006), 162-89.

[54] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 44.

[55] Remo Gramigna, 'Toilet Cultures: Boundaries, Dirt and Disgust', in *Things in Culture, Culture in Things*, ed. by Patrick Laviolette and Anu Kannike (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2013), pp. 256-79 (p. 270).

[56] Gramigna, p. 267.

[57] Gramigna, p. 267.

boundaries'.[58] The older, unmarried lower-class women at the centre of this chapter are aligned with this idea of symbolic pollution. Inspiring disgust and repulsion on the part of the youthful viewer, the socially dirty aging female body, marked by a proximity to death that is amplified by poverty and poor health, is ensnared in the social discourse around dirt and disorder, class, consumption and waste, and, as such, is seen as an obsolete waste product of a youthful society.

The Dusty Washstand

We meet one of these obsolete women in Storm Jameson's *A Day Off*, a novel that crafts a socially conscious portrait of an aging 'working-class flâneuse' during her attempted day off, as the title suggests, from the bleak reality of her life.[59] Imagining that she 'was not stout, not middle-aged, not poor, not afraid', the novel captures the unnamed woman's struggle to escape her social, sexual and economic woes.[60] With the narrative set entirely within the confines of one day, much like Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), and uniting 'high modernist stylistic experimentation' with what Liesl Olsen calls the 'aesthetic of the everyday', Jameson offers an important 'class-based critique of the earlier modernist day novels' by subverting, through what Elizabeth Covington argues are 'abortive repetitions', the

[58] Ben Campkin and Rosie Cox, eds., 'Introduction: Materialities and Metaphors of Dirt and Cleanliness', in *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), pp. 1-8 (p. 4). Reinforcing this in an early twentieth-century context, Morag Shiach notes that 'cleanliness and hygiene have frequently been understood as key cultural markers of a "modern" society, both in the sense that a modern society may offer the techniques and resources to achieve higher standards of cleanliness, and in the sense that self-understanding as "modern" may involve a repudiation of the "primitive" quality of dirt' (Morag Shiach, 'Technologies of labour: washing and typing', in *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 57-99 (p. 57)). For more on this see: Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York and London: Routledge: 1995).

[59] David James, 'Localizing Late Modernism: Interwar Regionalism and the Genesis of the "Micro Novel"', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 32, 4 (Summer 2009), 43-64 (p. 59).

[60] Storm Jameson, *A Day Off*, in *Women Against Men* (London: Virago, 1982), pp. 193-293 (p. 252).

actions of Clarissa Dalloway and Leopold Bloom.[61] Elaine Feinstein picks up on this in her introduction to the novel, where she describes how Jameson's focus on the materiality of the woman's everyday life

> calls up the stale scents and fading wallpaper of her room, and makes us share the anticipated joys of grilled food and cheap cups of tea. For all her varicose veins and sagging skin, the woman faces the world with a certain swagger.[62]

It is with this 'swagger' that we see the middle-aged woman aimlessly wandering the city streets, her aging body mingling with the 'almost palpable veil of dust and smells, the fumes from engines and the sour smell of clothes and bodies' as she loses herself in her memories.[63] Through these memories we learn about her younger days as a mill worker and a servant, her 'ersatz marriage', and her many lovers leading up to George, the man who will shortly leave her to face old age penniless and alone.[64] Despite the unspoken contract between the pair of 'two pounds a week' in exchange for living together as man and wife from 'Saturday to Monday', an arrangement that Terri Mullholland suggests makes her a 'kept woman' or an 'amateur prostitute' and reflects, as Lucy Bland argues, the 'difficulty in understanding active female sexuality outside the institution of prostitution' during this period, worries about the financial insecurity she will face if he abandons her constantly invade her memories.[65] These worries are compounded by her age and fading looks, which she knows, like Petta Bellot and Sasha Jansen, increasingly limits her sexual capital:

> But the thought of George was definitely unpleasant. As always, she tried instinctively to close her mind. What shall you do if? - thoughts that began this

---

[61] Elizabeth Covington, 'Splitting the Husk: The Day Novel and Storm Jameson's *A Day Off*', *Genre*, 46, 3 (Fall 2013), 265-84 (p. 269-70); Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5.

[62] Elaine Feinstein, 'Introduction', in *Women Against Men* (London: Virago, 1982), pp. vii-xii (p. xi).

[63] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 196, 272.

[64] Covington, 'Splitting the Husk', p. 269.

[65] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 217, 218; Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*, p. 95, 53; Lucy Bland, '"Guardians of the Race", or "Vampires Upon the Nation's Health"? Female Sexuality and its Regulation in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', in *The Changing Experience of Women*, ed. by Elizabeth Whitelegg, Madeleine Arnot, Else Bartels, Lynda Birke, Susan Himmelweit, Diana Leonard, Sonja Ruehl and Mary Ann Speakman (Oxford: Martha Robinson, 1982), pp. 373-88 (p. 381).

> way terrified her. No, no, her mind cried. Not now, not yet. Think of something. I am thinking. Think. I'm not old yet.[66]

Though her lover's gradual distancing has been subtle, it has not gone unnoticed. By the end of the novel, with an ominous letter arrived from George, the protagonist is plunged into financial precarity and overcome with the 'fear of finding herself without money, without a home'.[67]

Revealing the socioeconomic confines of her life, the novel opens in the woman's 'sour' rented room, where, cramped, littered with mess and smelling of 'stale scent', she wakes 'between coarse sheets in the tumbled bed'.[68] The washstand is the first object to which she stumbles 'heavily' upon waking.[69] Ignoring the 'film of dust on the water in the hand-basin', the woman attempts to clean up her appearance - her 'puckered', 'wrinkled' and 'coarse' (like the bedsheets) skin - as she performs her 'daily rite' of creams and make-up, even though, she admits to herself, the 'notion that she took all these pains to attract belonged now in the past'.[70] Washing her face with the washstand's dusty water (her refusal to change it, thinking back to my first chapter, signals her apathy towards recreating a visual facade of youth), aligns her and her aging body with its connotations of dirt and debris, and this is mirrored in the equally dirty room. Her bedroom-come-bathroom is suffused with detritus, as Jameson emphasises the sheer volume of mess that saturates this cramped space:

> I ought to tidy up a bit first, she thought, looking round. The rumpled bed was the centre of disorder but everywhere there were clothes tossed down on chairs, bits of paper, a banana skin, used cups, the cover of a magazine sticking out from under the bed, an empty powder-box with a dead puff inside, cigarette ends, a paper bag of something, and a towel-rail-ful of limp damp stockings.

---

[66] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 198. For further discussions of Petta Bellot and Sasha Jansen's social and sexual capital see my previous two chapters.
[67] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 246.
[68] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 193, 196.
[69] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 194.
[70] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 194, 195-96.

> Dust, too, everywhere, on the walls, on the shabby paint, on the floor. A film of dust on the water in the hand-basin.[71]

Jameson infuses this passage with images of litter that paints a pitiful picture of the woman's life. These objects are remnants - the powder-box is 'empty', the powder puff is 'dead', the banana has been eaten, the cigarettes smoked - and reinforce the suggestion that she, too, is used up and useless. Like the dust that has settled on every surface, even the supposedly clean water of the washstand basin, the room is overrun with mess. Through this opening image of the dusty washstand water, Jameson gives the scene a sense of stagnancy that is echoed in the woman's lethargic refusal to clean up her messes; the washstand becomes a synecdoche for both the woman's putrefying aging body and the stagnancy of her life.

From the debris of these opening pages, we see how the woman's living situation - the material reality of her lodging-house room - reflects her own social position. Describing the 'over-habited' room, Jameson writes:

> It was to it she belonged; to the faded wall-paper; the cupboard; the cracks in the ceiling; the smells of old rotten wood, clothes, the worn mats.[72]

Reading this scene, Mullholland suggests that Jameson connects 'the character's fractured life to her dilapidated lodgings', making associations 'between the lines on the ceiling and the woman's confrontation a few pages later with her ageing face in the mirror'.[73] In doing so, Jameson's 'portrayal of interior space mirrors the woman's sense of being an unwanted item, cast aside: she is also faded, cracked, and worn'.[74] In their recent work, Briganti and Mezei echo this, identifying connections between the room and the woman's body (which is tied closely to the material reality of her age, though they do not explicitly make this link), positing that 'the phantasm of the female

[71] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 196.
[72] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 211.
[73] Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*, p. 55.
[74] Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*, p. 55.

body, polluting and biologically determined by its reproductive powers, haunts the house'.[75] Replicating the style of Jameson's own domestic inventory, Briganti and Mezei argue that:

> The trajectory of her physical and moral descent is "thickly" reflected in her thickening waist, coarse skin, thick veiny legs, the powder lying in thick dabs, her skirt sagging at the seams, the rumpled bed, clothes tossed down on chairs and the layer of dust over the furniture. Her room and body partake of the same descent into a state of entropy.[76]

Jameson's emphasis on the materiality of both the lodging house and the woman's life is particularly striking because, as Briganti and Mezei suggest, the lodging house's "stuff", which they identify as 'old carpets, rickety chairs, broken desks' and to which I would add the opening scene's washstand, heightens its association with its inhabitant's 'loss of social status and a kind of ontological impermanence' - the 'state of entropy' that defines the unnamed woman's life.[77] Because these items do not belong to the lodger, they constantly remind her of her lack of power or autonomy in this domestic space, much like the shared bathroom, and, in doing so, amplify her social and economic precarity.

We saw this at work in the novel's opening scene through the object of the washstand, which emphasised the woman's social position on several levels. As we have seen already, the presence of this washstand in the bedroom broke down the boundaries between the bedroom and the bathroom, drawing the woman's bodily ablutions to the fore to highlight the mess of both her aging body and her domestic space. On a secondary level, however, the washstand also acts as an important symbol of her lack of autonomy (she does not have access to a bathroom in which to

[75] Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, eds., 'Aspidistras and Divans: Transient Spaces in the London Novel, 1920s to 1940s', in *Living with Strangers: Bedsits and Boarding Houses in Modern English Life, Literature and Film* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), pp. 26-43 (p. 31).
[76] Briganti and Mezei, 'Aspidistras and Divans', p. 31.
[77] Briganti and Mezei, 'Introduction', p. 7.

wash) and her lack of privacy (as we saw earlier in this chapter, other lodgers might hear her performing her morning ablutions). As such, the washstand becomes a physical reminder of the porosity of the lodging house, as well as its implicit connotations of literal and moral dirt.[78] But rather than this sense of porosity being attached to the lodging house's other inhabitants, as we saw in Richardson's narrative, the woman's room is pervaded by the city itself. Upon opening the blind, the dust of the room seems to merge with the 'dust thickened' street outside:

> The blind flew up and at once the street entered the room. A row of geraniums in the opposite window blazed all the hotter for the strong light. Beyond them the potboy at The Swan was sweeping last night's sawdust out over the doorstep. Dust thickened the sunlight. On the edge of the pavement a thin dirty child scraped the gutter with his fingers to make a ring of dust round two slivers of wood. Some game he's playing. At what? A woman bent her head in the window, doing something to a garment she squeezed between her hands. With the heat and the fierce light, noise flowed into the room, the squeak of wheels on asphalt, voices, a girl's shrill with anger, rough male laughter.[79]

Jameson infuses this street scene with images of dirt that mingle with physical labour to act as markers of class: the woman washing, the potboy sweeping, the thin child playing in the dirt of the gutter. This, coupled with the profusion of boundaries (the doorstep, the gutter, the window, the edge of the pavement), echoes the liminality or precarity of the woman's life in the lodging house, as well as her marginality, like these other city figures, as an aging, unmarried woman in society. Subtly reminding readers of the woman's financial precarity compounded by her aging body, here, Jameson emphasises her proximity to the gutter.

Jameson uses the invasion of sunlight to symbolise the porosity of the room and the street. Filling the 'narrow street to the neck' (the use of the word 'neck'

[78] Leonore Davidoff notes that lodging house rent 'included services such as cleaning, carrying water and coal, emptying slops such as waste water and chamber pots, making fires, running errands' (Davidoff, p. 82). In emptying waste water or cleaning the room, the literal and symbolic privacy of the rented room is further broken down.
[79] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 194, 195.

extending the earlier body/room metaphor to encompass the street), the sunlight causes the woman to draw back, 'shrinking from the impact of the street on her unprepared body'.[80] For Miriam, as we saw earlier in this chapter, the sunlight streaming into the lodging house had symbolised the liberatory potential she located in living independently, and connoted the bright future she saw ahead of her. Miriam's youthful optimism is absent from Jameson's narrative, with the sunlight instead shining a (literal) light on her protagonist's aging body, revealing its heft, 'puckered' skin and wrinkles, and exposing, by lighting up her messy body and messy room, the economic hardship her aging (and, therefore, less sexually attractive) body will bring.[81] This economic aspect is amplified when, directly after this moment, the woman fumbles for her purse amongst the 'heap' of clothes illuminated by the sunlight, counting out its meagre contents:

> Eleven and fourpence. She slumped against the end of the bed, trying to think. Thursday. If George came on Saturday as usual, or sent the usual - if he failed - A curious blankness succeeded this thought.[82]

From this opening scene, then, Jameson aligns this metaphor of porosity, which extends throughout her narrative, with the protagonist's fear of aging and its inevitable economic hardship.

The metaphor of porosity that surrounds the lodging house and the unnamed woman is linked to the disgust that her lover feels towards her as she begins to show signs of aging, as well as to the social disgust felt by a society that privileges youth. For George, the woman is inseparable from her age, economic status and life in the lodging house, and these factors all feed into his feelings towards her. This reaches a

[80] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 195.
[81] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 196.
[82] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 195.

climax during his last visit to her lodgings where, after watching her aging body dress, she feels something change between them:

> He walked in front of her down the unlighted stairs, so familiar to her that they were only an extension of her room. As she pulled the hall door to after her, he said that the whole house smelled of dust and females. But it was not what he said, it was his face. She felt anger squeezing her across her throat. [...] But something had happened that evening - though for the life of her she couldn't tell what it was. But instead of coming back with her as usual, he made an excuse, something she didn't catch, and left her gaping after him in Tottenham Court Road.[83]

Depersonalising her protagonist with her use of the word 'females' and reflecting George's dwindling feelings, Jameson captures the increasing pathos of the aging woman, who, lumped together with all of the other surplus spinsters living in rented rooms, is explicitly associated with smell of dust that pervades the 'whole house'. In contrast to the 'large dusty house' that Miriam found so full of potential in Richardson's novels, here we are confronted with the dirty materiality of this seemingly invisible substance which, along with his aging lover's body, repulses George.[84] Made up of remnants of human waste, dirt, pollen, decomposing insects, animal dander, lint and skin flakes, dust is a repulsive, even abject, substance; by collocating 'dust' and 'females', Jameson reveals that in George's eyes the lodging house - containing aging, unmarried women - is a socially dusty or dirty space, much like his increasingly unappealing lover. In this moment of realisation, George is unable to hide the disgust and pity he feels towards them both from his face.

After observing the disgust on her lover's face, the woman 'moved blindly, feeling for something, some support' from her material possessions, but 'there was

[83] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 209.
[84] Richardson, *Interim*, p. 428.

nothing'.[85] Once again implicitly emphasising the insubstantiality of her material belongings, Jameson writes that, instead,

> a door flew open in her mind, letting through the rough noise of a gramophone. *He left her behind before*.[86]

Through the sounds of the gramophone, Jameson highlights the protagonist's 'rough' treatment by men her whole life, as well as the 'rough' nature of her future without a steady income or the support or intimacy of a man. Illuminating the perpetual loop that men have played in her life, echoed in the novel's circadian structure, the song lyrics amplify the uncertainty and precarity of her future. Her entrapment in this perpetual loop is reinforced in the final scene when the woman returns home to the room we met her in at the novel's opening. Climbing the stairs, weary after her unsuccessful day off, the woman thinks 'it was like every other night' - though readers might have guessed by this point that she will soon be confronted with a letter from George formally ending their arrangement and marking this night as the start of a bleaker future.[87]

Getting ready for bed, all the while thinking about the contents of the letter, the washstand book-ends the woman's day: it is the first thing she stumbles to in the morning and the last thing she refills at night. The washstand's dirty, dusty water is always waiting to be emptied and refilled again. On this evening, still 'half full of dirty water' from her morning ablutions, she 'padded across the landing with it to the sink' to 'save herself trouble in the morning', though 'she did not wash'.[88] Just as the hand-basin had been covered with a 'film of dust' when she woke up that morning, the same dusty water will greet her the next day; it is, like the perpetual loop of lovers, a constant in her life.[89] In this final scene, Jameson uses this everyday item of bathroom furniture

[85] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 209.
[86] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 209.
[87] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 290.
[88] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 291.
[89] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 196.

and its grimy water to symbolise the monotony and pathos of the woman's situation. Having performed the last of her nightly ritual at the washstand, absentmindedly spreading 'cream over her face', we see her complete another turn in the endless daily cycle in which she is trapped as an aging, unmarried working-class woman.[90]

While Jameson's socially conscious narrative persistently illustrates the hardships of the woman's life, the recurring image of the washstand with its 'film of dust', as well as the novel's circadian structure, which becomes most obvious in this final scene, demonstrates that her novel is contributing to a wider discourse about the everyday lives of working-class women. Here, Jameson is commenting on the inevitability of this outcome for the aging, working-class woman, who exists in a bleak cycle of precarity, poverty and isolation that will only intensify as she ages, and gestures to the wider social, sexual and economic barriers facing women in the early twentieth century. This washstand, like the shared lodging-house bathroom, draws attention to both the dirty material reality of life for the aging, unmarried woman in a lodging house, and her increasing marginalisation as a socially dirty individual, reminding us of women's entrapment within highly gendered and classed cycles of poverty.

Through the pathos of this final image, Jameson depersonalises her protagonist into a 'universal everywoman', standing in for all of the aging, unmarried, financially precarious women living in rented rooms and struggling to escape the economic and emotional poverty of old age.[91] Culminating in the dirty rented room we met her in at the novel's opening, then, Jameson's narrative enacts a final depersonalisation of the anonymous woman, who, in her sleep, enters 'a colourless world peopled only by the

[90] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 291.
[91] Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*, p. 56.

dead, those who had died in the flesh and been forgotten and those who [...] were neither alive nor dead'.[92] It is through this final depersonalisation that Jameson presents the woman as nothing more than an anonymous victim of poverty and old age, one of the socially dirty, marginal individuals existing in a liminal 'colourless world' of poverty, isolation and loneliness.[93]

The Shared Bathroom

In her essay 'Documents' (1937), Storm Jameson discusses the importance of capturing 'detailed and accurate' 'documents' of the 'lives of men and women in a world that is changing and being changed'.[94] Written just four years after *A Day Off*, which is an important example of what Jameson was striving for here, this essay mulls over the problem of the middle-class observer writing an 'objective' representation of working-class lives, which, she argues, is often obscured by the emotion spurred in the writer when they discover that they do 'not even know what the wife of a man earning two pounds a week wears, where she buys her food, what her kitchen looks like to her when she comes into it at six or seven in the morning'.[95] In this essay, Jameson asks how a middle-class writer can ever truly know the reality of standing 'with his hands in greasy water at the sink, with a nagging pain in his back, and his clothes sticking to him' when he has never worried about the 'tumbled bed-clothes, dirty grates, and the ring of rust on the stove'.[96] She argues that, even though the sights and 'smells' of the 'savages' inspire feelings of disgust, which they must fight against to 'remain cool', there

[92] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 292.
[93] Jameson, *A Day Off*, p. 292.
[94] Storm Jameson, 'Documents', in *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, ed. by Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 556-59 (p. 558, 556).
[95] Jameson, 'Documents', p. 558, 557.
[96] Jameson, 'Documents', p. 557.

> is no value in the emotions, the spiritual writhings, started in him by the sight, smell, and touch of poverty. The emotions are no doubt unavoidable. There is no need to record them. Let him go and pour them down the drain.[97]

Instead, Jameson demands that the writer works 'ceaselessly to present the *fact* from a striking (poignant, ironic, penetrating, significant) angle' that 'must be sharp, compressed, concrete'.[98] If the writer manages this, then 'the emotion should spring directly from the fact'.[99]

Virginia Woolf mulls over this same problem in much of her writing, admitting, to lesser and greater degrees, the effect that her own emotions towards the working classes have on her depictions of them. We see this in early 1930 when Woolf was approached by Margaret Llewelyn Davies, previously general secretary of the Co-operative Women's Guild, to write an introduction for *Life as We Have Known It* (1931), a collection of writing by working-class women, ranging from 'A Plate-Layer's Wife' to 'A Guild Office Clerk' to 'A Public-Spirited Rebel', on the conditions of their everyday lives. From the introduction's opening lines, it is clear that Woolf did not think that she was suited to speaking on behalf of the women in the book, who demanded 'baths and ovens and education and seventeen shillings instead of sixteen, and freedom and air'.[100] Although her interest was 'altruistic', she admits that she was merely a 'benevolent spectator'.[101]

Her introduction echoes some of the ideas of Jameson's essay when she confesses that 'if every reform they demand was granted this very instant it would not touch one hair of my comfortable capitalistic head'.[102] Revealing her ambivalence

---

[97] Jameson, 'Documents', p. 557, 558.
[98] Jameson, 'Documents', p. 558.
[99] Jameson, 'Documents', p. 558.
[100] Virginia Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', in *Life as We Have Known It*, ed. by Margaret Llewelyn Davies (London: Virago, 2012), pp. ix-xxxvi (p. vxii).
[101] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p. vxii.
[102] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p. xiii.

towards her working-class peers, Woolf suggests that any middle-class observer's sympathy was inevitably 'fictitious, not real' because 'we pay our bills with cheques and our clothes are washed for us and we do not know the liver from the lights, we are condemned to remain forever shut in the confines of the middle classes'.[103] To explain this, Woolf imagines that she was 'Mrs Giles of Durham City', the 'wife of a miner', whose day revolves around cooking and cleaning from a 'crowded' dusty range with no sight of the 'hot water and electric light' of a middle-class home.[104] Rooting her argument in their material differences, much like Jameson, she admits her struggle to adequately imagine this life 'because one's body had never stood at the wash-tub; one's hands had never wrung and scrubbed and chopped up whatever the meat may be that makes a miner's supper'.[105]

Unable to identify with these women, Woolf emphasises the physical and material differences that she believed separated middle-class and working-class women. Woolf collocates the latter with physicality or materiality throughout the introduction, as we have seen, and takes this further when, describing the process of writing the introduction in a letter to her sister, she draws on a lavatorial metaphor:

> I have to write about working women all morning, which is as if you had to sew canopies round chamber pots.[106]

This amplification of the bodily and material in her writing about working-class women continues in a letter written to Ethel Smyth while revising the introduction. Revealing her visceral reaction to working-class bodies, and echoing the language she used in her diary to describe the 'common little tarts' and 'fat white slugs' of the 'parasitic' working-class women in the cafe scene we explored in my first chapter, Woolf uses

[103] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p.xxiii.
[104] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p.xv.
[105] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p. xv.
[106] Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, 1929-31,* ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978), IV, p. 175.

'squeamish, queasy language' in these letters to compare '"the poor" to "flies" or a rubbish heap, the imagery of animality, or of corruption and waste'.[107] In this imagery, then, we see Woolf fall prey to the emotions evoked 'by the sight, smell, and touch of poverty' that Jameson had warned about in her essay, revealing her life-long unease about accurately portraying the lives of working-class women.[108] While Alison Light suggests that Woolf felt the need to 'keep her distance, to insist that these inner lives were framed differently from her own' by emphasising the material differences of their everyday lives, Woolf's attention to this dirty materiality also enabled her to imagine or construct narratives of marginalised individuals in her fiction, and capture the unease of changing class, gender and social boundaries in the first half of the twentieth century.[109] Her attention to the dirt and disorder of abject (to Woolf, if not to the working-class women who 'wrung and scrubbed' in them) but everyday spaces situates the bathroom, as we will shortly come to see, as an important literary setting for her discussions of aging, class and marginalisation.[110]

This unease suffuses Woolf's later novel *The Years*, completed some six years after her introduction to *Life as We Have Known It*, but 'conceived', rather appropriately for all its words devoted to washing and cleaning, to stains, grease and dirt, 'while having a bath' in January 1931.[111] It was not until the following November, however, that her ideas took shape:

---

[107] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1936-1941*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), V, p. 357; Alison Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants: The Hidden Heart of Domestic Service* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 205.
[108] Jameson, 'Documents', p. 557, 558. For more on Woolf's unease towards the working classes see: Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants*.
[109] Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants*, p. 205.
[110] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p. xv.
[111] Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: Triad Grafton Books, 1978), p. 207.

> Its to be an Essay-Novel, called the Pargiters - & its to take in everything, sex, education, life etc; & come, with the most powerful & agile leaps, like a chamois across precipices from 1880 to here & now.[112]

What was thought up in her bathtub eventually evolved into *Three Guineas* (1938) and *The Years*, the latter emerging as her 'longest novel, her richest and most beautiful novel', a vast narrative that traces the lives of a middle-class family, the Pargiters.[113] Spanning the decades between 1880 and 1937, Woolf charts the changing social position of women across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, embedding into their stories a discourse of patriotism, patriarchy and feminism that culminates on the cusp of World War II. Drawing on a vast collection of historical material cut from books and newspapers (Woolf collated three scrapbooks worth), this novel makes a 'vital connection between the wider cultural, economic, and political situation of the period and the implications for women and their accommodation'.[114] And although Woolf does not necessarily succeed in stripping her novel of the emotions that Jameson argued hindered an 'objective' socially conscious representation of working-class lives, in weaving together these women's myriad narratives - women not too dissimilar to Jameson's unnamed protagonist - Woolf's novel provides an important social history of those often overlooked in favour of the 'lives of great men'.[115]

One of the ways Woolf achieves this is through her ambivalent portrayal of Sara Pargiter, a 'sallow, angular and plain' spinster, who is the cousin and narrative counterpoint to Eleanor Pargiter of the, now infamous, Abercorn Terrace.[116] We first

---

[112] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1931-1935*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (Harcourt: Harvest, 1983), IV, p. 129.
[113] Peter Monro Jack, 'Virginia Woolf's Richest Novel', *The New York Times* (April 11 1937) <https://goo.gl/gbGF1d> [accessed 21 February 2021].
[114] Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*, p. 151. For more on Woolf's scrapbooks see: Brenda Silver, *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 24.
[115] Virginia Woolf, 'The Art of Biography', in Se*lected Essays*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 116-23 (p. 121).
[116] Virginia Woolf, *The Years*, in *The Years* and *Between the Acts* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2012), pp. 3-298 (p. 122).

meet the daughter of Sir Digby and Lady Pargiter as a young 'imp' in 1891 'dancing with excitement' around a bonfire and then, again, as a young girl in 1907 lying in bed at the top of their bourgeois eighteenth-century house, replete with manservants and housemaids, while a nearby dance's 'confused babble of sound' drifts through the window.[117] We find out early on that Sara had 'been dropped when she was a baby; one shoulder was slightly higher than the other; it made him feel squeamish'.[118] This 'deformity' and the 'squeamish' reaction it evokes in her onlookers foreshadows her increasing marginalisation as the narrative progresses.[119]

Living alone in lodgings in the final section of the novel, her character symbolises the social decline of a crumbling middle-class identity that has been gradually chipped away by the loss of social status and dwindling finances after the death of her parents, and expedited by her increasing age and failure to marry. This culminates in what Steven Connor calls the 'most disturbing and difficult episode' of the novel, where, in Sara's 'cheap lodging-house' room, Woolf crafts a 'grotesque anti-Semitic exchange' that revolves around a Jewish lodger - a vessel for 'cultural and economic anxieties' - using their shared bathroom.[120] In this much-debated and 'troubling passage', Tracey Hargreaves argues that the Jewish man 'appears to be both emblematic of patriarchy which excludes and puts a ring round the mind and symbolic of poverty that necessitates entry into the competitive world in order to avoid

[117] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 92, 83, 94.
[118] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 86.
[119] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 86.
[120] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 216, 214; Steven Connor, 'Virginia Woolf, the Baby and the Bathwater' <http://goo.gl/pKWjAC> [accessed 21 February 2021]; David Bradshaw, 'Hyams Place: *The Years*, the Jews and the British Union of Fascists', in *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History,* ed. by Maroula Joannou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 179-91 (p. 180); Phyllis Lassner, 'The Necessary Jew', in *Varieties of Antisemitism: History, Ideology, Discourse*, ed. by Murray Baumgarten, Peter Kenez and Bruce Thompson (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2009), pp. 292-314 (p. 293).

him'.[121] Mullholland takes these arguments further in her recent study, asserting that the Jewish man embodies 'Sara's feelings of powerlessness at the way her life is controlled by the gendered structures of capitalism and the market-place'.[122] In what follows, it will become clear that this visceral and nauseating scene symbolises Sara's ambivalence towards existing within or outside a capitalist, patriarchal system, and that this is amplified by both her material living conditions and her socioeconomic status as an aging, unmarried and financially precarious woman.

Mediated by Sara's cousin North, a young man recently returned from Africa, this scene takes place during his visit to her 'dusky street, with old houses, now let out as lodgings'.[123] Pulling into Milton Street, North takes in a row of houses that 'had seen better days'.[124] He thinks:

> "What a dirty," he said, as he sat still in the car for a moment - here a woman crossed the street with a jug under her arm - "sordid," he added, "low-down street to live in".[125]

Blocked with vans, horses and coal-carts, and battered by shouting voices, North's progress up the street is jolty. Repeatedly stopping and starting, North's car 'dribbled up to the door'.[126] Woolf writes: 'He hooted. He stopped. He hooted again'.[127] Woolf's phrasing here sets a precedent for the scene to come; the syntax, coupled with North's

[121] Tracey Hargreaves, '"I Should Explain He Shares My Bath": Art and Politics in *The Years*', *English: The Journal of the English Association*, 50 (2001), 183-98 (p. 183, 194). For further discussions of this scene see: Bradshaw, 'Hyams Place'; Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), p. 310; Connor, 'Virginia Woolf, the Baby and the Bathwater'; Phyllis Lassner, '"The Milk of Our Mother's Kindness has Ceased to Flow": Virginia Woolf, Stevie Smith, and the Representation of the Jew', in *Between "Race" and Culture: Representations of "the Jew" in English and American Literature*, ed. by Bryan Cheyette (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 129-44; Hermione Lee, 'Virginia Woolf and Offence', in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. by John Batchelor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 129-50; Maren Tova Linett, *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*; Shiach, 'Technologies of labour'.
[122] Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*, p. 160.
[123] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 214
[124] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 214.
[125] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 214.
[126] Woolf, *The Years,* p. 214.
[127] Woolf, *The Years,* p. 214.

punctuated speech, is peppered with interruptions that presage the unwelcome presence of 'the Jew' in Sara's bathtub.[128]

Pushing open the front door, an unlocked invitation for strangers, a 'curious smell' bathes the lodging-house hallway.[129] As North makes his way deeper into the house, this smell synaesthetically manifests itself in the 'oily brown' wallpaper and 'cheap yellow varnish' that is 'daubed' across the banisters.[130] These musty smells and fixtures pervade the scene with a 'dark', frowsty atmosphere as North imagines he is 'no one and nowhere in particular'.[131] Sounds, like the smells, pour in from the street outside:

> From across the road came the voice of the singer deliberately ascending the scale, as if the notes were stairs; and here she stopped indolently, languidly, flinging out her voice that was nothing but pure sound. Then he heard somebody inside, laugh.[132]

Metaphorically climbing the stairs alongside North, the sounds break down the barrier between inner and outer, with the mingling of outdoor and indoor, public and private, amplifying the precarity and porosity of lodging-house living. Echoing the porosity of Richardson and Jameson's fictional lodging houses, Woolf emphasises the contrast between Sara's rented room and her earlier depictions of Abercorn Terrace. These rented rooms, Mullholland suggests, 'are not hermetically sealed domestic structures inhabited by the upper classes like Abercorn Terrace'.[133] Instead, their porosity reveals precarious boundaries that let in the sounds and smells of the outside world, augmenting the 'uncertain and provisional nature of these spaces and of the life

[128] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 234.
[129] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 214.
[130] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 214.
[131] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 214.
[132] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 215.
[133] Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*, p. 156.

within'.[134] In this jumble of 'strange houses', then, North feels out of place and 'uncertain' as he is bombarded with the sounds and smells of modern urban life.[135]

North's uncertainty, disguising his distaste, intensifies when he enters Sara's rented room, and manifests itself in the narrative through the imagery of mess and dirt. The room, North observes, 'with the pampas grass in a pot in the corner, was untidy', her furniture, aside from the occasional piece leftover from her childhood home, was old and 'cheap', and the surfaces are 'littered', though Woolf does not specify with what.[136] North's attention is repeatedly drawn to the cheapness of the room and its contents, with the 'cheap lodging-house tablecloth', the 'cheap lodging-house crockery' and the 'cheap lodging-house plates' becoming material touchstones.[137] Taking in Sara's cheap, grubby belongings - 'already yellowed with some gravy stain' - North begins to ask her 'Why d'you always choose slums' before he is abruptly interrupted by a 'regular lodging-house skivvy' coming in to lay the table.[138] As dinner is plated, North silently observes:

> They sat down and she took the carving-knife and made a long incision. A thin trickle of red juice ran out; it was underdone. [...] They watched the red juice running down into the well of the dish. [...] There was a slabbed-down mass of cabbage in one oozing green water; in the other, yellow potatoes that looked hard.[139]

Even the food appears unappealing. The joint of undercooked mutton seeps 'red juice', watery and 'thin', oozing evidence of its cheap cut and poorly cooked state. The 'mass of cabbage', like the unappetising watery mutton, is left to sit in a swamp of its own 'green water', and reminds readers of the 'curious smell' that hit North upon first entering the lodging house. The 'willow-pattern plate' from which they are eating, like

[134] Mullholland, *British Boarding Houses*, p. 157.
[135] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 214.
[136] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 215, 216.
[137] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 216-17.
[138] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 216.
[139] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 219.

the lodging-house walls and banisters, is ‘daubed’ with ‘gory streaks’.[140] Connotative of a thick, sticky substance smeared across a surface, mucilaginous to the touch, the verb ‘daubed’ adds to both North’s and the reader’s rising nausea. Daubed with unknown (almost bodily) substances - the pretty willow-pattern plates with animal blood, and the walls and banisters with ‘cheap yellow varnish’ and ‘oily brown paper’ - both suggest unpalatable bodily secretions.[141] Sitting in Sara’s presence, the literal and socioeconomic grubbiness of her lodgings formicates on North’s skin as he develops a paraesthetic reaction to his surroundings. North, under Sara’s gaze, repeatedly imagines there are flies crawling on his flesh as if he were the slightly dubious meat he has just been served.[142] Littered with dust, unidentifiable smears and shabby belongings, Sara’s lodgings are aligned with metaphorical refuse or debris, as in Jameson’s narrative, which, like the flies he imagines ‘crawling’ on his skin, repulses North.[143]

Woolf infuses syntactical and literal interruptions into this scene to echo North’s incongruity, and these reach a climax after dinner when North begins to recite verse by Andrew Marvell. In her reading of this scene, Ruth Burton suggests that their ‘surroundings actively resist’ the ‘delicious solitude’ that Marvell’s poem depicts, particularly, I would argue, when the sounds of the bathroom opposite begin to seep through the walls.[144] Exacerbating the interruption felt upon his arrival at the lodging house, North’s recital is cut short by the sound of ‘heavy footsteps outside the door’.[145]

[140] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 221.
[141] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 221, 214.
[142] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 216, 218.
[143] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 216.
[144] Ruth Emma Burton, ‘Single Women, Space, and Narrative in Interwar Fiction by Women’ (unpublished thesis, University of Leeds, 2015), p. 258; Woolf, *The Years*, p. 233.
[145] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 233.

Listening to the sounds filtering through the thin walls, North and Sara ‘could hear quite distinctly’:

> Somebody was turning on taps; somebody was having a bath in the room opposite.
> “The Jew having a bath,” she said.
> “The Jew having a bath?” he repeated.
> “And tomorrow there’ll be a line of grease round the bath,” she said.
> “Damn the Jew!” He exclaimed. The thought of a line of grease from a strange man’s body on the bath next door disgusted him.[146]

The idea of a ‘strange man’s body’ in the bath disgusts North, a disgust amplified by the threat that the remnants of his bodily secretions - or ‘grease’ - left around the rim of the tub pose. North and Sara fixate on this man’s body. Unnecessarily noting that he works in the ‘tallow trade’, Sara magnifies the bodiliness of the bathing scene as his ‘grease’ becomes aligned with the animal fat used in making candles and soap.[147] Traditionally fat from beef or mutton, tallow is solid at room temperature; in the clammy warmth of the bathroom, however, it would take on a greasy liquid form. Linking back to their meal of mutton minutes earlier, this reference adds another subtle layer of queasiness to North’s feelings of disgust.

Making matters worse, gummed to the bathtub’s imagined rim of grease are the imagined remnants of the man’s body hair. This natural bodily product evokes visceral responses in Sara and North, the latter feeling ‘a shiver run through him’: hairs ‘in food, hairs on basins, other people’s hairs made him feel physically sick’.[148] Building on this queasiness, Woolf’s repeated use of the verb ‘sponged’ both conjures a porous, moist, clammy image for the reader, and allows Sara and North to add an imagined action to the sounds emanating from the bathroom.[149] Tension intensifies when they hear the man in the bathroom ‘coughing’, ‘clearing his throat’ and ‘snorting’: all actions that

[146] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 234.
[147] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 234.
[148] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 234.
[149] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 234.

expel bodily fluids.[150] The imagined splattering of mucus across the shared bathroom is loaded with connotations of literal and metaphorical contagion as it is transported to all corners of the house by its plumbing:

> The pipes began to give forth hollow gurgling sounds. [...] The house was quiet now, save for the sound of bathwater running away. A watering pattern fluctuated on the ceiling. The street lamps jiggering up and down outside made the houses opposite a curious pale red.[151]

Even after the man has left the bathroom, the pipes gurgle with his bodily remnants, as North and Sara listen to his dirty bathwater circle the plug - a striking contrast to Richardson's efficient 'gurgling' and 'gushing' plumbing system.[152] The house now seems suffused with these watery images, as if the actions of this man in the shared bathroom, and the sounds and smells his body produced, has infected or contaminated the rest of the house - or, at least, that is how it feels to the disgusted North.

Woolf's lodging-house bathroom scene reinforces the social anxieties around this space, then, amplifying its associations, as well as its inhabitant's associations, with dirt and disorder. Woolf's decision to present a marginal figure - a Jewish man - having a bath to the soundtrack of his neighbour's disgust implicates her text in discussions of otherness, and its relationship to class, gender and ethnicity. The Jewish man has been read, as we have already seen in the work of David Bradshaw, Steven Connor, Phyliss Lassner and Terri Mullholland, as a symbol of otherness or not belonging, fulfilling 'extant racial and cultural stereotypes that suggested an intractable and unassimilable difference from the dominant culture'.[153] While critics have understandably interrogated Sara and North's anti-Semitic reaction to the

[150] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 234.
[151] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 235-36.
[152] Richardson, *The Tunnel*, p. 17.
[153] Lassner, 'The Necessary Jew', p. 293.

imagined rim of grease left around the bath by the Jewish man, they have, however, overlooked the different but nonetheless perceptible disgust that is attached to another of Woolf's marginal characters.[154]

In these later sections of the novel as her social status dwindles and age increases, Sara is similarly surrounded by this imagery of dirt, disorder and disgust. Much like the dirt and debris that Jameson collocated with her aging protagonist's body, Sara surely leaves evidence of her own body management and intimate grooming activities in the shared bathroom, but, ironically, she fails to see how her own body and bodily waste could be seen in the same queasy light as her Jewish neighbour. This critical oversight, despite much being written on North's distaste towards Sara and her domestic surroundings, reinforces the implicit invisibility of the older woman in studies of this period, as I examined in my first chapter, as well as Sara's increasing marginalisation as an aging, unmarried, socially declining woman. This scene speaks more widely to the liminality or precarity of women like Sara at this time, then, with the real and imagined sounds, smells and sights of the shared bathroom amplifying Sara's lack of autonomy and privacy over her domestic sphere. Here, the lived reality of her supposedly liberated existence in the lodging house, free from the gendered expectations of her middle-class childhood (expectations which have, as we will shortly come to see, engulfed her narrative foil Eleanor Pargiter, who was duty-bound to care for her aging father until his death), actually reinforces the material and social confines of her life, which will continue to contract, like the size of her lodgings in the novel, with her increasing poverty and old age.

[154] Connor, 'Virginia Woolf, the Baby and the Bathwater'.

Earlier in this scene, North had described Sara as 'crumpled' and 'shabby' with a 'plain', unchanging face and a dirty 'smudge on the side of her nose'.[155] She blends into her 'cheap' and 'untidy' room, becoming almost indistinguishable from the shabby furniture.[156] Sara's appearance, narrated through North's youthful eyes, sharply contrasts to descriptions of this section's other older woman, Eleanor Pargiter. In her seventies and, like Sara, still unmarried, Eleanor 'scarcely looked her age', though this, importantly, is a result of the independent means that she inherits after the death of her father, Colonel Pargiter.[157] North sees 'wandering Eleanor' as 'very vigorous' with 'wild eyes', and always 'gallivanting round the world'.[158] Recently returned from India, Eleanor is the epitome of the modern globe-trotter, obsessed with modern technologies like the telephone and aeroplanes.[159] Hosting a party at her flat, a strikingly different scene to Sara's subdued and awkward dinner, Eleanor shows off her new shower-bath:

> With a room full of people - her little room, had been crowded - she had insisted upon showing him her new shower-bath. "You press that know," she had said, "and look -" Innumerable needles of water shot down.[160]

In an extract deleted by Woolf after the novel had already been typeset, much more attention is given to Eleanor's flat, which, 'replete with every modern convenience', brings her a great deal of 'pleasure'.[161] Like Miriam Henderson, Eleanor is able 'to come and go as one liked; to feel that there was nobody - here she fitted her key in her lock - sitting up for her'.[162] The 'warmth, light, comfort' of her financial

[155] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 233, 215, 218.
[156] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 216, 215.
[157] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 211-12.
[158] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 233, 211, 217.
[159] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 215, 226.
[160] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 212.
[161] Virginia Woolf, 'Appendix', in *The Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 414-66 (p. 426).
[162] Woolf, 'Appendix', p. 426.

independence leaves her feeling ‘airy, exalted’ as she looks down from her sixth floor window ‘at London lying beneath her’, in contrast to Sara’s dark and dingy top floor flat.[163] Noting the difference between the pair, Morag Shiach argues that ‘throughout the “present day” section of the novel, images of dirt, stains and smudges’ - like those on Sara’s nose - ‘jostle with facts about shower baths, electric lights, sanitary towels and running water; the everyday technological conditions of modernist hygiene’.[164] This contrast between the pair becomes particularly acute when Eleanor goes to take a bath:

> She went into the bathroom. It gave her a thrill of pleasure. It was lined with gleaming white tiles; the taps shone silver; jars and brushes stood on a shining glass shelf. She lit the geyser; water instantly began to stream into the pure white bath. [...] Yes, she thought as she slipped off her clothes and hung them on a silver hook, this is luxury, a hot bath.[165]

This scene could not be more different to the shared bathroom in Milton Street, with Woolf’s excess of positive adjectives emphasising the ‘luxury’ and ‘pleasure’ of this private time and space for Eleanor. Woolf continues:

> She stood looking at the dappled iridescence of the moon-lit sky, which seemed to make her bathroom whiter, cleaner, more dazzling in its purity than ever; and then she stepped in.[166]

Standing ‘stark naked’ in front a window that ‘had no blind’, Eleanor basks in the expansive London skyline, which, rather than permeating her bathroom with the city’s dirt, grime and noise like Sara’s lodgings, seems instead to make this modern space stand out as ‘whiter, cleaner, more dazzling in its purity’.[167] Though North laughs at Eleanor’s excitement about her ‘shower-bath’, he sees her as a modern woman, albeit

[163] Woolf, ‘Appendix’, p. 426.
[164] Shiach, ‘Technologies of labour’, p. 87.
[165] Woolf, ‘Appendix’, p. 428-29.
[166] Woolf, ‘Appendix’, p. 429.
[167] Woolf, ‘Appendix’, p. 429.

an old one.[168] In contrast Sara seems to him stuck in the past, detached from the energy and excitement of modern life. In North's eyes, which as a young middle-class man denote wider society, Sara is a socially dirty "other", like the Jewish man in the tub, and his visceral reaction to both Sara and the Jewish man's dirty bodies, as well as their socioeconomic material reality, frames this scene.

Yet Sara's perception as "other" is far more ambivalent than that of her Jewish neighbour, rooted in unspoken class, age and gender anxieties rather than overt racism or anti-Semitism. When North questions why Sara chooses to live in 'slums', we question whether she lives in her dingy lodging house because she wishes to live outside certain patriarchal and capitalist structures, rejecting her traditional upbringing, or because she cannot afford to escape those structures that are biased against the unmarried, older woman without independent means.[169] And although, as Shirley Panken argues, Sara is 'the most outspoken, unconventional, rebellious and anarchistic' of all of Woolf's female characters in *The Years*, accepting 'her state of privation and loneliness in preference to conformity with societal verities', this scene asks us to question exactly where Sara's power or autonomy lies.[170]

This question is perhaps answered during her dinner with North, when Sara describes her previous contact with the Jewish man in the shared bathroom, after which she had 'rushed out in a rage'.[171] She tells North:

> And there were people passing: the strutting; the tiptoeing; the pasty; the ferret-eyed; the bowler-hatted, servile, innumerable army of workers. And I said, "Must I join your conspiracy? Stain the hand, the unstained hand [...] and sign on, and serve a master; all because of a Jew in my bath, all because of a Jew?"[172]

---

[168] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 213. Ruth Burton offers an interesting reading of Eleanor as a modern woman who 'unsettles' both the text and the idea of the middle-class spinster (Burton, p. 227-32, 253-56).
[169] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 216.
[170] Shirley Panken, *Virginia Woolf and the "Lust of Creation": A Psychoanalytic Exploration* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 222.
[171] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 234.
[172] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 235.

Sharing a bathroom with a man who leaves his greasy traces on the rim of the tub forces Sara to rush out and attempt to get a job in a newspaper office, to join the 'innumerable army of workers' that would allow her to have the money and economic stability to move out of her dingy lodging house. Yet her speech is hyperbolic, here, as she describes the 'bowler-hatted', 'ferret-eyed' men who all 'serve a master', and, through this hyperbole, her anger at her social position is revealed. Sara is furious at her impotency in the marketplace, unable to earn the wage of the 'bowler-hatted men' that would enable her to live how she wishes, to perhaps afford a private flat like Eleanor, and equally furious that her contact with the bodily remnants of a 'strange man' in her bathroom should disgust her enough to make her want to give up her non-traditional and anti-capitalist morals.[173] In this moment, Woolf directly positions the Jewish man as a counterpoint to Sara, joined in their poverty and social marginalisation, while Sara's disgust and anger towards him reveal that, although she wishes to exist outside the capitalist and patriarchal system (or is, arguably, forced to live outside them), this does not include living in such close proximity to the (socially and physically) dirty bodies of others. But because of her economic situation, age and unmarried status, Sara is unable to escape this sense of otherness and the social judgment that comes with it.

Reading this scene, particularly when placed alongside Woolf's extended focus on Eleanor in the deleted extract, it is clear that Sara's character is a key mechanism of her social critique of the period, particularly of women's often limited position within it. The contrast between Sara and Eleanor reveals the extent to which Woolf sees that material comfort and social acceptance, as well as the intellectual or imaginative

[173] Woolf, *The Years*, p. 234.

freedom she wrote about in her introduction to *Life as We Have Known It*, are rooted in financial security, as she contrasts the two daughters of middle-class parents now living distinctly different lives. For Eleanor, the aging, unmarried but independently wealthy woman, the privacy of her bathroom is a literary device that Woolf uses to gesture towards her 'increased horizons' as a modern woman.[174] By giving more attention to Sara and her lodgings in the published version, however, Woolf chooses to highlight the precarity and hardship of life for aging, single women without independent means, giving important textual space to those less privileged individuals, like Sara, existing on the margins of society.

'The last, hidden truth'

Returning for a moment to Olivia Manning's *The Doves of Venus*, we see Sara Pargiter's marginalisation extended to Petta Bellot, the aging protagonist we met in my first chapter, and who we last saw aimlessly wandering the city streets 'haunted' by the ghost memory of an 'old woman, a wreck of a human creature' that lives in the 'dark area of her mind'.[175] Following her realisation in the restaurant lavatory that she is perceived as an older woman by society, Petta's life begins to spiral downwards, echoing both the repetitive and increasingly pathetic cycle that engulfs Jameson's aging protagonist, as well as her and Sara's association with dirt, disorder and waste.[176]

From this important restaurant lavatory scene, which signals her escalating age-related desperation and depreciation, Manning amplifies the cycle of men that Petta relies on for financial and emotional support. Abandoned by Quintin, her most

[174] Burton, p. 253.
[175] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 88, 89.
[176] This restaurant scene is explored in greater depth in my first chapter.

wealthy lover, and Theo, her most caring lover, Petta settles for the 'gentle and undemanding' Arnold Valance, a man with 'puffy' skin, 'drooping shoulders', 'broadened' buttocks, a 'limping foot' and the 'slightly disintegrating appearance of a man who drank too much'.[177] From the start of their relationship, Petta 'knew him a failure, too slow in combat with the world, too sensitive to succeed', but, understanding her limited options, she realises that 'he would have to do'.[178] Her decision to settle for Arnold is rooted in her need for a place of 'refuge' or security; as an unmarried (technically separated) woman without financial independence or employment prospects, she relies on her male lovers for a place to call home.[179] But, after the luxury of Quintin's private flat, replete with 'Adam's fireplace', 'ruby carpet' and 'sumptuous' furnishings, Arnold's 'dingy' rooms signal her descent down the social ladder.[180] His lodging house is 'dirty, neglected, full of people whose rent was overdue' and, though the flat itself 'comprised two rooms', with a kitchen in 'a large cupboard in the sitting-room', to Petta's chagrin they have to share the bathroom on the 'lower landing' with the building's other tenants.[181] Reminiscent of the debris with which Jameson and Woolf littered their fictional lodgings, Manning captures the 'wretched disorder of the room':

> The sitting-room, filled with forlorn junk-shop furniture, smelt of books that were stacked everywhere. The dirt and untidiness of the place did not unduly worry her, but she found the cupboard-kitchen distasteful. It held a sink, gas-stove and provision shelves. Unventilated, it gave out a strong smell of old frying fat and a leak in the stove. She threw away half a tin of fungus and poured the last of the sugar into the cracked basin.[182]

[177] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 209, 203, 210.
[178] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 210, 203.
[179] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 203.
[180] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 10, 203.
[181] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 203, 258.
[182] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 256, 203.

Full of ‘strong’ smells and leaky pipes, the lodging house’s cheap furniture is ‘forlorn’, reflecting Petta’s mental state, and ‘cracked’ and musty like her own aging body. Though she remains unfazed by the room’s ‘dirt and untidiness’ - she is notoriously untidy herself - her distaste towards the ‘strong smell’ and ‘fungus’ of the cupboard-kitchen increases with the length of her stay, as Manning uses this dirty space to emphasise Petta’s feelings of unhomeliness and precarity:

> At first Petta had barely noticed the shortcomings of Arnold’s flat: now they disgusted her. [...] She lived in these quarters as a refugee lives, uncommitted, temporary, without expectations.[183]

Petta’s miserable existence in this lodging house, with her close proximity to the other strange tenants whose ‘unhappiness so infected the air’, leads her to question her past life choices, realising that ‘all the false moves of her life had, together, reduced her to this’.[184] Thinking about the houses of her past lovers and wondering which man, if any, ‘could save her now’, she realises that ‘this time, perhaps, the condition was incurable, a process of age’.[185] Recognising that the consequences of her failure to settle with one man, her increasing age and her current melancholy coalesce in these grubby lodgings, Petta imagines the ‘last glint’ of her youth and happiness ‘running out like the last upswirling glint of bath-water down a plug-hole’.[186]

This lavatorial simile is particularly apt when, following one more failed suicide attempt after Arnold refuses to leave a party ‘crowded with young people’, we see her last in their squalid shared lodging-house bathroom, forgotten and alone.[187] In this moment, ‘all her suffering came from the fact that her youth was passing and her beauty fading’, and the only escape from her aging body and the ‘desolate squalor’ of

[183] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 255.
[184] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 257, 258.
[185] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 259.
[186] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 259.
[187] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 293.

her lodgings was in the 'dozen or so boxes of sleeping-tablets'.[188] Wrapped in her dressing-gown and monopolising the shared bathroom, Manning uses this moment to subtly mirror the earlier bathroom scene at Ellie's lodging house, only this time Petta is the 'maniac' old woman 'scurrying' down the stairs in her 'yellow kimono'.[189] Manning writes:

> She moved carefully, holding her head as though to hold it together, and reached the bathroom with a sense of gratitude. She had scarcely bolted the door when the walls began to jerk and spin about her. The air turned yellow. She could not stand. She slid down beside the water-closet, that had a sickly urine smell, and, propping herself against the seat, she let her mouth hang open and waited.[190]

Sitting amongst the dirty bathroom furniture, with the 'sickly urine smell' of the communal lavatory merging with the 'sour smell' of her own 'vomit', Petta is implicitly aligned with the abject waste flushed away (made invisible, thinking back to my first chapter's discussions of her cultural invisibility) by the toilet she rests on.[191] Unable to escape the fate of the 'maniac' old woman through money, love or suicide, Manning's choice to end Petta's narrative in this final lodging-house bathroom scene amplifies her entrapment within a perpetual loop of poverty, rejection and marginalisation.[192]

The precariousness of Petta's future is revealed to Miriam Henderson, the young, optimistic city dweller that opened this chapter, in an equally poignant scene. In the seventh volume of Dorothy Richardson's novel-sequence, *Revolving Lights* (1923), Miriam is confronted by the poverty and isolation that old age can bring for unmarried, working women when she locks eyes with an 'old woman' during a 'long, slow, impeded walk' across London that, according to her biographer Gloria Fromm, 'begins in the present' and 'ends in the future, with a disquieting confrontation of

[188] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 301, 303.
[189] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 58, 57, 59.
[190] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 305.
[191] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 304.
[192] Manning, *The Doves of Venus*, p. 59.

self'.[193] This 'tattered' and 'leering' figure 'bent over the gutter', and who Richardson's phrasing suggests is homeless or at least living below the bread-line, is a representation of the bleak future alluded to by Manning, Jameson and Woolf in their collocation of their aging protagonists with waste, decay, and the dirt and precarity of the lodging house's bathroom spaces.[194] In this scene, Richardson captures Miriam's anxieties around this future, even from the distance of her youth:

> Lamplight fell upon the sheeny slopes of her shawl and tattered skirt. Familiar. Forgotten. The last, hidden truth of London, spoiling the night. She quickened her steps, gazing. Underneath the forward-falling crushed old bonnet shone the lower half of a bare scalp… reddish… studded with dull, wartlike knobs… Unimaginable horror quietly there. Revealed. Welcome. The head turned stealthily as she passed and she met the expected sidelong glance; naked recognition, leering from the awful face above the outstretched bare arm. It was herself, set in her path and waiting through all the years. Her beloved hated secret self, known to this woman.[195]

In this 'familiar' figure, Miriam sees a reflection of her future 'aged face', whose 'unimaginable horror' is 'revealed' in their 'expected sidelong glance'.[196] Capturing the fears that haunted Manning's Petta, Richardson amplifies the physical ugliness of the poverty-stricken older woman's appearance, hidden in the sweaty 'sheeny' folds of her 'crushed old bonnet'. The woman's 'bare scalp', red-raw with 'wartlike knobs', is reminiscent of the 'old lady' that Sasha Jansen serves in the Parisian clothes shop, whose 'bald skull with a fringe of grey hair' fills her daughter with 'shame'.[197] After trying on a 'hair-band, a Spanish comb, a flower', her daughter 'bursts out' in a 'loud, fierce hiss' that she had made a 'perfect fool' of herself 'as usual'.[198] Sasha watches the old woman's 'reflection in a mirror, her eyes still undaunted but something about

[193] Dorothy Richardson, *Revolving Lights*, in *Pilgrimage* (London: Virago, 1979), III, pp. 231-396 (p. 288); Gloria Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 147-48.
[194] Richardson, *Revolving Lights*, p. 288, 289.
[195] Richardson, *Revolving Lights*, p. 288-89.
[196] Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson*, p. 148.
[197] Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 19.
[198] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 20.

her mouth and chin collapsing…'.[199] Framed with ellipsis that emphasise the unspeakable 'horror' of old age, both scenes present these older women as abject figures, their 'collapsing' aging bodies evoking disgust or pity in their onlookers.[200] For Miriam and Sasha, however, they also provide an important moment of 'recognition' in their narratives, their gaze revealing the 'hidden truth' of their future and 'spoiling' or, perhaps, polluting the happiness of their youth.[201]

In this fleeting urban moment, Miriam sees this old woman as 'herself, set in her path and waiting through all the years'; aligned with the 'gutter', with dirt, disorder and deterioration, like Petta Bellot in her final bathroom scene, this older woman symbolises the increasing threat of age-related poverty and marginalisation by revealing a future in which Miriam could herself become the precarious, pathetic, socially dirty old woman, still living alone in her 'smeary', 'dusty' lodging house or, perhaps, like this woman, in the 'gutter' without a home at all.[202] And while Miriam might have found the 'dinginess' and 'smeariness' of her lodging house an important marker of its difference from an oppressive form of domesticity that is central to my next chapter, this moment of 'recognition' generated by the lone old woman is an important reminder of the potential physical and mental poverty of life outside the traditional family home, which, for working-class women in particular, often becomes more precarious, isolated or socially dirty - and literally dirty, in the case of this 'tattered' old woman - as she ages.[203]

---

[199] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 20.

[200] Richardson, *Revolving Lights*, p. 288-89; Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 20. Rhys' use of the verb 'collapsing' is particularly poignant when we think back to John Benson's argument that the old body was aligned with 'decay' and 'collapse' at this time (Benson, p. 16).

[201] Richardson, *Revolving Lights*, p. 288-89.

[202] Richardson, *Revolving Lights*, p. 289; Richardson, *Interim*, p. 428.

[203] Richardson, *Tunnel*, p. 11; Richardson, *Revolving Lights*, p. 289, 288.

The Family Bathroom

> Your sort of writing *ought* to drip rather than to splash. The quality of your drops is such that the quantity does not matter in the least.[1]

Comparing her talent with a 'slowly dripping tap', Harold Nicholson reassured Enid Bagnold that eventually 'a basin would be filled with carefully distilled water'.[2] While Nicholson's bathroom metaphor is rather suitable when we consider that Bagnold took more than fifteen years to write her most celebrated novel, *The Squire* (1938), he did not anticipate just how fitting it would be for a novel that centres on the everyday spaces, objects and technologies of the family home. Bathroom spaces form a backdrop to Bagnold's novel, which focuses on the daily minutiae of the Squire in the weeks leading up to the birth of her fifth child. Originally serialised in *Good Housekeeping* in Britain and the *Ladies' Home Journal* in the United States, this 'transgressive and shocking' narrative was the first of its kind to write about pregnancy and childbirth from a women's point of view.[3] Indeed, Bagnold's novel left many of its male readers outraged, among them H. G. Wells who declared that the book made him feel 'attacked by a multitude of many-breasted women (like Diana of Ephesus) and thrown into a washing basket full of used nursery napkins'.[4] Unlike Wells, however, many women praised Bagnold for her 'really important book', with the feminist magazine *Time and Tide* pronouncing it 'a mark in feminist history as well as a fine literary feat'.[5]

---

[1] Anne Sebba, 'Introduction', in *The Squire* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. v-xxi (p. v).
[2] Sebba, 'Introduction', p. v.
[3] Tess Cosslett, 'Childbirth from the Woman's Point of View in British Women's Fiction: Enid Bagnold's *The Squire* and A. S. Byatt's *Still Life*', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 8, 2 (Autumn 1989), 263-86 (p. 265).
[4] Anne Sebba, *Enid Bagnold; A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), p. 137.
[5] Sebba, *Biography*, p. 137.

In her novel, Bagnold constructs a matriarchal world headed by an androgynous figure known only as the Squire, who, with her husband away on business in India, is left to manage a 'masterless house' caught in 'restless suspension' before the arrival of her baby.[6] Despite her pregnancy, the Squire sees herself as a 'female male', an archetypal mother and wife that contrasts to feminine women like her young, beautiful friend Lady Caroline, who is a 'love-woman' and the 'thing that man sees when he says "woman"'.[7] In contrast to the practicality of the Squire's life, Lady Caroline's worries - her love affairs - are 'like the bathroom steam, wet and evaporating'.[8] The Squire tells her friend:

> *You* ought to be called "women". *We* ought to be called "wumen"; some different word. Wumen are hard-working, faulty, honest, female males - trudging down life, pushing the future before them in a wheelbarrow.[9]

Emphasising the hard yet 'honest' work of motherhood, Bagnold casts the Squire as a heroic figure, with the gender role reversal dignifying pregnancy and childbirth as an empowering and 'important and central human action'.[10]

Tethered to the outside world only by her friendship with Lady Caroline, the Squire is the 'temporary' master 'round whom the house's life pivoted'.[11] She 'who had once been thirsty and gay' was 'thickened now, vigorous, leonine, occupied with her house, her nursery, her servants, her knot of human lives'.[12] Both her body and her house are described through everyday domestic metaphors: her pregnant body is 'a pipe through which the generations pass', her house an accumulation of household sounds, the clanking of the 'evening buckets' and the 'throb of the tap' that 'stubbled

---

[6] Enid Bagnold, *The Squire* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 2, 1.
[7] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 96, 191-92.
[8] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 187.
[9] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 191.
[10] Cossett, p. 266.
[11] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 4.
[12] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 16.

and stuttered down the long pipes'.[13] The family's nightly bathing rituals become a way for the Squire to mark the stages of her daily life:

> One after the other the knell of the four bedtimes struck. [...] The bath could hardly fill and empty quickly enough. Boniface often had Henry's water. Lucy found a thousand excuses but went at last. Now the squire could hear her own bath running before dinner. [...] The bath-water from the nursery bubbled down the waste-pipe, unseen but marking the stages.[14]

In the Squire's domestic kingdom, it is the sound of running water that organises her time, with each emptying and refilling of the bathtub holding more significance for her than the real clock time of the outside world.

The family bathroom is not just an important material space in Bagnold's novel, emphasising women's everyday labour of child rearing and housekeeping (though it is important to note that much of the Squire's labour is offset by her servants, nurse and midwife), but it also provides the Squire with a temporary space of mental privacy. In her earlier memoir, Bagnold had emphasised the importance of the bathtub as a space for private thought, giving way to a unique form of reflection she called 'bath thoughts'.[15] In *A Diary Without Dates* (1918), she writes:

> I lay in my own bath last night and thought very deep thoughts, but often when we think our thoughts are deep they are only vague. Bath thoughts are wonderful, but there's nothing "to" them.[16]

Simultaneously 'deep' and 'vague', these 'bath thoughts' infuse the bathroom with a phantasmagoric quality in her novel, too, as the Squire, cerebrating on her domestic life, enters an almost dream-like state in the tub:

> Lying in the water now, putting her strong hands with the blunt fingers on the bath's lip, with shrewd and watchful eyes the steward whom he had left behind looked upwards through the steam. Invitation had gone now from her face, expectancy had gone, replaced by a lonelier but happy look. "In a strange way," she thought, "these absences suit my nature though not my heart. I love him, I miss him, but I have time to put on my humanity again." She felt gay. If she

[13] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 155, 7.
[14] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 262.
[15] Enid Bagnold, *A Diary Without Dates* (London: William Heinemann, 1918), p. 110.
[16] Bagnold, *A Diary Without Dates*, p. 110.

> could have whistled in tune she would have whistled in her bath. She produced a tuneless sound and stopped, from habit - floundering happily in the water, huge and light as a sea lion.[17]

The Squire's androgynous corporeality, emphasised in the 'strong hands', 'blunt fingers' and gender-neutral term 'steward', merges with her ethereal 'bath thoughts', creating a moment of liberation from domestic life. Through these 'deep' and 'vague' thoughts the Squire can leave the materiality of her physical body - 'huge and light' with child - along with the responsibilities of motherhood that come with it, escaping into fantasies of her own choosing. Reminding her of her identity outside that of wife and mother, the bathroom is the space in which the Squire feels she is able to 'put on her humanity again' before her husband returns, and which we see wash across her face here like the bathwater bubbling 'down the waste-pipe'.[18]

Moving the search for a place to call home out of the public, urban realm of the cafes, hotels and lodging houses of earlier chapters and into the domestic spaces of the suburban middle-class family home, this chapter explores the relationship between 'home' and 'humanity', as the Squire puts it.[19] Using the family bathroom as a material and metaphorical lens, this chapter considers how women - particularly the ordinary housewife without the luxury of the Squire's servants, nursery maids and midwives - understood themselves in relation to the domestic sphere. Writers in the interwar period reframed women's struggle for autonomy and a self-defined identity through literary domestic spaces, using new spaces like the family bathroom to examine the friction between wider social concerns about gender, particularly women's place in the home which had been disrupted by World War I, and women's need to construct an authentic sense of self outside of these often confining expectations.

---

[17] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 17.
[18] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 17.
[19] Bagnold, *The Squire*, p. 17.

In the first half of the twentieth century, as I set out in the introduction to my thesis, women's everyday lives were defined by this conflict as they experienced contradictions between their increasing independence outside of the home and the 'dominant ideology, transmitted through the press and advertising, that placed increased importance on domesticity, the idea of "home" and women's place within the familial structure'.[20] For many women, the family bathroom is not the private escape of Bagnold's novel, but, perhaps surprisingly, it is a space which might be experienced as less private than the lockable hotel room or anonymous cafe lavatory. The family bathroom, often without a lock on the door, is perpetually under threat from invasion by children, husbands, parents or servants, and its sanctuary is contaminated by the (usually female) labour of cleaning and childcare. While these new everyday spaces facilitated new ways of using and being in domestic space, with technologies like gas, plumbing and electricity improving quality of life across the social strata, they also reinforced how a woman's sense of self is moulded by the limited versions of femininity available to her. In what follows, I will examine the ways in which writers like Radclyffe Hall, Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Jean Rhys reveal how potentially liberating spaces like the family bathroom are often irrevocably tied to these gendered domestic roles and, for many women, come to stand for the confinement caused by the threat of an oppressive suburban domesticity.

The Ordinary Housewife

In her influential study *The Parlour and the Suburb*, Judy Giles argues that technological advances, notably gas, electricity and plumbing, had a 'radical impact

[20] Terri Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House: Female Transient Space in the 1930s' (unpublished thesis, The Queen's College, University of Oxford, 2011), p. 5.

on the organisation of domesticity'.[21] Discussing the ways in which piped water and sewerage systems improved standards of hygiene, Giles contends that 'the availability of hot and cold running water' produced more 'significant changes' in the everyday lives of women than 'any other technology'.[22] Following decades of slum clearance and housing reform, these technological and scientific advances, which were embedded in modern house design by the thirties, created new ways of living in domestic space, transforming women's lives by engendering new ways of organising their time, space and domestic labour.[23]

Interwar housing developments were the first to have private spaces for washing, grooming and relaxing as standard, and these bathrooms and lavatories, shared only with your family unit, 'enabled new forms of privacy that in turn shaped the ways in which people understand their bodies in relation to others'.[24] The family bathroom, perhaps more than any other domestic space, became a crucial touchstone in women's everyday lives, paralleling the modernisation of wider society whilst, at the same time, capturing (through its association with cleaning, childcare, status and the body) the more intimate, ambivalent relationship between women and the domestic sphere. The bathroom - a temporary room of one's own - provided women, in

[21] Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), p. 9.
[22] Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 20-21.
[23] For more on this see: John Boughton, *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (London: Verso, 2018); John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing: 1815-1970* (London: Methuen, 1986); John J. Clarke, 'Slums and the Housing Act, 1930', *The Town Planning Review*, 14, 3 (May 1931), 163-93; David Hoath, *Council Housing* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1978); Maroula Joannou, ed., 'The Woman Writer in the 1930s - On Not Being Mrs Giles of Durham City', in *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 1-15; Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of Social Experiment* (London: Routledge, 2001); William D. Rubenstien, *Twentieth-Century Britain: A Political History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Morag Shiach, *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890-1930 (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[24] Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 20-21. See also: Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939* (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 171; Alan Jackson, *The Middle Classes, 1900-1950* (Melksham: Redwood Press, 1988), p. 49.

particular, with the (temporary) spatial and mental privacy to come to terms with their evolving identities away from many of the demands of the domestic and urban spheres.

The ambivalence of these new private spaces within the family home is illustrated by George Orwell in his novel *Coming Up for Air* (1939), which explores his protagonist's desperate desire to escape his dreary life as a middle-aged insurance salesman stifled by suburban domesticity and all it symbolises. For George Bowling, a 'fed up' husband and father living in the suburbs, these new domestic spaces, along with the modern technologies implicit in their design, come to symbolise the eroding of the halcyon England of his boyhood, notably a time before the war, by industrialised and commercialised modern life. As a homeowner in the suburbs, however, he is unwillingly implicated in what he sees as the undoing of traditional English life; his family lives on one of the many suburban housing developments that sprang up between the wars, almost identical to 'fifty others exactly like it' across the country.[25] Sitting in 'long, long rows', the stucco-fronted houses of West Bletchley all feature the 'same back garden, same privets, and same grass'.[26] In George's eyes, these cookie-cutter houses are 'as much alike as council houses and generally uglier'.[27]

The novel opens with George Bowling taking a bath on a 'beastly January morning, with a dirty yellowish-grey sky' visible through the 'little square of bathroom window', and this view from the bathtub sets the tone for the rest of George's

[25] George Orwell, *Coming Up for Air* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 13. For more on the history of the suburbs see: Arthur Edwards, *The Design of Suburbia* (London: Pembridge Press, 1981); Lynne Hapgood, *Margins of Desire: The Suburbs in Fiction and Culture, 1880-1925* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Alan Jackson, *Semi-Detached London: Suburban Development, Life and Transport, 1900-39* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973); Thomas Sharp, *Town and Countryside: Some Aspects of Urban and Rural Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932).
[26] Orwell, p. 13.
[27] Orwell, p. 7.

pessimistic narrative.[28] For George, much like Bagnold's protagonist, the family bathroom is a space to 'shut the kids out' and steal half an hour of 'bath thoughts' before the day begins.[29] Orwell's opening pages illustrate his protagonist's meandering thoughts, which jump between his 'pudgy' body, horse racing, false teeth, women and cigars, as he performs his daily ablutions:

> After I'd soaped myself all over I felt better and lay down in the bath to think [...] I'd just turned on some more hot water and was thinking about women and cigars when there was a noise like a herd of buffaloes coming down the two steps that lead to the bathroom. It was the kids, of course.[30]

George's peace and quiet is interrupted by the 'frantic stamping' of his children, desperate to use the toilet, on the other side of the door:

> The w.c. is in the bathroom - it would be, of course, in a house like ours. I hooked the plug out of the bath and got partially dry as quickly as I could. As I opened the door, Billy - my youngest, aged seven - shot past me, dodging the smack which I aimed at his head. It was only when I was nearly dressed and looking for a tie that I discovered that my neck was still soapy.[31]

Giving him a 'disgusting sticky feeling', George's 'rotten' soapy neck - a direct result of his children's interruption and an indirect result of his wife's failure to control them - plagues him for the rest of the day, acting as a continual reminder of his entrapment in the increasingly commercialised capitalist society that hangs like a (soapy) weight around his neck.

---

[28] Orwell, p. 7. The bathroom in Orwell's novel can be read in the context of evolving bathroom styles during the first few decades of the twentieth century, which came to symbolise the increasingly industrialised and commercialised nature of modern life. In newly constructed houses, bathroom design reflected the streamlined ideals of the modern, hygienic home, revolting against the 'excess ornamentation, and unnecessary "fuss"' of their Victorian predecessors (Judy Giles, 'A Home of One's Own: Women and Domesticity in England, 1918-1950', *Women's Studies International Forum,* 16, 3 (1993), 239-53 (p. 244)). In the first few decades of the twentieth century, the design and appearance of bathrooms had remained largely aligned with Victorian style: wooden bath casings, exposed piping, porcelain, brass and nickel-plated fittings (Jackson, *The Middle Classes*, p. 68-69). But in the interwar years these began to be replaced by 'neat and bright chromium-plated labour-saving designs and plumbing was increasingly concealed behind pedestal basins and marbled or tiled bath surrounds' (Jackson, *The Middle Classes*, p. 69; Graves and Hodge, p. 181). Many bathrooms even boasted chromium-plated heated towel rails, glass bathroom appliances, and white ceramic tiles or glossy-oil paints for ease of cleaning' (Jackson, *The Middle Classes*, p. 49; Graves and Hodge, p. 181).

[29] Bagnold, *A Diary Without Dates*, p. 110.

[30] Orwell, p. 7, 9-10.

[31] Orwell, p. 10.

In her reading of Orwell's novel, Giles suggests that Orwell uses suburban domesticity as a metaphor for the 'dehumanising, homogenising and bureaucratic tendencies of twentieth-century life'.[32] Building on work by Alison Light, Giles argues that an increased attachment to the 'idea of private life', a response to World War I that is echoed in George's narrative, constitutes a 'search for a new kind of national identity at a time when the imperialist project of Victorian England no longer appeared tenable'.[33] This interwar narrative, Light contends, feminises 'the idea of the nation as a whole, giving us a private and retiring people, pipe-smoking "little men" with their quietly competent partners, a nation of gardeners and housewives'.[34] Giles takes this further to suggest that the feminisation associated with suburban domesticity is actually an emasculating force against which George Bowling struggles throughout the novel, symbolised by the home and, particularly, the housewife.[35] Indeed, George aligns his suburban estate with

> a prison with the cells all in a row. A line of semi-detached torture-chambers where the poor little five-to-ten pound-a-weekers quake and shiver, every one of them with the boss twisting his tail and the wife riding him like the nightmare and the kids sucking his blood like leeches.[36]

In buying into the idea of a wife, family and 'one of those little stucco boxes', he has become trapped in the consumerism cycle of modern middle-class family life, which requires him to submit to the control of the 'god of building societies' - half 'managing director', half 'wife in the family way', with the 'key of the workhouse' in one hand and

[32] Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 39. For more on this see: Simon Goulding, 'The Sound of the Suburbs: Orwell, Bowling and the Estates in *Coming Up for Air*', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, 7, 1 (March 2009) <https://bit.ly/3bR7eTf> [accessed 16 March 2021].
[33] Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 211; Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 42.
[34] Light, *Forever England,* p. 211.
[35] Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 42.
[36] Orwell, p. 14.

a ‘cornucopia’ of ‘portable radios, life-insurance policies, false teeth, aspirins, French letters, and concrete garden rollers’ in the other.[37]

For Orwell’s George Bowling, the suburban housewife is one of the key symbols of this suffocating modern life, and is associated with mass culture, consumerism and an emasculating form of femininity. This set of markers plays into popular interwar narratives which saw the birth of the ‘ordinary housewife’:

> It was only in the inter war period that the term “an ordinary housewife” acquired specific resonances which signified an apparently homogeneous group who could be addressed as having common interest by the media, by politicians, and by the designers of housing and domestic technology.[38]

Cutting across social classes, the term encompassed both the middle-class woman who ‘had finally and irrevocably lost her servants’ and the working-class woman who ‘had gained, or was in the process of gaining, a whole house to look after’.[39] Housewives became aligned with a specific set of ideals and images, particularly those associated with a healthy home (the same suburban home in which George Bowling felt so stifled), with the idea of the good housewife - a symbol of ideal womanhood, motherhood, cleanliness and order - playing a key part in the drive to improve health and housing throughout the twenties and thirties.

While the proliferation of the ordinary housewife was a liberating identity for many women - representing a personal choice, a potentially more affluent or pleasurable lifestyle, or a sense of security embedded in the husband and home - even

---

[37] Orwell, p. 15.

[38] Giles, ‘A Home of One’s Own’, p. 239. While the idea of the ‘ordinary housewife’ encompassed both working-class and middle-class women, it is only within the scope of this chapter to focus on the middle-class housewife. The idea of ‘middle-classness’ is not easy to define and consolidates a range of unique and often polarising identities. Alison Light has called it an unstable identity reliant ‘on an extremely anxious production of endless discriminations between people who are constantly assessing each other’s standing’ (Light, *Forever England*, p. 13). In her more recent study, Lucy Delap argues that it is a ‘vague and mutable identity, and highly internally factionalized’ (Lucy Delap, ‘Housework, Housewives, and Domestic Workers’, *Home Cultures*, 8, 2 (July 2011), 189-209 (p. 191-92)). This chapter considers a range of texts about middle-class families that sit across this category.

[39] Alison Ravetz, ‘A View from the Interior’, in *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design*, ed. by Just Attfield and Patricia Kirkman (London: The Women’s Press, 1989), pp. 187-205 (p. 189).

Mrs Miniver, hailed as queen of the housewives in Jan Struther's popular fictional column in *The Times*, notes the drudgery that came with the role:

> Every morning you awake to the kind of list which begins: - *Sink-plug. Ruffle-tape. X-hooks. Glue…* and ends: - *Ring plumber. Get sweep. Curse Laundry*. Your horizon contracts, your mind's eye is focused upon a small circle of exasperating detail. Sterility sets in; the hatches of your mind are battened down.[40]

Though many women had gained some form of social, sexual and economic independence during the war, Lucy Hall observes that 'this perceived female dominance of the wartime home front was followed by an emphasis in the postwar period on reasserting masculine authority and the re-subordination of women, confining them to maternal and domestic roles'.[41] With the introduction of the marriage bar, an attempt to solve high male unemployment rates, coinciding with the economic depression, many women saw their horizon contract, in the words of Mrs Miniver, as they were forced to return to domestic roles within the home. For many women, the idea of a house in the suburbs was as claustrophobic as it was for Orwell's George Bowling. This chapter dwells on this ambivalence, then, using the lens of the middle-class family bathroom to explore the ways in which wives and mothers attempted to navigate a self-defined, multi-faceted identity outside of the ordinary housewife.

The Home-Maker

> What was her life? A hateful round of housework, which, hurry as she might, was never done. How she *loathed* housework! The sight of a dishpan full of dishes made her feel like screaming out. And what else did she have? Loneliness; never-ending monotony; blank, grey days, one after another, full of

[40] Jan Struther, *Mrs Miniver* (London: Futura Publications, 1980), p. 221. For more see: Giles, 'A Home of One's Own'; Lucy Hall, 'Men of the House: Oppressive Husbands and Displaced Wives in Interwar, War and Postwar Women's Fiction', in *British Women's Writing, 1930 to 1960: Between the Waves*, ed. by Sue Kennedy and Jane Thomas (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 161-78 (p. 162); Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984), p. 150.

[41] Hall, 'Men of the House', p. 163. For more see: Margaret Higonnet and Patrice Higonnet, 'The Double Helix', in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars,* ed. by Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (London: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 31-47.

> drudgery. No rest from the constant friction over the children's carelessness and forgetfulness and childishness! How she hated childishness! And she must try to endure it patiently or at least with the appearance of patience. [...] A profound depression came upon her.[42]

In a tone much like her comrade-in-arms Mrs Miniver, the protagonist of Dorothy Canfield Fisher's novel *The Home-Maker* (1924) orates her hatred for her role as housewife from behind the privacy of the locked bathroom door each night. As she gazes at 'her dark face in the mirror', Evangeline Knapp, mother of three and wife to a 'poor stick of a husband', describes the 'heavy, heavy burden, too great for her to bear', of being the perfect housewife.[43] This 'burden' is the central theme of Fisher's narrative which explores the gendered roles 'dictated not by the individual but by the society, the culture and tradition, with a capital T'.[44] As her name suggests, Evangeline is zealous in her dedication to her family and their home, striving to fulfil her social duty as a wife and mother despite (privately) despising the 'loneliness', 'drudgery' and 'never-ending monotony' that comes with the role.[45] She tells her friends at the Ladies' Guild that her 'first duty is [her] home and children' and 'come what might she would do her duty to the uttermost'.[46] Yet her youngest child, peeking through a crack in the kitchen door one afternoon, feels the emotions Evangeline hides behind 'her bitterly fought-for self-control':

> The kitchen was full, full to suffocation with waves of revolt, and exasperation, and haste, and furious determination, which clashed together in the air above that quivering, energetic figure keeling on the floor.[47]

Stephen catches his mother 'scrubbing furiously' at the 'grease spots' left by his brother when clearing the dining table the previous day. To his mother, these

[42] Dorothy Canfield Fisher, *The Home-Maker* (London: Persephone Books, 2015), p. 35-36.
[43] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 35, 38.
[44] Karen Knox, 'Preface', in *The Home-Maker* (London: Persephone Books, 2015), pp. v-xiv (p. viii).
[45] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 35-36.
[46] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 32, 49.
[47] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 13-14, 35.

accidental grease spots signify the suffocating repetitiveness of a life which, like Mrs Miniver's, seems to revolve around a never-ending list of domestic chores. And, upon discovering that Stephen has disappeared (he is later found hiding from her temper under the stairs), Fisher reveals the extent to which this stress is having on Evangeline:

> It was too much. With all she had to do, slaving day and night to keep the house nice for them all who never thought of appreciating it, never any rest or change, her hair getting thinner all the time, simply coming out in handfuls, and she had had such beautiful hair, so many things to do this afternoon while Mattie was out, enjoying herself, riding in a new car, and now everything stopped because of this naughty trick of Stephen's of not answering.[48]

Evangeline's work seems unending and this causes her anxious thoughts to tumble over one another like Fisher's phrasing, which, full of asyndeton, captures the hopelessness of her situation. Unlike fellow housewife Mattie, whose successful husband has just purchased a new Buick, and who, as a more modern, carefree housewife, Fisher implements as Evangeline's foil, Evangeline is unable to escape the confinement of her domestic duties, even when the stress of this perfect 'appearance' causes her hair to fall out in 'handfuls'.[49]

Fisher's novel is preoccupied with these 'feelings of powerlessness and futility which the husband and wife in the story, as well as the children, feel in their particular roles'.[50] For Evangeline's husband Lester, the pressure to provide for his family leaves him feeling 'bound and gagged' by society's expectations.[51] On his way to his office, leaving behind the 'combative angry roar' of his wife, Lester's

> vitality began to ebb. He felt the familiar terrible draining out of his will-to-live. At the thought of enduring this demoralising torment that morning, and that afternoon, and the day after that and the day after that, he felt like flinging himself on the ground rolling and shrieking.[52]

[48] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 7.
[49] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 36.
[50] Knox, p. viii.
[51] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 57.
[52] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 58.

Unable to make enough money to give his family the comfortable middle-class lifestyle of their peers, Lester's anxiety presents itself somatically in the form of a particularly debilitating dyspepsia - the 'demon of dull discomfort' - that symbolises his incompetence as a husband and father.[53] Much like her husband's indigestion, the 'powerlessness and futility' of Evangeline's life manifests itself in physical ways, too: her daughter's 'badly made bed deepened the line between her eyes', scrubbing the floor makes her body 'tense', while the harsh 'cleaning-powder' leaves her hands riddled with eczema.[54] In the privacy of the bathroom, Evangeline surveys her wounds:

> Then she went swiftly up the stairs, locked the bathroom door behind her, and began to unwind the bandages from around her upper arm. When it finally came off she inspected the raw patch on her arm. It was crusted over in places with thick, yellowish-white pus oozing from the pustules. It was spreading. It was worse. It would never be any better. It was like everything else. [...] She began to undress rapidly and to wash. As she combed her dark hair, she noticed again how rapidly it was falling. The comb was full of long hairs. [...] And she had had such *beautiful* hair! It had been her one physical superiority, that and her "style". What good had they ever done her![55]

Trapped in the house 'slaving day and night', Evangeline's body is a symbol of her devotion to her domestic duties (the eczema a literal and symbolic reaction to the harsh cleaning chemicals), as well as the bitterness and claustrophobia that she tries to keep hidden underneath.[56] The 'thick, yellowish-white pus oozing' from her skin is 'spreading' up her arms as her dreams of a better life become increasingly unattainable, and, coupled with her 'rapidly' thinning hair, signifies her entrapment in the ordinary housewife role when, contrary to social expectations, she believes she is 'fit for something better than scrubbing floors all her life'.[57]

---

[53] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 56.
[54] Knox, p. viii; Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 7, 3.
[55] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 34-35.
[56] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 7.
[57] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 38.

Evangeline's 'chronic skin trouble' becomes the talk of the Ladies' Guild, as they gossip about her 'from their superior position of women whose husbands were good providers'.[58] Fisher writes:

> "Doctor thinks it may be nervous, may be due to…"
> "Nervous!" cried Mrs. Mattie Farnham. "Why, it's a real eruption, discharging pus and everything. I had to help her dress a place on her back once when Stephen was a tiny baby. Nervous!"
> "Oh, Doctor doesn't mean it is anything she could help. He often says that just because you've called a thing nervous is no reason for thinking it's not serious. It's as real to *them*, he says, as a broken leg."
> "Well, I'd have something worse than eczema if I had three delicate children to bring up and only that broken reed of a Lester Knapp to lean on," said Mrs. Prouty with energy.[59]

The doctor's diagnosis associates Evangeline's 'real' physical symptoms with the underlying anxieties of her domestic situation, suggesting that her 'nervous' illness might be a result of her unhappiness at home. Evangeline's ailments align with an illness that plagued middle-class housewives in the interwar period, who, trapped in their homes and 'separated for ten or more hours each weekday from the companionship of their husbands and other adults' (much like Evangeline, who 'passed her life in solitary confinement, as home-makers always do'), developed 'minor indispositions such as headaches, depression and indigestion'.[60] Coined by Dr Stephen Taylor, Senior Resident Medical Officer at the Royal Free Hospital in London, in a 1938 article in *The Lancet*, 'suburban neurosis' was a specifically interwar ailment only eradicated, according to Alan Jackson, by the more pressing concerns and abruptly altered lifestyles of women in World War II.[61] In his article, Taylor describes the plight of the housewife, married to Mr Everyman and living in a

> small semi-detached hire-purchase villa on the wonderful new Everysuburb estate, adjacent to one of the great by-passes and only twenty minutes from

[58] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 42, 44.
[59] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 42-43.
[60] Jackson, *The Middle Classes*, p. 123; Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 44.
[61] Jackson, *The Middle Classes*, p. 124.

> the station. The estate was Mr. Jerrybuilder's fifth successful venture in the property market. By this time he had thoroughly mastered the technique of using the cheapest unseasoned timber, the lightest of breeze brick, and the smartest of bathroom fittings.[62]

After a year or two, Taylor writes, the 'thrill of a "home of her own"' has 'worn off' and the housewife finds that the house is 'getting her down'.[63] Mrs Everyman finds herself lonely, with no one to talk to about her situation and her growing unhappiness:

> If only she'd got someone to talk to. Somehow she couldn't tell hubby. He'd say she was just being silly.[64]

Translating 'this miserable little story into medical jargon', Taylor blames this 'anxiety' on the lifestyle of the housewife in the suburbs.[65] Highlighting the facade of the middle-class home, Taylor argues that this lifestyle

> is such that the self-preserving, race-preserving and herd instincts can be neither adequately satisfied nor sublimated. The barriers to satisfaction and sublimation are the superficial or "trigger" causes of the condition; while the symptoms - pathological anxiety, somatic manifestations, failure of conation, and failure of affect - represent a side-tracking of the frustrated emotional energy.[66]

The causes of suburban neurosis, then, are boredom, through lack of friends; lack of intellectual and social stimulation; financial worries about the home; anxiety about retaining their middle-class lifestyle; and a false set of values that results from the middle-class 'fetish of the home'.[67] Most importantly, the housewife wonders why her domestic role fails to bring her the satisfaction she imagines it brings to her peers or sees in the media.[68] Taylor places the 'prevention of the suburban neurosis [...] in the hands of the social workers and politicians', believing the 'best plan' is to establish 'social non-religious clubs catering for all possible interests' as a way for women,

---

[62] Stephen Taylor, 'The Suburban Neurosis', *The Lancet* (26 March 1938), 759-61 (p. 759).
[63] Taylor, p. 759, 760.
[64] Taylor, p. 760.
[65] Taylor, p. 760.
[66] Taylor, p. 760.
[67] Taylor, p. 760.
[68] Taylor, p. 760.

previously confined to the home, to forge new social and intellectual bonds with other women.[69]

Interestingly, Taylor suggests that suburban neurosis presents itself somatically, affecting the housewife's body through a range of physical symptoms which his patients have identified as:

> Trembling all over, and I jump at the slightest noise.
> Continuous gnawing, nagging headache.
> Stabbing pains over my heart.
> Pain in my back which runs up and down.
> My stomach swells up terrible.
> Nasty taste in my mouth.[70]

Not only does Mrs Everyman develop many of these physical symptoms, but the mental illness alters her appearance, too. Her body becomes thin and pale and shaky, and she develops a 'slovenly look about her'.[71] Evangeline's physical symptoms, all somatic expressions of the anxiety and 'loneliness' of 'her life in solitary confinement' (the tension of her 'quivering, energetic back', the 'loathsomeness' of her 'eczema eruptions', and the shock of her 'rapidly' thinning hair), would not look out of place on this list.[72] Nor would the nervous symptoms of Mrs Ogden, the middle-class housewife in Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Unlit Lamp* (1924). Written in the same year as *The Home-Maker*, Hall similarly uses the gendered dynamics of the Ogden family to explore the effect of traditional gender divisions on her protagonist's autonomy and identity, narrating the life of the coltish elder daughter of middle-class parents living in a stagnant English town and the potential freedom that comes into her life when she falls in love with her tutor, Elizabeth Rodney. Their dreams of living out a Boston marriage together in London, with Joan studying to become a doctor, are thwarted by

[69] Taylor, p. 761.
[70] Taylor, p. 759.
[71] Taylor, p. 759.
[72] Fisher, *The Home-Maker*, p. 3, 34, 35, 44.

her manipulative mother, Mrs Ogden, whose emotional dependency on her daughter lurks beneath the surface of the novel like the tentacles of its original title, *Octopi*.[73]

While an official name for suburban neurosis did not surface until a decade after Hall and Fisher were writing, we can see clear links between Mrs Ogden and Evangeline's extreme unhappiness and their stifling domestic life, as well as the physical effects of this on their bodies. Hall describes Mrs Ogden as a

> small woman, pale and pensive looking; her neat hair, well netted, was touched with grey, her soft brown eyes were large and appealing, but there were lines about her mouth that suggested something different, irritable lines that drew the corners of her lips down a little.[74]

While readers may note Mrs Ogden's normal signs of aging, there is a subtle undertone of something darker here, too. Tinged with 'something different', her face's 'irritable lines' are evidence of her strained relationship with her cold and controlling husband, Colonel Ogden, who is an overbearing and domineering man that has caused her to develop a 'nervous tremor' in his presence.[75] Bullying his wife, Colonel Ogden symbolises the patriarchal society that traps her in this role of the ordinary housewife, which Hall explores in a scene set in the couple's bedroom:

> Mrs Ogden began to hurry. She pattered round the room like a terrier on a scent; garments fell from her nerveless fingers, the brush clattered on the floor. She eyed her husband in a scared way. [...] She began cleaning her teeth. Colonel Ogden watched her languidly from the bed. His red, puffy face looked ridiculous against the pillow; a little smile lifted his moustache. She turned and saw him, and stopped with the tooth-brush halfway to her mouth.[76]

Brushing her teeth at a washstand or basin in the bedroom, Mrs Ogden craves privacy and escape, but this scene instead reveals their gendered power-play as her husband

[73] Diana Souhami, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), p. 116.
[74] Radclyffe Hall, *The Unlit Lamp* (London: Virago, 1981), p. 10.
[75] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp,* p. 10.
[76] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp,* p. 25.

attempts to assert his dominance.[77] His 'ridiculous' 'red, puffy face' torments his wife as she brushes her teeth:

> She felt suddenly disgusted and outraged and shy. In a flash her mind took in the room. There on the chair lay his loose, shabby garments [...] It hung limply suspended over the arm of the chair, like the wraith of a concertina. On the table by his side of the bed lay a half-smoked pipe. His bath sponge was elbowing her as she washed.[78]

Hall animates the sponge, a base bathroom item, with the Colonel's human characteristics as it aggressively asserts its power over Mrs Ogden by 'elbowing her as she washed'. Soon, 'everything' in the room was 'pervaded' by his overbearing 'masculine personality' until 'the room reeked of it'.[79] Yet Hall infuses the scene with a subtle irony here, too, by aligning the Colonel with the 'loose, shabby' objects 'limply suspended' around the room and with the insubstantiality implied by the image of the 'wraith'. And although the sponge, a metonym for Colonel Ogden, is (metaphorically) attempting to violently impose itself on Mrs Ogden, the Colonel's association with these base and demeaning objects, described in adjectives connotative of impotency, reveals her 'disgusted' contempt, which is, at all other times, hidden beneath her public facade of the ordinary housewife.

Mrs Ogden distracts herself from the disgust she feels towards her husband by focusing on brushing her teeth, all the while knowing her husband is lying on the bed watching her:

> Up and down and then across - disgusting! What she was doing was ugly and detestable. Why should he lie in the bed and smile? Why should he be in the

[77] It is not clear if Mrs Ogden is brushing her teeth in an en-suite bathroom or at a washstand or plumbed basin in the bedroom proper. I would suggest it is the latter, as washstands had largely disappeared from middle-class family homes by the 1920s when fully-plumbed bathrooms and hot water were more common. Alan Jackson notes that 'after 1920, to relieve the pressure on the single bathroom, wash-basins with running hot and cold water were frequently installed in bedrooms' (Jackson, *The Middle Classes*, p. 70). To make these more aesthetically pleasing, these were often concealed 'in alcoves, or by providing a small dressing room off the bedroom' (Jackson, *The Middle Classes*, p. 70).

[78] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp,* p. 25.

[79] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp,* p. 25.

> bed at all - why should he be in the room at all? Why hadn't they taken a house with an extra bedroom, or at least with a room large enough for two beds?[80]

Mrs Ogden is rendered machine-like under her husband's watchful gaze, which forces her to 'mechanically' brush her teeth 'taking great care to do as her dentist bade her' in an attempt to perform perfectly for these authoritative men.[81] Yet this act fills her with disgust, and is made all the more 'disgusting' by her husband's presence. The house, and their shared bedroom washstand in particular, becomes a vessel for her anger, loaded with the implications of their class and financial status. She wishes they were able to afford a house with two bedrooms for herself and her husband, and much like Evangeline Knapp, places this blame on her husband. In this moment, she craves real privacy and bemoans these 'repellent familiarities'.[82]

Unable to escape her husband's gaze, even during this usually private act, Mrs Ogden 'felt like a virgin whose privacy had suffered a rude intrusion'.[83] In a rare moment of protest, directly after this scene Mrs Ogden dashes into the main family bathroom before her husband, who is usually given priority:

> "You can wait until I have had *my* bath."
> She heard herself and marvelled. Would the heavens fall? Would the ground open up and swallow her up? She hurried away before her courage failed.[84]

Subverting the hierarchy of the family home and limited resources like hot water, Mrs Ogden uses the bathroom space to temporarily destabilise the power dynamics of her marriage, momentarily escaping the tyranny of her husband and her role as his housewife:

> In the bath-room she slipped the bolt and turned the key, and sighed a sigh of relief. Alone - she was alone. She turned on the water. A reckless daring seized her; let the hot water run, let it run until the bath was full to the brim; for once she would have an injuriously hot bath; she would wallow in it, stay in it, take

[80] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp,* p. 25.
[81] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp,* p. 25.
[82] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 25.
[83] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 25.
[84] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 25.

> her time. She never got enough hot water; now she would take it *all* - let his bath be tepid for once, let him wait on her convenience, let him come thumping at the door, coarse, overbearing, foolish creature![85]

Double-locking the bathroom door, Mrs Ogden creates a physical barrier between herself and her husband. Hall's syntax echoes the adrenaline racing through Mrs Ogden's body - 'Alone - she was alone. She turned on the water' - with these two short, mostly monosyllabic sentences mimicking her fast breathing and 'reckless daring' at her insubordination.[86] Once Mrs Ogden begins filling up the bath, Hall's short sentences are replaced by longer, multi-clause phrases full of semicolons. Acting almost as a mantra, these repetitive phrases and multiple clauses mimic the flowing bathwater in which Mrs Ogden luxuriates. The italics, coupled with the use of exclamatives, confront Colonel Ogden's 'thumping' (his signature sound in the novel) on a syntactical level, and reflect the anger, power and courage that fills Mrs Ogden like the 'injuriously' hot water filling the tub.[87] For once, Mrs Ogden is the one who pervades an 'overbearing' authority.

As in Bagnold and Orwell's narratives, the bathroom becomes a thinking space for Mrs Ogden and 'as she lay luxuriously in the brimming bath her thoughts went back' to memories of their earlier relationship.[88] Yet these 'bath thoughts', unlike the Squire's, are interrupted, denoting the distinctly temporary nature of Mrs Ogden's gendered power reversal, and, once outside of the protection of the locked bathroom door, Hall notes that Mrs Ogden's 'courage had all run away with the bath water'.[89] Once she is back in her usual position at the breakfast table, worrying about her husband's 'special dishes, the kidneys and the curried eggs', she reverts back to her

[85] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 25-26.
[86] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 25, 26.
[87] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 26.
[88] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 26.
[89] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 27.

earlier anxious self.[90] Ultimately, the bathroom is a space that reasserts the reality of their domestic lives, which, for Mrs Ogden, is filled with drudgery and a bullying husband. Mrs Ogden feels confined in her domestic role as a housewife to an overbearing husband and, although the bathroom offers a temporary release or power subversion, her inability to sustain this in the rest of the domestic sphere reasserts her sense of confinement, a confinement so ingrained, in fact, that it becomes impossible to escape even after the death of her husband.

We might hope that Colonel Ogden's death would signal the beginning of a new, more liberated existence for Mrs Odgen and her daughters, who are finally able to escape the tyranny with which their father had ruled the house. This hope is short lived, however, as it soon becomes clear that Mrs Ogden uses her manipulative 'tentacles of sickness and loneliness' to thwart Joan's bid for autonomy. The pair become entangled in an intense, quasi-incestuous partnership that sees Mrs Ogden usurp her husband's power and control. Hall imbues their relationship with intentionally skewed gender dynamics, playing with Joan's masculine qualities. In her youth, Joan had been 'large-boned and tall for her age, lanky as a boy, with a pale face and short black hair'.[91] In her exploration of Hall's lesbian characters, Esther Newton notes that:

> Hall uses a masculinized body and a strong, active mind to symbolize women's rejection of traditional gender divisions and bourgeois values. Joan wants to be a doctor. Her mind is swift, intelligent, her body large, strong, healthy.[92]

After Colonel Ogden's death, it is Joan's 'strong, young arms', not a husband or lovers, that comfort Mrs Ogden:

> Joan's strong, young arms would comfort and soothe, and her firm lips grope until they found her mother's; and Mrs. Ogden would feel mean and ashamed but guiltily happy, as if a lover held her'.[93]

---

[90] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 27.
[91] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 11.
[92] Esther Newton, 'The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman', *Signs* , 9, 4 (Summer 1984), 557- 75 (p. 563).
[93] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 13.

By depicting Joan as the masculine one, Hall ironically subverts traditional gender expectations, both by creating a faux heterosexual relationship between mother and daughter, standing in for the one between Colonel Ogden and his wife, and by constructing the masculine partner - Joan - as the weaker one in this relationship.

When Hall's narrative skips forward nineteen years and we are reintroduced to Joan, now in her forties and still looking after her mother, it becomes clear that she never achieved the autonomy and sense of individuality that she had craved in her youth. Hall describes her changes:

> To the casual observer she looked about forty-eight, in reality she was forty-three. Her grey eyes still seemed young at times, but their colour had faded and so had their expression of intelligent curiosity. The eyes that had once asked so many questions of life, now looked dull and uninterested. Her cheeks had grown somewhat angular, and the clear pallor of her skin had thickened a little; it no longer suggested good health. In all her face the mouth remained as a memory of what Joan had been.[94]

With the passing of time, Joan has lost the spark of youth (as is expected after nearly two decades), but she has also lost the 'intelligent curiosity' that set her apart from her peers. After Joan had 'lost her battle for autonomy' with her mother, Newton suggests that

> her body changes, her health deteriorates, her ability to move freely, to see clearly is impeded. At forty-three she is an old woman, given to hysteria and hypochondria.[95]

Joan is troubled by more than just the 'small, annoying symptoms' of middle age, however, as Hall notes that

> Her mentality was gradually changing too, and her brain was littered with little things. Trifles annoyed her, small cares preoccupied her, the getting beyond them was too much of an effort. She could no longer force her unwilling brain to action, any mental exertion tired her. [...] Her interests were narrowing down into a small circle.[96]

---

[94] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 268.
[95] Newton, p. 563.
[96] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 268-69.

In language strikingly similar to Struther's *Mrs Miniver*, Hall describes the gradual contracting of Joan's horizons, whose 'mind's eye is focused upon a small circle of exasperating detail'.[97] More than this, Hall's descriptions suggest that in living a life subjugated by her manipulative mother, Joan has started to display symptoms of the suburban neurosis that earlier plagued Mrs Ogden: her 'mind has been shrivelling away for years; it's not able to grasp big things as it was once, it's grown small and petty and easily tired'.[98] Much like the array of physical symptoms that Taylor outlines in his article, Joan is now afflicted by 'a mass of small ailments; real or imaginary' and, tending to make 'mountains out of molehills', her nerves have become 'unreliable'.[99]

Upon reuniting briefly with the man who proposed to her in her youth, the pair argue over the root of her deterioration, with Richard laying the blame at the feet of 'the weak who prey on the strong, the old on the young':

> "If you *are* a mass of ills, as you say, if your splendid brain is atrophied, and you feel empty and unfulfilled, whose fault is that? Not yours, who had too much heart to save yourself. I tell you, Joan, the sin of it lies at the door of that old woman up there [...] She's like an octopus who's drained you dry. You struggled to get free, you nearly succeeded, but as quickly as you cut through one tentacle, another shot out and fixed on to you."[100]

This language echoes the way that Una Troubridge, Hall's partner at the time she was writing *The Unlit Lamp*, describes a visit to a Devon resort in 1921 where Hall was 'distressed by the sight of an old lady waited upon by her ageing daughter'.[101] Troubridge writes that it was 'ghastly to see these unmarried daughters who are just unpaid servants' with old people 'sucking the life out of them like octopi'.[102] Identifying

---

[97] Struther, p. 221.
[98] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 299.
[99] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 299.
[100] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 300.
[101] Maroula Joannou, "*Ladies, Please Don't Smash These Windows": Women's Writing, Feminist Consciousness and Social Change, 1918-38* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), p. 80.
[102] Una Troubridge, *The Life and Death and Radclyffe Hall* (London: Hammond, 1961), p. 69. For more see: Richard Dellamora, *Radclyffe Hall: A Life in the Writing* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

the generational familial duty that ties single women to their elderly parents and married women to their husband and children, Richard calls this 'disease' an infection, like 'a pestilence that infects people one after the other'.[103]

As Mrs Ogden's health declines and the pair are confined to almost complete solitude - nowadays she 'seldom went beyond the front door' - we see Joan's lethargy infect her with 'physical pain':

> She did the simplest things with feelings of reluctance, dragging her body after her like a corpse to which she was attached.[104]

Joan's physical deterioration is stark. Where she 'had been brilliant once' she is now, on her mother's death, unable to find a job.[105] Her stagnated mind and lethargic body leave her trapped in a world 'centuries ago' and this renders her unable to fend for herself in a modern society where women are expected to have 'experience or a business education for most things'.[106] As the novel draws to a close, we see Joan hesitating over the decision to take up a post caring for an 'eccentric' invalid relative for 'a hundred a year', transplanting one caring role for another (although this time, at least, she would receive financial compensation), in a suburban town identical to her hometown just 'under a new name' 'in which invalids incubated their germs or sunned themselves like sickly plants in greenhouses'.[107] Ending with a small glimpse into the depressing future that awaits her at her new house, Hall reveals that Joan, having failed to assert her individuality, autonomy or an identity outside of those she has to care for, is trapped once again by the tentacles of the domestic octopus.

Joan's narrative arc reflects, more widely, the inability of middle-class women to escape an often confining set of prescribed roles and social expectations at this

[103] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 301.
[104] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 305, 306.
[105] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 310.
[106] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 311.
[107] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 313, 314.

time, hidden in the guise of familial duty. The Ogden family symbolises an oppressive society, Newton argues, as well as the 'imposition of traditional gender divisions, and the subjugation of female fulfilment to traditional bourgeois norms'.[108] Hall uses the fictional spaces of the Ogden's family home to excavate ideas that bubble beneath all of her writing, exploring the fate of 'unmarried daughters' turned 'unpaid servants' striving to break free from the tentacles of family duty, social expectations and gendered roles.[109] Years later, in an article describing her motivations for writing *The Unlit Lamp*, Hall argues that women like Joan Odgen

> wither away for want of self expression and encouragement, because they are too refined, too sensitive, too unselfish, or too timid, or perhaps too noble, to make a stand in defence of their rights as human beings.[110]

Revealing both her own disillusionment with the nuclear patriarchal family unit, the tentacles of which she spent much of her own life trying to escape, Hall, by exposing the stifling gendered family dynamics of the Ogden family, emphasises the entrapping and often claustrophobic nature of women's roles in the first half of the twentieth century, and the impossibility of creating an authentic identity outside of a husband, children or the family home.[111]

It is interesting to read *The Unlit Lamp* alongside Dorothy Canfield Fisher's novel *The Home-Maker*. Both interwar novels probe issues of women's identity and autonomy in the middle-class family home and both writers use fictional bathroom settings as thinking spaces for their female protagonists - Mrs Ogden and Evangeline Knapp - who, in the temporary privacy their locked doors offer, dwell on their own happiness in a moment of respite from the pressures of their families, the labour of the

[108] Newton, p. 563.
[109] Troubridge, p. 69.
[110] Souhami, p. 17.
[111] Diana Souhami argues that Radclyffe Hall's mother was the 'archetype' for Mrs Ogden (Souhami, p. 116, 9).

house, and the relational identity they inhabit as housewives. In front of the bathroom mirror, the two women reach beyond the facade of the ordinary housewife and experience moments 'about which nobody ever warned you, about which everybody kept a deceitful silence'.[112] The ambivalent reality of the ordinary housewife role is brought to the fore in this everyday space, then, as they are reminded that there will '*never* be anything but this'.[113] In the privacy of the bathroom, Mrs Ogden wonders:

> Why had she never thought of these things before? She *had* thought of them, but somehow she had never let the thoughts come out; now that she had ceased to sit on them they sprung up like so many jacks-in-the-box.[114]

Despite coming to this realisation, Mrs Ogden never fully escapes the tyranny of her marriage - as Hall writes, her 'courage had all run away with the bath water'.[115] In *The Home-Maker*, however, Fisher saves the Knapp family from the same fate.

Having been fired from his job for being too much of a 'dead loss', Lester Knapp contemplates suicide, imagining his life insurance will leave his family in a better position without the 'dead weight of an unsuccessful husband'.[116] But, as luck would have it, when a neighbour's house catches fire, 'Mr Knapp came running out from their house, bareheaded in all that cold with a pail in each hand', and climbed onto the 'steep icy roof' to put it out.[117] Lester falls off the roof (whether accidentally or not is left to our imagination) paralysing his legs. As a result, Lester becomes a 'bed-ridden invalid', eventually able to use a wheelchair, but forcing Evangeline to seek work to support their family.[118] In an attempt to expunge his feelings of guilt, Lester's boss gives Evangeline employment in his department store, where she quickly and

[112] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 36.
[113] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 35.
[114] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp* p. 26.
[115] Hall, *The Unlit Lamp*, p. 27.
[116] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 64, 68.
[117] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 72.
[118] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 94.

efficiently works her way up from stock-girl to the manager of the Ladies' Cloak-and-Suits department, gobbling up every opportunity to 'study and learn' in the process.[119] In contrast to the strained domestic atmosphere we saw at the novel's opening, Evangeline now returns home 'rather later and pretty tired' from work each day to 'a good hot bath waiting for her' and dinner 'steaming on the table'.[120]

By swapping domestic roles, abandoning traditional gender divisions out of necessity, Evangeline and Lester's lives are transformed. Lester, 'the man who, three months ago, was so eager to get out of life', now relishes the time with his children and the way 'housework doesn't interfere with thinking', much to the protest of fellow housewife Mattie who baulks at the 'idea of *your* darning stockings'.[121] He defends his new role with glee:

> "You're telling me that you really think that home-making is a poor, mean, cheap job beneath the dignity of anybody who can do anything else."
>
> Mattie Farnham was for a moment helpless with shock over his attack, when she slowly rose to a comprehension of what he had said she shouted indignantly, "Lester Knapp, how dare you say such a thing! [...] Home-making is the noblest work anybody can do!"[122]

Having escaped from the 'rubber-stamp formula' that had so oppressed them both, Lester and Evangeline's earlier ailments, used by Fisher to symbolise their unhappiness and unfulfillment, suddenly disappear.[123] Both Lester's dyspepsia, which 'the doctor always said [was] nervous', and Evangeline's eczema are cured, the latter by a 'new kind of ointment' that we know is merely a cover story for Evangeline's newfound happiness.[124]

---

[119] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 122.
[120] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 187.
[121] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 209, 160, 162.
[122] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 163.
[123] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p.161.
[124] Fisher, *The Home-Maker,* p. 222, 227.

In her article on 'Marital Relations' published in the same year as *The Home-Maker*, Fisher writes that society should let married people, 'without comment or blame, construct the sort of marriage which fits their particular case, rather than the sort which fits our ideas'.[125] This idea is reinforced in her novel when, upon the discovery that Lester's paralysis is not permanent (Evangeline and Lester both realise this privately and do not discuss it with the other), they both choose to continue to live in their new fulfilling roles outside of the traditional gendered division of labour. To achieve this, however, they must keep Lester's healthy legs a secret, a fact that Fisher uses to emphasise the impossibility of living in this gendered role-reversal unless out of necessity. With its heart-warming story of family happiness against all odds, Fisher's novel proffers a challenge to the stigma of gender role-reversal in the home, whilst, at the same time, revealing the insidious nature of this stigma in society and its stifling effects on the modern woman, her family and, in subtly noting Evangeline's significant contribution to the labour market by the end of the novel, the wider capitalist society in which they live.

The Failed Housewife

In 1928, Storm Jameson was commissioned to write a series of feature articles for *The Evening News* in which she debated the merits of boarding school, recounted the impossibilities of combining motherhood with a career, and highlighted the 'tyranny of the home and the travails of the modern wife'.[126] In one article entitled 'Bored Wives', Jameson launches a vitriolic attack on the suburban housewife or, as she calls them, the 'glutinous mass of femininity'.[127] Mrs Adams, one of the homogenous mass of

[125] Elaine Showalter, 'Afterword', in *The Home-Maker* (London: Persephone Books, 2015), pp. 269-79 (p. 274).
[126] Jennifer Birkett, *Margaret Storm Jameson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 96.
[127] Storm Jameson, 'Bored Wives', *The Evening News* (1 October 1928), p. 8.

housewives much like Taylor's Mrs Everyman, is 'bored and cross', her husband 'bored and uneasy'.[128] These housewives waste their lives in

> small, labour-saving houses, the care of which takes them only two or three hours a day. They have no children, or only one - at most two. They have no ambitions - beyond wishing that their husbands made more money. They have no imagination. They have no ideas.[129]

Jameson lashes out at the 'hundreds and hundreds of Mrs Adams she passes on Oxford Street in a 'crowd of women moving sluggishly along the pavement' 'not buying [...] just staring' in idle passivity at the shop windows.[130] Jameson writes:

> How on earth do they find the time? *I* have no time, I think to myself as I dodge resentfully through them, to drift about Oxford Street. My hard-worked young secretary has no time to do it. What on earth do these women think they are doing with their precious lives?[131]

The following day Dorothy Richardson responded to Jameson's article which, she agreed, did have an 'air of verisimilitude' about it, even if it was rather a 'period picture' of a 'pre-war, pre-wireless, pre-gramophone, pre-cinema, pre-dance hall Suburbia'.[132] In her rebuttal, Richardson argues that only a 'small proportion of the crowd [represented] the vacuous automatism credited by Miss Jameson to the whole'.[133] Even in suburbia, Richardson writes, 'there are entertaining wives, witty wives with plenty of ideas, and wives not over-burdened with ideas but possessing an ample store of wisdom'.[134] For Richardson, the blame of 'vacuous automatism' lay firmly 'not with the wife but society and the education it provided for girls'.[135]

---

[128] Jameson, 'Bored Wives', p. 8
[129] Jameson, 'Bored Wives', p. 8.
[130] Jameson, 'Bored Wives', p. 8.
[131] Jameson, 'Bored Wives', p. 8.
[132] Dorothy Richardson, 'Where is Miss Jameson's Suburbia?', *The Evening News* (2 October 1928), p. 8.
[133] Richardson, 'Where is Miss Jameson's Suburbia?', p. 8.
[134] Richardson, 'Where is Miss Jameson's Suburbia?', p. 8.
[135] Richardson, 'Where is Miss Jameson's Suburbia?', p. 8; Gloria Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 227.

Condemning suburban housewives to a mass of 'vacuous automatism', then, Jameson's article strikes a chord with a short story by Jean Rhys in which she uses the metaphor of regulated machine-like women to explore the 'wider social-economic mechanics of modernity', as well as, like Hall and Fisher's novels, the impossibility of escaping confining domestic roles and identities in the middle-class home.[136] In 'Outside the Machine', we see the catastrophic effects of a stifling suburban existence (resulting in what Taylor might call a case of suburban neurosis) on an ordinary housewife, Mrs Murphy, whose attempts to escape her role as wife and mother result in a mental breakdown, hospitalisation and attempted suicide.[137] Rhys uses the institutional hospital setting, as well as a judgemental group of housewives (Rhys' 'fat, fair women' do call to mind Jameson's 'glutinous mass of femininity'), to consider the point at which the pressure to conform to a specific female identity breaks down, and the catastrophic effect that this can have on both an individual's sense of autonomy and identity.[138]

[136] Imogen Free, '"Outside the Machine": Stasis and Conflict in the work of Jean Rhys', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 31, 2 (August, 2020), 211-23 (p. 214).

[137] Though Jean Rhys' short story 'Outside the Machine' was not published until 1968, it was written, or at least Rhys had begun writing it, in the 1930s. Rhys wrote to her friend Peggy Kirklady in October 1945 announcing that she had finished a book of 'bitter' short stories (Jean Rhys, *Letters 1931-1966*, ed. by Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly (London: Andre Deutsch, 1984), p. 40). While this is not necessarily a strictly interwar text, there are distinct parallels between the characters and themes of the short story and the women in Rhys' interwar novels, and the setting and subject matter may be in part inspired by Rhys' time in a nursing home in London in 1936. Notably, in a letter from her 1936 stay, she describes the nursing home as 'grim, clean, hard, cheerless, smug, smirking' (Rhys, *Letters*, p. 30). Using similar imagery in her short story, Rhys describes the 'clean and aggressively respectable' patients as having 'hard, inquisitive eyes' (Jean Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', in *Tigers are Better-Looking* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 78-100 (p. 80, 95)). In her letters, Rhys also describes the nurse coming 'with tea and one piece of bread and butter' which is directly replicated in the opening of the short story, where patients have 'tea and bread-and-butter' when they wake up (Rhys, *Letters*, p. 31; Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 78). Rhys was also hospitalised in a clinic near Versailles at the end of 1937 after a 'breakdown' during the trip to Paris where she conceived her novel *Good Morning, Midnight*, though little information survives surrounding this stay (Lilian Pizzachini, *The Blue Hour* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 219).

[138] Jameson, 'Bored Wives', p. 8; Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 90.

Rhys constructs a bleak vignette of a mechanised hospital somewhere 'near Versailles' though 'run on strictly English lines'.[139] The hospital 'has quite a reputation' for high-quality 'English nursing', and boasts an 'English matron, a resident English doctor' and several English nurses; it is an 'aggressively respectable' institution filled with 'clean', 'sanctimonious' women.[140] Modern hospitals are spaces for 'improvement', according to Alice Street, who examines the way these institutional spaces act as heterotopic sites of 'social change and improvement', and suggests that, as a 'big clinic' regulating unruly, ill or broken female bodies, the hospital is an integral part of the machine of patriarchal society.[141] We see this in the way Rhys constructs the hospital setting, which runs like clockwork. Charging about 'very brisk and busy and silent' like cogs in a machine, the nurses complete their tasks in utter uniformity.[142] Rhys writes:

> They did everything in an impersonal way. They were like parts of a machine, she thought, that was working smoothly. The women in the beds bobbed up and down and in and out. They too were parts of a machine. They had a strength, a certainty, because all their lives they had belonged to the machine and worked smoothly, in and out, just as they were told. Even if the machine got out of control, even if it went mad, they would still work in and out, just as they were told, whirling smoothly, faster and faster, to destruction.[143]

They are identical and indistinguishable, controlled by a motherboard - the matron - and programmed by the mostly absent male doctors. This mechanised imagery is enhanced by the matron's steely demeanour as she struts about the ward 'as though she were royalty opening a public building'.[144] But more than just mechanising the nurses and their labour, Rhys' polysyndeton extends this mechanical metaphor to the

[139] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 78.
[140] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 80, 90.
[141] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 78; Alice Street, 'Affective Infrastructure: Hospital Landscapes of Hope and Failure', *Space and Culture,* 15, 1 (2012), 44-56 (p. 44).
[142] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 82.
[143] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 82.
[144] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 78.

patients as well, who bob ‘up and down and in and out’ ‘smoothly’ in time with the machine.[145] Their existence is arranged, as Imogen Free suggests, ‘in a pattern of stasis and sterilization: the women are awoken but remain still, they wait, they wash, they are still again’.[146] Repeating the phrase ‘in and out, just as they were told’, Rhys emphasises the women’s lack of autonomy, implicating them in a machine - our patriarchal, capitalist culture - that posits them the vacuous automatons of Storm Jameson’s article.[147] The women are efficient members of society improving in this space of institutional authority and, even if the machine were to lose control, even if it were to go as ‘mad’ as Mrs Murphy, these ‘respectable’ women will remain bobbing ‘in and out, just as they were told’, fulfilling their roles ‘smoothly, faster and faster, to destruction’.

Illustrating the potential adversity facing women outside of marriage and the nuclear family, Rhys’ narrative focuses on an unmarried and impoverished character called Inez Best, who, as the story progresses, becomes a ventriloquist and narrative foil for Mrs Murphy’s frustrations. Both women are, as the title suggests, ‘outside the machine’, rejecting the prescribed roles embedded in and enforced by the machine of patriarchal society.[148] Inez feels ‘dubious, out of place’ amongst the ‘fat, fair’ middle-class married women who ‘fitted so well with their surroundings’.[149] Inez is alienated from the homogenous group of housewives - the ‘glutinous mass of femininity’ - by her marital status, her economic precarity, her looks (rather than being ‘fat’ and ‘fair’ like the other women, she is described as looking ‘very much like Raquel Meller’, a dark-haired Spanish cuplé singer and actress), and, as Free suggests, because ‘neither her

[145] Rhys, ‘Outside the Machine’, p. 82.
[146] Free, p. 213.
[147] Rhys, ‘Outside the Machine’, p. 80.
[148] Rhys, ‘Outside the Machine’, p. 82.
[149] Rhys, ‘Outside the Machine’, p. 80.

skin, nor her voice, nor her external objects are easily legible, their origins are concealed or ambiguous'.[150] Like Sasha Jansen, Inez does not belong to one of 'the seven divisions, sixty-nine subdivisions, and thousand-and-three subsubdivisions' of their middle-class 'stable, decent world' and, instead, is associated with waste, otherness and abjection:

> Because she was outside the machine they might come along at any time with a pair of huge iron tongs and pick her up and put her on the rubbish heap, and there she would lie and rot.[151]

Inez is broken, used-up and unable to fit the correct mold of femininity like the 'smoothly' running women of the machine.[152]

The story's most startling encounter occurs in the hospital bathroom where Inez is attempting to make herself presentable again after her operation. Much like the institutional bathroom spaces of my next chapter, this is a 'whitewashed' room at the end of 'a long brown passage smelling of turpentine', filled with 'rows of basins [...] three water closets and two bathrooms at the far end'.[153] Inez is standing at a washbasin with her 'soap, a toothbrush, toothpaste and peroxide' when Mrs Murphy 'stealthily' opens the door.[154] Described as a 'mysterious girl with long plaits and a sullen face who sometimes helped the nurse to make the beds', Mrs Murphy is seen as an outsider too, alienated from the other housewives because of her rejection (or at least their perceived rejection) of the ordinary housewife role.[155] She is separated from the other women both by her designation as a 'girl' not a woman and by her 'mysterious' illness which, unlike the other women's physical conditions, remains invisible to the eye. Hesitating in the doorway 'for a moment', Inez observes that 'she

[150] Jameson, 'Bored Wives', p. 8; Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 79; Free, p. 215.
[151] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 81, 82.
[152] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 82.
[153] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 92.
[154] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 92.
[155] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 90.

does look fed up'.[156] Soon, however, Mrs Murphy makes her way to a basin and opens her sponge bag, at which point Inez turns away and begins to clean her teeth. Rhys writes:

> The door opened again and a nurse came in and glanced round the washroom. It was curious to see the expression on her plump, pink face change in a few moments from indifference to inquisitiveness, to astonishment, to shocked anger.
>
> Then she ran across the room, shouting, "Stop that. Come along, Mrs Murphy. Give it up."
>
> Inez watched them struggling. Something metallic fell to the floor. Mrs Murphy was twisting like a snake.[157]

Watching the changing expressions on the nurse's face, Inez realises that Mrs Murphy is attempting to commit suicide and, as the scene progresses, recognises the despair and anguish of her sobs: '"She's speaking to me," Inez thought'.[158]

As news of Mrs Murphy's attempted suicide spreads across the ward, the women 'talked excitedly', lambasting her - 'a married woman with two sweet little kiddies' - for wanting a form of escape.[159] Their responses are highly gendered when they deny her sympathy or understanding because as a woman she should know better: 'if it had been a man, now, you might have been a bit sorry'.[160] The women crow:

> She's one of these idiotic neurasthenics, neurotics, or whatever you call them. She says she's frightened of life, I ask you. That's why she's here. Under observation. [...] I'm so awfully sorry for her husband [...] And her children. So sorry. The poor kiddies, the poor sweet little kiddies… Oughtn't a woman like that be hung?.[161]

Rhys' use of 'observation' is ironic, here, as Mrs Murphy is not just 'under observation' by the doctors and nurses. In the machine-like ward, she is also observed and judged

[156] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 92.
[157] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 92-93.
[158] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 93.
[159] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 93.
[160] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 93.
[161] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 94.

by the other women amongst whom she seems so 'out of place'.[162] Their words, like 'stone and iron' and 'so much alike that they might have belonged to the same person', condemn both Mrs Murphy and Inez, and, like identical mass-produced 'vacuous' automatons, the other women merely repeat the ideals of a patriarchal society that Inez and Mrs Murphy feel suppresses them.[163] Clinging to the 'coded behaviour that will keep the cogs turning', the 'vehemence and violence with which the women discuss this is testament to the threat Mrs Murphy poses to their system'; her rejection of her husband, children and role in her family home threatens to reveal the insecurities that lie underneath their perfected housewife facade.[164]

Supporting her amongst the clamour of identical voices, Inez speaks up when Mrs Murphy is reduced to sobs. Hearing 'the words coming round and full and satisfying out of her mouth', she tells them 'exactly what she thought about them, exactly what they were, exactly what she hoped would happen to them'.[165] Acting as a ventriloquist for Mrs Murphy, who quietly resumes her role as a cog in the institutional machine the next morning by once again helping the nurses make the beds, Inez's anger at Mrs Murphy's treatment bubbles over: 'you pair of bitches. Behaving like that to a sad woman! What do you know about her?'.[166] Inez's words, 'round and full' like bullets, verbalise all that remains unsaid by Mrs Murphy, who only wants to 'get out' of the machine: the patriarchal society (and its microcosmic 'unutterably horrible' institutional setting) that entraps her in a role that leads her to mental breakdown.[167] Here, the hospital ward's gendered dynamics exposes the oppressive structures imposed on women in society. In the hospital ward, Mrs Murphy is forced to exist within

[162] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 80.
[163] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 94-95; Richardson, 'Where is Miss Jameson's Suburbia?', p. 8.
[164] Free, p. 220.
[165] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 96.
[166] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 95-96.
[167] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 95.

certain boundaries and expectations that echo the mechanics of wider society, and in helping the nurses to make the beds everyday (performing her part in the machine even if it leads to her 'destruction'), Rhys demonstrates the inescapability of these rules, structures and mechanics for women like Mrs Murphy, who have no real option but to exist within the stifling parameters of the machine.[168]

The hospital is a useful setting to think through women's place in society, much like Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Radclyffe Hall and Enid Bagnold's domestic spaces, and Jean Rhys uses these mechanical and spatial metaphors to explore how women craft (or fail to craft) authentic identities not defined by their position in society. In my next chapter, I continue to investigate institutional settings through close readings of Antonia White and Emily Holmes Coleman's asylum spaces, which are crucial fictional sites for working through ideas of identity, sanity and sexuality. For them, unlike for Jean Rhys, the institutional setting, particularly its bathroom spaces, provides their protagonists with the opportunity for moments of self-expression, intimacy and belonging. For the protagonists of White and Coleman's novels, as for Mrs Murphy, Mrs Ogden and all of the Mrs Everymans in this chapter, their madness or neurosis or anxiety is rooted in a conflict inherent to women's everyday lives at this time: the conflict between self-defined freedom, be that social, sexual, or economic, and the roles imposed upon them by their patriarchal society, more often than not tying them to the family and the home. The failure of women like Mrs Ogden and Mrs Murphy to create valid, fulfilling identities reveals the prevalence of this conflict, which is interrogated in different ways in each of the chapters of this thesis, but is drawn into narratives surrounding the ordinary housewife, here, through the gendered domestic dynamics of Radclyffe Hall, Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Jean Rhys' writing.

[168] Rhys, 'Outside the Machine', p. 82.

Reading these interwar narratives through a material lens has facilitated a closer look at literary representations of the new bathroom spaces being built into family homes at this time. These domestic bathroom spaces are central to the ordinary housewife's everyday life as, for the first time, many women were able to access fully-plumbed hot water, the privacy of a locked door, and the positive effect these technologies and labour-saving devices had on their time, energy and daily routines, and this led to new ways of understanding and conceiving of the self. Indeed, as Judy Giles argues, it is important to remember that a home with a bathroom 'was a visible reminder of the social distance many women had travelled from the bug-ridden, over-crowded homes of their childhood' and signified, along with a respectable husband and children, a 'sense of self-respect, security and belonging' for many women.[169] The effects of these new bathroom spaces on women's everyday lives are replicated in the literature that this chapter has explored, as Enid Bagnold, Radclyffe Hall and Dorothy Canfield Fisher use bathroom spaces as key thinking spaces for women navigating the friction between their often confining gendered domestic role in the middle-class suburban home and their burgeoning independence. And, as a thinking space, this semi-private setting facilitates the creation of three-dimensional female characters with complex psychologies and multifarious subjectivities that confront Storm Jameson and George Orwell's ideas of the limited and homogenous housewife identity.

The middle-class family bathroom, as a new everyday space in the early years of the twentieth century, offered many women new opportunities for expression, exploration and privacy within the domestic sphere, which comes to fruition in Enid Bagnold and Dorothy Canfield Fisher's liberating narratives. Yet, as both writers acknowledge, their female protagonist's freedom, fulfilment and autonomy is an

[169] Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 64.

anomaly, caveated by the Squire's absent husband and Evangeline's paralysed husband secretly hiding his own good health, as well as the security of money, which grants them the permission to alter or outgrow their housewife identity. Importantly, this caveat reflects the inability of this identity - the ordinary housewife embedded in the suburban family home - to fully challenge the innately 'gendered and classed nature of everyday life' for the middle-class woman at this time.[170] When read alongside Joan Ogden and Mrs Murphy's narratives, these texts and textual spaces speak more widely to the impossibility of women's social, sexual and economic independence, and the fact that, more often than not, their attempts to escape the confinements of the family home are thwarted by the social mores and imposed roles that define their middle-class female identity.

[170] Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 64.

The Therapeutic Bathroom

> In spite of the knowledge of my sanity and the assurance that I would be released in a few days, my heart gave a sharp twinge. Pronounced insane by four expert doctors and shut up behind the unmerciful bolts and bars of a mad-house! Not to be confined alone, but to be a companion, day and night, of senseless, chattering lunatics; to sleep with them, to eat with them, to be considered one of them, was an uncomfortable position.[1]

In 1887, investigative journalist Nellie Bly feigned insanity and was committed to Blackwell's Island Asylum in New York to work on an undercover exposé of institutional brutality and neglect. Initially published as a series of articles in the *New York World*, her work was later collected into the popular full-length book *Ten Days in a Mad-House* (1887). After reading the shocking scenes of abuse at the hands of medical staff, the general public were so outraged that a Grand Jury investigation was launched, prompting the asylum to make reforms and the City of New York to appropriate '$1,000,000 more per annum than ever before for the care of the insane'.[2]

Having been 'pronounced insane by four expert doctors', we follow Bly on the drive 'through the beautiful lawns up to the asylum'.[3] Sitting in the wagon surrounded by 'so-called crazy women', Bly is struck by two things: the 'look of distress on the faces' of the other women who, unlike herself, are 'being driven to a prison, through no fault of their own, in all probability for life', and a 'stench' 'so horrible that [she] was compelled to hold [her] breath'.[4] The stench that emanates from the asylum is a sign of what is to come. It will prove to be a cold, dirty, violent place in which vulnerable women are neglected and abused. This begins almost immediately after her arrival

[1] Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in A Mad-House: Nellie Bly's Experience on Blackwell's Island* (New York: Norman L. Munro, 1887), p. 50.
[2] Bly, p. 4.
[3] Bly, p. 50, 49.
[4] Bly, p. 50, 49.

when the women are taken to a ‘cold, wet’ communal bathroom to wash off the grime of their journey:

> I was ordered to undress. Did I protest? Well, I never grew so earnest in my life as when I tried to beg off. They said if I did not they would use force and that it would not be very gentle.[5]

Bly’s protests go unheeded as the nurses pull off her clothes in front of a watching ‘group of patients gathered at the door’, while, clinging ‘vehemently’ onto the last vestiges of modesty, she begs the nurses to keep her underwear.[6] Forced into the bathtub, Bly describes a traumatic scene:

> I noticed one of the craziest women in the ward standing by the filled bathtub with a large, discolored rag in her hands. She was chattering away to herself and chuckling in a manner which seemed to me fiendish. I knew now what was to be done with me. I shivered. [...] I can find no other word that will express it, but scrubbing. From the span tin she took some soft soap and rubbed it all over me, even all over my face and my pretty hair. I was at last past seeing or speaking, although I had begged that my hair be left untouched. Rub, rub, rub, went the old woman, chattering to herself.[7]

The nurses are strikingly absent here, their labour replaced by that of a ‘fiendish’ patient who takes on the job of violently ‘scrubbing’ Bly’s dirty body, though presumably under their watchful gaze. Bly loses control of her body when even her ‘pretty hair’, the last vestment of her sanity, is drenched by the ‘chattering’ old woman:

> Suddenly I got, one after the other, three buckets of water over my head - ice-cold water, too - into my eyes, my ears, my nose and my mouth. I think I experienced some of the sensations of a drowning person as they dragged me, gasping, shivering and quaking, from the tub. For once I did look insane.[8]

Shocking her into submission, the ice-cold water reduces her to a ‘gasping, shivering and quaking’ body, no longer able to ‘beg off’ or ‘protest’ her rough treatment. Instilling in the women a fear of ‘drowning’, the bathtub asserts the omnipotence of the asylum’s medical authorities, who use it as a means to control their unruly or outspoken patients;

[5] Bly, p. 59.
[6] Bly, p. 59-60.
[7] Bly, p. 59-60.
[8] Bly, p. 60.

after such a violent introduction to the asylum, these 'insane' women are rendered docile and compliant.

Having revealed the bathtub to be a mechanism of control in the asylum, Bly's narrative goes further, situating it as a tool of punishment, too. We see this most explicitly when Bly recounts the story of fellow patient Mrs Cotter, 'a pretty, delicate woman' who had spent time on one of the 'violent wards', ironically called the Retreat, where she had been sent as punishment for stepping out of line:

> The remembrance of that is enough to make me mad. For crying the nurses beat me with a broom-handle and jumped on me, injuring me internally, so that I shall never get over it. They tied my hands and feet, and, throwing a sheet over my head, twisted it tightly around my throat, so I could not scream, and thus put me in a bathtub filled with cold water. They held me under until I gave up every hope and became senseless.[9]

In this deeply disturbing scene, the nurses use the bathtub as a way to punish Mrs Cotter's disobedience and, with the help of a tightly twisted sheet wrapped around her throat and a rush of cold water to her lungs, a way to control and silence her. Fearing she would be drowned, Mrs Cotter quickly acquiesces, though the nurses only release their hold when she is rendered 'senseless'.

These methods and mechanisms of control and punishment are at the centre of this chapter, which examines the work of three writers who situate their narratives in the therapeutic bathroom spaces of asylums and spas - supposedly restorative spaces where those who reject or are rejected by both the public sphere of the city and the domestic sphere of the family home, much like Jean Rhys' Mrs Murphy who was hospitalised for trying to escape her family in my previous chapter, can be contained temporarily until deemed fit, healthy or sane enough to reintegrate into society. In their novels and short stories, Emily Holmes Coleman, Katherine Mansfield

[9] Bly, p. 95, 86-87.

and Antonia White subvert our expectations of therapeutic bathroom spaces, capturing the ambivalence - pleasure and punishment - of hydropathic treatments. For their protagonists, these therapeutic bathroom spaces become important, if fragile, sites of intimacy and female community that allow them to subtly unsettle the patriarchal authority of the institution. Through a series of close readings of Emily Holmes Coleman's *The Shutter of Snow* (1930), Katherine Mansfield's 'Epilogue III: Bains Turcs' (1913) and Antonia White's *Beyond the Glass* (1954), I probe the alternative communities and alternative relationships facilitated by the female-only bathroom spaces of the asylum and spa, and consider how these writers posit female intimacy and same-sex relationships as a valid and fulfilling alternative to the heteronormative and patriarchal roles available to women in the early twentieth century.

A Palace for Lunatics

The Lunacy Act of 1845 marked a significant break in the way Victorians viewed and treated their mad.[10] With only a handful of asylums existing in Britain prior to the Lunacy Act, the fate of the insane had depended on the wealth and goodwill of their families. Paupers were often held in prisons, workhouses or public hospitals without receiving proper treatment, while the upper-classes were cared for or hidden away at home. Following decades of pioneering work by asylum reformers such as William Tuke, William Ellis and Robert Gardiner Hill, by the mid-nineteenth century all counties in England and Wales were required to provide asylums, which soon became the

[10] In this chapter, I use terminology in line with language used in the early twentieth century. These terms reflect the attitudes and language of the period and some would now be considered derogatory or offensive. 'Madness' was the broadest term used at this time, covering what we understand as mental illness today. In the nineteenth century, 'insanity', originally referring to an unhealthy body or mind, became synonymous with 'madness', however, medical professionals stopped using the term 'insanity' as a clinical term in the early twentieth century (Thomas J. Dalby, 'Terms of Madness: Historical Linguistics', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 34, 6 (1993), 392-95 (p. 393)). In the nineteenth century, the term 'lunacy' became synonymous with 'insanity', and the terms 'paranoia' and 'psychosis' were also prevalent (Dalby, p. 393-94).

primary mode of care. With new intuitional spaces dedicated to the care of the insane, insanity transitioned from an unknown condition associated with the 'morally disreputable' to an entity that could be 'authoritatively diagnosed, certified and dealt with only by a group of legally recognised experts'.[11] This shift in attitude, however, was steeped in Victorian ideals of morality that were already celebrated in the domestic sphere.

Morality and medicine collided in a new medical speciality - psychiatry - devoted to diagnosing, preventing and treating madness in its many forms. In his history of psychiatry, Edward Shorter argues that, on both sides of the Atlantic, the 'history of psychiatry began as the history of the custodial asylum'.[12] Indeed, it was 'the discovery that these institutions could have a therapeutic function that led to the birth of psychiatry as a discipline'.[13] In her influential study on women and madness, Elaine Showalter identifies the 'triple cornerstones of Victorian psychiatric theory and practice' during this period as 'moral insanity, moral management and moral architecture'.[14] She writes that:

> "Moral insanity" redefined madness, not as a loss of reason, but as deviance from socially accepted behavior. "Moral management" substituted close supervision and paternal concern for physical restraint and harsh treatment, in an effort to reeducate the insane in habits of industry, self-control, moderation and perseverance. "Moral architecture" constructed asylums planned as therapeutic environments in which lunatics could be controlled without the use of force, and in which they could be exposed to benevolent influences.[15]

With the sudden proliferation of asylums and a shift in behaviour and attitude towards the insane, the mid-nineteenth century marked a new focus on moral management in

[11] Andrew Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder: Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 215, 216.
[12] Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1997), p. 7-8.
[13] Shorter, p. 7-8.
[14] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady* (London: Virago, 1988), p. 29.
[15] Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 29.

both Britain and America.[16] For the first time, as prominent American psychiatrist Luther Bell suggests, the very design of the asylum became an 'instrument of treatment' in itself, including its spatial arrangement, which was designed to 'emphasize as little as possible the idea of imprisonment or confinement'.[17] This could be realised in 'small and apparently insignificant details' like replacing the iron bars on the windows, which blocked sunlight and signalled imprisonment, with subtle wooden frames that offered the same level of security.[18] Asylums also began to be designed with multiple rooms for patients, such as a Day Room, to mimic domestic life, as well as extensive grounds that amplified 'cheerfulness by being aesthetically pleasing'.[19]

This move towards moral management also saw the earlier physical restraints and violent force replaced with systems of 'classification, surveillance and the creation of a therapeutic environment'.[20] Where 'noisy women' had previously been 'silenced with the brank, or "scold's bridle"', reformed asylums used new techniques and practices, such as therapeutic bathing, that treated 'the patient like a rational person'.[21] Asylum reformer William Tuke suggested that the abolition of mechanical restraints and brutality could 'cultivate a sense of self-esteem that would lead to self-control'.[22] This was reinforced in asylum design, which imitated society's divisions by segregating patients according to their disorder, class and gender. These reforms caused award-winning British physician Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson to declare that Britain was 'first among all the nations as physicians of mental disease'.[23] No longer a place where

[16] Scull, p. 214.
[17] Scull, p. 225.
[18] Scull. p. 228.
[19] Scull. p. 228.
[20] Elaine Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', *Victorian Studies*, 23, 2 (Winter 1980), 157-81 (p. 158). For more see: Michael Donnelly, *Managing the Mind: A Study of Medieval Psychology in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York: Tavistock, 1983).
[21] Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 31.
[22] Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 31.
[23] Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 33.

patients raved in chains, egged-on by tourists drawn to the spectacle of madness, the asylum became a reflection, albeit a rather unnerving one, of a more humane society.[24]

Unsurprisingly, the period of unprecedented asylum construction and reform that followed the Lunacy Act was paralleled by an increase in the number of patients residing within their walls. In the 1850s, women made up the majority of the asylum population.[25] By 1871, there were approximately twenty percent more women housed in asylums than their male counterparts.[26] Under moral management, doctors hoped to tame madness in institutions that were designed 'not only to house feminine irrationality but also to cure it through paternalistic therapeutic and administrative techniques'.[27] In substituting the 'moral force of paternal authority' from the home with that of the male doctor, the nineteenth-century asylum attempted to remoralise its female patients by returning them to the 'ladylike values of silence, decorum, taste, service, piety, and gratitude'.[28] And, where it had once been deemed too costly or ignominious to commit a female family member to an institution before, the reformed asylum was now a marginally more acceptable place for a woman, or, at least, a madwoman.

---

[24] Infamously, asylums allowed people unrelated to patients to visit the asylum as a way of raising funds. This practice, which continued into the 1800s, was established as early as 1598 (Jonathan Andrews, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker and Keir Waddington, *The History of Bethlem* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 132). One early periodical notes that during Easter Week 'one hundred people at least' visited Bethlem Royal Hospital (Jonathan Andrews, et al., p. 178). Showalter notes that Charles Dickens attended the patients' dance at St Luke's Hospital for the Insane on Boxing Day 1851 (Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', p. 157). For more on this see: Jonathan Andrews, 'Bedlam Revisited: A History of Bethlem Hospital' (unpublished thesis, Queen Mary University of London, 1991); Christine Stevenson, 'Robert Hooke's Bethlem', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 55, 3 (1996), 254-75.

[25] Showalter, *The Female Malady,* p. 17.

[26] Joseph Mortimer Granville, *The Care and Cure of the Insane* (London: Hardwicke and Bogne, 1977), p. 230. For more on the history of women and madness see: Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (London: Allen Lane, 1974); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Women Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).

[27] Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 17.

[28] Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', p. 169; Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 79.

The Therapeutic Bathroom

The therapeutic bathroom is a key space in the reformed asylum for patient control, punishment and, ultimately, cure. Symbolically aligned with wider Victorian ideals of cleanliness and purity, key factors in moral management, which were often expressed on and through the female body by nurses and doctors acting in the interests of society, the bathroom became a performative space within the asylum where the physically and mentally unruly could be washed clean. The object of the bathtub itself was central to attempts to remoralise the insane; as we saw in Bly's exposé, a journey to sanity began with the patient's first bath on admission, like a symbolic rite of passage into the asylum and out of madness.

While asylums were being reformed, hydropathy as a formal therapeutic system was also growing in popularity.[29] Invented in its modern form in the 1820s by Austrian farmer Vincent Priessnitz and later popularised further by Sebastian Kneipp, hydropathy professes to cure disease, illness and poor health through the external and internal application of water, such as hot or cold baths, swimming, steam inhalation, drinking and spraying water. From the 1830s onwards bathing was seen to have a regenerative or transformative potential, falling under the 'guise' of the 'back-to-nature' movements that were gaining momentum across the globe.[30] Kirsty Martin notes that natural therapies such as hydrotherapy, heliotherapy, climatotherapy, thalassotherapy and balneotherapy were embedded in a narrative of 'transformation' which 'was

[29] The terms 'hydropathy' and 'hydrotherapy' are interchangeable. I primarily use the term 'hydropathy' as this was the term associated with Vincenz Preissnitz's water treatments. The term 'hydrotherapy' came after 'hydropathy' and is associated with the medical side of water treatments. Both have also often been used interchangeably along with the term 'water cure', which comes from the German *Wasserkur* (first used as early as 1690). Sebastian Kneipp, who repopularised hydropathy after Preissnitz's death, wrote a book entitled *My Water-Cure* (1886).

[30] Siegfried Giedion, 'The Mechanization of the Bath', in *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (London: Norton and Company, 1969), pp. 628-713 (p. 628).

encouraged by the medical literature of the time'.[31] In these therapies, Tania Woloshyn argues, natural agents like sunlight and water were seen 'as a natural regenerative agent with unforeseen potential within modern, progressive medicine'.[32] As water treatments spread across the globe, medical professionals began to see its therapeutic potential for insanity.[33] Soon, hydropathic techniques became 'expressly associated with psychiatric illness' and began to be used to treat people with mental illnesses.[34] Aligning with ideals of moral management, hydropathy became a (supposedly) more gentle way to regenerate or transform madwomen, promising a return to an ideal of purity and femininity that their madness had stripped away.

Hydropathy remained popular in asylums throughout the first half of the twentieth century.[35] A psychiatric nursing textbook from the 1930s details the use of hydropathic treatments as sedatives, including 'the continuous bath, the saline bath, the wet sheet pack, and the trunk compress'.[36] The 1959 edition of the textbook suggests that these treatments were still being used to 'reduce agitation, excited and overactive behaviour' and 'relieve insomnia' some thirty years later.[37] In a 1930 textbook *Nervous and Mental Diseases for Nurses*, the specifics of continuous bath treatments are described:

> The tubs were constructed so that there was a continuous inflow and outflow of water at a constant temperature. The patient was supported in a hammock-like

[31] Kirsty Martin, 'Modernism and the Medicalization of Sunlight', *Modernism/modernity*, 23, 2 (April 2016), 423-41 (p. 432).
[32] Tania Woloshyn, 'Le Pays du Soleil: The Art of Heliotherapy on the Cote d'Azur', *Social History of Medicine*, 26, 1 (2012), 74-93 (p. 80). For more on contemporary attitudes to the regenerative potential of natural therapies see: *Art, Sex and Eugenics: Corpus Delecti*, ed. by Fae Brauer and Anthea Callen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain, 1880-1939*, ed. by Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[33] Giedion, p. 660-61, 628.
[34] Shorter, p. 120.
[35] For more on this see: Joel Braslow, *Mental Ills and Bodily Cures: Psychiatric Treatment in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[36] Katharine McLean Steele, *Psychiatric Nursing*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1937), p. 104.
[37] Marguerite Lucy Manfreda and Katharine McLean Steele, *Psychiatric Nursing*, 6th edn (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1959), p. 518.

> arrangement with a support for the head. The temperature of the water was adjusted to between 95 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit.[38]

Though primarily seen as a form of therapy, hydropathic treatments like the continuous bath were also used as an instrument of control or restraint, too. Indeed, the nursing textbooks note that continuous baths were 'the most efficient form of restraint for the excited and extremely active manic and delirious patients', and one of the 'necessary evils of maintaining order' in the asylum.[39] Highlighting the dual use of hydropathy as a therapeutic 'treatment or as a punishment, or both at different times', then, Rebecca Harmon writes:

> If the recipient was willing, water therapies were described as reassuring, relaxing, and comforting. If the patient was unwilling, the same treatment could be used as a method to control undesirable behavior on the ward.[40]

Reading this alongside Nellie Bly's experience, it is clear that the bathtub was not just a therapeutic tool but actually replaced the shackles and chains of earlier asylums as a tacit instrument of control and punishment under moral management. Writing in his medical report in 1871, Dr George Turner Jones, Medical Superintendent of the North Wales Counties Lunatic Asylum, noted that nurses should use 'gentle force' to 'induce' patients 'to enter the bath'.[41] Jones' term 'gentle force' is strikingly similar to language used in Bly's account to describe the nurse's threats to 'use force and that it would not be very gentle'.[42] Even at William Tuke's York Retreat, heralded as a symbol of 'historical achievement' in asylum reform and founded on ideals of benevolence and personalised attention, the treatment books of the 1850s show that prolonged showers

[38] Irving Jesse Sands, *Nervous and Mental Diseases for Nurses* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1930), p. 227. For more on this see: Madelene Elliott Ingram, *Principles of Psychiatric Nursing* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1940), p. 189.
[39] Sands, p. 231; Braslow, p. 104.
[40] Rebecca Bouterie Harmon, 'Hydrotherapy in State Mental Hospitals in the Mid-Twentieth Century', *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 30, 8 (2009), 491-94 (p. 493).
[41] North Wales Counties Lunatic Asylum, *Annual Report 1871* (Denbeigh: The Asylum, 1872), p. 13.
[42] Bly, p. 59.

were often used as a way of quieting unruly patients.[43] As patient numbers ballooned in the late nineteenth century this use of 'gentle force' became common practice, and remained, as these later nursing textbooks have shown, long into the twentieth-century asylums that housed Emily Holmes Coleman and Antonia White.

The Beast

Immersed in a circle of artists and writers, Emily Holmes Coleman and Antonia White's friendship blossomed at Peggy Guggenheim's Devonshire country house Hayford Hall, more appropriately known as Hangover Hall, after their first meeting in the thirties.[44] Soon to become lifelong friends, their lives share faint echoes of each other: both were born in 1889, though on different sides of the Atlantic, and both suffered mental breakdowns prior to meeting.[45] Antonia White was incarcerated for ten months in the infamous Bethlem Royal Hospital in 1922 after a manic episode during an intense 'abnormal' love affair in which she imagined she could telepathically communicate with her partner, Robert Legg.[46] White later identified the intensity of this love affair as 'a function of her madness'.[47] Her biographer Jane Dunn writes:

---

[43] Anne Digby, 'Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives on the Asylum', in *Problems and Methods in the History of Medicine*, ed. by Roy Porter and Andrew Weird (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 153-74 (p. 154); Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality and Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 134-5; Samuel Tuke, *Description of the Retreat* (Philadelphia: Isaac Peirce, 1813), pp. 103-10.

[44] For more on their meeting see: Jane Dunn, *Antonia White* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998), p. 155. For more on Hayford Hall see: Elizabeth Podnieks and Sandra Chait, eds., *Hayford Hall: Hangovers, Erotics, and Modernist Aesthetics* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005).

[45] In 1933, after reading the biography that preceded White's short story 'The House of Clouds' in *Life and Letters*, Coleman wrote in her diary that she 'didn't know what to make of it, because it's so like mine. Like me with the life left out' (Emily Holmes Coleman, *Rough Draft: The Modernist Diaries of Emily Holmes Coleman, 1929-1937*, ed. by Elizabeth Podnieks (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2012), p. 166). For more on White and Coleman's friendship see: Mary Lynn Broe, 'My Art Belongs to Daddy: Incest as Exile, The Textual Economics of Hayford Hall', in *Women's Writing in Exile*, ed. by Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 41-86; Dunn, p. 155; Kylie Valentine, 'Mad and Modern: A Reading of Emily Holmes Coleman and Antonia White', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 22, 1 (Spring 2003), 121-47 (p. 123).

[46] Dunn, p. 88, 74. The word 'bedlam', meaning uproar and confusion, is derived from Bethlem Royal Hospital's nickname.

[47] Dunn, p. 88.

> She was twenty-three years old and she was raving. She seemed to be oblivious both to herself and of the outside world; Antonia was sealed in her own pandemonium.[48]

Noting her 'incoherence', 'hyperactivity' and suicidal tendencies, the doctors certified her insane.[49] Continuous bath treatments and 'other forms of hydro-therapy' can be found on White's Prescription Sheet, now held in the Bethlem Museum of the Mind Archive, which were prescribed to sedate White's mania and insomnia, and which are vividly illustrated in her fiction.[50] Talking to a journalist about her experience many years later, White says that, with all of the 'straight jackets' and 'being plunged in and out of cold baths', 'it was the real thing'.[51]

Emily Holmes Coleman was only a couple of years older than White when she was admitted to Rochester State Mental Hospital in 1924, where, following the birth of her only child and consequent diagnosis of puerperal fever, she spent two months suffering from toxic exhaustive psychosis.[52] During her time in the asylum, Coleman believed that she was God, a fact that is reflected in her fictional retelling. This 'sense of her own divinity never really left her', according to Dunn, who described her as an

> irresistible force with an irrepressible belief in her own genius. In later life she acknowledged that she was a manic depressive, who lived most of her life at full tilt with the accelerator slammed flat to the floor.[53]

White saw Coleman as 'reckless and headlong in her behaviour', perhaps identifying a certain self-confidence about her writing that White lacked.[54] White put this down to Coleman's 'private income from her father', which, she believed, meant that Coleman would 'never understand the real pressures of having to earn a living at a precarious

[48] Dunn, p. 79.
[49] Dunn, p. 79.
[50] Dunn, p. 81.
[51] Dunn, p. 86.
[52] Joshua R. Galat, 'Modernism, Mental Hygiene, and the Embodiment of Mental Disability', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 42, 2 (Winter 2019), 113-31 (p. 121).
[53] Dunn, p. 155-56.
[54] Dunn, p. 195.

profession'.[55] Over the years, as their personal and professional relationship deepened, the two women grew to love, respect and appreciate each other as women and as writers.[56]

Both women wrote fictionalised accounts of their time in mental institutions.[57] White wrote a short story called 'The House of Clouds' (1928), which she later reworked into a full length novel *Beyond the Glass*. According to White's biographer, upon the novel's publication it was Coleman's 'verdict' that was 'the most eagerly awaited' and, luckily, 'she had loved it'.[58] At around the same time as White was writing her short story, though neither woman knew of the other at this point, Coleman was writing *The Shutter of Snow* which, after several years of rejections, was published in 1930. Coleman was unfazed, however, writing to her father in 1929 about the importance of her novel:

> It is the first time anyone has written an account of life in an insane hospital in any other way than to make propaganda - no one has ever treated a subject of this kind in an imaginative, poetic way. Obviously such a subject lends itself gorgeously to the opportunities of modern writing.[59]

Indeed, in her introduction to the Virago edition, Carmen Callil is astounded that contemporary reviews 'failed to see the qualities which lift this novel on to such a special plane', particularly

> the conflict experienced by so many women in relation to the process of birth: the powerlessness of the female body in this condition, the mixture of love and hatred felt for husband and child by a woman defenceless in the face of its mysteries and agonies.[60]

---

[55] Dunn, p. 225.
[56] Dunn, p. 187. See also: Coleman, *Rough Draft*, p. 280.
[57] For more on the autobiographical elements of White's novel see: Dunn, p. 76-80; Lyndall Passerini Hopkinson, *Nothing to Forgive: A Daughter's Story of Antonia White* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988), p. 47-50. For more on the autobiographical elements of Coleman's novel see: Minna Besser Gedes, 'Emily Holmes Coleman', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939,* ed. by Karen Lane Rood (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1980), IV, p. 71-77.
[58] Dunn, p. 346.
[59] Elizabeth Podnieks, 'Introduction', in *Rough Draft: The Modernist Diaries of Emily Holmes Coleman, 1929-1937* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2012), pp. xi-xlvi (p. xxx).
[60] Carmen Callil and Mary Siepmann, 'Introduction', in *The Shutter of Snow* (London: Virago, 1981), no page number given.

Both novels depict the 'mysteries and agonies' of everyday life for women; Coleman's of a young woman giving birth and White's of a young woman falling intensely in love, both for the first time. And while White and Coleman disagreed on the place of madness in their daily lives, both women saw it as an inescapable reality. Coleman believed

> that women, particularly, could choose madness as an escape from the daily pain of living. She had herself. On the contrary, Antonia had said, it was something that was thrust upon you, that lurked and stalked and then pounced.[61]

Regardless of the way madness presented itself to the two women, it is clear from their fiction, diaries and letters that both women used these textual spaces to try to comprehend their experiences of madness and its effect on their lives. Their writing allowed them to understand themselves when their sense of self was fractured and discontinuous.[62] For White,

> writing provided a structure which constrained her experiences and gave them form and reality. Antonia's sense of her own identity was so fugitive that she seemed only to exist when she could capture herself in words on the page.[63]

Similarly, Coleman 'poured forth letters, poems, diary, and eventually paintings, with an extravagance of energy which was breathtaking', and echoed the throes of her mania in the asylum.[64] Sadly, both women felt the threat of a return to madness - or 'The Beast', as White called it - for the rest of their lives.[65]

---

[61] Dunn, p. 181.

[62] For more see: Patricia Moran, *Antonia White and Manic-Depressive Illness* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 2; Sherah Wells, 'Strand by Strand: Untying the Knots of Mental and Physical Illness in the Correspondence and Diaries of Antonia White and Emily Holmes Coleman', in *Tapestry of Health, Illness and Disease*, ed. by Vera Kalitzkus and Peter L. Twohig (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 43-55 (p. 45).

[63] Dunn, p. 129.

[64] Dunn, p. 156.

[65] Moran, p. 39, 11. White wrote about 'the beast' in her epistolary work, *The Hound and the Falcon* (1965): 'Once I was right in the power of the beast it was terrible and wonderful' (Antonia White, *The Hound and the Falcon* (London: Virago 1980), p. 16). Emily Holmes Coleman maintained that she was mad for the rest of her life and her friend Peggy Guggenheim remarked that 'unlike most people who are mad, [Coleman] did not hide it' (Callil, 'Introduction', no page number given). Sherah Wells also

Spaces of Regeneration

Set in the fictional Gorestown State Hospital, Emily Holmes Coleman's novel *The Shutter of Snow* begins *in medias res* as readers are introduced to Marthe Gail, the novel's autobiographical protagonist, navigating life among the manic, delusional and misbehaving patients of the asylum's rowdy East Side. In contrast to the largely realist style of Antonia White's novel, though, as we will come to see, strikingly similar in content, Coleman's novel is defined by 'severe narrative disturbance' that reflects Marthe's 'violent dislocation from herself'.[66] Coleman's narrative abandons apostrophes, commas and speech marks, merging sentences together in grammatically incorrect free indirect discourse, constructing Marthe's reality through a unique and 'starkly stylized language'.[67] It is in this manner that Coleman vividly depicts her experience of continuous bath treatments, capturing many of the details outlined in the contemporary nursing textbooks. Coleman writes:

> They were standing in a line, each one with two nurses holding her and wrapping her tight in strips of cloth. One nurse held the figure still and the other sewed with large swoops, Marthe was happy because it was the first time for her. [...] I didn't know we were sewed for this. It keeps you quieter said the nurse.[68]

This hydropathic treatment is associated with the asylum's symbolic and literal control, with the nurses symbolising the patriarchal and medical authority that governs the lives of Marthe and her fellow hospital patients. Much like in Jean Rhys' 'monograph on lavabos' in *Good Morning, Midnight*, we see the women standing in a line, 'not one bold spirit daring to dash out of her turn pass the stern-face attendant', except here

highlights the pair's 'continued anxiety' over the possible recurrence of their earlier madness (Wells, p. 52).

[66] Sophie Blanch, 'Writing Self/Delusion: Subjectivity and Scriptotherapy in Emily Holmes Coleman's *The Shutter of Snow*', in *Depression and Narrative: Telling the Dark*, ed. by Hilary Clark (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), pp. 213-28 (p. 216).

[67] Blanch, 'Writing Self/Delusion', p. 217.

[68] Emily Holmes Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow* (London: Virago, 1981), p. 48.

the stern-faced attendant of the ladies' lavatory is replaced by the nurses in the asylum bathroom.[69] Two to every patient, they hold the women (reduced, in Coleman's words, to a depersonalised 'figure') 'still' while sewing them into the 'tight' wrappings. While this scene is punctuated by 'an orchestra of laughter and strident sounds' as 'a quartette of galloping nurses holding the wrists of someone in their midst who struggled', soon the treatment will render the women 'quieter'.[70] Much like in Nellie Bly's account almost fifty years earlier, the nurses use physical force, as well as the bathtub, to quiet disruptive patients.

Coleman's descriptions of the continuous bath treatment continue as Marthe is 'lifted' into the tub:

> It was very long and she lay in a sling. A canvas sheet was drawn over the top only her head coming out. They put a small pillow behind her head. Very slowly the water came in, tepid and smooth. It grew warm deliciously. She glided her body about in the tub. She hung in space and tasted the green voluptuousness of living water.
>
> The water kept coming in. It came from behind her and came around her and filled her body with warmth and listlessness. She was absolutely without strain, hung delicately in the water without effort of will. She was hung from the pivot of a golden sun and swung swinging in the pouring of its fluid content.[71]

This scene epitomises the ambivalence of these hydropathic treatments, identified earlier in the nursing textbooks. Marthe does not feel trapped in the tub, despite the fact that her body is tightly sewn into a wrapping and kept in place by a canvas sheet. Suspended 'delicately in the water', the connotations of control and force that infused the textbook descriptions are noticeably absent from this scene. The water is voluptuous - sybaritic, sexually charged, feminine - and embraces Marthe 'without strain'. The repetition of 'hung' suggests a momentary release; Marthe's body is able to exist 'without effort or will'. As it heats up, the bathwater and Marthe's body within it

[69] Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 10.
[70] Coleman, p. 48.
[71] Coleman, p. 49-50.

become aligned with a ‘golden sun’: her body ‘swung’ in the ‘swinging’ and ‘pouring’ of its molten rays. Coleman’s use of gerunds allows ‘pouring’ to function as a noun, imbuing the sun’s ‘fluid content’ with a physicality that emphasises Marthe’s sensory experience. The scene is suffused with senses. Marthe ‘tasted’ the ‘green voluptuousness of living water’ as it glides ‘tepid and smooth’ across her skin, and the water heats up ‘deliciously’. Marthe’s pleasure in bathing is palpable as Coleman subverts the usual construction of femininity as passive through the grammatical construction of the phrase ‘She glided her body about’, putting Marthe in control; the active aspect posits Marthe as the subject, giving her autonomy over her body and her experience.

Soon, however, the cloths wrapped around her body become so ‘hot and irritating’ that she ‘no longer felt the softness of the water’.[72] The wrappings cause a separation between Marthe and the physical pleasure of the bathwater:

> She twisted her body and turned her arms pinioned behind her, and rolled her body about. It was heavy and clogged the running of the stream. It was heat, languorous and clinging, and it pricked the pores of her skin.[73]

No longer hanging ‘delicately’ in the water, her body feels ‘heavy and clogged’ by the canvas. Pricking her skin, the cloth is ‘languorous and clinging’. Wanting to break free, Marthe tears the threads with her fingers. She unwinds her ‘spiral casket’ - along with its associations of death - kicking it to ‘oblivion below her feet’.[74]

Free from her restrictive wrappings, the natural power Marthe associates with water intensifies. Coleman’s narrative amplifies the earlier elemental imagery of the ‘golden sun’ pouring its liquid fire into the tub:

> Now it was essence of molten quicksilver and poured around her limbs and into her veins and swam about her lungs and went out at her feet. She turned her

[72] Coleman, p. 50.
[73] Coleman, p. 50.
[74] Coleman, p. 50.

> head to one side and the water melted into her eyes. The water was gurgling behind her, constantly renewed, and out below at the bottom of the tub. Her arms long slender stems of pond lilies, and the water cress of her breasts floated and sank in the depth of the stream.[75]

Marthe's body and the water melt together in the tub. The scene is suffused with body parts as Marthe feels the sensations of hot water touch her newly unwrapped skin, first touching her limbs, working its way into her veins, before swimming 'about her lungs'. Distinctions between interiority and exteriority collapse as the 'molten quicksilver' travels through her body and 'out at her feet'. The 'constantly renewed' water reinvigorates her. Her arms become 'long slender stems of pond lilies' and her breasts 'water cress'. In casting off the symbols of institutional control (the 'clogged' and 'clinging' wrappings), Marthe is literally and metaphorically able to free her body, breaking the bonds imposed on her by the asylum.

Here, Coleman uses the fictional space of the bathroom to symbolically subvert the physical and mental control enacted on women's bodies in the asylum, and to unsettle hydropathy's associations of regeneration, transformation and healing. Coleman rejects the traditional narrative of transformation associated with hydropathy at this time, instead embracing an alternative form of regeneration based on Marthe's sensuality and own bodily enjoyment. Rejecting and subverting the regenerative narrative of hydropathic treatments - a form of regeneration defined and controlled by medical and patriarchal authority - Marthe's transformation is rooted in a more personal form of self-realisation and sanity, based on a connection to her body, the power she draws from nature, and the sensual connection of these in the warm water. In subverting the asylum bathroom's associations with control and punishment - as Marthe breaks free from the canvas sheet - Coleman offers a subtle rebuff to the bodily

[75] Coleman, p. 50-51.

control placed upon Marthe in the asylum, allowing her to escape the narrow and limited ideals of femininity imposed upon her by the institution and, more widely, by society.

Spaces of Community

Like Emily Holmes Coleman, Antonia White paints an ambivalent picture of the hydropathic treatments she experienced in Bethlem Royal Hospital. In her autobiographical novel *Beyond the Glass,* White traces the gradual demise of her protagonist Clara Batchelor, whose fragile identity splinters like a fragmented reflection in a looking-glass during an intense love affair with a young soldier named Richard Crayshaw, based on an Officer in the King's Own Scottish Borderers, Robert Legg. Coming out of a dark depression following the annulment of her first marriage, meeting Legg at a party sparked an 'extraordinary metamorphosis' in White and, during their three weeks together, she 'felt she could see in the dark; she could make out each layer of scent in the room; mundane objects were alive with fanatical detail'.[76] White captures this vividly in her novel, where she describes Clara and Richard's 'psychic connection' as they communicate telepathically, turning up 'simultaneously, knowing without telling where and when to arrive'.[77] White later assured Coleman that this had actually happened, even if it was a bit 'odd'.[78] Her biographer, Jane Dunn notes just how closely Clara's descent into madness parallels White's own experience, suggesting that

> with the evidence of her Bethlem medical records, it is possible to appreciate just how brilliantly she maintained, within her fiction, an extraordinary connection to the literal truth. It was as if she was both in the belly of the beast and also detached, observing the processes of her madness and the treatment meted out to her from a distant perspective. To entwine both strands of

[76] Dunn, p. 74.
[77] Dunn, p. 74, 75.
[78] Dunn, p. 76.

> experience [...] shows the extent of the suffering she endured, and the flight of her mind as it transcended the material world.[79]

The dislocation from her sense of self that White felt during her initial breakdown is captured in her fictional retelling where, following an episode in which she is plagued by psychotic delusions and nightmarish hallucinations, Clara wakes up 'months, perhaps years, later' in 'a small bare cell' in the Nazareth Royal Hospital, or the 'hospital for girls who ask too many questions'.[80]

During what White would later describe as the 'asylum's intense waking dreams', Clara's sense of self is disconnected from her body, transforming into a 'stag', a 'fairy horse' with a 'magic with a golden mane' and a 'salmon' 'suffocating in a dry, stone-floored cell'.[81] Alongside sedative drugs, White was prescribed 'continuous baths and other forms of hydro-therapy' to treat her delusions, 'acute excitement and insomnia'.[82] In contrast to Marthe's relatively positive experience in which she enjoys floating in the 'heavenly' bathtub, Clara is subjected to a brutal hydropathic treatment of contrasting 'boiling' and 'ice-cold' baths.[83] As in Bly and Coleman's narratives, White depicts the disciplined queue of women, vigilantly patrolled by the nurses, as they wait for the unknown treatment occurring at the front of the queue. Revealing her fear, Clara imagines 'it was some form of torture for she could hear the women ahead of her screaming'.[84] White writes:

> Then two nurses dragged her, one on each side, to an enormous room filled with baths. They dipped her into bath after bath of boiling water. [...] After the hot baths, they ducked her, spluttering and choking, into an ice-cold one. [...] She screamed, and nurses, dozens of them, crowded round the bath to laugh

[79] Dunn, p. 80. See also: Antonia White, *Antonia White: Diaries, 1926-1957*, ed. by Susan Chitty (London: Constable, 1991), I, p. 136.
[80] Antonia White, *Beyond the Glass* (London: Virago, 1989), p. 211, 219.
[81] Dunn, p. 80; White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 211, 212, 214.
[82] Dunn, p. 81.
[83] Coleman, p. 51; White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 212.
[84] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 212.

> at her. [...] She had human limbs, but she was not human; she was a horse or a stag being prepared for the hunt.[85]

This hydropathic treatment is a violent and frightening experience for Clara, emblematic of the confusion and helplessness felt by patients at this time, whose experience of the asylum is determined largely by the actions of omnipotent doctors and nurses. Unable to remember her own name and unsure if she is in a hospital or a prison, these fragmented, animalistic bodily forms allow her to step outside of her old human body and the mental and physical pain she is suffering. For Clara, experiencing the asylum's brutal treatment is easier in a physicality removed from reality and, after these baths, she 'threw up her head and neighed and made a dash for the door'.[86] As a horse, Clara makes a thwarted dash for freedom.

White's depictions of the asylum bathroom embody the conflicting use of the bathtub as both a mechanism of control and punishment, and as one of treatment and care, and this is reflected in Clara's experience. Her return to sanity only occurs when she is made aware of her own human body again as she is washed by a nurse:

> Sometimes nurses came in and washed her. She grew interested in the body they washed and began to recognise certain features of it. If it was not the body she had had in the old life, it seemed definitely to belong to her.[87]

While the nurse is washing her body, Clara's mind intently focuses on the movement of the hands on her skin, as if this intimate physical contact reconnects her to her senses. During this haptic moment, she begins to recognise some of her bodily features - her birthmark and hands - and, as she reconnects her mind and her body, begins to remember the time 'long ago' before the asylum.[88]

---

[85] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 212.
[86] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 213.
[87] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 229.
[88] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 229.

Once Clara recognises herself as human again, no longer in her deepest throes of madness, she is allowed to use the communal bathroom, a 'long tiled' room with a

> row of basins at which other women were washing themselves. On the other side of the washroom was a row of lavatories unlike any she had ever seen. They had no doors on them and, instead of a chain, a thick brass rod hung down from the cistern.[89]

White's descriptions reveal the asylum bathroom's panopticon design, yet in this scene its threat of constant surveillance is subverted. Away from the doctors and amongst other female patients, the bathroom becomes a space in which Clara is able to fully reconnect her fractured sense of self, regenerating her body and mind through her connection to other women and their bodies, and, as such, it is a key space that facilitates her return to sanity. It is in this room that White crafts a moment of female homosociality which becomes a turning point in the narrative; from this point, she returns to a more linear, realistic narrative, moving away from the dream-like stream of consciousness style that captures Clara's madness. Here, White rewrites the control, fear and violence of the earlier hydropathic treatments, allowing Clara to experience moments of intimacy with other women that enable her to express or reconstruct her sense of self outside of the series of men (husband, lover, father) who led to her madness.

Unlike the 'strange bathroom' that housed dozens of hydropathic baths, this communal bathroom, perhaps more reflective of a domestic or public bathroom in the outside world, exists as a space of female intimacy.[90] White writes:

> She so often found herself in this place that she came to recognise some of the other women who used it. Nearly all of them were middle-aged or old. Stripped to the waist, their shrivelled or pendulous breasts repelled her. But there was one quite young with a milk-white skin and firm round breasts. Clara always

[89] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 231.
[90] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 212.

> tried to take the basin next to the white-skinned girl. Sometimes they smiled at each other.[91]

At this time, middle-class young women like Clara would not have been used to seeing other women's naked bodies this intimately, and this is reflected in her ambivalent reaction. The other women's breasts are 'shrivelled' and 'pendulous' or 'firm' and 'round', echoing Marthe's similar fascination with the 'grotesque' female bodies, 'all of them with breasts that did not fit'.[92] Clara finds herself drawn to one 'young' girl whose beauty seems out of place in the asylum. Her unblemished 'milk-white skin' reflects, both metaphorically and literally, the ideals of purity and femininity that are aligned with sanity. For Clara, her apparent normality is a link to the outside world.

In a similar manner to Coleman, White infuses the bathroom space with natural imagery. For Clara, this organic potential comes from the sunlight soaking in from a high barred window, rather than the water of the tub which Clara associates with gruelling hydropathic treatments:

> One day, in the washroom, a shaft of tempered sunlight came in through a high barred window at one end. There was a tree beyond the window, so that the light was tinged with green. The girl was standing full in the shaft so that her torso looked almost translucent. It was no longer white but touched with faint rose and green reflections and dappled with moving shadows of leaves. Clara stared entranced at this beauty.[93]

Nature transforms the young girl's body; her skin is no longer 'milk-white', like an emblem of Victorian purity, instead, she is 'touched with faint rose and green reflections'. Clara's gaze, like the sunlight, paints soft colours onto the girl's skin. Rendered 'almost translucent', she is as delicate and diaphanous as gossamer. These ethereal semantics conflict sharply to the concrete reality of the asylum. Clara sees the asylum through tangible objects: 'double iron tracks', 'thick, brass rod', 'shiny

[91] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 231.
[92] Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow,* p. 11.
[93] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 231-32.

wooden floor', 'blank yellow surface'.[94] The stark materials are fixed in the asylum's architecture - the floor, the windows - and their stasis contrasts to the 'moving shadows of leaves' that leave a 'dappled' imprint on the young girl. The sunlight imbues the asylum with beauty or, at least, it does through Clara's eyes. Telling the young girl that she looks 'exactly like a Renoir', Clara inverts the patriarchal and medical gaze of the panopticon bathroom space by imbuing the girl's sick (because she is mad) body with the beauty of an Impressionist painting - a wholly unexpected collocation from a madwoman in an asylum.[95]

In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Michel Foucault sets up the idea of the 'medical gaze' as 'no longer the gaze of any observer, but that of a doctor supported and justified by an institution, that of a doctor endowed with the power of decision and intervention'.[96] Foucault goes on to say that the medical gaze is 'always receptive to the deviant', grasping 'tiny anomalies' on the patient's body and, more than this, it should not be 'content to observe what was self-evident; it must make it possible to outline chances and risks; it was calculating'.[97] The calculating, powerful medical gaze, usually from a male doctor, is given access to the sick body in the asylum, examining it for minute deviances from the norm. The body, as Jennifer Wallis argues, is the 'point of interaction between patient and doctor', and the site 'where the dynamics and the relationships of care were structured and played out'.[98] In this scene, Clara usurps the male medical gaze, examining and analysing the other women's bodies with a gaze that picks up on the small differences in their appearances, much like a doctor would

[94] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 213, 230-31.
[95] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 232.
[96] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), p. 89.
[97] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, p. 89.
[98] Jennifer Wallis, *Investigating the Body in the Victorian Asylum* (London: Palgrave, 2017), p. 14.

when analysing a patient: one woman's skin is 'shrivelled', another woman's is 'firm'.[99] Clara is entranced by both the corporeality and the beauty of the other women's bodies, and, through this appropriation of the usually professional gaze, White's narrative rewrites the asylum's controlling medical gaze, as well as the male gaze which had contributed to the onset of Clara's madness in the outside world.

In an interview discussing his ideas around the medical gaze in asylums, Foucault states the basic principle of effective observation is the presence of daylight because it allows the 'overseer's gaze [to] capture the inmate more effectively than darkness, which afforded after all a sort of protection'.[100] White's narrative unknowingly plays with this idea of the bright daylight that renders the gaze effective when, refracted through the asylum's window, the 'tempered sunlight' allows Clara to see the beauty of the female body in new ways.[101] What is more, when Clara tells the girl that she looks like a Renoir painting, the girl responds by smiling 'confidingly' at Clara as they share an intimate moment of warmth. In this institutional bathroom, where the lavatories have no doors and doors have no locks, this moment allows the bathroom to take on connotations of female intimacy that are not normally facilitated or encouraged in the outside world. It is this ironic subversion of the sunlight by Clara's gaze that posits the bathroom as a site where intimate female communities can be formed. For both Marthe and Clara, it becomes a therapeutic space away from the pressures of patriarchal norms.

Both White and Coleman construct the asylum bathroom as a generative site of female intimacy, then. In their novels, the bathroom is a safe space in which the

[99] White, *Beyond the Glass,* p. 231.
[100] Michel Foucault, 'The Eye of Power: A Conversation with Jean Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings,* ed. by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon, 1980), pp. 146-65 (p. 147).
[101] White, *Beyond the Glass*, p. 231.

asylum's medical, patriarchal or institutional authority can be subverted and alternative female-only communities can be formed. This subversion is particularly important for their marginalised protagonists who exist, by choice or otherwise, outside of the traditional spaces, roles and expectations for women at this time: Clara is a failed wife, Marthe a failed mother. These two narratives form a sharp contrast to the exclusionary atmosphere we saw at the end of my last chapter in Jean Rhys' short story 'Outside the Machine', where the hospital ward mimicked the claustrophobic and restrictive societal norms that drove Mrs Murphy to suicide. For her, unlike for Marthe and Clara, there was no accepting community of women to turn to for support. By subverting the traditional regenerative, controlling or curative associations of asylum bathroom spaces, White and Coleman construct moments of belonging within the unhomely institutional setting, embracing a sense of female community that is rare in an outside world where female relationships are often defined and limited by the patriarchal control of their fathers, husbands or sons.

Spaces of Queer Community in the Asylum

Towards the end of her novel, Coleman takes this subversion of medical authority one step further during a needle-spay shower, a form of hydropathy where a standing patient is sprayed with multiple horizontal jets of water that stimulate the body, and into which she writes a scene of lesbian intimacy between Marthe and Nurse Brunmark. Writing about their use in mental hospitals in 1927, one doctor noted that this 'mild but powerful' treatment could 'be borne well by patients who are too feeble or ill to undergo more drastic treatment'.[102] In fact, Hubbard went as far as to claim

[102] L. D. Hubbard, 'Hydrotherapy in the Mental Hospital', *The American Journal of Nursing*, 27, 8 (August 1927), 642-44 (p. 643). For a comprehensive history of the use of showers in asylums see: Stephanie C. Cox, Clare Hocking and Deborah Payne, 'Showers: from a violent treatment to an agent of cleansing', *History of Psychiatry*, 30, 1 (2019), 58-76.

that ‘nothing does so much for a circulation rendered sluggish by inactivity and depression’ as the needle-spray shower, which we see play out in Coleman’s novel.[103]

To undergo this invigorating treatment, Marthe is taken to a bathroom located on a ‘short corridor’ between the asylum’s East and West sides, the latter being an aspirational area of the asylum where those nearing the end of their stay and, therefore, supposedly closest to sanity are housed. Playing into the liminality of this space and emphasising its interstitial placing within the asylum, the shower room forms a threshold between the mad of the asylum and the supposed sanity of the West Side, buffered by corridors on every side. Nurse Brunmark and Marthe are secluded from the rest of the asylum by layers of corridors and empty rooms which amplify their sense of privacy, facilitating an unusual intimacy between the pair:

> Brunmark stood before her at a distance to play the buttons and turn the spigots. From all four sides came fine prickings, warm and comely. The needle spray. Marthe danced lifting her legs and leaning to the spray. Brunmark bent to the turning of her bright nickel spigots, leaned to hold the hose that rushed at Marthe’s spinal column, played it up and down the middle of her back, holding her out and erect like a stone majesty.[104]

The sprays of water are ‘comely’, a typically feminine descriptor that imbues the mechanics of the needle-spray shower with female connotations. The machine is personified into a powerful female form: a majestic, metallic structure around which Marthe dances in an act of female defiance and pleasure. Coleman writes:

> Dance dance Brunmark, throw away your cap and dance. Come out from under your stiff legs and float above the spray. Be still be still Brunmark cried out above the rush of the spray. They laughed and shouted and the water mounted and leaped and fell again.[105]

Nurse Brunmark acquiesces to the machine as her body is ‘bent to the turning of her bright nickel spigots’. The hose takes on the female determiner ‘her’ and Coleman’s

[103] Hubbard, p. 643.
[104] Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow,* p. 145-46.
[105] Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow*, p. 146.

ambiguous phrasing - ‘holding her out and erect like a stone majesty’ - makes the reader unsure as to whether it is Brunmark or the machine that is in control.

In the intimacy of the shower setting, the pair lose their inhibitions. Their pleasure is palpable as Brunmark, playing the water ‘up and down the middle of her back’, watches Marthe’s Dionysiac dancing under the ‘fine prickings’ of the spray. Caught up in this hedonistic moment, Brunmark embraces the moment’s playfulness, metaphorically floating ‘above the spray’ with Marthe. In this moment of shared laughter, Brunmark’s nurse's cap falls to one side as she ‘shifted her feet to the changing of the waters’.[106] The new jaunty angle of the cap signals a loss of medical authority, working as an unspoken metonym that suggests a levelling between the pair, reinforced by the image of the ‘changing’ waters. No longer her superior, the pair experience a moment of mutual intimacy and sensuality, which, when read alongside Coleman’s biography, holds lesbian undertones.

While Coleman did not openly identify as lesbian or bisexual, as she might identify today, her diaries are ‘infused’ with ‘homoerotic, lesbian, and bisexual narratives’, however, scholars of *The Shutter of Snow* have largely failed to discuss her narrative’s lesbian undertones.[107] In her introduction to the edited collection of Coleman’s diaries, Elizabeth Podnieks highlights Coleman’s mixed feelings towards her sexuality over her lifetime, alluding to the trial against Radclyffe Hall’s novel *The Well Of Loneliness* (1928), which formed a cultural and political backdrop to her

[106] Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow*, p. 145-46.

[107] Podnieks, p. xxxv. Spring Healy briefly discusses queer companionship between Marthe and Nurse Brunmark, touching on this shower scene (Spring Healy, ‘The Madwoman Persists: Expression as Resistance in Emily Holmes Coleman’s *The Shutter of Snow* and H. D.’s *HERmione*’ (unpublished honors project, Bowling Green State University, 2017), p. 16, 20). In her thesis, Britta Maren Moelders also discusses Marthe’s emotional, though not particularly sexual, connection to fellow patient Mary (Britta Maren Moelders, ‘A Feminist and Foucauldian Reading of Coleman and White’ (unpublished thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2012), p. 60).

lesbian affair. Coleman pondered her evolving sexuality in her diary in December 1929, writing:

> I had got so that I could think of nothing but women. I was more excited about Judith sexually than I had been over any man. This frightened me. I thought, "Can it be I am homosexual?" But I thought, "Whatever I am, that shall I be".[108]

Coleman destroyed a portion of her diary from the summer of 1928 when she was having a 'Lesbian "affair"' with a woman known only as Judith, but would later write that it was one of the 'only genuine sexual feelings [she had] ever had'.[109] In her diary, Coleman uses elemental language to describe making love to Judith, echoing the profusion of water imagery in the fictional scene in *The Shutter of Snow*:

> I found her body perfect, so I poured passion into her. I was a flame on which oil is spent, I ate up my indifference.[110]

Throughout her diary, as in her novel, Coleman often returns to natural and elemental imagery; as we saw in her earlier fictional descriptions of continuous bath treatments, the water in the bathtub relaxes her body so that she 'was hung from the pivot of a golden sun and swung swinging in the pouring of its fluid content'.[111] Later, the 'constantly renewed' bathwater becomes an 'essence of molten quicksilver' that signifies her own form of personal regeneration, rooted in her body's sensual connection to nature.[112] In her diaries, Coleman associates these natural images - particularly the 'heavenly round bright sun' - with happiness and personal freedom.[113]

---

[108] Coleman, *Rough Draft*, p. 54.
[109] Coleman, *Rough Draft*, p. 218, 244.
[110] Coleman, *Rough Draft*, p. 9.
[111] Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow*, p. 50. Podnieks suggests that Coleman 'found the natural world to be a representation of spiritual goodness on a physical level'. (Podnieks, *Rough Draft*, p. xxxvi-xxxvii). In her diary in 1929, Coleman reveals that several natural and elemental words - among them 'glittering', 'shine, gleam', 'cold, light, gold', 'sun, maze, seed, soft' - are among her 'favourite words', to which John Holms suggests that she 'had better psycho-analyze myself [...], because there was some reason, probably sexual, why I used them so much' (Coleman, *Rough Draft*, p. 19).
[112] Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow*, p. 50.
[113] Coleman, *Rough Draft*, p. 136. For more examples see: Coleman, *Rough Draft*, p. 19, 143, 175, 358.

It is through similar elemental and natural symbolism that Coleman describes the moment of physical and emotional intimacy between Marthe and Nurse Brunmark:

> This one is the last, watch out, she cried, and suddenly from below sprang up a rigid strand of water. It took her off her feet and up into the air she went and snatched above her head and hung, glorious in the glittering and spuming all about. She hung from the pipes above her head and turned and twisted her long swinging legs and all her body about. She swung her legs above her head until she hung as in a tree above looking down on green water and yellow foam.[114]

This sexually charged moment is interspersed with phallic imagery as the 'rush of the spray' becomes synecdochal for their sexual intimacy. The water flows from the hose 'erect like a stone majesty'. The 'rigid strand of water' sprays Marthe's body in 'fine prickings, warm and comely', playfully associating this phallic image, suggestive of sexual penetration, with the feminine adjective of the latter clause.[115] The water lifts Marthe's body into the air where, watched by Brunmark, she hangs 'glorious' in the 'glittering' shower of water, her soapy body dancing in the 'spuming' froth of the shower. Coleman's excess of polysyndeton emphasises the movement of their bodies and the rhythm of the scene, building to a physical and metaphorical climax on the page.

When the needle-spray shower comes to an end, however, so does this hedonistic scene. Coleman writes:

> Then quickly all the spigots were shut off and on again straight and stiff did Brunmark set her cap. Get down from there do you hear? [...] Brunmark went composed into the other room and laid the edges of her cap before the glass.[116]

As soon as the water is shut off, Brunmark sets her cap 'straight and stiff', reinscribing on her body the visible signifiers of control. Brunmark symbolically resumes her proper role as nurse before leaving the bathroom and returning to the 'straight and stiff' male

[114] Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow*, p. 146.
[115] Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow,* p. 145.
[116] Coleman, *The Shutter of Snow,* p. 146-47.

gaze of her supervising physician. In this scene, Marthe and Brunmark's sensual exhibitionism subverts the patriarchal ideas of regeneration and transformation associated with the asylum's bathroom spaces and hydropathic treatments. Marthe is transformed, but not into the image of normative femininity that hydropathic treatments were used for; her body is not controlled, punished or cured in the needle-spray shower. Instead, by embracing sensuality, the pair temporarily break down the traditional structures of medical authority and institutional hierarchy to allow an exploration of queer sexuality and female intimacy. The bathroom enables this exploration and expression of female sexuality, including the pair's desire, and the bathroom's temporary privacy (facilitated by the guise of a hydropathic treatment) shields Marthe and Brunmark from the watching eyes of the asylum. Here, the asylum bathroom exists as a space in between the boundaries of exposure and concealment, control and regeneration. In its ambivalence, the female-only bathroom space encourages the destabilising of hegemonic sexualities and experiences, allowing Marthe and Brunmark the opportunity and physical space to express a new and alternative desires, sexualities and intimacies.

Spaces of Queer Community in the Turkish Bath

> Last night I spent in her arms - and to-night I hate her - which, being interpreted, means that I adore her: that I cannot lie in my bed and not feel the magic of her body: which means that sex seems nothing to me. I feel more powerfully all those so-termed sexual impulses with her than I have with any man. She enthrals, enslaves me - and her personal self - her body absolute - is my worship. I feel that to lie with my head on her breast is to feel what life can hold.[117]

[117] Katherine Mansfield, *Journal of Katherine Mansfield,* ed. by John Middleton Murray (London: Constable, 1984), p. 12.

Writing in her journal in June 1907, Katherine Mansfield describes the agony and intoxication of being 'half mad with love'.[118] Her journals reveal several affairs with women over this period, particularly during her time in New Zealand, her first with school-friend Maata Mahupuku and her second with artist Edith Bendall (or Edie, as Mansfield called her). Describing the latter, she writes that she felt

> happier than I had ever been, than I could ever have imagined being - the past once more buried, clinging to her, and wishing that this darkness might last for ever.[119]

But, like Coleman, Mansfield was not fully open about her sexuality. Her biographer Claire Tomalin calls her 'sexually ambiguous, with a husband and a wife, and lovers of both sexes', and notes that many of her short stories reveal her 'bisexuality', though this is often shrouded in symbolism.[120] Like Coleman, she was concerned about the consequences of acting on her desire for women in her heteronormative, conservative society. Writing about the 'affliction' of her lesbian impulses in a letter to Ida Baker, and reflecting the socially aberrant nature of queer desire at this time, Mansfield worried that it would drive her 'insane or paralytic'.[121] Mansfield writes that she feared

> my mind is morally unhinged and that is the reason - I know it is a degradation so unspeakable that - one perceives the dignity in pistols.[122]

Yet, like Coleman, she frequently imbues a subtle, often implicit, exploration of same-sex desire into her writing.

These ideas come into play in her short story 'Epilogue III: Bains Turcs', part of tryptic published in the *Blue Review* in 1913. The story is based on her experiences in the Bavarian spa town of Bad Wörishofen, an epicentre for hydropathic treatments

---

[118] Mansfield, *Journal of Katherine Mansfield,* p. 13.
[119] Mansfield, *Journal of Katherine Mansfield,* p. 14.
[120] Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), p. 6, 8. Lifelong friend, Ida Baker is the woman that Mansfield refers to as her 'wife' (Tomalin, p. 225).
[121] Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Margaret Scott and Vincent O'Sullivan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), I, p. 90.
[122] Mansfield, *The Collected Letters*, p. 90.

based on the health theories of Sebastian Kneipp who resided there, opening several hospitals, for more than forty years, and where Mansfield was disposed of by her mother in 1909 in the hope of solving both her daughter's pregnancy and her potential lesbianism.[123] In his exploration of Mansfield's time in Bad Wörishofen, John Horrocks likens the spa town to 'a prison or asylum in its suffocating pressure to conform and the lack of physical distance from the other visitors'.[124] For Mansfield's mother, however, Bad Wörishofen was a sanitised space mercifully separate from respectable British society, as well as a space from which rumours of her unruly daughter were unlikely to find their way back to New Zealand.

Published several years after the *In a German Pension* (1911) stories that led to her literary fame, Mansfield's focus has shifted from mealtime conversations of 'symptoms, histories and social status' to a more intimate and biting portrayal of female relationships that delves further into what Cherry Hankin calls her 'youthful uneasiness about relationships between the sexes'.[125] As the name suggests, 'Bains Turcs' relays a trip to a Turkish bath where the narrator watches as two lesbians upset the balance of the baths by flaunting their femininity and sexuality in front of Mackintosh Cap, a married mother of four and the story's symbol of heteronormative conformity. Mansfield's story centres on female bodily experience and, like Coleman and White, uses the therapeutic bathroom setting as a lens to focus on this often overlooked perspective. The female-only space of the Turkish bath, as well as the story's implicit lesbian content, allows the narrator to imagine an emotional alternative to heteronormative relationships.

[123] Tomalin, p. 67-69; John Horrocks, '"In their Nakeds": Katherine Mansfield and Neurasthenia at Bad Worishofen', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 32 (2014), 121-42 (p. 124).
[124] Horrocks, p. 136.
[125] Tomalin, p. 70; Cherry Hankin, *Katherine Mansfield and Her Confessional Stories* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 62.

Existing as a liberatory realm away from the devouring male gaze, the Turkish bath provides a sheltered, female-only space in more than just a physical sense. In her exploration of the Turkish bath in women's travel writing, Efterpi Mitsi argues that women's naked bodies 'inevitably' become 'objects of mutual curiosity' in Turkish baths, but that this actually unsettles the traditional 'male western gaze' which often intrudes upon 'private female space' - as we saw in my previous chapters, the supposedly private spaces of urban and domestic bathrooms are often invaded by the male gaze or by an internalised misogynistic female gaze.[126] Mitsi suggests that by

> transferring a private act, like washing, to the public sphere, cleanliness transforms to sexual self-expression, and, therefore leads, according to many travellers, to physical and mental degeneration.[127]

Reflecting early twentieth-century British society's prejudices, this potential for 'degeneration' is amplified in Turkish baths in which there was a mixing of classes, races and nationalities, all compounded by nudity, bringing to the fore what Anne McClintock argues is a discourse of cleanliness infused with notions of gender and class, both of which have been explored throughout this thesis.[128] For Mansfield, whose short story is built around these themes of class, gender and sexuality, the Turkish bath is not just a space of 'mental and physical degeneration', rather it is a creative, exciting and liberatory space for her female narrator who wants to escape the limiting social norms of the outside world. For Mansfield, the Turkish bath is a safe

---

[126] Efterpi Mitsi, 'Private Ritual and Public Selves: The Turkish Bath in Women's Travel Writing', in *Inside Out: Women Negotiating, Subverting Appropriating Public and Private Selves*, ed. by Teresa Gomez Reus (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 47-63 (p. 53, 52).

[127] Mitsi, p. 58-59.

[128] Introduced to Britain by David Urquhart, the history of the Western Turkish bath is rooted in ideas of eliminating dirt (literal and moral) among the Victorian working-classes. For more on Urquhart and the Turkish bath see: Leslie Stephen, 'David Urquhart', in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1899), LVII, pp. 43-45. For more on Britain's prejudices against Turkish baths see: Mitsi, p. 59. For a comprehensive history of the Victorian Turkish bath see: Malcolm Shifrin, *Victorian Turkish Baths* (Swindon: Historic England, 2015). For more on the notions of gender, race and class within discourses of cleanliness see: Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York and London: Routledge: 1995).

space for women and women's bodies, and this intimation of safety allows the exploration of female intimacy, as well as sexuality and same-sex desire.

The story opens with a portrait of a female cashier whose stature creates an 'immediate impression of dominance'.[129] Standing among 'artificial palms' she is likened to a fertile plant:

> Her white neck and powdered face topped with masses of gleaming orange hair - like an over-ripe fungus bursting from a thick, black stem.[130]

The cashier captivates the narrator as her 'black satin skirt swished across the scarlet and gold hall'.[131] The combination of sibilant and liquid sounds creates a sense of soft, light movement that echoes her motion across the hall. Mansfield's sensual prosodics accentuates what Hankin calls a 'luxurious fecundity' that 'suggests this place is ruled by women'.[132] The elevator attendant - the only man in the story - is no challenge to women's dominance, and is depersonalised by Mansfield, who reduces him to a sexless and, therefore, non-threatening male presence:

> There appeared from nowhere a tiny figure disguised in a peaked cap and dirty white cotton gloves. "Here you are?" she scolded. "Where have you been? What have you been doing?" For an answer the figure hid its face behind one of the white cotton gloves and sneezed twice. "Ugh! Disgusting! Take Madame to the third storey!" The midget stepped aside, bowed, entered after me and clashed the gates to. We ascended, very slowly, to an accompaniment of sneezes and prolonged, half whistling sniffs.[133]

Sniffing and sneezing, the 'tiny figure' is associated with illness and contagion, and seen as a dehumanised, disease-spreading 'creature' identified by the pronoun "it".[134] As the man sneezes into his 'dirty white cotton gloves', to the admonitions of the domineering cashier, his mucus drips onto the narrator's hands as she offers him a

---

[129] Hankin, p. 68.
[130] Katherine Mansfield, 'Epilogue III: Bains Turcs', *Katherine Mansfield Society*, pp. 1-3 <https://bit.ly/3i1Bhrd> [accessed 24 September 2020] (p. 1).
[131] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 1.
[132] Hankin, p. 68.
[133] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 1.
[134] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 1.

'ten-centime tip'.[135] Stripped of any predatory masculinity, this pathetic figure is the antithesis of the women he takes up in the elevator, where the most he can do to assert a feeble form of power is to lace his sneezes with an 'air of great relish'.[136]

Mansfield's story is ruled not just by women but by unruly women, which becomes apparent when we are introduced to the 'two tall blonde women' whose 'gay, bold faces, and quantities of exquisite whipped fair hair' align them with the exuberant cashier.[137] These flamboyant female figures juxtapose with the 'dull' and 'lank' homogenous mass of 'other women' that litter the baths, of whom Mackintosh Cap is the ringleader.[138] The two blonde women imagine that the 'hideous', 'red and moist' 'other women' waste their energy in 'shocked prudery at the behaviour of the two blondes', 'discussing whether or not they ought to tell their non-existent babies how babies come'.[139] In contrast, the two blonde women appear 'exquisite' to the onlooking narrator who is entranced by their vivacity, and it is not long before Mansfield subtly reveals them to be lesbians:

> Before sitting down they glanced around the room, looked the other women up and down, turned to each other, grimaced, whispered something, and one of them said, offering the box, "Have a mandarin?" At that they started laughing - they lay back and shook, and each time they caught sight of each other broke out afresh.[140]

After the '*careful* inspection' of the room, the pair make do with eating their box of mandarins, insinuating that this is more appealing than the other women in the baths.[141] Sharing this joke, they 'lay back and shook' with laughter, their bodies a physical performance of intimacy. Watching as they recline 'languid as the flowers',

[135] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 1.
[136] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 1.
[137] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 2.
[138] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 2.
[139] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 2.
[140] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 2.
[141] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 2.

the narrator relishes their soft, female bodies in the tropical warmth of the spa.[142] She sees them as 'two fresh beauties', who, luxuriating in a moment of shared happiness, contrast sharply to Mackintosh Cap's rigidity and frigidity:

> The Mackintosh Cap sat down on the edge of a chair, snatched a fashion journal, smacked over the crackling pages and pretended to read, while the blonde women leaned back eating the mandarins and throwing the peelings into the lily basin.[143]

Instead of reclining like the other women, Mackintosh Cap's body hovers on the 'edge of a chair'. The plosive sounds in 'snatched', 'smacked' and 'crackling' suffuse descriptions of her body with an angry abruptness that suggests sharp movements out of place in the languorous Turkish bath. Her whole body is a pretence, poised with uncertainty in front of watching eyes. She reads a fashion journal, reminiscent of the 'tiled corridor decorated with advertisements for lingerie and bust improvers' that leads the way to the baths - seedy instructions that perpetuate the production of the ideal woman. Like the bust improvers and lingerie, Mackintosh Cap wants women's bodies covered and caged by propriety, reserved for the privacy of the home and the husband.[144]

Towards the end of the vignette, after she has undergone a shampoo treatment, the narrator's negative descriptions of Mackintosh Cap become all the more virulent:

> All the time I was soaped and smacked and sprayed and thrown in a cold water tank I could not get out of my mind the ugly, wretched figure of the little German with a good husband and four children, railing against the two fresh beauties who had never peeled potatoes nor chosen the right meat.[145]

The narrator's cutting remarks polarise piquantly with descriptions of the two blonde women. Their 'charming feather hats and furs', 'ivory suede gloves' and the delicate 'bunch of violets' pinned to their bosoms - another subtle allusion to their sexuality -

[142] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 1.
[143] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 3.
[144] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 1.
[145] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 3.

overshadow, in the narrator's eyes at least, the 'ugly, wretched figure of the German' with the 'large hips' and 'terrible birds nest' on her head.[146] Even her biting name for this overly-sensitive woman suggests she is out of place; Mackintosh Cap - or '*the* Mackintosh Cap' as Mansfield dubs her - is a personified raincoat, a piece of man-made, rubberised fabric designed to repel the rejuvenating water of the Turkish bath.[147] As a symbol of heteronormative relationships, Mansfield paints an unattractive picture: she is a 'short stout little woman with flat, white feet, and a black mackintosh cap over her hair'.[148] Unlike the soft 'blue' of the two blondes or the 'gleaming orange' of the cashier, Mackintosh Cap's 'black' cap seems out of place against the hygienic collocations of the spa.[149]

For the narrator, Mackintosh Cap symbolises the restrictions women face in marriage, drawing on ideas discussed in my previous chapter. Persistently praising her heteronormative life, Mackintosh Cap can only relay what her 'husband says' or what her husband would think of the 'couple of street women', as she labels the two blondes.[150] She becomes a ventriloquist for her husband's agenda:

> I shan't lower myself by paying any attention to a couple of street women. If my husband knew he'd never get over it. Dreadfully particular he is. We've been married six years. We come from Pfalzburg. It's a nice town, Four children I have living, and it was really to get over the shock of the fifth that we came here.[151]

[146] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 3. Historically, violets have been associated with lesbians and used to symbolise their love (Sarah Alyson and Joe Chapple, 'Gay Symbols Through the Ages, in *The Alyson Almanac: A Treasury of Information for the Gay and Lesbian Community* (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1990), pp. 55-58 (p. 58). Their symbolism is associated with poems by Sappho in which she describes a lover wearing garlands of violets (Diana Collecott, *H. D. and Sapphic Modernism, 1910-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 216)
[147] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 2 (my italics).
[148] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 2.
[149] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 1-3.
[150] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 3.
[151] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 3.

As the story progresses, however, it becomes increasingly clear that Mackintosh Cap is perhaps too obsessed by the two blonde women, and the strain of this obsession is written all over (and under) her skin:

> The great big fat pigs like that! And I haven't sweated at all properly, just because of them. I got so angry that the sweat turned in instead of out.[152]

Mackintosh Cap's 'championing' of marriage is, as Hankin suggests, 'belied by a physical interest in her own sex she is unable to suppress'.[153] The closing sentence of the story reveals Mackintosh Cap watching the two blondes with the 'face of a hungry child before a forbidden table'.[154] The symbolic mackintosh cap, here, aligns with the nurse's cap of the asylum: both are emblems of patriarchal control and a desire for heteronormativity, both have been queered within the bathroom spaces of Mansfield and Coleman's narratives. While Brunmark's cap fell to one side during a moment of same-sex intimacy with a female patient, Mackintosh Cap's cap is rendered impotent by her indefatigable hunger for the female body, and, in particular, her obsession with the two lesbians in the Turkish bath.

With this inverted gender binary established from the story's opening, it is perhaps a surprise to see the narrator drowsily reminiscing about the popular tune 'The Honeysuckle and the Bee' from the London stage play *Bluebell in Fairyland* (1901) while she relaxes in the baths. The lyrics emphasise the divide between male and female roles in a heteronormative relationship:

> You are my honey, honeysuckle,
> I am the bee,
> I'd like to sip the honey sweet
> From those red lips, you see
> I love you dearly, dearly,
> And I want you to love me,
> You are my honey, honeysuckle,

[152] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 3.
[153] Hankin, p. 69.
[154] Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 3

I am the bee.
[...]
For her heart had yielded soon,
Neath the honeysuckle bloom,
And through life they'd wander day by day.
And he vowed just like the bee,
I will build a home for thee,
And the bee then seemed to answer them and say:
You are my honey, honeysuckle,
I am the bee.[155]

In the song, the man is drawn to the woman like a bee to honeysuckle, his role as the strong and steady provider fitting perfectly with her 'honey sweet' nature. The 'maiden' yields to her male lover, who promises to 'build a home' for her. Yet in Mansfield's story the song appears distorted, playing on a loop in the narrator's head 'much too fast… over and over'. The metaphorical honeysuckle no longer wants to give up her pollen to be ravaged by the bee. Instead, the narrator becomes a bee drawn to the 'sweet' honeysuckle: the lesbians, implicitly coded through natural imagery like the 'bunch of violets' pinned on their bosoms, who recline 'languid as the flowers' in the Turkish bath.[156] The narrator takes on her own form of the devouring gaze, usurping this traditionally male action. Mansfield's illustration of the two blonde women destabilises this heteronormative binary and, by portraying a positive picture of same-sex desire and female community, challenges the parameters of the socially acceptable.

Just as Emily Holmes Coleman and Antonia White offer subversive narratives of female intimacy located within the institutional bathroom spaces of their texts, Mansfield queers the bathroom spaces of her narrative, exploring the alternative communities and alternative relationships facilitated by a female-only bathroom space, and, in turn, liberating the female body from a devouring male gaze. The liberated

[155] 'The Honeysuckle and the Bee', *Library of Congress* <https://bit.ly/3xFZ355> [accessed 3 May 2021].
[156] 'The Honeysuckle and the Bee'; Mansfield, 'Bains Turcs', p. 1, 4.

bodily experiences of her characters, reinforced by Mackintosh Cap's unacknowledged hunger for this liberation, posit female intimacy and same-sex relationships as a valid and fulfilling alternative to heteronormative and patriarchal roles. The community between women in these narratives transcends heteropatriarchal controls as these writers advocate a utopian potential for the expansion of non-normative spatiality brought on by writing this disruption into their narratives. The bathroom, as the epitome of transgressive, disruptive space, then, forms a site of resistance for the decentred subject, be that the queer, mad or unruly woman, who these writers recentre and rehome in the alternative spaces of the narrative. These bathroom spaces allow these writers to transcend heteropatriarchal constraints; by opening up these alternative locations as spaces of belonging where non-normative subjects can form communities, Coleman, White and Mansfield use therapeutic bathroom spaces to destabilise heteropatriarchal relationships and provide new opportunities for intimacy, queer expression and female community.

Conclusion

> The day is fresh-washed and fair, and there is a smell of tulips and narcissus in the air.
>
> The sunshine pours in at the bath-room window and bores through the water in the bath-tub in lathes and planes of greenish-white. It cleaves the water into flaws like a jewel, and cracks it to bright light.
>
> Little spots of sunshine lie on the surface of the water and dance, dance, and their reflections wobble deliciously over the ceiling; a stir of my finger sets them whirring, reeling. I move a foot and the planes of light in the water jar. I lie back and laugh, and let the green-white water, the sun-flawed beryl water, flow over me. The day is almost too bright to bear, the green water covers me from the too bright day. I will lie here awhile and play with the water and the sun spots. The sky is blue and high. A crow flaps by the window, and there is a whiff of tulips and narcissus in the air. [1]
>
> 'Bath' by Amy Lowell

Written in her 'patented polyphonic prose', this dithyrambic poem by Imagist poet, performer, editor and translator Amy Lowell 'caused an uproar' when she first read it to the Poetry Society of America before a short talk on Imagism in March 1915.[2] Lowell's decision to read a poem about her own sensual and bodily pleasure in the bathtub shocked the 'withering Victorian decorum of her audience'.[3] In his recent biography of Lowell, Carl Rollyson notes that 'titters' could be heard as 'society members envisioned the elephantine poet at her ablutions - or rather her profanation of what a dignified poet ought to perform'.[4] Mary Galvin and Sarah Parker suggest more than just titters came from the audience, with some accounts claiming that 'rotten fruit was flung at the poet' as audience members 'angrily charged the podium after

[1] Amy Lowell, 'Bath', in *The Complete Poetical Works of Amy Lowell* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), p. 145.
[2] Carl Rollyson, *Amy Lowell Anew: A Biography* (Blue Ridge Summit: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), p. 11.
[3] Mary Galvin, *Queer Poetics: Five Modernist Women Writers* (Westport: Greenwood, 1999), p. 28. For more see: Richard Benvenuto, *Amy Lowell* (Woodbridge: Twayne Publishers, 1985) p. 18-19; Jean Gould, *Amy: The World of Amy Lowell and the Imagist Movement* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975), p. 174.
[4] Rollyson, *Amy Lowell Anew*, p. 11, 71.

Lowell's performance'.[5] Indeed, the ridicule that Lowell received for her bathtub poem was not limited to this rather conservative gathering; fellow Imagist poet Ezra Pound had mocked Lowell at a dinner party she had hosted the previous year by parading around with a tin bathtub on his head.[6] It seems society did not consider the sensual pleasures of a woman taking a bath appropriate subject matter for serious poetry.

This vitriolic response is rooted in the early twentieth-century's misogynistic view of women and women's bodies, and their perception of what is socially acceptable public behaviour. Lowell shocked social norms and virtues both because of this poem's 'perceived licentiousness', as her biographer Jean Gould suggests, and also because of its subject matter.[7] As 'a reverie on her daily life', the poem brings to the fore the materiality of Lowell's body during this everyday act and the usually private 'erotic pleasures associated with that'.[8] Lowell's poem depicts a bather reclining languorously in a bathtub during a moment of privacy that many of the women in this thesis craved. We only have to think back for a moment to Jean Rhys' protagonist, Sasha Jansen, to remember her increasingly desperate search for a 'room with bath': a small, private space in which she could escape the city and her miserable life within it, even if only temporarily, and one not plagued by the constant threat of invasion by hotel managers and guests - all those watching eyes - that comes to define her

[5] Galvin, *Queer Poetics*, p. 27; Sarah Parker, 'Amy Lowell's Appetites: Food, Consumption and Homoerotic Desire in Amy Lowell's Poetry', in *Fat Sex: New Directions in Theory and Activism*, ed. by Helen Hester and Caroline Walters (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 159-80 (p. 4).

[6] For a full account of this event see: Paul Bradley Bellew, '"At the Mercy of Editorial Selection": Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, and the Imagist Anthologies', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 40, 2 (Winter 2017), 22-40 (p. 26); Rollyson, *Amy Lowell Anew*, p. 11; Steven Watson, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), p. 203. It is interesting to note that Ezra Pound had also written a poem entitled 'The Bath-Tub', part of the collection *Lustra* (1913), in which he compared the tepid bathwater with his cooling passions for a woman.

[7] Gould, *Amy*, p. 174.

[8] Galvin, *Queer Poetics*, p. 27; Melissa Bradshaw, 'Remembering Amy Lowell: Embodiment, Obesity, and the Construction of a Persona', in *Amy Lowell, American Modern*, ed. by Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. 167-85 (p. 182).

experience of the shared bathroom.[9] The narrator of Lowell's poem does not share these same worries. They do not feel the same risk of being disturbed, policed or surveilled as Sasha, and this sense of security and privacy is evident in Lowell's sensual, sybaritic prose.[10]

The poem opens and closes with the 'whiff of tulips and narcissus', their floral scent either pouring in like the 'little spots of sunshine' from an open window or rising from the 'green-white water, the sun-flawed beryl water' of the bathtub.[11] Lowell is playing on the subtle duality of the word narcissus here, its Greek mythological connotations amplified by her poem's dithyrambic nature. In the bather's moment of mental and physical relaxation, facilitated by the privacy of the bathroom, she is able to turn her attention to herself and her body in the bathtub. This moment of narcissistic reflection is amplified by Lowell's choice of imagery: the sunshine that 'lathes', 'planes' and 'cleaves the water' 'like a jewel' plays with the idea of surface and depth.[12] Lowell emphasises both the bathwater's reflective properties, which 'dance' sensuously over her body, and the reflective state of the bather: 'I will lie here awhile and play with the water and the sun spots'.[13] In the bathtub, the bather is able to focus on her own physical and mental needs in that moment. Both the reflective bathwater and the bather's reflective thoughts are connected with her body as she lies in the bath, and

[9] Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 33.
[10] I use the term prose to describe her poetry here. In her introduction to her collection *Can Grande's Castle* (1918), Lowell described her style of 'polyphonic prose': '"Polyphonic prose" is perhaps a misleading title, as it tends to make the layman think that this is a prose form. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The word "prose" in its title simply refers to the manner in which the words are printed; "polyphonic"-many voiced-giving the real key. "Polyphonic prose" is the purest, the most elastic, of all forms, for it follows at will any, and all, of the rules which guide other forms. Metrical verse has one set of laws, cadenced verse another; polyphonic prose can go from one to the other in the same poem with no sense of incongruity. The only touchstone is the taste and feeling of its author' (Amy Lowell, *Can Grande's Castle* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1918), p. x-xi). For more on this see: John Gould Fletcher, 'Miss Lowell's Discovery: Polyphonic Prose', *Poetry*, 6, 1 (April 1915), 32-36.
[11] Lowell, 'Bath', p. 145.
[12] Lowell, 'Bath', p. 145.
[13] Lowell, 'Bath', p. 145.

we see her find acute pleasure in this playful moment of self-reflection and self-love. It is the poem's overt celebration of female pleasure and self-pleasure that caused such an uproar when this poem was first read, then, which we see when the bather plays 'with the water and the sun spots', which 'wobble' and 'dance' 'deliciously' over her body and its surroundings, allowing the pleasure of this private moment in the bath to 'flow over' her like the narcissus-scented bathwater.[14] Lowell writes: 'I lie back and laugh, and let the green-white water, the sun-flawed beryl water, flow over me'.[15] The erotic and sensual pleasure that the bather sees in her own body is palpable; facilitated by the bathroom's real or imagined sense of privacy, the bather feels safe to explore the pleasures of her naked body.

Lowell's bather - and, indeed, herself as she reads it to the Poetry Society of America - is not ashamed of her own nakedness, as our misogynistic and fatphobic society would expect. Instead, she is 'quite possibly enthralled by it'.[16] It is this overt expression of female pleasure, eroticism and bodily self-love that brings first the audience's titters then their violent anger and rotten fruit, because, as Bradshaw so aptly puts it, in our society women and, particularly, 'fat women do not get to love their bodies, they do not get to be narcissistic'.[17] The poet's corporeality, gender and sexuality have played a key part in not just the legacy of this poem, but the legacy of the poet as well. Sarah Parker argues that Lowell's 'body and behaviour visibly defied the expectations placed on American women during both the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.[18] More than this, Lowell

> provoked scandal by smoking cigars in public; she lived extravagantly and unapologetically, co-habiting with a beloved female companion, and she did all this in a body which was defiantly fat. Moreover, through her live poetry

[14] Lowell, 'Bath', p. 145.
[15] Lowell, 'Bath', p. 145.
[16] Bradshaw, 'Remembering Amy Lowell', p. 169.
[17] Lowell, 'Bath', p. 145; Bradshaw, 'Remembering Amy Lowell', p. 169.
[18] Parker, 'Amy Lowell's Appetites', p. 3.

> readings, Lowell implicitly insisted that a connection be drawn between her body and her words, as the site and expression of pleasure.[19]

Indeed, Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw, editors of a recent essay collection on Lowell, concede that it was 'her corpulence' and 'not her considerable literary contributions' that have kept her alive in literary memory.[20] Her non-conforming body and personality meant that she did not fit with the socially acceptable image of femininity defined by British and American society at this time.

This erotically charged image of Lowell in the bathtub was all the more shocking to the Poetry Society of America, then, both because of the her weight (she was a 'physically large and verbally outspoken' woman, according to Gould) and her 'homoerotic appetites' which dance, like the 'little spots of sunshine', on the surface of this poem.[21] These two aspects of Lowell's identity contrasted with society's image of the ideal woman, or, more specifically, with the image of the middle-aged spinster, which is the version of "woman" that forty-one-year-old Lowell represented to them, whether that was how she defined herself or not. In fact, Lowell's poem demonstrates a 'level of self-love that is deemed inappropriate for a presumably celibate (and dejected) spinster'.[22] And this fact is particularly hard to ignore when the poet's naked body, luxuriating in the bathtub, is not hidden behind the safety of a locked bathroom door but celebrated in a poem for all to see.

Lowell's 'reverie on her daily life' draws together many of the strands of my thesis in its celebration of a marginalised woman's socially dirty (she was middle-aged,

---

[19] Parker, 'Amy Lowell's Appetites', p. 3-4.
[20] Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw, eds., 'Introduction', in *Amy Lowell, American Modern* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. xi-xxvii (p. xxiii).
[21] Gould, *Amy*, p. 27; Parker, 'Amy Lowell's Appetites', p. 18; Amy Lowell, 'Bath', p. 145. Parker notes that 'Lowell flaunted her fat body at a moment when the very associations of fatness were shifting from positive to negative: from a sign of prosperity to a marker of greed, laziness, and even criminality' (Parker, 'Amy Lowell's Appetites', p. 3).
[22] Galvin, *Queer Poetics*, p. 28.

overweight and a lesbian) body exploring the boundaries of her physical, emotional and sensual freedoms in the semi-private space of the bathroom, and, in its legacy, this poem also reveals how society's dominant ideologies of gender, class, age and sexuality attempt to control, contain or police this dirty body.[23] While Lowell does not explicitly reference these social or material factors in her poem, like many of the other writers in my thesis, by setting a poem in the bathroom, as a space where an individual's physical and social identities collide, Lowell invited her early twentieth-century audience to be shocked at this public display of female nudity, sensuality and pleasure, and, therefore, implicitly draws in to discussions of the poem all of the social, material and moral connotations that surrounded the bathroom spaces in this thesis. Women's experience of everyday life - their sense of identity, privacy, independence and belonging, as well as their connection to their physical bodies - is inextricably tied to everyday spaces in the material world, which become rich literal and metaphorical containers of historically specific narratives. The mundane space of the bathroom, as the space where the bodily, physical and corporeal intersect with the mental, emotional and social, reveals women's evolving relationship to her body, her sense of self, and her place within or outside society, and, as such, can be a fruitful way to think through women's ambivalent position during the first half of the twentieth century.

In my thesis, I have maintained that bathroom spaces are highly ubiquitous, yet largely forgotten, and often unspoken spaces around which women's lives are organised, whether on a conscious level, like Sasha Jansen's search for a lavabo in which to camouflage her tear-stained face, or on a more subconscious level driven by unexpressed physical or mental needs, like Lowell's moment of relaxation in the bathtub. Because of their omnipresence in the daily lives of women across the social

[23] Galvin, *Queer Poetics*, p. 27.

strata, albeit in varying levels of accessibility, luxury, cleanliness and comfort, bathroom spaces provide a useful lens through which to explore the key material and social issues that plagued them: the conflict between women's public and private selves; the discord between a dominant ideology of a potentially limited and claustrophobic domestic role and women's burgeoning independence; and the struggle to craft a sense of home, homeliness or belonging as a marginalised individual. This thesis has shown how a diverse set of writers - from Radclyffe Hall to Christina Stead to Emily Holmes Coleman - used literary bathroom spaces to think through the ambivalent position of women at this time, as the dominant ideologies of gender, class, age and sexuality arguably built into the very walls of these modern bathroom spaces inflect their imaginative representations with historically specific narratives about women's everyday lives.

Bathroom spaces are the focal point for conversations around homeliness, cleanliness and what it means to belong in a patriarchal society, particularly when this patriarchy becomes internalised. As a 'hinge between private and public realms', bathrooms act as liminal spaces of refuge, escape and imprisonment for society's dirty women, those like Lowell's 'elephantine' body imagined wallowing in the tub.[24] We followed these marginalised women into the interstitial cafe and restaurant lavatories of Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys and Olivia Manning's texts in my first chapter. Using this ambivalent semi-public, semi-private bathroom space as an imaginative lens, these writers interrogate the mutability of this seemingly standardised space, which serve different purposes for their characters depending on unspoken social factors like class, age, wealth and marital status. The ladies' lavatory, like Sasha's Parisian lavabo, offer women momentary comfort away from the more public sphere of the cafe or city street

[24] Barbara Penner, *Bathroom* (London: Reaktion, 2013), p. 10; Rollyson, *Amy Lowell Anew,* p. 11, 71.

- a small, semi-private space for women to dry their tears and reapply their public mask of powder and rouge. At the same time, however, Rhys, Manning and Woolf's writing reinforces the omnipresence of a judgmental gaze that stalks the aging, penniless, single woman. These writers use the ladies' lavatory as a literary device to confront, or encourage us to confront, the ways in which ageism and sexism intersect to marginalise the middle-aged woman in the first half of the twentieth century. Refocusing attention on underexplored aspects of women's histories, then, my first chapter reclaimed and resituated these narratives, spaces and characters, redrawing the critical map of women's everyday lives at this time.

Still loitering in the city, my second chapter examined how the hotel 'room with bath' that Sasha yearns for in *Good Morning, Midnight* is implicated in the commercial economy of the hotel.[25] As liminal spaces in the city, the hotel room and bathroom reveal the power that money, age and social status have on the levels of comfort, freedom and privacy of the women who inhabit them. Rhys' narrative overflows with feelings of claustrophobia and marginalisation as the policing public gaze penetrates the supposedly private, intimate space of the shared hotel bathroom, filling Sasha with unease. Yet the impersonal, commercial nature of the hotel has less of an impact on the relatively socially secure women of Christina Stead and Henry Green's novels. These younger, wealthier women find this gaze exciting and erotic, easily manipulated and subverted, or, indeed, escaped (for the right price). As a space for self-exploration, Stead and Green's hotel bathrooms provide their characters with a unique space where female sexual desire can be realised, yet, read alongside Rhys' novel, it is impossible to ignore its innate impermanence and unhomeliness, which reveals, on a

[25] Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, p. 33.

wider level, the impossibility of female sexual freedom in the first half of the twentieth century.

Returning once more to the unmarried, economically precarious yet supposedly liberated woman living outside of the security of marriage and the family home, my third chapter revealed how writers like Virginia Woolf, Olivia Manning and Storm Jameson imaginatively engage with lodging-house bathroom spaces in their texts. We saw these writers use the grubby washstand and shared lodging-house bathroom to dwell on the precarious position of the older woman whose independence and freedom wane with age and increasing economic instability. Always at risk of being disturbed by another lodger who might leave remnants of their ablutions around the rim of the tub, the lodging-house bathroom is enmeshed in a network of dirty, dingy social and moral associations, and comes to symbolise the bleak future that might lie in wait for a woman like Miriam Henderson.

For Miriam, as for many of the women explored in this thesis, the security of the suburban family home was not the answer to the threat of this bleak future. Often without a lock on the door and perpetually invaded by children, husbands, parents or servants, the family bathroom might be experienced as less private than many of its urban counterparts. For many women, too, the privacy that the domestic bathroom promises, and which we saw celebrated in Lowell's poem, is all too often contaminated by the labour of cleaning and childcare. The middle-class family bathroom is a much more ambivalent space than first expected, then, with writers like Radclyffe Hall, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher drawing into their novels conversations around women's confinement within the prescribed roles of the early twentieth century, roles that brought with them the often unspoken expectations of unpaid and unrecognised labour placed on women to this day. Many women, like Evangeline Knapp, Mrs Ogden and

Mrs Murphy, experience an internal conflict between performing the role of the ideal housewife, and the desire for more social, economic and sexual freedoms. Hall and Fisher tease out these limitations in the domestic bathroom spaces of their novels, which come to symbolise the confinement caused by the threat of an oppressive suburban domesticity.

We saw the negative effects of this internal conflict play out Jean Rhys' short story 'Outside the Machine'. In the character of Mrs Murphy, Rhys reveals the real unhappiness, verging on mental breakdown, that can occur when women are unable to reconcile these often contradictory parts of their identities. This idea fed into my final chapter, which examined how these women, often proclaimed mad, were ostracised from society in asylums, spas and hospitals until, like Marthe Gail and Clara Batchelor, they recover their sanity in the form of a return to the socially acceptable image of woman (daughter, wife, mother or, at a push, spinster) required of them. Yet, as we saw in my final chapter, even the most confining of bathroom spaces - the institutional bathroom - can offer the potential for escape, intimacy and a sense of belonging, reflecting the ambivalent, highly personal and mutable nature of the bathroom.

The female-only semi-private spaces within highly-ordered institutional settings, like the asylum bathrooms of Emily Holmes Coleman's *The Shutter of Snow* and Antonia White's *Beyond the Glass*, offer women temporary moments of intimacy not normally facilitated or encouraged in the outside world, enabling their protagonists to subvert the power of the asylum's patriarchal and medical authority. And, while this is not a realistic solution for women (the asylum is, after all, an abysmal and violent place), the idea of female intimacy, community and homosocial relationships illustrated by Coleman, White and Mansfield in my final chapter does offer a way for women to momentarily escape the entrapping roles and limiting ideologies enforced by society,

as well as a potential way to overcome the internalised patriarchy that this thesis has repeatedly revealed.

A lengthier study of twentieth-century bathroom spaces might have explored their importance in the work of the next generation of women writers - women, like Doris Lessing, Marylin French and Muriel Spark, writing in Britain and America from the fifties. Bathroom spaces litter these women's work in ways that are both connected and, at times, different to those explored in this thesis. Muriel Spark's novel *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), set in post-war London between V. E. Day and V. J. Day in 1945 and framed by a narrative from the early sixties, follows the inhabitants of the 'May of Teck Club', a house not too dissimilar from the women-only lodging houses of the first half of the twentieth century. In Spark's novel, we witness the unfolding tragedy as an undetonated bomb goes off in the garden, setting fire to the house with many of the inhabitants still inside. Some of the women are able to make their escape through the tiny top-floor bathroom window, which, earlier in the narrative, had become a marker of their femininity, allowing only those with enviably slim figures to sunbathe on the roof. Once again, the bathroom space in this novel becomes a literary device for Spark to explore ideas about women's identity, belonging, independence and class, as well as the often unreasonable beauty standards imposed upon them.

Bathroom spaces pervade the title and famous opening scene of Marylin French's influential novel *The Women's Room* (1977), which opens with its central character Mira Ward 'hiding in the ladies' room'.[26] French writes:

> But here she was at the age of thirty-eight huddled for safety in a toilet booth in the basement of Sever Hall [...] she was perched, fully clothed, on the edge of the open toilet seat, feeling stupid and helpless, and constantly looking at her watch.[27]

[26] Marylin French, *The Women's Room* (London: Abacus, 1988), p. 1
[27] French, p. 1.

From this opening scene, we are taken through Mira's life from the late 1940s, where she is a young woman stuck in a traditional marriage, to her gradual feminist awakening and independence in the 1960s, encountering domestic and public bathrooms of varying luxury and comfort as she progresses into and then back out of suburbia. Like many of the bathroom spaces explored in this thesis, these bathroom spaces become a sort of 'cocoon' for Mira: a literal and figurative space where she can escape the world outside.[28] Yet, just as the lavatory mirror reflected Petta Bellot's aging body, the ladies' room becomes a reminder of Mira's shortcomings, too, both in her appearance, which 'refused to coalesce in the mirror', and in her inability to consolidate her burgeoning independence, aligned in the novel with a new form of feminist living that rejects the amplified domestic feminism of mid-century America, with her lasting need to fulfil some of society's feminine expectations, and for this the narrator, who we later find out is Mira herself, calls Mira 'vain and shallow'.[29] French's bathroom spaces are markers of how the conflict influencing women's identity in the first half of the twentieth century - between a domestic femininity and expanding sexual, social and economic freedoms - evolves and changes as the century progresses.

Writing in the second half of the twentieth century, then, these women, unlike the women I explored in my thesis, were not one of the first generation to have access to bathroom spaces in the city and the home, and, as such, although they use them as literary devices through which to explore social and ideological conflicts that many of the writers in this thesis have explored, using these bathroom spaces in their writing does not hold quite the same power, importance or, indeed, shock as in the work of

[28] French, p. 2.
[29] French, p. 4.

many of their earlier counterparts. Yet, what is clear from even a brief survey of women's writing from this later period is that, even as new and evolving feminist arguments around women and their place in the home - or the 'problem that has no name' - came into play with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and the second wave feminism of the 1960s, bathroom spaces remained an important physical and psychological space for women.

A temporally lengthier study could also encompass contemporary debates around who has access to specific bathroom spaces, particularly the discourse on transgender rights taking place in Britain and America today. This could be preceded by a deeper discussion of bathroom spaces and the LGBT+ community in the early twentieth century, which this thesis only briefly touched upon in the final chapter. In particular, there is a rich history of gay men using public bathroom spaces for cottaging, which Matt Houlbrook explores in depth in his monograph *Queer London*. For an example of this, we might want to turn to Aldous Huxley's novel *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), which depicts a minor character, Beppo Bowles, approaching a young man in a public lavatory:

> On the way home from Miller's, dived into public lavatory at Marble Arch, and there ran into Beppo Bowles deep in conversation with one of those flannel-trousered, hatless young men who look like undergraduates and are, I suppose, very junior clerks or shop assistants. On B.'s face, what a mingling of elation and anxiety. Happy, drunk with thrilling anticipation, and at the same time horribly anxious and afraid. He might be turned down - unspeakable humiliation! He might not be turned down - appalling dangers! Frustration of desire, if there was failure, cruel blow to pride, wound to the very root or personality. And, if success, fear (through all the triumph) of blackmail and police, court. Poor wretch! He was horribly embarrassed at the sight of me. I just nodded and hurried past. B.'s hell - an underground lavatory with rows of urinals stretching to infinity in all directions and a boy at each. Beppo walking up and down the rows, for ever - his sweating self, but worse[30]

[30] Aldous Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 186.

Houlbrook's reading of the modern city through often overlooked spaces, like the men's public lavatory, sits in line with many of the arguments my thesis has been making and, although my primary focus has been on the everyday lives of women, an argument could be made to include other marginal figures.

Rather than a temporal expansion, a future project might want to explore other historically specific bathroom spaces that the word count of this project simply did not permit. There are many, often fleeting, references to a variety of bathroom spaces in early twentieth-century literature: the train lavatory in Katherine Mansfield's short story 'The Little Governess' (1915), or the corner of the third-class train carriage where 'peasants openly obey[ed] the dictates of nature' in Virginia Woolf's short story 'The French Woman in the Train' from the snapshot collection 'Portraits' (1937), or, indeed, the train station lavatory where Sasha realises she is pregnant in Jean Rhys' *Good Morning*, *Midnight*; the boarding-school bathroom in Henry Green's *Concluding* (1948), where a school-girl is locked 'so she could have a good cry', or the convent school bathroom in Gladys Mitchell's *St Peter's Finger* (1938), where a child is found murdered in the tub; the working-class or lower-middle-class family bathroom in Storm Jameson's *Company Parade* (1934) or George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* (1939), both offering different ideas of parental labour and domestic duty to that revealed by the middle-class family bathroom in my fourth chapter; or the upper-class domestic bathroom in May Sinclair's short story 'The Collector' (1914), briefly touched upon in my introduction, where a guest escapes a house party by hiding in 'the most secret, the most absolutely safe position in the whole house'.[31] A further project that focused

[31] Virginia Woolf, 'Portraits', in *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. by Susan Dick (London: Triad Grafton Books, 1987), pp. 324-30 (p. 326); Henry Green, *Concluding*, in *Caught, Back, Concluding* (London: Vintage, 2016), pp. 413-645 (p. 489); May Sinclair, 'The Collector', *The Century Magazine*, 87, 3 (January 1914), 321-30 (p. 71).

on these bathroom spaces could provide an insight, albeit diverging from the gendered dimension of this thesis, into the everyday lives of people across the social strata.

In my thesis, I have used everyday bathroom spaces to investigate the ambivalent social and cultural position of a range of women, from the aging, penniless spinster to the suburban housewife, to contribute to readings of women's experience of and place in modernity. Through my reading of a supposedly private space at the heart of the home and the city, I have unearthed new ways of understanding how these bathroom spaces are located, textualised and interrogated in an early twentieth-century context. I have shown how the ubiquitous yet often overlooked space of the bathroom provides a useful lens through which to explore what Virginia Woolf hailed as the 'accumulation of unrecorded life' of women navigating early twentieth-century society.[32] This thesis has reasserted the importance of examining these previously ignored or overlooked narratives and histories, whilst, at the same time, has worked to reclaim neglected women writers. In doing so, I have asserted that bathroom spaces are key sites of meaning and importance for women and women's writing at this time, building on their complex discourse of implicit social and moral anxieties to construct nuanced readings of both women's everyday lives and the key issues that affected them. By using bathroom spaces as a lens through which to explore these issues, then, this thesis offers valuable insights into the bathroom's own overlooked place in literature, and has generated new readings and rereadings of a myriad of narratives by and about women within the context of historically specific discussions of women's identity, access to public and private space, and their sense of belonging or existing in modernity.

[32] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, in *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. by Michèle Barrett (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), pp. 3-104 (p. 81).

Bibliography

Alexander, Sally, '*A Room of One's Own*: 1920s Feminist Utopias', *Women: A Cultural Review* 11, 3 (2000), 273-88

Alyson, Sarah, and Joe Chapple, 'Gay Symbols Through the Ages, in *The Alyson Almanac: A Treasury of Information for the Gay and Lesbian Community* (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1990), pp. 55-58

Anderson, Bonnie, and Judith Zinsser, *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present* (New York: Harper, 1988)

Anderson, Susan C., and Bruce H. Tabb, eds., *Water, Leisure and Culture* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002)

Andrews, Jonathan, 'Bedlam Revisited: A History of Bethlem Hospital' (unpublished thesis, Queen Mary University of London, 1991)

—— and Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker and Keir Waddington, *The History of Bethlem* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997)

Angier, Carol, *Jean Rhys* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1990)

Armstrong, Tim, *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998),

Athanassakis, Yanoula, 'The Anxiety of Racialized Sexuality in Jean Rhys'*, Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, 13, 2 (December 2016), 1-18

Aykroyd, Peter, *Queer City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2017)

Bagnold, Enid, *A Diary Without Dates* (London: William Heinemann, 1918)

—— *The Squire* (London: Virago, 1987)

Bang, Mary Jo, 'Self-Portrait in the Bathroom Mirror', *The Paris Review* (Spring 2016) <https://bit.ly/3tdPas3> [accessed 6 January 2021]

'Bank Hill toilet and Seaburn ladies' lavatories listed', *BBC News* (2 September 2020) <https://bbc.in/3bzSibQ> [accessed 5 September 2020]

Banks, Taunya Lovell, 'Toilets as a Feminist Issue: A True Story', *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law and Justice*, 6, 2 (1991), 263-89

Barcan, Ruth, 'Dirty Spaces: Communication and Contamination in Men's Public Toilets', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 6 (June 2005), 7-23

—— 'Dirty Spaces: Separation, Concealment, and Shame in the Public Toilet', in *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, ed. by Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 25-42

—— and Brian S. Barnett, Ariana E. Nesbit and Renée M. Sorrentino, 'The Transgender Bathroom Debate at the Intersection of Politics, Law, Ethics, and Science', *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 46, 2 (June 2018), 232-41

Bates, Charlotte, 'Hotel Histories: Modern Tourists, Modern Nomads and the Culture of Hotel-Consciousness', *Literature and History*, 12, 2 (2003), 62-75

Bazalgette, Joseph, *Letter of Mr J. W. Bazalgette on Establishment of Public Conveniences throughout the Metropolis* (London: Metropolitan Commission of Sewers, 1849)

Beard, Mary, 'From one lav to another', *The Times Literary Supplement* <https://bit.ly/2OkysZi> [accessed 11 March 2021]

Bell, Michael, 'The Metaphysics of Modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. by Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 9-32

Bellew, Paul Bradley, '"At the Mercy of Editorial Selection": Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, and the Imagist Anthologies', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 40, 2 (Winter 2017), 22-40
Benjamin, Walter, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1973)
Bennett, Arnold, *Imperial Palace* (London: Cassell, 1931)
—— *The Grand Babylon Hotel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972)
Benson, John, *Prime Time: A History of the Middle Aged in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997)
Bentham, Jeremy, *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. by Miran Bozovic (London: Verso, 1995)
Benvenuto, Richard, *Amy Lowell* (Woodbridge: Twayne, 1985)
Berger, Molly, *Hotel Dreams: Luxury, Technology, and Urban Ambition in America, 1829-1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011)
Betsworth, Leon, 'The Café in Modernist Literature: Wyndham Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Jean Rhys' (unpublished thesis, University of East Anglia, 2012)
Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994)
Bird, Peter, *The First Food Empire: A History of J. Lyons and Co.* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2000)
Birkett, Jennifer, *Margaret Storm Jameson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
Blackburn, Lucy Emma Charlotte, 'Antonia White, Emily Blackburn, Djuna Barnes and the literary confession' (unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2007)
Blair, Sara, 'Modernism and the Politics of Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. by Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 157-73
Blake, E. G., *Plumbing: A Text-book to the Art or Craft of the Plumber* (London: Pitman, 1930)
Blanch, Sophie, and Melissa Sullivan, eds., 'The Middlebrow - Within or Without Modernism', *Modernist Cultures* (Special Issue), 6, 1 (May 2011)
—— 'Writing Self/Delusion: Subjectivity and Scriptotherapy in Emily Holmes Coleman's *The Shutter of Snow*', in *Depression and Narrative: Telling the Dark*, ed. by Hilary Clark (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), pp. 213-28
Bland, Lucy, '"Guardians of the Race", or "Vampires Upon the Nation's Health"? Female Sexuality and its Regulation in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', in *The Changing Experience of Women*, ed. by Elizabeth Whitelegg, Madeleine Arnot, Else Bartels, Lynda Birke, Susan Himmelweit, Diana Leonard, Sonja Ruehl and Mary Ann Speakman (Oxford: Martha Robinson, 1982), pp. 373-88
Bluemel, Kristin, ed., 'Introduction', in *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 1-18
Bly, Nellie, *Ten Days in A Mad-House: Nellie Bly's Experience on Blackwell's Island* (New York: Norman L. Munro, 1887)
Bordo, Susan, 'The Body and Reproduction of Femininity', in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 165-84
Borer, Mary Cathcart, *The British Hotel Through the Ages* (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1972)

Boris, Eileen, '"You Wouldn't Want One of 'Em Dancing With Your Wife": Racialized Bodies on the Job in World War II', *American Quarterly,* 50, 1 (1998), 77-108
Boughton, John, *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (London: Verso, 2018)
Bowen, Elizabeth, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* (London: Jonathan Cape)
Bowie, David, 'Innovation and 19th century hotel industry evolution', *Tourism Management*, 64 (2018), 312-23
Bowlby, Rachel, *Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000)
—— *Everyday Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)
—— *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (London: Routledge, 2009)
Bown, Matthew, 'Toilets of our time: Where art meets defecation', *The Times Literary Supplement* (23 August 2019) <https://bit.ly/38suBAw> [accessed February 22 2021]
Bracco, Rosa Maria, *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War* (Providence and Oxford: Berg, 1993)
Bradley, Kate, 'Rational Recreation in the Age of Affluence: The Cafe and Working-Class Youth in London, c. 1939-65', in *Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Britain*, ed. by Erika Rappaport, Sandra Trudge and Mark Crowley (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 71-86
Bradshaw, David, 'Hyams Place: *The Years*, the Jews and the British Union of Fascists', in *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History,* ed. by Maroula Joannou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 179-91
Bradshaw, Melissa, 'Remembering Amy Lowell: Embodiment, Obesity, and the Construction of a Persona', in *Amy Lowell, American Modern*, ed. by Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. 167-85
—— and Adrienne Munich, eds., 'Introduction', in *Amy Lowell, American Modern* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. xi-xxvii
Bradshaw, Steve, *Café Society: Bohemian Life from Swift to Bob Dylan* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978)
Braslow, Joel, *Mental Ills and Bodily Cures: Psychiatric Treatment in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997)
Brauer, Fae, and Anthea Callen, eds., *Art, Sex and Eugenics: Corpus Delecti* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008)
Braybrook, Neville, and June Braybrook, *Olivia Manning: A Life* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2004)
Briganti, Chiara, and Kathy Mezei, eds., 'Aspidistras and Divans: Transient Spaces in the London Novel, 1920s to 1940s', in *Living with Strangers: Bedsits and Boarding Houses in Modern English Life, Literature and Film* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), pp. 26-43
—— *Domestic Modernism, the Interwar Novel and E. H. Young* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006)
—— 'House Haunting: The Domestic Novel of The Inter-War Years', *Home Cultures*, 1, 2 (2004) 147-68
—— eds., 'Introduction: Living with Strangers', in *Living with Strangers: Bedsits and Boarding Houses in Modern English Life, Literature and Film* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), pp. 1-24

Briggs, Julia, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2005)
Britzolakis, Christina, '"This way to the exhibition": Genealogies of Urban Spectacle in Jean Rhys's Interwar Fiction', *Textual Practice*, 21, 3 (2007), 457-82
Broe, Mary Lynn, 'My Art Belongs to Daddy: Incest as Exile, The Textual Economics of Hayford Hall', in *Women's Writing in Exile*, ed. by Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 41-86
Bronfen, Elisabeth, *Dorothy Richardson's Art of Memory: Space, Identity, Text* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
Brooker, Peter, *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
Brown, Erica, ed., 'Investigating the Middlebrow', *Working Papers on the Web* (Special Issue), 11, 2008 <https://bit.ly/2R3xVfA> [accessed 26 February 2021]
Brown, Patricia Leigh, 'A quest for a restroom that's neither men's room nor women's room', *The New York Times* (March 2005) <https://nyti.ms/3el35bN> [accessed 8 March 2021]
Browne, Kath, 'Genderism and the bathroom problem: (Re)materialising sexed sites, (re)creating sexed bodies', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 11, 3 (2004), 331-46
Browne-May, Andrew, and Peg Fraser, 'Gender, Respectability, and Public Convenience in Melbourne, Australia, 1859-1902', in *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender*, ed. by Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), pp. 117-46
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 'To Flush, My Dog', *Poetry Foundation* <https://bit.ly/3uiQvzg> [accessed 21 February 2021]
Brunton, Deborah, 'Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections: Public Conveniences and Private Interests in the Scottish City, 1830-1870', *Social History of Medicine*, 18, 10 (2005), 187-202
Bryden, Inga, and Janet Floyd, eds., *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
Burnett, John, *A Social History of Housing: 1815-1970* (London: Methuen, 1986)
Burton, Ruth Emma, 'Single Women, Space, and Narrative in Interwar Fiction by Women' (unpublished thesis, University of Leeds, 2015)
Calechman, Steve, 'How risky is using a public bathroom during the pandemic?', *Harvard Health Blog: Harvard Medical School* (14 July 2020) <https://bit.ly/3tbanDi> [accessed 24 August 2020]
Callil, Carmen, and Mary Siepmann, 'Introduction', in *The Shutter of Snow* (London: Virago, 1981), no page numbers given
Campkin, Ben, and Rosie Cox, eds., 'Introduction: Materialities and Metaphors of Dirt and Cleanliness', in *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination*, ed. by Ben Campkin and Rosie Cox (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), pp. 1-8
—— and Paul Dobraszczyk, 'Architecture and Dirt Introduction', *The Journal of Architecture*, 12, 4 (2007) 347-51
Carr, Helen, *Jean Rhys* (London: Northcote House, 2012)
Cavanagh, Sheila L., *Queering Bathrooms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010)
Celoria, Francis, *Water-Closets: Past, Present and Future* (Stoke-on-Trent: Gladstone Pottery Museum, 1981)
Census of England and Wales, *General Report* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1931)

Chalk, Bridget, 'The Semi-Public Sphere, Maternity, and Regression in Rhys and Mansfield', *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 28, 3 (2017), 217-37
Chapman, Tony, *Gender and Domestic Life: Changing Practices in Families and Households* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
Chesler, Phyllis, *Women and Madness* (London: Allen Lane, 1974)
Chun, Allen, 'Flushing in the Future: The Supermodern Japanese Toilet in a Changing Domestic Culture', *Postcolonial Studies*, 5, 2 (2002), 153-70
Clarke, John J., 'Slums and the Housing Act, 1930', *The Town Planning Review*, 14, 3 (May 1931), 163-93
Clarke, Simon, and Rebecca Pow, 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): letter to councils on the re-opening of public toilets and tips', *gov.uk* (28 June 2020) <https://bit.ly/3l5co0V> [accessed 11 March 2021]
Clements, Mikaella, 'The slow clean: Mikaella Clements on the role of baths in twentieth-century literature', *The Times Literary Supplement* (6 September 2019) <https://bit.ly/3t6nrK3> [accessed 7 September 2019]
Cohen, William, and Ryan Johnson, eds., *Filth: Dirt, Disgust and Modern Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005)
Coleman, Emily Holmes, *The Shutter of Snow* (London: Virago, 1981)
—— *Rough Draft: The Modernist Diaries of Emily Holmes Coleman, 1929-1937*, ed. by Elizabeth Podnieks (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2012)
Collecott, Diana, *H. D. and Sapphic Modernism, 1910-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)
Colman, Penny, *Toilets, Bathtubs, Sinks, and Sewers: A History of the Bathroom* (New York: Atheneum, 1994)
Connor, Steven, 'Virginia Woolf, the Baby and the Bathwater' <http://goo.gl/pKWjAC> [accessed 21 February 2021]
Conor, Liz, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004)
Cook, Matt, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
Cooper, Lettice, *The New House* (London: Virago, 1987)
Cooper, Patricia, and Ruth Oldenziel, 'Cherished Classifications: Bathrooms and the Construction of Gender/Race on the Pennsylvania Railroad During World War II', *Feminist Studies*, 25, 1 (Spring 1999), 7-41
Cosslett, Tess, 'Childbirth from the Woman's Point of View in British Women's Fiction: Enid Bagnold's *The Squire* and A. S. Byatt's *Still Life*', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 8, 2 (Autumn 1989), 263-86
Covington, Elizabeth, 'Reclaiming Memory: Literature, Science, and the Rise of Memory as Property, 1860-1945' (unpublished thesis, Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, 2001)
—— 'Splitting the Husk: The Day Novel and Storm Jameson's *A Day Off*', *Genre*, 46, 3 (Fall 2013), 265-84
Cowan, Brian, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2008)
Cowan, Ruth Schwartz, *More Work For Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth of the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983)
Cox, Stephanie C., Clare Hocking, and Deborah Payne, 'Showers: from a violent treatment to an agent of cleansing', *History of Psychiatry*, 30, 1 (2019), 58-7
Cuming, Emily, *Housing, Class and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

Cunningham, Valentine, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)
Dalby, Thomas J., 'Terms of Madness: Historical Linguistics', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 34, 6 (1993), 392-95
David, Dierdre, *Olivia Manning: A Woman at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
Davidoff, Leonore, 'The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century England', in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. by Sandra Burman (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 64-97
Davidson, Joyce, *Phobic Geographies: The Phenomenology and Spatiality of Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003)
Davidson, Lisa Pfeuller, '"A Service Machine": Hotel Guests and the Development of an Early-Twentieth-Century Building Type', *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 10 (2005), 113-29
Davies, Margaret Llewelyn, ed., *Life as We Have Known It* (London: Virago, 2012)
Dean, Stella, 'Emily Hilda Young's *Miss Mole*: Female Modernity and the Insufficiencies of the Domestic Novel', *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 30, 3 (2001), 351-68
Dearborn, Mary, 'Daisy Miller with Rather More Balls: Biographical Notes on Peggy Guggenheim', in *Hayford Hall: Hangovers, Erotics, and Modernist Aesthetics*, ed. by Elizabeth Podnieks and Sandra Chait (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), pp. 27-45
DeJean, Joan, *The Age of Comfort* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009)
Delap, Lucy, 'Housework, Housewives, and Domestic Workers', *Home Cultures*, 8, 2 (July 2011), 189-209
Dell'Amico, Carol, *Colonialism and the Modernist Moment in the Early Novels of Jean Rhys* (London: Routledge, 2005)
Dellamora, Richard, *Radclyffe Hall: A Life in the Writing* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011)
Dick, Kay, *Friends and Friendship: Conversations and Reflections* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1974)
Digby, Anne, *Madness, Morality and Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
—— 'Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives on the Asylum', in *Problems and Methods in the History of Medicine*, ed. By Roy Porter and Andrew Weird (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 153-74
Directive Respondent (9141), reply to July 1950 Directive, Mass Observation Archive
Donnelly, Michael, *Managing the Mind: A Study of Medieval Psychology in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York: Tavistock, 1983).
Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 2012)
Draznin, Yaffa Claire, *Victorian London's Middle-Class Housewife: What She Did All Day* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001)
Drewery, Claire, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011)
Dunn, Jane, *Antonia White* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998)
Edwards, Arthur, *The Design of Suburbia* (London: Pembridge Press, 1981)
Ellis, Aytoun, *The Penny Universities: A History of the Coffee-Houses* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956)
Ellis, Markman, *The Coffeehouse: A Cultural History* (London: Orion, 2011)

Emery, Mary Lou, *Jean Rhys at World's End: Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990)
Eveleigh, David J., *Bogs, Baths and Basins: The Story of Domestic Sanitation* (Stroud: Sutton, 2002)
—— *Privies and Water Closets* (London: Shire, 2008)
Falcus, Sarah, 'Unsettling Ageing in Three Novels by Pat Barker', *Ageing and Society*, 32, 8 (2012), 1382-98
Featherstone, Mike, 'The Body in Consumer Culture', in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 170-96
—— and Mike Hepworth, 'The mask of ageing and the postmodern life course', in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 371-89
Feinstein, Elaine, 'Introduction', in *Women Against Men* (London: Virago, 1982), pp. vii-xii
Felski, Rita, *The Gender of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
Fernández, Laura de la Parra, 'Subversive Wanderings in the City of Love: Constructing the Female Body in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*', *ES Review: Spanish Journal of English Studies*, 39 (2018), 215-32
Fisher, Dorothy Canfield, *The Home-Maker* (London: Persephone, 2015)
Fleming, Amy, 'Keep it clean: The surprising 130-year history of handwashing', *The Guardian* (18 March 2020) <https://bit.ly/38w4lVF> [accessed 18 March 2020]
Fletcher, John Gould, 'Miss Lowell's Discovery: Polyphonic Prose', *Poetry*, 6, 1 (April 1915), 32-36
Foltz, Mary, *Contemporary American Literature and Excremental Culture: American Sh*t* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)
Forman, James, *Sammy Younge, Jr: The First Black College Student to Die in the Black Liberation Movement* (New York: Open Hand, 1968)
Forty, Adrian, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society, 1750-1980* (London: Thames, 1986)
Foucault, Michel, *The Birth of the Clinic*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York and London: Routledge, 2003)
—— *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977)
—— 'The Eye of Power: A Conversation with Jean Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings,* ed. by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon, 1980), pp. 146-65
Frascari, Marco, 'The Pneumatic Bathroom', *Plumbing: Sounding Modern Architecture,* ed. by Nadir Lahiji and D. S. Friedman (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), pp. 163-80
Free, Imogen, '"Outside the Machine": Stasis and Conflict in the work of Jean Rhys', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 31, 2 (August 2020), 211-23
French, Marylin, *The Women's Room* (London: Abacus, 1988)
Frickey, Pierrette M., *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys.* (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1990)
Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin, 2010)
'From the Surreal to the Decorative', *Tate Etc* <https://bit.ly/3ebdPt7> [accessed 5 March 2021]

Fromm, Gloria, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977)
Furman, Frida, 'There are no old Venuses: Older women's responses to their ageing bodies', in *Mothertime: Women, Ageing and Ethics*, ed. by Margaret Urban Walker (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), pp. 7-22
Fuss, Diana, *The Sense of an Interior: Four Rooms and the Writers that Shaped Them* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004)
Galat, Joshua R., 'Modernism, Mental Hygiene, and the Embodiment of Mental Disability', J*ournal of Modern Literature*, 42, 2 (Winter 2019), 113-31
Gallagher, Lucy, 'The Contemporary Middlebrow Novel: (Post)Feminism, Class and Domesticity' (unpublished thesis, Newcastle University, 2011)
Galvin, Mary, *Queer Poetics: Five Modernist Women Writers* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999),
Gan, Wendy, *Women, Privacy and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century British Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)
Garrity, Jane, *Step-Daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)
Gedes, Minna Besser, 'Emily Holmes Coleman', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939,* ed. by Karen Lane Rood (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1980), IV, pp. 71-77
Gershenson, Olga, and Barbara Penner, eds., 'Introduction: The Private Life of Public Conveniences', in *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), pp. 1-32
Gibbens, Sarah, 'Could flushing a public toilet really spread COVID-19?', *National Geographic* (22 June 2020) <https://bit.ly/3clHwFh> [accessed 19 March 2021]
Giedion, Siegfried, *Mechanization Takes Command: Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (London: Norton, 1969)
Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Women Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984)
—— and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Women Writer in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989)
Giles, Judy, 'A Home of One's Own: Women and Domesticity in England, 1918-1950', *Women's Studies International Forum,* 16, 3 (1993), 239-53
—— *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004)
—— *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-50* (London: Macmillan, 1995)
Gilleard, Chris, 'Women, ageing and body talk', in *Cultural Gerontology*, ed. by Lars Andersson (Westport: Auburn House, 2002), pp. 139-60
—— and Paul Higgs, *Culture of Ageing: Self, Citizen and the Body* (London: Prentice-Hall, 2000)
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)
Gordon, Lyndall, *Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)
Gould, Jean, *Amy: The World of Amy Lowell and the Imagist Movement* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975)
Goulding, Simon, 'The Sound of the Suburbs: Orwell, Bowling and the Estates in *Coming Up for Air*', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the*

Representation of London, 7, 1 (March 2009) <https://bit.ly/3bR7eTf> [accessed 16 March 2021]
Gramigna, Remo, 'Toilet Cultures: Boundaries, Dirt and Disgust', in *Things in Culture, Culture in Things*, ed. by Patrick Laviolette and Anu Kannike (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2013), pp. 256-79
Granville, A. B., *Spas of England and Principle Sea-Bathing Places* (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1841)
Granville, Joseph Mortimer, *The Care and Cure of the Insane* (London: Hardwicke and Bogne, 1977)
Graves, Robert, and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939* (New York: Norton, 1963)
Gray, Dorothy, *Hotel Receptionist* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1944)
Greed, Clara, 'Creating a nonsexist restroom', in *Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, ed. by Harvey Molotoch and Laura Norén (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 117-41
—— 'Join the queue: Including women's toilet needs in public space', *The Sociological Review*, 67, 4 (2019), 908-26
—— and Jo Anne Bichard, '"Ladies or gents": Gender division in toilets', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 19, 4 (2012), 545-47
Green, Henry, *Concluding*, in *Caught, Back, Concluding* (London: Vintage, 2016), pp. 413-645
—— *Party Going*, in *Loving, Living, Party Going* (London: Pan Books, 1982), pp. 383-528
Greenhalgh, Charlotte, *Aging in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018)
Gullette, Margaret Morganroth, 'Creativity, Aging, Gender: A Study of Their Intersections, 1910–1935', in *Aging and Gender in Literature: Studies in Creativity*, ed. by Anne M. Wyatt-Brown and Janice Rosen (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1993), pp. 19-48
Hall, Lucy, 'Men of the House: Oppressive Husbands and Displaced Wives in Interwar, War and Postwar Women's Fiction', in *British Women's Writing, 1930 to 1960: Between the Waves*, ed. by Sue Kennedy and Jane Thomas (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 161-78
Hall, Radclyffe, *The Unlit Lamp* (London: Virago, 1981)
Halliday, Stephen, *The Great Stink of London: Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the Cleansing of the Victorian Metropolis* (Cheltenham: History Press, 2001)
—— 'On (and In) The Sewers (and Sewage) That Transformed Paris: The Secret of a World Class City', *Literary Hub* <https://bit.ly/3exKwRI> [accessed 6 January 2021]
Hankin, Cherry, *Katherine Mansfield and Her Confessional Stories* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984)
Hanscombe, Gillian E., and Virginia L. Smyers, *Writing for their Lives: The Modernist Women, 1910-1940* (New Hampshire: Northeastern University Press, 1988)
Hapgood, Lynne, *Margins of Desire: The Suburbs in Fiction and Culture, 1880-1925* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005)
—— and Nancy L. Paxton, eds., *Outside Modernism: In Pursuit of the English Novel, 1900–30* (New York: Palgrave, 2000)
Hargreaves, Tracey, '"I Should Explain He Shares My Bath": Art and Politics in *The Years*', *English: The Journal of the English Association*, 50 (2001), 183-98

Harper, Charles George, *The Old Inns of Old England* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1906)
Harman, Claire, *Sylvia Townsend Warner: A Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989)
Harmon, Rebecca Bouterie, 'Hydrotherapy in State Mental Hospitals in the Mid-Twentieth Century', *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 30, 8 (2009), 491-94
Harris, Margaret, 'Introduction to the new Text Classic edition', *The Conversation* <https://bit.ly/3qnFdGO> [accessed 2 November 2020]
Harvey, Melinda, 'Dwelling, Poaching, Dreaming: Housebreaking and Homemaking in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*', in *Inside Out: Women Negotiating, Subverting, Appropriating Public and Private Space*, ed. by Teresa Gomez Reus and Aránzazu Usandizaga (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 167-88
Haug, Wolfgang Fritz, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society,* trans. by Robert Bock (London: Polity Press, 1986)
Hayner, Norman, 'Hotel Life and Personality', *American Journal of Sociology*, 33, 5 (March 1928), 784-95
Healy, Spring, 'The Madwoman Persists: Expression as Resistance in Emily Holmes Coleman's *The Shutter of Snow* and H. D.'s *HERmione*' (unpublished honors project, Bowling Green State University, 2017)
Hentea, Marius, *Henry Green and the Limits of Modernism* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2014)
Hepworth, Mike, *Stories of Ageing* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000)
Higgs, Mary, *Glimpses into the Abyss* (Glasgow: Good Press, 2019)
Higonnet, Margaret, and Patrice Higonnet, 'The Double Helix', in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars,* ed. by Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (London: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 31-47
Hite, Molly, 'The Public Woman and the Modernist Turn: Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* and Elizabeth Robins's *My Little Sister*', *Modernism/modernity*, 17, 3 (2010), 523-48
Hoagland, Alison K., 'Introducing the Bathroom: Space and Change in Working-Class Houses', *Buildings and Landscapes*, 18, 2 (Fall 2011), 15-42
Hoath, David, *Council Housing* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1978)
Holden, Katherine, *The Shadow of Marriage: Singleness in England, 1914-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010)
Hopkinson, Lyndall Passerini, *Nothing to Forgive: A Daughter's Story of Antonia White* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988)
Horan, Julie L., *The Porcelain God: A Social History of the Toilet* (New Jersey: Carol, 1996)
Horrocks, John, '"In their Nakeds": Katherine Mansfield and Neurasthenia at Bad Worishofen', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 32 (2014), 121-42
Houlbrook, Matt, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)
Howells, Coral Ann, *Jean Rhys* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1991)
Hubbard, L. D., 'Hydrotherapy in the Mental Hospital', *The American Journal of Nursing*, 27, 8 (August 1927), 642-44
Humble, Nicola, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)
Huxley, Aldous, *Eyeless in Gaza* (London: Vintage, 2004)

Inglis, David, *A Sociological History of Excretory Experience* (Michigan: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001)
Ingram, Madelene Elliott, *Principles of Psychiatric Nursing* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1940)
Isaksen, Lise Widding, 'Masculine Dignity and the Dirty Body', *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 10, 3 (2002), 137-46
—— 'Toward a Sociology of (Gendered) Disgust, *Journal of Family Issues*, 23, 7 (October 2002), 791-811
Jack, Peter Monro, 'Virginia Woolf's Richest Novel', *The New York Times* (April 11 1937) <https://goo.gl/gbGF1d> [accessed 21 February 2021]
Jackson, Alan, *The Middle Classes, 1900-1950* (Melksham: Redwood Press, 1988)
—— *Semi-Detached London: Suburban Development, Life and Transport, 1900-39* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973)
Jackson, Lee, *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight Against Filth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015)
James, David, 'Localizing Late Modernism: Interwar Regionalism and the Genesis of the "Micro Novel"', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 32, 4 (Summer 2009), 43-64
—— 'Introduction', in *Modernism and Close Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 1-16
Jameson, Storm, 'Bored Wives', *The Evening News* (1 October 1928)
—— *Company Parade* (London: Virago, 1985)
—— *A Day Off*, in *Women Against Men* (London: Virago, 1982), pp. 193-293
—— 'Documents', in *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, ed. by Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 556-59
Jeffreys, Sheila, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1997)
Joannou, Maroula, "*Ladies, Please Don't Smash These Windows": Women's Writing, Feminist Consciousness and Social Change, 1918-38* (Oxford: Berg, 1995)
—— ed., 'The Woman Writer in the 1930s - On Not Being Mrs Giles of Durham City', in *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 1-15
Johnson, Erica L., *Home Maison Casa* (London: Associated University Press, 2003)
Jones, Charlotte, and Jen Slater, 'The toilet debate: Stalling trans possibilities and defending "women's protected spaces"', *The Sociological Review*, 68, 4 (2020), 834-51
Jones, Lora, 'Coronavirus: What's behind the great toilet roll grab?', *BBC News* (26 March 2020) <https://bbc.in/2ODSI89> [accessed 11 March 2021]
Jordan, Fiona, 'Gendered discourses of tourism: The experiences of mid-life women travelling solo' (unpublished thesis, University of Gloucestershire, 2003)
Joyce, James, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
Kennedy, Sue, and Jane Thomas, eds., *British Women's Writing, 1930 to 1960: Between the Waves* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020),
Kerry, Stephen Craig, 'Hypospadias, the "Bathroom Panopticon," and Men's Psychological and Social Urinary Practices', in *Masculinities in a Global Era*, ed. by Joseph Gelfer (New York: Springer, 2014), pp. 215-28
King, James, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994),
King, Jeanette, *Discourses of Ageing in Fiction and Feminism: The Invisible Woman* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)
Kira, Alexander, *The Bathroom* (London: Viking Press, 1976),

Kneipp, Sebastian, *My Water-Cure* (Varanasi: Pilgrims Publishing, 2002)
Knox, Karen, 'Preface', in *The Home-Maker* (London: Persephone, 2015), pp. v-xiv
Kogan, Terry, 'Sex Segregation: The Cure All for Victorian Social Anxiety', in *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, ed. by Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 145-64
—— 'Sex-separation in public restrooms: Law, architecture, and gender', *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law*, 14 (2007), 1-54
Konzett, Delia Caparoso, *Ethnic Modernisms: Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys and the Aesthetics of Dislocation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)
Kracauer, Siegfried, 'The Hotel Lobby', in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 173-85
Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1982)
Laporte, Dominique, *History of Shit*, trans. by Nadia Benabid and Rodolphe el-Khoury (London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1978)
Lassner, Phyllis, "The Milk of Our Mother's Kindness has Ceased to Flow": Virginia Woolf, Stevie Smith, and the Representation of the Jew', in *Between "Race" and Culture: Representations of "the Jew" in English and American Literature*, ed. by Bryan Cheyette (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 129-44
—— 'The Necessary Jew', in *Varieties of Antisemitism: History, Ideology, Discourse*, ed. by Murray Baumgarten, Peter Kenez and Bruce Thompson (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2009), pp. 292-314
Lee, Amy, 'Emily Holmes Coleman', *Review of Contemporary Fiction,* 25, 1 (Spring 2005), 116-38
Lee, Hermione, 'Virginia Woolf and Offence', in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. by John Batchelor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 129-50
—— *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997)
Lennep, D. J. van, 'The Hotel Room', in *Phenomenological Psychology: The Dutch School*, ed. by Joseph J. Kockelmans (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), pp. 209-15
Levenson, Michael, *The Humanities and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)
Levy, Heather, *The Servants of Desire in Virginia Woolf's Shorter Fiction* (London: Peter Lang, 2010)
—— '"These Ghost Figures of Distorted Passion": Becoming Privy to Working-Class Desire in "The Watering Place" and "The Ladies Lavatory"', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 50, 1 (Spring 2004), 31-57
Lewis, Jane, *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1984)
Lewis, Sinclair, *Mantrap* (London: Cape, 1926)
'Lift the Lid: A Zine About Toilets', *Around the Toilet* <https://bit.ly/3cq3OWD> [accessed 3 February 2018]
Light, Alison, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991)
—— *Mrs Woolf and the Servants: The Hidden Heart of Domestic Service* (London: Fig Tree, 2007)
Linett, Maren Tova, 'The Jew in the Bath: Imperilled Imagination in Woolf's *The Years*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 48, 2 (Summer 2002), 341-61

—— *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
'Lodging Houses', *UK Parliament* <https://bit.ly/2Ml0wLk> [accessed 21 February 2021]
Longhurst, Robyn, *Bodies* (London: Routledge, 2001)
—— 'Some Thoughts on Close(t) Spaces', in *The Cultural Geography Reader*, ed. by Timothy Oakes and Patricia Price (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 388-94
Loos, Adolf, 'Plumbers', in *Plumbing: Sounding Modern Architecture*, ed. by Nadir Lahiji and D. S. Friedman (New York: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 15-19
Lowell, Amy, 'Bath', in *The Complete Poetical Works of Amy Lowell* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), p. 145
—— *Can Grande's Castle* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1918)
Lupton, Ellen, and J. Abbott Miller, *Bathrooms, Kitchens and the Aesthetics of Waste* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992)
Macaulay, Rose, *Keeping Up Appearances* (London: Methuen, 1986)
MacDonald, Kate, 'The Use of London Lodgings in Middlebrow Fiction, 1900–1930s', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, 9, 1 (March 2011) <https://bit.ly/3qR38iY> [accessed 23 February 2021]
Macinol, John, *The Politics of Retirement in Britain, 1878-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
Manfreda, Marguerite Lucy, and Kathleen McLean Steele, *Psychiatric Nursing*, 6th edn (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1959)
Manning, Olivia, *The Doves of Venus* (London: Virago, 1991)
Mansfield, Katherine, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Margaret Scott and Vincent O'Sullivan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), I
—— *The Collected Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin, 2007)
—— 'Epilogue III: Bains Turcs', *Katherine Mansfield Society*, pp. 1-3 <https://bit.ly/3i1Bhrd> [accessed 24 September 2020]
—— *In a German Pension* (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1929)
—— *Journal of Katherine Mansfield,* ed. by John Middleton Murray (London: Constable, 1984)
Marcus, Sharon, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)
Martin, Kirsty, 'Modernism and the Medicalization of Sunlight', *Modernism/modernity*, 23, 2 (April 2016), 423-41
Matthias, Bettina, *The Hotel as Setting in Early Twentieth-Century German and Austrian Literature: Checking in to Tell a Story* (London: Camden House, 2006)
McClintock, Anne, *Imperial Leather* (New York and London: Routledge: 1995)
McCracken, Scott, 'Embodying the New Woman: Dorothy Richardson, Work and the London Cafe', in *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality*, ed. by Avril Horner and Angela Keane (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 58-74
—— 'Imagining the Modernist City', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. by Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gąsiorek, Deborah Longworth and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 637-54
—— 'Introduction: Modernism and the Everyday', *Modernist Cultures*, 2, 1 (May 2006), 1-5
—— *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)

—— ‘Voyages by Teashop: An Urban Geography of Modernism’, in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 86-98
McGlynn, Cathy, ‘“No One Noticed Her”: Ageing Spinsters and Youth Culture in Sylvia Townsend, Warner’s Short Stories’, in *Ageing Women in Literature and Visual Culture*, ed. by Cathy McGlynn, Margaret O’Neill and Michaela Schrage-Früh (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 111-28
Meiners, Erica R., and Therese Quinn, ‘Toilet Trouble’, *Windy City Times* (December 2015) <https://bit.ly/3kpLLmS> [accessed 26 February 2021]
‘The Metropolitan Hotel Movement’, *The Observer* (16 October 1864)
Metzl, Jonathan, ‘From scopophilia to Survivor: A brief history of voyeurism’, *Textual Practice*, 18, 3 (2004), 415-34
Miller, Nancy K., ‘The Marks of Time’, in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 3-19
Mitchell, Gladys, *St. Peter’s Finger* (London: Vintage, 2014)
Mitsi, Efterpi, ‘Private Ritual and Public Selves: The Turkish Bath in Women’s Travel Writing’, in *Inside Out: Women Negotiating, Subverting Appropriating Public and Private Selves*, ed. by Teresa Gomez Reus (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 47-63
Moelders, Britta Maren, ‘A Feminist and Foucauldian Reading of Coleman and White’ (unpublished thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2012)
Molesworth, Helen, ‘Bathrooms and Kitchens: Cleaning House with Duchamp’, in *Plumbing: Sounding Modern Architecture*, ed. by Nadir Lahiji and D. S. Friedman (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), pp. 75-92
Molotch, Harvey, and Laura Norén, eds., *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing* (New York: New York University Press, 2010)
Moran, Patricia, *Antonia White and Manic-Depressive Illness* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018)
Morgan, Margaret, ‘The Plumbing of Modern Life’, *Post-Colonial Studies Journal*, 5 (September 2002), 1-19
Mullholland, Terri, ‘Between Illusion and Reality, “Who’s to Know”: Threshold Spaces in the Interwar Novels of Jean Rhys’, *Women: A Cultural Review*, 23, 4 (2012), 445-62
—— *British Boarding Houses in Interwar Women’s Literature: Alternative Domestic Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2017)
—— ‘The Literature of the Boarding House: Female Transient Space in the 1930s’ (unpublished thesis, The Queen’s College, University of Oxford, 2011)
Mulvey, Laura, *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times* (London: Reaktion, 2019)
—— ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, *Screen*, 16, 3 (Autumn 1975), 6-18
Munoz, Jesse, ‘*Good Morning, Midnight*: Masks and Consequences’, *The Artifice* <https://bit.ly/3t9fELA> [accessed December 20 2020]
Newton, Esther, ‘The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman’, *Signs*, 9, 4 (Summer 1984), 557-75
Nicholson, Harold, ‘Marginal Comment’, *The Spectator* (12 March 1948)
North Wales Counties Lunatic Asylum, *Annual Report 1871* (Denbeigh: The Asylum, 1872)
Oliver, Jane, and Ann Stafford, *Business As Usual* (Bath: Handheld Press, 2020)
Olson, Liesl, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Oró-Piqueras, Maricel, ‘The complexities of female aging: Four women protagonists in Penelope Lively’s novels’, *Journal of Aging Studies*, 36 (2016), 10-16
Orwell, George, *Coming Up for Air* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974)
Palmer, Roy, *The Water-Closet: A New History* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973)
Panken, Shirley, *Virginia Woolf and the “Lust of Creation”: A Psychoanalytic Exploration* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987)
Parke, Phoebe, ‘This Viral Story About A Woman Crying In A Bathroom Stall Will Make You Weep’, *Grazia* (22 August 2019) <https://bit.ly/3bAdUEY> [accessed 28 August 2019]
Parker, Sarah, ‘Amy Lowell’s Appetites: Food, Consumption and Homoerotic Desire in Amy Lowell’s Poetry’, in *Fat Sex: New Directions in Theory and Activism*, ed. by Helen Hester and Caroline Walters (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 159-80
Parliamentary Papers, 1852-3, LXXVIII, Common Lodging House Act, Report to the Secretary of State for Home Department
Parsons, Deborah, *Streetwalking the Metropolis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
Partridge, Joanna, and Sarah Butler, ‘Toilet roll sales rise by more than a fifth amid new UK Covid-19 restrictions’, *The Guardian* (22 September 2020) <https://bit.ly/3t7Ykqa> [accessed 11 March 2021]
Penner, Barbara, *Bathroom* (London: Reaktion, 2013)
—— ‘Entangled with a User: Inside Bathrooms with Alexander Kira and Peter Greenaway’, in *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, ed. by Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 229-52
—— ‘The Flexible Heart of the Home’, *Places* <https://bit.ly/3sGy1af> [accessed 2 March 2021]
—— ‘World of Unmentionable Suffering’, *Journal of Design History*, 14 (2001), 35-52
Pernick, Martin, ‘Contagion and Culture’, *American Literary History*, 14 (Winter 2002), 858-65
Pham, Larissa, ‘A Bathroom of One’s Own’, *The Paris Review* (March 2019) <https://bit.ly/2OKf1cs> [accessed 11 March 2021]
Pilkey, Brent, Rachael M. Scicluna and Andrew Gorman-Murray, ‘Alternative Domesticities’, *Home Cultures*, 12, 2 (2015), 27-138
Pizzichini, Lilian, *The Blue Hour* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009)
Podnieks, Elizabeth, *Daily Modernism: The Literary Diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth Smart, and Anaïs Nin* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000)
—— and Sandra Chait, eds., *Hayford Hall: Hangovers, Erotics, and Modernist Aesthetics* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005)
—— ‘Introduction’, in *Rough Draft: The Modernist Diaries of Emily Holmes Coleman, 1929-1937* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2012), pp. xi-xlvi
Pollock, Griselda, ‘Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity’, in *Vision and Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 50-90
—— *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003)
Port, Cynthia, ‘Ages are the Stuff!: The Traffic in Ages in Interwar Britain’, *National Women’s Studies Association Journal*, 18, 1 (Spring 2006), 138-61

—— '"Money, for the night is coming": Jean Rhys and Gendered Economies of Ageing', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 12, 2 (2001), 204-17
Pready, Joanna Elaine, 'Liminality in a London Hotel: Henry Green's *Party Going* and the Impact of Space on Identity', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, 7, 1 (March 2009) <https://bit.ly/3aI19rj> [accessed 21 April 2020]
—— 'The power of place: re-negotiating identity in hotel fiction' (unpublished thesis, University of Nottingham, 2009)
Pritchard, Annette, and Nigel Morgan, 'Hotel Babylon? Exploring Hotels as Liminal Sites of Transition and Transgression', *Tourism Management*, 27 (2006), 762-72
Ramster, Gail, Clara Greed and Jo Anne Bichard, 'How inclusion can exclude: The care of public toilet provision for women', *Built Environment*, 44, 1 (2018), 52-76
Randall, Bryony, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
Rappaport, Erika, *Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-Century* (London: Routledge, 2015)
—— 'Either ladies didn't go out or ladies didn't "go"', in *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 79-85
Ravetz, Alison, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of Social Experiment* (London: Routledge, 2001)
—— 'A View from the Interior', in *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design*, ed. by Just Attfield and Patricia Kirkman (London: The Women's Press, 1989), pp. 187-205
Reed, Christopher, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004)
—— 'Introduction', in *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), pp. 7-17
Renk, Kathleen Williams, '"Blackberrying in the Sun"? Modernism and the Ageing Woman in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent*', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27, 3 (2016), 317-28
Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Bethnal Green, Wellcome Library <https://bit.ly/3c8NI4T> [accessed 2 April 2020]
Rhodes, Harrison, 'The Hotel Guest', *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 138 (May 1919), 753-64
Rhys, Jean, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (London: Penguin, 2000)
—— *Good Morning, Midnight* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987)
—— *Letters 1931-1966*, ed. by Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly (London: Andre Deutsch, 1984)
—— 'Outside the Machine', in *Tigers are Better-Looking* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 78-100
—— *Quartet* (London: Penguin, 2000)
—— *Smile Please* (London: Penguin, 1981)
Richardson, D. J., 'J. Lyons and Co. Ltd: Caterers and Food Manufacturers, 1894-1939', in *The Making of the Modern British Diet*, ed. by Derek Oddy and Derek Miller (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 161-72
Richardson, Dorothy, *Deadlock*, in *Pilgrimage* (London: Virago, 1979), III, pp. 9-230

—— *Interim*, in *Pilgrimage* (London: Virago, 1992), II, pp. 289-453
—— *Revolving Lights*, in *Pilgrimage* (London: Virago, 1979), III, pp. 231-396
—— *The Tunnel*, in *Pilgrimage* (London: Virago, 1992), II, pp. 9-288
—— 'Where is Miss Jameson's Suburbia?', *The Evening News* (2 October 1928)
Rollyson, Carl, *Amy Lowell Anew: A Biography* (Blue Ridge Summit: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013)
Rosner, Victoria, *The Architecture of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005)
Rowley, Hazel, *Christina Stead: A Biography* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1993)
Rubenstein, William D., *Twentieth-Century Britain: A Political History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)
Ryf, Robert S., *Henry Green* (Columbia and New York: Columbia University Press, 1967)
Sands, Irving Jesse, *Nervous and Mental Diseases for Nurses* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1930)
Savory, Elaine, *Jean Rhys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
'Savoy Hotel Extension', *British Architect*, 61, 19 (6 May 1904), 342-43
Schneiderman, Deborah, and Bishakh Kumar Son, *The Prefab Bathroom* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014)
Schroder, Leena Kore, *Modernism and the Idea of Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014)
Schuchter, Veronika, '"You cannot imagine how much I long to have a house, a room, or two, a cave of my own": Rooms and Homes in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, "Outside the Machine" and "Sleep it Off Lady"', *Peer English*, 9 (2014), 12-25
Schwartz, Barry, 'The Social Psychology of Privacy', *American Journal of Sociology*, 73, 6 (May 1968), 741-52
Scott, Bonnie Kime, ed., *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2007)
—— ed., 'Introduction', in *The Gender of Modernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 1-18
Scull, Andrew, *Social Order/Mental Disorder: Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989)
Sebba, Anne, *Enid Bagnold; A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986)
—— 'Introduction', in *The Squire* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. v-xxi
Segal, Lynne, *Out of Time: The Pleasures and Perils of Ageing* (London: Verso, 2015)
Sharp, Thomas, *Town and Countryside: Some Aspects of Urban and Rural Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932)
Sheringham, Michael, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)
Shiach, Morag, 'Modernism, the City and the "Domestic Interior"', *Home Cultures*, 2, 3 (2005), 251-67
—— *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
Shifrin, Malcolm, *Victorian Turkish Baths* (Swindon: Historic England, 2015)
Short, Emma, 'No Place Like Home: The Hotel in Modernist Women's Writing' (unpublished thesis, Newcastle University, 2011)
Shorter, Edward, *A History of Psychiatry* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1997)
Shove, Elizabeth, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience* (Oxford: Berg, 2003)

Showalter, Elaine, 'Afterword', in *The Home-Maker* (London: Persephone Books, 2015), pp. 269-79
—— *The Female Malady* (London: Virago, 1988)
—— 'Victorian Women and Insanity', *Victorian Studies*, 23, 2 (Winter 1980), 157-81
Sibley, David, *Geographies of Exclusion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995)
Silver, Brenda, *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983)
Simmons, Jack, 'Railways, Hotels, and Tourism in Great Britain, 1839-1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19, 2 (April 1984), 201-22
Sims, George R., 'Savoy Hotel: World Record', *The Observer* (30 October 1910), 1-8
Sinclair, May, 'The Collector', *The Century Magazine*, 87, 3 (January 1914), 321-30
Slattery, Paul, *The Economic Ascent of the Hotel Business* (Oxford: Goodfellow, 2009)
Smith, Albert, *The English Hotel Nuisance* (London: D. Bryce and Son, 1855)
Spark, Muriel, *The Girls of Slender Means* (London: Penguin, 2013)
Sontag, Susan, 'The Double Standard of Aging', in *The Other Within Us: Feminist Explorations of Women and Aging*, ed. by Marilyn Pearsall (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 19-24
Souhami, Diana, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998)
Spacks, Patricia Meyer, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006)
Staley, Thomas F., *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1979)
Stead, Christina, *The Beauties and Furies* (London: Virago, 1982)
—— *Miss Herbert* (New York: Random House, 1976)
Stephen, Leslie, 'David Urquhart', in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1899), LVII, pp. 43-45
Stevenson, James, *Report on the Necessity of Latrine Accommodation for Women in the Metropolis* (London, 1879)
Stevenson, Christine, 'Robert Hooke's Bethlem', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 55, 3 (1996), 254-75
Steele, Katharine McLean, *Psychiatric Nursing*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1937)
Street, Alice, 'Affective Infrastructure: Hospital Landscapes of Hope and Failure', *Space and Culture,* 15, 1 (2012), 44-56
Streip, Katharine, '"Just a Cérébrale": Jean Rhys, Women's Humor, and Ressentiment', *Representations*, 45 (Winter 1994), 117-44
Struther, Jan, *Mrs Miniver* (London: Futura Publications, 1980)
Tallack, Douglas, '"Waiting, Waiting": The Hotel Lobby', *Irish Journal of American Studies*, 7 (1998), 1-20
Taylor, Derek, and David Bush, *The Golden Age of Hotels* (London: Northwood, 1974)
—— *Ritzy* (London: Milman Press, 2003)
Taylor, Stephen, 'The Suburban Neurosis', *The Lancet* (26 March 1938), 759-61
Thacker, Andrew, *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009)
Thane, Pat, 'Old Women in Twentieth-Century Britain', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2001), pp. 207-31
—— 'Women and Ageing in the Twentieth Century', *L'Homme*, 17, 1 (2006), 59-74
'The Honeysuckle and the Bee', *Library of Congress* <https://bit.ly/3xFZ355> [accessed 3 May 2021]
Thomas, Sue, *The Worlding of Jean Rhys* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999)

‘Tilly Losch’s bathroom’, *V&A Collections* <https://bit.ly/3kLNhQo> [accessed 5 March 2021]
Tinniswood, Adrian, *The Long Weekend* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016)
Todd, Ian Scott, ‘Bathroom Readings: Modernism and the Politics of Abjection’ (unpublished thesis, Tufts University, 2014)
—— ‘Dirty Books: Modernism and the Toilet’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 58, 2 (Summer 2012), 191-213
Tomalin, Claire, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988)
Tomes, Nancy, *The Gospel of Germs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998)
Townsend Warner, Sylvia, ‘Bathrooms Remembered’, *New Yorker*, 11 January 1964
—— ‘The Property of a Lady’, in *Selected Stories* (London: Virago, 1990), pp. 311-16
Trotter, David, *Cooking with Mud: The Idea of Mess in Nineteenth-Century Art and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
—— *The Uses of Phobia: Essays of Literature and Film* (Chichester: Blackwell and Wiley, 2010)
Troubridge, Una, *The Life and Death and Radclyffe Hall* (London: Hammond, 1961)
Tuke, Samuel, *Description of the Retreat* (Philadelphia: Isaac Peirce, 1813)
Twigg, Julia, ‘The Body, Gender, and Age: Feminist Insights in Social Gerontology’, *Journal of Aging Studies*, 18 (2004), 59-73
Valentine, Kylie, *Psychoanalysis, Psychiatry and Modernist Literature* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003)
—— ‘Mad and Modern: A Reading of Emily Holmes Coleman and Antonia White’, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 22, 1 (Spring 2003), 121-47
Vicinus, Martha, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1994)
Victoria, Mabel, ‘Toilet graffiti: secrets, support and solidarity in the women’s restroom’, *The Conversation* <https://bit.ly/2OECuvw> [accessed 30 January 2021]
Wagner, W. Sydney, ‘The Hotel Plan’, *Architectural Forum*, 39 (November 1923), 211-18
Walker, Lynne, ‘Vistas of Pleasure: Women Consumers of Urban Space in the West End of London, 1850-1900’, in *Women in the Victorian Art World*, ed. by Clarissa Campbell Orr (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 70-88
Walkowitz, Judith, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)
Wallis, Jennifer, *Investigating the Body in the Victorian Asylum* (London: Palgrave, 2017)
Watson, Steven, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991)
Wells, Shereh, ‘Strand by Strand: Untying the Knots of Mental and Physical Illness in the Correspondence and Diaries of Antonia White and Emily Holmes Coleman’, in *Tapestry of Health, Illness and Disease*, ed. by Vera Kalitzkus and Peter L. Twohig (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 43-55
Wharton, Edith, ‘Full Circle’, in *Tales of Men And Ghosts*, *Project Gutenberg* <https://bit.ly/2P6Bpgf> [accessed 21 February 2021]
White, Antonia, *Antonia White: Diaries, 1926-1957*, ed. by Susan Chitty (London: Constable, 1991), I
—— *Beyond the Glass* (London: Virago, 1989)
—— *The Hound and the Falcon* (London: Virago 1980)
—— ‘The House of Clouds’, in *Strangers* (London: Virago, 1981), pp. 45-66

—— ‘Surprise Visit’, in *Strangers* (London: Virago, 1981), pp. 160-73
White, Arthur, *Palaces of the People: A Social History of Commercial Hospitality* (London: Rapp and Whiting, 1968)
Whyte, Iain Boyd, *Modernism and the Spirit of the City* (London: Routledge, 2003)
Wills, Clair, ‘Digs and Lodging Houses: Literature, Ruins, and Survival in Postwar Britain’, *Éire-Ireland*, 52, 3 (Fall/Winter 2017), 57-74
Wilson, Elizabeth, ‘The Invisible Flâneur’, *New Left Review*, 1, 91 (1992), 90-110
—— *The Sphinx in the City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991)
Wohl, Anthony, *The Eternal Slum* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977)
Wolff, Janet, ‘The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2, 3 (1995), 37-46
Woloshyn, Tania, ‘Le Pays du Soleil: The Art of Heliotherapy on the Cote d’Azur’, *Social History of Medicine*, 26, 1 (2012), 74-93
Woodward, Kathleen, *Aging and its Discontents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991)
—— ‘Introduction’, in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. Ix-xxix
—— ‘Performing Age, Performing Gender’, *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, 18, 1 (Spring 2006), 162-89
Woolf, Virginia, ‘Appendix’, in *The Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 414-66
—— ‘The Art of Biography’, in Se*lected Essays*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 116-23
—— *Between the Acts*, in *The Years* and *Between the Acts* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2012), pp. 305-410
——*The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1925-1930*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1980), III
—— *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1931-1935*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: Harvest, 1983), IV
—— *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1936-1941*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), V
—— *Flush* (London: Vintage Classics, 2018)
—— (Heather Levy), ‘Appendix A: “The Ladies Lavatory”’, in *The Servants of Desire in Virginia Woolf’s Shorter Fiction* (London: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 197-200
—— ‘Introductory Letter’, in *Life as We Have Known It*, ed. by Margaret Llewelyn Davies (London: Virago, 2012), pp. ix-xxxvi
—— 'Middlebrow', in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), pp. 152-60
—— *Mrs Dalloway* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2012)
—— ‘The New Dress’, in *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. by Susan Dick (London: Harcourt, 1985), pp. 170-77
—— ‘Portraits’, in *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. by Susan Dick (London: Triad Grafton, 1987), pp. 324-30
—— *A Room of One’s Own*, in *A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas*, ed. by Michèle Barrett (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), pp. 3-104
—— ‘An Unwritten Novel’, in *The Complete Shorter Fiction,* ed. by Susan Dick (London: Triad Grafton, 1985), pp. 151-64
—— *The Voyage Out* (London: Vintage, 2004)
—— ‘The Watering Place’, in *The Complete Shorter Fiction,* ed. by Susan Dick (London: Triad Grafton, 1985), pp. 393-94

—— *A Writer's Diary*, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: Triad Grafton, 1978)
—— *The Years*, in *The Years* and *Between the Acts* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2012), pp. 3-298
Wright, Lawrence, *Clean and Decent: The Fascinating History of the Bathroom and Water-Closet* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960)
Zimmerman, Emma, '"Always the same stairs, always the same room": The Uncanny Architecture of Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 38, 4 (Summer 2015), 74-92
—— 'Architexture: space, form, and the late modernist novel' (unpublished thesis, University of Nottingham, 2016)
Zimring, Rishona, 'The Make-up of Jean Rhys's Fiction', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction,* 33, 2 (Spring 2000), 212-34
Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Ina, ed., *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain, 1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)