

“Behind the cotton wool”: Everyday Life and the Gendered Experience of Modernity in
Modernist Women’s Fiction

by

Tara S. Thomson
M.Sc., University of Edinburgh, 2005
B.A., University of Victoria, 2002

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Dr. Stephen Ross, Department of English
Supervisor

Dr. Misao Dean, Department of English
Departmental Member

Dr. Émile Fromet de Rosnay, Department of French
Outside Member

Abstract

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This dissertation examines everyday life in selected works by Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, and Katherine Mansfield. It builds on recent scholarship by Bryony Randall (2007) and Liesl Olson (2009), who have argued that modernism marks a turn to the mundane or the ordinary, a view that runs contrary to the long-established understanding of modernism as characterized by its stylistic difficulty, high culture aesthetics, and extraordinary moments. This study makes a departure from these seminal critical works, taking on a feminist perspective to look specifically at how modernist authors use style to enable inquiry into women's everyday lives during the modernist period. This work draws on everyday life studies, particularly the theories of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Rita Felski, to analyze what attention to the everyday can tell us about the feminist aims and arguments of the literary texts.

The literary works studied here include: Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (predominantly the fourth volume, *The Tunnel*), Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, and Katherine Mansfield's "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode." This dissertation argues that these works reveal the ideological production of everyday life and how patriarchal power relations persist through mundane practices, while at the same time identifying or troubling sites of resistance to that ideology. This sustained attention to the everyday reveals that the transition from Victorian to modern gender roles was not all that straightforward, challenging potentially

simplistic discourses of feminist progress. Literary technique and style are central to this study, which claims that Richardson, Woolf, and Mansfield use modernist stylistic techniques to articulate women's particular experiences of everyday life and to critique the ideological production of everyday life itself. Through careful analysis of their various uses of modernist technique, this dissertation also challenges the vague or uncritical uses of the term 'stream of consciousness' that have long dominated modernist studies.

This dissertation makes several original contributions to modernist scholarship. It sets these three authors alongside one another under the rubric of everyday life to see what reading them together reveals about feminist modernism. The conclusions herein challenge the notion of an essentializing 'feminine' modernism that has largely characterized discussion of these authors' common goals. This dissertation also contributes a new reading of bourgeois everydayness in Mansfield's stories, and is the first to discuss cycling as a mode of resistance to domesticity in *The Tunnel*. It argues for the 'mobile space' of cycling as a supplement to the common symbol of feminist modernism, the 'room of one's own.' The reading herein of Woolf's contradictory approach to the everyday challenges the accepted view among Woolf scholars that her theory of 'moments of being' has transformative power in everyday life. This dissertation also makes a feminist intervention into everyday studies, which has been criticized for its failure to take account of women's lives.

Keywords: Richardson, Woolf, Mansfield, everyday, modernist style, stream of consciousness, feminism, modernity, modernism.

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Dedication

For my brilliant and inspiring mother

Introduction: The Eruption of Everyday Life in Modernism

“The momentous eruption of everyday life into literature should not be overlooked.”

—Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*

“‘Women’ in general bear all the weight of everyday life.... Their situation sums up what the everyday is.”

—Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life, Vol. 2: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*

“Although it was a good day the goodness was embedded in a kind of nondescript cotton wool. This is always so. A great part of every day is not lived consciously.”

—Virginia Woolf, *A Sketch of the Past*

Overview

Virginia Woolf’s essay “Modern Fiction” urges her readers to “examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day” (149). Contrary to the “convention[s]” of “plot,” “comedy,” and “tragedy ... in the accepted style,” Woolf presents everyday life as “the proper stuff of fiction,” and arguably, her entire *oeuvre* is an extended exploration of everyday life (150, 154). A far from unique concern, Woolf’s preoccupation with the everyday speaks to a larger trend in modernist fiction. Faced with a rapidly changing world, modernist authors sought new discourses and techniques to articulate their

experiences of modernity.¹ In her Afterword to the collection *Women's Experience of Modernity, 1875–1945*, Rita Felski asks: “What exactly did it mean to live in the world of the 1890s, or the 1920s, or the 1940s? How were daily routines, fleeting perceptions, the taken-for-granted sense of self, shaped by the experience of modernity? What did it really mean to be a modern subject?” (291). This dissertation takes these questions as a starting point for an exploration of the fiction of Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, and Katherine Mansfield, to discover not only what it meant to live in that world, but what it meant to be a woman whose daily routines and sense of self were shaped by the conflicting demands of traditional gender roles and the promises of modernity. As these authors turned their attention to the mundane aspects of everyday life, they too were asking what it meant to live in a world in which women's roles were rapidly shifting, where new opportunities were afforded them by social and political change, yet a conservative backlash to feminist progress presented ongoing challenges.

Tellingly, Henri Lefebvre's theoretical treatise *Everyday Life in the Modern World* does not begin with a definition of either everyday life or the modern world, but with a reflection on James Joyce's *Ulysses*, a novel in which “the quotidian steals the show” (3). Although Lefebvre urges us to not overlook the “eruption of everyday life into literature,” he also suggests it might “be more exact to say that readers were suddenly

¹ I am using ‘discourse’ not just as a substitute for ‘language,’ but in a Foucauldian sense to signify language and other cultural interactions in which every utterance “is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences,” and is always engaging with all other utterances as part of a network of signification (Foucault 25). Modernist authors were often trying to define their experiences of modernity against or in conversation with other experiences or traditions, and in this particular context, female modernist authors were trying to develop discourses that challenged existing male traditions. As such, any modernist innovation in narrative style was (and remains) in conversation with all other narrative styles in order to articulate its significance.

made aware of everyday life through the medium of literature or the written word” (2). In this formulation, literary modernism is given the power of insight to understand and reveal the nature and production of the quotidian, which Lefebvre argues did not exist as such prior to the nineteenth century.² If we take modernism as “the *expressive dimension of modernity*,” as Susan Stanford Friedman does, it follows that many of the social changes happening within modernity would register in modernist literature, which “engage[s] with the historical conditions of modernity” (432). However, as we were made aware of everyday life through literature, what we saw was arguably not only a reflection of existing conditions. “Like other social practices,” Ann L. Ardis argues, “literary texts participate in the making of history rather than existing at one remove from it” (3). By exploring representations of women’s everyday lives in modernist literature, we can not only gain insight into women’s experiences of and responses to modernity, but also into modernist authors’ contributions to it. Authors such as Woolf, Richardson,

² Lefebvre writes: “Undoubtedly people have always had to be fed, clothed, housed and have had to produce and then re-produce that which has been consumed; but until the nineteenth century, until the advent of competitive capitalism and the expansion of the world of trade the quotidian as such did not exist Modern man (the man who praises modernity) is the man of transition, standing between the death of style and its rebirth” (*Everyday Life in the Modern World* 38). “Style” refers in this instance to ways of operating in the world which gave meaning to daily activities and produced power relations. In Lefebvre’s view, capitalism alienates people from relations and conditions of production, nature, the sacred, and the communities, myths, and signs that previously gave people a sense of meaning. As capitalism took hold, everyday life as we now understand it was produced as a means of reorganizing and rationalizing our experiences, relations with one another, and the spaces through which we move. The rapidly changing nature of modern society, the increased rationalization and divisions of labour, the increased management of time—including divisions such as work, home, and leisure time—and the increased commodification of every corner of life, have brought everyday experience to the forefront. Even the experience of the division of a work day, the recurrence of the week and the weekend, the annual vacation, etc., are due to the proliferation of capitalism and have completely changed our experience of everyday life.

and Mansfield contributed to the early development of modernist technique in fiction, which in turn presented new possibilities for women to understand and change their lives.

This dissertation draws on everyday life studies, particularly the theories of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Rita Felski, to analyze what attention to the everyday can tell us about the feminist aims and arguments of the literary texts in question. As such, it also draws on feminist theory and the socio-historical contexts of modernism, which will be detailed in the next section. Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield reflected on shifts in the practices and spaces of everyday life as women transitioned away from roles determined by Victorian models of femininity to become modern, more independent women with public lives. The fiction studied here captures the multifaceted aspects of this transition, or what Alison Light has called “women’s entry into modernity” (10). It articulates women’s experiences of modernity by attempting to represent everyday life from women’s perspectives, through both innovations in form and subversive content. Examining these fictional representations offers insight into how women’s lives were experienced and understood in relation to the promises of modernity, enabling a critique of everyday life.³

I make two distinct but related claims through this study: First, the authors in question use modernist stylistic techniques to articulate women’s particular experiences of everyday life and to critique the ideological production of everyday life itself; and second, this sustained attention to everyday life reveals that the transition from Victorian

³ Lefebvre claims that “Modernity was promising. What did it promise? Happiness, the satisfaction of all needs. This *promesse de bonheur*—no longer through beauty, but by technical means—was to be realized in daily life. In fact, the ideology of modernity above all masked daily life as the site of continuity, by floating the illusion of a rupture with the previous epoch” (*Critique III* 49–50).

to modern gender roles was not all that straightforward, challenging potentially simplistic discourses of feminist progress. The transition was characterized by both progress and setbacks, or what Lefebvre would call discontinuities and continuities. Through sustained analysis of the practices that shape women's everyday lives in the literature and that produce the home, the feminized space of the everyday, I argue that these authors both reveal the ideological nature of everyday life and how patriarchal power relations persist, while at the same time identifying sites of resistance, though not always those expected. I admit that when I began this study, I expected to find a liberatory feminist politics at work in the fiction's attention to women's everyday lives. What I found was a much more complex politics that, even as it radically breaks with traditional patriarchal discourses, at times also reinscribes those same discourses or demonstrates their constancy.

This dissertation reads texts that are primarily about women's lives and domesticity. My argument locates the everyday as an essential concept in understanding women's modernism as part of its historical context, while also enabling a fresh look at what innovations in literary style and technique reveal in the following texts: Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (predominantly the fourth volume, *The Tunnel*), Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, and Katherine Mansfield's "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode." Although focused on domestic narratives, my readings of these texts also challenge the dichotomy of public and private, and the inherent assumption that modernity is somehow antithetical to the protected space of home. Throughout, I argue that the turn to everyday life in women's literature reveals the ideological construction of everyday spaces and mundane activities, while at the same time identifying, and sometimes troubling, modes of resistance for women as they tried to move away from

established gender roles and expectations. This dissertation aims to at least partially answer Felski's aforementioned question, and explore what it meant for women to live in early twentieth century Britain. All of the literature studied here is situated in the interwar period, and through critical analysis of the literature in its social context, I explore how women's everyday lives and their senses of self were "shaped by the experience of modernity," and in turn, how these representations might have empowered women as agents of change in modernity (Felski "Afterword" 291). Privileging inquiry into women's everyday lives, both at home and outside of it, situates women more firmly in the history of modernity.

While Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield explore similar themes in relation to everyday life, their works do not always take the same approach, nor do they come to the same conclusions. Though these authors were writing through the same period, their perspectives on everyday life are clearly influenced by their different backgrounds. Each reading in this dissertation demonstrates how the authors' feminist interpretations of everyday life are inflected with class concerns and different political agendas, leading to the identification of somewhat different sites of resistance. In addition, although all three authors also focus on the development and representation of consciousness, their uses of modernist technique to do so vary, revealing different nuances in their understandings of both consciousness and everydayness.

Literary technique and style are central to my argument. It is through stylistic innovations that Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield effectively explore the ideological nature of everyday life. They do not simply describe what everyday life is like for their characters; they use style to tell us something about how the everyday is produced. The

different uses of the stream of consciousness technique and free indirect discourse are of primary importance to my analysis. These techniques are variously used to narrate the continuities and discontinuities in both consciousness and the experience of everydayness. Equally significant, though, is that these authors use these techniques in different ways, and each author develops a unique style for writing everyday life. For instance, while Richardson (and, to an extent, Woolf) uses the stream of consciousness technique to create a sense of the continuity of an individual consciousness across the various fields of the everyday, Mansfield use variations of the technique alongside free indirect discourse to create disruptions in everyday life that emphasize fragmentation and anxiety in her characters' psyches. Throughout, I challenge generic uses of these literary terms. I argue that the terms themselves sometimes obscure technical differences in style, which can lead to rather different interpretations of the literature. Reading the everyday through style throughout this study also reveals and reflects on the difficulties inherent in mapping a literary technique (stream of consciousness) on to a theoretical or philosophical construct (everyday life).

What is at stake in these arguments? While it may seem obvious that modernism attends to everyday life, it is not necessarily an established fact of modernist criticism. The Modernist Studies Association's annual conference took "Everydayness and the Event" as its theme in 2013, yet many of the panels still relied on an uncritical and vague use of the term 'everyday,' and as Bryony Randall argues, "It is when something appears to be universal, essential, or obvious, that it is particularly in need of exploration" (*Daily*

Time 1).⁴ Furthermore, Terry Eagleton's plenary lecture at the conference largely succumbed to many of the biases everyday life studies is itself criticized for, most notably that it fails to account for the lives of women. When challenged on his narrow view of everyday life, and asked whether a feminist or non-western perspective on the everyday might provide a corrective to his bias, Eagleton conceded that he does not know much about feminist or non-European thinkers of the everyday, then quickly deflected the question with a rhetorical trick, asking "from whose perspective" those thinkers might be considered marginal (Eagleton 1:15–1:17). When asked again to map feminism onto the everyday, he briefly discussed Woolf's conceptions of consciousness, but failed to acknowledge any other female modernist authors. Eagleton's lecture, alongside the substantial critical gaps in modernist scholarship on the everyday, which I detail later, suggests that a feminist intervention into both everyday studies and modernist studies is still necessary.

In order to make this intervention with my readings of Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield, I will first provide some essential context. The next section presents the theoretical framework for my arguments, including a working definition of everyday life

⁴ Although the plenary sessions were delivered by scholars well versed in everyday life studies, including Ben Highmore, Michael Sheringham, and Gillian Beer, their critical discussions of everyday life were not necessarily representative of the rest of the conference content, as great as much of it was. For instance, in the seminar "The To-Day and To-Morrow Series: Everydayness and the Future," not a single paper aside from my own tried to define everydayness itself, and its relationship to this future-oriented series very much about mundane daily practices. Likewise, during the feminist roundtable session, only one speaker of five, Jane Goldman, raised everydayness as a critical concept, using it to point out the very quotidian nature of the conference itself set against the current political 'event' of chemical weapons being deployed in Syria. The rest of the conversation focused on feminist writing largely about material culture—related topics, but only vaguely. This is not to say no modernist scholars understand the critical import of the term 'everyday,' but only that uncritical uses of the term are still dominant.

supported by key thinkers of the everyday and the feminist context for the study. The final subsection, "Style Matters," presents a feminist approach to reading style as everyday, which attempts to deal with the inherent pitfalls in previous approaches to style in the literature. That is followed by a more in-depth exploration of existing criticism, which identifies gaps in the critical conversation around everyday life in modernism and asks what is at stake for feminist modernist studies. Finally, a brief introduction to each chapter is outlined, along with its relation to the larger argument.

Toward an Analysis of Everyday Life in Women's Modernism

As aforementioned, the theoretical framework for this dissertation is informed by everyday life studies and feminist theory. Building on this framework, each chapter analyses fictional representations of everyday life to discover what they can tell us about the realities of women's everyday lives during the interwar years in relation to the promises of modernity. The theories support readings of fiction that in turn challenge the shortfalls of everyday studies, particularly in regard to feminism. Style is at the centre of this project, which introduces a new understanding of how Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield use modernist techniques to critique everyday life and to either identify or trouble potential sites of resistance. This understanding enhances the theoretical basis for the study, but also transfigures it by restoring agency to the women Lefebvre argues could not understand or properly critique everyday life.

Defining Everyday Life

Though I draw on a number of theoretical works and thinkers, the theoretical framework for this dissertation is primarily founded on three key thinkers of the everyday: Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Rita Felski. Lefebvre is the most

important theorist of everyday life and arguably one of the most significant but overlooked thinkers of the twentieth century.⁵ His body of work, including the three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* which spans several decades, is extensive and changeable, much like the everyday that he is continually chasing. De Certeau is an essential counterpart to Lefebvre, and is most notable for *The Practice of Everyday Life*, in which he undertakes a sociological approach to the everyday. His philosophical and theoretical picture of how everyday life is practiced, or how individuals operate within power structures, serves as a focal point for my readings of resistance in the literature. Both theorists take a neo-Marxist approach to the everyday, drawing on Marx, Hegel, Foucault, and many others. In turn, Felski draws on both Lefebvre and de Certeau to develop an approach to the everyday that privileges inquiry into women's lives, which she feels have been elided from the established body of everyday theory.

Each of these three offers a somewhat different, yet complementary, approach. Both Lefebvre and de Certeau see the everyday as a site of ideology and resistance, but while Lefebvre's focus falls on the ideological production of everyday life, or the bigger picture, de Certeau focuses his attention on mundane practices that allow individuals to

⁵ In his Afterword to *Modernism and Theory*, Fredric Jameson remarks on Lefebvre's "welcome appearance" in the collection, which "marks a long-postponed engagement with this philosopher of modernity" (249). Lefebvre is, in Jameson's view, "a basic ally in any attempt to restore a longer historical view of modernism as a movement and as a period (even if both those terms remain contested). ... Lefebvre's work on modernity is driven by his virtual invention of the concept of everyday life; and crowned in turn by his work on the urban and his philosophical theorization of space itself" (249). As such, Jameson sees Lefebvre's work as integral to modernist studies, as it introduces 'space' into readings of modernism that have previously privileged inquiries into time.

exercise agency in a world built on diffuse power structures.⁶ Felski resituates these perspectives in a paradigm that would privilege inquiry into women's lives, which will be mapped out in more detail in the next section. Taken together in this dissertation, the work of these three theorists is used to understand how women's everyday lives are governed by patriarchal ideology, capitalism, and bourgeois sensibilities, or what Lefebvre calls the "ideology of femininity" (*Everyday Life in the Modern World* 96). In turn, what Felski identifies as the feminized aspects of everyday life can be understood as sites of potential resistance through subversive daily practices. As such, taking the three together presents the opportunity to read the literary texts as encapsulating a double movement, reading both oppression and resistance in the ideological production of women's everyday lives in particular.

An examination of everyday life first requires a definition of the term, not so straightforward a task as it may seem. Lefebvre, de Certeau and Felski each define everyday life in somewhat different, sometimes contradictory, terms. The everyday, argues Maurice Blanchot, is "what is most difficult to discover" (238). Just as one submits it to critical scrutiny, "the everyday escapes" (244). According to Ben Highmore, the theoretical traditions that make up the body of everyday life theory have been

characterized by a stubborn refusal to underwrite some of the most everyday meanings that are attached to 'the everyday.' So while it is common practice to describe everyday life as a scene of relentless tedium, this tradition has often tried to register the everyday as the marvellous and the extraordinary (or at least to combine dialectically the everyday as both extraordinary and tedious). (*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 17)

⁶ I am using the term 'ideology' in a classically Marxist sense, to signify a comprehensive worldview comprised of values, discourses, and power relations, which dictates and organizes knowledge, social relations, modes of production.

The paradoxical view of everyday life Highmore outlines has given rise to avant-garde techniques and movements (like montage and Surrealism, respectively) that represent the potential transformation of everyday life through moments of shock and defamiliarization. These avant-garde forms can seem anything but everyday, but they arise, Highmore argues, from a refusal to submit to the everyday as “an arena for the reproduction of dominant social relations” (17). Conversely, Lefebvre and de Certeau call us back to the mundane itself, reminding us that this is where lived experience is located, constituting both material realities and subjective consciousness. As Lefebvre states, “Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all” (*Critique I* 127). However, while Lefebvre and de Certeau understand everyday life as produced by ideology and power relations, they also still see “the everyday as a site of resistance, revolution and transformation” (Highmore *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 17). The revolutionary power of everyday practices depends on a proper critique of everyday life, or seeing the everyday for what it is, rather than aiming to transcend it through aesthetics or the eruption of the marvellous. The tension between understanding the everyday as containing both the ordinary and the extraordinary is also evident in the literary works analyzed in this study, and remains a continuing source of paradox.

In defining everyday life for this study, I take Blanchot’s essay “Everyday Speech” as a starting point, which defines everyday life in the first instance as “what we are first of all and most often: at work, at leisure, awake, asleep, in the street, in private existence. The everyday, then, is ourselves, ordinarily” (238). While there is a relationship between the everyday and the ordinary, it is important to note that they are not one and the same. While ordinary experience, according to Liesl Olson, “can be

understood as the things we do every day, meaningful in their usefulness,” the concept of the ordinary—whether in the context of experiences, events, or things—cannot fully account for the everyday (*Ordinary* 4). As already suggested, the possibility of an extraordinary eruption into everyday life is always present. Furthermore, the ordinary does not fully account for the temporality of the everyday. Lorraine Sim claims that “the everyday implies a degree of repetition and, potentially, monotony which is not an implicit aspect of the ordinary. Something can be ordinary without being everyday” (2). The repetitiveness of the everyday is captured in Felski’s “The Invention of Everyday Life,” which presents a similar working definition to Blanchot’s that would fit most people’s sense of what their everyday lives are: “the essential taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities that frames our forays into more esoteric or exotic worlds. It is the ultimate non-negotiable reality, the unavoidable basis for all other forms of human endeavor” (77–78). The tension between the ordinary and the extraordinary is again evident here, but Felski and Blanchot both situate the everyday in this figuration as the mundane backdrop to extraordinary events, rather than as containing both. Both definitions seem sensible, but they also lead to a complication: to claim that everyday life is composed simply of mundane activities performed in familiar spaces disperses the everyday into a series of distinct acts and spaces, leaving the “continuum” itself rather empty or vague.

Lefebvre argues that “everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by ‘what is left over’ after all distinct, superior, specialized structures and activities have been singled out by analysis, must be defined as a totality” (*Critique I* 97). Specialized activities, he argues, “leave a ‘technical vacuum’ between one another which is filled up by everyday

life” (97). However, rather than existing simply as a backdrop to these activities, the totality of everyday life instead unifies them:

Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human—and everyday human being—a whole takes its shape and form. (97)

In this sense, Lefebvre would like to define the everyday in positive, rather than negative, terms: not as what is left over, but instead everything that is. Everyday life cannot be reduced to “a series of separate technical acts” because that approach tries to “substitute a number of compartmentalized actions for this indefinite presence, this connected movement (which is not, however, a whole) by which we are continually, though in the mode of discontinuity, in relation with the indeterminate set of human possibilities” (Blanchot 244). Everyday life, then, is more than the sum of its parts. What determines everyday life is not only what we do ordinarily and where we operate on a daily basis, but also the social relations that impel mundane practices and produce everyday spaces like ‘home’ or ‘work.’ Likewise, Lefebvre asks “Where is [everyday life] to be found? In work or in leisure? In family life and in moments ‘lived’ outside of culture? Initially the answer seems obvious. Everyday life involves all three elements, all three aspects. It is their unity and their totality, and it determines the concrete individual” (31). Though he goes on to complicate this response, the general suggestion persists that there is a “totality” of everyday life composed of all aspects of material existence, and the individual’s experience of those realities. The totality of everyday life is thus a combination of daily practices and the social relations that produce the sites and spaces of the everyday. Likewise, Guy Debord defines everyday life as “the measure of all things:

of the (non)fulfillment of human relations; of the use of lived time; of artistic experimentation; and of revolutionary politics” (“Perspectives” 92). Social relations are determined by ideology, in both Lefebvre’s and Debord’s views. They argue that ideology insinuates itself primarily at the level of everyday life.⁷ Debord even claims that everyday life is “a colonized sector,” hence the continued need for a revolutionary politics of the everyday (92).

In addition to the familiar spaces we would identify as everyday—such as home, work, and the city streets—and the practices associated with those spaces, everyday life also has a temporality, which is implicit in Felski’s definition of it as a “continuum” (77). She reminds us that we also understand everyday life as that which repeats, over time, and as such, a definition of the everyday requires equal attention to both time and space. For the purposes of this study and following Bryony Randall, I borrow an additional concept from Mikhail Bakhtin to help open up discussion of the “totality” of everyday life, or the field of the everyday: the chronotope.⁸ Chronotope literally means ‘time-space’ and captures the interdependence of temporal and spatial constructs in shaping everyday life, and the inseparability of these two dimensions in practice. Like Blanchot, Felski, and Lefebvre, Bakhtin suggests there is a “temporal whole that encompasses and

⁷ Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies* demonstrates this point rather powerfully. For instance, in an analysis of rhetoric used to sell competing laundry detergents, Barthes briefly points to the use of racial ideology: “‘*Persil* Whiteness’ for instance, bases its prestige on the evidence of a result; it calls into play vanity, a social concern with appearances, by offering for comparison two objects, one of which is *whiter than* the other” (36). This demonstrates not only how racial ideologies are used in advertising, but how these ideologies are supported and perpetuated in everyday life by seemingly benign product marketing.

⁸ In *Modernism, Daily Time, and Everyday Life*, Randall makes use of the term ‘chronotope’ to define the day as a construct that is spatial as well as temporal. “[T]he day,” she argues, “takes on a variety of spatial characteristics as a subject exists in it” (*Daily Time* 25).

unifies the separate episodes of everyday life” (129). However, he also recognizes that this temporal experience unfolds within a space, and the particularity of each moment depends for its character on the spaces within which it occurs. “According to Bakhtin,” explain Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, “our particular totally integrated sense of space and time shapes our sense of reality. We are constantly engaged in the activity of re-presenting the signals we get from our exterior environment, shaping those signals into a pattern by means of particular chronotopes” (279). This formulation is a useful way of conceptualizing the relationships we see in the literature between the spaces of women’s everyday lives—home, work, the public, and everything that constructs them as such—and the temporality of everyday life—repetition and continuity—captured in part through style, including the stream of consciousness and disruptive techniques such as ellipsis and suspended moments.

Following from the aforementioned thinkers, particularly Lefebvre, it would seem that my definition of everyday life is complete: it is a chronotope determined by the totality of the mundane practices, temporal continuity, familiar spaces, and social relations that shape an individual’s experience of ordinary life itself, each aspect of which is produced by ideology. However, this definition on its own presents everyday life as a threatening totality that exerts complete control of the individual. As Blanchot suggests, “Man (the individual of today, or our modern societies) is at once engulfed within and deprived of the everyday” (239). To counter this view, de Certeau’s theories are essential. De Certeau presents everyday life as governed by ideology as well; however, his work is also predicated on the notion of ideology as productive. Ideology is produced and reproduced through practice; it is through repeated practice that it comes to be taken for

granted and appears natural or given. Inherent in this process is the possibility of failure—the failure to repeat—which is what allows individuals the possibility of resistance. In this sense, ideologies always contain their undoing. This process is better captured in the original French title of de Certeau's book: *L'Invention du Quotidien*. If the everyday is 'invented' through practice, it follows that it can be reinvented as well.

De Certeau focuses on the practices that ordinary people can engage in to regain power. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, he writes:

If it is true that the grid of 'discipline' is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also 'miniscule' and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and finally what 'ways of operating' form the counterpart, on the consumer's (or 'dominee's'?) side, of the mute processes that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order. (de Certeau xiv)

In a Foucauldian world, where power is not centralized but diffuse, ordinary subjects cannot overturn power in a classically Marxist revolutionary sense, in de Certeau's view. As a concession, he argues for a micro-politics in which everyday practices, the aforementioned "popular procedures" or "ways of operating," allow people opportunities to resist the order that established power relations have prescribed for them, even if only temporarily. "These 'ways of operating'," he continues, "constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production. ... The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them" (xiv, xix). In this sense, de Certeau presents an everyday that is, contrary to Felski's definition, a *negotiable* reality. The conscious shift in de Certeau's discourse from "consumers" to "users" repositions ordinary people as not necessarily passive

consumers of modern capitalism, but active participants with choice as to their style of living, to make something new of the tools available to them.

These ‘ways of operating’ are especially pertinent in regard to women’s roles in the early twentieth century. Public and private spaces had been organized to support patriarchal systems, often also motivated by national agendas.⁹ Women could not necessarily reproduce these spaces differently, but they could operate within them in different ways, destabilizing the status quo and challenging the power relations that governed them. Modernist women’s fiction often represents what de Certeau calls “tactics,” or “the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend[ing] a political dimension to everyday practices” (xvii). As demonstrated in my reading of Richardson’s novel *The Tunnel*, for instance, the protagonist Miriam subversively occupies urban space as a cyclist, rather than as a feminized consumer or *flâneuse*.

⁹ National identity formation through what is essentially a domestic fantasy relies on women maintaining a particular role. During wartime, for instance, women were expected to keep their homes stable and support their husbands emotionally, even in their absence. Marriage and householding during the two world wars and in the interwar years were seen as women’s patriotic duty. Of course, many women first entered the workforce during WWI; however, the state and media pressure to return to the home after the wartime work was done and support this domestic fantasy persisted in the face of new opportunities for women, emphasizing the national anxiety surrounding shifting gender roles. Phyllis Lassner claims that “Wartime records of women’s behaviour reveal that they are not passive bystanders, but participate and actively fuel war’s support. But even here, a problematic maternal model prevails, implying that women justify their war work not only to nurture men, but to rally for their sacrifice” (6). She quotes feminist Micaela Di Leonardo on the enduring power of the “central, powerful image of the Moral Mother—nurturant, compassionate, and politically correct,” who guards the homefront while the men are at war (qtd. in Lassner 7). This image, though it “legitimizes women’s place in public spheres,” Lassner argues, “also ties them to domestic ideology and roles,” fixing them in what she calls an essentializing “maternal double bind” (7).

De Certeau also makes a connection between “ways of operating” and “‘styles’ or ‘ways of writing’,” which I develop in this dissertation (30). In de Certeau’s figuration, style is a mode of resistance, and this is especially relevant to modernist literature. Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield each experimented in various ways with syntax, language, literary form, and genre to develop a style of writing that would express the realities of women’s lives more accurately. Although this study reveals some of the limitations inherent in applying theoretical fields to literary techniques, I also argue that there is a connection between narrativity in modernist fiction and the experience of everyday life as a continuum that can be disrupted.

As a final definitional gesture, it is important to point out that Sigmund Freud’s *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* often lurks in the background of others’ theories of the everyday, particularly as they pertain to literary criticism. Freud’s contribution to everyday life studies is the significant claim that the seemingly banal things we do through the day are imbued with latent meaning. Freud theorizes a number of parapraxes, or ‘Freudian Slips,’ that demonstrate how everyday practices are informed by the unconscious. What is key here is that if we pay enough attention to everyday practices and behaviour, we can potentially determine underlying desires and motivations. This theory bears logical similarity to both Lefebvre’s and de Certeau’s contentions that everyday practices are informed by ideology. Reading through modernist fiction’s psychological narratives for the latent ideological significance is a mode of interpretation in which Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious* argues we must engage.

These theoretical perspectives on the everyday are of course limited. By focusing on Lefebvre and de Certeau, my working definition of everyday life privileges a Marxist

materialist view over an approach that emphasizes the transformative power of the everyday through aesthetics. This alternative approach might focus more on how the extraordinary is embedded in everyday life, thus rescuing the everyday from complete ideological control, as Highmore has outlined. I could have just as easily approached female modernism from a surrealist perspective, or focused my inquiry around Walter Benjamin's 'trash aesthetics' and the power of objects, both of which would be rather interesting and fruitful lines of questioning. However, I narrow my working definition to this perspective so as to answer specifically Felski's call for a feminist intervention into everyday studies, in addition to making an intervention into modernist studies. The paradoxical nature of these other definitions of everyday life intrudes in to my readings at times, for instance, in my discussion of Woolf's 'moments of being.' It should also be noted, though, that feminist readings of Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield have already largely emphasized the transformative power of art and the transcendence of everyday life. However, attention still needs to be paid to what happens to the everyday when the extraordinary takes the stage—is it truly transformed, or is it simply transcended for a moment, to little material effect?

A Feminist Everyday

Blanchot provocatively writes, "Nothing happens; this is the everyday ... but for whom does 'nothing happen' ... ?" (241). In *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, Highmore acknowledges that everyday life theory generally fails to take account of the lives of women, arguing that "part of the project of developing 'theories of the everyday' is going to be rescuing pre-feminist theory from its gendered orientation" (74). Lefebvre, de Certeau, and others attempt to formulate a liberatory politics of the everyday that

privileges a masculinist perspective. De Certeau's first volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, for instance, does not address gender difference or gender roles at all. Likewise, most other key works in everyday studies, including Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* and the works of Walter Benjamin, also fail to address gender as a concern in the production of everyday life. The single, notable exception to this trend is the second, less-cited volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, which contains an entire section titled "Doing-Cooking." Through this section, Luce Giard argues that feminized everyday practices such as cooking, which have typically been seen as oppressive, can be recuperated through their creative potential. Nonetheless, there is a sense in all of these works that the figure of the 'everyman' that dominates everyday life studies is meant to equally account for all, regardless of gender, class, or other difference. For instance, the first volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life* opens with an address "To the ordinary man. To a common hero, an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets" (de Certeau v). Lefebvre asks, "what entity is more vague and more lacking in epistemological status than 'man'?" (*Critique III* 33). These elisions in everyday theory suggest that 'woman' is perhaps the literal answer to Lefebvre's rhetorical question.

Lefebvre makes the familiar claim that "Everyday life weighs heaviest on women" (*Everyday Life in the Modern World* 73). However, he continues with a rather inflammatory analysis:

they are the subjects of everyday life and its victims or objects and substitutes (beauty, femininity, fashion, etc.) and it is at their cost that substitutes thrive. Likewise they are both buyers and consumers of commodities and symbols for commodities (in advertisements, as nudes and smiles). Because of their ambiguous position in everyday life—which is specifically part of everyday life and modernity—they are incapable of understanding it.

Robotization probably succeeds so well with women because of the things that matter to them (fashions, the house and the home, etc.) (73)

Clearly, Lefebvre's view of women's position *vis-à-vis* everyday life offers them no agency. They are simply modernity's hapless victims, exploited by capitalism and in thrall to the material promises of consumerism. He draws a parallel here as well between an inauthentic existence and a negative conception of a feminized everyday life, as if the worst aspects of everyday life under capitalism are both primarily experienced and enabled by women.

Unsurprisingly, Lefebvre has been harshly criticized for this representation of women, and rightly so. As Laurie Langbauer writes:

For Lefebvre, the feminine indoctrinates mankind into a dominant culture whose terms of everydayness it also teaches these subjects not to contest, even though 'femininity' is itself an ambiguous term that carries with it an oppositional force—"feminism"—that might be put to better use. The implication is that because women cannot understand such ambiguity or recognize their contradictory position, they squander that feminism—it turns into mere "assertiveness." ("Cultural Studies" 51)

Felski likewise points out that "Some groups, such as women and the working class, are more closely identified with the everyday than others" leading to an unfortunate but inevitable "ranking of persons" based on their ability to "escape the quotidian" ("Invention" 79, 80). She argues that, by way of an essentializing association between women and repetitive, cyclical time, and a connection in turn with the repetitive features of commodity consumption and domestic routine, "Women become the primary emblem of an inauthentic everyday life" (83). Following from these criticisms, both Langbauer and Felski assert the need for a feminist reorientation of everyday life studies.

While I do not mean to defend Lefebvre against these charges, there are nuances in his approach to gender that Langbauer's and Felski's criticisms do not address. Although he problematically deploys the word 'femininity,' he also asserts a desire to avoid essentializing femininity and preserve individual difference. In *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, he argues that "for the critical mind woman's significance in everyday life is too great to be confined to Femininity. . . . moreover Femininity forbids real women access to their own lives, adaptation to their own lives, for it submits individuality and particularity (specific differences) to trapped generalities" (174). Despite his performing this exact generalization in his earlier analysis of women's position in everyday life, he seems to also have an awareness of the inherent problems in doing so. He does not seem to want to downgrade women's experiences; rather, he wants to avoid suppressing women's real experiences beneath the sign of the 'feminine.' Nonetheless, the contradictions in Lefebvre's position betray some ambivalence toward women, and should be drawn out. He does, however, make a suggestive point when he calls 'femininity' an ideology. It is an ideology he deploys himself, but as a term I still find it rather useful. By applying this term to my readings of modernist literature, I analyze precisely how this "ideology of *femininity*" informs everyday practices, allowing a critique of everyday life in the fiction, while also enabling a critique of Lefebvre's claim that women have no agency within everyday life (96). This study questions why women are seen as lacking epistemological status in relation to everyday life, and challenges Lefebvre's argument that they cannot understand it. In doing so, my work answers to Felski's and Langbauer's call to reorient everyday life studies to account for gender difference.

Typically, everyday studies has focused on the city streets, public life, and commerce, although very recent work is beginning to shift this focus.¹⁰ In *The Gender of Modernity*, Felski claims that the private sphere, the dominion of women, has often been regarded as outside modernity. Likewise, Lee Rumbarger argues that,

Simmel, Freud, and Benjamin seem to separate the *very experience of modernity* from women's lives and the life of the home. Indeed, as they imagine as [*sic*] archetypal sites of modernity—especially the city street—fraught with 'penetrating' energies, where human value is measured in market value, they describe an atmosphere particularly hostile to women. (4)

In a move to correct this bias, Felski attempts a redefinition of everyday life in terms that would highlight women's experience: "The temporality of the everyday," she suggests, "is that of repetition, the spatial ordering of the everyday is anchored in a sense of home, and the characteristic mode of experiencing the everyday is that of habit" (81). As such, Felski aims to appropriate and revalue those feminized aspects of the everyday that have been characterized negatively. To turn our attention away from the city streets and into the home—the space that Felski argues anchors all people in one way or another—enables fuller attention to women's experiences and assigns them an equally privileged role in modernity as the men implied by the 'everyman.' Although women's lives were becoming more public in early twentieth century Britain—and *The Gender of Modernity* has many examples of this—their primary roles were still considered to be wife, mother,

¹⁰ Particularly in other disciplines, such as architecture, sociology, and philosophy, everyday studies is rapidly turning to inquiry of domestic space and private life. For instance, a September 2013 conference at York University titled *Ordinary / Everyday / Quotidian* featured several papers on topics such as domesticity, habit, and domestic practice, including Jennifer Baird's keynote address. This recent turn to the private is also evident in Highmore's 2014 book *The Great Indoors*, also cited in Chapter Three.

daughter, and/or homemaker.¹¹ The domestic chronotope, or the daily routine of managing the home, was where women largely operated during the early twentieth century; however, this was not necessarily opposed to modernity in the way theories of modernity have suggested.

Felski claims that “the boundaries between home and non-home are leaky. The home is not a private enclave cut off from the outside world, but is powerfully shaped by broader social currents, attitudes, and desires. . . . home, like any other space, is shaped by conflicts and power struggles (“Invention” 87). To set up an opposition between public and private disregards the production of those spaces by the same ideologies, the same modernity. It is also important not to regard the home as simply a passive victim of modernity, or a defenseless space to be invaded. Just as women left home to enter the workforce, consumerism infiltrated the home. Products, media, and ideologies reshaped domestic practices, a shift that became even more visible by the 1930’s, when appliances like vacuum cleaners were introduced to improve the efficiency of domestic work. As Felski argues, “the so-called private sphere, often portrayed as a domain where natural and timeless emotions hold sway, is shown to be radically implicated in patterns of modernization and processes of social change. The analysis of modern femininity brings with it a recognition of the profoundly historical nature of private feelings” (*Gender* 3).

¹¹ One of the more interesting examples in *The Gender of Modernity* describes the rise of department stores in the late-nineteenth century, and their role in constructing a feminized consumer. Although Felski delineates the problems inherent in feminizing commodity consumption, it is also important to note that department stores gave women more opportunities to spend time in public. What’s more, with the increasing proliferation of cafés attached to the stores, women did not necessarily have to spend their time shopping, they could simply linger.

The idea of private space itself made way for advances in consumer capitalism, which focused on the individual, private property, competition, and profit.

This dissertation adopts Felski's paradigm by focusing on domestic spaces and routines in order to privilege inquiry into women's everyday lives and resituate them within modernity. Giard's "Doing-Cooking" could be seen to complement Felski's approach in the context of this study, particularly given it is an existing exception to the masculinist perspective of everyday studies, as aforementioned. However, there are issues with applying Giard's model of the creative potential of domestic practice to the modernist context. I argue that in order for domestic work to be practiced as an art, in the way Giard describes it, there would need to be significantly less duress involved. In the works studied here, domestic practices are largely represented as practices performed because they *must* be, with little question of choice. As such, I argue that while Giard's theories may apply to later works, or perhaps even modernist works that are not about domesticity, applying them to these stories, is anachronistic.¹²

This feminist reorientation of everyday studies relies quite heavily on the historical context of the literature. Throughout the twentieth century in Britain, the destabilization of the boundaries between the public and private spheres so essential to the Victorian social order dramatically changed the landscape of everyday practices, particularly in the production and performance of gender roles. This was motivated by a

¹² This is particularly evident in Eileen T. Bender's argument for Mrs. Ramsay's domestic work as a creative practice (discussed in Chapter Two), and Rishona Zimring's article about interior decorating as female empowerment in "Bliss" (discussed in Chapter Three). While these are compelling arguments, I argue in each instance that they largely contradict the textual evidence, which strongly suggests the women in each story do not understand their domestic practices as either creative or empowering because they are required.

number of factors: women entering the workforce in increasing numbers, women's eventual entry into the professions, women's suffrage, social movements that gave women more personal power (the divorce act, changes in dress), and the personal becoming more a part of politics. We typically think of the division between the public and private spheres dissolving as women ventured out into the public; however, the movement went both ways, as modernity was also entering the home and affecting the social relations therein. This happened in a number of ways, including the introduction of new technologies and commodities into the home, the specialization and technicization of women's roles as housewives and housekeepers, the disruption of family life by war, and also through increasing affluence in the middle classes, leading to more widespread attention to fashion and interior design.

In *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars*, Alison Light claims that "the ambiguous place of home and private life in the period, and the problematic and contradictory ways in which it signalled the feminine" should be central to an analysis of literature from the interwar years (217). Light figures 'home' as ambiguous because it is at once privileged, through a period "of home ownership and of house-building, and ... an identification of the nation with the increasing privatisation of social life," but also denigrated, as "the 1920's and 1930's saw blistering attacks upon older versions of domestic life and made questions of the conduct of home life public property as never before" (218). The double movement Light identifies, drawing on the work of historians, describes a domestic existence much like the bourgeois family life of Thorstein Veblen's description in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, which comes into play in my reading of Mansfield's stories in Chapter Three. Light emphasizes the

modernization of bourgeois sensibilities, as the ideology of progress intervenes in the form of efficiency: “Older and more elaborate forms of bourgeois comfort (those which depended on a household of servants, for example) were decried,” she states (218).

Instead,

efficiency and management increasingly became the new watchwords of women who no longer saw themselves as simply wives at home but ‘housewives’, something altogether more professional. Feminists and non-feminists alike could agree on rejecting the domestic culture of the past, but the values given to domesticity and the place of domestic labour remained a source of intense division between women within, and across, the classes. (218)

Many people tend to think of feminism as linear progress, but arguably, what Light calls “women’s entry into modernity” was fraught, involving nearly as many setbacks as gains (10). Despite gains like the right to vote and entry into the workforce and the professions, changes to women’s everyday lives were not always in step.

Conservative reactions to feminism, particularly after World War I, meant that the value placed on Victorian-style domesticity actually prevailed for quite a bit longer than one would expect. “Feminists were caught between disparaging domesticity and supporting the house-wife,” Phyllis Lassner reminds us, as the “social pressures on women after 1918 ‘to replace the manpower lost in the First World War pointed unambiguously to a return to marriage and motherhood’” (256, Pugh qtd. in Lassner 256). Lassner reflects on the effects this conservative backlash and its “regeneration of domestic ideology” might have had on women writers leading up to and during World War II (12). Lassner argues, following from Light, that this return to traditional attitudes put “women and the home ... at the centre of national life,” a troubling move as fascism was rising across Europe and “its emphasis on women’s childbearing and caring roles”

marks an unsettling parallel with the traditional attitudes to which women in England were being subjected (12). This dissertation frames these tensions using Lefebvre's concept of continuity in everyday life. According to Lefebvre, everyday life "*is lagging behind what is possible*" (*Critique I* 230), meaning while larger scale social change offers the *promise* of increased agency and democratic freedom, existing power relations persist in mundane practices and familiar spaces, thus enabling ideological structures to reassert themselves in new contexts. My readings of Woolf's, Richardson's, and Mansfield's fiction are situated within this historical context and reveal the ways women's lives lagged behind the possible. As such, these readings offer a corrective to potentially simplistic discourses of feminist progress.¹³

Style Matters

Within the theoretical and historical contexts detailed above, this dissertation claims that Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield privilege inquiry into women's everyday lives through style and form, in addition to content. Their innovative use of literary technique enables inquiry into the production of everyday life and critiques the push to bourgeois domesticity continuous from the Victorian period, posing a continued challenge to the conservative backlash to feminism. As aforementioned, de Certeau presents style as a mode of resistance, and this is especially relevant to modernist

¹³ Laura Marcus points out that "the concept of 'improvement'" is a slippery one when discussing Woolf's feminism, as it suggests "evolutionary, developmental models of femininity and of 'woman' that dominated discussion at the turn of the last century" ("Woolf's Feminism" 214). This comment could be equally applied to Richardson's and Mansfield's works. Nonetheless, a narrative of progress, or improvement, is evident in much feminist literary criticism. For instance, in this dissertation I argue that Anita Levy's reading of *The Tunnel* succumbs to this progress narrative when she claims it shows the protagonist Miriam crossing over "from the domestic economy to the economy proper," overlooking the continuity of similar power relations in Miriam's workplace (58).

literature, which is often defined by its style of refusal or negation.¹⁴ This study focuses, in particular, on the authors' various uses of the stream of consciousness technique and free indirect discourse, but it also pays some attention to overall narrative structure, the use of irony, and recurring motifs in the literature. Although my work reveals some of the limitations inherent in mapping the theoretical field of everyday life on to modernist literary techniques, I still argue throughout that there is a formal connection between narrativity in modernist fiction and the experience of everyday life as a continuum that can be disrupted. Through stylistic representations of temporal continuity and disruption, these works attempt to grasp the everyday itself, as it has been defined in the previous sections.

My argument that these authors' innovations in style represent everydayness contrasts with the dominant discussion around style in their works, which positions it mainly as a means for representing women's consciousness. Readings of modernist women's stylistic engagement with modernity have tended to rely on the rather ambiguous notions of 'women's experience' and the 'feminine consciousness.'¹⁵ This has

¹⁴ This is best captured by Ezra Pound's famous dictum to "make it new," which advocates for a break from literary tradition and its established conventions. Astradur Eysteinnsson's *The Concept of Modernism* argues that modernism marks "a paradigmatic shift, a major revolt beginning in the mid- and late nineteenth century, against the prevalent literary and aesthetic traditions of the Western World" (2).

¹⁵ The list of examples is extensive, but those most relevant to this study include: Sydney Kaplan's *Feminine Consciousness in the Modern British Novel*, Gillian Hanscombe's *The Art of Life: Dorothy Richardson and the Development of Feminine Consciousness*, and Lynette Felber's "A Manifesto for Feminine Modernism." After these landmark works, this particular line of inquiry seems to have fallen out of favour. However, a few very recent articles indicate a welcome turn in Richardson studies to stylistic analysis that does not rely on essentializing gender constructs (Watts 2014, Lindskog 2014). Annika J. Lindskog, in a detailed analysis of ellipses and syntax in *The Tunnel* and *Interim* has completely divorced the question of style from gender inquiry, arguing that "*Pilgrimage* must in many ways be understood as a *silent* text: a text which includes

been a useful frame for discussing women's responses to and roles in modernity; however, it has presented a wide range of issues as well.¹⁶

As Ardis argues, 'experience' is itself a problematic term because it implies not only a complete subject, but also homogeneity across a category of subjects. The idea of 'women's experience,' she claims, was important for early feminist movements, but has since been taken to task for trying to construct a 'universal woman' and effacing differences in class, race, and other identity categories (Ardis 1–2). In addition, talking about 'women's experience' or 'feminine consciousness' can lead directly into the trap of essentializing femininity, naturalizing identity categories "rather than [understanding them] as products of history in and of themselves" (1). In my own discussion of representations of 'women's experiences' in modernist literature, I remain aware of this pitfall, and offer a few potential correctives. Although I repeatedly speak of 'women's experience' throughout my readings of the literature, I am careful to present each instance as a particular representation of experience and to frame it in its historically constructed

non-verbal and unarticulated elements which need to be reflected upon to be understood, and which even then may not yield up their full significance." Similarly, Kara Watts insists upon Richardson's style as a resistance to "economic consumptive practices ... through the proliferation of" textual waste, or excessive detail. Recent scholarship on Woolf and Mansfield, while not refuting earlier works on 'feminine consciousness,' is instead focused largely on an historical engagement with modernity (as opposed to stylistic), aesthetics (in the case of Woolf), and archival work (in the case of Mansfield).

¹⁶ In addition to the issues detailed, this focus on the 'feminine consciousness' and 'women's experience' has fed into the many autobiographical readings of Woolf's, Richardson's, and Mansfield's works, as well as other female modernists. There seems to be a general acceptance that applying the term autobiography to the works of Joyce and Proust is insufficient or problematic, despite their use of semi-autobiographical material, whereas in Richardson's, Woolf's, and Mansfield's cases it is commonplace, an issue that is addressed several times through this dissertation. There has been, according to Bonnie Kime Scott, a "tendency to sensationalize the biography of women writers rather than to explore their works with care" (*Gender of Modernism* 11).

context. Although particular experiences may also apply more generally—for instance, the organizing principles of Miriam’s workday in *The Tunnel*—the particular instance does not pretend to account for all potential experiences of all women. My readings also take questions of class into consideration, so as not to generalize based on gender difference alone. Although this dissertation also regards style as a means of representing women’s experiences, it reframes the discussion around women’s everyday lives, rather than feminine consciousness, where the focus has been. This new perspective considers external factors in the production of everyday life as much as internal factors in the development of consciousness, while also avoiding essentializing discourses that have dominated the critical conversation around style in the works of these authors.

This study also examines the implications of potential gender essentialism inherent in the style of the literary texts. While my readings of those texts attempt to avoid the essentialist trap by maintaining a focus on ideologies and constructed identities, the push to gender essentialism in the literature itself remains at times rather powerful, particularly in Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*. Both Richardson and Woolf deploy the word ‘feminine’ themselves, although Woolf has a more self-conscious resistance to its connotations. In their attempts to foreground women’s everyday lives, they repeatedly fall back on essentializing language and constructs to represent women’s experiences. For instance, despite her resistance to essentializing discourses, Woolf draws parallels between domestic routine and cyclical time in *To The Lighthouse*, suggesting (perhaps inadvertently) that women are embodied subjects embedded as much within the routines of everyday life as they are in the rhythms of nature. One could argue that this discourse is a product of its historical moment; however, each of the authors in this study also takes

a critical approach to ‘femininity,’ suggesting they understood it to varying degrees as a construct despite sometimes still representing it as naturalized.

Richardson came on to—or more precisely, set—the modernist scene with *Pointed Roofs*, the first volume of *Pilgrimage*, in 1915. Her objective was to portray a woman’s experience of her everyday life through a new ‘feminine’ style, which critics eventually labelled ‘stream of consciousness.’ In her Foreword to the collected edition of *Pilgrimage*, Richardson says she wanted to write “the feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism,” which would capture a woman’s experience of modernity through experimental means (9). With this statement of intent, she of course implies that a definitive binary of masculine and feminine exists, that the existing realist tradition was, in fact, masculine, and that there could be a feminine style upon which to build an anti-tradition. The distinctions Richardson makes between femininity and masculinity are always inherently naturalized, even when she tries to avoid it. She argues that women constitute “the synthetic principle of human life,” whereas men have a “mental tendency to departmentalize, to analyze, to separate single things from their flowing environment” (Richardson “Comments” 542). Conversely, the feminine mind is capable of “being all over the place and in all camps at once” (Richardson “Leadership” 347).¹⁷ However, she also finds it “daunt[ing]” that the masculine discourse of the day regards “womanhood as synonymous with the function of physical reproduction,” yet her problem is clearly with the fact that men are perpetuating this particular notion, and not with the gender

¹⁷ Similarly, in *The Tunnel*, she writes: “In speech with a man, a woman is at a disadvantage—because they speak different languages. She may understand his. Hers he will never speak or understand. In pity, or from some other motives, she must therefore, stammeringly, speak his. He listens and is flattered and thinks he has her mental measure when he has not touched even the fringe of her consciousness” (210).

essentialism it implies. This is clear when she follows with an impassioned response: “She will continue to flap. She is woman. He cannot make her man. She will go on being, on the whole, rhythmic, ‘lunatic’ swayed by the moon, and we hope, the stars, dancing and careless, leaving morbid pre-occupation with her ‘great responsibilities’ to the eugenisists” (“Comments” 532–542). While Richardson grapples with the social constraints placed on women, she still repeatedly appeals to essentializing discourses to simply reverse the position of privilege in a binary.

In response to Richardson’s project, Woolf famously credited her with creating “the psychological sentence of the feminine gender” (Woolf “Romance” 367). However, while Woolf was also interested in building a feminist literary tradition to counter the predominantly male one, she was also skeptical about generalizing appeals to the notion of femininity. She said that “woman’s writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine; the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine” (*Women and Writing* 70). When Woolf questions the meaning of ‘femininity,’ she sets it up as a social construct. Her belief in gender as constructed is most evident in *Orlando*, in which the protagonist shifts seamlessly between genders, but she also outlines it rather explicitly in *A Room of One’s Own*.¹⁸ In her discussion of Shakespeare’s sister, she argues that, if women had been given the same opportunities as men, they could have influenced literary tradition in equal measure.

Mansfield likewise resists appeals to essentialized femininity, despite her frequent use of clichéd natural symbolism to signify women’s sexuality. She is often quoted saying, “I’m [*sic*] a writer first & a woman after” (*Collected Letters IV* 133). Although

¹⁸ Laura Marcus likewise asserts that there is “little or nothing of biology in Woolf’s arguments” (“Woolf’s Feminism” 214).

this is taken slightly out of context, as I argue in the opening of Chapter Three, Mansfield's writing still communicates a belief in the socioeconomic construction of gender roles and inequalities. Mansfield's narrative style frequently represents fragmented consciousnesses, resulting not from inherent instabilities, I argue, but from external influences, not least the push toward bourgeois domesticity.

An attention to gendered experience and style in the works of these three authors has invited comparisons between their works and French feminist theory of the 1960's. Critics have argued that women's stream of consciousness writing anticipates the concept of *écriture féminine*. Although I argue that we need to move away from this interpretation, as well as the concept of *écriture féminine* itself, this critical conversation has yet to be properly challenged. Lynette Felber has argued that "Richardson's narrative techniques embody the disruptive nature of gaps in women's writing as defined by Irigaray," and in the novel *Miriam* "discovers how to articulate her true essence and write in an inherently feminine style" (35). Rachel Blau du Plessis likewise argues that "Woolf's 'woman's sentence' ... can be the kind of realignment of emphasis noted by Nancy Miller, following Luce Irigaray" (375).¹⁹ These arguments are in part motivated by a feminist response to Hélène Cixous's use of male authors to represent *écriture féminine*. Cixous positions the stream of consciousness as a feminine form in itself, based on its temporal qualities and its "overflow[ing]," yet identifies Joyce's *Ulysses* and the works of Mallarmé and Lautréamont as the only examples of it ("Medusa" 2040). In

¹⁹ Other examples include Jean Radford's *Dorothy Richardson*, which claims there are "a series of remarkable correspondences, theoretical and stylistic, between the text of *Pilgrimage* and Cixous's writing in 'The Laugh of the Medusa'" (113). Ellen G. Friedman also claims *Pilgrimage* is "prophetic of *écriture féminine*. ... The project Cixous proposes for the future of feminine discourse Richardson had already begun" (357).

“Coming to Writing,” she asks, “Continuity, abundance, drift—are these specifically feminine? I think so. And when a similar wave of writing surges forth from the body of a man, it’s because in him femininity is not forbidden. Because he doesn’t fantasize his sexuality around a faucet” (57). She also, however, claims in “The Laugh of the Medusa” that “Woman must write woman. And man, man” (2041). It makes sense in this context that feminist critics would want to reclaim *écriture féminine* for female authors. Especially considering the first use of ‘stream of consciousness’ as a literary term referred to *Pilgrimage*, it seems a much more effective example of *écriture féminine* than *Ulysses*.²⁰

Pilgrimage has been called *écriture féminine* mainly because of the ‘flow’ of the style. Miriam’s stream of consciousness, somewhat like Irigaray’s women’s writing, expands through “an unpunctuated space-time ... without end” (Irigaray 64). *Pilgrimage*, unlike the ‘Penelope’ episode of *Ulysses*, which Cixous cites as the emblematic instance of *écriture féminine*, is not unpunctuated. However, the punctuation is unconventional, and Richardson herself posited that this was a quality of feminine writing. In “About Punctuation,” she suggests that modern literature needs to do away with regulated punctuation, claiming that, although a text without punctuation (except periods) is difficult to follow, you get used to it as you go along; you find “[your]self *listening*. Reading through the ear as well as through the eye” (Richardson 415). To Richardson,

²⁰ The term was first used in a literary context by May Sinclair in a 1918 review of the first three volumes of *Pilgrimage*: “there is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on. It is Miriam Henderson’s stream of consciousness going on and on. And in neither is there any grossly discernible beginning or middle or end” (5–6). Richardson is widely acknowledged to have developed the technique in advance of Joyce and Woolf, as discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

experimentation with the comma was paramount. In her Foreword to the collected edition of *Pilgrimage*, she argues that “feminine prose... should properly be unpunctuated, moving from point to point without formal obstructions” (12). As such, she makes extensive use of dashes, ellipses, long sentences and sentence fragments.

Woolf and Mansfield also make extensive use of these same techniques and syntactical structures. My readings of *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves* in Chapter Two demonstrate how Woolf uses dashes, ellipses, commas and semi-colons in place of full stops to build long sentences in an attempt to align women’s experiences with natural rhythms. Mansfield also uses dashes and ellipses extensively, although to much different effect than Woolf or Richardson. Rather than creating a sense of continuity, Mansfield uses syntax to disrupt readerly expectations and emphasize the alienated character of modern consciousness.

The labelling of feminine style in *Pilgrimage* and other modernist texts by women, enabled by an unproblematized deployment of the term ‘feminine,’ has reinstated often negative views of women, even when not intended that way.²¹ Furthermore, studies that look at *écriture féminine* in women’s modernism fail to address the critiques already lodged against the concept itself. Annette Kolodny suggests that to look for “a feminine style expressive of a unique female ‘mind’” implies the “assumption that there is something unique about women’s writing” (75, 76). This could lead to “potentially fruitless debate over the relative merits of nature versus nurture ... overly hasty pronouncement [and] generalizing” (76, 78). She is not opposed to the pursuit, but

²¹ This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

insists that we look more critically at the term ‘feminine’ and all it implies, just as Woolf suggested decades earlier.

Of course, Richardson’s own assertions about her desire to write the feminine make it difficult not to read the style of *Pilgrimage* as ‘women’s writing’ above all else. However, I argue that modernist women’s styles can be approached in a different way if we do away with ambiguous appeals to ‘feminine consciousness’ and the essentializing conception of *écriture féminine*, which is a problematic term in light of developments in feminist and gender theory since the 1980’s. In response to the theorists of *écriture féminine*, Elaine Showalter argues that “there can be no expression of the body which is unmediated by linguistic, social, and literary structures” (“Wilderness” 189). Showalter claims critics can avoid essentializing femininity by focusing on what she calls ‘women’s culture’:

... a theory of culture incorporates ideas about woman’s body, language and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which they occur. ... A cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers: class, race, nationality, and history are literary determinants as significant as gender. (197)

Everyday life presents another framework for discussions of women’s culture, particularly as it examines social relations and historical contexts.

While Felber argues “that the narrative features Dorothy Richardson defines as ‘feminine’ strikingly resemble those we call modernist today,” I suggest that these stylistic features of modernist literature could equally describe everydayness (25). Showalter argues that in women’s writing “The orthodox plot recedes and another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint” (204). While she refers to marginal discourses that emerge from feminine

uses of style, she could just as easily be talking about modernism's refusal of conventional plotting in favour of writing "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (Woolf "Modern Fiction" 149). The stream of consciousness technique forms a link between these conflicting perspectives.

Cixous positions the stream of consciousness as a feminine technique in itself, based on its temporal rhythms and its excess. Rhythm and excess are terms that have variously been applied to everyday life as well, most notably in Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* and Blanchot's "Everyday Speech." "Everyday life," according to Felski, "is above all a temporal term" ("Invention" 81), and I argue that various uses of the stream of consciousness technique in modernist literature mimic everyday temporality, creating the overall effect of an atmosphere of everydayness that is not present in the details alone, but persist in the whole. Blanchot claims that the everyday cannot be captured in discourse; however, I counter that the narrativity and proximity to experience crafted through stream of consciousness can at least gesture toward the experience of everydayness, and sometimes recreate everyday sensations for a reader, like boredom or rhythm. In his discussion of *Ulysses*, Lefebvre writes, "Time—the time of the narrative, flowing uninterrupted, slow, full of surprises and sights, strife and silence, rich, monotonous and varied, tedious and fascinating—is the Heraclitean flux, engulfing and uniting the cosmic (objective) and the subjective in its continuity" (*Everyday Life in the Modern World* 4). His reading of Joyce as everyday discourse could just as readily apply to Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, another one-day novel, or even *Pilgrimage*.

In *Modernism, Daily Time, and Everyday Life*, Randall similarly argues that Henri Bergson and William James "are often spoken of together as lying behind the

development of the ‘stream of consciousness novel,’” while they also “provide an important matrix for an exploration of how the concept of dailiness might emerge from the early twentieth-century literary landscape” (32). While Randall’s work also recognizes a stylistic continuity between the stream of consciousness and everydayness, it remains aware of the stylistic nuances and philosophical richness carried in the term ‘stream of consciousness.’ Building on this awareness, I argue throughout this dissertation that the term ‘stream of consciousness’ is used too often as a blanket term for narrative styles that, although they share similarities, may actually be quite different. Most often, the intimate perspective of modernist narratives of consciousness is itself taken as a technical analysis of style, leading to an understanding of ‘stream of consciousness’ as a genre of modernist literature rather than a technique. As such, the term seems obvious when its use has actually become quite vague. Reframing these stream of consciousness narratives as everyday narratives allows for a more precise discussion of how they work, and how they differ from each other, while also allowing a more critical examination of literary terms.

This is where Mansfield figures most heavily in this dissertation in terms of style. Although she makes frequent use of both the stream of consciousness technique and free indirect discourse, she is not usually cited as one of the ‘stream-of-consciousness writers.’ This is largely because she wrote only short stories, and our troubled use of ‘stream of consciousness’ usually applies to novels because of their extended ability to create a sense of continuity and narrativity. The argument I have developed thus far of how modernist style represents or tries to capture the everyday has relied on the concepts of continuity, duration, and repetition, or the uninterrupted flow of consciousness and

dailiness. This runs counter to Mansfield's style, which I argue is characterized by disruption. Even the short story form itself usually represents suspended moments, removed from the rhythms and repetitions of everyday life. However, I argue that Mansfield uses similar techniques as Woolf and Richardson to disrupt everyday life rather than to recreate it. This may sound like familiar territory, hearkening back to Olson's claim that modernism's extraordinary moments (particularly epiphany) obscure its attention to the ordinary. However, Mansfield's disruptive moments are not in the least transcendent, and through failed epiphanies, her characters remained firmly rooted in the mundane everyday. Like Woolf and Richardson, Mansfield experiments with syntax and punctuation, but to a significantly different effect.

As a disclaimer, I acknowledge that the theoretical and methodological approaches in this study are by no means exhaustive, and certainly present problems of their own, not least the challenges encountered in mapping theories on to literary techniques. In addition, I remain aware that an easy slippage between the concepts of 'everydayness' and 'femininity' runs the risk of embedding women within the everyday, just as Lefebvre has suggested. Actually, this is a problem for the literature as well, and my reading of Woolf demonstrates how women are sometimes embedded in a devalued everyday through discourses of femininity. However, my readings of Richardson and Mansfield also demonstrate how this once feminized style creates disruptions, enabling a critique of Lefebvre's position. Although these problems are not easily resolved here, they raise interesting questions for further study, and build on the relatively new scholarly conversation around these issues in modernist studies.

The Eruption of Everyday Life into Modernist Studies

I have chosen the literary texts for this study based on three premises: following Felski's mandate for inquiry into women's everyday lives, these texts focus on domestic spaces and routines, or the feminized aspects of everyday life; they use innovative stylistic techniques to represent everyday life; and they attend to mundane practices, both as ideologically produced and potential modes of resistance. One seeming exception to the first premise might be *The Tunnel*, which is largely set in the protagonist Miriam's workplace and in public spaces; however, I argue that the routines and practices that typically shape domestic space are reproduced in these other spaces in the novel, and as such, it demonstrates the continuity of the feminized aspects of everyday life in other contexts.

According to Olson's *Modernism and the Ordinary* (2009), narratives of the everyday are a dominant feature of modernism in general, as "many writers of the period sought to represent the ordinary as *ordinary*, even while they questioned the possibility of successfully doing so" (25). "[L]iterary modernism," she argues, "takes ordinary experience as its central subject. Yet the predominance of ordinariness has often been overlooked" (3). Olson argues that, in modernist criticism, representations of ordinary experience are usually subsumed by extraordinary, or heightened, experiences. Modernist literature, however, often marks a return to the everyday after the extraordinary event. While Sim notes the difference between the everyday and the ordinary, as aforementioned, Olson does not explicitly define the two terms against one another even though her approach implies a difference.²² In *Modernism, Daily Time, and Everyday*

²² In her discussion of Viktor Shklovsky's "Art as Technique," for instance, Olson claims: "Shklovsky does not denounce ordinary objects in and of themselves; he

Life (2007), Randall turns to the temporality of the everyday, rather than the ordinary, and focuses on the concept of ‘dailiness’ to similarly argue that modernism is concerned with the everyday. Randall notes that James’s and Bergson’s “engagement with the question of temporality, and in particular the origin of temporality within the human subject, were highly influential in shaping the intellectual climate under which” modernist literature was produced (*Daily Time* 32). Modernism, as a cultural response to modernity, is shot through with this consciousness. The turn to the everyday, for Randall, is a means for exploring the “particular instability of the ideology of the subject during this period” and throughout modernist literature (186).

These two books mark the beginning of a recent interest in everyday life in modernist studies. The different approaches these two works take to everyday life reveal the richness of the concept, and its ability to frame many different types of inquiries into literature. In the few years since their publication, everyday life has emerged as an important concept for modernist studies. It has quickly become a commonplace to claim modernism as a literature of the everyday; however, there is still limited published scholarship on the topic. Lorraine Sim claims that “recent histories of everyday life have predominantly focused upon significant cultural and social critics and philosophers; literature and art more broadly remain largely untapped areas in contemporary

questions how we sense and order the ordinary world. Art’s heightened attention to the everyday, therefore, may ultimately sanctify the ordinary rather than cause a rupture with it” (*Ordinary* 4–5). This discussion clearly positions the ordinary as a feature of objects, as Sim notes, while the everyday remains a field that contains both the ordinary and extraordinary moments.

explorations of the everyday” (2).²³ As Sim suggests, drawing on everyday life studies presents countless opportunities for new critical readings of both canonical and marginal modernist works.

In this growing field, scholars are using modernism’s attention to everydayness to counter the conception of modernism as elitist, obscure, or simply extraordinary.

According to Olson, modernism’s focus on interiority has often led to an understanding of modernism characterized by its extraordinary or transcendent moments: “Woolf’s ‘moment of being,’ James Joyce’s ‘epiphany,’ Ezra Pound’s ‘magic moment,’ Walter Benjamin’s ‘shock,’ T.S Eliot’s ‘still point of the turning world,’ or Marcel Proust’s explosion of memory” (*Ordinary* 3). Modernism’s “preoccupation with the extremities of self-consciousness, located most strikingly in such moments as these,” she argues, “has been praised and criticized but only rarely challenged” (3). In response, Olson turns her attention to “modernism’s commitment to the ordinary, to experiences that are *not* heightened” (4).²⁴ This dissertation builds on Olson’s work by exploring representations of the mundane in other modernist texts. Although Olson writes about Woolf, her focus is

²³ This is reflected in Olson’s recent “Everyday Life Studies: A Review,” in which only two of the seven works reviewed pertain to literary criticism, and one of those is Randall’s book (175).

²⁴ This aim has been taken up by a handful of scholars, including a few who discuss Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield in particular. Recently, Sim’s *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* explores the arguments and concepts introduced by Olson (and to an extent Randall) in much greater depth with regard to a broad spectrum of Woolf’s works. Saikat Majumdar’s *Prose of the World: Modernism and the Banality of Empire* applies the concept of everyday life to a colonial context, arguing that “the oppressive banalization of everyday life on the margins of empire is an ineluctable experience of colonial modernity” (2). A chapter of Majumdar’s book is dedicated to Mansfield’s New Zealand stories and their representations of a bourgeois everyday that is built up against the constant threat of colonial outsiders. Other notable examples include Irene Gammel’s *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity: A Cultural Biography* and Siobhan Phillips’s *The Poetics of the Everyday: Creative Repetition in Modern American Verse*.

on *Mrs Dalloway*, whereas I turn the discussion to *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*. In addition, this study has some slightly different aims from Olson's. For one, it supplements a turn to the ordinary with continued consideration of the types of heightened moments Olson refers to, asking whether they truly have the power to transform everyday life, as intended. This study also relies heavily on Randall's work, particularly on Richardson, but adds new perspectives and arguments. While our theoretical frameworks are similar, I take off from Randall's focused attention to 'dailiness' and temporality in *Pilgrimage* to explore spatial practices and the reproduction of domestic ideologies. Randall also reads Woolf's *The Waves*, with some reference to *To The Lighthouse*; however, where she argues that everyday life for Woolf is the life of the mind, I keep my attention on mundane domestic practices and issues of class.

The continuity between modernism and the everyday has been remarked on by Lefebvre and others, but the gendered experience and representation of everyday modernity has been largely overlooked, except by the few scholars already cited here. In *The Gender of Modernism* (1990), Bonnie Kime Scott argues that modernism has been unconsciously gendered male. This is evident even in the titles of landmark modernist studies such as Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era* (1971). Kenner's version of high modernism is male-centered, focusing on the works of Pound, Eliot, and Joyce as emblematic of and foundational to modernism as a whole. Of course, over the past few decades, important strides have been made by feminist critics in modernism; however, the field of modernist studies is still ripe for inquiries into gender. There is a danger, I would argue, in the expansionist rhetoric of "The New Modernist Studies," which risks overlooking feminist recovery work by giving the sense that work is done, when that is

nowhere near the case.²⁵ Even female modernists we might now consider canonical have not been exhaustively studied, and especially not from a variety of perspectives.

For instance, the past decade has seen a huge resurgence in interest in both Richardson and Mansfield. Although it would be a false claim to say either of these authors is still neglected, their significance to modernism has still been largely overlooked. In Richardson's case, a large part of the issue is that much of her work has been out of print for the past few decades. Although most modernist scholars would recognize that her work is foundational to modernism, few have actually read any of it. There are projects underway to publish the complete volumes of *Pilgrimage* and Richardson's complete letters, which should boost scholarship. As such, this is the perfect time to explore deeper readings of Richardson's feminist content, to situate her firmly in the conversation about everyday life in modernism, and to begin to refute some of the long accepted ideas about her works' feminist implications.

In Mansfield's case, Clare Hanson argues that neglect of her work is a result of her writing only short stories, which were often regarded as a minor genre. This is still an issue, clear in the fact that *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* (2005) does not even include the short story in its list of genres. Claire Drewery's *Modernist Short*

²⁵ In "The New Modernist Studies," Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz claim that "Were one seeking a single word to sum up transformations in modernist literary scholarship over the past decade or two, one could do worse than light on *expansion*" (737). While much of that expansion has included feminist recovery work, I would argue the continuing privilege given to newness and expansion brings with it some issues. In a field now turning to global modernisms, digital humanities, and multidisciplinary, there seems to be little place in modernist studies for 'old' work as yet unfinished but less fashionable. The impetus to expand, to make modernist studies always new, is of course largely motivated by institutional pressures. But there is something about our readiness to follow scholarly trends that gives 'old' work the appearance of being finished, which is just one of many problems with the expansionist rhetoric of "The New Modernist Studies."

Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf is one of several recent works to attend to that gap in modernist studies; however, the majority of Mansfield's stories have yet to be written about. "Marriage à la Mode," which I include a new reading of in this dissertation, has only been written on a couple of times, and only in a rather perfunctory way. Published scholarship tends to focus on a key few of Mansfield's stories, including "The Garden Party," "Prelude," "Bliss," "Miss Brill," and "Je ne Parle pas Français." One could argue that the significant themes in Mansfield's overall body of work can be represented by these few stories; however, my reading of "Marriage à la Mode" demonstrates particular nuances to that story alone, suggesting a more thorough reading into other works of Mansfield's would be fruitful and interesting. Recent Mansfield scholarship is still largely focused on archival work, and historical and biographical readings. This is an exciting time for Mansfield studies—now that we are amassing so much new content, we can examine that content through different theoretical lenses.

This is certainly not the first sustained study to group Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield together under the banner of feminist criticism. However, with the exception of Drewery's and Randall's works, much of the criticism that reads these authors together tends to draw on autobiography, their personal relationships, or their attention to 'feminine consciousness,' as discussed earlier.²⁶ As a counterpoint, this study

²⁶ Some examples along these lines not yet mentioned include: Angela Smith's *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, articles by Ann L. McLaughlin comparing Woolf's and Mansfield's shared aims, Patricia Moran's *Word of Mouth: Body Language in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf*, and Diane Gillespie's "Politics and Aesthetics: Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson." With the exception of Drewery's book, Richardson and Mansfield are not usually read alongside one another. Those works that read Richardson alongside Woolf tend to be about the

incorporates the everyday into the conversation.²⁷ My readings frame the relationships among these authors in context of their attention to everyday life, and the specific ways they critique the ideological production of women's everyday lives through style. As such, I also build on the few existing readings of everyday life in these authors' works and bring them together to discover shared (or divergent) concerns and perspectives. Though each author has been read against the other, and each has been read in terms of the everyday, this is the first instance of all three being discussed together under this rubric.²⁸

A number of other female authors would have proven just as useful to this study; however, these three demonstrate shared concerns about women's experiences of everyday life, and also demonstrate similar attention to domestic spaces and routines, and the continuities and discontinuities of everyday life, as defined by Lefebvre. They also answer Felski's call to privilege the female spaces and modes of everyday life—home, repetition, and habit. These shared concerns are evident in many other works by female modernist authors, for instance, May Sinclair's *Mary Olivier: A Life*, Elizabeth Bowen's

development of the stream of consciousness novel and tend to focus on Richardson's and Woolf's 'feminine' use of the technique, including works by Deborah Parsons (*Theorists*) and Shiv K. Kumar, discussed further in this dissertation, and Melvin Friedman.

²⁷ Though not necessarily titled with "everyday," a number of recent articles have explored closely related topics with regard to Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield, and I draw on these throughout my readings of the literature in each chapter. These include articles by Randall, Banfield, McCracken, Harvey, Majumdar, and Zimring. More broadly speaking, some interesting work on domestic space has also recently emerged, and which I also draw on, including works by Mezei and Briganti, and Highmore (2014).

²⁸ In Sim's *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience*, Mansfield and Richardson only turn up briefly in the introduction, as examples in a list of other authors writing about the everyday.

The House in Paris and *The Heat of the Day*, Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, and many others. A number of lesser known examples may have proven interesting to study in this context, such as Catherine Carswell's *Open the Door!* and *The Camomile: An Introduction*, which engage specifically with women's everyday lives in Scotland. It may seem that I have chosen the most obvious three authors to discuss, especially considering they have already been compared with each other in a number of studies. However, despite this critical history, Richardson and Mansfield are still not being given the critical attention of Woolf.²⁹ There are still not many journal articles being published on Richardson outside of *Pilgrimages*, the dedicated Richardson studies journal. Likewise, articles on Mansfield do not feature very often outside of *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, although she seems to turn up more than Richardson of late. In response, this dissertation situates Richardson and Mansfield alongside Woolf as foundational to modernist style. Furthermore, it asks what attention to the everyday means for modernism *as* feminism, a question that studies on the everyday in modernism have not yet asked.

While my intervention into everyday modernism is informed by a feminist perspective, my intervention into the canonical formation of modernist studies is not terribly problematic. The criticism outlined here recognizes these authors as part of a feminist tradition, with shared goals and influences. My intervention into stylistic

²⁹ A quick search of articles since 2004 containing each author's name in *Modernism/modernity*, the Modernist Studies Association's journal, returns 84 hits on Woolf, 14 hits on Richardson, and 12 hits on Mansfield. Similarly, a search of the MLA International Bibliography turns up 670 hits on Woolf since 2009, 78 on Mansfield, and only 10 on Richardson, as the MLA does not index *Pilgrimages*, the Richardson Society journal. These numbers are of course not definitive, but they indicate continued gaps in feminist perspectives of modernism. The MLA search is especially telling, since that is where most literary scholars turn for indexing and research.

understandings of modernism, however, may be more contentious. My discussions of style, and in particular these authors' uses of the stream of consciousness technique and free indirect discourse, draw heavily on previous studies that have established the works of Woolf, Richardson, and others as stream of consciousness works. These include Shiv Kumar's *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* and Deborah Parsons's *Theorists of the Modern Novel: James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf*. I argue throughout that literary criticism's establishment of the stream of consciousness novel as a genre has obscured its various uses as technique. Categorization of the literature in question as 'stream of consciousness' comes at the expense of a more open-minded inquiry into just how these authors deploy style and technique differently and to different effect. What remains largely unexamined is an in-depth exploration of the stylistic relationship between women's writing, continuity, and disruption, and the formal properties of everyday life. This dissertation addresses this critical blind spot.

The Critique of Everyday Life in Woolf, Richardson, and Mansfield

The works discussed in this dissertation present a critique of everyday life, as conceived by Lefebvre, de Certeau, and to a certain extent Felski. By focusing on domestic spaces, the practices that produce those spaces, and literary style, I analyze continuities that complicate discourses of feminist progress. However, I also read for how each author presents disruptive moments or sites of resistance, full of the potential for transforming everyday life.

The next chapter, "Everyday Practices in Dorothy Richardson's *The Tunnel*" analyzes *The Tunnel* as an exemplary volume of Richardson's 13-volume *Pilgrimage* series. Through innovative stylistic techniques, including the stream of consciousness and

other techniques foundational to the modernist novel, Richardson explores the everyday life of her protagonist, Miriam Henderson, as she moves to the city and begins work as a secretary in a dental practice. *The Tunnel* has been read as a modern 'New Woman' novel, and conventional interpretations position Miriam's entry into the professional working world and urban living as a feminist coup. As Woolf suggests in *A Room of One's Own*, Miriam seeks independence so that she can eventually become a writer.

My reading analyzes the everyday practices that produce the novel's two primary spaces, or organizing centres: Miriam's rented room and her workplace. I argue, contra the conventional reading, that attention to Miriam's everyday practices in the novel reveals how the apparently liberating spaces of her rented room and her office continue to be constructed by Victorian values of femininity and power relations. As such, the novel exposes continuity in everyday life, revealing ways that the ideology of femininity is re-encoded into the New Woman figure. However, my argument has a double movement. In addition to exposing the ideologies that shape Miriam's everyday life, the novel also reveals opportunities for resistance to those ideologies, though not those previously identified in Richardson criticism. Using de Certeau's concept of tactics of resistance at the level of mundane practice, I argue that Miriam carves out mobile spaces of her own, through appropriation of work time to her own ends and a subversive occupation of public space through cycling. As such, Richardson demonstrates both an everyday life dictated by ideology and an empowered everyday life full of tactical opportunities for resistance to ideology. The ongoing struggle between these two faces of everyday life can go a long way toward explaining why, despite women gaining entry to the professions

and public life, they still faced such difficulty protecting their rights to autonomy in their day to day lives.

Chapter Two analyzes Woolf's representations of everyday domestic life in *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*. The chapter is framed around what I identify as a fundamental contradiction in Woolf's work: although her entire *oeuvre* is an extended exploration of the mundane aspects of everyday life, she in turn devalues the everyday by privileging transcendence over it through moments of being. In her theory of 'moments of being,' Woolf presents the stuff of mundane everyday life as "non-being," whereas true being is only experienced in these transcendent moments ("Sketch of the Past" 72). Given that Woolf presents the everyday as a platform for feminist inquiry, I argue that this is problematic.

Woolf's novels turn to the everyday to privilege an understanding of women's everyday lives, and they set the oppressive routines of domesticity against potentially empowering natural rhythms to try to recuperate women's experiences of everyday life. However, through an unfortunate connection to cyclical time, I argue Woolf essentializes women's connection to both natural rhythms and domestic routine, embedding them within the everyday life she characterizes as 'non-being.' My reading runs counter to most Woolf scholarship, which maintains the positivity of a paradoxical everyday in Woolf and the transformative power of art and moments of being in her works. Furthermore, I also argue that the transformative power of moments of being seems to be less available to those of the working classes, whose domestic labour in these novels remains suspiciously invisible. By setting the "non-being" of everyday life against

transcendent moments of being, these novels situate some characters closer to the everyday than others, and those closest to it remain more subject to its demands.

The third chapter explores Katherine Mansfield's critique of marriage and gender roles in "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode." Mansfield's critique of traditional gender roles is inseparable from her critique of the bourgeois class, as she arguably sees the former emerging from the latter. Attention to domestic practices in each of these narratives reveals the institution of marriage to be a primarily economic arrangement, motivated by the demands of an emerging commodity capitalism that is continuous with patriarchal ideology. As in Richardson and Woolf, home is a practiced space, and is imbued with class values through objects and mundane practice. Unlike Richardson and Woolf, though, Mansfield's critique of the bourgeois everyday is revealed through disruption rather than continuity, and this aesthetics of disruption is connected to her use of the short story form. Mansfield's female characters imagine an artistic, bohemian lifestyle as an alternative to oppressive bourgeois everyday; however, this alternative lifestyle is revealed to be a false choice, a commodified version of modernity. Mansfield's critique contrasts with both Woolf's and Richardson's implication that art, and by extension the artist's lifestyle, has transformative power. The conservative backlash to feminism in the interwar period is evident in all of my readings, but is most powerfully represented in Mansfield's devastating endings, which I argue are frustrated epiphanies that further root the characters in everyday life, rather than allowing them to transcend it. Although these endings seem pessimistic, I argue that they represent Mansfield's continued commitment to transforming the material conditions of everyday life itself.

Through these readings, it becomes clear that each author uses modernist technique to different effect, although they all use it for feminist purposes. Interestingly, Richardson, Woolf, and Mansfield all made claims at some point to not being feminists, yet their purpose was so often to write the lives of women. There is clearly a tension between their understandings of the word 'feminist,' likely associated with the activities of Suffragettes and radical feminist activists, and the more personal feminism that emerged post-WWII, of which they are early exemplars. While they all critique the ideological production of everyday life, they also always gesture toward potential sites of resistance to ideology in order to recuperate the everyday.

Chapter One: Resisting Domesticity in Dorothy Richardson's *The Tunnel*

“there is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on.”

—May Sinclair, “The Novels of Dorothy Richardson”

Overview

A defining feature of Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* in literary criticism is its use of the stream of consciousness technique, as it is widely recognized as the first stream of consciousness work in English. However, simply labeling the *Pilgrimage* novel series as a stream of consciousness work is problematic for a number of reasons, not least because of Richardson's own resistance to the term. Critics have responded extensively to Richardson's well documented dislike of the stream of consciousness label, yet continue to use it. Though the term certainly represents significant aspects of Richardson's text, as a common label it also compels us to read the series in a particular way, one that is focused on the protagonist Miriam Henderson's identity as primarily a matter of interiority and subjective experience. This interpretation, one that Richardson certainly intended despite her quibbling over terminology, often comes at the expense of effectively questioning Miriam's experiences of everyday life as a social being and the material factors that shape them. If we look beyond the stream of consciousness to representations of Miriam's outer world, a different story from the obvious materializes. *Pilgrimage* is the story of a New Woman entering the modern world and seeking a new discourse that both fits her gendered experiences and empowers her as a woman. It is

ultimately about how Miriam makes her way in the modern world to become an independent woman and a writer, making it a *künstlerroman*, like James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, other modernist works frequently compared with *Pilgrimage*. However, if we examine the unique stylistic qualities of *Pilgrimage*, and reframe it as not just a stream of consciousness novel but an everyday novel, it tells another, somewhat less heroic story. Attention to the everyday in *Pilgrimage* allows for interrogation into social practices and power structures that exist independently of individual consciousness. As such, examination of everyday practices in the novel reveals that Miriam, despite her best efforts at being independent, has no space of her own, in that every fixed space she occupies continues to be constructed by Victorian values and gender roles.

Although I will speak of the thirteen-volume *Pilgrimage* series more generally, this chapter focuses mainly on *The Tunnel*, the fourth volume, in which Miriam begins her new life as a dental secretary living on her own in London.³⁰ Though all of *Pilgrimage* attends to everyday life, *The Tunnel* stands out as particularly rooted in mundane detail, and particularly governed by a tension between subjectivity and the demands of the social world, not least that between measured work time and the individual experience of time (what Henri Bergson calls *la durée*). The shift toward a heightened everydayness is highlighted by an intensification of the style that Richardson

³⁰ The first three volumes see Miriam on her own, but she is working as a governess and teacher, positions at that time designated for women. According to Elaine Showalter, "Many observers have pointed out that the first professional activities of Victorian women, as social reformers, nurses, governesses, and novelists, either were based in the home or were extensions of the feminine role as teacher, helper, and mother of mankind" (*Literature of Their Own* 14).

introduced in earlier volumes,³¹ and this intensification is connected to a rupture in the series, compelled by two significant events in Miriam's life: her mother's death, and her entry into the modern, urban, working world. These two events, though seemingly independent, are in fact connected, as they together mark the moment in 1895 in which Miriam attempts to cast off the old world of her Victorian mother and create another life as a New Woman.³²

I argue that although *The Tunnel* appears, on the surface, to be about Miriam's increasing independence enabled by her mother's death and her new working life, attention to everyday practices³³ in the novel actually reveals a continuing reconstruction

³¹ Richardson's style became increasingly difficult and experimental, reaching its height in *The Tunnel* and *Interim*, volumes four and five of the thirteen-volume series. Of note was her representation of dialogue, in which she placed conversation in line with the rest of the text and used dashes (or nothing) rather than quotation marks, and paragraphing, which she almost completely did away with in *Interim*. These two volumes were so unconventional, in fact, that her publisher, Duckworth, insisted on regularizing much of the punctuation and layout for the book publication so it would not alienate readers. Deborah Parsons writes: "By the publication of the collected edition, for which the text of the original books was reset with more conventional speech marks, paragraphing and line breaks, she was admitting with defeat that her attempt to write 'feminine prose' had resulted in a textual 'chaos' for which she was 'justly reproached'" (*Theorists* 34).

³² The term 'New Woman' was coined by author Sarah Grand in 1894, in her *North American Review* essay "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," and quickly became the term to designate a woman who refused to adhere to Victorian conventions of domestic femininity. Grand writes: "The new woman is a little above him [the Bawling Brotherhood], and he never even thought of looking up to where she has been sitting apart in silent contemplation all these years, thinking and thinking, until at last she solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere, and prescribed the remedy" (142). She goes on to argue for women's entry into public life and access to education.

³³ As outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, I am using the word 'practice' as Michel de Certeau does in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (see pages 16–17). Everyday practices are, according to de Certeau, "ways of operating' or doing things" that organize space and produce and are produced by social relations (xi). De Certeau's notion of practice is particularly useful to my analysis because it facilitates inquiry into the mundane activities that constitute Miriam's everyday life.

of the Victorian home, along with the associated power relations, in her workplace, the very space she has gone to in order to avoid the confines of domestic femininity.³⁴ *The Tunnel* thus demonstrates how, with the onset of twentieth century modernity, the domestic economy is encoded within the economy proper, and everyday practices, effectively captured through Richardson's ground-breaking style, reveal a re-encoding of Victorian femininity within the New Woman figure. Henri Lefebvre calls this the continuity of everyday life, arguing that although modernity carried the promise of progress, "Daily life was consolidated as the site where the old reality and the old representations were preserved" (*Critique III* 47). In this sense, everyday life "*is lagging behind what is possible*" (*Critique I* 230), meaning while larger scale social change offers the *promise* of increased agency and democratic freedom, existing power relations persist in mundane practices and familiar spaces, thus enabling ideological structures to reassert themselves in new contexts.

However, my argument also has a double movement. Just as attention to the everyday in *The Tunnel* reveals embedded ideologies, it also presents sites of resistance. In the final instance, I argue that Miriam challenges the continuity of everyday life and resists further domestication using what Michel de Certeau calls 'tactics.' In de Certeau's formulation, tactics are "everyday practices, 'ways of operating' or doing things" that have the potential for subverting diffuse power structures (xi). Faced with the patriarchal power relations that continue to organize both her home and workplace, Miriam seeks sites of resistance outside of those spaces. As such, she performs subversive tactics such

³⁴ I use the word 'femininity' here to specifically denote a social construction of gender, not a biological inevitability. This constructed femininity is inextricable from the woman's expected role in the home and behaviours associated with Victorian propriety, embodied in the figure of the 'Angel of the House.'

as appropriating work time to her own ends and bicycling through public spaces, marking out spaces that, however ephemeral, are her own.

Reframing *Pilgrimage* as an ‘everyday novel’ rather than a ‘stream of consciousness novel’ does not place it in an entirely different paradigm, but instead offers a more comprehensive view of Miriam’s situation, taking account of both her everyday life and her experience of it. Though everyday life has only recently emerged in literary studies as a theoretical field, even early readers of *Pilgrimage* recognized it as an everyday work. The excess of mundane detail, though many readers found it boring, made the series an important archive of women’s everyday experiences and practices around the turn of the twentieth century. In addition, the style and narrative techniques Richardson uses to capture the workings of her protagonist’s mind, those usually associated with stream of consciousness narration, were notable at the time for how well they recreated the experience of everydayness itself, drawing a parallel between everydayness and the stream of consciousness technique. A contemporary review of *Deadlock*, which could be applied to any of the volumes, suggests “the perusal of the book amounts to a sort of vicarious living” (“Fiction. Miss Richardson’s New Novel” 403). Of course, everydayness cannot exactly replace stream of consciousness as a literary term in this context, but it serves as a useful supplement. By looking at everyday life, we can see how ideologies are both embedded in and critique social life; ideology can reassert itself through continuities, or the persistence of existing social structures and power relations in changing contexts, and critique can manifest in discontinuities, or disruptions in daily practice.

The shift from reading the stream of consciousness to reading for everydayness seems logical. What characterizes the experience of everyday life if not thought, after all? However, although it is tempting to equate the interior life with everyday life while reading modernism, everyday theorist Lefebvre claims that “Lived experience and daily life do not coincide” (*Critique III* 11).³⁵ Though an individual’s phenomenological experience of daily life is perhaps characterized by thought, the chronotope of daily life is produced by power relations and ideologies that often assert themselves in ways unnoticed by ordinary individuals, through rituals of daily practice. As we will see through this chapter, Miriam’s intentions and perceptions of the world around her do not always coincide with the social practices at work.

A turn to everydayness can also help us to further understand *Pilgrimage* as a feminist text, while working to avoid the gender essentialism that has dominated the work’s critical history.³⁶ *Pilgrimage* is concerned with one woman’s experiences, and its

³⁵ While some modernist scholarship tends toward this reading of everyday life as the interior life (Randall 2007, Phillips 2010, Drewery 2011), another strand of scholarship on modernism and the everyday focuses on the outer world of ‘ordinary’ things and what are assumed to be ‘everyday’ spaces (Sim 2013, Olson 2009, McCracken 2000, Parsons 2000, Harvey 2008), although they often approach the everyday in a relatively unexamined way, particularly in the case of McCracken and Harvey (in this instance). Following from the latter, some recent articles discuss similar ‘everyday’ things and spaces, and even deploy similar language, but without critical engagement with or theorization of the terms ‘everyday’ or ‘ordinary’ (Watts 2014, Mulholland 2014). As such, these works take for granted that something is ‘everyday’ simply because it is not extraordinary, which runs counter to Lefebvre’s mandate to define everyday life in positive rather than negative terms, as discussed in my introduction.

³⁶ J.M. Murry claims that Richardson’s “insistence upon the immediate consciousness as reality” is “instinctive and irrational; it has a distinctly feminine tinge” (294). To him, the lack of hierarchization of detail, and the failure to appeal to a higher, ordering meaning, is irrational, and therefore feminine. Another contemporary reviewer writes less negatively: “I wonder if so completely feminine a novel as ‘Pilgrimage’ has ever been written” (Bourne 451). The femininity of *Pilgrimage* has been a recurring theme among Richardson’s critics. Sydney Kaplan has said: “Richardson was looking at the

style was devised as “a feminine equivalent to the current masculine realism” (Richardson “Foreword” 9). Richardson’s narrative employs techniques that, coupled with a deliberate attention to ‘the feminine,’ have led critics to argue *Pilgrimage* anticipates the French feminists of the 1960’s, and their concept of *écriture féminine*.³⁷ To make *Pilgrimage* a feminine work, rather than a work of psychological realism that just happened to be recounted from a woman’s consciousness, Richardson experimented in particular with syntax and punctuation in hopes of creating a language particular to a woman’s experience of modernity. This led Virginia Woolf to famously credit her with creating “the psychological sentence of the feminine gender,” “capable of capturing not ‘states of doing’ but ‘states of being’” (Woolf “Romance” 367, Gillespie “Dorothy Richardson” 396). What Richardson deemed the feminine qualities of *Pilgrimage* need to

innumerable perceptions which change from moment to moment, at life seen in the concrete, in the particularities, never in terms of totalities; she believed this was the essence of the feminine consciousness” (“Featureless Freedom” 915). Richardson’s own assertions about her desire to write the feminine make it untenable not to read *Pilgrimage* as specifically ‘women’s writing,’ and Richardson herself had a somewhat essentialist view of gender difference. Richardson felt that women did not just have differing material conditions from men; there was also something inherently different about the way they understood and experienced the world because of their gender. In *The Tunnel*, she writes, “In speech with a man, a woman is at a disadvantage—because they speak different languages. In pity, or from some other motives, she must therefore, stammeringly, speak his. He listens and is flattered and thinks he has her mental measure when he has not touched even the fringe of her consciousness” (*Pilgrimage II* 210). Annette Kolodny suggests that to look for “a feminine style expressive of a unique female ‘mind’” implies the “assumption that there is something unique about women’s writing” (75, 76). This could lead to “potentially fruitless debate over the relative merits of nature versus nurture ... overly hasty pronouncement [and] generalizing” (76, 78). She is not opposed to the pursuit, but insists that we look more critically at the term ‘feminine’ and all it implies.

³⁷ For instance, Lynette Felber, among others, has claimed that “Richardson’s narrative techniques embody the disruptive nature of gaps in women’s writing as defined by Irigaray,” and in the novel *Miriam* “discovers how to articulate her true essence and write in an inherently feminine style” (35). For a more detailed discussion of *écriture féminine*, its critics, and its relation to modernism, see pages 29–36 in the introduction of this dissertation.

be examined as such, not least because they emerge from the same narrative techniques as those that make it both a stream of consciousness work and an everyday one.

However, sole focus on the work's subjectivity and aligning her style with *écriture féminine* make it easy to essentialize these gendered narrative qualities.³⁸ A focus on the everyday instead allows for more examination of the social construction of gender and gendered experience, casting *femininity* as an ideological construct rather than a natural one.³⁹

The stylistic connection that emerges in *Pilgrimage* between everydayness and femininity does not simply highlight women's experiences of the modern everyday. Richardson's style is disruptive, in keeping with the conventional view of modernism in general, but in the subtext of the work, it also reveals continuity in everyday life. As such, it critiques the *ideology of femininity*⁴⁰ while also demonstrating women's potential for

³⁸ Richardson uses a number of stylistic techniques that are later singled out as *écriture féminine*, as detailed in the introduction of this dissertation, in the section on "Style Matters." However, as suggested earlier, by hanging on these (slight) similarities and calling her work *écriture féminine*, we risk submitting it to the same criticisms waged against the theory. What's more, many of the common criticisms launched against *Pilgrimage* (its length, impenetrability, and open-endedness) can also be gendered within this paradigm, equating stylistic difficulty and aesthetic failure with the essentialized, irrational femininity that Murry points to (see note 31). As such, it is perhaps not such a useful term anymore for feminist inquiry, as I argue in the introduction.

³⁹ Elaine Showalter similarly suggests feminists can avoid essentializing femininity by focusing on 'women's culture,' as discussed in the introduction (see page 35). Modernist women writers recognized a women's culture that could oppose the male-dominated tradition, and aimed to develop a representative style for their particular experience of modernity. Richardson's writing style, although it has some of the qualities Cixous and Irigaray espouse, can be instead read as an attempt to resist the dominant discursive mode, rather than a discourse of the body.

⁴⁰ I am using Lefebvre's notion of femininity *as* ideology here, as discussed in the introduction (see pages 21–22). Lefebvre claims that women's "ambiguous position in everyday life" is enabled by "[t]he ideology of *femininity*," which is "only another form of the ideology of consumption (happiness through consumption) and the ideology of

resisting that ideology through particular types of everyday practices, though not those one would expect. However, these subversive practices, or “tactics” to use de Certeau’s term, “play on and with a terrain imposed on [them] and organized by the law of a foreign power” (37). Rather than finding a space of her own at work or in her rented room, Miriam’s more effective resistance to femininity comes of tactics that do not reside within a familiar space, for instance bicycling through public spaces. Lefebvre’s contention that “‘women’ in general bear all the weight of everyday life” rings true in *Pilgrimage*, as “their situation,” Miriam’s situation, “sums up what the everyday is” (*Critique II* 11–12). However, his concurrent claim that women cannot see the everyday for what it is and are hence its victims finds a counterpoint in Miriam’s resistance to further domestication and ideological subjection in *The Tunnel*.

The Stream of Consciousness and Everydayness

As aforementioned, the stream of consciousness is one of the defining features of *Pilgrimage*, and it shares technical qualities with both the everydayness of the work and Richardson’s attempt to write a ‘feminine realism.’ As such, it is important to explore just what the term means, how it applies to *Pilgrimage*, and what difficulties it presents that can be circumvented by reframing *Pilgrimage* as an everyday work. When Richardson began writing *Pilgrimage*, she says she found she was “telling *about* Miriam, describing her. There she was as I first saw her, going upstairs. But who was *there to describe* her?” (*Journey* 400). The narrative insight she wanted could only come, she realized, from

technicality (women possessing the technique of happiness!)” (*Everyday Life in the Modern World* 73, 96). Key here is the use of *femininity* not to describe an essential femaleness but an ideology that demands women behave, live, and feel in a manner both prescribed by and prescriptive of a patriarchal economy.

having Miriam narrate herself. Richardson had also determined that, in order to properly represent consciousness, her work would have to remain confined to a single mind. The narrative's singular focalization through Miriam's consciousness led May Sinclair to famously write, in a 1918 review of the first three volumes: "there is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on. It is Miriam Henderson's stream of consciousness going on and on. And in neither is there any grossly discernible beginning or middle or end" (5–6). Sinclair is thought to have adopted the term 'stream of consciousness' from the psychological works of William James, but this review marks its first use as a literary term.⁴¹

Although stream of consciousness has become a widely recognized literary technique, usually associated with the famous works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, Richardson's narrative and stylistic innovations were especially ground-breaking. Even Joyce and Marcel Proust, writers usually cited alongside Richardson as creators of the 'New Novel' in the 1920's, did not write at this point with the extreme interiority of perspective Richardson did. Upon publication, the first three chapter-volumes of *Pilgrimage*, as Richardson called them, were met with critical acclaim, making her one of

⁴¹ However, Anne Fernihough suggests that "the actual phrase 'stream of consciousness' might have come from a whole range of texts, psychological and biological, that Sinclair had read, and not necessarily from James" (68). Suzanne Raitt claims that Sinclair "read widely in nineteenth-century biology and psychology" and many of the texts she cites in her works from that period "use the phrase 'stream of consciousness' as a matter of course The phrase, then, far from alluding specifically to William James, invokes a range of scientific and popular contexts, none of which are concerned primarily with the nature of perception, but all of which consider at length the question of the limits of individuality" (*May Sinclair* 219). These included texts by Herbert Spencer, Samuel Butler, William McDougall, Théodule Ribot, and Henry Maudsley. This is significant because attention to other potential sources could help us to understand the stream of consciousness technique more broadly, rather than characterizing it mainly by James' conception of how the mind works.

the most celebrated authors of the moment. The ‘New Novel’ that preoccupied 1920’s critics boasted innovations readers would come to recognize as the defining features of the modernist stream of consciousness novel.⁴² According to John Middleton Murry, *Pilgrimage* was marked by the “attempt to record immediately the growth of a consciousness. Immediately without any effort at mediation by means of an interposed plot or story” (292). Consciousness was, he argued, represented “as it was before it had been re-shaped in obedience to the demands of practical life” (293). Certainly in the case of *Pilgrimage*, if not also the other texts Murry critiques in this context, this is not strictly true. Though these psychological narratives aim to represent mind-wandering from a subjective point of view, many concessions are made to “the demands of practical life.” In fact, through much of *Pilgrimage*, readers see Miriam’s inner life conflicting regularly with outside influences.

Sinclair claimed that, by limiting the text only to Miriam’s consciousness, Richardson was the first English author to come so close to reality (6). R. Brimley Johnson likewise suggested, shortly thereafter, that Richardson “has carried the ideal of realism to its last, logical conclusion: the observation, and reproduction, of thought and emotion” (146). In this respect, Richardson clearly anticipates (and potentially even influenced) Woolf’s essay “Modern Fiction,” which claims that the new novelists

⁴² See John Middleton Murry’s “The Break-up of the Novel,” and Hugh Walpole’s response, “Realism and the New English Novel.” Murry claims that three significant works were written in 1913–14: Marcel Proust’s *Swann’s Way*, Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Richardson’s *Pointed Roofs* (the first chapter-volume of *Pilgrimage*), all three aligned by their incompleteness, their autobiographical style, and their attention to consciousness over plot. In Murry’s view, the new style was a sign of decadence, of the deterioration of the novel form, which should be structured around a story. Walpole defends these new writers in his response to Murry, suggesting that their works are not novels at all, but a new genre characterized by their semi-autobiographical nature.

“attempt to come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them, even if to do so they must discard most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelist” (150).⁴³ In Woolf’s view, fiction that more adequately represents modern realities turns to the “ordinary mind on an ordinary day,” representing the “myriad impressions” that mind receives (149, 150). Woolf and Murry both claimed that, as we learned more about consciousness through the development of psychology, old methods of storytelling would become inadequate. The modern novel’s attention to subjective consciousness thus represented a drive for truth: “All we can know,” Murry wrote, “is our own experience, and the closer we keep to the immediate quality of that experience, the nearer we shall be to truth” (295).⁴⁴ Interestingly, Murry and others do not account for the irony that can arise from taking an entirely subjective point of view. Not only did Freud teach us that we have an unconscious, but also that it could betray us, and we may not always be aware of the motives underlying our thoughts and behaviours. Ironically then, the nearer we seem to get to truth in a psychological story, the further we may actually be from it, depending on the reliability and soundness of the narrator.

Critics have long argued that the psychological works of William James and Henri Bergson’s theories on time are “behind the development of the ‘stream of

⁴³ It seems strange that Woolf does not mention Richardson in “Modern Fiction.” We can surmise that she was likely reading *Interim* in the *Little Review*, as she mentions the serialized *Ulysses* in her essay, which was running alongside *Interim*. Her familiarity with Richardson is not in question, as she had already reviewed *The Tunnel*. Although Woolf was apprehensive about Richardson’s work, the *Pilgrimage* series would have proven an excellent example of a work that “suggest[s] how much of life is excluded or ignored,” as she says of *Ulysses* (152).

⁴⁴ Murry is clearly parroting Woolf’s “Modern Fiction” here, although he does not ultimately buy into Woolf’s message, holding on to the necessity of plot in fiction.

consciousness' novel" (Randall *Daily Time* 32). James and Bergson had a direct influence on many modernist writers (Gertrude Stein and Proust, for instance). However, in many cases, writers unfamiliar with James or Bergson, like Richardson, still shared common concerns with the two thinkers, whose ideas about consciousness and time came to represent the *zeitgeist* of the early twentieth century. In *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), James theorized the concept of 'mind-wandering': "a mental state in which we open ourselves up to the swarm of sense data bombarding consciousness at any given moment" (Fernihough 66). To 'wander' is an apt spatial metaphor for the mind in this state, as these thoughts are connected by free association, rather than logic, and remain unhierarchized. What *Pilgrimage* appears to do is render Miriam's thought processes as they might actually occur in her mind, without filtering or narrative structure. A striking example of this appears in *The Tunnel*, when Miriam goes to the theatre, and her impressions and sometimes random thoughts are described instead of the play she is seeing. Her thoughts flit from the identity of the actors, to wondering who staged the music, to questioning her friends' interpretations of Shakespeare, to how Japanese people might react to English drama. She carries on with an angry rant to herself about conventionally gendered performances—"Did a man *ever* speak in a natural voice"—and how there is "no reality in any of Shakespeare's women," then follows a tangent about the English Civil Wars, without any indication as to how those thoughts might correspond to what is happening around her (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 187, 188). "Was the idea of divine right a mistake?" she asks herself:

Can no one be trusted? Cromwell's son was a weak fool.
How can a country be ruled? People will never agree. What
ought one to be if one can neither be a quite a Roundhead
nor quite a Cavalier? They worshipped two gods. Are there

two Gods? ... Irving ... walking gently about inside Charles, feeling, as Charles felt the beauty of the sunlit garden the delicate clothes, the refinement of fine living, the charm of perfect association, the rich beauty of each day as it pass. ... Charles died with all that in his eyes, *knowing it good*. Cromwell was a farmer. Christ was a carpenter. Christ did not bother about kings. 'Render unto Caesar.' (190)

And this is the account readers get of Miriam's trip to the theatre—an account that tells us nothing of what she has actually seen. Mind-wandering is evident in this passage in how quickly Miriam jumps across a variety of topics, and although her thoughts are somewhat driven by memory and logic, there are also illogical interventions, such as when she starts to imagine the scene of Charles walking in the garden, and the association between Cromwell and Christ, clearly driven more by metonymy than metaphor. Richardson's use of ellipses to graphically represent a wandering mind, which in this passage jumps from the question of two Gods to the name of an actor (Irving), is characteristic of her style throughout the novel series, as is the use of short, choppy sentences in these stream of consciousness moments.

However, there are actually limited moments of free-associative thought in the text, and much of *Pilgrimage* represents what James called 'selective attention': "a more discriminating faculty of mind which made practical, everyday life possible by singling out the particular things which might be useful to us and suppressing or editing out the rest" (Fernihough 66). A point of note here is that, while *Pilgrimage* is not merely a long experiment in representing 'mind-wandering,' the selective thoughts Miriam lingers on are more "useful" to her than they are to readers. While it may not always explain the scene and context to readers, much of Miriam's narration represents her trying to work out her position in various social situations and coming to terms with her identity in

relation to others. When she reflects early on in *The Tunnel*, “I should never have gone to Mornington Road unless I had been nearly mad with sorrow,” she is coming to terms with the difficult few months after her mother’s death and acknowledging to herself, in rather rational structured thought, that she is moving forward (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 20). Unfortunately for the reader though, there is no indication of where Mornington Road is or when Miriam went there. The passage appears to refer to an episode of Miriam’s life that occurs outside the pages of the novel. As such, much of the narration in *Pilgrimage* aims to maintain the integrity of the voice and the continuity of Miriam’s consciousness and personality, while refusing to succumb to the confines of a conventional plot to help readers along. This is likely why it seems as though “nothing happens” through large parts of the work (Sinclair 5).

Alongside James’ conceptions of how the mind works, Bergson’s influence on stream of consciousness writing is evident in representations of memory, time, and temporal experience. Bergson’s concept of *la durée* (duration) is typically defined as psychological time, or the individual experience of time passing, which cannot be divided into equivalent parcels like objective, measured time. Within an individual’s consciousness, some moments may feel extended and some may fly by unnoticed or be compressed. What shapes time is experience and memory, which are what makes individuals who they are at any given moment, as well as who they have been throughout their lives leading up to that moment. In this sense, time, through memory, is perceived as both progress and simultaneity. What seems consistent across this duration is the individual consciousness, the persistence of which allows the individual to perceive this succession of moments and accumulate experience. However, in *Creative Evolution*,

Bergson also claims that there is no enduring ego; we are “nothing but change” (60).

“Our duration,” he writes,

is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would be nothing but the present—no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and swells as it advances. ... What are we, in fact, what is our *character*, if not the condensation of the history we have lived from our birth ...? Our personality, which is being built up each instant with its accumulated experience, changes without ceasing.
(70)

Thus, *la durée* is the experience of the self across time. Indeed, Bergson would argue that we are nothing but the accumulation of our experiences across time, which we carry with us at each and every moment. In this sense, *la durée* combines change and continuity.

Pilgrimage's temporality is captured in Sinclair's description of Miriam's "stream of consciousness going on and on," without "beginning or middle or end" (6). Indeed, the sheer length of the *Pilgrimage* series evokes this Bergsonian temporality. Readers get the sense of being caught within Miriam's ongoing consciousness, as it accumulates experience and changes. The persistent focalization on Miriam, whose consciousness is always at the centre of the story, arguably makes *Pilgrimage* even more Bergsonian than many other stream of consciousness works, as it is a sustained demonstration of how an identity develops and is crystallized around the illusion of a stable ego.⁴⁵ On a smaller

⁴⁵ Kumar claims that "*Pilgrimage* is more a journey through *la durée* than through space. It is in her durational presentation of personality that she resembles Bergson" (50). However, he also claims Richardson to be the least successful of the stream of consciousness novelists, so I think he would disagree with me on this point. Shirley Rose claims that Kumar's inclusion of Richardson in his study derives from his misunderstanding Richardson's conception of consciousness (370). She says that Kumar eventually recognizes that, in *Pilgrimage*, consciousness has "some sure centre" (371), which is why he also eventually discounts her as less successful. I would argue that the real misunderstanding results here from both Kumar and Rose taking Miriam at

scale, the sense of continual movement through the series is emphasized through Richardson's frequent use of ellipses. In addition to signalling mind-wandering, the ellipses also signal to readers that Miriam's narrative of herself continues to move across the page, spatializing temporality.

Richardson rejected the 'stream of consciousness' label, calling it the "death-dealing metaphor" ("Letter to Bryher" 597). She characterizes it as "amongst the company of useful labels devised to meet the exigencies of literary criticism... isolated by its perfect imbecility" (qtd. in Rose 367–68). Richardson's issue was not so much with the consciousness part of the formulation, but the stream metaphor. Shirley Rose claims that Richardson's issue with the term derived primarily from the tendency of the stream metaphor to temporalize consciousness in a way that sacrifices depth to progress.

Richardson preferred metaphors like "tree, pool, sea, and ocean," suggesting even that "fountain of consciousness" might be more suitable, if still inadequate (qtd. in Rose 370). Each of these substitutes, though they all certainly present their own issues, suggests a stable centre of identity. Rose argues that the tendency to fit Richardson into a Bergsonian view of time and consciousness results from a misunderstanding of what she thinks consciousness is (370). "Whereas Bergson asserts the fluidity and alteration of apprehensible reality," Rose claims, "Dorothy Richardson argues for its stability and changelessness" (371). However, Rose's argument rests on an oversimplification of both Bergson and Richardson. "Literature," Richardson says, "is a product of this stable human consciousness, enriched by experience and capable of deliberate, concentrated contemplation" (qtd. in Rose 368). She clearly sees in consciousness *both* a stable centre

her word. Though she conceives of herself as a stable ego, she repeatedly reveals herself to be an unreliable narrator.

and the accumulation of experience. Of course, Bergson does not believe in the same stable centre Richardson does, but he still claims there is continuity in each consciousness, which is grasped through memory. Though identity is perpetually changing with experience, the individual's perception of him/herself still rests in a constant (even if illusory) space. As we can see in Richardson's mention of experience, her problem with the stream metaphor was perhaps not simply that it was temporal, but that "it failed to capture the way in which consciousness accumulates rather than merely flows in her writing," as suggested by Anne Fernihough (68). Miriam's experience does not simply spread itself across time, in a sequence of moments, but in Bergson's terms, it "accumulates ... rolling upon itself, as a snowball" (68). *Pilgrimage's* style thus mimics a temporality akin to Bergsonian *durée*.

Although it appears Richardson was simply quibbling over the connotations of the word 'stream,' and James's and Bergson's theories seem to fit her intentions quite well, her critique of the term 'stream of consciousness' should nonetheless be taken seriously. Arguably, use of the term in literary criticism tends to homogenize modernist novels. *Pilgrimage*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* are all generally regarded as stream of consciousness works, but they each treat consciousness differently, using notably different narrative techniques.⁴⁶ The final chapter of *Ulysses*, for instance, does

⁴⁶ According to Matz, the "flowing dissolution" of stream of consciousness writing "did not simply mean running together sentences and flooding narration with random thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Accurate characterization became a matter of plumbing new depths of idiosyncrasy and confusion; plot turned now on decisions, realizations, and reflections that were more minute, idiosyncratic, and heterogeneous; and narration itself took wholly new forms—each of which could vary depending upon the quality, mood, or motivation of the minds it sought to match" ("The Novel" 220). Thus different aims require somewhat different styles and uses of language and syntax, and do not always conform to the same principles.

away with punctuation altogether to mimic Molly Bloom's wandering mind, and is usually cited as a rare example of 'pure' stream of consciousness writing. Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*, by contrast, uses dashes and commas to carefully craft a feeling of uninterrupted thought that is nonetheless hierarchized to maintain clarity. The result is an entirely different representation of consciousness. *Pilgrimage*, as aforementioned, uses similar techniques to both Joyce and Woolf (and more) to represent different experiences of Miriam's self in different situations, yet remains uniquely confined to her singular point of view. While it fails to account for these differences, 'stream of consciousness' started out as a convenient term for early critics to make sense of something unfamiliar: the modernist novel.⁴⁷ Drawing on its association with *Pilgrimage*, in addition to the works of Joyce, Proust, and Woolf, the stream of consciousness novel came to be defined not just by its psychological nature, but by the particular formal elements that Richardson pioneered to effectively represent the consciousness of a woman in her daily life. *Pilgrimage* came to embody many of the defining features of the modernist novel more generally, including: an absence of conventional plot and narrative sequence; unconventional graphic layout and overall structure; the complete, or frequent, absence of an omniscient narrator; colloquial, mixed, and even non-sensical language; occasional

⁴⁷ Lynette Felber claims that, as "an antecedent of Joyce and Woolf—those British writers generally credited with inventing stream-of-consciousness narrative—Richardson, in *Pilgrimage*, uses an encyclopedic form to express the vastness of inner feminine consciousness. Whereas some modernist women writers define an antitradition, as Shari Benstock, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Susan Stanford Friedman, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar and others have noted, Dorothy Richardson defines *modernism itself* (albeit long before it was recognized as such) as a feminine movement" (24). Likewise, Matz argues that Richardson was the only author whose commitment to what we now know as modernist style was unwavering, while she was also the one to ultimately define the literary modernist movement ("Singular Modernity").

phonetic rather than conventional spelling, and onomatopoeia; experimental or absent punctuation; mental digressions and free association; and excessive, mundane detail.⁴⁸ In the case of Richardson's text, the reader encounters all of these formal elements to varying degrees.

Although Richardson's stylistic and narrative innovations were widely celebrated at first, the subsequent publication of *The Tunnel* in 1919, and the serialisation of *Interim* (volume five) alongside *Ulysses* in the *Little Review*, led *Pilgrimage* to be increasingly regarded as unreadable. Although Murry, for instance, claimed new narrative methods were more appropriate to modern understandings of consciousness, he still maintained that what makes a novel a novel *par excellence* is a story. He saw the new style as something not yet fully formed, and charged Richardson with being the least successful of the new authors because of her failure to relay a conventional plot or structure.⁴⁹ According to Murry, because the work follows Miriam's consciousness alone, there is no larger meaning with which to reconcile the narrative. There is no climactic epiphany moment, as in the works of Joyce, Woolf, or Mansfield, nor does Richardson divide and mark time the way they do, for instance, with the chiming of Big Ben in *Mrs. Dalloway*. There is no obvious mythic structure, such as that of *Ulysses*, based on Homer's *Odyssey*.⁵⁰ Murry and Richard Aldington both state that *Pilgrimage* also lacks Proust's

⁴⁸ For a comprehensive account of the features of the modernist novel, Matz's chapter on "The Novel" in *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* is quite good, as it lists common formal features while also exploring the social and cultural influences they arise from.

⁴⁹ As a counterpoint, one reviewer said "James Joyce and Marcel Proust have a largeness of conception beyond Miss Richardson's, but in execution her novels are the most perfect of the three" (Suckow 12).

⁵⁰ In *Form and Meaning in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage*, María Llantada Díaz has recently argued that *Pilgrimage* does in fact have a mythic structure. She analyzes

historical preoccupations and philosophical anchors.⁵¹ Richardson's failure, by the standard of these early reviewers, is that *Pilgrimage's* lack of structure or higher meaning makes it boring and incomprehensible: it "can be as tiring as a 24 hour cinematograph without interval or plot" (Murry 298). Murry's argument is that "a consciousness is a flux, it needs to be crystallized about some foreign object to have an intelligible shape" (298). And because *Pilgrimage* does not obviously do this, it fell into insignificance, often regarded as nothing more than a writing experiment.⁵² Katherine Mansfield also

Pilgrimage as a *bildungsroman*, and Miriam's journey as a quest narrative. However, she goes a step further in explaining the quest and argues that each chapter-volume corresponds to different arcana in the tarot. I find the tarot part of her argument a bit of a stretch, but agree that there are certainly larger cultural narratives underlying the structure of *Pilgrimage*. For instance, Díaz also convincingly argues for the influence of Quakerism on Miriam's quest for self. However, to argue that Richardson deliberately structured the series against these things works against what we know to be her intention, in my opinion, which was to follow the maturation of a consciousness on its way to becoming a writer, which does not necessarily fit a fixed pattern like the tarot. The impulse to fit Richardson back into the modernist canon by arguing she was more like the others than we thought could be another of those moves that threatens to homogenize the modernist novel.

⁵¹ Another early review, from *The New Republic*, cites this in more positive terms: "Miss Richardson's heroine lives at a pitch of intensity that casts enchantment over the commonest things. The novel has the detail of Proust, without the fatiguing effect of Proustian society. It has the living quality of Virginia Woolf, without her careful pattern" (B.D. 305).

⁵² Kumar apes all of these early criticisms, albeit without proper attribution (substantial passages are even copied verbatim from Murry): "It is necessary to point out at this stage that although Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* has a certain historical importance in the development of the English novel, it pales into insignificance when compared with the novels of Virginia Woolf or James Joyce. Devoid of any dramatic interest, symbolic meaning or skilful patterning, *Pilgrimage* remains at best only a literal and rather uninteresting record of Miriam's stream of consciousness. Dorothy Richardson contents herself with choosing brief intervals of Miriam's experience, and within these periods there is hardly any selection. Unlike Virginia Woolf or James Joyce, she does not attempt to reconcile Miriam's stream of thought with any design or pattern. No rhythmic tones, contrasts of mood or situation, relieve the monotony of her narrative which seems to continue in its primordial flow. She appears to be unaware of the imperative need to superimpose some kind of aesthetic design on the indeterminate flow Miriam's stream of sensory impressions. ... there is no form in *Pilgrimage*."

joined the conversation, similarly classifying Richardson as one of those writers that don't "relate their 'experiences' to life or ... see them against any kind of background ... are, as we see them, content to remain in the air, hovering over, as if the thrilling moment were enough and more than enough" ("Dragonflies" 310). She took issue with *The Tunnel's* radical subjectivity and excessive detail, charging Richardson with "guard[ing] the secret" of its significance ("Three Women Novelists" 309). In her review of *Interim*, Mansfield famously suggested that "everything being of equal importance to her, it is impossible that everything should not be of equal unimportance" ("Dragonflies" 310). Woolf, who clearly shares Richardson's interest in modernity and women's lives, was not as bothered by the level of detail in *Pilgrimage* as Mansfield was. She was, however, "worried about the narrowing effect of a narrative that remains in just one mind" (Scott *Refiguring Modernism* 69). Woolf preferred a narrative that explores multiple perspectives and appeals to what she called 'moments of being,' or moments of understanding that moved beyond the self.⁵³

Dorothy Richardson thus remains the least successful of all the stream of consciousness novelists" (62–63). Kumar's criticism of Richardson is especially significant because his work was one of the first sustained studies of the stream of consciousness novel, defining the technique while also essentially defining it as a modernist genre. Even now, Kumar is widely cited, as there have been few sustained studies of the stream of consciousness novel since. As such, Richardson was for years regarded in this negative way, in comparison to Joyce and Woolf. To my knowledge, no one has yet challenged Kumar by trying to redefine the 'stream of consciousness novels' by their differing treatments of consciousness—a study I would argue is well overdue.

⁵³ In her *Times Literary Supplement* review of *The Tunnel*, Woolf writes: "That Miss Richardson gets so far as to achieve a sense of reality far greater than that produced by the ordinary means is undoubted. But, then, which reality is it, the superficial or the profound?" (81). Despite her reservations about the egotism in *Pilgrimage*, she was also excited about Richardson's work, stating that *The Tunnel* "is better in its failure than most books in their success" (81). Woolf's own writing was clearly influenced by Richardson's early experiments; however, she attempts to do away with the perceived egotism by exploring multiple consciousnesses in each of her works, rather than just

Mansfield's readerly desire for the secret meaning of the text represents one of the most notable misreadings of *Pilgrimage*, as Richardson is not guarding a secret at all. Rather than imposing order on her fiction by appealing to a mythic, transcendent structure, or the direction of an omniscient narrative consciousness, like many of her contemporaries do, Richardson instead focuses her critical faculties on everyday life: what Rita Felski calls "the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities ... the ultimate non-negotiable reality" (Felski "Invention" 77–78). The extensive detail in Richardson's work may strike readers as unimportant or meaningless, as the everyday "belongs to insignificance;" yet, "the insignificant being what is without truth, without reality, and *without secret*" is, Maurice Blanchot claims, "also perhaps *the site of all possible signification*" (239–240, emphasis added). In this sense, the work itself already is the 'background' that Mansfield sought, yet it comes forward as more than neutral backdrop. Richardson's style attempts to recreate one woman's experience of her everyday life, allowing readers to see, and thus critique, the ways in which everyday life itself and the practices that constitute it operate.⁵⁴

Although Mansfield took issue with the level of detail in *Pilgrimage*, more recent critics have argued that this very tactic is Richardson's way of rejecting the priorities of

one individual, culminating in the collective consciousness of *The Waves*. She also pairs a focus on subjective consciousness with moments of being, to gesture toward the "profound" reality she thought was missing from *Pilgrimage*. For a more detailed discussion of moments of being, see Chapter Two.

⁵⁴ In *Novels of Everyday Life: The Series in English Fiction, 1850-1930*, Laurie Langbauer connects the serial novel to the everyday: "precisely because of their expansiveness, their repetitiveness, their complication of closure, those linked novels that are part of extended series seem to mirror and carry properties often defined as essential to everyday life: that it's just one thing after another, going quietly but inexhaustibly on and on" (2). That last clause evokes Sinclair's review of *Pilgrimage*, drawing an explicit connection also between the everyday and the stream of consciousness.

the traditional novel, as she “defends the significance of seemingly mundane, everyday events” (Felber 30). *The Tunnel* prioritizes Miriam’s experience and impressions of the mundane, rather than the extraordinary or notable moments that typically constitute a fictional plot, emulating both the experience of everydayness and women’s “entry into modernity” (Light 10). It chronicles the minutiae of Miriam’s working day as a dental assistant and receptionist; her struggle for personal and financial independence, represented by ‘a room of her own’; and her foray into the public spaces of city streets, cafés, the theatre, and public lectures. Richardson pairs a focus on consciousness with truly extensive detail, creating an atmosphere of everydayness that makes *The Tunnel* an almost anthropological account of a woman’s experience at the turn of the twentieth century, a time when women’s roles in the public and private spheres were drastically shifting, and new opportunities were afforded by political and social change. Rather than trying to transcend the everyday in search of meaning, Richardson mires her protagonist in the details of everyday life in order to capture and critique this experience. This stands in stark contrast to Woolf’s conception of the “cotton wool” of daily life as “non-being,” or a space one must rise above to experience authentic “moments of being” (“Sketch of the Past” 72).⁵⁵ Richardson’s conception of the everyday falls more in line with Lefebvre’s statement that “Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all” (*Critique I* 127). Style is essential to Richardson’s critique, as close attention to the mundane and the

⁵⁵ According to Laura Marcus, “Woolf habitually drew the distinctions between her own work and that of Joyce and Richardson on the basis of surface versus depth in the novel form” (“Pilgrimage” 444). However, one could reframe that criticism by looking at the equivalent to Woolf’s ‘surface’ as everyday life, and ‘depth’ as something outside it. Woolf’s own work arguably devalues everyday life as merely a means to an end. In her view, depth comes from form and aesthetics, not the everyday. For a more detailed argument about Woolf’s devaluation of everyday life, see Chapter Two.

gendered experience of modernity “tear[s] away the veil” to reveal everyday life as it really is, uncovering the ways ideology is quietly reified through familiar practices (57).

Everyday life is, according to Felski, “above all a temporal term” (Felski, “Invention” 81). As such, there are notable formal parallels between the stream of consciousness technique, the modernist novel as conceived by Richardson, and everyday life. Each goes on and on, cannot be broken down into its component parts, and escapes easy definition. “Definitions of consciousness,” Richardson wrote, “vary from school to school and are necessarily as incomplete as definitions of life. The only satisfactory definition of a man’s consciousness is his life” (qtd. in Rose 368). She draws an explicit connection here between consciousness, the *experience* of life, and everyday life itself. Everyday life is thus, in this formulation, as shaped by the interior as the exterior. The radical turn inward, in Richardson’s view, does not necessarily represent a turn away from materiality or embodiment, but a turn to the experience of everyday (real) life, and in particular for this case, a woman’s everyday life. However, in Lefebvre’s words, “Consciousness presents itself in the novel in this way because this is how it occurs in life: at one and the same time *from without and from within*” (*Critique I* 127). Richardson’s formulation does not account for Lefebvre’s *without*, which is integral to a full understanding of everyday life as the only definition of a person’s life cannot be his or her consciousness alone.

The Tunnel operates at more than just the level of experiential moments; the overall structure could also represent everydayness. It opens with a famously detailed description of Miriam moving into her new room in London. After a brief Easter holiday with her sister, in which Miriam talks about settling into her life in the city, the novel

then turns to her new job as a dental assistant and secretary. This chapter, along with the subsequent one, detailing an extended evening of leisure, takes place over a single day and comprises over one quarter of the volume, anticipating the ‘day in the life’ mode of *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, the most frequently cited ‘daily’ modernist novels. *The Tunnel*, however, extends beyond the single day. After this early episode, nearly every chapter is confined to a single working day, a leisurely evening, or a weekend each, moving fairly evenly through this cycle. The chapters alternate regularly between work and leisure, giving a sense of not just a ‘day in the life’, but also the daily life, as it repeats, but slightly differently each time. Dispersed across approximately one year, the volume becomes a more accurate representation of everyday life than the day in the life novel because of its refusal to enclose the single day. By enclosing the single day, *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* narrate a *notable* day, at least somewhat removed from the ordinary, whereas *The Tunnel*, as it continues, dilutes the impact of each single day, rendering none of them as notable in the end.⁵⁶

Woolf’s and Mansfield’s criticisms of *Pilgrimage* are quite similar. They both “propose a profound reality, in which individual details achieve significance through their relation to the ‘whole scheme,’ an Idealist totality,” and *Pilgrimage* does not conform to that vision, in their views (Finn 120). Although the “totality” or scheme that these early readers were missing seems to be something outside of everyday life (certainly in Woolf’s case), I argue, following Lefebvre, that it is the everyday itself. “[T]here is a certain obscurity in the very concept of *everyday life*,” Lefebvre argues (*Critique I* 31).

⁵⁶ While this leveling out of the days contributes to an extent to Mansfield’s aforementioned criticism about the relative unimportance of *Pilgrimage*’s details, I maintain that the significance of the details is clear when one regards them in context of the whole, as already argued.

“Where is it to be found?,” he asks: “In work or in leisure? In family life and in moments ‘lived’ outside of culture? Initially the answer seems obvious. Everyday life involves all three elements, all three aspects. It is their unity and their totality, and it determines the concrete individual” (31). Though he goes on to complicate this response, the general suggestion persists that there is a “totality” of everyday life composed of all aspects of material existence, and the individual’s experience of those realities. “The discreteness of the elements of the everyday,” Lefebvre continues, “implies an alienation,” and this perhaps also contributes to our difficulty in conceiving it as an object around which a consciousness can take shape (32). To recount the details of everyday life as *Pilgrimage* does “might be taken for a ‘scientific’ description or ‘phenomenology’ of daily life” (*Critique III* 2–3); however, the totality of everyday life is a combination of these daily practices and the social relations and spaces that produce them. The continuum of everyday life in Richardson’s work, expressed through her narrative techniques, in tandem with the social relations that structure her everyday life (detailed in the next section), amounts to this totality, a reading experience that cannot be located in any single moment but persists in the whole.

The Continuity of Everyday Life

This turn away from reading *Pilgrimage* as a stream of consciousness work to reading it as an everyday one enables us to look outside of Miriam, and to look at the social construction of space, rather than just her experience of space. According to de Certeau, “*space is a practiced place,*” and the spaces of Miriam’s home and work are organized and determined by patriarchal power relations through the disciplining of mundane practices (117). Attention to this construction of space reveals the social and

material constraints that are imposed on Miriam through everyday practice, as well as Miriam's potential for resistance to these constraints through everyday practice.

The Tunnel's everyday structure and its temporal mode are anything but straightforward. As previously mentioned, *The Tunnel* differs from previous volumes in the series, in that Richardson's style shifts somewhat and the everyday comes forward with more intensity. Anita Levy argues that the stylistic shift, or intensification, in *Pilgrimage* marked by *The Tunnel* is brought on solely by the change in Miriam's work situation. "To remain within any domestic institution," she argues, "is no longer a *thinkable* option for the intellectual woman as represented by Miriam" (59). Levy presents this as the reason Miriam is "poised at the end of the decision that ultimately returns her to London ... to look for work in the male professional world" (59). In this formulation, the increasing fragmentation of the narrative consciousness and the extensive objective detail in the novel derive from Miriam's immersion in the drudgery of urban professional life. This has become a conventional reading of *The Tunnel*, but what goes unacknowledged in this argument is that, at the end of *Honeycomb*, Miriam's mother has committed suicide, and this also creates a rupture in the series. This rupture causes Miriam psychological trauma, while simultaneously enabling her to free herself from the domestic economy, resulting in a heightened awareness of both the struggles and potential of everyday life. The mother's death is unrecognizable for a first-time reader because it is "an unnarrated event...alluded to but in such an oblique and puzzling manner, and with no information as to its cause, that for the reader in 1919 it might well have been as if the event had vanished in the narrative gap between the two volumes"

(Mepham 455). Indeed, readers can piece together what has happened only in retrospect, with the help of clues from later volumes.⁵⁷

While *The Tunnel* is, in many respects, concerned with ordinary, mundane events, it was also described early on as “notably removed from the commonplace” (“The Tunnel (Review)” 117). Though Miriam does not mention her mother’s death explicitly, there is an ongoing feeling that something is wrong, and her trauma is evident in the lengthy passage in which she enters her newly rented room in London. Howard Finn has suggested that, “If Miriam seems overwrought in her negotiation of the window, it is because she *is* overwrought. . . . One of the earlier reviewers of *Pilgrimage* thought the book ‘a charted dissection of an unsound mind’ and, in a sense, they were not wholly wrong” (Finn 116–117). Of course, when narration follows a precisely Jamesian definition of the stream of consciousness, as it sometimes does in *Pilgrimage*, it represents what James sees as an unsound mind *par excellence*, in that it is not properly filtering experiences and impressions and is instead being overwhelmed by them. This is less a quality of a particular mind than the effect of rendering this failure to filter thought. However, the room scene in *The Tunnel* is not narrated through a first-person stream of consciousness technique, but is instead free indirect discourse, focalized through Miriam’s consciousness. This is an important distinction because the use of free indirect discourse here exerts control over Miriam’s thoughts and focuses her on the objective

⁵⁷ This is not to say that Richardson scholars have not recognized and discussed the suicide, and Mepham’s article “Dorothy Richardson’s ‘Unreadability’: Graphic Style and Narrative Strategy in a Modernist Novel” is an excellent analysis of the significance of the unwritten suicide. However, arguments like Levy’s, which do not take it into account, position Miriam’s taking up a secretarial job as the primary rupture in the series, overlooking the effects of her mother’s death and its connection with her working life, as both escape and promise.

details in the room, further suppressing her trauma from the narrative. However, details about the appearance of the room, though they are of the objective world, are not independent of Miriam's subjective experience, but are singled out and described in a manner that mirrors her mental state.⁵⁸ Before she enters, readers are told that Miriam "felt like an inmate returning after an absence," and the ensuing description, which goes on for several pages, describes the room as a prison cell (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 11). She repeatedly refers to its greyness, and returns several times to the iron bars on the windows. Home, as a potential reminder of her past, is represented as a jail in Miriam's mind.⁵⁹ However, there is a sense here in which Miriam is jailed within her own mind as well. According to John Mephram, Miriam's extensive account of these "trivial" details "can be seen as representing the determined and self-protective superficiality of a traumatised young woman. However, the lack of narrative information makes this explanation unavailable to the first-time reader" (456). Though her attention is drawn to the details that reflect her state of mind, her lack of self-reflection, and her failure to acknowledge the source of her despair, result in a text that feels detached and disjointed.

⁵⁸ According to Laura Marcus, "The rooms in which Miriam lodges are, simultaneously or variously, spaces in and through which she moves, as an embodied self; sites of consciousness; visual arenas of colour, light and shade. The detail deployed in the description of interior spaces suggests a realist aspiration, but it is rarely separable from a phenomenological consciousness, in which objects are presented as given to perception, and in which appearances, including and especially the 'mood' of a room, can alter radically from moment to moment" ("*Pilgrimage*" 443).

⁵⁹ According to Felski, "Modern feminism, from Betty Friedan onward, has repeatedly had recourse to a rhetoric of leaving home. Home is a prison, a trap, a straitjacket" ("*Invention*" 86). Felski argues that a feminist intervention into everyday theory needs to reposition home as a positive place intimately involved in modernity rather than a place hindered by conservative tradition, as discussed in the introduction of this dissertation. Miriam's associations between home and prison here are more complicated though.

It is significant that Miriam is crossing a threshold in the room scene, both materially and psychologically, as a threshold is traditionally regarded as “the point of transition between one state of consciousness and another” (McCracken “Completion” 151). Miriam is still negotiating her mother’s death, but she is also moving into a new part of her life, and as such is caught between worlds. Tellingly, the opening line of the volume is: “Miriam paused with her heavy bag dragging at her arm” (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 11). Though beginning a new part of her life, Miriam is not excited but scared. Instead of walking through the door she pauses, unsure, and feels the resistant drag of her heavy bag. Richardson scholars have been quick to make the disjointedness of this volume about personal trauma alone, but I argue that it arises from a larger break, an historical trauma in tandem with the personal, potently symbolized by the death of the mother.⁶⁰ Through that death, Richardson creates a powerful rupture between the Miriam who still belonged to a Victorian family structure and the modern Miriam, who is becoming truly independent. The trauma Miriam experiences is perhaps not just personal, but also more general: the trauma of entering modernity, of crossing a threshold into a new life, which although it is full of promise, is also potentially terrifying and alienating.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Mephram has argued that the change in tone and style at the beginning of *The Tunnel* is a direct result of Miriam’s personal trauma from her mother’s death. The same argument has been put forth by Laura Marcus (2008).

⁶¹ Modernity as traumatic is a well-documented idea. Take, for instance, Georg Simmel’s claim that the constant shock of living in a modern metropolis necessitates a “blasé attitude” and “reserve” in the city dweller, in order to cope psychologically (55). Probably the most compelling account of modernity as trauma—as an era of terrifying, shocking, accelerated change confronting society—is Marshall Berman’s *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. The trauma of modernity is evident in *The Tunnel* in Miriam’s walk home from the long work day, where the walk itself is left out of the text and Miriam finds herself suddenly in the Strand, “wonder[ing] what

Cathy Caruth describes trauma as a “breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world” that “is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor” (4). This breach is evident in *The Tunnel*’s pacing, which is different from previous volumes. Miriam’s focus on extensive objective detail in the room scene demonstrates her experience of time slowing down, while at the same time enclosing that extended moment, protecting it from the threatening intrusion of memory. As she thinks, “None of these things can touch me here” (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 12). Upon entering the room, she almost immediately begins to think about how her impressions are like a dream, and the narration takes on a dream-like quality: “She was surprised now at her familiarity with the detail of the room ... that idea of visiting places in dreams. It was something more than that ... all the real part of your life has a dream in it; some of the real dream part of you coming true” (12). While Miriam is caught up in her surreal daydream, an entire paragraph elapses before she even begins to take note of the actual details of the room. I propose that the pacing in this section evokes a particular mode of *durée*, or a breach in duration: a temporality of mourning somewhat akin to boredom, or what I would like to call in this instance ‘dead time’. Though ‘dead time’ and boredom are both, formally speaking, extended moments of heightened awareness, the former is isolated from previous moments in a way the

she had been thinking since she left Wimpole Street, and whether she had come across Trafalgar Square without seeing it or round by some other way” (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 75). Scott McCracken argues this gap in the story “marks the almost unbridgeable divide between the two identities: the worker and the consumer” (“Embodying the New Woman” 58–59). While this is a very compelling reading, I would argue that the gap in Miriam’s consciousness also demonstrates the psychological need to filter stimulus so as to not become overwhelmed while walking through a busy city, as Simmel claims.

latter is not. Crossing the threshold into this new life, Miriam “held herself in,” believing it “better to begin as she meant to go on” (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 11). Shocked out of her routine, and no longer compelled by unconscious habit, she is simply trying to get through the day without incident, and every insignificant, ordinary moment becomes a hurdle. And when every moment becomes tangible, and thus extraordinary, her experience of time passing slows down and everything becomes surreal. As at the end of *Honeycomb*, she is “in eternity” (Richardson *Pilgrimage I* 90).

Miriam experiences an “existential intensity,” a mode of being that Michael Maffesoli refers to as “the tranquil raging of the present,” which situates one both in the mundane and in eternity (207, 206). This intense presence is reflected in the repeated references to light and colour: “the stream of light pouring in,” that “gleamed,” the “brightly coloured” tablecloth with “rich fresh tones,” the “sharp grey light” of the skylight, and “the brilliance of the window space,” for instance (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 12). Such intense impressions contrast sharply with the general “dimness” of the room, the “carpet [which] was colourless in the gloom,” the “silence” from the landing, and especially the greyness of everything she observes out the window (12). The entire paragraph is built on contrasts: “The room asserted its chilliness,” yet the “wall-paper was warm” (12). Miriam’s heightened attention to contrasting impressions emphasizes her intense presence in the moment. This concept of “existential intensity” is somewhat similar to James’s and Gertrude Stein’s notion of the ‘prolonged present’. There is a difference, though, between this experience of presence, in which one is not moving toward death, but is fixed in the here and now of life, and the experience of ‘dead time,’ which may have a similar temporal slowness but is experienced more like a traumatic

break from the past and from the self. Richardson's representation of time here is less Jamesian, and could instead perhaps be attributed to the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom we know Richardson was familiar with and whom Miriam reads in *Pilgrimage*. In "Works and Days," Emerson writes: "One of the illusions is that the present hour is not the critical, decisive hour. Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year. No man has learned anything rightly, until he knows that every day is Doomsday" (89). The present, in this formulation, is not life, but death itself, or 'dead time.'

Lefebvre claims that "daily life has served as a refuge from the tragic," implying that everyday objects "create an armature against the feeling of tragedy, which is to say against our consciousness of death and the inevitable finitude of life" (Lefebvre *Critique III* 171, Maffesoli 205). It is tempting to read Miriam's immersion in the mundanity of everyday life as an escape from the trauma of death, just as in *Honeycomb*'s closing scene when she finds her mother's body and fixates instead on a plate of food. However, Miriam's eventual recovery from this shock offers a new promise. Beginning late in chapter two of *The Tunnel*, Miriam repeatedly refers to a newfound freedom she is experiencing. She is doubtless referring to the material freedom of living independently in London; however, there is another level of freedom she has been given, to more fully realize her passage into modernity, which only becomes possible for her through the loss of her mother and a complete break from her role as a Victorian daughter.

The freedom Miriam begins to experience, though, comes gradually. *The Tunnel* marks an awakening, through her conscious entry into everyday life, but aspects of her former life remain. As Miriam unconsciously mourns, her mother, and everything she

represents, continues to haunt the spaces Miriam inhabits. The loss of her mother will ultimately allow her the freedom to cast off the ideals of Victorian femininity, which are bound up in domestic spaces and routines, to become a New Woman. However, in the early stages of transition, features of the domestic chronotope persist in both her new home and her workplace, leaving her, at least for the time being, without a space of her own.

Though *The Tunnel* does not appear to be about domesticity, the idea of home remains the most significant motif in the novel. Home is an ambiguous space for Miriam throughout the early volumes of *Pilgrimage*, in which Richardson “explores what happens when a woman who works *can't* go home again” (Levy 58). She leaves her family home at the beginning, as her father can no longer support her, and her mother, prior to her death in *Honeycomb*, is mentally unstable. The first three volumes see Miriam moving through three different residences, yet never feeling ‘at home.’ Home, throughout, is not the building itself, but the mode of being in a space that produces ‘home.’ This mode of being, according to Felski, is characterized by habit and developed through familiarity. Felski argues that, to take home as the privileged space of modernity, rather than the public spaces of the city street, is also to privilege women’s experiences of modernity, which have been elided in everyday theory.⁶²

⁶² Highmore acknowledges that everyday life theory generally fails to take account of women’s lives, as discussed in the introduction (see pages 19–21). He argues that “part of the project of developing ‘theories of the everyday’ is going to be rescuing pre-feminist theory from its gendered orientation” (*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 74). Lefebvre and Benjamin, in particular, attempt to formulate a liberatory politics of the everyday that privileges a masculinist perspective. Lefebvre makes the inflammatory claim that women are too close to the everyday to be able to effectively critique it, and thus women’s lives are not explored in any depth in his work, a point that Rita Felski also singles out as a shortcoming in everyday theory.

“Home is not just a geographical designation, but a resonant metaphysical symbol” (Felski “Invention” 86), and in *The Tunnel*, home remains a symbol for mother.⁶³ Not only is Miriam’s new dwelling unfamiliar, but her mother still haunts it in the person of Mrs. Bailey, her landlady. Mrs. Bailey, a mother herself, is both the nurturing mother that Miriam desired but did not have, and the domestic mother from whom Miriam is trying to break away. In conversation with an older woman, Miriam notes that “She was like Mrs Bailey—and someone farther back—mother,” explicitly drawing the connection between the two matriarchs (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 267). Mrs. Bailey is at times a comfort to Miriam, particularly at the beginning of the novel. The text alludes to Miriam’s fixation on Mrs. Bailey when she first comes to see the room: “When she had stood in the middle of the floor with Mrs Bailey, she had looked at nothing but Mrs Bailey” (13). However, her tendency to quickly run in and out of the house suggests she is avoiding Mrs. Bailey through the majority of the novel, implying the continued presence of a mother is likely what makes Miriam’s experience of her room unsettling, which it clearly is: “In half an hour the adventure would begin and go on and be over. The room would not be in it. Something nice, or horrible, would come back. But the room would not be changed” (154). She also refers to the room in terms like “stifling,” “stuffy,” “dusty,” and “hot,” with “a close thick smell of dust” that “sickened her” (180). Contrary to what one would expect, given how much attention is paid to descriptions of the room in Richardson criticism, Miriam spends only a minute portion of the novel in her new home. She seems to move through it to quickly change her clothes, or to pick up

⁶³ Melinda Harvey argues that “a deep nostalgia for her rambling childhood home will be shown to determine Miriam’s choice of lodging and eating locations” (168), making a connection specifically to the spaciousness of Mrs. Bailey’s lodging house, but not accounting for Mrs. Bailey herself as a mother figure and the trauma that signals.

the mail, but does not linger long enough to engender a comfortable familiarity with the space. She demonstrates a similar aversion to her sister Harriet's home, later in the novel. Arriving there for a holiday, she promptly leaves on her bike and does not return, staying instead in a hotel alone. This aversion is explicitly connected to maternity, as Harriet is at "the end of the awful nine months" of pregnancy and Miriam is troubled, even angered, by Harriet's impending entry into motherhood (225).

Miriam's discomfort in her room also demonstrates a gap between dwelling and the feeling of being 'at home,' which Lefebvre argues characterizes modern urban living. This gap was created in the shift from residence to housing, where residence was an aristocratic ideal co-opted by the bourgeoisie and shaped by familial ties. Housing, by contrast, is "characterized by its functional abstraction. The ruling classes seize hold of abstract space as it comes into being ... and then they use that space as a tool of power, without for all that forgetting its other uses ... the generation of profit" (Lefebvre *Production of Space* 314). Mrs. Bailey could hardly be considered ruling class—her home is somewhat modest and run down—but the profit she wrests from Miriam certainly aggravates Miriam's own consciousness of her *déclassé* status.⁶⁴ In the relationship between Miriam and Mrs. Bailey, the family dynamic is poised on the edge of a shift toward an economic relation. This shift will fully realize itself at the end of *The*

⁶⁴ As previously mentioned, Miriam initially leaves home because her family can no longer support her. This is analogous to Dorothy Richardson's own life—her father was a wealthy gentleman who was bankrupted, and the Richardson sisters were all forced to find other means of supporting themselves, whether that be through marriage or work. Miriam's perceptions of class, and her obvious jealousy of wealthy characters in the novel, betray an ongoing sensitivity to her own downward class movement, despite the excitement about her newfound independence.

Tunnel, when Mrs. Bailey decides to turn the home into a boarding house, turning domesticity into a business.

Furthermore, Melinda Harvey makes some very important observations about the nature of Miriam's room. "Since the late-nineteenth century," she writes,

the bedsit's modest dimensions have been seen to be spinster spaces, fit and proper for the woman who is neither an Angel of the House nor a mistress of the streets. Feminist critics, deceived by Woolf's class-blind rubric of the 'room of one's own', have been prone to over-eulogise the bedsit as a utopian site of female creativity and freedom. It has often been confused with the kind of rooms that money—and five hundred pounds a year is real money—could supply. Thus, in general, we have failed to see it for what it usually is: a locus of economic hardship and social deprivation as well as a site of intellectual and sexual freedom. Small, shabby and expediently furnished, the bedsit is the family home slashed to meanness. It is a sleeping cubicle divested of its separate supplementary spaces for eating, drinking, cooking, cleaning, bathing, dressing, reading, talking and entertaining." (Harvey 169)

Miriam notes many details in her room that signal its meanness, including the cheap deal table and the stained curtains, and activities of the type Harvey singles out at the end of the above passage are performed in other spaces. Throughout *The Tunnel*, Miriam usually eats in public cafes or restaurants and her entertaining and conversation all happens in other people's homes.⁶⁵ In this sense as well as in its reminder of family life, her home cannot be a space that offers freedom of thought or practice. In "The Reality of Feminism," Richardson writes:

The world must become a home. In it women will pursue socially valuable careers, responsible to the community for their work, assured by the community of an economic status clear of sex and independent of their relationship to

⁶⁵ These patterns change somewhat in later volumes, after the house becomes a boarding house and Miriam begins to dine and socialize there regularly with other boarders.

any specific male. They will spend their days at the work they can do best, whether nursery work, education, or mechanical engineering, finding their places in the social fabric as freely as do their brothers. Houses, communally cleansed and victualled, will remain as meeting-places for rest and recreation. (588)

Interestingly, in Miriam's case, the house does not become a comfortable place for rest and recreation until it becomes a boarding house, and thus less private, less like a conventional family home. This notion of the rented room as alienating is in direct contradiction with Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. This is not to say, however, that Richardson generally contradicted Woolf on this idea. "Quiet, and solitude in the sense of freedom from occupation," she claims, preceding Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* by four years, have been repeatedly proven as "the absolute conditions of artistic achievement," but women rarely have this luxury, hampered as they are by social and familial obligations (Richardson "Women in the Arts" 422). For Richardson, as for Woolf, the free time and freedom from domestic responsibility are necessary for a woman to create art, but the room itself does not serve as a symbol of that freedom for Richardson as it does for Woolf. The difference in perspective between the two writers, even if they served similar general goals, is no doubt due to their class difference.

Felski argues that, "home constitutes a base ... central to the anthropomorphic organization of space in everyday life; we experience space ... in circles of increasing proximity or distance from the experiencing self. Home lies at the center of these circles" (Felski "Invention" 85). Conversely, Miriam, displaced from home and trying to forget her past and family troubles, situates work at the center of her circles for most of *The Tunnel*. Work, as for many women at the time, presents itself as an escape from domesticity, as it both provides her with an alternate space and renders her life in London

financially viable.⁶⁶ Though work was one of the objectives of the women's movement, Richardson shows us a perhaps unexpected outcome. Miriam's work-space and daily routine play out a troubling overlap between home and work. Whether Miriam is at home or at work, she is still in a house. The building she works in is both a dentist's office and a family home, where the repetitive tedium of the work day meets the habit of domestic routine. Here, familial relations persist, organizing the space in ways similar to a home and dictating Miriam's role and daily tasks.⁶⁷

The long work day in *The Tunnel*'s third chapter has garnered significant critical attention. It goes on for over forty pages, detailing every mundane task Miriam performs as a secretary. She welcomes patients, writes up invoices, balances the accounts, cleans the dental instruments, and makes appointments, all the while surrounded by the frantic activity of a busy office. The pacing through much of this section is quite rapid, mimicking the pace of a hectic workday, and Miriam's resulting anxiety is symbolized in the pile of letters that she needs to address but keeps putting off to the corner of her desk. Miriam has, according to Levy, crossed over "from the domestic economy to the economy proper" (58). However, the office is also a family home, and many of the practices Miriam engages in throughout the day are domestic, such as cleaning, preparing

⁶⁶ According to Lefebvre, in the early twentieth century, "Work was still regarded as the concrete realization of human beings" (*Critique III* 13).

⁶⁷ According to McCracken, "Miriam's employment provides her with a basic wage and the possibility of a marginal existence in the city, but the practice in Wimpole Street is also a symbolic site in which social identities are produced" ("Embodying the New Woman" 61). McCracken goes on to argue that Miriam's complicated construction as a subordinate worker and empowered consumer is demonstrated in her eating habits. She continually refuses offers of food from the family, as "The meal as social event underlines her own subordination" (61). Yet she chooses to pay for food at the café afterwards instead, despite having very little money. As such, "Miriam is able to imagine the possibility of subjecthood through her perception of the café as a space in which an independent femininity might be performed" (64).

and serving tea, and helping with the decorating. Levy argues that, because Miriam cannot return to her family home, she “remains in the male realm” (58). This working environment, though, is not a “male realm” in the sense Levy uses the term, to set the public (work) as male and the private (home) as female. It is, however, a patriarchal realm, as Miriam’s workday is still occupied with objects, habits, and modes of being that preserve domestic gender roles. In this space, the men hold professional positions, while the secretary performs duties not unlike those of a housewife.⁶⁸

The space is also physically organized as a family home, allowing for the insidious reproduction of the associated power relations. In the “inhabited space” of the bourgeois home, according to Lefebvre “an atmosphere of family and conjugal life—in short, of genitility—all of which is nobly dubbed an *intimité*” persists (*Production of Space* 315). Curtains separate the interior scene of family life from the outside, and the interior is invested with value. Meanwhile, “The servants and domestic staff, for their part, live under the eaves” (315). Though Miriam’s employers—the Orlys, Mr. Leyton (their son), and Mr. Hancock—primarily work together in the house, they also sit for meals together, inviting Miriam to join them. On the periphery of this family, as in the bourgeois home, the servants wait on them all, including Miriam, rounding out the office as a home and positioning Miriam, not as a servant herself, but in a role similar to an adult daughter. The servants, meanwhile, remain in the basement unless duty calls. The familial scenes in *The Tunnel* nearly all take place in the den, where, in a moment similar to the sitting room performances one reads in many nineteenth century novels, Miriam

⁶⁸ As Randall observes, “Miriam is expected to provide the kind of comfort, beauty, distraction, and so on, still in the late nineteenth century seen as women’s duty to men” (“Telling the Day” 263).

even plays the piano for her employers, like the refined feminine heroine of the Victorian age performing for potential suitors.⁶⁹

In *The Tunnel*, an imbalance of power is evident in the employer/employee relationship, but there is also a familial power dynamic. “Coming in to break fast,” Miriam reflects, “had been a sort of home-coming” (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 172). She is surrounded by the “pleasant noises about the house” as the family prepares for their day, and “the usual subdued manner of the servants was modified by an air of being in possession of the house and liking it” (172). The morning rush and “the very aroma of the coffee seemed tranquilly to feed one. At breakfast every one was cheerful and kind. *It was home*” (172, emphasis added). Though Miriam longs to be independent, she exhibits conflicted feelings in this scene, as she finds comfort in the very kind of family setting she otherwise expresses no desire for in her future: “at the end of the day, if asked, she would join the family party again” (172). What she does not fully recognize is that her role has been cast as part of the family already. Mrs. Orly features as the nurturing mother, and Mr. Hancock, despite his also being a love interest, is the powerful father. The relationship Miriam maintains with Mr. Hancock, as he takes her to scientific lectures and the theatre, provides her with the “liberal education” she always longed for from her father; thus, she explicitly casts her boss in that paternal role (101). “[A]ll these

⁶⁹ Jane Austen’s *Emma* comes to mind, for one. According to Jodi Lustig, “The piano quickly became the emblematic object of upper and middle-class daughters who learned to play the instrument as an ‘accomplishment’ illustrating their grace and their family’s gentility. Informal performances given in the semi-public areas of the home, the bastion of middle-class culture, allowed players to fashion themselves for prospective suitors as the paragon of Victorian womanhood, the domestic helpmeet who becomes known as the ‘Angel in the House’. Within this patriarchal context, the performance that might have appeared immodest for a proper lady became an overwhelmingly feminine act, a service performed for the enjoyment of others” (85).

years,” she thinks, “they might have been going sometimes to those lectures. Pater always talking about them—telling about old Rayleigh and old Kelvin as if they were his intimates—flinging out remarks as if he wanted to talk and his audience were incapable of appreciation” (100). Of course, Miriam’s interest in Mr. Hancock goes much beyond the paternal; however, her association of him with her father in these finer details is telling of the general dynamic in the office.

According to Lefebvre, these “‘Familiar’ everyday practice[s],” or the persistence of home in the workplace, ensure the continuing control of social space by existing power structures, and “In this sense space is a trap” (*Production of Space* 233). In this way, through the construction of the office as a conventional family home, the expectations of the Victorian-style feminine role are re-encoded into the New Woman figure in *The Tunnel*. The very place Miriam goes to find a space of her own turns out to not be her own at all. This is precisely what Lefebvre refers to when he discusses the continuity of everyday life—the persistence of power structures, as they reassert themselves into changing contexts through minute everyday practices.

In addition to the familial power relations in Miriam’s workplace, Richardson draws parallels between the drudgery of house work and the drudgery of paid labour, suggesting the latter does not necessarily offer much change to everyday life from the former. In thinking both domestic and work routines as habit, boredom, which Blanchot argues “is the everyday become manifest,” becomes operative as an analogous mode of being (242). It is “the insensible apprehension of the quotidian into which we slide in the leveling out of a steady slack time, feeling ourselves forever sucked in, yet feeling at the same time that we have already lost it and are henceforth incapable of deciding whether

there is a lack of the everyday or too much of it” (242). As Miriam becomes more adept at her job, she tunes in to “The tedium of the long series of small, precise, attention-demanding movements” required to clean the dental instruments (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 40). She sees “the endless series [that will] last as long as she stayed at Wimpole Street” and wonders if anyone “could do this kind of thing patiently, without minding?” (40). What troubles Miriam is the repetition of minute tasks involved in work as the profession becomes increasingly efficient. She recognizes that, with advancing technology, “the more drudgery workers, at fixed salaries” there would be (40). Miriam draws a parallel between her work and factory work, demonstrating the seamless transition from industrial capitalism to goods and services capitalism, and the persistence of boredom in what is usually perceived as more meaningful, less tedious types of paid work.

Exploitation, in both cases, is justified through a moralizing of labour: “Did some of them do it cheerfully, as unto God? It was wrong to work unto man. But could God approve of this kind of thing?” (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 40). Siegfried Kracauer claims that, when people must “expend all their energies, simply to earn enough for the bare necessities,” as Miriam does, they invent “a work ethic that provides a moral veil for their occupation” to make it bearable (302). Miriam, however, challenges this morality, as she considers the parallels between domestic labour and paid labour. She thinks, “Blessed be Drudgery,” evoking William C. Gannett’s 1890 treatise on the value of hard work (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 40).⁷⁰ “[B]ut,” she continues, “that was housekeeping, not

⁷⁰ William Channing Gannett’s *Blessed be Drudgery: And Other Papers*, written at a time when “Ideals may seem dead and faded beyond our reach,” aims to teach people how they could “idealize [their] Real” and come to see drudgery as a blessing (6). The entire

someone else's drudgery," taking a departure from Gannett and thinking labour in the context of domesticity and women's work (40). She comes to see a kind of exploitation (in this case, of women in particular) that separates the worker's everyday life from the promise of modernity. As Miriam does not own the fruits of her labour, and her work is repetitive, the drudgery manifests in boredom. Though she sees value in dentistry as a profession, she is attuned to the repetitive and boring nature of her own tasks as a secretary, and we see her go back and forth between preoccupation with her minute tasks, reflection on their value, and the mind-wandering that happens as she presumably works through her tasks automatically, out of habit. Ironically, it is the performance of habitual tasks that awakens Miriam's mind from habit. Boredom occurs when the everyday loses "its essential—constitutive—trait of being *unperceived*" (Blanchot 242). Through *The Tunnel*'s long work day, Richardson's excessive and undifferentiated reporting of detail brings the boring character of work and of everyday life forward. As Miriam experiences boredom, it is difficult, as a reader, not to feel bored as well.

Tactics of Resistance

Faced with the continuity of everyday life, the question of resistance becomes more urgent. For Miriam, if moving in to her own room and working in an office does not exactly liberate her from the trappings of domesticity and the associated power relations, then can anything? As aforementioned, *Pilgrimage* is a *künstlerroman*, and Miriam will ultimately find freedom from the pressures of domestic femininity through

treatise argues that what people experience as drudgery and oppression—housework, office work, minding children, etc.—is, in fact, our moral duty, and "the higher our ideals, the *more* we need those foundation habits strong" (17–18). Drudgery, he claims, "gives us the fundamental qualities of manhood and womanhood," highlighting the relationship between moral values, social norms, and established gender roles (37).

writing. Until she reaches that stage, though, she finds ways of making do within the system that works to restrain her efforts.

Michel de Certeau writes:

Innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game (*jouer / déjouer le jeu de l'autre*), that is, the space instituted by others, characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations. People have to make do with what they have. In these combatants' stratagems, there is a certain art of placing one's blows, a pleasure in getting around the rules of a constraining space. (18)

For de Certeau, following Foucault, power is diffuse in the modern world, dictating all spaces and relationships. Though Foucault ultimately suggests that power is inevitable and inescapable, de Certeau instead takes a more optimistic approach, suggesting that individuals do have power within ideological structures, but it is ephemeral. Nothing that is gained can be kept; there are no great battles to be won. Instead, an individual can resist subjection through everyday practices that refuse the dictates of capital and discipline. In *The Tunnel*, as Miriam has no proper space of her own, she can only claim power through the performance of everyday practices that defy the power relations that have produced whatever space she happens to be in.

Miriam engages, in particular, in a mode of resistance that de Certeau calls *la perruque*, in which one secretly uses work time and resources to one's own ends. Though she is clearly quite busy at work, she is also bored enough that she chooses to appropriate some of her work time for contemplation, from which she derives more pleasure than from her paid labour. Contemplation is, in fact, an everyday practice actually enabled by boredom in this context. As such, boredom as Miriam experiences it in *The Tunnel* is not negative. Boredom is, according to Siegfried Kracauer, "the only proper occupation,

since it provides a kind of guarantee that one is, so to speak, still in control of one's own existence. If one were never bored, one would presumably not really be present at all" (304). In boredom is the self, in Kracauer's view, and the person who performs his or her labour "by inclination," without feeling boredom or distraction, is separated from him or herself by the drudgery of work (302). In *The Tunnel*, boredom is cast as extreme presence, and it allows Miriam to wrest power by taking time out of her day for contemplation, outside economy. The term 'boredom,' in this sense, might be something of a red herring, as it typically implies that the weight of the everyday exerts itself, and an uncomfortable state of suspension is the result. Instead, I propose, following from Kracauer, that boredom is not necessarily a state, but an act that refuses objectionable practices. This renders the everyday, contrary to Felski's definition, a *negotiable* reality, one that the individual can manipulate through subversive practices.⁷¹

Because Miriam becomes a writer, her mind-wandering at work could be conceived as *la perruque*: "the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer" (de Certeau 25). Randall has observed that much of the time Miriam spends at work is diverted to her own ends. The narrative in the chapter about the long working day,

⁷¹ Allison Pease also discusses boredom in *Pilgrimage*: "Thematically, Richardson's *Pilgrimage* approaches boredom first as an inevitable component of a woman's life and later as a critique of the conventions that circumscribe women's lives, those that Miriam seeks to avoid" (85). In Pease's work, though, boredom is cast in a conventionally negative manner, as an obstacle to self-realization. She claims that "Miriam's pilgrimage is a quest to circumvent boredom and instead achieve self-realization, a concept that until the turn of the twentieth century had been the right and privilege of the male" (85). As is evident, boredom in this context is not conceived as an active practice or as presence, as I am arguing, following Kracauer. Instead, "in boredom one is not present to oneself" (98). Pease does also present boredom as resistance to gendered conventions, to an extent, but in the sense of a phenomenology of reading. She argues that the representation and reproduction of boredom in the text is used to resist conventionally male-gendered meaning-making.

according to Randall, “proceeds in a way that mitigates against any likelihood of being able to separate out and specify when Miriam is working and when she isn’t, and what part of her being is engaged with ‘work’” (“Telling the Day” 261). Randall identifies this as a political move, as “the narrative structure thus works against any simple conversion of Miriam’s time into measurable, economically valuable, work” (261). In this sense, by regarding Miriam’s working practices as *la perruque*, one can begin to argue that *The Tunnel* presents a politics that does more than simply distract the heroine from the drudgery of her job. Miriam “actually diverts time ... for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit” (de Certeau 25). By ‘wasting’ labour-time, Miriam consumes time itself. Consumption, in this mode, is agency, and runs counter to the image of woman as a passive consumer of goods. An artistic product also eventually emerges from Miriam’s consumption of this time: the memoir that she will begin writing near the end of the series.

Though Miriam is able to appropriate some work time, the fact remains that she still has no space of her own (nor can she if we agree with de Certeau). There is no immediate change in her material situation—the Victorian domestic order remains in place in her office, regardless of how she uses the moments of her day. “The actual order of things is precisely what popular tactics turn to their own ends, without any illusion that it will change any time soon,” according to de Certeau (26). The quality of those moments improves for Miriam, but to change the order of things, she must elaborate that practice into something larger, where she can “make a kind of *perruque* of writing itself” (28). *La perruque* is ultimately a victory of time over space, but Levy suggests that, to truly find the freedom she seeks, Miriam must imagine “a third place (beside the

household and workplace),” and that this is the mental space she creates for herself as an intellectual woman (58). If we are reading *Pilgrimage* as stream of consciousness, or as *écriture féminine*, it seems that the only space Miriam can properly occupy is her own mind and embodied discourse.

Conversely, to read *The Tunnel* as an everyday novel, and thus to examine both the subjective and objective elements of Miriam’s life, again urges us to look not just at what she thinks about, but what practices she performs in socially-determined spaces. Though critics have largely argued that Miriam’s power is found in her mind and her art, I argue that Miriam’s subversive occupations of public space offer more opportunity for lasting changes in the material conditions of her everyday life.⁷² The existing scholarship on Miriam’s subversive occupation of public space has focused on her presence in the male-dominated spaces of the city streets, cafés and restaurants. Her frequenting cafés seems especially *risqué*, although there are some issues that somewhat undermine the political impact of her eating out in public. For one, the ABC cafés she largely frequents were, at that time, presented as cafés for women. Although they certainly presented opportunities for a practice that did not fit with the social norms for either women or men, her presence in an ABC would not have been especially challenging to expectations

⁷² According to Felski, “Freedom and agency are traditionally symbolized by movement through public space” (“Invention” 86). However, it was not quite so simple for women to simply go outside and wander the city streets. “According to the nineteenth-century ideology of the ‘separate spheres,’” argues Harvey, “virtuous women were easily differentiated from their less salubrious sisters by the kind of space they ‘chose’ to occupy. This spatial configuration of respectability, based like all phallogocentric logic on a series of oppositional and hierarchical binaries (male-female, public-private, outside-inside, city-home), not only kept men separate from women and dissuaded women from entering public spaces but also prevented women from encountering other women” (757).

about how or where women should appear in public.⁷³ What's more, as McCracken points out, "in the figure of the small egg roll and butter, Richardson was concerned to show the material constraints which defined the embodiment of that [new gendered] identity" ("Embodying the New Woman" 67). Like Miriam's shabby rented room, this other space that is supposed to be empowering for the New Woman is also further testament to her actual poverty. Miriam also wanders through the city, and some very interesting scholarship has argued for Miriam as a *flâneuse*.⁷⁴ However, this also presents issues as it presents a version of Miriam simply trying to appropriate a male-dominated practice. Harvey reminds us that, "The figure of the *flâneur* is usually recognized as representative of the male writer" (748).⁷⁵ In this sense, reading Miriam as *flâneuse* is

⁷³ "Amongst the city men," McCracken writes, "Miriam chooses a feminised space, but her performance of femininity on the stage of the ABC is not, cannot be, the domestic role of Victorian ideology. ... The role of the London café in Richardson's text makes it possible to suggest that the new chains like the ABC and J. Lyons coffeehouses did provide the kinds of public space in which a new gendered identity could be performed" ("Embodying the New Woman" 67). As such, the ABC is perhaps a space between the Victorian and the modern.

⁷⁴ McCracken, Harvey, and Parsons have written most convincingly on Miriam as *flâneuse*. "The hunt for the 'invisible' *flâneuse* of modernity has prompted many critics to turn their attention to Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*," writes Harvey (167). According to Parsons, in *Pilgrimage* "The everyday life of the modern city woman is thus represented as the experience of low-paid work, solitariness, and lots of walking" (*Streetwalking* 114). While Parsons claims Miriam is "more relaxed while walking," she concedes that the city is often a threatening place for Miriam, and her urban walking is a "transgression" (114). Likewise, Miriam's "experience of the streets is far from utopian," claims McCracken ("Embodying the New Woman" 66). "The constraints on her movement are brought home by her immediate encounter with male violence" as she comes across two men in a fight and timidly intervenes (66). All three critics point out the difficulties involved in Miriam being a *flâneuse*, and challenge the desire to situate her within what has typically been a male paradigm.

⁷⁵ She continues: "Walking is a cogent metaphor for (and, one might venture, an enjoyable evasion of) the act of writing itself. The *flâneur*, like the writer, selects, (dis)orders, and forges narratives out of an infinite mass of detail while reading and adding to that detail" (Harvey 748).

attractive, as it connects occupation of public space to her identity as a writer. However, the *flâneur*'s maleness cannot be easily shed. Harvey also writes, "Men felt authorized to walk and look in the city, and women understood that, by entering the urban scene, they were vulnerable to scrutiny," going on to discuss the *flâneur-passante* paradigm that positions men as lookers and women as the looked-at in public encounters, which automatically puts women in the city streets at a disadvantage, no matter their purpose (751).⁷⁶

These discussions about Miriam's occupation of public space also position Miriam as either a passive consumer, as a patron of the ABC diner, or as a potential object for consumption, the hopeful *flâneuse* who may still end up a *passante*.⁷⁷ Taking

⁷⁶ Harvey claims the act of looking is more characteristic of the *flâneur* than simply walking. She claims that women's "excursions into public space were, as a rule, purposeful and predetermined, routed strictly according to the logic of a fixed destination and an eventual return home. Neither progressive or [*sic*] transgressive, female transit was swift, harried, and intent. Engrossed in a sense of her own purpose and hell-bent on appearing so to the male eyes of the crowd, the woman walker did not have the need or the leisure to look where she was going. It has been the great mistake of critics desperately seeking a female equivalent of the male *flâneur* to see the act of walking, pure and simple, as necessarily emancipatory. I would rather argue that it is the act of looking, and consequently the mode of walking, which delineates *flânerie*" (751).

⁷⁷ The relationship between women, femininity, and consumerism is terribly fraught. For an excellent overview of these issues in relation to modernity, see Felski's *The Gender of Modernity*. Felski claims that "the category of consumption situated femininity at the heart of the modern in a way that the discourses of production and rationalization examined previously did not. Thus consumption cut across the private/public distinction that was frequently evoked to assign women to a premodern sphere" (*Gender* 61). Though Felski convincingly argues that consumerism (in this context, in the development of the department store) enables women to enter modern, public life, she also takes note of the associated problems with that move. For instance, "the most common economic metaphor which has been used to describe women's position within capitalist society is that of the commodity," which "rather than symbolizing progress," represents "the regressive dimension of modernity as exemplified in its unleashing of an infantile irrationalism of unchecked desire" (63, 69). What's more, this association

these issues into consideration, Harvey comes to the conclusion that “The woman who wishes to write must circumvent the privileged *flâneur-passante* paradigm and embark on the formation of a new type of urban encounter. . . . As *passante*, women can only be read—they are the page, so they cannot inscribe the page” (751). I argue that *The Tunnel* does, in fact, narrate a new type of urban encounter for Miriam, and it is a significant social act that challenges the order of public space: riding a bicycle. Miriam, on her bicycle, moves outside of the paradigm of consumption.

Though Miriam is still looked at, it is in a different way. Early in *The Tunnel*, it is on a bicycle that she is able to escape her pregnant sister’s house. As she is seen cycling through a village, she hears a man say in astonishment, “*Good Lord—it’s a woman*” (Richardson *Pilgrimage II* 234). This is heard quickly in passing, and with satisfaction, she does not stop. Of course, Miriam is clearly irritated with the man. She thinks, “Yes. Why not? . . . The man’s voice went on with her down the safe dull road. A young lady, taking a bicycle ride in a daylight suburb. That was what she was. That was all he would allow. It’s something in men” (234). However, while she is frustrated at his perceived failure to recognize her subversion, she is still able to actively circumvent gendered conventions, the only consequence being an eventual flat tire. When a man in the town shop suggests that “Mr Drake next door would mend that for you,” she is able to then pull out her own “repair outfit” in response (235). Although she must spend the night in a hotel because the sun has gone down, her night closes with the thought, “Everything’s alive all round me in a new way” (237). As a “chance traveller,” she has “been alive here” (237). While this vivid cycling adventure takes place in the suburbs and the

allows for negative aspects of modernity to be feminized and women’s experiences of modernity devalued.

country, similar moments occur in the city. Miriam sees her bicycle as a means for occupying the otherwise threatening urban spaces:

To be able to go down the quiet street and on into the squares—on a bicycle. . . . To go along like that, in the moment when he took his hands off the handle-bars, in knickers and a short skirt and all the summer to come Everything shone with a greater intensity. Friends and thought and work were nothing compared to being able to ride alone, balanced, going along through the air. (77)

Not only does Miriam perceive the bicycle as a means for moving through the city independently, and to shed her feminine dress, but her comment that “thought and work” are nothing by comparison is highly significant. In contrast to the image of the thinking, writing woman of *A Room of One’s Own*, Miriam understands (at this moment at least) independent movement to be a more powerful articulation of her autonomy.⁷⁸

The very fact of movement mimics the temporality of Richardson’s narrative technique, while also becoming an analogue for Richardson’s conception of a woman’s mind, which “can move, as it were in all directions at once, why, with a man-astonishing ease” (“Reality of Feminism” 590). Miriam’s cycling enables her to occupy moving spaces rather than the fixed, over-determined spaces of the café, the office, or even the rented room. De Certeau’s distinction between space and place can be helpful in emphasizing the significance of Miriam’s movement. He argues that “The law of the ‘proper’ rules in the place It implies an indication of stability” (de Certeau 117). In contrast, “A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. . . .

⁷⁸ It is worth noting that Miriam is actually not very adept at cycling early in the novel, and while taking lessons in the city, she repeatedly falls and causes chaos amongst the pedestrians. She persists in her lessons though, and eventually masters the practice.

In short, *space is a practiced place*” (117). As such, Miriam’s practice of cycling leaves a mark on the spaces she moves through without sticking around long enough to be fixed in a proper place, or domesticated. This gives the sense of space as dynamic and practiced, rather than static and fixed. Furthermore, the speed of cycling, as opposed to strolling, is antithetical to the type of consumption that constitutes dining out or *flânerie*, and once Miriam has a bicycle of her own, which is given her as a gift from Mr. Leyton, cycling costs her nothing, unlike eating in the ABC.

Although the ‘room of one’s own’ is the most frequent symbol we return to in women’s modernism, the bicycle was also regarded at the time as a vehicle to freedom for women, and can serve as a similarly powerful symbol in our reading of *The Tunnel*.⁷⁹ The feminist Susan B. Anthony famously claimed the bicycle “has done a great deal to emancipate women” (Sherr 277).⁸⁰ The proliferation of bicycles gave women in particular much more freedom of mobility, and as such, the bicycle became a recurring feature in New Woman literature. After the New Woman became a popular term for women refusing Victorian ideals of femininity, “A stereotyped image of the New Woman quickly took hold on [*sic*] the public imagination. She was educated at Girton College, Cambridge, rode a bicycle, insisted on rational dress, and smoked in public: in short, she

⁷⁹ Bicycles were developed in the nineteenth century and became very popular in the 1890s, when their design came to look much like today’s bicycles.

⁸⁰ As Lisa S. Strange and Robert S. Brown argue, “the bicycle posed a challenge to the doctrine of spheres by offering women a way to escape the physical confines of the home” (616). Strange and Brown provide an interesting account of the role the bicycle played in women’s rights movements around the end of the nineteenth century, as well as detailing many of the anxieties around cycling and women’s health, particularly reproductive health. Furthermore, they argue anxieties about gendered performances became pervasive: “Responding to fears that female cyclists might become ‘manly’ and lose the ‘delicacy,’ ‘tenderness’ and ‘virtue’ that equipped them uniquely for lives in the private sphere, supporters of women’s cycling generally reassured critics that cycling posed no threat to women’s femininity or the prevailing social order” (616).

rejected the traditional role for women and demanded emancipation” (Christensen Nelson ix). Although de Certeau claims that a tactic cannot win a victory over space, I argue that Miriam’s cycling complicates his theory. Although it is not a victory of fixed space—she does not win control of the city for her own revolutionary headquarters—she certainly leaves her mark on the spaces she cycles through, shocking others with her subversive public performance of anti-femininity.⁸¹ In turn, she creates a mobile space of her own, an alternative to the room.

In addition to increased mobility, cycling influenced women’s dress, eventually allowing them to exchange their large, cumbersome skirts for shorter ones, and eventually pants. In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin singles out cycling as one of the major influences on women’s fashion in the early twentieth century. “The bicycle,” he writes, “offered unsuspected possibilities for the depiction of the raised skirt” (64). Somewhat undermining the power these possibilities could offer women, Benjamin’s male-centric view focuses on the spectacle of fashion and again objectifies women, claiming that the cyclist offers the most provocative view of the female figure (63). Richardson instead focuses on the freedom of movement these changes in fashion could offer women. In a conversation Miriam has with her friends Mag and Jan, the latter two say that, after cycling at night in only their knickers, they “came home nearly crying with rage at not being able to go about, permanently, in nothing but knickers. It would make life an *absolutely* different thing” (148). They all three continue:

⁸¹ Around the end of the nineteenth century, women cyclists were largely represented in the media as manly or unfeminine. For a thorough and interesting read about how the media at the turn of the century represented athletic women, or women cyclists, see the chapter on “Women’s Athletics,” in Patricia Marks’s *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*.

“The freedom of movement.”

“Exactly. You feel like a sprite you are so light.”

“And like a poet though you don’t know it.”

“You feel like a sprite you are so light, and you feel so strong and capable and so broadshouldered you could knock down a policeman. Jan and I knocked down several last night.”

“Yes; and it is not only that; think of never having to brush your skirt.”

“I know. It would be bliss.”

“I spend half my life brushing my skirt. If I miss a day I notice it—if I miss two days, the office notices it. If I miss three days the public notices it.”

“La vie est dure; pour les femmes.” (148–149)

Tellingly, the opportunity to get rid of their skirts results not just in a practical “freedom of movement,” but also a feeling of being “strong and capable.” The expectations of *femininity* are, at least in part, imposed on women through conventional dress, and if these gender conventions are not properly adhered to, there are social consequences. As the women say, people notice when their attire is not proper. Cycling offers an excuse for these women to take off the unwanted clothing, along with its associations, in a potent act of defiance.

In conclusion, it seems that Miriam’s battle against *femininity* is not necessarily won in the ways we might expect—working and living on her own. Although these two areas of her life enable a certain amount of independence, the practices that produce the spaces of ‘work’ and ‘home’—which have more significance than simply the office and the house—reveal a continuing reconstruction of Victorian ideals, along with the associated power relations. In this sense, *The Tunnel* demonstrates how everyday life lags

behind the possible, as Lefebvre argues. However, Miriam is able to resist further subjection and domestication in other ways, which challenge the continuity of everyday life: through a form of *la perruque* that uses work time to her own contemplative ends, and cycling in public spaces. These are both practices that enable Miriam to eventually take on the role of modern writer, by making space (both psychological and physical) for her to inscribe her experience on the social world. Both Miriam's *perruque* and her cycling stand against domestic and work routines and her experience of dead time, or an absence of meaningful presence. As such, they are practices that embody an empowered everydayness, rather than one entirely dictated by ideology.

Chapter Two: Everydayness and Moments of Being in Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*

“behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this.”

—Virginia Woolf, *A Sketch of the Past*

“I do not pray. I revenge myself upon the day. I wreak my spite upon its image.”

—Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

Overview

Virginia Woolf's fiction is haunted by many contradictions, although her representations of everyday life embody what I argue is a fundamental contradiction.⁸² On the one hand, her work attends to everyday life, and women's lives in particular, by narrating mundane non-events and familiar spaces and routines, rather than conventional plots. Woolf has this in common with “many writers of the period” who, as Liesl Olson argues, “sought to represent the ordinary as ordinary even while they questioned the possibility of successfully doing so” (*Ordinary* 25). On the other hand, her highly crafted

⁸² The 21st Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf was themed *Contradictory Woolf* and the volume of selected proceedings makes a strong claim for contradiction being a major feature of Woolf's *oeuvre*. In their introduction, the volume's editors Derek Ryan and Stella Bolaki write: “Woolf's writing continually refuses settled readings or closed meanings, revealing and reveling precisely in its potential or actual, subtle or forceful, contradiction” (ix). Following from theories of modernity by Henri Lefebvre (detailed in this chapter) and others, one could argue that Woolf's contradictoriness arises from the fact she lived through a period rife with historical tensions and contradictions. Marshall Berman's Introduction to *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* also suggestively argues that the “basic fact of modern life ... is that this life is radically contradictory at its base” (19).

poetic style and her appeal to transcendental “moments of being” privilege an experience of the eternal, casting everyday life itself as “non-being” or the “cotton wool” that hides the “pattern” that “we—I mean all human beings—are connected with” (Woolf “Sketch of the Past” 79, 81).⁸³ While her turn to characters’ thoughts as they go about their ordinary lives suggests that the rhythms, spaces, and practices of daily life shape lived experience, both the historical events that haunt the texts and her appeal to the eternal leave readers with a fatalistic sense that the same characters’ lives are governed by larger forces, beyond everyday experience or understanding. Although Woolf locates the possibility of transcendence in everyday moments, as opposed to monumental events and history, she ultimately devalues the everyday itself in the process. Paradoxically, once everyday moments become a vehicle for transcendence, they are no longer, by definition, everyday.

This contradiction is not unique to Woolf. Henri Lefebvre also argues that everyday life in modernity is fundamentally contradictory. For Lefebvre, as for Woolf, the everyday “embraces both the trivial and the extraordinary” (Lefebvre *Critique I* 20); its temporality is characterized by an “antagonistic unity” between cyclical and linear time (*Rhythmanalysis* 76); its material realities are veiled by the technically possible, as most people’s lives lag behind the promises of modernity (*Critique I* 230); and the supposedly separate spheres of life—public/private, labour/leisure, work/home—nonetheless bleed into one another. Although Woolf and Lefebvre might have agreed on

⁸³ Lorraine Sim claims that, “As [Woolf’s] memoir makes clear, she understands [moments of being] to be an integral aspect of ordinary life, regularly surfacing amidst more mundane and unnoticed periods” (137). Though Sim also acknowledges the paradoxical relationship between the everyday and moments of being in Woolf’s work, she does not claim that paradox to be problematic.

the contradictory nature of everyday life in modernity, and the alienation that arises from the aforementioned tensions, they ultimately propose divergent projects. While Lefebvre's critique aims to "tear away the veil" and reclaim everyday life from ideology in order to improve people's lived experience and material conditions, Woolf wants to rise above the everyday to find wholeness in the eternal, devaluing the everyday itself by positioning it merely as a platform for reaching authentic "moments of being" or "the great revelation" (Lefebvre *Critique* 157, Woolf "Sketch of the Past" 79, Woolf *Lighthouse* 161).⁸⁴

Woolf elaborates her theory of 'moments of being' in her memoir, *A Sketch of the Past*, and in the essay "The Moment: Summer's Night." In *A Sketch of the Past*, she characterizes many everyday practices as "non-being" (79). "A great part of every day is not lived consciously," she writes (79). "One walks, eats, sees things, deals with what has to be done; the broken vacuum cleaner; ordering dinner; writing orders to Mabel; washing; cooking dinner; bookbinding" (79). Evidently, the mundane practices Woolf characterizes as "non-being" are primarily of the private sphere, inadvertently suggesting that women's lives have been closer to the everyday, and they are thus more subject to "non-being." What's more, if "ordering dinner" and "writing orders to Mabel" are also instances of "non-being" for her, where does that leave Mabel, the object of these tasks? In this sense, Woolf's conception of the everyday is problematic in terms of women's lives in particular, which she casts as insufficient. Although she was clearly committed to

⁸⁴ In contrast, Sim claims that "for Woolf, the quotidian is not devalued in moments of being, nor is the cotton wool of everyday life separate from, or separable from, the numinous 'pattern' she finds behind it" (163). Because the two sites are "intimately related," in Sim's view, "Woolf's philosophy of a pattern relates to her broader social and ethical views and, when properly apprehended, expresses and reveals the ordinary" (163).

women's progress, and her fiction aims to bring women's experiences to the forefront, I argue that her ultimate devaluing of everyday life threatens to undermine her feminist aims. As such, this chapter will argue that, although Woolf charts a path toward considering the everyday as a platform for feminism, she pulls back from its full realization, as women's relationship to the everyday in her fiction is complicated by class relations and inadvertent gender essentialism. Although Woolf sees the everyday as affording transcendent moments, those moments are by definition no longer everyday, ultimately devaluing everyday life itself and the experiences of those closest to the everyday.

In this chapter, I elaborate this argument by analyzing the representation of everyday life and moments of being in two novels, *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*.⁸⁵ Using Rita Felski's figuration of the everyday, this inquiry will be framed by the premise that "The temporality of the everyday ... is that of repetition, the spatial ordering of the everyday is anchored in a sense of home, and the characteristic mode of experiencing the everyday is that of habit" ("Invention" 81). To define the everyday in this way, Felski argues, enables us to challenge "assumptions about gender and women's relationship to the modern world," and question the "view that the habitual, home-centered aspects of

⁸⁵ In *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism, and the Politics of the Visual*, Jane Goldman also discusses the "qualities of Woolf's 'moment'" and performs in-depth readings of these same two novels in context of the moment (1). However, rather than presenting the moment as antithesis to the everyday, as I have done, Goldman follows a different line of inquiry. Her book "seek[s] to understand the feminist implications of Woolf's aesthetics at the heart of her writing career," and as such, focuses on Woolf's deployment of colour to argue that she uses post-impressionist aesthetics to make a feminist intervention into the literary tradition (2). Goldman's book lays essential groundwork for this chapter, and although we ask some of the same questions, about Woolf's feminism in particular, we come to different conclusions as a result of my focus on the everyday.

daily life are outside, and in some sense antithetical to, the experience of an authentic modernity” (81). In these two novels, Woolf inquires into women’s changing roles in the private and public spheres, what Alison Light calls “women’s entry into modernity” (10), by setting up a domestic chronotope that reveals the transitional nature of women’s everyday lives in early twentieth century Britain.⁸⁶

These novels, in the spirit of critique, enact Lefebvre’s claim that “Everyday life weighs heaviest on women” (*Everyday Life in the Modern World* 73). However, while he admits “It is highly probable that they get something out of it by reversing the situation,” as arguably the characters of Lily in *To The Lighthouse* and Jinny in *The Waves* do, he allows them no real power to understand or critique everyday life: “the weight is none the less on their shoulders. ... they are the subject of everyday life and its victims” (73). Lefebvre has been harshly criticized, and rightly so, for this male-centered perspective and its failure to ascribe any agency to women, but these critiques have glossed over a significant nuance in his position.⁸⁷ He claims that women’s “ambiguous position in everyday life” is enabled by “The ideology of *femininity*,” which is “only another form of

⁸⁶ Chronotope is a term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin and elaborated in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, as discussed in the introduction (see pages 14–15). It literally means ‘time-space’ and captures the interdependence of temporal and spatial constructs in shaping everyday life, and the inseparability of these two dimensions in phenomenological experience.

⁸⁷ Ben Highmore says it is evident that “the masculinist perspective predominates” everyday theory, as discussed in the introduction (see pages 19–21) (*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 12). Felski takes Lefebvre specifically to task for his “assumptions about gender and women’s relationship to the modern world,” arguing that his gendering of time and repetition, and its equation with passive consumption, does not allow women agency in their own lives (“Invention” 81). She also critiques de Certeau for privileging the city streets over the home as the proper space of modernity, thus de-privileging the domestic lives of women. Laurie Langbauer charges that, “in blaming women for people’s unconscious relation to the everyday, Lefebvre casts women in another too-familiar role: both women and the everyday are smothering. They come to stand for an overwhelming totality” (*Novels of Everyday Life* 21).

the ideology of consumption (happiness through consumption) and the ideology of technicality (women possessing the technique of happiness!)” (73, 96). Key here is the use of *femininity* not to describe an essential femaleness but an ideology that demands women behave, live, and feel in a manner both prescribed by and prescriptive of a patriarchal economy.⁸⁸ He continues to argue that, “for the critical mind woman’s significance in everyday life is too great to be confined to Femininity. . . . moreover, Femininity forbids real women access to their own lives, adaptation to their own lives, for it submits individuality and particularity (specific differences) to trapped generalities” (174). While I do not mean to defend Lefebvre too much—I agree with Felski and his other critics that he does not adequately take into account the lives of women—I think the distinction he makes between real women’s lives and the *ideology of femininity* is an important one, and provides us with a useful framework for inquiring into Woolf’s fiction. In spite of her feminist agenda in representing women’s everyday lives, I argue that Woolf reinstates the *ideology of femininity* by drawing an essentializing connection between domestic space, cyclical time, and women’s experiences, which in turn embeds women within structures she represents as oppressive. By extension, she genders the experience of “non-being,” offering only “exceptional moments” as a promise of “wholeness” and power (Woolf “Sketch of the Past” 81). Following this, one could launch a similar critique against Woolf’s style in these two novels as the critiques made

⁸⁸ Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti argue that the “permeability [of the boundaries between public and private] as well as the inextricable connection between private and public, power and space, geopolitics and habitat, and the home and the world is embedded in the word ‘economy,’ whose origin lies in the Greek *oikos* (house) and *nomos* (rule, law). While in the seventeenth century *oikonomia* ceased to denote ‘household management’ and came to signify ‘manage the resources of a country’ (short for political economy), traces of the original remain” (7). This suggests a direct formal connection between the working of economies and women’s domestic work.

against the concept of *écriture féminine* proposed by Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and other French feminists of the 1960's, a point I elaborate on later in this chapter.

As Woolf's poetic prose seems anything but ordinary, I will first establish how her work attends to everyday life in general. *Mrs. Dalloway* is often singled out as Woolf's everyday novel. Like James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the work Henri Lefebvre claims to epitomize the everyday, *Mrs. Dalloway* takes place over the course of a single day. "The one-day novel, both in Woolf and in general terms," Bryony Randall writes, "tends to suggest a reading of the text as representing 'a life in the day,'" or "the whole through the part" (*Daily Time* 159). Laura Marcus observes:

Four of Woolf's novels—*Mrs. Dalloway*, *To The Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, and *Between the Acts*—engage in something of this 'examination': a diurnal temporality or a 'dailiness' experienced by an intersecting group of consciousnesses takes the place of (or in the case of *The Waves*, coexists with) the representation of individual life or lives over an extended period of time. (*Virginia Woolf* 25–26)

The novels *Night and Day* and *The Years* also engage everydayness as a theme, although not in the diurnal sense of the four Marcus singles out. The pervasiveness of this theme suggests that Woolf's fictional *oeuvre* is a deliberate and extended exploration of everyday life. However, Marcus's point about intersecting consciousnesses is important here; transcendental experiences, and the notion that consciousnesses are connected by some larger order, always trump the minutiae of individual lives in these stories. As such, these novels do not engage forms typical of conventional fiction, like the *bildungsroman* for instance, which focus on individual development, but instead perform the experience of everyday life for multiple consciousnesses through modernist techniques, including free indirect discourse and non-linear narrative structure.

In her oft-quoted essay "Modern Fiction," Woolf claims that conventional realist fiction, or what she labels materialist, "more often misses than secures the thing we seek. Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide" (149). By focusing on her characters' inner lives rather than external details, Woolf reproduces what she sees as the authentic experience of modern everyday life. She suggests that, "For the moderns ... the point of interest, lies very likely in the dark places of psychology" (152). Modern fiction thus gets at the "truth or reality" that escapes conventional fiction by representing "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day," in which "The mind receives a myriad impressions" but there is "no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style" (150). To challenge the forms and narrative features of conventional fiction, Woolf instead writes about the non-events of everyday life, and the attendant thoughts and experiences that constitute that life.

Like *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To The Lighthouse* uses the "one-day structure," although it does not follow the 'day in the life' mode (Randall *Daily Time* 159). Instead, the first and last sections of the novel, "The Window" and "The Lighthouse," each chronicle a single day in the lives of the Ramsay family and their friends. Those two days are separated by "Time Passes," a middle section covering a ten-year period during which a number of significant events occur, including the First World War and the deaths of several key characters. "The Window" acts as a metaphorical window into the Ramsay home and into the inner lives of its inhabitants, detailing the mundane activities and experiences that make up an ordinary day. Like *Mrs. Dalloway*, "The Window" aims for that 'essential thing' Woolf felt escaped conventional fiction by trying to "put the whole of 'life' into a

single day” (155). There are no significant historical events and no major turns of plot; rather, the action is a series of non-events, like walking, eating, reading, playing, knitting, running errands, talking, and above all else, thinking and remembering. The non-plot of “The Window” embodies “the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities” that is typically considered mere background for more significant events but that actually constitutes lived experience (Felski “Invention” 77). “The Lighthouse” similarly represents a single day ten years later, to show how everyday life at home has been altered by the Great War and modernity.

“The Window” and “The Lighthouse” are narrated from within the private consciousnesses of several characters, the perspective shifting seamlessly from one mind to the next to explore the experience of this continuum of non-events from different vantage points. Although Woolf’s technique here is typically called stream of consciousness, it is more precisely free indirect discourse, an important distinction in this case because the latter allows for the presence of an omniscient narrator. The omniscient narrator is instrumental in creating transcendental moments of being in the novel, and also largely directs “Time Passes,” as I will discuss later.

The Waves, though not strictly a daily novel, uses similar narrative techniques to represent the experience of everydayness and the passing of time. Although it feels closer to stream of consciousness narration than *To The Lighthouse*, as it moves through the thoughts of the six main characters, its style cannot be properly categorized as either that or free indirect discourse. While it appears to be reported speech, it is arguably a much

more complex discourse.⁸⁹ The omniscient narrator plays a significant part in the novel in creating a collective consciousness, and in turn, a sense of some larger force binding individual lives together. According to Randall, *The Waves* does not describe “what life is,” but rather “performs it” (*Daily Time* 156). Woolf’s idea of “the greatest book in the world,” she writes, is one “that was made entirely solely & with integrity of one’s thoughts” (*Diary III* 102). Randall thus argues that everyday life for Woolf consists primarily of thought, “since what are our days filled with if not, first, foremost and always, with thinking?” (169).⁹⁰ Randall acknowledges that the poetic language in the text makes it seem anything but ordinary, but she defends the style as a tactic to imbue the banal moments of everyday life with “value,” “beauty,” “profundity,” and “humanity” (170). *The Waves*, because of its interiority and abstractness, does not narrate every detail of the cotton wool of daily life. By turning the text entirely inward, Woolf stakes a claim for real, authentic life as an accumulation of the moments of being that, in her view, constitute memory and, thus, subjectivity. The everyday temporality of *The Waves*, though formally somewhat different from that of *To The Lighthouse*, nonetheless aims to communicate a similar idea. Just as *To The Lighthouse* represents “a life in the day” (158), *The Waves* presents everyday life as a succession of moments in which each

⁸⁹ While the narrative style of *The Waves* is difficult to fix in conventional terms, there is a tendency to claim it as free indirect discourse. For a sense of just how frequently this claim is made, see Melba Cuddy-Keane’s “Narratological Approaches” in *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies*. In an attempt to define the unique style of *The Waves* outside of these conventional terms, Makiko Minow-Pinkney has argued that its narrative voices represent the semiotic, or the Kristevan chora, while Anna Snaith argues it creates a dialogue between public and private voices that resist authority.

⁹⁰ This builds on Gillian Beer’s position, in *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* that thought and everyday life cannot be conceived as separate, and that *The Waves* “represent[s] what it is like to think about what we are thinking about” (Randall *Daily Time* 169).

significant moment contains the whole, the totality of each character's identity and subjective experience, all of which are connected by a transcendental collective consciousness. This is not a huge stretch, given that Woolf initially considered titling the book *Moments of Being*. The novel makes some use of the one-day structure as well. Each section represents a 'chapter' or extended moment in the characters' lives, separated by meditative interludes that collectively cover the passing of a single day. The cycle of that single day stands in for each and every day, while also acting as a metaphor for the passing of a lifetime.

For Woolf, the turn to everyday life is a feminist move.⁹¹ In the essay "Women and Fiction," an earlier version of *A Room of One's Own*, she suggests that women's writing has, and should have, different concerns from the dominant male literary tradition. "Both in life and in art the values of a woman are not the values of a man," she writes (Woolf 182). "Thus, when a woman comes to write a novel, she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values—to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what is to him important" (182).⁹² This sentiment is

⁹¹ That Woolf was a feminist writer is probably so well documented it is not necessary to state. It is obvious from the subjects of her own works, in particular *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. For an excellent overview of Woolf's feminist works and feminist scholarship of Woolf, see Laura Marcus (2010). Feminist approaches to Woolf have been extensive and varied, but some of the most interesting, and probably most important, include Pamela Caughie's *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism: Literature in Quest and Question of Itself*, which argues that Woolf's feminism can be better understood in the context of postmodernism than modernism, and works by Jane Marcus (1983, 1987), Jane Goldman, Makiko Minow-Pinkney, and Anne E. Fernald. For an excellent, recent reading of Woolf's feminism as postmodern and performative, see Lisa L. Coleman's "Woolf and Feminist Theory: Woolf's Feminism Comes in Waves."

⁹² This notion recalls Richardson's similar insistence on how men and women "speak different languages," and her project to write "the feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism," as discussed in Chapter One (*Pilgrimage II* 20, "Foreword" 9).

echoed in *To The Lighthouse*, as Mrs. Ramsay silently marvels at her husband's inattention to everyday life. He was "born blind, deaf, and dumb, to the ordinary things, but to the extraordinary things, with an eye like an eagle's," she thinks (*Lighthouse* 70).

His understanding often astonished her. But did he notice the flowers? No. Did he notice the view? No. Did he even notice his own daughter's beauty, or whether there was pudding on his plate or roast beef? He would sit at table with them like a person in a dream. (70)

Not only does he not notice mundane, domestic objects or practices, like the details of dinner, but he also does not see the aesthetic beauty of commonplace things like flowers and landscapes. He is blind to the everyday at both its most oppressive and its most beautiful. While Mrs. Ramsay is running errands, knitting stockings, and preparing for dinner, Mr. Ramsay is busy working through scholarly arguments in his mind. She later reflects on "how much they missed, after all, these very clever men!," suggesting that she understands something fundamental about life that he does not (99).

In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," Elaine Showalter writes: "In the purest feminist literary criticism we are ... presented with a radical alteration of our vision, a demand that we see meaning in what has previously been empty space. The orthodox plot recedes and another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint" (204). This model of women's writing as "a double-voiced discourse, containing a 'dominant' and a 'muted' story" is "what [Sandra M.] Gilbert and [Susan] Gubar call a 'palimpsest'" (204). In foregoing conventional plot and narrative structure and focusing instead on everyday life, and in particular the domestic everyday, Woolf forces this other plot forward, casting its narration specifically as the

female artist's job. Lily Briscoe thinks, "But the day is still rolled up," as if her day itself is a scroll she must inscribe (Woolf *Lighthouse* 45).⁹³

Domesticity and Women's Everyday

In *To The Lighthouse*, Woolf turns to everyday life to explore women's experiences of modernity and their changing roles as the private and public spheres begin to bleed into one another. The novel is concerned primarily with the idea of home, and how daily practices in the home are affected by and affect modernity.⁹⁴ As such, it is a text that enables one to take up Felski's mandate to make a feminist intervention into everyday theory by regarding home as the primary "spatial ordering" of everyday life ("Invention" 81). "A feminist theory of everyday life," she suggests, "might question the assumption that being modern requires an irrevocable sundering from home, and simultaneously explicate the modern dimensions of everyday experiences of home" (89).⁹⁵ Woolf explores the home as a site of modernity, as I will demonstrate; however,

⁹³ This echoes with Dorothy Richardson's *The Tunnel*, in which the protagonist Miriam thinks, "Her day scrolled up behind her" (*Pilgrimage II* 74).

⁹⁴ *To The Lighthouse* is not set in the Ramsays' regular London home, but in their summer vacation home in the Hebrides. This setting, however, does not affect my argument that it is a domestic space, as it functions and is organized in the same way the regular home would be. One could even suppose that in their regular home, as in this vacation home, the men would have been present throughout the day. Many professionals used their homes as a place of work well into the twentieth century. Just as Leslie Stephen did not 'go to the office,' one could imagine Mr. Ramsay might not either.

⁹⁵ Likewise, in "Housekeeping: Women Modernists' Writing on War and Home," Lee Rumbarger argues that, "in representing the home as a site of modernity, [writers] insist on women as participants in their times—as participants in historical and national narratives of war and peace" (4). This also helps position *To The Lighthouse* as a war novel, for it may not be directly about the battlefields of war, but is about war's effects on domestic life. This is the case in *Jacob's Room* as well, which uses Jacob's empty shoes as a final image to symbolize the way war has reshaped the home.

both *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves* hold to the assertion that women must leave the conventional home behind to fully participate in modernity. Though they might not have to physically leave the building, their roles, or the ways in which they operate at home, must fundamentally change if they are to be anything more than victims of modernity's effects on their everyday lives.

Laura Marcus claims that *To The Lighthouse* is “the novel in which Woolf explored most fully the Victorian concept of ‘separate spheres’ and the chasm separating past and present,” as well as “Woolf’s most complex and extended fictional exploration of the historically constructed nature of masculinity and femininity” (“Woolf’s Feminism” 222, *Virginia Woolf* 43). By joining these two quotes, I am making a connection between space and gender, but would like to emphasize Marcus’s words “historically constructed” to remind readers that, just as *femininity* is constructed, so is its connection with domesticity. Home is “an active practicing of place,” argues Felski, following everyday theorist Michel de Certeau (“Invention” 87).⁹⁶ “Even if home is synonymous with familiarity and routine,” she continues, “that familiarity is actively produced over time, above all through the effort and labor of women” (87). In the case of *To The Lighthouse*, the production of home through the labours of women is especially

⁹⁶ Actually, de Certeau make an important distinction between place and space that is elided in Felski’s analysis. Whereas “The law of the ‘proper’ rules in the place,” space is “actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Spaces occurs as an effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function” (de Certeau 117). This is a significant distinction because the familiarity of home, which Felski argues is produced through the labour of women, is actually the production of space. “*Space is a practiced place,*” writes de Certeau, suggesting that the power relations within a space are fluid in a way that they are not within a fixed place (117).

evident, given that the characters' experience of the space changes dramatically after Mrs. Ramsay dies.

The Ramsay home in *To The Lighthouse* is a home in transition. It is built on Victorian ideals of femininity and family; however, modern feminist ideas and the intervention of the Great War redefine this home from the beginning to the end of the novel.⁹⁷ In this sense, despite its setting as seemingly outside modernity—outside the city, away from public life, protected by privacy—modernity's reach still affects it. According to Felski, despite the Victorian belief in separate spheres, “the boundaries between home and non-home are leaky. The home is not a private enclave cut off from the outside world, but is powerfully shaped by broader social currents, attitudes, and desires. ... home, like any other space, is shaped by conflicts and power struggles” (“Invention” 87). When one sets up an opposition between public and private, the construction of domestic spaces by modernity is disregarded. “The so-called private sphere,” she claims, “often portrayed as a domain where natural and timeless emotions hold sway, is shown to be radically implicated in patterns of modernization and processes of social change” (*Gender* 3). The manifestation of this modernization in the novel, the transition I speak of, is evident both in the historical and familial changes from “The Window” to “The Lighthouse,” and in the different ideals espoused by female characters of different generations, with Mrs. Ramsay representing the Victorian matriarch and Lily

⁹⁷ Laura Marcus points out that “the concept of ‘improvement’” is a slippery one when discussing Woolf's feminism, as it suggests “evolutionary, developmental models of femininity and of ‘woman’ that dominated discussion at the turn of the last century” (“Woolf's Feminism” 214). Arguing that there is little biology in Woolf's conception of women's roles, she also contends that Woolf “subverted representation of ‘The New Woman’ ... too shallow a figure through which to explore psychical and temporal complexities, including women's collusions with their unfreedoms” (214–215).

Briscoe best representing the young, modern woman, who would become a self-supporting artist rather than a wife and mother.

Mrs. Ramsay, as the matriarch, presides over the home in “The Window,” and although the narration moves through several characters’ perspectives, hers remains the dominant one. Mrs. Ramsay is the ‘Angel in the House,’ the symbol of Victorian femininity that Elaine Showalter argues must be killed, imaginatively, in order for the twentieth-century woman writer to continue her feminist work.⁹⁸ Her activities are governed by domestic obligation and responsibility, as she is expected to take care of the house’s workings and the guests’ activities: “They came to her, naturally, since she was a woman; all day long with this and that; one wanting this, another that” (Woolf *Lighthouse* 32). After running “a dull errand in the town,” she spends the rest of the afternoon knitting stockings for the lighthouse keeper’s boy and caring for her youngest son, before getting dinner ready (9). While performing these mundane tasks, she simultaneously holds everything else together, keeping track of everyone’s whereabouts, and organizing the daily agenda, or what little of it there is. She “would be annoyed because somebody was late, or the butter not fresh, or the teapot chipped” (196). Despite

⁹⁸ In *A Literature of Their Own*, Showalter writes: “The middle-class ideology of the proper sphere of womanhood, which developed in post-industrial England and America, prescribed a woman who would be a Perfect Lady, an Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the Home” (14). “The Angel in the House” was an 1866 poem by Coventry Patmore that first described this ideal Victorian wife and mother. Woolf introduces this figure into “Professions for Women”: “I discovered that if I were going to review books I should need to do battle with a certain phantom. And the phantom was as woman, and when I came to know her better I called after the heroine of a famous poem, The Angel in the House. ... She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly selfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily.” Setting the stage for Showalter’s argument, Woolf writes, “It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her.”

the fact that they are on vacation, “There was always something that had to be done at that precise moment,” “all must be in order” (112, 113). When Mrs. Ramsay leaves the company of her family and guests, “disintegration sets in” and no one seems to know his or her place in the home any more, wandering aimlessly from room to room (112). She is frequently portrayed as a strong, “irresistible” woman who “always got her own way in the end” (101). Having “put a spell on them all,” she makes romantic matches between her guests, and her beauty commands their attention and admiration, even as it offends some of them (101). Although “She had the whole of the other sex under her protection,” she is also “willful” and “commanding” in her “relations with women” (6, 49). These details highlight the managerial aspect of Mrs. Ramsay’s role, positioning her not just as a wife at home, but a housewife, a role Light argues is “altogether more professional” (218).⁹⁹ Lefebvre claims this comes as a result of modernity and capitalism infiltrating private feelings and spaces, which is certainly the case from the mid-century, but I suggest that perhaps the professionalization of household duties in this scenario serves a different dual function: it roots the wife firmly in the private sphere by giving her ‘a job,’ which generates a sense of purpose and satisfaction, while at the same time distinguishing her from the lower class of the household staff and allowing her the authority to manage them in her husband’s absence. The class distinctions between women in the house are demonstrated even in Mrs. Ramsay’s naming, as she is not referred to by her given name,

⁹⁹ With the technicization of the home, claims Lefebvre, women’s domestic roles become more specialized, divided into discrete practices, and thus more like a job than before. This shift also emerges from the increasing lack of servants in middle-class homes, necessitating middle-class housewives to do more of the menial labour than ever. Mrs. Ramsay still has her servants, but her existing managerial position in relation to those servants is a precursor to the shift toward being a housewife as an autonomous occupation.

like her servants, Ellen and Mildred. While household management is by no means a twentieth century concept, the professionalization of the sort that Light and Lefebvre discuss, and the managerial role that Mrs. Ramsay enacts, is different in its gesturing toward the public sphere.

Although Mrs. Ramsay derives a sense of satisfaction from performing domestic duties well, and maintains a level of power over her staff, there is also an oppressive aspect to her work. In this sense, Mrs. Ramsay's role has two sides: she is their protector and orchestrator of fates, in control, but she also represents "the subjection of all wives ... to their husband's labours" (Woolf *Lighthouse* 11). I would like to return to Woolf's use of the phrase "naturally, since she was a woman," quoted above, which is ambiguous (32); does she see an essential connection between a woman and her domestic role, or is she simply parroting Mrs. Ramsay's, or even Mr. Ramsay's, feelings? Mr. Ramsay has a definite sense that women should be responsible for domestic work, so men can carry on the tasks associated with progress, as well as more 'masculine' physical labours: "He liked men to work like that, and women to keep house, and sit beside sleeping children indoors, while men were drowned, out there in a storm" (164). Though it seems more in keeping with the narrative voice for Woolf to use "naturally" ironically, the affinities she draws out between domesticity, cyclical time, and nature, which I explain further later, could reinforce an essentialist perspective. The image of men drowning in a storm could also be a metaphor for men fighting in the First World War as the women stayed home to 'keep the home-fires burning,' which becomes the Ramsays' situation in "Time Passes,"

when their eldest son goes to fight.¹⁰⁰ The interruption of everyday life by war is significant to Woolf's defamiliarization of the *homely* home, as will be discussed shortly.

An even more striking representation of women's subjection to domesticity occurs in *The Waves*, with the character Susan. Like Mrs. Ramsay, Susan seeks satisfaction through her children and her role as homemaker, but she cannot shake the feeling of being trapped. In many ways, Susan's character is a more critical approach to traditional gender roles than Mrs. Ramsay, as Woolf does not romanticize her position at all or treat it nostalgically.¹⁰¹ Once married and with a baby, Susan feels trapped, "fenced in, planted here like one of [her] own trees" (Woolf *Waves* 146). She "pad[s] about the

¹⁰⁰ Woolf believed that war was the province of men, and that women had no inclination to it. In *Three Guineas*, she writes: "For though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes, to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's" (6). She outlines several reasons for this difference, none of them naturalized, but all social: "Here, immediately, are three reasons which lead your sex to fight; war is a profession; a source of happiness and excitement; and it is also an outlet for manly qualities, without which men would deteriorate" (8). These reasons all seem to reflect Mr. Ramsay's attitude to gender roles in the quoted passage. To demonstrate that these traits and concerns are not universal, however, Woolf presents the counter-example of Wilfred Owen. She also makes an important point that "her interpretation of the word 'patriotism' may well differ from his," reminding readers that "history is not without its effect upon mind and body," as she proceeds through a detailed critique of the differences between men's and women's social positions and the effects those differences have on their psychologies (9).

¹⁰¹ Woolf's nostalgic view of Mrs. Ramsay comes from the character being at least somewhat based on her mother. There is an extensive body of criticism that treats *To The Lighthouse* as an elegy to Woolf's parents. For an interesting take on Woolf's fiction as elegy and mourning, both personal and historical, see Tammy Clewell's article "Consolation Refused: Virginia Woolf, the Great War, and Modernist Mourning." Clewell gives a brief overview of the ways in which Woolf's fiction has been tied to mourning in her own life; however, she acknowledges that "The project of reading Woolf's fiction as a case history of neurotic grief has now come to an end," and situates the elegiac elements of Woolf's work as a process for coming to terms with the war (198). Gillian Beer likewise claims that "Death was [Woolf's] special knowledge: her mother, her sister Stella, her brother Thoby had all died prematurely. But death was also the special knowledge of her entire generation, through the obliterative experience of the first world war" (34).

house all day long in apron and slippers, like [her] mother who died of cancer” (131). The cancer, of course, is a metaphor for the creeping misery that she feels could literally kill her, casting the crushing monotony of domestic routine as physical degradation. The baby she once hoped would bring her joy only ends up trapping her more, which is unsurprising because prior to having a baby she resolves, “What has formed in me I shall give him” (73). This resolution symbolically roots her in domestic space and subjects her to her husband: “I shall have children; I shall have maids in aprons; men with pitchforks; a kitchen where they bring the ailing lambs to warm in baskets, where the hams hang and the onions glisten. I shall be like my mother, silent in a blue apron locking up the cupboards” (73). Her repeated “I shall” at first suggests she is making a choice; however, in context of the novel’s treatment of time (which is discussed in detail later), the phrase is more fatalistic. She knows she is doomed to end up an unhappy housewife like her mother, but has no real choice. The “something” that she feels forming in her, that she resolves to give to her lover—“Something has formed, at school, in Switzerland, some hard thing”—is ambiguous (73). It seems she has simply resolved to give in to expectations, as she cannot see herself like her more modern or daring friends.

Unlike Susan, Mrs. Ramsay seems satisfied with her place most of the time. She would insist that “an unmarried woman has missed the best of life,” and that each of the women in the house “must marry” (Woolf *Lighthouse* 49). However, she also fleetingly acknowledges that it is “an escape for her too, to say that people must marry; people must have children” (60). It is an escape from the truth that there are other things she would like to be doing that her domestic responsibilities prevent. She occasionally longs instead to be a public woman, freed from the restrictions of her primary role at home:

She ruminated the other problem, of rich and poor, and the things she saw with her own eyes, weekly daily, here or in London, when she visited this widow, or that struggling wife in person with a bag on her arm, and a notebook and pencil with which she wrote down in columns carefully ruled for the purpose wages and spending, employment and unemployment, in the hope that thus she would cease to be a private woman whose charity was half a sop to her own indignation, half a relief to her own curiosity, and become what with her untrained mind she greatly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem. (9)

These types of charity calls were typical of Victorian middle-class women, but she imagines herself going further and labouring for material improvements in her community: “A model dairy and a hospital up here—those two things she would have liked to do, herself” (58). This passage demonstrates Mrs. Ramsay’s desire to undertake work that is more properly valued, specifically paid labour in the public sphere, rather than charity or housework.¹⁰² But it is telling that she imagines herself with “a notebook and pencil,” writing, which mirrors her husband’s work as a scholar. Just as he is, she wishes to become “an investigator, elucidating the social problem.” Her conception of valuable public work is thus always a version of that which her husband does. However, her desire to venture into public life is hindered by her responsibilities to her children. “When they were older, then perhaps she would have time: when they were all at school” (58). Her everyday life is dictated by her responsibilities at home, and it is made clear that this is not her choice alone. At dinner, “she described the iniquity of the English dairy system,” and as she is about to elaborate on the problem, “her children laughed; her husband laughed; she was laughed at, fire-encircled, and forced to veil her crest,

¹⁰² According to Showalter, “Many observers have pointed out that the first professional activities of Victorian women, as social reformers, nurses, governesses, and novelists, either were based in the home or were extensions of the feminine role as teacher, helper, and mother of mankind” (*Literature of Their Own* 14).

dismount her batteries” (103). It is not her attack on the system that prompts mockery; it is the fact that she is their wife and mother doing so. No one laughs, after all, when the men argue about politics earlier on.

Mrs. Ramsay’s traditionally domestic woman has Lily Briscoe as a counterpart, a modern woman who plans to forego the domestic life altogether. It is significant that Lily spends much of the novel outside of the house itself, observing and painting domestic scenes rather than participating in them. She does not want to marry or have children, so as not to sacrifice her individual identity or her ability to be an artist. Despite her love for Mrs. Ramsay, she does not understand her defense of marriage, from the perspective of a later generation. “She need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation, she was saved from that dilution” (Woolf *Lighthouse* 102). She perceives marriage as a loss of autonomy and control, and feels that the only way for her to be an artist is to avoid family life and domestic commitments: “She would like here exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that” (50). The conflict between these two characters embodies a transitional moment in women’s modernity. That Lily’s is the dominant perspective in “The Lighthouse,” after Mrs. Ramsay has died, demonstrates a shift in gender roles and values from the pre-war era to the interwar years.

Also interesting in this context are the above-quoted terms Lily uses to describe marriage: “degradation” and “dilution”(102). Both are also words one could use to describe ruined paintings or paint, which sets up a clear opposition between the domestic everyday and the life of an artist. Lily values art above other forms of labour a woman

might undertake, as a path toward modernity and independence.¹⁰³ Lily is enraged by Charles Tansley's charge, "women can't write; women can't paint," in part because she is an artist herself, but also because the comment implies women's roles should always be domesticated (86). For Lily, the only alternative to domestic labour is art; however, one could argue, as many have, that domestic labour is also itself an art that can empower women.¹⁰⁴ In that vein, Eileen T. Bender compares Lily's art to Mrs. Ramsay's: "Lily has an artist's single-mindedness and vehicle for creation and self-expression; Mrs. Ramsay, in contrast, plies the traditional domestic arts, part of an everyday experience undervalued, noted only, it would seem, in its absence" (321–322). Bender hits on an important point about the dichotomy Woolf sets up between art and domesticity, which is

¹⁰³ According to Showalter, "For women, however, work meant labor for others. Work, in the sense of self-development, was in direct conflict with the subordination and repression inherent in the feminine ideal. The self-centeredness implicit in the act of writing made this career an especially threatening one; it required an engagement with feeling and a cultivation of the ego rather than its negation" (*Literature of Their Own* 22). As such, art in general would be a form of labour in direct defiance of Victorian domesticity, as Lily's words also suggest. Lily also somewhat parrots Woolf herself in *A Room of One's Own*, in which she says that, in order for women to be free to write, they need a space of their own (without husband and children around to disturb) and financial autonomy.

¹⁰⁴ In *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume Two*, Luce Giard makes this argument in "Doing Cooking." She claims cooking is an art passed down through generations of women, which can be controlled, played with, and imbued with the individual woman's own personality. In this way, she wants to reframe labour that can be oppressive as empowering. "Like all human action," Giard writes: "these female tasks are a product of a cultural order: from one society to another, their internal hierarchy and processes differ; from one generation to the next in the same society, and from one social class to another, the techniques that preside over these tasks, like rules of action and models for behavior that touch on them, are transformed. In a sense, each operator can create her *own style* according to how she accents a certain element of a practice, how she applies herself to one or another, how she creates her personal way of navigating through accepted, allowed, and ready-made techniques" (de Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 156). As such, what she identifies as a certain "level of social invisibility" is given value through women's individual styles or unique contributions that are not expressly written into the social code (156).

that it devalues the everyday experience that would belong to most women at this time, and for a long time to come.¹⁰⁵

Whether one considers Mrs. Ramsay's role as housewife a job or an art, the actual practices remain the same. She is expected to manage the home in such a way as to make it a comfortable, familiar space for her family and guests. Lee Rumbarger claims that the ideal of "home" relies on the work of women, "even as it makes that work invisible" (1). She argues that the "home-sweet-home, home-fires-burning idea of domestic peace and continuity," what Felski calls the familiar space of home, "may be the place where a woman works, what she works on, and what she works to achieve. And, if she's successful, the individuality of her work, wants, self, disappears into tastefully papered walls, rubs into well-polished silver, blends, like her outfit into the room" (2). As long as the labour that has gone into the production of home remains invisible, the space remains *homely*. However, Rumbarger's subtle point is that the comfort and familiarity relies in part on the invisibility of a woman's labour and in perhaps equal part on that woman somehow becoming part of the space, disavowing her individuality and quietly incorporating her personality into the material space itself. The invisibility can thus be interrupted in two ways: when the labour is properly witnessed, or through the absence of the woman, both of which occur in *To The Lighthouse*. In these instances, when the invisibility is interrupted, home ceases (even if only for a moment) to be comfortable, and becomes *unheimlich*, in the literal sense of the word, *unhomely*.

Rumbarger is speaking specifically about the wartime home, and how the collapse of physical space reveals its historical construction. As the First World War occurs during

¹⁰⁵ This value-laden dichotomy reminds me of Pablo Picasso's famous words: "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life" (qtd. in Robertson 325).

the “Time Passes” section of the novel, the *unhomeliness* of the Ramsay house is evident in the way it physically breaks down under the pressures of nature. Even though the house is restored by Mrs. McNab, the feeling of *unhomeliness* persists through “The Lighthouse,” as the characters return to a home haunted by the absence of Mrs. Ramsay. Lily registers Mrs. Ramsay’s death, and all she can feel in the house is “Nothing, nothing—nothing she could express at all ... Ghost, air, nothingness” (Woolf *Lighthouse* 145, 179). This echoes her earlier “Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing!” (51); only the first time she utters these words, it is while lying on Mrs. Ramsay’s knee, while the second time it is trying to grasp Mrs. Ramsay’s absence. As she sits alone at the breakfast table, she notes that no one is ready for the day, lunch has not been prepared, and Mr. Ramsay just gets angry about it. He is unable to manage these details like his wife did. Mr. Ramsay feels a sense of loss, but it is more than grieving for his wife; it is also a loss of his connection to the home—in that space, he no longer had someone “to talk to about that table, or his boots, or his knots,” someone to anchor those details, as the ‘Angel in the House’ is no longer there (156). In this sense, the home is *unheimlich* not only because of a ghostly presence but also because the everyday lives that once conducted themselves in this space are no longer easy or familiar.

The remaining characters are also unsettled by Mrs. Ramsay’s absence, but the novel registers a more common experience, supported also by the deaths of the Ramsay children, Andrew and Prue. The postwar experience of any household figure being absent unsettles the home, changing the way the space is defined, the way it is organized, and the practices that fill the time. In this sense, the home is rendered *unheimlich* by the intervention of war. It is clear, as Felski claims, that home is not cut off from modernity,

but is profoundly influenced and shaped by external forces and power struggles. To see it in this way could suggest that the traditional home, and Victorian family values, are victims of an encroaching modernity. However, Woolf counters that view in Lily. That she has completed her picture leaves the reader with a sense of her accomplishment, suggesting that the other major change that takes hold during “Time Passes,” an increasing shift in gender roles, is manifested as much by the women already inside of the home as it is influenced by outside forces.

That the *homely* home is created by invisible labour, and the subsequent devaluation of this labour, is also evident in the dinner scene in *To The Lighthouse*. Bender notes the conflict between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily in this scene, as Mrs. Ramsay presides over the dinner table but Lily “refuses to acquiesce to convention, to take up a woman’s role in dinner-table discourse” (322). Bender then empowers Mrs. Ramsay, arguing that “as the dinner party progresses, Woolf shows Mrs. Ramsay as a consummate artist herself, working in the fluid medium of life, transforming the guests and the occasion into an ideal of grace and order” (322). One could read this in context of Felski’s feminist intervention into everyday theory, as a move to restore value to labour that has typically been devalued. However, in this particular situation, this move willfully forgets Mrs. Ramsay’s own feelings of dissatisfaction, and that she performs these tasks because her role as housewife demands it. Mrs. Ramsay observes the place settings, lamenting that while Minta and Paul have their engagement to celebrate, all she has is “an infinitely long table and plates and knives,” the presence of which everyone else takes for granted (Woolf *Lighthouse* 83).

Furthermore, this argument fails to acknowledge that the more trying labours involved in creating this *homely* dinner scene, including setting the table, cooking the meal, and even serving the meal, are not performed by Mrs. Ramsay herself, but by the servants. Mrs. Ramsay, in her managerial position, does concern herself with the details of dinner, hoping everything will turn out perfectly: “Everything depended upon things being served up to the precise moment they were ready. The beef, the bay leaf, and the wine—all must be done to a turn” (Woolf *Lighthouse* 80). Yet, when the *Boeuf en Daube* comes to the table, “Marthe, with a little flourish, took the cover off. The cook had spent three days over that dish” (100). Though Mrs. Ramsay is the one fretting over the food, she has no hand in making or serving it, save for a ceremonial ladling of soup to open the meal and signify her position as head woman of the house. There is no space in the novel devoted to the cook’s actual labour over the dish. Likewise, there is no discussion of it amongst the guests—in fact, they complement Mrs. Ramsay on its perfection and she replies by telling them it was her grandmother’s recipe. But, of course, it is “Mildred’s masterpiece” (80), which Mrs. Ramsay acknowledges to herself alone. The cook, Mildred, although she is named in the novel, is not given a voice. When Mrs. Ramsay needs to communicate with her, she sends her daughter Cam, who returns with Mildred’s reply: “No, they haven’t, and I’ve told Ellen to clear away tea” (55). There is a network of women—Mildred, Ellen, Marthe, and who knows who else—who do the more laboursome jobs and who remain suspiciously invisible. When Mr. Carmichael, a guest, asks for seconds, he asks Ellen to serve him. Ellen, whom readers have not yet met, but who must have been standing there beside the dinner table through this whole scene, despite this being the only mention of her presence (94).

Ellen's emergence at this moment is *unheimlich*, in the most visceral sense of the word. As a ghostly presence who has been haunting the dinner table, Ellen suddenly materializes to indicate to readers that the familiarity and comfort the Ramsays and their guests feel is not a natural result of them being 'at home,' but has been carefully crafted for them by the work of others. This scene suggests too that if homemakers' labour is invisible, their servants' labour is even more so, and the value attributed to different forms of labour, or different labourers' lives, may depend on just how deeply entrenched they are in the mundanity of everyday life. Although Mrs. Ramsay's day is spent "walk[ing], eat[ing], deal[ing] with what has to be done," her servants' day is spent "washing" and "cooking dinner," clearly the more difficult practices Woolf associates with "non-being," yet ones the family wants to credit Mrs. Ramsay with nonetheless ("Sketch of the Past" 79).

Everyday Time and Gendered Rhythms

As we have seen so far, Woolf's turn to everyday life is fraught. Though she represents the everyday practices associated with domesticity as a way of shedding light on women's experiences, she in turn devalues those experiences by casting the mundane aspects of women's everyday lives as oppressive non-being, or exploited labour, inevitably tied up with class. These tensions are also evident in Woolf's representation of time in the novels, as it relates to domesticity and everyday practice. Our sense of the space of 'home' is inseparable from the temporality that also shapes it. As modernity offers the potential for changing women's lives, the more modern women in Woolf's novels want lifestyles that are not governed by the repetitiveness and routines of domestic family life.

In *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, Woolf meditates extensively on time, seeking to represent everyday domestic temporality through formal technique. Felski, following Lefebvre, writes:

Everyday life is above all a temporal term. As such, it conveys the fact of repetition; it refers not to the singular or the unique but to that which happens “day after day.” The activities of sleeping, eating, and working conform to regular diurnal rhythms that are in turn embedded within larger cycles of repetition: the weekend, the annual holiday, the start of a new semester. For Lefebvre, this cyclical structure of everyday life is its quintessential feature. (“Invention” 81)

She continues to suggest that, even though repetition is necessary for survival and making meaning, it continues to have negative connotations “because it is fundamentally at odds with the modern drive toward progress and accumulation” (81). This is one reason why home, which is often characterized by routine and habit, has been traditionally regarded as antithetical to modernity. Both *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves* represent domestic temporality as repetition; however, they also draw connections between women’s experiences of time and natural cycles in an effort to recuperate women’s everyday lives from the more oppressive aspects of routine. The novels also demonstrate the interference of the linear time of history, and the fraught relationship between domestic time, monumental history, and women’s lives.

Woolf’s approach to time is complex, drawing on many influences. Ann Banfield argues that 1927, the year of *To The Lighthouse*, “represents the culmination of a period of intense interest in time” and that “Virginia Woolf’s novel was its major artistic expression” (“Tragic Time” 44). Banfield convincingly argues that Cambridge philosophies about the contingency of the future and time as a series of moments, and Bertrand Russell’s time philosophies in particular, influence Woolf’s narrative. She

provides a different perspective from that which tends to look at time in Woolf as Bergsonian *durée*. Shiv Kumar, in his seminal *Bergson and The Stream of Consciousness Novel*, the first book-length study of the modernist technique, claims that “all her literary experiments as a novelist can be explained in terms of Bergson’s *la durée*” (68). As the majority of Woolf’s fiction is still largely read as stream of consciousness narrative, this connection between her technique and Bergson’s philosophies has become almost a given, an assumption not challenged that often.¹⁰⁶ *La durée*, or duration, is the “temporality of human consciousness,” which stands in opposition to the illusion that time is homogeneous, composed of a series of repeated and equivalent moments (Randall *Daily Time* 29). “The same moment does not occur twice,” according to Bergson, because the individual’s psyche is constantly changing (*Time* 200). With each new moment, consciousness “goes on increasing—rolling upon itself, as a snowball on the snow,” and thus an individual’s experience of time passing depends on how his or her memories are hierarchized (Bergson “Creative” 69).

Given that Woolf’s narrative techniques rely on a psychological perspective, reading her works through Bergson make sense. However, Jane Goldman argues that “the invocation of Bergson has more often tended to encourage readings of Woolf’s work that neglect its feminist import,” as “Bergson’s *durée* ‘locates ‘freedom’ in subjective intuition, which although potentially inspiring as a site of utopian vision, remains cut off from the spatial, material and historical ‘real world,’ the site in fact of feminist struggle” (4). Although the concept of *durée* has provided some important insights into Woolf’s work, I agree with Goldman that it detracts from the social realities of everyday life. To

¹⁰⁶ Banfield’s works on time in Woolf (2000, 2003) are a notable exception.

claim Woolf's representations of time primarily as *durée* obscures the everyday temporalities, both natural and historical, imposed on individuals from the outside, which largely shape their subjective experiences. As such, I instead analyze Woolf's representations of temporality in context of everyday time as theorized by Lefebvre, and in turn, Felski.

In *Rhythmanalysis*, Lefebvre's most significant work on time, he claims there is an "antagonistic unity" between cyclical and linear time (76). One could say that cyclical time is that of everyday life and linear time is that of modernity, setting up an opposition.¹⁰⁷ However, this view has been used to support gendered dichotomies of private and public, not to mention its oversimplification of the experience of time in the modern world. In reality, cyclical and linear times are always intertwined: "They penetrate one another, but in an interminable struggle: sometimes compromise, sometimes disruption. However, there is between them an indissoluble unity: the repetitive tick-tock of the clock measures the cycle of hours and days, and vice versa. (76). Thus, everyday time is constituted by recurring cycles, driven ever forward by the progression of clock time, though cyclical time moves forward as well, by virtue of the return. These cycles include the natural recurrence of the days and the seasons, which play a significant role in the structure and style of Woolf's novels. However, it is

¹⁰⁷ For instance, Guy Debord argues that modern cycles of time are remnants from a pre-modern agricultural civilization and persist only at the level of everyday life, whereas linearity and history have come to be the privileged measures of modernity. Debord writes: "The victory of the bourgeoisie was the victory of a *profoundly historical* time—the time corresponding to the economic form of production, which transformed society permanently, and from top to bottom" (*Society of the Spectacle* 104). This "irreversible time of production" contrasts with the cyclical time of agricultural life that "tended to nourish those combined forces of tradition which slowed down the movement of history" (107, 104).

important to remember that cyclical time in modernity is not entirely natural either. Manufactured cycles that mimic the natural ones, such as the return of the weekend, the annual vacation, or the fashion or shopping season, organize everyday life as well. This is evident in *The Waves*, as will be detailed shortly. The forward movement of time as epitomized by the “tick-tock” of a clock, in which each moment is equivalent and sequential, is of course an artificial measure, and this would have been much stranger to someone in Woolf’s day than in our own. Many of Woolf’s early readers would have still remembered clock time not being standardized as it is now.¹⁰⁸

The unity between these two modes of time creates tension, but also rhythm. Rhythm, according to Lefebvre, is repetition with difference. For example, waves have a rhythm: they repeat, they follow a pattern, but they always vary and one is never identical to another. He argues that when one breaks up parcels of time and what happens within them in an analysis of everyday life, one loses sight of the rhythm that ties them together. When repetition is privileged over rhythm, the repetition takes on a monotonous or oppressive edge. The distinction Lefebvre makes between repetition and rhythm is essential to a clear understanding of how Woolf represents time. In *To The Lighthouse*

¹⁰⁸ Although the Prime Meridian Conference established Greenwich Mean Time as the global standard, “it took more than forty years for advocates of standard time to pressure individual nations to adopt the reforms” (Barrows 2). As Adam Barrows argues, representations of “temporal standardization” are “tightly bound up in modernist texts,” as these reforms were being adopted and then incorporated into everyday life throughout what is generally considered the high modernist period (2). Randall argues, as well, that the “problematization of the very idea of objective time” that comes with psychological and philosophical discourses in the early twentieth century “stands in stark contrast to some of the political developments of the period, most importantly the establishment of Greenwich Mean Time” (*Daily Time* 30). Furthermore, in 1916, British Summer Time was established, probably the most tangible reminder that clock time is not fully concordant with nature and is in fact man-made. In *Between The Acts*, the play’s director Miss La Trobe reflects, “That’s one good the war brought us—longer days” (Woolf 73).

and *The Waves*, she draws a connection between repetition and domestic practice, setting routine at the heart of women's feelings of being trapped at home; however, she also draws a connection between domestic rhythms and the cycles of nature, casting this rhythmic experience of time as potentially liberating. According to Lefebvre, rhythm is qualified duration, or in other words, duration with structure or limits. As such, the concept of rhythm is a useful supplement to *la durée* in theorizing Woolf's representations of time; it stands as a way of accounting for both the subjective experience of time and the external temporalities, both natural and social, that shape that experience.

Woolf's most striking representation of repetition and routine as oppressive is in *The Waves*, in Susan's reflections on being a housewife. The passage is set around the passing of seasons, as "Summer comes, and winter The seasons pass," during which time she "sing[s]" and "croon[s]" "Sleep, sleep" to her child (Woolf *Waves* 130). As the passage continues, more seasons and months pass by and she repeats "sleep" several times, presumably in response to a perpetually crying baby. Each utterance becomes more strained, as she no longer sings, but simply "say[s]" (130, 131). Near the end of the passage, she reflects:

I am driven forward, till I could cry, as I move from dawn to dusk opening and shutting, "No more. I am glutted with natural happiness." Yet more will come, more children; more cradles, more baskets in the kitchen and hams ripening; and onions glistening; and more beds of lettuce and potatoes. I am blown like a leaf by the gale. (131–132)

Though it is possible she is genuinely full of "natural happiness," the anxious repetitions in the language, set alongside the relentless passage of time, suggest otherwise. The passive voice situates her also as an object—someone without control to whom life is

happening. Furthermore, she later confirms, as an older woman, “sometimes I am sick of natural happiness, and fruit growing, and children scattering the house with oars, guns, skulls, books won for prizes and other trophies. I am sick of the body, I am sick of my own craft, industry and cunning” (146–147). She walks around the house all day “like [her] mother who died of cancer,” casting the repetition as degradation (131).

Susan has always experienced time as repetitive and oppressive. Even as a child, she dreads the repetitiveness of her duties and the crushing weight of daily time. Of her school days, she says:

For how many months, for how many years, have I run up these stairs, in the dismal days of winter, in the chilly days of spring? Now it is midsummer.... So each night I tear off the old day from the calendar, and screw it tight into a ball. I do this vindictively, while Betty and Clara are on their knees. I do not pray. I revenge myself upon the day. I wreak my spite upon its image. You are dead now, I say, school day, hated day. They had made all the days of June—this is the twenty-fifth—shiny and orderly, with gongs, with lessons, with orders to wash, to change, to work, to eat. (Woolf *Waves* 29)

Though the passage of seasons always figures in Susan’s discourse, the hated return of each day seems to stand in conflict with natural cycles. As each day is rendered “orderly” by the measure of clock time, she experiences the days as artificial, a measure that an unnamed authority, “They,” “had made.” Furthermore, these parcels of time are already organized by domestic tasks, anticipating her adult responsibilities. Susan’s seeming obsession with, and contempt for, the calendar does not merely suggest contempt for daily and monthly cycles themselves. After all, she idealizes farm life, which is also structured by cycles but where “the men in [the] fields are doing real things” (45). Instead, she is contemptuous of standardized time and routine, which she recognizes as a mere mimicry of natural cycles, and which is organized in her life by gendered practices.

“I will not send my children to school nor spend a night in all my life in London,” she thinks, as a way of resisting spaces she feels are repetitive and unreal (45). However, though she moves back to a space she feels is more real—the farm—repetition and routine still catch her in her domestic duties.

Mrs. Ramsay also feels her subjection most acutely in the routine of domestic life.

While she is ladling the soup at dinner, and directing the guests to their seats, she feels that

the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her.... If she did not do it nobody would do it, and so, giving herself the little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating, as the watch begins ticking—one, two, three, one, two, three. And so on and so on, she repeated, listening to it, sheltering and fostering the still feeble pulse as one might guard a weak flame with a newspaper. (Woolf *Lighthouse* 83)

The measure evoked in this passage, the repeated “one, two, three” in tandem with the ticking clock, represents domesticity as repetitive, oppressive routine, a familiar conception of housework as mundane. Though she considers the task at hand, ladling soup, as “creating,” it is not represented as art so much as a duty, an “effort” she must exert to satisfy the expectations of her role. And she can only perform it by physically giving in to repetition. The metaphor of her body as a watch demonstrates how she must physically subject herself to artificial rhythms to accomplish what is expected of her. She literally comes to embody repetitive time as she performs this domestic task.

Furthermore, the description of her task as “merging and flowing” suggests an embodied temporality that directs housework. As such, Mrs. Ramsay’s body is disciplined by the repetitive actions of her daily activities. That repetitive time is inscribed on the body in this way is an especially modern notion, reflecting the efficiency movement and

especially Taylorism.¹⁰⁹ The “one, two, three” of Mrs. Ramsay’s motions invokes Frederick Winslow Taylor’s motion studies, which broke filmed movement down into its constituent frames to identify points where efficiencies could be introduced into workers’ labour. In this sense, Taylor used technology and standardized time to manage industrial labour and increase productivity. Mrs. Ramsay’s and Susan’s subjection to repetition, as well as their aversion to it, demonstrates how the efficient repetitiveness of industrial activity infiltrates private space, rationalizing domestic labour as well.

Furthermore, repetitive labour rationalizes domesticity and is inscribed on women’s bodies through a naturalizing discourse that associates women with repetitive cycles. Though Woolf was suspicious of naturalized discourses on difference, I argue that

¹⁰⁹ The efficiency movement of the early twentieth century (in Britain and the US) maintained that all aspects of public life—economy, government, education, medicine, etc.—were laden with inefficiencies and waste. The desire to limit waste developed out of the drive to progress and the increasing speed that characterized modern life. People believed that life in general could be improved, or optimized, if experts were recruited to deal with inefficiencies. This would, in turn, lead to increased productivity, profit, and technological development. The two key experts in this movement were Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henry Ford. Taylor’s *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) streamlined the division of labour and devised a wage system based on performance and speed. The main principles of Taylorism are time management, standardization, time-saving devices, staff management, and task allocation. Ultimately, Taylor believed the subdivision of labour and more controlled people management would get things done more efficiently and result in increased productivity. Likewise, Ford developed the assembly line to enable heightened capitalist control over the pace and intensity of work and increase productivity. Evelyn Cobley’s *Modernism and the Culture of Efficiency* provides a thorough history of the efficiency movement and charts how it registers in a number of modernist novels. Cobley writes: “Although efficiency became an issue in the nineteenth century, it was during the first three decades of the twentieth century that it generated a host of cultural anxieties most dramatically captured in modernist novels” (5). “Without drawing attention to itself,” she argues, efficiency as ideology “has infiltrated the social consciousness of individuals and suffused the social fabric” (5). In her article “The Rhetoric of Efficiency in Early Modernism,” Suzanne Raitt likewise claims that “Modernist art, like the industrial cultures of modernity, engages centrally with the rhetoric of efficiency,” focusing her attention on Dorothy Richardson’s development of the stream of consciousness technique and Ezra Pound’s Imagism (835).

she nonetheless genders time in *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, thus essentializing women's connection to the everyday, which becomes especially problematic given Woolf's contradictory treatment of the everyday.¹¹⁰ This does not occur simply by association between women's experiences of domestic repetition and routine. Woolf casts this unnatural state of regulated repetition against the natural rhythms of nature to first critique the rationalization of time, and then try to recuperate women's experience and give them agency through a reconnection with nature. As she sets linear and cyclical time against each other, she positions women as resistant to the linear time of history, and embodied in the rhythms of cyclical time.

Woolf represents cyclical and linear time through formal techniques. The overall structures of *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves* embody the interplay between cyclical and linear time, albeit in slightly different ways. In *To The Lighthouse*, "The Window" and "The Lighthouse," exemplify the recurring cycle of the single day and the rhythms that govern it. These two sections are interrupted by the passage of irrevocable, historical time in the middle section "Time Passes," and this structure mimics history's interruption and alteration of the habitual day-to-day of ordinary life. In "Time Passes," ten years go by, in which a number of notable events occur, including the First World War and the

¹¹⁰ In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf discusses the popular assumptions about biological and psychological differences in men and women, but makes a point of asking "where shall I find that elaborate study of the psychology of women by a woman?" (67). Laura Marcus reads this as Woolf's assertion that "male writers taking women as their object of study ... have vested interests in distorting the terms of the differences. ... There is 'difference', Woolf seems to be suggesting, but we can as yet make no assumptions about its nature, of which we have no adequate instruments or standards of measurement. Difference, moreover, can only be a relative term—dependent on history, circumstance and perspective" ("Woolf's Feminism" 220–221). Furthermore, Woolf's statement, "'I' is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being," though it aims to separate Woolf herself from the fictional narrative voice, also gestures toward a belief in the social construction of identity ("A Room of One's Own" 2).

deaths of several characters. However, the events that punctuate this ten-year period sit oddly in the background, each only mentioned briefly within brackets, as the cycles of nature, driven by recurrence and difference, dominate the section's narrative. The passage of time in this middle section is thus quite complex, more than a simple chronological development.

One could read "Time Passes" as containing 'monumental time,' as Paul Ricoeur does with *Mrs. Dalloway*. In *Time and Narrative, Volume Two*, Ricoeur argues that the chronological time of Big Ben's chimes is "the audible expression" of "monumental time," the time of Nietzsche's "monumental history" (106).¹¹¹ "To this monumental time," he argues, "belongs the figures of authority and power that form the counterweight to the living times experienced by Clarissa and Septimus" (106). Big Ben's chimes represent the irrevocable forward flow in the novel, the one guided by "clock time, the time of monumental history, the time of authority-figures," all of which are "the same time!" (106). In a similar fashion, "Time Passes" contains the time of the "Great" War, which casts two seemingly ordinary days as pre- and post-war moments, lived experience

¹¹¹ Nietzsche describes his conception of monumental history in *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (1874): "That the great moments in the struggle of individuals form a chain, that in them the high points of humanity are linked throughout millennia, that what is highest in such a moment of the distant past be for me still alive, bright and great — this is the fundamental thought of the faith in humanity which is expressed in the demand for a monumental history. Precisely this demand however, that the great be eternal, occasions the most terrible conflict. For all else which also lives cries no. The monumental ought not arise—that is the counter-watch-word. Dull habit, the small and lowly which fills all corners of the world and wafts like a dense earthly vapour around everything great, deceiving, smothering and suffocating, obstructs the path which the great must still travel to immortality" (15). As such, Nietzsche sets the ordinary, everyday life against great, monumental history, and where the latter can be distorted to serve the pursuit of power, the former enables human survival in the world as it actually is.

devastated by a violent history. However, by placing the significant events in brackets, Woolf resists a monumental model of history. According to Banfield, the sentences in brackets

encapsulate for Woolf the passage of time the section as a whole presents, recording irreversible events: Mr. Carmichael's blowing out the last candle at midnight, Prue Ramsay's marriage, Mrs. Ramsay's death, then Prue's in childbirth, and Andrew's "in battle," Mr. Carmichael's publication of his war poetry, and Lily Briscoe's return to the house. One wedding, three deaths, three insignificant acts, flattened in an arbitrary series. ("Tragic Time" 50)

As the brackets "flatten" the events into "an arbitrary series," they do not allow the reader to hierarchize the events, rendering a wartime death as significant structurally as blowing out a candle. Woolf's version of history in "Time Passes" is thus an unhierarchized accumulation of moments, each of similar relative significance. By foregrounding cyclical time instead, the ten-year duration becomes everything that happens around the brackets, and everyday life becomes the privileged stuff of history.

What really drives the narrative forward then is not the progression of events themselves, but the recurring cycles of nature that would normally appear as backdrop. Section III of "Time Passes" is set on the first night, the night of "The Window," then jumps ahead to the night after Mrs. Ramsay's death. This sets up the cycle of day and night as significant. In further sections, the cycles become bigger, moving to "day after day," then "week after week," then "summer and winter" (Woolf *Lighthouse* 129, 134). Time becomes repetitive in a way—"night and day, month and year ran shapelessly together"—though different from the repetition of a ticking clock evoked earlier (134). The time of this section revolves around nature, "the torment of storms, the arrow-like stillness of fine weather" (134). During this time, nature erodes the house. However,

nature is not simply a degenerative force; it is presented as generating some kind of natural life outside of social life. Woolf seems to suggest that human time somehow tries to impede natural time, but that nature always prevails. “What power now could prevent the fertility, the insensibility of nature?” (138). The cyclical structure of “Time Passes” is most evident in that, although ten years have gone by, the narrative comes full circle to its beginning again, as if only one night had passed. The household retires, Mr. Carmichael blows out the candle to sleep, and after only eighteen pages, Lily finds herself “again... sitting bolt upright in bed. Awake,” in the same house, occupied by many of the same people (143).

The structure of *The Waves* performs the reverse. Rather than interrupting the diurnal with the long passage of time, as in *To The Lighthouse*, *The Waves* interrupts the long passage of time with the parts of a single day. Each section of the novel represents a chapter in the characters’ lives, always moving forward in time, from childhood through to adulthood. The progressive chapters of their lives are then punctuated by short sections that, taken together, narrate the cycle of a single day as it moves from pre-dawn to after sunset. The passing of this single day acts as a familiar metaphor for the passing of a life. When “The sun had not yet risen,” the characters are children (Woolf *Waves* 3); as “The sun rose higher,” they begin school (20); and this progresses through all the phases of their lives until the final section, when “the sun had sunk” and Bernard alone reflects back on the whole of life: “‘Now to sum up,’ said Bernard. ‘Now to explain to you the meaning of my life’” (181, 183). Each interval of the single day begins with “The sun” (3, 20, 54, 81, 111, 139, 159) except the final one, which begins “Now” (181). Thus, whereas *To The Lighthouse* subjects linear time to the cyclical, *The Waves* ultimately

privileges something arguably more static or absolute, evoking Nietzsche's 'eternal return.' Even though the final "waves [breaking] on the shore" suggest the rhythmic return of the day, or repetition with difference, a constantly repeated "now" throughout each life-chapter suggests an eternal present, and the "now" of that last daily moment sets everything else in the novel up in service of Bernard's pre-death retrospections (228, 181). This gives the narrative a sense of inevitability, suggesting the characters' lives will always be as they have been. The eternal present of *The Waves* was likely influenced by Bertrand Russell's philosophy of time. According to Russell, "You cannot make the past other than it was ... But you also cannot make the future other than it will be" (195). Banfield claims that "Tragedy is the literary expression of this view of time," and "the novel for Woolf gives the tragic perspective on time seen from eternity" (61, 63). This evocation of the eternal, or an absolute, is key to Woolf's understanding of moments of being as an antidote to the repetitive dulling of everyday life, a point elaborated in the next section.

Though a sense of tragedy and inevitably looms large in both novels, Woolf's representations of the passage of time nonetheless want to be read as cyclical and rhythmic, as "waves [breaking] on the shore," rather than as narratives celebrating monumental history (*Waves* 228). Reversing narrative expectations in this manner and foregrounding cyclical time and rhythm is a feminist move for Woolf, who emphatically challenged a British literary tradition that had been dominated by male voices. This was nowhere more apparent than in *A Room's of One's Own*, in which she evokes the powerful character of Shakespeare's imaginary sister, while also repeatedly reminding readers that she was still not allowed to even enter the library at the fictionalized

Oxbridge campus (based, of course, on the real ones). She questioned the cultural barriers that prevented more women writing, and she also felt that traditional language and form reflected patriarchal narratives. As such, her model of time in these two novels counters the historical authority of those dominant male voices. Privileging the cyclical return in nature is for Woolf about deprivileging patriarchal discourses of rationalized progress, war, and power, and this is evident in the way she sets cyclical and linear time in tension through the structures of her novels. Woolf maintained a view of gender as socially constructed. She said that “woman’s writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine; the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine” (*Women and Writing* 70). Nonetheless, the association between women’s experiences of the everyday and cyclical time that emerges in these novels calls to mind Julia Kristeva’s “women’s time” and the feminist theory of *écriture féminine*, also characterized by an embodied experience of repetition and return, which perpetuates an essentializing discourse on gender.¹¹²

In this discourse, linear historical time is associated with male rationality and cyclical time is linked to both femininity and the sacred. Kristeva sees repetition as integral to women’s experience of time. “Female subjectivity,” she argues, “would seem

¹¹² Woolf’s discussion of women’s writing and literary tradition always emphasizes social and historical issues, such as women’s limited access to education, financial dependence, and the pressures of domestic life. In fact, much of her feminist non-fiction directly counters the gender essentialism that dominated the conversation about gender roles at the time. However, there seems to be a continuing need for Woolf scholars to remind readers of this fact. Marcus’s assertion that there is “little or nothing of biology in Woolf’s arguments,” even as she has already demonstrated Woolf’s investment in social construction, betrays some anxiety amongst Woolf scholars that her feminism could be understood otherwise (“Woolf’s Feminism” 214). The potentially essentializing connection these novels draw between women, cyclical time, and nature could be responsible for some of that anxiety.

to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations” (Kristeva 191). In Kristeva’s view, repetition constitutes female subjectivity through “cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature,” or essentially, women’s experiences of their bodies (191). However, those bodily cycles have a “regularity and unison with what is experienced as extra-subjective time, cosmic time, occasion vertiginous visions and unnameable *jouissance*,” in other words, the eternal (191). As such, Kristeva’s theories link women to cyclical time because they are understood as embodied subjects closer to the rhythms of nature, connected by virtue of their biological rhythms. Despite Woolf’s resistance to essentializing discourses, she nonetheless reinforces this connection.

For instance, in *To The Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay represents domesticity in tandem with the rhythms of nature:

The gruff murmur, irregularly broken by the taking out of pipes and the putting in of pipes which had kept on assuring her, though she could not hear what was said (as she lay in the window which opened on the terrace), that the men were happily talking; this sound, which had lasted now half an hour had taken its place soothingly in the scale of sounds pressing on top of her, such as the tap of balls upon bats, the sharp, sudden bark now and then, “How’s that? How’s that?” of the children playing cricket, had ceased; so that the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again as she sat with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature, “I am guarding you—I am your support,” but at other times suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her mind raised itself slightly from the task actually in hand, had no such kindly meaning, but like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea,

and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow—this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror. They had ceased to talk; that was the explanation. (Woolf 15–16)

That this passage contains one very long sentence demonstrates some of the reasons Woolf's prose has been called *écriture féminine*. Through the long sentence, the use of successive commas and dashes rather than full stops, and the repetition of both words and sounds, she crafts a style that flows seemingly without interruption. The use of natural metaphors and rhythms, and their connection to domesticity, heightens this effect. For instance, the "How's that? How's that?" of the children, with its brusqueness being called a "bark," imitates the sound of a dog barking. Though the waves "remorselessly beat the measure of life," they also evoke a soothing lullaby she sings to her children. Mrs. Ramsay's unconscious awareness that the men have stopped talking morphs into an overwhelming fear of death and the awesome power of nature, represented by the image of life being "engulf[ed] in the sea" and "ephemeral as a rainbow." Through style, natural metaphors, and their association with domestic family life, this passage situates Mrs. Ramsay as the site of experience and negotiation of everyday rhythms. It also demonstrates a gendered connection between cyclical time and everyday practices, which produces those everyday rhythms. The rhythm of sounds is layered with repetition and difference, and the domesticity of it all is soothing rather than oppressive: "domesticity triumphed; custom crooned its soothing rhythm" (31). The rhythm of this passage portrays the home as a place of familiarity, comfort, and habit. However, these rhythms are also thoroughly natural, thus essentializing the connection between women and repetition.

In *The Waves*, Susan is also embodied in precisely the way Kristeva describes. Susan explicitly says, “I am not a woman, but the light that falls on this gate, on this ground. I am the seasons, I think sometimes, January, May, November; the mud, the mist, the dawn” (Woolf *Waves* 73). This sentiment, moreover, comes as Susan realizes she is pregnant, making an explicit connection between gestation and the seasons. It is no accident that Susan’s description of her oppressive domestic life is full of farming metaphors. Her hatred of routine is reinforced by her awareness that the cycles of hours, months, and years are not the same as the cycles of the seasons and nature, no matter how closely the modern everyday tries to mimic them. The ‘real’ experiences for Susan occur on the farm, rather than in the city, which is governed by habit and consumption, or the school, governed by routine. This understanding, about the nature of time in modernity, reinforces a naturalizing connection between female subjectivity and nature that exists in tension with a cultural connection between female subjectivity and domesticity.

Of course, one could debunk the essentialist claim to gendered time by arguing that all of the characters in *The Waves* and *To The Lighthouse* are embodied consciousnesses, not just the women. Rhythm cannot be dissociated from the body, according to Lefebvre, and everyone has one of those. Men and women both experience the measured rhythm of the heartbeat, for instance, which represents an embodiment of the unity between cyclical and linear time. Although this is true, the concerns of each character are quite different, and their consciousnesses seem to be differentiated less by their individual interests and experiences than by their genders. In *The Waves*, the women reflect largely on time, their bodies, and their labour; the men, by contrast, think mostly about art, literature, and cultural traditions. Even Neville, who is likely gay and thus also

on the gender margins, fills his thoughts with poetry. The one exception is Louis, who, like the women, is preoccupied with the minutiae of everyday life, and who longs for the “protective waves of the ordinary” (*Woolf Waves* 70). He seems connected to everydayness by virtue of his lower class status, but finds it as protective as it is trapping. While the exception of Louis makes it more difficult to argue for strict gender divides, his experience of time as potentially monumental aligns him with an authoritative history (as discussed earlier) and sets him in opposition to Susan and Rhoda, particularly as they each evoke striking gongs in different ways.

It is notable that Susan thinks of gongs as repetitive and oppressive, whereas Louis uses the metaphor of “gongs striking” to signify the passing moments of their lives, evoking a sense of movement toward the eternal (*Woolf Waves* 29, 28). The striking gongs could be a metaphor for the embodied experience of rhythm through heartbeat, and thus universal across genders. However, Louis and Susan still register it differently: his temporal experience is of significant moments passing and accumulating, whereas hers is of the same moment repeating. Susan thinks of gongs in everyday domestic terms: “They have made all the days of June—this is the twenty-fifth—shiny and orderly, with gongs, with lessons, with orders to wash, to change, to work, to eat” (29). By contrast, when Louis says, “Children, our lives have been gongs striking,” he suggests that each moment they experience is potentially significant, rather than simply fleeting or repeating (28). This passage alludes to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in which St. Paul says, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (13:1), suggesting that without divine love, or the eternal, there is no meaning to our actions. These differing experiences

suggest that, for Woolf, the men in *The Waves* generally think of the mundane aspects of their daily lives as always potentially monumental, whereas the women do not. Any moment of the men's lives could become part of history, or the cultural traditions with which they are constantly framing their thoughts. In contrast, the domestic gong associated with the girls' school in turn disciplines those girls then dissipates, much like the chiming of Big Ben in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

In slight contrast to both Susan and Louis, Rhoda in *The Waves* experiences the discipline of the gong as soothing. When her routine is interrupted because she has to stay behind after class, she feels herself subjected to the insecurity of not knowing what comes next:

Meaning has gone. The clock ticks. The two hands are convoys marching through a desert. The black bars on the clock face are green oases. The long hand has marched ahead to find water. The other, painfully stumbles along hot stones in the desert. It will die in the desert. The kitchen door slams. Wild dogs bark far away. Look, the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with time; it holds the world in it. I begin to draw a figure and the world is looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop; which I now join—so—and seal up, and make entire. The world is entire, and I am outside of it crying, "Oh save me, from being blown for ever outside the loop of time!" (Woolf *Waves* 14–15)

For Rhoda, the possibility of the monumental is terrifying. When she imagines herself outside the loop of cyclical, repetitive time, she imagines herself lost from the world. She much prefers the dull everyday to seal her within its protective circle, which she perceives as "entire." Further on, when she recognizes a "present moment" as "the first day of the summer holidays," or the first in a sequence of days, she imagines time as an "emerging monster to whom we are attached" (48). Rhoda's preference for routine situates her even more within the everyday than Susan, as she does not share Susan's

disdain for it, which is evident in her hatred of school-day routine and the metaphor of her domestic married life as a cancer. Rhoda's perception of herself as a ghost, as someone who "has no body as the others have," could be seen to complicate the novel's associations between women's bodies and cyclical time that Woolf sets up through Susan (15). However, the anxiety she expresses throughout the novel suggests that she needs the routines of everyday life to constitute her identity, even as they discipline her.

According to Felski, women are connected to cyclical time not only through nature but also because they are associated with the mundane repetitive tasks of the domestic and consumption. The latter view reveals *femininity* as social construct, created by women's cultural immersion in the repetitions of everyday life. Woolf, too, aims to represent the gendered experience of time as created by social constructs, in particular domestic practices compelled by gender roles. However, in a recuperative move, Woolf at times also conflates domestic and natural rhythms, as discussed, and though she clearly wants to cast the experience of cyclical time as potentially empowering, through rhythm's access to the eternal, this has the unfortunate effect of also essentializing the gendered experience of time. For instance, Susan's description of housework is laden with metaphors and images of nature and gestation. "I pour out cup after cup," she says, "while the unopened flowers hold themselves erect on the table among the pots of jam, the loaves and the butter" (Woolf *Waves* 74). She then begins to prepare dinner, describing her tasks: "I knead; I stretch; I pull," and as she waits for everything to cook, she observes how "All the world is breeding. The flies are going from grass to grass. The flowers are thick with pollen" (74). When the meal is ready, she then makes "the kettle boil for [her] father among the just reddened roses on the tea-table" (74). Susan likens

preparing dinner to creating life, and her repetitive domestic tasks are equated with sexual acts. In this sense, Woolf essentializes *femininity* as domesticity. Susan's extensive repetition of the pronoun "I" in this scene further reinforces her personal identification with the tasks she performs.

By embedding women within everyday life, through domestic labour and an embodied connection to cyclical time, Woolf reaffirms the ideology of *femininity* even as she is trying to undo it. This all has a fairly devastating effect on Woolf's turn to the everyday as a platform for feminism, as the everyday itself becomes an oppressive realm of routine and non-being that women are inextricably bound up in no matter their actions.

"Moments of Being": Transcending the Mundane

As an older woman, Susan in *The Waves* asks herself, "What shock can loosen my laboriously gathered, relentlessly pressed down life?" (Woolf 146). Woolf implies that the "pressed down" feeling results from an excess of everyday life governed by habit, or in her own words, an accumulation of 'non-being,' the "great part of every day [that] is not lived consciously" ("Sketch of the Past" 79). "Every day includes much more non-being than being," she writes; however "When it is a bad day, the proportion of non-being is much larger" (79). Her antidote to the 'non-being' of habitual everyday life is 'moments of being,' which she describes in *A Sketch Of The Past* as moments when one is awakened or shocked out of habit, and sees "a revelation of some order," "a token of some real thing behind appearances" (72). The moment is temporality suspended, a break in both the forward march of history and the oppressive repetition of everyday life. But 'moments of being' do not only reveal "life" or "order," but also situate individuals within that order. As the everyday is suspended, one experiences one's self as real and

“whole” (81). In contrast to the “relentlessly pressed down life” that separates individuals from themselves and each other, authentic subjectivity is, for Woolf, constituted by an accumulation of moments of being (*Waves* 146). Her own memoir is a collection of “exceptional moments” that she claims to remember because they dramatically, often shockingly, shaped her understanding of herself and the world (“Sketch of the Past” 80).

To attain a moment of being, one’s full attention is required, allowing one to fully experience sensations from the outside world and of oneself; however, it is not exactly a material experience. The moment necessitates a return from inattention to the body and the senses, but only as a means of transcending to a metaphysical plane. Although the moment usually launches from an ordinary experience (for instance, looking at a flower, as for Woolf in both *A Sketch of the Past* and “A Moment: Summer’s Night”), that ordinary experience is in itself insignificant. Its only value is in where it leads. The conditions necessary for a ‘moment of being’ are described in *To The Lighthouse*, as Lily reflects on “the unreality of the morning hour” (191). Using the time of day as a metaphor, she sets up a contrast between the distracted mind and the attentive one: “So coming back from a journey, or after an illness, before habits had spun themselves across the surface, one felt that same unreality, which was so startling: felt something emerge. Life was most vivid then” (191–192). Habit is cast here as the thing that prevents Lily from feeling “life” at its most vivid, or most authentic.¹¹³ The early morning is a suggestive metaphor, as one experiences not just a clear moment, but the day as yet

¹¹³ This evokes Victor Shklovsky’s 1917 *Art as Technique*, which argues that “If we start to examine the general laws of perception, we see that as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic. ... And so life is reckoned as nothing. Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one’s wife, and the fear of war ... And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*” (218, 219).

empty of mundane tasks, when experience has not yet become cluttered and dulled by the ordinary.

Though Woolf introduces ‘moments of being’ in her non-fiction essays, her most sustained development of the concept occurs in *The Waves*. The structure of *The Waves* is such that each section attends to a particular moment in the characters’ lives, moving through each of their perspectives on that moment and moving overall from childhood to old age. This structure recalls a line from *To The Lighthouse*: “Life, from being made up of separate little incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach” (Woolf 47). However separate these moments seem, consciousness is represented as continuous rather than atomized. Though separate incidents are “lived one by one,” the characters in *The Waves* experience time as if each moment contains every moment of their lives, and they seem to have a consciousness of their entire story before it happens. They go through their lives with the wisdom of age before they could have logically acquired it. This model of presence echoes with Walter Benjamin’s concept of *jetztzeit*, in which “time is filled by the presence of the now” (“Theses” 261). Benjamin claims the present is “a model of Messianic time” as it “comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgement” (263). What is most important in Benjamin’s theory of history is not just an awareness of both the past and future, but that each moment offers the possibility of transcendence and thus redemption. Paradoxically though, just as the Messianic moment promises the transformation of everyday life, it does so by stripping it of its everydayness.

In Woolf's novel, Louis thinks: "I seem already to have lived many thousand years. But if I now shut my eyes, if I fail to realise the meeting-place of past and present, that I sit in a third-class railway carriage full of boys going home for the holidays, human history is defrauded of a moment's vision. Its eye, that would see through me, shut" (*Waves* 48–49). In this sense, though the temporality of the novel is chronological, it is not linear. Moments do not accumulate and there is little cause and effect. Woolf makes each moment contain all of time, in keeping with Cambridge philosophies of time. For Russell in particular, time is relative rather than sequential: the present is always the *now*, which shifts, unlike dates, which are fixed.¹¹⁴ He further emphasizes the timelessness of the word 'is,' which is reflected in the present tense narration of Woolf's characters' thoughts. According to Russell, "You cannot make the past other than it was—true, but this is a mere application of the law of contradiction. ... But also you cannot make the future other than it will be; this again is an application of the law of contradiction. ... supposed prevision would not create the future any more than memory creates the past" (195). In a sense, everything is predetermined in Russell's view of time, and this philosophy underwrites the fatalistic sense of the future the characters in *The Waves* have.

This is further emphasized in the sophistication of the characters' narrative voices, even as children.

'Now let me try,' said Louis, 'before we rise, before we go to tea, to fix the moment in one effort of supreme endeavour. This shall endure. ... I, who shall walk the earth these seventy years, am born entire, out of hatred, out of discord. Here on this ring of grass we have sat together,

¹¹⁴ Russell's understanding of time is also linked with consciousness: "if there were no consciousness, there would be events that were earlier or later than others, but nothing would be in any sense past, present, or future" (Russell qtd. in Banfield "Tragic Time" 46).

bound by the tremendous power of some inner compulsion. The trees wave, the clouds pass. The time approaches when these soliloquies shall be shared. We shall not always give out a sound like a beaten gong as one sensation strikes and then another. Children, our lives have been gongs striking. (28)

As aforementioned, this passage alludes to St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, which suggests that without divine love, there is no meaning to our actions. The image of a gong striking in a void, separated from the larger pattern, suggests atomized experiences without some kind of higher understanding to tie them together. Louis, however, knows already that he and his friends will not always experience moments in this way, that they will come to see their meaning and pattern. The accumulation of moments, the series of gongs striking, constitutes each of their subjectivities. Each character is who he or she is through the accumulation of all of these moments. Paradoxically, though Louis, as a child, does not yet have this understanding, his narrative voice does. He goes on to say that the impressions they have "hint at some other order, and better, which makes a reason everlastingly" (28). Following Woolf's philosophy, understanding the meaning of the "separate little incidents" makes one "whole" (*Lighthouse* 73, "Sketch of the Past" 81).

The moment of being reveals a pattern, which is periodically revealed to characters in Woolf's fiction, and they must make sense of it. For instance, at the end of *To The Lighthouse*, Lily understands something fundamental about family life and can thus complete her picture. In a similar move, *The Waves* ends with Bernard's retrospective chapter. The moment of being is thus more than a simple vision. Woolf is after nothing less than knowledge of "our destiny and the meaning of life," and in order to discover that, one has to make meaning of the moment (Woolf "Women and Fiction"

183). As Louis says, of the gongs striking: “This I see for a second, and shall try to-night to fix in words, to forge in a ring of steel” (*Waves* 28). The revelation is thus not forged out of the moment that Louis experiences; he must “fix it in words” to gain something from it. For Woolf, this meaning is discovered through art. Moreover, Woolf casts the “meaning of life” as itself aesthetic: “that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art” (“Sketch of the Past” 72). What comes clear here is that not only does one need to rise above the everyday for an authentic experience of life, but that experience of being is explicitly connected to both artistic sensibility and skill.

To The Lighthouse and *The Waves* are commonly called stream-of-consciousness novels; however, use of this term obscures the ways in which Woolf uses narrative technique to blend different characters voices with an authorial voice. As mentioned in the overview, Woolf’s technique in these two novels is instead largely Free Indirect Discourse. Though the stories move through the perspectives of several characters, there is an omniscient narrator holding them all together, to demonstrate the underlying pattern and connections. This is evident in the third person ‘he/she said’ of *The Waves*, and especially in narrating the passing of natural time when no one is around in “Time Passes.” This is arguably Woolf’s philosophical voice, and it is always busy working out the larger patterns. It is notable that each character in *The Waves* has the same voice, in terms of style. Though they each have different concerns, they speak with the same sophisticated diction and in similar sentence structure, with no colloquial language to differentiate between classes, genders, or even sensibilities. This uniformity in the style flattens the characters out into one great collective consciousness, and in this sense,

Woolf's omniscient narrative voice is essential in creating a redemptive temporality outside of the everyday.

Shocking people out of habit is the mode of the artist, and this is a familiar motif in modernism. Paradoxically though, the artist may work with the materials of everyday life, but the product is antithetical to it. Bernard, the artist/philosopher in *The Waves* does not experience time as everyday, but seems somehow to be above it. He says, "I am at liberty now to sink down, deep, into what passes, this omnipresent, general life," at which point he observes the workings of everyday life—"curious hesitations at the door of the lift ... buying a hat ... the roar of the traffic"—while at the same time describing himself as outside of it (Woolf *Waves* 84–85). "I will let myself be carried on by the general impulse," he says, and yet, "I wish to go under; to visit the profound depths; once in a while to exercise my prerogative *not always to act*" (84, 85, emphasis added). Though all of the characters (with the noted exception of Susan) seem to rise above the everyday in their temporal experiences, Bernard is a special case. As an artist with the ability to see the everyday itself clearly and from a temporal distance, Bernard is less subject to its requirements. Furthermore, he adds that "to embrace the whole world with the arms of understanding [is] impossible to those who act," which clearly claims the overcoming of everyday life as necessary for true understanding, and thus art (85). He is "aware of our ephemeral passage" (85); in other words, he shares a position with his omniscient narrator. But where does that leave "those who act"? I do not mean to conflate Bernard's voice with Woolf's, but the implication here is that those who are more subject to the demands of a mundane everyday life, like the servants in *To The Lighthouse*, for instance,

may be less able to access that experience and thus remain embedded in an oppressive everydayness.

In “Modern Fiction,” Woolf writes: “Let us not take for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small” (150). This is a powerful notion, but she ultimately pulls back from the full realization of this statement in her fiction, appealing instead to the significant moments and leaving the minutiae behind. To attain a moment of being, one must pay attention, rather than succumb to habit or a dulling of the senses. But attention to the everyday itself is only a means for reaching something outside of it. “Such a negative view of the quotidian is,” according to Felski, “open to criticism” (“Invention” 80). She continues, “Both feminism and cultural studies have questioned the view that the everyday exists only as something to be transcended, as the realm of monotony, emptiness, and dull compulsion” (80). The everyday in Woolf is frequently represented as Felski describes, as simply a platform for reaching something more authentic. Goldman argues that readings of Woolf as eliding social realities largely derive from the common association between Woolf and Bergson. She claims that Bergson’s abstraction of time in the form of moments of vision is itself cut off from social realities, and to read Woolf’s techniques as simply *Bergsonism* “may tend to foreground Woolf’s aesthetics at the expense of her politics” (9).¹¹⁵ However intentional Woolf’s feminist political aesthetic though, I disagree with Goldman that Woolf is not guilty of the same charge as Bergson, even if she goes about it somewhat

¹¹⁵ Goldman’s aim is to “suggest that some of those elements critics have identified as Woolf at her most abstract, aestheticized, and philosophically remote, may alternatively (and paradoxically) be read, and reclaimed, in relation to an historically aware, materialist and feminist Woolf” (1).

differently. The issue is not so much that Woolf's moments of being are abstract, but that they actively devalue everyday life itself.

Woolf moments of being perform what Lefebvre calls absolutizing moments of experience. Though he similarly argues that we can give appropriate attention to the everyday by looking at it as a succession of moments, he warns that "There is no moment except in so far as it embraces and aims to constitute an absolute. It is possible for every moment to become hypertrophied, or hypostatized" (Lefebvre "Inventory" 175).

Lefebvre conceives of a moment, singled out from the totality of everyday life, as a form that can be filled with particular content. The content becomes recognizable, or rises to the level of its form, by repeating. This is where habit takes over—not only because the moment repeats, but because we perform the moment based on normalizing discourses rather than attending to the particular material realities of that moment. According to Lefebvre, when a moment becomes a form populated with an element of the everyday that connects to a larger myth or structure in civilization—just as in the instance of a moment of being that reveals the pattern behind everyday life—it becomes an absolute. And when the moment becomes an absolute, "the modality of presence is transformed into a modality of absence. The mode of being or the attribute of existence is transformed into annihilation" (175). The absolutized moment is thus alienating to the individual, which is in direct contrast to Woolf's assertion that the 'moment of being' is an experience of true selfhood.

Furthermore, the 'moment of being' as an experience of true selfhood is a problematic notion if one is in a position more subject to the mundane demands of everyday life, like women and particularly working-class women, whom Woolf embeds

within everyday time and spaces, as discussed throughout this chapter. Felski argues that “such a division between the everyday and the non-everyday slides imperceptibly into a ranking of persons: those exemplary individuals able to escape the quotidian through philosophy, high art, or heroism versus the rest of humanity” (“Invention” 80). This ranking of persons is evident in Woolf’s work, although this is not a popular view to take. She clearly represents the moment of being as aesthetic, or the work of an artist rather than an ordinary individual. In addition, throughout the two novels in question, those whose labour is more mundane, like Ellen the housemaid or Susan the housewife, remain more subject to the everyday than “those exemplary individuals,” Mr. Ramsay and Bernard, the philosophers, and Woolf herself, as author and narrator. Of course, it is possible Woolf may have maintained the aesthetic is a democratic concept. In “A Sketch of the Past,” she writes, “we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself,” implying that ‘we,’ and by extension the ordinary, are already inherently aesthetic (72). However, the point still maintains throughout Woolf’s work that in order to grasp that aesthetic quality, we need to be able to articulate it. While reflecting on “the greatest book in the world” in her diary, which “was made entirely solely & with integrity of one’s thoughts,” she continues to wonder: “Suppose one could catch them before they became works of art? Catch them hot & sudden as they rise in the mind” (*Diary III* 102). Again, Woolf’s paradoxical everyday life is at once ordinary and extraordinary, yet what seems to unite them in her view is the ability to articulate them as works of art.

“Everyday life,” Felski reminds us, is “a secular and democratic concept. Secular because it conveys the sense of a world leached of transcendence Democratic because it recognizes the paramount shared reality of a mundane, material embeddedness in the

world” (“Invention” 79). Though Woolf’s turn to the everyday is clearly motivated by democratic ends, as a means to privilege women’s experiences, she pulls back from its full realization in favour of moments of being, suggesting that habit needs to be transcended, rather than accepted and revalued. Perhaps she pulls back from the everyday because she cannot see beyond its trappings. However, the fact remains that no matter whether Lily, through a moment of being, is able to complete her painting at the end of *To The Lighthouse*, Ellen the maid is still silently standing beside the dinner table serving soup. This is not to say that she does not have her moments of being too, but simply a reminder that the material facts of her everyday life are not likely to change as a result. As Felski argues, “Habit is not something we can ever hope to transcend. Rather it constitutes an essential part of our embeddedness in everyday life and our existence as social beings” (“Invention” 91). To revalue the feminized modes of everyday life—domesticity, repetition, and habit—is essential for a more fully realized feminist intervention into the everyday.

Chapter Three: The Bourgeois Everyday in Katherine Mansfield's "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode"

"The institution of marriage makes a parasite of woman, an absolute dependent."

—Emma Goldman, "Marriage and Love"

"I do not in any way *depend* on you, neither can you shake me."

—Katherine Mansfield, "To J.M. Murry,
12 December 1920"

Overview

Katherine Mansfield once famously stated, "Im [*sic*] a writer first & a woman after" (*Collected Letters IV* 133). This oft-quoted phrase is typically cited to suggest that Mansfield wanted to be read for the quality of her work and not for her gender. However true that may have been, the statement has been taken out of context. Mansfield wrote these words in a letter to her husband, J.M. Murry, to explain why she could not be a conventional wife to him. After stating she is a writer first, she follows with "I can't give you *all* you want" (133). In another letter shortly thereafter, she again tells Murry "I am a writer first. ... I have of you what I want—a relationship which is unique but it is not what the world understands by *marriage*. That is to say I do not in any way *depend* on you, neither can you shake me" (149). For Mansfield, economic self-sufficiency and artistic autonomy are incompatible with a traditional marriage, which demands female dependence. Her implied critique of that arrangement is echoed in a number of her short stories, which frequently explore domestic everyday life.

This chapter focuses on “Bliss” and “Marriage à la Mode,” two stories that are specifically about domesticity, gender roles, and the breakdown of marriage. These stories critique the institution of marriage and the established gender roles that constitute the household to demonstrate the poverty of women’s everyday lives during this time period. I argue that, when these two stories are put in conversation with one another, what emerges is a particularly bourgeois conception of everyday life, in which relations between husband and wife and the space they live in are thoroughly suffused with capitalist ideology, which is in many ways continuous with the patriarchal ideology underlying Victorian gender roles and values. Mansfield demonstrates how firmly rooted her characters are in the bourgeois everyday, and how conventional gender roles are kept in place by the demands of capital.

In both stories, the female characters see artistic bohemianism as promise of a more liberated, modern lifestyle; however, the artistic life does not, in the end, offer the transcendence of the bourgeois everyday. The women in these stories find themselves caught between a traditional role and a modern one, neither of which offers the satisfaction they seek.¹¹⁶ As such, what emerges is not necessarily a brighter alternative

¹¹⁶ Saikat Majumdar likewise argues that Mansfield “offers telling stories of futility, restlessness, and emptiness, of a world where such desires are teased but never satisfactorily fulfilled” (*Prose of the World* 74). Majumdar reads Mansfield’s New Zealand stories from a postcolonial perspective, so these desires he mentions are for “a fuller, richer, and aesthetically meaningful life,” which he argues is always out of reach for the colonial subject (74). “One of the most pervasive affective markers of this failure,” he continues, “is a realization of the iterative, restrictive banality of their lives and the boredom that comes with it—to which one must eventually surrender. This boredom marks a gendered response to the perceived fracture of colonial modernity as it exists, hesitant and incomplete, on the antipodean margins of the British Empire” (74). Majumdar asserts that Mansfield’s colonial experience pervades all of her work, thus while the stories discussed in this chapter are set in England, “aesthetic

for her female protagonists, but instead a painful reckoning with reality. Contrary to Henri Lefebvre's outrageous claim that "Because of their ambiguous position in everyday life ... they are incapable of understanding it," the women in Mansfield's stories become painfully aware of their everyday realities and the ideologies to which they are subject (*Everyday Life in the Modern World* 73). This assertion runs counter to much Mansfield scholarship, which claims that her female characters draw sympathy and pity because of their lack of self-awareness. For instance, Jayne Marek has argued that, in her early works, "a prime feature of Mansfield's satire rests on her ironic manipulation of narrative discourses which reveal the characters' inability to free themselves from their roles or to articulate the true nature of the anxieties driving them" (290). Mary Burgan agrees, and though she points out that the later stories evolve more complex female characters, they ultimately still remain unable to see themselves honestly. I agree that the women in these stories are unable to "free themselves from their roles"; however, it is not because they remain unaware of the nature of their situations and their anxieties.¹¹⁷

The bind in which Mansfield's female characters find themselves could be characterized as frustrated epiphany—they see the reality of their situations, but are unable to do anything about it. In a letter to Virginia Woolf, Mansfield cites this as the job of the writer: "what the writer does is not so much to *solve* the question but to *put* the

unfulfillment ... casts a shadow even on the stories that do not have a recognizably colonial setting" (74).

¹¹⁷ Majumdar has also recently countered this conventional view of Mansfield's female protagonists, claiming that "In stories like 'Miss Brill,' 'Millie,' and 'Prelude,' women are only too conscious, often painfully so, of their entrapment within lives defined by severe aesthetic and affective poverty" (*Prose of the World* 88). However, Majumdar's argument is problematic in its implication that a more meaningful, but ill-defined, aesthetic life presents a solution to this entrapment, particularly in context of the stories discussed here. I return to Majumdar's argument in more detail at the end of this chapter.

question” (229). As such, Mansfield’s work is committed to a critique of the bourgeois everyday life that does not present possibilities for transcendence. Although this could be interpreted as pessimism on her part, I argue that Mansfield’s refusal to offer transcendental solutions privileges the everyday itself as the site of transformation. This runs in direct contrast to Woolf’s notion of a ‘moment of being’ that lifts one out of the ‘non-being’ of everyday life.

Throughout this chapter, I argue that Mansfield uses modernist style to disrupt this bourgeois everyday life and launch a critique of marriage as an economic arrangement.¹¹⁸ Mansfield’s use of disruptive aesthetic techniques has much in common with the avant-garde movements contemporary with her work, particularly Surrealism and Dada. For the avant-garde, disruptive techniques are the essential feature of a proper critique of the bourgeois everyday. In his discussion of the avant-garde, Astradur Eysteinnsson claims that “in the ‘explosion’ of narrative forms we are to see reflected the dissolution of bourgeois forms of life” (38). The surrealists in particular, who Mansfield evokes in her use of absurdism and humour, felt that a disruptive aesthetic practice was required to make a shift in everyday life, which had been colonized by capitalism and bourgeois values. Although Mansfield maintains similar aims, she does not use aesthetic practice to transform everyday life, only to reveal it. The stylistic techniques discussed in this chapter are Mansfield’s unique blend of free indirect discourse and stream of consciousness, leading to irony and destabilized narrative voice; a modernist

¹¹⁸ Though I have chosen these two, there are several other examples that would be suitable. “Prelude,” for instance is all about domesticity, and “How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped” deals with a young girl’s perception of the bourgeois everyday as it relates to the colonial enterprise in New Zealand. “The Garden Party,” though not about marriage *per se* demonstrates the ways in which young girls are groomed to take up the roles that the women in the other two stories occupy.

appropriation of the short story form, which is essential to Mansfield's disruption of the everyday itself; and defamiliarization techniques that critique the bourgeois everyday, including the disruptive epiphanic moment.

Before analyzing "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode" in more detail, I would like to first outline precisely how the term 'bourgeois everyday' is deployed here. By the early twentieth century, the bourgeoisie primarily refers to the typically urban middle-class, characterized by its commitment to "uphold[ing] the interests of capitalism" (*OED* "bourgeois"). The stories discussed in this chapter feature middle-class, married homeowners, and the representations of their homes are central to an understanding of how bourgeois values are oppressive to women. Although the couples in these stories employ household help, there remains a gendered division of labour, and the organization of the homes' interiors reflect an increasing reliance on commodities for happiness.¹¹⁹ My readings in this chapter focus mainly on two aspects of the bourgeois everyday: the commitment to commodities, and marriage as a bourgeois economic institution. Following the theories of Thorstein Veblen and Emma Goldman, my argument rests on the assertion that, as capitalist demands exert pressure on all spheres of life, marital relations in the early twentieth century become increasingly mediated by economic relations.

¹¹⁹ Majumdar likewise argues that Mansfield's female protagonists are often represented within "traditions of patriarchal control" that are tied to "the oppressive tedium and gritty materiality of ... quotidian labor," which "was originally confined to the domestic sphere" (84). Majumdar's reading of domestic labour focuses on working-class labour, or the duties performed by household servants, which are unsurprisingly effaced from the bourgeois everyday presented in "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode." While the domestic labours of these protagonists are shown to also be compelled by capitalist demands, it is notable that there is little discussion in the stories of the class relationships between women (as opposed to those between women and men).

To clarify the ways in which these stories represent marriage as a bourgeois institution, I will turn briefly to Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Though by no means an exhaustive account of the class structures at work in these narratives, it provides some concrete markers of the modern bourgeoisie and an interesting theorization of the relationship between husband and wife.¹²⁰ Veblen uses the designation 'leisure class' to describe a new class of bourgeois consumers that emerges with commodity capitalism. Within this class, the family structure relies on a strict division of the private/public and female/male spheres. The husband works while the wife manages the home and, with her free time, consumes on his behalf.¹²¹ Vicarious leisure and consumption are her primary practices, according to Veblen, whereas his primary practice is labour. Possession is paramount to the leisure class, in particular owning the perfect house, outfitted by the perfect wife with the perfect objects. In Veblen's view, husband and wife are the ultimate capitalist team—he produces income by exploiting others, and she uses her free time to make good use of that income. However, the wife has little autonomy within this system, as she has no choice but to consume in order to display her husband's status, or to preserve the "reputability of the household and its head" (Veblen 40). Hers is always what Veblen calls conspicuous consumption, as she displays the objects of consumption for the benefit of others. Because the husband does

¹²⁰ According to Angeliki Spiropoulou, "one of the most original aspects of [Veblen's] evolutionary account of culture is that it traced the development of status practices and the establishment of ownership by focusing on the primacy of gender division" (52).

¹²¹ According to Alison Light, as modernity entered the home, women began to see themselves as more than "simply wives at home but 'housewives', something altogether more professional" (218). Lefebvre gestures toward this as well, in his discussions of the technicization of everyday life. As housewives, women's occupation was to consume products for home improvement, such as vacuum cleaners, washing machines, refrigerators, cleaning products, and even things like radios.

not have enough leisure time to consume as much, the capitalist economy has an investment in maintaining these roles through the institution of marriage. These gendered leisure class roles are evident in both Mansfield stories, which will be discussed in most detail in the upcoming section on “The Bourgeois Home.”

The display of status and reputability via commodities is at the heart of this dynamic. According to Rita Felski, “Home is often a place for displaying commodities and hence saturated by class distinctions” (“Invention” 87–88). Boris Arvatov’s “Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing” (1925) argues that there is a particularly bourgeois relationship to objects, especially in domestic spaces. Bourgeois material culture, he claims following Marx, is constituted by an alienation of the individual from objects themselves as a product of labour. “[F]or the bourgeois,” writes Arvatov, “the Thing exists only to the extent that he can extract profit from it or use it to organize his everyday life. ... The Thing now becomes the means for both purely personal and class-demonstrating affectation. It enters the structure of everyday ceremony as its main basis” (123). What is suggested here, and echoed later in Walter Benjamin’s conception of the object world, is that objects have an ideological value beyond their material existence or purpose, and that value is expressed in the relation between that object and the perceiving subject. The “bourgeois ceremonial of things,” according to Arvatov, is

shaped by a cult of the value, rarity, and antiquity of materials and objective forms, by the effect of an external material shell, that is, through everything that is capable of clearly demonstrating the socio-economic power of the individual bourgeois or of the bourgeois collective. (123)

As in “Bliss” and “Marriage à la Mode,” the image of the bourgeois home is constructed through luxury items like the latest coffee-maker or foreign toys that speak their monetary and cultural value. The creation and maintenance of this image dictates the

daily practices that both husband, as producer of income, and wife, as vicarious consumer, must engage in.

A significant aspect of Veblen's theory, which renders it especially problematic for women, is its necessary location in the home, as opposed to at work or in the city streets. Home is "an active practicing of place," argues Felski, following everyday theorist Michel de Certeau ("Invention" 87). "Even if home is synonymous with familiarity and routine," she continues, "that familiarity is actively produced over time, above all through the effort and labor of women" (87). Lee Rumbarger claims that "in representing the home as a site of modernity, [writers] insist on women as participants in their times—as participants in historical and national narratives," implying women's potential empowerment through a reevaluation of domestic narratives (4). However, if we take on this perspective, we must also acknowledge that women's participation in modernity extends to capitalist consumption, complicating this discourse of feminist empowerment through the potentially creative aspects of domesticity. The tension between the two images of women as active producers of the home and women as passive consumers of commodities is evident in both "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode," as discussed later.

As discussed throughout this dissertation, Felski argues that founding theories of modernity have been primarily about mobility and city streets, casting the home as other, or outside modernity. A feminist theory of the everyday, she claims, must understand the home as an essential aspect of the experience of modernity. "The home," she writes, "is not a private enclave cut off from the outside world, but is powerfully shaped by broader social currents, attitudes, and desires. ... like any other space, [it] is shaped by conflicts

and power struggles” (Felski “Invention” 87). This notion of home as shaped by modernity, rather than a space to be protected from it, is evident in Mansfield’s domestic narratives, in which female characters must negotiate between the persistent expectations of Victorian-style domestic femininity and their desire for freedom from those expectations, often promised by the more modern lifestyle of the bohemian artist. In the challenges they face in ‘becoming modern’, Mansfield’s characters exemplify Henri Lefebvre’s argument that “Everyday life weighs heaviest on women” (*Everyday Life in the Modern World* 73); they are simultaneously cast as guardians of the home, but are given little power within it, and any attempt to improve their everyday lives invites only more difficulty. In many ways, the Victorian dichotomy of ‘Angel of the House’ or monster still haunts Mansfield’s stories.¹²²

One of the organizing features of women’s domestic everyday lives in Mansfield’s work is, of course, marriage. Mansfield’s contemporary, anarchist feminist Emma Goldman, argues that marriage,

like that other paternal arrangement—capitalism ... makes a parasite of woman, an absolute dependent. It incapacitates her for life’s struggle, annihilates her social consciousness, paralyzes her imagination, and then imposes its gracious protection, which is in reality a snare, a travesty on human character. (241)

That “protection” can take the form of social validation and emotional security, but Goldman argues that it is primarily economic. Marriage is represented in Goldman’s

¹²² Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* claims this dichotomy is a major feature of Victorian literature. Much modernist literature about domesticity continues to play on this dichotomy. For instance, Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse* plays the ‘Angel of the House’ quite perfectly, while Robin in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood* embodies the ‘monster.’

critique as a tool for perpetuating male domination of female sexuality and capitalistic control of the emerging modern bourgeoisie. The marriages that Mansfield portrays in “Bliss” and “Marriage à la Mode” are represented as bourgeois economic arrangements that rely on women remaining in the home and fully dependent.

However, as aforementioned, readers do not encounter in these stories the emancipatory narrative they might expect from a woman who led a famously bohemian life herself. Though Mansfield critiques gender roles, marriage, and Victorian-style domesticity, she also critiques a simplistic narrative of feminist progress, in which modernity would radically improve women’s everyday lives by giving them access to public lives and more freedom from conventional morality. According to Lefebvre, everyday life is a site of continuity, meaning that while modernity offers the promise of progress, old ways are preserved in daily life. With modernity, he argues, “‘progress’ has affected existing social realities only secondarily, modifying them as little as possible, according to the strict dictates of capitalist profitability. The important thing is that human beings be profitable, not that their lives be changed” (Lefebvre *Critique I* 230). In other words, the game is rigged. While new opportunities and lifestyles begin to seem possible, women are pressured back toward domesticity in order to encourage stability in the private/public dichotomy and continued commodity consumption. They can continue to flirt with other worlds, so long as they ultimately take up their role in the family as wife, or primary consumer. Although modernity appears to redistribute systems of power, when the cards fall, they are still stacked against women. As such, Mansfield’s critique of gender roles—particularly of marriage and householding—is inseparable from her critique of the bourgeois class, as she arguably sees the former emerging from the latter.

Rather than trying to solve the woman question, Mansfield instead provocatively suggests that a shift from Victorian femininity to modern bourgeois or bohemian femininity is not sufficient in terms of women's emancipation. As becomes clear through my readings of "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode," the cards may be reshuffled, but the stakes remain the same. My readings offer insight into the feminist import of what could be read in these stories as frustrated epiphanies. I argue that the refusal to transcend the everyday marks Mansfield's insistence on recognizing the everyday as it is, and as it is produced by patriarchal and capitalist ideology. According to Lefebvre, one of the problems with everyday life under capitalism is that most people "do not know their own lives very well, or know them inadequately" (*Critique* 194). However, contrary to his insistence that women are the greatest victims of this ignorance, Mansfield presents female characters that know their own lives only too well.

Married Bliss

At the beginning of "Bliss," readers meet the protagonist, Bertha Young, as she is returning from a shopping trip to prepare for a dinner party. Bertha is overcome with a feeling of 'bliss,' which I argue is actually anxiety arising from ambivalent feelings about her marriage, which she seems desperate to repress. The story is told from Bertha's point of view, and an attentive reader will notice by Mansfield's stylistic rendering of narrative voice that there are incongruities between what Bertha is feeling and what she thinks she is feeling, likely caused by an unwillingness or inability to address the reality of her situation, which is revealed later. Bertha reaches out to the reader, asking:

What can you do if you are thirty and, turning the corner of your own street, you are overcome, suddenly, by a feeling of bliss—absolute bliss!— as though you'd suddenly swallowed a bright piece of that late afternoon sun and it

burned in your bosom, sending out a little shower of sparks
into every particle. (Mansfield "Bliss" 174)

As she approaches home, she is experiencing a feeling that she calls "bliss"; however, the diction in this passage suggests her feeling could be something closer to anxiety.¹²³ Her description of bliss—swallowing a sun that sends sparks through the body—while potentially warm and joyous, also evokes subtle undertones of choking, burning, and being shattered from within, uncomfortable feelings which become increasingly obvious as the opening scene progresses. She later "thr[ows] off her coat," unable to "bear the tight clasp of it another moment," and the "shower of little sparks" becomes "almost unbearable. She hardly dared breathe for fear of fanning it higher" (174). Mansfield's use of the word "bliss" in this story must be read ironically, as readers quickly see that Bertha is not in a transcendent or spiritual state, but is rooted rather uncomfortably in her own body.¹²⁴ What Bertha calls "bliss" is actually a fairly violent physical reaction to arriving home. As she "breathe[s] deeply, deeply" and sees in the mirror her "trembling lips," one gets the impression that she is experiencing a panic attack, escalating to the point that she becomes "hysterical" and begins to hallucinate the table "seem[ing] to melt into the dusky light and the glass dish and the blue bowl to float in the air" (174, 175).¹²⁵ The use

¹²³ Marek identifies anxiety as one of the primary themes of the stories in *In a German Pension*, and demonstrates how Mansfield uses narrative techniques to draw that anxiety out. Her argument is widely accepted among Mansfield scholars, though there is limited attention to these same techniques in Mansfield's later works, including "Bliss."

¹²⁴ 'Bliss' is defined most often as "the perfect joy of heaven; the beatitude of departed souls. Hence, the place of bliss, paradise, heaven" (*OED* "bliss"). Even when defined as a "physical, social, mundane" joy, there is the connotation that it will eventually lead to a "mental, ethereal, spiritual" joy (*OED* "bliss").

¹²⁵ As obvious as it might seem that Mansfield's use of the word 'bliss' is ironic, much criticism of this story assumes that Bertha is, in fact, as happy as she thinks she is. For instance, Marvin Magalaner argues that Bertha's emotions at the beginning of the story

of the word “hysterical” in this scene is significant, as hysteria was long regarded a ‘woman’s disease’ connected to sexual problems, giving readers the first definite hint that Bertha’s married life is not ideal.¹²⁶

Bertha’s panic attack is quite explicitly linked to her arrival at home, a space that should be comfortable but that we quickly learn is constructed around a lie—the lie to herself that she is in a fulfilling marriage and has the lifestyle she wants. Though clearly unhappy, she experiences cognitive dissonance as she tries to keep that feeling at bay. In an attempt to convince herself she is “too happy—too happy!,” she even makes a list (Mansfield “Bliss” 178):

Really—really—she had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals. She had an adorable baby. They didn’t have to worry about money. They had this absolutely satisfactory house and garden. And friends—modern, thrilling friends, writers and painters and poets or people keen on social questions—just the kind of friends they wanted. And then there were books and

are at “the heights of joyous exhilaration (bliss)” (414). More recent critics acknowledge Bertha’s troubled psychological state, explaining it most commonly as a result of suppressed sexuality; however, there is still little refutation of the word ‘bliss’ as genuine, and most readings of the story tend to set Bertha’s blissful beginning in contrast with her tragic ending. Claire Drewery, for instance, claims that Bertha’s extreme emotions emerge from her unacknowledged bisexuality; however, although she acknowledges Bertha’s feelings to be most strong as she is crossing the threshold into the house, Drewery stills calls it an “ecstatic mood” which is “abruptly cut off” when she discovers her husband’s affair (119, 117). Rishona Zimring reads the strange energy of “Bliss” as “excess,” not anxiety, which in her formulation “foregrounds female creativity” (45, 48). Christine Butterworth-McDermott argues that Bertha’s bliss is a childlike fantasy resulting from a Victorian upbringing, demonstrating how “a Victorian childhood and patriarchal expectations might repress the sexuality of the modern woman” (57). Her argument implies that Bertha’s bliss is genuine, even if not rooted in reality.

¹²⁶ That hysteria was regarded as a female disease is a widely known fact, but the manifestations of hysteria as female madness in literature was probably best articulated in Elaine Showalter’s *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic*.

there was music and she had found a wonderful little dressmaker, and they were going abroad in the summer, and their new cook made the most superb omelettes.... (178)

If there were any doubt as to whether Bertha's happiness is genuine, words like "satisfactory" and "pals" to describe her married life betray her underlying dissatisfaction by suggesting a lack of passion. Even the act of listing itself betrays insecurity, as she clearly enumerates her possessions to herself as reassurance that she is happy. As it turns out, despite Bertha's attempts to construct the image of a happy modern marriage and a fulfilling lifestyle, she in reality has neither of these things. She is quite clearly sexually repressed and her husband is later revealed to be having an affair; she cannot even feed the baby without the nanny losing patience with her lack of parental skill; and in the end, her bohemian friends, who represent to her the excitement not offered by traditional married life, are revealed to be completely vapid and ridiculous, ultimately betraying her by shattering her illusions then leaving her in the wreckage. All that remains from Bertha's list is the money, which enables her to buy nice dresses, go on vacation, hire servants, and outfit the house with beautiful objects that represent the perfect bourgeois home. Bertha clings to the objects around her—the "books," the dresses, the "omelettes," her "new coffee machine"—even to the point where she "passionately, passionately" hugs her couch cushions, searching for the object that will prove she has the life she desires (178, 182, 177). Her fixation on these trappings of bourgeois "happiness" provocatively reveals that capitalism has not only colonized her home, but also her interiority.

Critics have claimed Bertha's troubled state is caused by repressed homosexual desire for Pearl, Bertha's latest "find," whom she "had fallen in love with . . . , as she

always did fall in love with beautiful women who had something strange about them” (Mansfield “Bliss” 177).¹²⁷ The contrast in language with which she talks about Pearl and that which she uses for her husband suggests her desire is really for Pearl, and the scene where she feels a connection with Pearl while looking at the pear tree together makes that reading very convincing.¹²⁸ She also thinks, when she takes Pearl’s arm to lead her inside: “What was there in the touch of that cool arm that could fan—fan—start blazing—blazing—the fire of bliss that Bertha did not know what to do with?” (180).¹²⁹ Given these markers of desire for Pearl, it could be that Bertha’s ‘hysteria’ is a symptom of repressed desire for another woman.

¹²⁷ Helen Nebeker’s was one of the first critics to argue that “the homosexual overtones are inescapable,” and Bertha’s perceived desire for her husband later in the story is not real (548). Nebeker’s reading is indeed convincing and has not been refuted, to my knowledge. Sydney Janet Kaplan takes this perspective outside of the text to argue that repression of lesbian desires in Mansfield’s stories are “a symptomatic denial on Mansfield’s part of her own lesbian experiences” (*Katherine Mansfield* 138). This biographical lens is a common feature in Mansfield criticism, particularly in reading her domestic stories. In fact, in a 1978 article about “Bliss”, in which Magalaner argues the story to be about bisexual desire, he also claims “perhaps the time has come to put Katherine Mansfield back into her stories,” even though “her own attitude toward autobiography in art is ostensibly ambivalent” (413). There has been, according to Bonnie Kime Scott, a “tendency to sensationalize the biography of women writers rather than to explore their works with care,” and this is clearly the case in this instance (*Gender of Modernism* 11). Since the time of Magalaner’s article, the use of Mansfield’s own life to shed light on “Bliss” (and other similar stories) has obscured other potential readings of the text, as if the facts of Mansfield’s life offer more weighty evidence than the sum total of the text itself. Even recently, Shawna Ross has conceded that “the critical flypaper that is Mansfield’s fascinating biography” has been an obstacle to the range of Mansfield scholarship (177).

¹²⁸ Nebeker makes a compelling argument that “Because the pear tree is by nature bisexual,” Bertha’s desire for Pearl is undeniable (546).

¹²⁹ This has an interesting analogue in images from the Victorian period of women reading, in which they would become hysterical and faint from desire evoked by too much knowledge. The fear behind these images was not that women were losing control, but that society was losing control of women.

That one of the main problems in “Bliss” is repressed female sexuality is emphasized in the almost heavy-handed symbolism Mansfield deploys, the most notable symbol being the pear tree in the garden. Mansfield was influenced by the French Symbolists, and is often cited as a symbolist writer herself.¹³⁰ Angela Smith observes that Mansfield’s stories tend to pivot around a central symbol: “The aloe in ‘Prelude’, the pear tree in ‘Bliss’, the little lamp in ‘The Doll’s House’, ... the fur necklet in ‘Miss Brill’” (“Introduction” xxiv). I would add the hat in “The Garden Party” to that list. Smith continues to claim that “no two readers interpret it in the same way,” and aligns Mansfield’s use of symbolism with Virginia Woolf’s “nebulous but haunting” symbolism (xxiv). Conversely, I think Mansfield’s use of central symbols tends to be more concrete than Woolf’s use of a lighthouse to draw “a central line down the middle of the book,” which is important because their different uses of symbolism speak also to their positions on discourses of femininity (Woolf “Letter to Roger Fry”). While Woolf attempts to recuperate conventional symbols of femininity, as discussed in the previous chapter, Mansfield uses these same types of symbols to critique existing discourses of femininity.

Symbols like the pear tree, the fruit (symbol of sexuality and plenty), and the walled garden (symbol of repressed female sexuality) in “Bliss,” for instance, draw on clichéd cultural associations with femininity for their very definite meanings. Bertha sees the pear tree “with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life,” and even dresses for the evening in green and white, the colours associated with gardens, fertility, and a virginal bride (Mansfield “Bliss” 178). This is an interesting irony because, as

¹³⁰ Kaplan claims that, by the time Mansfield had written “Bliss,” she had “already incorporated the influence of French Symbolism into her prose fiction” (*Katherine Mansfield* 20). For a detailed overview of the French influence in Mansfield’s work, see Gerri Kimber’s *Katherine Mansfield: View From France*.

aforementioned, Bertha is *uncomfortably rooted* in her body. She identifies with the tree's open blossoms, and though she recognizes a connection between the tree and her own body, she seems unable to understand the nature of that connection. Mansfield frequently draws on flower symbols to represent women's sexuality; however, although these are clichéd symbols, Mansfield subverts these clichés by demonstrating a schism between their conventional significance and the manifestations of their meaning in her characters' experience. The irony in Bertha's identification with the pear tree is an example of this symbolic subversion, and this is one of the very potent tools Mansfield uses to critique existing discourses of femininity and gender roles in modernity.

However compelling the reading that Bertha is a closeted bisexual, there are aspects of the story that complicate that reading. For instance, ambiguity in her purported homosexual desire is introduced when Bertha transfers the "fire of bliss" she is feeling to her husband and begins to desire him "For the first time in her life," wondering "Was this what that feeling of bliss had been leading up to?" (Mansfield "Bliss" 184). One could argue she is simply repressing her lesbian feelings by turning back to her husband; or maybe, she is bisexual and cannot articulate it. However, I think the ongoing question in criticism of *who* she desires is an attempt to solve a perhaps irresolvable problem, and it obscures the question that Mansfield *puts* of *what* Bertha desires and why. Bertha's obsession with the objects in her house, her commitment to improving her image and social status, and her longing to be a part of the intellectual circles represented by her "modern, thrilling friends," all of which are discussed in the following two sections, suggest that what she desires is not necessarily to *be with* someone else, but to *be*

someone else (178). Pearl is attractive to Bertha in part because she is a modern, sexually enlightened woman, as Bertha desires herself to be.

Though marriage has given her a baby, a home, and the security of a breadwinner, it has prevented her from knowing and fully realizing herself. In Bertha's anxious mind, there is a clear sense of alienation from herself. The textual evidence suggests she may be homosexual or bisexual, but that evidence makes just as compelling a case that Bertha is alienated from any sexual feeling at all. This repression is arguably not a flaw of her own but arises from her role as a wife, and control of her sexuality by patriarchal power. Mansfield presents Bertha as an example of the systematic ways in which women have been oppressed by marriage and denied ownership of their own bodies.

Goldman argues that the marriage institution, and by extension patriarchal control over women, relies for its success on women being kept from any kind of sexual awakening:

The prospective wife or mother is kept in complete ignorance of her only asset in the competitive field—sex. Thus she enters into life-long relations with a man only to find herself shocked, repelled, outraged beyond measure by the most natural and healthy instinct, sex. It is safe to say that a large percentage of the unhappiness, misery, distress, and physical suffering of matrimony is due to the criminal ignorance in sex matters that is being extolled as a great virtue. Nor is it at all an exaggeration when I say that more than one home has been broken up because of this deplorable fact” (237).¹³¹

¹³¹ Women's ignorance in matters of sex and sexuality is a well-documented historical fact. The pioneering work of Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes's 1918 *Married Love*, published around the same time as “Bliss” and shortly after Goldman's essay, began the work of educating women about sex and their bodies. The cultural mores that made the ignorance Goldman discusses “a great virtue” also meant that sexual awareness and self-possession in women was regarded as decadence and moral failure. Many popular stories in the 1910's and 1920's reinforced this view, and their proliferation betrays a strong sense of social anxiety about women's sexual freedom. For example, the popular

Bertha's similar ambivalence toward sex is evident in the language she uses to describe her relationship with her husband, whom she fears being alone in the dark with, yet enjoys that they are "such good pals" (Mansfield "Bliss" 184). This description is quite childlike as well, and Bertha's ignorance in 'adult' matters is emphasized by her last name—Young—and the childishness with which she behaves and perceives her marriage. Furthermore, the "physical suffering" that Goldman speaks of is evident in Bertha's anxiety, which causes physical symptoms like her "trembling lips" (174). She makes an analogy of her body as "shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle," sensing that she is under physical constraint (174). Tellingly, that same analogy pops into her mind as she is feeling jealous of the nanny's relationship with her baby. Yet she perceives herself as the "poor little girl" who envies the "rich little girl with the doll" (175). The childishness of her feelings, and the imagining of her daughter as a doll, betray a lack of maternal feeling toward the baby, and a disconnect with how the baby came to be in the first place. Her fear of, or resistance to, sex is clearly stated, as she admits to herself that, although "she'd been in love with" her husband, she had never desired him "in that way" (184). She acknowledges that "It had worried her dreadfully at first to find that she was so cold, but after a time it had not seemed to matter. . . . That was the best of being modern" (184). However, as Goldman suggests, Bertha's reluctance does matter, ultimately leading to the climactic moment in the story when she discovers her husband is

women's magazine *True Story* is full of sensationalized stories of women being publicly embarrassed or punished for skirting accepted gender roles. For instance, the 1922 story "The Little Cloud" is about a woman who, upon discovering her husband has had an affair, has an affair herself. She is cast as a moral failure and is publicly shunned, while her husband receives none of the same attention or blame. The subtitle of the story is, tellingly, "The Woman who Spoiled her Husband Tells her Story," and it begins with the line "This is the story of a girl who wanted to be modern, and the grief it brought her" ("Little Cloud" 36).

having an affair with Pearl, a sexually enlightened single woman. That Pearl is less inhibited than Bertha is emphasized again through symbolism. Pearl is dressed “all in silver” like “the round silver moon,” associating her with the moon as a symbol for female sexuality (180, 183).

Woolf apparently did not like “Bliss” much, feeling that the revelation of the affair at the end was too contrived and thus the story did not faithfully represent lived experience.¹³² However, “Bliss” can only be a failed story in this regard if knowledge of the affair is, in fact, the true revelation for Bertha. Instead, I argue that Bertha’s true revelation is not that her marriage is troubled, as that is a fact she seems to know on some level from the beginning. The revelation is instead that marriage itself has not delivered on its promise of protection. It has instead placed her in a mundane life that is empty of real value and has alienated her from herself and her own body. When she muses “Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?,” her body is given the aspect of an object to be possessed, and not by herself (Mansfield “Bliss” 174). What Bertha desires is ultimately not either her husband or Pearl, but perhaps a sense of self and autonomy, which is denied to her within the structure of her marriage. However, a ‘sense of self’ is also such an unknown state for Bertha that she is unable to articulate it as the object of her desire. She only knows that she has a deep void of constant, painful desire, which she mislabels ‘bliss.’

¹³² Richard F. Peterson cites both Woolf’s and Mary Lavin’s criticisms of “Bliss” to argue that it “falls short because the revelation of Bertha’s truth comes about through the contrivance of her accidental discovery of her husband’s affair” (385). “The less intrusive the narrative of a story,” he argues, “the more it is capable of creating a direct impression of life,” or a more “truthful representation” (384). Peterson, though, also takes Bertha’s ‘bliss’ in earnest, not recognizing the irony and tension present from the beginning. If Bertha were truly blissful, the revelation of the affair would be the story’s main point.

“Marriage à la Mode,” commonly translated as ‘modern marriage,’ also narrates the breakdown of a marriage. Significantly, this is also the title of a series of eighteenth century paintings by William Hogarth. These paintings similarly narrate the breakdown of a marriage arranged for economic benefit, while satirizing the moral decadence of the upper classes. While there is no direct evidence that this painting was a source for Mansfield’s story, the parallels cannot be ignored, particularly given the way Isabel and William battle over the value of traditional versus modern art. “Marriage à la Mode” is unique amongst Mansfield’s domestic stories, as the narration primarily takes the perspective of the husband William, with only the final section turning to the wife Isabel’s point of view. There is a striking lack of criticism about this particular story, and this is perhaps because it troublingly deals with domesticity and marriage from a primarily male perspective. Though this shift in perspective enables a cutting critique of established gender roles, the narrative voice is at times disturbing in its tendency to make the wife seem absurd and heartless, which may not be a popular perspective with feminist scholars. As in “Bliss,” the narrative voice strikes a subtle blend of third person omniscient narration, free indirect discourse, and moments of internal monologue. This narration does not create the same kind of irony as in “Bliss,” in that it does not necessarily give a sense of a fragmented individual psyche, but is instead used to develop tension between the husband and wife.

What makes William and Isabel’s situation different from the Youngs is that they live separately: he works in the city, she lives in the country, and he travels home to see his family on weekends. The story is about what may happen when a woman pursues her independence rather than working for her husband’s happiness and comfort. Readers are

alerted from the first page that this arrangement is connected to a change in their relationship, as William repeatedly refers to his wife as “the new Isabel,” and bitterly recalls her “laugh[ing] in the new way” (Mansfield “Marriage” 271). Isabel’s ‘newness’ is explicitly connected to her new social circle. We learn through William’s recollections that their home life was, at one time, quite conventional. “Every evening when he came back from chambers,” he recalls, “it was to find the babies with Isabel in the back drawing-room” (273). He recalls her telling him that their house was too small, and though he acknowledges it to have been crowded, he romanticizes the “little white house with blue curtains and a window-box full of petunias,” and remembers with fond nostalgia that she was always there when he came in from work (Mansfield “Marriage” 274). At no point in the story are we given Isabel’s recollections of their old home, except through William’s eyes.

William chides himself for his “blindness,” for not having realized that Isabel was unhappy when they were living a conventional life, “that she really hated that inconvenient little house, that she thought the fat nanny was ruining the babies, that she was desperately lonely, pining for new people and new music and pictures and so on” (Mansfield “Marriage” 275). The life William recognizes too late to have been unbearable for Isabel closely resembles the conventionality of Bertha’s in “Bliss.” However, he also reflects, “If they hadn’t gone to that studio party at Moira Morrison’s— if Moira Morrison hadn’t said as they were leaving, ‘I’m going to rescue your wife, selfish man. ... if Isabel hadn’t gone with Moira to Paris—if—if’” (275). What is telling about this passage is that, even though William calls himself “imbecile” for having been unaware of Isabel’s feelings, he returns at the end of his thoughts to “—if—if....”

(275). If what? The implication is that, if only they had not gone to that party, he might still have his old life, which he clearly desires. Despite his acknowledgement of his wife's unhappiness, he still begrudges the change in her. It is as if he believes she has been corrupted by Moira and her trip to Paris, rather than having been genuinely unhappy before. In another of Mansfield's characteristic uses of natural symbolism to signify female sexuality, William even likens Isabel to "the rose-bush" in the garden that he liked to run through as a boy, that he is sad to not have access to anymore (273). She is corrupted in his eyes, 'new,' but what really frustrates him is that hers is no longer a body that he owns. He jealously wishes to have her to himself, imagining her waiting for him alone at the train station, and is disappointed when her friends are there too. Throughout the rest of the story, his feeble attempts to pull Isabel back, and his disdain for her new lifestyle, make clear that he was happier while she was unhappy.¹³³

What follows is the suggestion that Isabel, much as Bertha seems to want to do, has turned to a bohemian lifestyle and the company of writers and artists for fulfilment instead. Isabel resists the everyday demands of married life in favour of the everyday life of an artist and woman not so bound by her role as a wife. In this story, the shift in her lifestyle seems to offer more leisure time and less time spent taking care of her husband and children. She and her friends go swimming while the nanny puts the children to bed; they lounge in the garden "in long chairs under coloured parasols" (Mansfield "Marriage" 278); and the objects William observes around the sitting room suggest she and her friends spend much of their time painting, writing, and smoking (276).

¹³³ In one of the few essays published on this story, Jennifer E. Dunn similarly describes William's nostalgia and denial, claiming that he is "in love with a fantasy of the old Isabel" (208).

Isabel's resistance to her prescribed role as wife and homemaker also manifests in a broader rejection of traditional English values. In defiance of her husband, she has "scrapped" the old toys, "because they were so 'dreadfully sentimental' and 'so appallingly bad for the babies' sense of form'" (Mansfield "Marriage" 271). She favours instead "Russian toys, French toys, Serbian toys," toys that William identifies as from "God knows where," betraying his traditional Anglo-centrism and fear of the other (271). He, in contrast, likes the sentimental old English toys, and reminisces about "the old days," when "of course, he would have taken a taxi to a *decent* toyshop" (271, emphasis added). Isabel's rejection of traditional English values also manifests in ambivalence toward the classical English artistic tradition, suggesting that "if the poor pets have to spend their infant years staring at these horrors," referring to the old toys, "one can imagine them growing up and asking to be taken to the Royal Academy" (271). What she implies, of course, is that she does not want her children to embrace traditional English values and aesthetics, particularly those associated with the upper classes. William again, in his conservatism, has a conflicting response: "And she spoke as though a visit to the Royal Academy was certain immediate death to anyone ..." (271).

The conflicting perspectives are emphasized in the dialogue here, making it sound like a marital spat, but what is interesting about the narration is that the fight is only happening in William's head. The language he uses to *speaks* Isabel makes her sound silly and dramatic, for example, the hyperbole of "certain immediate death" (Mansfield "Marriage" 271). However, his use of language also suggests an almost childish anger in him at his loss of control. His use of the word 'decent,' as highlighted above, is significant here. The issue of what toys the children play with may seem trivial and

mundane, but it has a much larger significance in the story, making a causal connection between Isabel's new commitment to modern aesthetics and the change in the marital relationship. William implies through this (at least partially) fabricated argument that the change in Isabel is *indecent*, and what they are experiencing is not the breakdown of a marriage due to a failure of patriarchal restrictions, but instead the breakdown of a good, healthy woman.

William's perception is that, after her fated trip to Paris, Isabel has embraced artistic and thus moral decadence. According to Gerri Kimber, "In the decades straddling the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, Paris was considered a literary and artistic Mecca" (25). Kimber argues that Paris had that same appeal for Mansfield, and that her work was heavily influenced by the French literary movements of Symbolism and Decadence, including writers like Baudelaire, Rachilde and Colette (53). Decadence, though it refers to a modern aesthetic movement, is also associated with moral decay, degeneracy, and deviant sexuality. Ironically, William's aforementioned likening of Isabel to a rose bush in the garden appeals to natural motifs of embodied femininity used by the nineteenth-century decadents to denigrate women, casting them as "romantically doomed prostitutes or devouring Venus flytraps" (Showalter *Daughters of Decadence* xi). Isabel's rejection of traditional sensibilities, along with 'proper' female behaviour, is interpreted by William as corruption, and that attitude is evident in his perception of the artistic aspects of her new life.

In a rather funny scene, William describes a painting he sees on the wall of the sitting room: "some one had painted a man, over life-size, with very wobbly legs, offering a wide-eyed daisy to a young woman who had one very short arm and one very

long, thin one”(Mansfield “Marriage” 276). It is possible that the painting is simply amateur or poorly done, but the implication is that it is an avant-garde work. The disproportionate, even ugly, bodies certainly recall some of Pablo Picasso’s early portraits, like “Les Demoiselles d’Avignon,” and the painterly aspect of the work (as opposed to realistic representation) also evokes Henri Matisse’s Fauvist work.¹³⁴

William’s perspective on the painting emphasizes the subject’s deformity, and the repeated use of the word ‘very’ brings home just how extreme the picture looks to him. He then pans the room to see “strips of black material, covered with splashes like broken eggs, and everywhere one looked there seemed to be an ash-tray full of cigarette ends” (276). Although this is simply a description of the room, the focus is on how *dirty* the work of painting is, leaving behind marks like broken eggs and cigarette butts. In all the objects he notices around the room, he clearly focuses on signs of decadence. Even the walls are yellow, the colour associated with the Aesthetic and Decadent movements.¹³⁵

Interestingly, among the very few essays published on this story, no one has yet commented even briefly on its artistic allusions. Even in scholarly editions of Mansfield’s stories, including the Norton Critical Edition edited by Vincent O’Sullivan, there is no

¹³⁴ Mansfield worked with J.M. Murry on the journal *Rhythm*, a publication committed in part to Fauvism in the visual and literary arts. Whether Mansfield was familiar with “Les Demoiselles d’Avignon,” which was first exhibited in 1916, is undocumented; however, she was certainly familiar with Picasso’s style. The first issue of *Rhythm* published a study of two women and a disembodied woman’s head by Picasso.

¹³⁵ In *fin-de-siècle* Paris, books with perceived morally decadent content were wrapped in yellow covers. Following that, a British journal championing aestheticism and early modernism called itself *The Yellow Book*. Showalter claims that *The Yellow Book*, alongside the proliferation of new periodicals, contributed to the rise of the short story from the 1890’s. “For late-nineteenth-century women writers in particular,” Showalter writes, “the short story offered flexibility and freedom from the traditional plots of the three-decker Victorian novel, plots which invariably ended in the heroine’s marriage or her death” (*Daughters of Decadence* viii-ix). The last section of this chapter discusses the role of the short story form in Mansfield’s fiction more specifically.

note of the allusion in the story's title to the aforementioned Hogarth paintings, or to any of the potential references to avant-garde art. Dunn mentions the painting in the story, but presents it as a satire for Isabel and William's uneven relationship and as a mockery of "the artist's lack of talent," rather than a potentially modern distortion of proportions and perspective (208). The story's representations of modern art are a potent device Mansfield uses to demonstrate the split between husband and wife as a result of modernity, as well as the troubling perception of an independent modern woman as morally decadent.

One could read "Marriage à la Mode" as something like a sequel to "Bliss," or at the very least, as a story about what happens when a wife's desire for independence becomes awakened and she becomes a threat to conventional family life, choosing an alternative lifestyle. Isabel has made changes to her lifestyle, but her husband exerts considerable pressure on her to change back. The point of view shifts to Isabel in the final section, when she reads the love letter William sends to her after his departure. The "pages and pages" of the letter are presumably laden with manipulative moaning, encapsulated in one of the few quoted phrases, "*God forbid, my darling, that I should be a drag on your happiness*" (Mansfield "Marriage" 279). Isabel's initial reaction is "astonishment," which then becomes "a stifled feeling" (279). Her subsequent eruption into laughter is clearly a mechanism to protect herself from the "frightened" feeling of being drawn back into her old "stifled" life (279). When her friends see she has received a letter, one of them warns, "He's sending you back your marriage lines as a gentle reminder," another responds mockingly: "Does everybody have marriage lines? I thought

they were only for servants” (279).¹³⁶ Although the joke is about class on the surface, it also implies that being in a legal marriage creates servitude. Though William is professing love and disappointment, and a good deal of self-pity, Isabel and her friends interpret the “love-letter” as an attempt to regain control of her with the backing of the law (279). He is, after all, a lawyer. Furthermore, Jennifer E. Dunn claims that William’s work papers appear to be divorce documents, implying that he is a divorce lawyer and would thus have objective insight into marital troubles (208). Although Dunn presents no evidence to support this interpretation, one can see a potential connection between William’s papers, which mention the “client’s correspondence files,” and Isabel’s later statement that she “always thought those letters in divorce cases were made up” (Mansfield “Bliss” 272, 279). If he is a divorce lawyer, and has told Isabel stories of love letters being used in his cases, the irony of their situation is especially pointed.

Isabel’s change in feeling after they make fun of the letter is perhaps somewhat unexpected after William’s portrayal of her as cold. She is overcome with guilt and sees herself as “shallow, tinkling, vain” (280).¹³⁷ However, she quickly represses those feelings and returns to her friends, “laughing in the new way” (280). With this ending, it is difficult to read either William or Isabel in a favourable light, and in this sense, Mansfield does not allow for easy resolution. Isabel’s old, stifling life is set in contrast to her new, shallow life. It seems that neither lifestyle is ideal. In addition to the critique of marriage, and by extension the restrictions placed on the everyday lives and desires of

¹³⁶ ‘Marriage lines’ was the term for a marriage certificate, the legal agreement.

¹³⁷ W. Todd Martin identifies this moment as “The only time Isabel is completely honest with herself about the situation” (160). This reading overlooks the fact that it is the only time the narrative takes on Isabel’s perspective, and the rest of the narration, in which Martin presumes she is not being honest with herself, is actually William’s perspective of her.

married women, Mansfield also suggests that the alternative lifestyle Isabel turns to is not the quick fix it may seem.¹³⁸ The bourgeois everyday is revealed to be not just limited to married life—it permeates all spheres of life for a woman.

The Bourgeois Home

As discussed, these stories critique the marriage institution, but they also represent married life in a particularly bourgeois setting. Mansfield's portrayals of the bourgeois home demonstrate how the continued pressure on women to adhere to conventional gender roles, regulated by the institution of marriage, serves the requirements of an emerging commodity capitalism. The Victorian separation of life into the public and private spheres—which emerged with the advent of modernity and bourgeois capitalist notions of an individual self, a private consciousness, and property ownership (all intimately connected ideals)—“is a gendered process,” argues Majumdar, and results in an impoverished daily life for women at home (“Katherine Mansfield” 132).¹³⁹ According to Goldman, marriage had, by the beginning of the twentieth century, become “primarily an economic arrangement, an insurance pact” (234). No doubt certain people still married for love; however, Goldman argues that those people were primarily of the working classes, where both husband and wife were required to work, particularly as manual or factory labourers (238). Conversely, in the middle and upper classes, if “a woman's premium is a husband, she pays for it with her name, her privacy, her self-

¹³⁸ Dunn likewise observes that “Even as the text presents Isabel's epiphany as a possible escape from life ‘à la mode,’ the alternative on offer—a return to her former self—is even less attractive” (208).

¹³⁹ “A gendered relationship between domesticity and boredom,” Majumdar continues, “has been identified as a significant component of the world-view of English prose fiction from its very beginnings” (“Katherine Mansfield” 132).

respect, her very life, ‘until death doth part’” (234). This premium is emphasized in “Bliss” through the naming of characters, as the couples are referred to by their family name along with the first names of the husbands, for example, the Norman Knights and the Jacob Nathans. Following from this, both Goldman’s claim and Mansfield’s suggestion that marriage keeps women subjugated is intimately tied to class, as this economic arrangement depends on a bourgeois status and conception of gender roles and domestic life. Of course, a sexually enlightened or financially independent woman poses a threat to this system.

In “Bliss,” the relationship between Bertha and Harry demonstrates Veblen’s theory of the leisure class all too well. The Youngs have all the usual markers of the bourgeois class: servants, home ownership, disposable income, leisure time, an urban lifestyle, membership in a social club, a materialistic worldview, and cultural knowledge. As members of the leisure class, Harry works while Bertha arranges the home to display their bourgeois status. Bertha’s display, or conspicuous consumption, is evident in the dinner she serves and the way in which she arranges couch cushions and a matching fruit display for her guests. The best example, though, is just after dinner, when Bertha draws the women away with the invitation “Come and see my new coffee machine” (Mansfield “Bliss” 182). Harry sarcastically follows that up with “We only have a new coffee machine once a fortnight” (182). On the surface, he seems to be mocking Bertha’s love of things, but the statement also subtly reminds the guests that he is financing all of those things. The contrasting pronouns “my and “we” subtly discipline Bertha back into her role as subservient wife and vicarious consumer. The machine is not ‘hers,’ it is ‘theirs.’

Bertha takes her fixation on the objects in the house to almost absurd degrees. For example, she buys grapes “to tone in with the new dining-room carpet,” something she recognizes as “rather far-fetched and absurd,” yet she feels “it had seemed quite sense at the time” (Mansfield “Bliss” 175). As ridiculous as the matching grapes seem, they answer perfectly to Veblen’s statement that “in order to be reputable [expenditure] must be wasteful” (40). In a further turn to the absurd, Bertha even perceives her dinner guests as “a decorative group,” as if they were simply ornaments she has been collecting, rather than people (181). There has been much discussion of Bertha wearing the colour green, as a symbol that links her to the pear tree and garden; however, Bertha’s use of green also demonstrates prowess in interior decorating. Green was a favoured colour for middle-class interior decorating in the Victorian era. A 1919 issue of the popular magazine *Our Homes and Gardens* says that, in the Victorian home, “Sage green was an especially favoured tint, supposed to be expressive of artistic taste (qtd. in Highmore *The Great Indoors* 47). Ben Highmore, through research in the Mass Observation archives, has discovered that all the way through to the beginning of the Second World War, homemakers still overwhelmingly preferred to paint their interiors green (48).¹⁴⁰ As such, Bertha’s commitment to the colour green—in her dress and even her food—also demonstrates awareness of the bourgeois fashions of the day, and an interest in showing off to her dinner guest Mrs. Knight, who is “awfully keen on interior decorating” (Mansfield “Bliss” 177). By taking Bertha’s decor to this degree, of colour-coding the

¹⁴⁰ Likewise, Rishona Zimring, following the historian Deborah Cohen, argues that “the modernist *British* interior did not join the design revolution sweeping the continent. Rather, British interiors clung to the past” (40). British home decoration during the Edwardian era instead “became a form of individual self-expression,” which also “set the stage for the emergence of the British avant-garde” (40).

food, Mansfield also defamiliarizes the process of creating a luxurious private space, demonstrating the absence of actual value. In this sense, Mansfield critiques this process. Rumbarger argues that the “home-sweet-home, home-fires-burning idea of domestic peace and continuity,” what Felski calls the familiar space of home, “may be the place where a woman works, what she works on, and what she works to achieve. And, if she’s successful, the individuality of her work, wants, self, disappears into tastefully papered walls, rubs into well-polished silver, blends, like her outfit into the room” (2). Like Bertha’s outfit that merges in colour with both the food and the pear tree in the garden, Bertha suffuses her identity into the styling of hers and Harry’s home, and she is unable to extract herself from it.

Bertha sets up this display for her dinner guests, but she also treats the objects in the house as armour. She hugs the couch cushions and obsesses over Harry’s approval of her food. While she set up all of these status markers to convince herself and the others that she and Harry are happy, there is also a sense that this space and these objects are not actually her own. The nanny cares for the baby, all of the objects she clings to have been provided by her husband, and even her most prized showcase, the pear tree in the garden, grows independently of her. Not only is her sexuality managed by her husband, as discussed earlier, but even the household she appears to manage is owned by him. As Goldman states, “even the middle-class girl in marriage cannot speak of her home, since it is the man who creates her sphere. . . . marriage guarantees a woman a home only by the grace of her husband” (239–240). Harry mocks Bertha about the coffee machine as a not so subtle reminder that it is meant to secure his own status, as is the entire display that she has worked on. Furthermore, her overly pleased reaction to his praise of the dinner

she has cooked is an additional reminder that the domestic daily practices she engages in are primarily for his benefit.¹⁴¹ Even her outfit is devised to maintain a bourgeois image.

Bertha's vicarious consumption is taken to its absurd, but perhaps logical, end in her desire for Pearl, the object of her husband's affections. Through the formation of this 'love triangle,' Mansfield powerfully critiques the capitalistic demand that a woman must be subject to her husband and display his status by consuming his objects of desire on his behalf. Walter E. Anderson claims that "Mansfield ironically plays off a conventional love triangle against an unconventional one," the conventional one meaning both Bertha and Pearl love Harry, and the unconventional being that both Bertha and Harry love Pearl (403). He sets his reading against the previously common interpretation that irony arises from Bertha's discovery of the affair, "a revelation which shatters her growing sense of marital bliss," and contributes to the substantial body of criticism that interprets Bertha to be homosexual (397). None of these configurations account for the possibility that the relations between these three characters could be motivated by anything but sexual desire, but they especially do not account for economic relations.

Though "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode" present different marital situations, the relationship between husband and wife is based on a similar economy. In "Marriage à la

¹⁴¹ In contrast, Zimring argues that "Bliss" is about the "charming possibilities of interior decoration as an aesthetic practice of self-expression and sociability. It foregrounds domesticity as a creative practice by implicitly comparing the ambitions of the interior decorator with professional aspirations (Mrs. Norman Knight), with those, more creative and disorderly, of the amateur (Bertha)" (45). This fits with Felski's statement that home "can be a place of female subordination as well as an arena where women can show competence in the exercise of domestic skills" ("Invention" 88). It also echoes with Luce Giard's project to recuperate domestic duties as empowering, creative arts. Zimring's reading of the story in context of the creative potential of domestic practices is very compelling; however, it takes Mansfield's "enchantment" of domestic space out of the context of gendered power relations, which is problematic given the other themes in the story.

Mode,” as in “Bliss,” the husband works in an office, while the wife stays at home. Isabel and William have similar markers of bourgeois class and lifestyle—servants, a nanny to care for the children, two houses, disposable income, leisure time, and an association with a privileged intelligentsia. In trying to decide what type of gift to buy his children, William alerts readers that this happens regularly, and that an expectation has been set up with the children for fairly extravagant gifts. William demonstrates his social position further in the disdain he briefly shows toward the working class people on the train platform, while he comfortably seats himself in a first class carriage. Interestingly, when he is watching the people on the platform, he thinks “A filthy life!,” anticipating his observations about the dirtiness of Isabel’s sitting room (Mansfield “Marriage” 272).

The story sets up an interesting contrast between their old home and Isabel’s new one. William’s nostalgic memories of the “poky little hole” they used to share revolve entirely around Isabel as homemaker (Mansfield “Marriage” 273). His description of the comfort and familiarity of the space relies entirely on Isabel’s presence with the children in the sitting-room, the room designated for family leisure time. Lee Rumbarger claims that the ideal of “home” relies on the work of women, “even as it makes that work invisible” (1). Interestingly, William does not perceive Isabel’s activities in their old home as labour, but as leisure, playing with the children. Tellingly, the other details he hangs on are the “window-box full of petunias” and the fact that the house was white (the colour of innocence and virginity) with blue curtains (274). William’s repeated conflation of memories of Isabel with memories of flower gardens troublingly positions Isabel as a symbolic object of desire. The window box also calls to mind another Mansfield story, “How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped,” in which a young girl is taken away from her

middle-class “House of Boxes” by two Maori women (20). Pearl’s neighbourhood of “Houses in Boxes,” where they “all live in a row” and “the men go to offices” is a place full of “nasty things,” where her mother is “In the kitching, ironing-because-its-Tuesday” (22, 20). Mansfield represents the proper bourgeois family home as a place governed by oppressive order, made comfortable through the exploitation of women’s labour, and thus requiring that the women remain there and perform their household duties. Presumably William still lives in poky little quarters in London, but he does not mention them at all, suggesting he does not consider that arrangement ‘home’ because of Isabel’s absence.

In contrast, although the new house is where Isabel and the children live, it offers none of the comfort that William longs for. For one, it has been invaded by bohemian artists and freeloaders. Isabel is not pictured with the children—they are always elsewhere—and she clearly refuses domestic labour and instead turns her time to either artistic labour or idleness. Her hope is clearly that art and a bohemian lifestyle have the power to transform her mundane daily life into a fulfilling one. This hope is reflected in the dreaminess of the conversations between the friends, as they lounge outside “under coloured parasols” and wonder things like, “Do you think there will be Mondays in Heaven?” (Mansfield “Marriage” 278). However, Mansfield portrays the artist friends as quite ridiculous, which is discussed in more detail later, giving them the air of not being terribly authentic. They end up appearing as pseudo-bohemian, commodified copies of actual artists. There is no mention, after all, of any of them producing work for a larger audience. As such, the choice between ‘marital bliss’ and the bohemian artiness is a false choice for Isabel.

According to Veblen, consumer capitalism has brought change to the sphere of leisure for women: “Instead of simply passing her time in visible idleness, as in the best days of the patriarchal regime, the housewife of the advanced peaceable stage applies herself assiduously to household cares” (40). In contrast to Bertha, Isabel refuses household cares, engaging instead in creative pursuits and sustained idleness. It seems she has by extension rejected her role as vicarious consumer; everything she does is apparently in service of her own happiness, not her husband’s.¹⁴² However, she still inadvertently affirms his bourgeois status by having him support her new lifestyle, and is thus still engaging in conspicuous consumption. After all, there are probably few things more wasteful than running two households, as they are doing. What comes clear through the story is that Isabel, despite the fact that she lives away from William, cannot be free because nothing around her is free either. When she accuses William, “even this new house and servants you grudge me,” she inadvertently confirms that even her new life belongs to him (Mansfield “Marriage” 273). As long as she is consuming his goods, “she still quite unmistakably remains his chattel in theory; for the habitual rendering of vicarious leisure and consumption is the abiding mark of the unfree servant” (Veblen 40). This is where the bourgeois everyday reclaims Isabel even as she tries to break from the marriage arrangement.

¹⁴² Zimring, in a brief mention of this story, compares Isabel to Mrs. Knight in “Bliss,” claiming that Mrs. Knight’s “garish, tawdry scheme” for decorating her friend’s room “resembles the soul-destroying ambitions of Isabel ... both are targets for Mansfield’s aggressive satirical wit” (45). It is unclear just what these “ambitions” of Isabel’s might be in Zimring’s view, but the implication is that Isabel is not interested in domestic creativity like Bertha, and the language unfairly casts Isabel in an unfavourable light. This brief mention evokes some interesting questions about how the two stories relate similar themes, but Zimring does not pursue the comparison.

To complicate matters further, Mansfield's understanding of gender relations and the bourgeois lifestyle is informed by her bourgeois upbringing in New Zealand. As Majumdar argues, "a tension that characterizes much of Mansfield's fiction, though usually in a more subtle, covert, or metaphorical form [is] a tension between a routine-encased domestic space on one hand and the powerful undercurrent of violence and trauma on the other, both of them uneasy and unavoidable legacies of colonial history" (92). The colonial situation Mansfield was brought up in influences all of her stories, even those set in England, and the structured existence of a bourgeois everyday is always set against a threat from the outside.

"The Garden Party" is Mansfield's most studied example of the bourgeois everyday in New Zealand, and a key example of the "bourgeois ceremonial of things."¹⁴³ Though it is not about marriage *per se*, it is continuous with the other two stories in that it is ultimately about establishing a proper female role in a bourgeois household. The protagonist, Laura, is one of the daughters in a wealthy New Zealand family, preparing for a garden party, and being simultaneously groomed by her mother to preside over a similar such household. Loosely based on Mansfield's childhood upbringing, "The Garden Party" is a New Zealand story in which the English way of life is copied to a

¹⁴³ Mansfield's bourgeois upbringing in New Zealand is well documented, and that the representation of class in "The Garden Party" is based on her own experience is a widely accepted contextual reading of the story. Despite this, Saikat Majumdar argues that "Traditional Anglo-American criticism has tended, often rather simplistically, to construct a European Mansfield with little or no relationship to her colonial roots" ("Katherine Mansfield" 122). He draws attention to the fact that recognition of Mansfield's colonial roots in criticism of stories like "The Garden Party" tends to emphasize the English-ness of colonial New Zealand life at the expense of exploring the oppression of the colonized Maori as a necessary precursor to that life.

fault.¹⁴⁴ Privilege and excess are affirmed throughout in the details of the family's everyday life and the objects that surround them. Mrs. Sheridan, the mother, after receiving a delivery of what her daughter assumes must be too many flowers, proclaims "for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies," although readers have already been told that the family has a "lily-lawn" near which they are having a marquee put up for their party (Mansfield "Garden" 339, 337). Shortly thereafter, the daughters sample "Fancy cream puffs," tittering over having them "so soon after breakfast" (342). There is a definite humour here, and irony in Mansfield's portrayal of the girls' naïveté about their class privilege.

Laura tries to act like her mother early on, affecting her voice, and is concerned about appearing mature and respectable, but she is continually sidelined by her compassion for others. As in "Bliss," the narrative voice creates irony, as Laura's internal dialogue shows us an immaturity and condescension in her that she does not recognize in herself, for instance, when she thinks "how very nice workmen were!" or is in awe of the workman enjoying the smell of lavender (Mansfield "Garden" 337, 338). Laura is sheltered by her privileged situation and by her family, but she is also different in that she is concerned with others—she is "the artistic one" (336). Though Laura is not yet dissatisfied with her own daily life, clearly still enjoying her leisurely pursuits and the beautiful objects around her, she begins to grapple with the realities of class division, and the bourgeois world that is grooming her to become like her mother, or like Bertha or

¹⁴⁴ Majumdar writes: "in a colony like New Zealand ... desire for the imperial metropole could only intensify, as such a community identified almost completely with the empire to the point it created a vowed detachment from any indigenous culture. As such, the life of the settler colonial population, to which Mansfield belonged, was perhaps more directly and radically marked by an irrevocable yearning for the metropolis than nearly any other colonial experience" ("Katherine Mansfield" 120).

Isabel. Though the story does not appear to be overtly about gender roles, we are shown a world in which the men go to the office and the women stay home to plan parties and manage the household. Laura's expected acceptance of her role as woman of the house is predicated on a refusal to acknowledge working class labour as exploited, both in the person of the dead carter and in the servants and workmen who actually perform the labours to make the Sheridans' party happen. Here, the bourgeois household, and the relationships that construct it, depend on suppressing a threat from the outside, in addition to the potential internal threat of a woman not properly placed in her role.

In Majumdar's formulation, the colonized other threatens bourgeois everyday life, both practically and ideologically. This is perhaps most clear in "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped," in which a young girl is picked up outside of her home by two Maori women and taken back to their community. The opening line tells us everything we need to know about the little girl's class situation: "Pearl Button swung on the little gate in front of the House of Boxes" (Mansfield "Pearl Button" 20). Her name situates her not just as a cute, little girl, but also as an object that decorates a bourgeois home. The capitalization of "House of Boxes" paints her house as a type of many, rather than a home. Readers could easily imagine this as Bertha Young's home, the cookie-cutter version of bourgeois leisure class life. Just as a pearl is removed from its shell to become a commodity, Pearl Button is taken from her family home by two Maori women and returned to what is represented as a more 'natural' state of community. Here, the bourgeois is aligned with the capitalist colonizer, positioned against the colonized other, suggesting that the bourgeois lifestyle depends on colonization and exploitation, both of indigenous communities and the natural landscape.

In all of Mansfield's stories—those set in New Zealand as well as those set in England—gender relations, class conflict, and the colonial project all come together to represent a bourgeois everyday life that is threatening and under threat, yet persists based on the demands of capital. However, in the absence of a literally colonized other (like the Maori), it is perhaps less clear what the outside threat might be in the English stories. Following from my analysis of Bertha's desire, I argue that the colonized other in these stories is the wife herself, who is always subject to the demands of this patriarchal capitalist structure. William's aforementioned reactions to Isabel's assertions of independence in "Marriage à la Mode" make this all the more clear, as he fights to maintain ownership of her body through an imposition of bourgeois values.

The Disruption of Everyday Life

As discussed, "Bliss" and "Marriage à la Mode" expose the ideologies and power structures that both shape bourgeois everyday life and insinuate themselves through everyday practices, such as mundane household tasks and commodity consumption. Mansfield does not simply achieve this critique by representing women's oppressive experiences of marriage and the constraints placed on them by capital. She also uses modernist stylistic techniques to defamiliarize and disrupt the continuity of this everyday life. In this sense, content and form are interdependent in her work. By disrupting the everyday through formal and stylistic techniques, Mansfield reveals the conditions, moments and relations that constitute the everyday itself, like taking it apart to see what is inside. Though seemingly quite ordinary, these characters' lives are actually quite unsettling. As demonstrated, they are fragmented, constructed by bourgeois values and structures that are oppressive to women, and also at times rather absurd. In these two

stories, the most significant literary devices that materialize from Mansfield's innovative style are irony, humour, and epiphany. Through these devices, she destabilizes the power structures that prop up a bourgeois everyday, and by extension keep women trapped under the weight of an impoverished everyday life.

Unlike the goals professed by her contemporaries Woolf and Richardson, Mansfield's experimental prose does not aim to represent women's lives through a 'feminine' style.¹⁴⁵ Rather, she was interested in developing a style that would effectively reflect the experience of living in a post-war world, a world that Mansfield, just like Lefebvre, ultimately seems to suggest is characterized by a tension between disruption and continuity. Style, Ben Highmore argues is "something deeply social and significant," and this applies to both individual lifestyles, which Mansfield represents, and styles of representation (*Ordinary Lives* 11). Mansfield's writing style, argues Smith, is characterized primarily by disruption, as she makes the "established" seem "strange" ("Introduction" x). While Smith does not define just what the "established" is, it is clear from my readings that the established world of these stories is the bourgeois everyday, as it has been outlined so far. But how exactly does Mansfield make it "strange"?

Mansfield's style depends for its impact on her use of the short story form, and as such, I must make a brief digression to discuss the significance of the short story to the modernist aesthetics of disruption. In their introduction to *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield*, Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson claim that Mansfield's centrality to modernism has long been ignored, and this is due in part to her commitment to the short

¹⁴⁵ Both Richardson and Woolf aimed to represent women's everyday lives, at least in part, through a new 'feminine' style. This is discussed at length in the previous two chapters.

story form, which “was for many years underestimated in relation to the weightier, more prominent genres of modernism—poetry and the novel” (2). The short story is not only a neglected genre in modernist studies, but in literary studies at large. Considered as lacking the weight or depth of the novel, or the formal complexity of poetry, it has often been regarded as “the smaller and lesser genre” (Pratt 181). However, Dominic Head, in his seminal work *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice*, has argued that the short story form is intimately connected with the preoccupations of modernity, and that short fiction may be the only particularly modernist genre.¹⁴⁶ “[T]he short story,” he claims, “encapsulates the essence of literary modernism, and has an enduring ability to capture the episodic nature of twentieth-century experience,” and this is largely due to innovations in the form during the modernist period, which privileged representations of consciousness and characterization over plot (1).¹⁴⁷ Mansfield, who was committed to developing a style suitable to the fragmented nature of post-war consciousness, clearly saw that potential in the short story form.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Head’s work, published in 1992, is one of the guiding studies on the modernist short story. More recent critics, however, have substantially built on his work and gained some critical import for study of the modernist short story. For instance, see Cheryl Alexander Malcolm and David Malcolm’s edited collection *A Companion to the British and Irish Short Story*, as well as Claire Drewery’s *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf*, which contributes important and long overdue feminist attention to the modernist short story. It is important to note, too, that Head’s work builds substantially on Clare Hanson’s *Re-reading the Short Story*, in which she argues that the short story allows for levels of stylistic experimentation that would be resisted by readers of a novel.

¹⁴⁷ Head further writes, “The artifice of the short story facilitates another modernist preoccupation: the analysis of personality, especially a consideration of the fragmented, dehumanized self” (7–8).

¹⁴⁸ Jenny McDonnell claims Mansfield “endorse[d] the short story rather than the novel as the genre most adaptable to literary experimentation in the postwar world” (734). Head

Anticipating Woolf's "Modern Fiction," Mansfield claimed in 1919 that "the time for a 'new word' has come but I imagine the new word will not be spoken easily. People have never explored the lovely medium of prose. It is a hidden country still" (qtd. in McDonnell 733).¹⁴⁹ Mansfield famously criticized Woolf's *Night and Day* (1919) for being formulaic and conventional. However, she also criticized Dorothy Richardson's *The Tunnel* and *Interim* (also both 1919), despite their departures from traditional literary form, for being too steeped in inconsequential detail. Clearly she wanted to find a form that departed from conventionality, but that would more succinctly capture the experience of fragmented consciousness, or of being caught between old and new. She favourably reviewed Woolf's early short story "Kew Gardens" in *Athenaeum* in 1919, demonstrating a clear preference for the form. Her call for "a new word" was made in a review of a short story collection, suggesting it "was to be fundamentally linked with her commitment to the short story genre" (McDonnell 732). Mansfield's commitment to the short story as 'new word' is frequently demonstrated by the extensive revision process she undertook to pare down "Prelude," one of her most notable stories, which was originally conceived as a novel.¹⁵⁰

likewise ties Mansfield's use of the short story as disruption to modernism's larger break with literary convention, and the move to 'make it new.'

¹⁴⁹ McDonnell argues that Mansfield's time as a reviewer for *Athenaeum* in 1919–1920 was pivotal in the development of her style, as she developed a keen sense of what works in fiction through her exposure to a massive number of contemporary novels and stories.

¹⁵⁰ For example, Head writes: "'Prelude' is the final result of Mansfield's most ambitious literary project, the revised version of the novella *The Aloe*, a work originally conceived as a novel. The meticulous editorial process involved in trimming *The Aloe* by a third demonstrates emphatically Mansfield's aesthetic principle of excising all omniscient explanation" (117).

Head claims that the short story as a genre, by its nature, disrupts. He points to the “disunifying effects of ellipsis and ambiguity,” broadly modernist techniques that Mansfield employs repeatedly, suggesting that “this kind of disruption established a connection between text and context” (Head 2). Critics have largely turned to the ‘stream of consciousness’ novel and the fragmentary works of poets like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot as exemplary of everyday life and modernist disruption, focusing on the more established genres of the novel and poetry. However, Mansfield’s experimentation with short story conventions allows her to develop a style that formally mimics the disruption of everyday life, giving us another form of critical modernism. To speak of a disruptive aesthetic in context of the everyday may seem problematic. After all, formally speaking, the short story may seem anything but everyday, as it suspends everyday temporality and repetition and engages in artifice. One could even argue that the short story is antithetical to everyday life, as it arrests it by isolating a moment or event.¹⁵¹ However, the two modernist works most often cited as everyday novels, *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, according to Head also “hinge on single significant events—Clarissa Dalloway’s party, the meeting of Bloom and Stephen—the episodes around which these books are structured” (5). He continues to argue, as such, that the modernist short story “exemplifies the strategies of modernist fiction” (6). Though the singular moments of most short stories do not perhaps embody the temporality of everyday life, with its repetitions and continuities, they capture another side of everyday life, its discontinuities

¹⁵¹ Head suggests that “It is interesting to note that *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Ulysses* were both originally conceived as short stories. ... in their suggestion, through limited action, of the full-length life—*Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* are representative of a tendency common in modernist literature, and a tendency particularly well suited to the short story” (5–6).

and fundamental strangeness. In this sense, a disruptive aesthetic can reveal the ideological nature of an apparently naturalized everyday. According to Heidegger, “We believe we are at home in the immediate circle of beings. That which is, is familiar, reliable, ordinary. ... At bottom, the ordinary is not ordinary; it is extra-ordinary, uncanny” (54). Interestingly, he writes this in context of his aesthetic theory and his exploration into the ideological power of objects, concerns that we have already seen relate to Mansfield’s domestic narratives.

According to Head, “A key aspect of the modernist short story is the presentation of character through narrative voice, and this is a seminal feature of Mansfield’s technique” (113). Mansfield’s uses of narrative voice not only describe character, but are also frequently disrupted, graphically and by other means. These disruptions in voice aim to create a more authentic representation of consciousness and experience, and a more focused view of the characters’ personalities. But they also create unreliable narrators and irony, which is a key feature of modernist literature at large. To create irony, Mansfield uses a number of broadly modernist techniques, including free indirect discourse and the stream of consciousness, but she also experiments with syntax in unique ways. What tends to emerge is a representation of consciousness as fragmented and alienated, rather than whole and continuous. This is evident in many of Mansfield’s stories, perhaps the most notable example being “Je ne Parle pas Français,” in which readers encounter a narrator who is sexually ambiguous and perhaps untrustworthy. “Miss Brill” is an example of a narrator who is woefully alienated from herself and from reality, to the point that she does not even recognize her own tears as coming from herself. This stands in striking contrast to Dorothy Richardson’s representation of Miriam Henderson’s

stable, yet changeable, consciousness, as well as Woolf's representation of collective consciousness in *The Waves* and *To The Lighthouse*. Mansfield's irony is essential to her critique of gender roles and women's everyday lives, as it demonstrates the psychic split that can emerge from an awareness of being caught between modernity and the converse realities of everyday life.

In "Bliss," Mansfield uses a blend of free indirect discourse and stream of consciousness to get inside Bertha's head. The story opens as she is returning to her house, with an omniscient narrator introducing her and setting the scene; however, the second paragraph promptly turns to Bertha's internal monologue. In a passage discussed earlier, she thinks, "Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?" (Mansfield "Bliss" 174). She then interrupts her own thoughts with another, self-conscious voice: "No, that about the fiddle is not quite what I mean,' she thought" (174). The subtle addition of quotation marks in this interruption, where there were not any bracketing the previous thought, sets this up not just as internal monologue, but as a dialogue between Bertha and some other part of herself. The marks graphically interrupt the text, calling into question the stability of the narrative consciousness. Bertha continues with: "It's not what I mean because—Thank you, Mary'—she went into the hall" (174). In this unsettling blend of internal monologue and conversation, she interrupts the interruption to her own thoughts with a greeting to a servant, followed by a return to the omniscient narrator. This subtle but quick movement across several different narrative layers unsettles the reader, setting up ensuing disruptions. Mansfield also disrupts Bertha's thoughts with ellipses, for instance: "waiting for something ... divine to happen ... that she knew must happen ... infallibly" (174). In addition to drawing

attention to the artifice of style, the insertion of ellipses throughout this particular story emphasize the broken and anxious nature of Bertha's thoughts, as discussed earlier. She does not seem aware of how broken her own thoughts are, although it is clear to the reader, which creates dramatic irony. Furthermore, the ellipses suggest omission or repression. There is another layer of thought that Bertha dips into with these ellipses but ultimately cannot articulate or access. As aforementioned, Bertha cannot quite name the object of her desire, because there is no obvious solution to her present situation.

The instability of Mansfield's characters' psyches is arguably what leads to ambiguous endings and what critics have read as frustrated epiphanies, another manifestation of Mansfield's aim to "*put* the question" rather than "*solve*" it (Smith "Introduction" xvi). "Many of her stories pivot on a fleeting disruption," Smith writes, "when an established way of life is jolted by something other, strange and disturbing" (x). A reader might expect that the disruption of everyday life would motivate change, but as Smith observes, it is indeed fleeting, and only a feeling of pessimism and frustration remains. Disruption in the short story usually takes the form of epiphany, which many critics have argued is the defining moment in modernist short fiction.¹⁵² Many of the climactic, or epiphanic, moments in Mansfield's stories center on the breakdown of traditional values and institutions, particularly marriage, family, and motherhood. However, critics have also noted that Mansfield's epiphanies are often frustrated or incomplete, as they do not result in any substantial realization in characters, but pause at

¹⁵² "The emphasis of modernist short fiction was on a single moment of intense or significant experience. ... So the 'epiphany' or 'blazing moment' came to form the structural core of modernist short fiction This stress on the fleeting moment is consistent with the prevailingly relativist philosophy inherited by modernist writers" (Hanson qtd. in Head 18–19).

a moment of threatening reality and their repercussions are frequently and immediately suppressed.

Conversely, I argue that although the women in “Bliss and “Marriage à la Mode” experience ‘frustrated epiphanies,’ their repercussions are not suppressed in the manner suggested. The focus on character development in short story criticism means the epiphany is regarded as a disruption in a character’s consciousness. While this is the case in Mansfield’s stories, the disruption is external as well as internal; there is a disruption not merely of consciousness, but of everyday life, an interruption to the routines of everyday life that reveal their ideological nature. The women in these stories, while they may not be wholly satisfied or self-possessed, experience full awareness of their realities and the power structures that work on them in those disruptive moments, becoming painfully aware of their positions vis-à-vis modernity and the continuity of everyday life.¹⁵³ While the epiphany, as a disruptive technique, presents a full realization of everyday life, the epiphanies in these stories feel frustrated or incomplete because they provide no solution.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ According to Majumdar, “The tradition of awareness of female constraint marks the work of many female modernists, often through variations of the motifs of boredom, the ordinary, the repetitive, and the claustrophobic—all of which operate within a domestic sphere cocooned from a public life that was going through destabilizing changes during, and between, the two world wars. ... The overarching sense of boredom, futility, and restlessness often pervading the domestic locations of Mansfield’s female characters similarly emerge [*sic*] as an index of female disenfranchisement under a male-dominated society” (“Katherine Mansfield” 133).

¹⁵⁴ Dunn draws on Head to also make this point in her reading of “The Garden Party.” She claims that “Approaching the story’s ending as a ‘denial of a solution’ shifts the focus from an attempt to stabilize the meaning of Laura’s question and Laurie’s answer to a more productive exploration of Laura’s ‘ambiguity of characterization’” (Dunn 204). Mansfield’s resistance to resolution is, in this formulation, regarded as a powerful critical tool rather than a failure.

As I have already argued, the epiphany in “Bliss” is not that Bertha’s husband is having an affair, although this is the catalyst. The revelation of the affair serves as a disruption of everyday life, revealing that life itself to be quite absurd. When Bertha returns her gaze to the pear tree after the revelation, she sees it standing “as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still” (Mansfield “Bliss” 185). Bertha is clearly disturbed, as she repeats Pearl’s parting words to her—“Your lovely pear tree—pear tree—pear tree!”—as she runs to the window crying “Oh, what is going to happen now?” (185). Her final vision suggests that she has come to understand both her repression and her oppression, but cannot see another way.

Isabel also has a moment of disruption at the end of “Marriage à la Mode,” when she receives the letter from William. After reading it aloud to her friends, who mock it ruthlessly, she has a moment of apparent shame, thinking “How vile, odious, abominable, vulgar” (Mansfield “Marriage” 280). On the surface, it seems that Isabel is referring to her own behaviour in betraying William’s trust. However, a closer read reveals ambiguity as to just what she finds vile. As she closes her eyes, she sees them, “but not four, more like forty, laughing, sneering, jeering, stretching out their hands while she read William’s letter” (280). Perhaps Isabel has realized that her friends are “vile, odious, abominable, vulgar.” However, immediately following that vision, she chides herself: “Oh, what a loathsome thing to have done. How could she have done it!” (280). The suggestion that her realization is about her own vanity, which she echoes shortly after, is in turn undermined by the intervention of lines from William’s letter: “*God forbid, my darling, that I should be a drag on your happiness*” (280). Perhaps what disgusts her most is the letter itself, the profession of love within a relationship that she finds stifling, even if she

also recognizes that she and her friends are shallow in their reactions. She then sets herself the task of making a decision: "Would she go with them, or stay here and write to William" (280). "I must make up my mind," she says to herself, setting this up as a decision about more than just writing a letter (280). One gets the sense that she is making a final decision about whether or not to recommit to her marriage, and in the end, she returns to her friends. She does not, however, outright reject the marriage either, but instead asserts her intention to return to the letter later on, deferring the decision after all. There is recognition in Isabel that no action will improve her situation. As for Bertha, returning fully to either her husband (tradition) or her friends (modernity) is a poor choice.

What critics have identified as frustrated epiphany in these stories could be read as simply pessimism on Mansfield's part; however, I argue that it is Mansfield's mode of critique. Mansfield represents both Bertha's and Isabel's desire to improve their everyday lives by becoming modern, but reveals the flaws in the very notion of being modern that is on offer, allowing no possibility for moving beyond the lives they already have. There is no solution, only critique. This is driven home by the satirical manner in which Mansfield represents the artist friends in each story. Both Bertha and Isabel imagine a bohemian lifestyle as a promising alternative to married life, yet their bohemian friends end up being just as disappointing.

Mansfield's mockery of the friends in these two stories also disrupts the bourgeois everyday through absurdism and humour. Throughout "Marriage à la Mode," Isabel's

friends are portrayed as childish and silly.¹⁵⁵ Moira, for instance, is first seen “in a bonnet like a huge strawberry, jump[ing] up and down,” shouting “No ice! No ice! No ice!” (Mansfield “Marriage” 275). Bobby Kane then emerges from the candy shop with an armful of sweets that haven’t been paid for, and Isabel has to take care of the bill. Later, he is seen “flapp[ing] his towel” as he “began to leap and pirouette on the parched lawn” (277). Their vacuity is further emphasized in the speech of, Dennis, a writer who repeatedly speaks in the form of captions: “A Lady in Love with a Pineapple,” “A Lady with a Box of Sardines,” and “A Lady Reading a Letter” (275, 277, 279). While I am unaware of any particular surrealist or cubist paintings these captions might gesture toward, the structure of the titles certainly mirrors and then subverts many traditional painting captions, most notably Johannes Vermeer’s *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*. Though it appears this absurdity is exaggerated by William’s ambivalent perspective, a similar treatment persists when the story takes Isabel’s perspective, suggesting an authorial narrative voice is the one mocking them. Near the end, as they are all lounging about, Bobby asks Isabel “childishly,” “Do you think there will be Mondays in Heaven?” (278). Isabel further emphasizes this immaturity in her friends by actually calling them “my children” (277). Ironically, she spends the entire story looking after these grown-up “children,” while her actual children are being cared for by the nanny, and do not feature in her daily activities at all. There is an implicit critique in this relationship of the emotional, domestic labour women do in bohemian circles as well, in which they may

¹⁵⁵ According to Dunn, “At first glance, ‘Marriage à la Mode’ is a satirical send-up of what Magalaner calls ‘the flamboyant, articulate, utterly silly pseudo-bohemian’” (207).

end up simply caring for the male artists, who are in turn enabled to fully explore their creative lives.¹⁵⁶

In “Bliss,” Bertha seems to idolize her “modern, thrilling friends, writers and painters and poets or people keen on social questions,” yet they likewise disappoint her, and Mansfield foreshadows the betrayal with a deft mockery of them throughout the story (Mansfield “Bliss” 178). She paints them as ridiculous—in their speech, in their dress, and in their absurd conversations. She mocks them through the use of italics to mimic speech patterns, dropping emphasis on the most mundane elements of conversation to highlight their superficiality, and readers come to see them as actually quite ridiculous. For instance, the Norman Knights call each other by the pet names “Face” and “Mug,” and Mrs. Knight arrives in a coat covered in monkeys, with an outfit underneath that Bertha notes makes her look like a monkey, in “that yellow silk dress out of scraped banana skins. And her amber ear-rings; they were like little dangling nuts” (179). And when Eddie Warren, the playwright, arrives to dinner he reports: “I have had such a *dreadful* experience with a taxi-man; he was *most* sinister. I couldn’t get him to *stop*. The *more* I knocked and called the *faster* he went. ... I saw myself *driving* through Eternity in

¹⁵⁶ Majumdar argues that Mansfield “seems keenly aware, moreover, that this ritualized life of the arts is likely to be embedded within a masculine subjectivity, that the banal labor needed to clean the debris of everyday life is far more likely to be left to women” (*Prose of the World* 87). One of the most striking examples of this from this particular period (the 1920’s) is André Breton’s novel *Nadja*, in which the woman is ruthlessly exploited for the man’s creative benefit. When Nadja cannot tidy up “the debris of everyday life,” she is committed to a mental institution and André never visits her, having already reaped what he needed from her for his aesthetic manifesto.

a *timeless* taxi” (179).¹⁵⁷ In all of Eddie’s speech, he is dropping emphasis like this, rendering his speech more affected and dramatic.

The truly absurd moment in “Bliss” comes at the end, just as Bertha discovers her husband’s affair with Pearl. At that moment, Eddie is passionately talking about the brilliance of a new poem called “*Table d’Hôte*,” which “begins with an *incredibly* beautiful line: ‘Why Must it Always be Tomato Soup?’” (185). The utter mundanity of a set menu of tomato soup set against Eddie’s dramatic speech patterns emphasizes falsity in the speech itself, suggesting that these characters have no depth, that they are nothing but affectation. Furthermore, Bertha see her husband in a passionate embrace with Pearl, just as Eddie says: “It’s so *deeply* true, don’t you feel?” he says. “Tomato soup is so *dreadfully* eternal” (185). It is a moment of *non sequitur* both hilarious and horrible, and the emphasis on “*deeply*” and “*dreadfully*” here serves a dual purpose: it speaks to Bertha’s dreadful realization that her marriage (and herself) lack depth, while also highlighting the dread that comes of realizing the banality of the domestic objects and routines that she has armoured herself with and built her identity on. Not only is her marriage revealed to be an oppressive trap, but her whole world, the space around her, is directly implicated in that collapse of values as well, moving from absurd to completely meaningless. How can “Tomato Soup” be “so dreadfully eternal”? It makes one think of Andy Warhol, and how something as simple as a can of soup becomes emblematic of

¹⁵⁷ I must digress here to mention Elizabeth Bowen’s “The Demon Lover,” in which the female protagonist is whisked away in a taxi driven by the ghost of her dead husband, a WWI soldier. It is unclear whether Bowen was influenced by Mansfield’s absurd Eddie Warren, but the recurring motif of being driven away in a taxi toward death is interesting. In Bowen’s story, the surfacing ghost is uncanny, whereas in Mansfield’s story the taxi ride seems humorously surreal. In both cases, there is a disruption of the ordinary though, suggesting that even the most mundane aspects of daily life are tenuous.

both an everyday life governed by commodities, and a domestic everyday as oppressive to some women now as it was a hundred years ago. The continuity in that symbol is powerful, suggesting a real prescience in Mansfield.

This use of food objects to critique marriage also occurs in “Marriage à la Mode.” The title, meaning modern marriage, or marriage in the fashion of the day (as stated earlier), emphasizes both the changing nature of marriage and the fleeting superficiality of the relationships in the story. However, the idiomatic meaning of “à la mode” as a dessert served with ice cream also signifies here.¹⁵⁸ Marriage, served up with a side of ice cream, comes across in this sense as trivial and mundane, but also ephemeral. This use of the phrase falls in line with the absurd captions with which Dennis describes the events of the day.

These moments of disruption through food and absurd humour anticipate Luis Buñuel’s great satire *The Discreet Charms of the Bourgeoisie*. In this film, three couples are caught in a loop, wherein they try again and again to gather for a dinner party, yet are each time interrupted by an extraordinary and absurd event. Mansfield likewise uses surrealist-style disruption to satirize the bourgeoisie and break domestic routine. We do not typically think of Mansfield as a surrealist, but surrealism is not just about the strange; it is about the disruption of the everyday through which the everyday then reveals itself. In this sense, one could argue for Mansfield’s use of a surrealist aesthetic. Highmore has argued emphatically that “to understand the general modernist incorporation of surrealism we have to move beyond the explicit groups of self-

¹⁵⁸ First printed in a 1903 issue of *Everybody’s Magazine*, this meaning of the phrase had gained widespread use in the United States. Though not a commonplace in Europe, it is likely that Mansfield and her readers would have at least been familiar with this usage.

proclaimed adherents to the surrealist cause and recognize how much of modernist culture is built around the privileging of chance, the unconscious, and an amorphous sense of the primitive” (“Hopscotch” 73). At the heart of the surrealist aesthetic is a moment when one sees that everyday life could be otherwise, at which point the everyday takes on “a new vividness” (74). Through the aforementioned instances of *non sequitur*, absurdism, and textual disruption, Mansfield’s representations of everyday life then become vivid, and both the reader and characters see beyond banality and routine to the fragile, now cracked, veneer of the bourgeois everyday. Most notably, the surrealist moment of chance is captured in the aforementioned moment of revelation, when two disparate elements—a marital betrayal and Tomato Soup—come together at precisely the same moment to reveal the poverty of a bourgeois everyday governed by commodities. One element without the other would reveal an incomplete picture; that the two occur simultaneously presents an instance of how surrealism happens “‘out there’ in the world rather than in the imaginative ‘visions’ of a coterie of self-proclaimed artists” (71). As Highmore points out, British surrealism later took up “the objective claims of surrealism” rather than stressing interiority as the continental surrealists did (73). In this manner, Mansfield not only makes use of a surrealist aesthetic, but also anticipates the objective focus of the later British surrealists.

What the bohemian lifestyle potentially offers Bertha and Isabel does not represent the bright alternative they would have hoped for, and the message of the two stories seems to be that, even if the wife can become self-possessed and free from patriarchal constraints, she will only find more emptiness. In Mansfield’s portrayals of “feminized upper-middle-class domesticity,” Majumdar argues, there is tension that

manifests “a certain gendered dialectic of boredom and excitement” (“Katherine Mansfield” 123). However, the excitement at the potential for change is repeatedly frustrated and the boredom, or in other words banality, of bourgeois everyday life persists even if momentarily disrupted. The pessimism in Mansfield’s endings is tangible, and it raises the question, why do these narratives that seem to want to empower women make it so difficult for them to change their lives? Is it simply a commentary on the power of marriage and patriarchal control? Or is there more at work in these situations? Majumdar claims that, in Mansfield’s stories,

women are only too conscious, often painfully so, of their entrapment within lives defined by severe aesthetic and affective poverty. As such, these stories, wholly or in part, are driven by the quest for affective and aesthetic meaning. *What makes for a meaningful life?* is the urgent question that lies behind most of her stories, a question that she frames most powerfully in terms of women’s experience. (*Prose of the World* 88)

Majumdar does not come back to this question of “*What makes for a meaningful life?*,” presumably because Mansfield does not answer it either. Both Bertha and Isabel seem to believe that bohemianism and art have transformative power. However, the artistic lifestyle is revealed to have little transformative power in and of itself. Rather than transcending the banality and oppression of the bourgeois everyday, the turn to art only gives the illusion of freedom and choice, while the women still remain fixed by the demands of a patriarchal capitalism. In this sense, Mansfield complicates discourses of feminist progress characteristic of other writers, like Woolf for instance. In Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse*, Lily Briscoe is able to capture transcendent moments of being in her art, and thus rise above what Woolf calls the “cotton wool” of “non-being,” or the everyday (“Sketch of the Past” 72). In contrast with the housewife Mrs. Ramsay, Lily is a modern

woman who presumably gets to fulfil the promises of modernity, although this is a problematic notion, as I argue in the previous chapter. Conversely, Mansfield's characters are given no way out of the bourgeois everyday, even momentarily.

However, while Mansfield's frustrated endings seem strikingly pessimistic, they are arguably quite powerful. Lefebvre provocatively states that "Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all" (*Critique I* 127). Mansfield likewise implies that everyday life must be seen for what it actually is, and then the material practices that constitute it need to be transformed to make any real differences in women's lives. These stories do not promote transcendence above an impoverished everyday life. Instead, Mansfield demonstrates how firmly rooted her characters are in the bourgeois everyday, and how conventional gender roles are kept in place by the demands of capital, suggesting that what needs to be transcended is the economic aspects of marriage and the bourgeois commitment to commodities. Only by divorcing this system from family relations can the women engage in daily practices that truly serve their own needs, transforming the shape of the everyday itself.

Conclusion: Everyday Discourse

“The everyday: what is most difficult to discover.”

—Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*

One of the most important questions often asked about everyday life is whether it can be accessed through discourse or representation. Maurice Blanchot argues that the everyday cannot be grasped through knowledge: “the everyday is inaccessible, but only insofar as every mode of acceding is foreign to it” (241, 245). In Blanchot’s view, as soon as one tries to articulate the everyday, it ceases to be everyday and all that remains is a representation or copy. The everyday, after all, is such because it goes largely unnoticed. Along similar lines, Ben Highmore claims that a “significant concern for theorizing the everyday is the problem of generating a suitable form for registering everyday modernity” (*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 22). It is clear that Highmore sees the problem somewhat differently from Blanchot, suggesting that there might actually be an appropriate discursive form for accessing the everyday, even if that form somehow transforms it in the process. Highmore continues to suggest that the question itself betrays inadequate knowledge of everyday life even at an experiential level:

That the very form of articulating the everyday is seen as a problem, or that describing the everyday might require formal experimentation, implies not only that the everyday has suffered from inattention, but that the kinds of attention that are available are severely out of step with the actuality of the everyday. (*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 23)

This echoes with Lefebvre’s claim that most people “do not know their own lives very well, or know them inadequately” (*Critique I* 94). For Lefebvre, as well as Guy Debord,

this inattention to everyday life is compelled by ideology. People are too “delude[d]” by modern spectacle and consumerism to know “their needs and their own fundamental attitudes” (94). If this is the case, and I take for granted that it is, the need to “tear away the veil” to see everyday life as it is becomes especially urgent (57). Furthermore, if there were truly no discourse sufficient for at least recognizing everyday life, then women would not be the only group unable to understand it, as Lefebvre suggests. Presumably we would then all be crushed under its weight, regardless of subject position.

Highmore asks, “What then would constitute a suitable aesthetic form for registering daily life in all its newness, uncertainty and lack of tradition?” (*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 23). The aesthetic forms presented as ‘everyday’ in his study are all experimental, and his argument focuses largely on the avant-garde aesthetics of shock and defamiliarization inherent in movements like Surrealism. Defamiliarization achieves the objective of making noticeable something banal or obvious, although it frequently transfigures it in the process.¹⁵⁹ While this dissertation has similarly argued for Mansfield’s use of a disruptive aesthetic to reveal the everyday, it has also tried to avoid configurations of the ordinary and extraordinary that deploy the extraordinary as an insidious distraction from the persistent realities of an impoverished everyday life. In an attempt to foreground the mundane and ordinary character of everyday life, this dissertation has put forward the stylistic mode typically labelled ‘stream of consciousness’ as a discourse that might be sufficient to the everyday itself. Despite its

¹⁵⁹ Highmore argues that “If everyday life, for the most part, goes by unnoticed (even as it is being revolutionized), then the first task for attending to it will be to make it noticeable” (*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 23). Of course, this perspective, as well as the others mentioned takes for granted that one would want to make the everyday noticeable, rather than remain ignorant to it.

being a highly crafted, artificial technique, it does not work to defamiliarize experience so much as to mimic it.¹⁶⁰

To come back to the question, in light of my findings in this study, do the stylistic techniques we typically call ‘stream of consciousness’ allow access to the everyday? I am compelled to answer both ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ The inherent problems in the uses of the literary and philosophical terms here are not easily resolved. Throughout this dissertation, the terms ‘everyday,’ ‘everydayness,’ ‘consciousness,’ ‘experience,’ and even ‘femininity’ threaten to uneasily slip into one another, while at the same time demonstrating their inherent incompatibility. For some reason, they beg to be mapped onto each other, even while there is no apparent logic binding them beyond formal properties. As such, my attempts at fixing the everyday *as a ‘stream of consciousness’* have generated a constant reminder that one term is a concept that refers to the material world and the other is a highly artificial literary construct. Despite this persistent disjunction, though, there seems to also be a way in which style *can* at least speak to how the everyday is produced, even if the everyday itself always exceeds those representations. The two stylistic modes discussed here, deployed by the continuity of the stream of consciousness and disruptive moments that challenge that continuity, have enabled effective and thorough inquiry into the ideological pressures that impel everyday practices, while at the same time presenting opportunities for challenging power structures through practice and style.

Just as Lefebvre has suggested we should not ignore the “momentous eruption of everyday life” in to modernist literature, I think we should also pay attention to the recent eruption of everyday studies into modernist criticism (*Everyday Life in the Modern World*

¹⁶⁰ In contrast to, for instance, Imagism’s or T.S. Eliot’s shocking juxtapositions, or the distorted perspectives of Cubism or Fauvism.

2). Similarly to 100 or so years ago, a renewed interest in everyday life suggests we are in a moment of crisis, in which we are increasingly driven by a need to understand why the current social structures are as they are. Particularly in regard to feminist progress, many women still struggle to balance domestic responsibilities with work and still face significant inequities in public life. A closer look at how the existing power structures established themselves in the previous century can help us to understand how they work, and perhaps also to see that the results were not inevitable. The realities of everyday life continue to fall short of the promises of modernity, and the gains of previous feminist movements appear to have only been a beginning. Lefebvre claims that,

Modernity was promising. What did it promise? Happiness, the satisfaction of all needs. This *promesse de bonheur*—no longer through beauty, but by technical means—was to be realized in daily life. In fact, the ideology of modernity above all masked daily life as the site of continuity, by floating the illusion of a rupture with the previous epoch. (*Critique III* 49–50)

Understanding the everyday as a “site of continuity” troubles the progress narrative and challenges us to look back for answers. As we grapple with the effects of global capitalism—a slumping economy, continued gender inequality, institutionalized exploitation of developing nations and the working classes—some insight into potential alternatives could provide hope and motivation. Looking back to the moment when current ideologies began to crystallize enables just this, and incidentally both Lefebvre and Debord claim that moment to have been around the first two decades of the twentieth century.¹⁶¹ As Marshall Berman argues:

¹⁶¹ Lefebvre begins his timeline of modernity “around the 1900’s” with the appearance of a “modern style” in France, then follows with a series of “silent catastrophes” that lead to the First World War (*Critique III* 46). “Portents of modernity can be detected earlier, but it did not flourish before the beginning of the twentieth century. ... Daily life was

we can learn a great deal from the first modernists, not so much about their age as about our own. We have lost our grip on the contradictions that they had to grasp with all their strength, at every moment in their everyday lives, in order to live at all. Paradoxically, these first modernists may turn out to understand us—the modernization and modernism that constitute our lives—better than we understand ourselves. (36)

As Berman points out, the literature of the modernist period understands some of the origins of our current situation, and as such, “going back can be a way to go forward” (36). While the modernists were not necessarily historians or activists, their representations of modernity necessarily engage with the spirit and anxieties of the moment. Furthermore, an understanding of the revolutionary power of everyday practices can perhaps be more clearly grasped through representation of specific practices than theory or philosophy, which will always (necessarily) slide back into a questioning of the terms.

While each of the authors in this study were resistant to the term ‘feminist,’ I think it remains necessary to continue ignoring those claims and giving precedence to what we understand as their feminist aims. Like Richardson, Woolf, and Mansfield, Elizabeth Bowen also asserted she was “not, and shall never be, a feminist” (qtd. in Ellmann 18). Though “a good deal remains to be righted,” she states in a 1936 article in the *New Statesmen*, “broadly, the woman’s movement has accomplished itself” (18). She continues to argue that now that women “are free to do what they ought, what they can,

[then] consolidated as the site where the old reality and the old representations were preserved” (46–47). Debord similarly claims that spectacle, his term for the ideological everyday, established itself in the 1920’s (*Comments* 3).

what they have it in them to do: they have no excuse for not doing it” (50).¹⁶² While I appreciate her empowering rallying cry, I cannot help but wonder how Bowen might respond today. With continued gender inequity all over the world, we can hardly say that the women’s movement “has accomplished itself.” She seems to have made a pre-emptive statement based more on what was possible than what actually happened in most people’s daily lives.

Although I have challenged Lefebvre and de Certeau to demonstrate how women can have agency in everyday life, I must admit that I do not feel I accomplished exactly what I set out for. While I have identified potent sites of resistance in *The Tunnel*, and cast Miriam’s everyday as a *negotiable* reality, an ideological everyday seems to remain the dominant force in my readings of Woolf and Mansfield. Unfortunately, their representations of the everyday demonstrate considerable ideological continuity and leave the reader with a sense of pessimism. Of course, my readings of both Woolf and Mansfield still demonstrate the power of style in lifting the veil away from everyday life; however, they leave little room for those being crushed under its weight to do much more than simply resist.

One of the shortfalls of this research, in the end, is that it has followed Felski’s plan for a feminist intervention into everyday life a little too closely. Although there may be ways of recuperating home, repetition, and habit from a negatively feminized view of everyday life (for instance, through Luce Giard’s “doing-cooking” and her conception of the domestic arts), I might argue now that attention to domestic narratives in the interwar

¹⁶² Maud Ellmann reminds us that, like Woolf, Bowen was in a position of privilege, and argues that “A female office-cleaner battling for equal pay might be less convinced than Bowen, heiress to a large (if penurious) estate in County Cork, that feminism had fulfilled its historic mission” (18).

period is not all that likely to uncover a recognizably liberatory politics of everyday life. Even in the case of *The Tunnel*, while Miriam experiences similar patterns of practice in her workplace as she would in domestic routine, her refusal of a domestic role is still what allows her access to other, more potent sites of resistance. As such, my readings have inadvertently challenged Felski's paradigm for a feminist intervention into everyday life by demonstrating its shortfalls in practice. Her call to look at everyday practices in the home still relies on the dichotomy of public and private, which was more clearly defined during the Victorian period, on which most of her literary criticism is focused. I still stand by Felski's and Langbauer's arguments that a feminist intervention into everyday studies is necessary, but it is clear from this study that recuperation or reversal may not be the most effective approach. Perhaps something more along the lines of a *reinvention* of everyday life is necessary. My discussion of 'mobile spaces' in *The Tunnel* is a version of this new approach, which is not organized around either the feminized spaces of the everyday or the masculine spaces of the *flâneur*, the public figure, or the monumental hero. Rather than trying to resituate women differently within an existing chronotope of everyday life, this approach reconfigures the chronotope itself. It is possible that this new paradigm could turn up other sites of resistance in Woolf's and Mansfield's works as well.

As gestured toward in the introduction, I came to this study expecting to discover a liberatory feminist politics at work in the literature, but what I found was much more complicated. Just as the authors challenged conventional gender roles, they also revealed the incredible difficulty of moving beyond them. The more I read, the more Lefebvre's concept of continuity, or the lagging everyday, became apparent. I also found counter-

evidence to my original premise, suggesting that discourses of feminist progress propped up by readings of Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and similar texts might be oversimplifying the matter. My discoveries about the relationship between natural rhythms and domestic routine in Woolf are especially troubling, as I still, despite my readings, want to believe in the recuperative power of Woolf's poetic discourse in the arena of everyday life. As the contradictions in her work cannot be resolved (just as the paradox of everyday life cannot be resolved), and the problems around class cannot be ignored or easily resolved either, how can we then understand Woolf's use of essentializing discourses? No feminist scholar, least of all me, wants to argue that Woolf's representations of time and domesticity undermine her feminist aims. Taking another perspective on the everyday (like the Messianic, for instance) would deal with the contradictions, but the problem of a feminized everyday life as 'non-being' remains. This reveals another problem that has emerged from this research, which is the inherent trouble in trying to reconcile historically-situated essentializing discourses with our current understandings of gender. How does one attend to criticisms of gender essentialism, which I believe in wholeheartedly, without discounting the work of the modernists who only had that discourse to work with?

This, like the other problems that have emerged from this dissertation, can be addressed by further research, and as such, this study lays some essential groundwork for future interventions into both modernist studies and everyday studies. While the research for this study initially relied on a wide range of ideas and thinkers, the dissertation itself focuses on a narrow range of thinkers to try to fix a perhaps indefinable subject. The everyday life that emerges from my readings, then, is a product of the perspectives and

discourses applied to it. As such, this dissertation cannot provide an exhaustive account of everyday life, and this is of course an issue of scope. It turns out that nearly anything can be considered ‘everyday’ from one vantage point or another, so detailed inquiry necessitates broad and extensive omissions. This cannot be easily resolved, only supplemented with further readings and supplementary perspectives. There is also an inherent problem in drawing generalizing conclusions about the historical nature of everyday life through literature, which is always only a representation. As such, we are drawn back to what Friedman’s definition of modernism as the “expressive dimension of modernity” ultimately signifies (432).

I admit, as before, that this study did not end up exactly where I expected it to. My objectives in the beginning were three-fold: (1) to see what more representations of everyday life could tell us about modernism as a cultural response to modernity, and the role played by women in the emergence of modernism; (2) to supplement male-centered theories of the everyday with inquiry into women’s everyday lives; and (3) to bring further attention to Richardson’s and Mansfield’s contributions to modernism, situating them alongside Woolf. Although style was a question from the beginning, it became more central to the discussion as I went along. This emerged out of the existing criticism’s focus on subjective consciousness, femininity, and the use of the stream of consciousness term, which I discovered were rather problematic. I expected to find shared aims in the authors’ uses of style, which would potentially lead to an argument about ‘women’s style’ as foundational to modernism, following from works like Shari Benstock’s *Women of the Left Bank* and Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers’s *Writing for Their Lives: The Modernist Women, 1910-1940*. While my readings uncover

some shared aims between the authors, I discovered that each author deploys style in substantially different ways and to different effect. Style, then, was not the unifying principle I thought it might be, which ended up actually being more interesting.

Variations in stylistic technique to apprehend the everyday and the subjective experience of it speak to the multiplicity and heterogeneity of everyday life itself, which brings me back again to the question of whether there can be *a style* of the everyday. Taking into consideration differences of gender, class, nationality, sexuality, race, and even different commitments to literary tradition and political agendas, I might propose we look for “suitable aesthetic form[s] for registering daily life” instead (Highmore *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* 23).

This work opens up significant potential for further studies of the everyday in literature, feminist perspectives of the everyday, and further readings of both canonical and marginal modernist texts. Future research could add other modernist women writers to the discussion, and I think it should. So few have been read through the rubric of everyday life, which would, as I have demonstrated, provide new readings of the literature and new understandings of modernism as feminism. Elizabeth Bowen would be a welcome addition to the conversation, particularly in service of building on a socio-historical understanding of interwar feminism. The everyday provides a useful frame for recovering still marginalized female authors, including the Scottish writers Catherine Carswell and Willa Muir (among others). Arguably these writers’ attention to a particularly oppressive and dreary Calvinist everyday life is one of the reasons they have been neglected in literary studies. There is also potential, as well as an urgent necessity, to challenge other oppressive discourses of domesticity and femininity inherent to

modernist and avant-garde literature and theory. For instance, Surrealism's treatment of women, particularly the misogyny of André Breton's *Nadja*, could be read alongside Mansfield or Woolf to question Breton's simultaneous degradations and exaltations of the properly domestic woman. These are just a few examples, but the options are countless given how little research has been published on the everyday in modernism.

There is increasing research potential for further studies of Richardson, Mansfield, and Woolf revealed here as well. Although myself and Randall (and to an extent, McCracken) have read *The Tunnel* as an everyday text, there remains 12 other volumes of *Pilgrimage* to consider.¹⁶³ There is a tendency to read parts of the narrative as representative of the whole, which I have also done to a point, but the parts are all quite different. Another angle I considered would be reading *Oberland* as another type of chronotope developed in the *Pilgrimage* series: the vacation. One could even read it alongside *To The Lighthouse* and Mansfield's German spa stories to question why and how we establish everyday routines in what are meant to be non-everyday sites.

In regard to Mansfield studies, my new reading of "Marriage à la Mode" suggests that existing interpretations of a limited number of Mansfield's works do not broadly apply to all of them. Studies of other neglected works could turn up some equally interesting new insights and further establish Mansfield's centrality to modernism. The stylistic paradigm through which I have read Mansfield's disruption of a bourgeois

¹⁶³ Randall's article "'Telling the day' in Beatrice Potter Webb and Dorothy Richardson: The Temporality of the Working Woman," which also focuses on *The Tunnel*'s workday, was published around the time I had already established the dissertation chapter. Although we uncover some different points—notably, my reading is the first to discuss cycling—it would be good to look at another volume to build further on the research around boredom and everyday practice.

everyday life makes room to read additional stories from a similar perspective, even those with a more established critical history.

Although the contradictions I discuss in Woolf cannot be easily resolved, as I have stated, reading through other texts could provide insight into other ways Woolf might deal with the problem of everyday ‘non-being.’ Attention to the everyday in her short stories, for instance, would read well alongside Mansfield’s disruptive aesthetics. What my reading of Woolf has demonstrated above all else, I think, is how necessary it is that we resist the stream of consciousness label in discussing everydayness in Woolf’s works. A turn to the short stories might mitigate against the impulse to fall back into these established discourses.

If the ultimate goal of everyday theory is the critique and transformation of everyday life, the actual improvement of lived life or the ‘catching up’ to modernity, then we must ask what these literary representations can tell us about real, lived situations. The readings here suggest that we cannot ‘catch up,’ and that Lefebvre was right to suggest everyday life always lags behind the possible. A paradigm shift, then, is called for, which stops looking ahead and focuses on the realities of the present. As Lefebvre asserts, “Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all” (*Critique I* 127). Each of the authors and theorists discussed in this dissertation offers an understanding of how everyday life is produced, experienced, understood, and potentially transformed. If we can uncover the connections, or as Woolf might have it, ‘patterns’ that underlie these paradigms, we may be able to focus our understanding on implementing more radical transformations of everyday life itself, rather than continuing to look beyond it.

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