The Architecture of Walking

embodied perception in novels of the European city in the 1920s

Angeliki Sioli
School of Architecture
McGill University, Montreal, Canada
March 2015

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

The perception and representation of place are crucial to our understanding of its meaning, and so to our creation of architecture. This dissertation studies a precise manifestation of spatial perception and representation: literary descriptions in which protagonists are fully immersed in the city, in which their experience of architecture and the urban environment is sensed through the body and impacts their consciousness and actions, and in which they in turn have the potential to influence the city and its atmospheres. The dissertation addresses passages describing the experience of walking specifically, as among the most profound instances of such *enactive embodied interaction.* It focuses on novels whose narrative draws heavily upon the cartographical and topographic realities of each city.

Employing a *phenomenological hermeneutic* approach the dissertation examines descriptions of urban walking in the Russian city of St. Petersburg, through Andrei Bely's *Petersburg* (1922, final version), London through Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Paris through Philippe Soupault's *Last Nights of Paris* (1928). Questions of materiality, geometrical and topographical relationships and human appropriation of space become the subject matter. Attention is paid to the way the urban configurations and their "character" influence human behavior and how walking allows for both traversal of diverse urban atmospheres and their creation.

The dissertation thus reveals the architectural context of the particular cities in the respective time period each novel describes and in ways that none of the conventional means of architectural representation and research can offer. It valorizes elusive qualities of these urban environments: their moods and inherent "mythologies." The dissertation concludes by discussing the relevance of this study for a contemporary reading of diverse urban environments through literature, along with the importance of such an approach for architectural education today: foregrounding the value literary imagination can have for architects, when cultivated through literature and the use of language.

Résumé

La perception et la représentation d'un lieu sont cruciales pour la compréhension de son sens, et par conséquent pour la création des espaces significatifs en architecture. Cette thèse étudie une manifestation précise de perception et de représentation du lieu: des descriptions littéraires où la ville enveloppe entièrement les protagonistes, dans lesquelles leurs expériences de l'architecture et de l'environnement urbain sont perçues à travers leur corps. Leurs perceptions étant à la fois intellectuelles et émotionnelles, elles ont un impact sur leur conscience et leurs actions. Il s'agit des situations dans lesquelles les protagonistes, à leur tour, pourraient potentiellement avoir une influence sur la ville et son atmosphère. La thèse traite particulièrement des passages qui décrivent explicitement l'expérience de marcher, une des conditions les plus exemplaires d'une telle *interaction*. Elle examine des romans dont la narration fait appel fortement aux réalités cartographiques et topographiques de chaque ville.

Suivant une approche *herméneutique phénoménologique* cette thèse étudie les descriptions de déambulations urbaines dans trois romans : Saint Petersburg en Russie, à travers *Petersburg* de Andrei Bely (1922, version finale), Londres à travers *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) de Virginia Woolf et Paris à travers *Les dernières nuits de Paris* de Philippe Soupault (1928). Les questions de matérialité, de relations géométriques et topographiques et d'appropriation humain de l'espace en sont le sujet principal. Cette étude accorde une attention particulière à la façon dont les configurations urbaines et le "caractère" de la ville influencent les conduites humaines et réciproquement, à la façon dont le passage pédestre à travers la ville peut créer de nouvelles atmosphères.

Ainsi, la thèse présente le contexte architectural des villes en question dans les années 1920, de façon unique et inégalée par les moyens conventionnels de la représentation architecturale et de la recherche. Elle valorise les qualités insaisissables de ces environnements urbains: leurs ambiances et leurs "mythologies" inhérentes. La thèse conclut avec une discussion sur la pertinence d'une lecture contemporaine de divers environnements urbains à travers la littérature, ainsi que sur l'importance d'une telle approche dans la formation des architectes aujourd'hui en privilégiant l'imagination littéraire et l'emploi du langage.

Acknowledgements

My journey through the bittersweet agonies of my Ph.D. research started during a Sunday family gathering. We were celebrating the completion of my Post Professional Degree on Theory of Architecture when my father raised his wineglass with a serious look on his face and instead of a toast asked me: “So, now, … when will you be leaving for North America?” My mother, who can humble everyone and everything with just one of her characteristic witty comments, remained silent. Her surprised and worried gaze towards my father transformed to the most encouraging look and landed on me with softness. It was during this Sunday lunch that I decisively contemplated starting doctoral research; a thought I had many times flirted with. I have been blessed with two parents who can see what drives and motivates me in life and respect that; support me in every step of the way; and always stand by me patiently listening and trying to understand, no matter what I need to talk about. Their trust and belief in me are invaluable fuels for my engine.

That Sunday toast ended up taking me all the way from Greece to Montreal, Canada, where I landed knowing nobody, clueless of the miracles this – for me – unknown part of the world would offer. The School’s facilities, the University’s libraries, the people’s (staff, professors, colleagues) kindness and eagerness to help, and the city’s gentle and smooth atmosphere (even, paradoxically, during the harsh winters) were only few of them. To encounter on your way a supervisor who inspires you, moves you and makes you revalue your love for architecture and life is a rare gift in a Ph.D. process. To end up sharing a deep and cherished friendship with him, is something I had never even dreamed of. No words can ever express my gratitude to Alberto Pérez-Gómez who with his wife Louise Pelletier offered me a second family away from home.

My new “Canadian family” was soon enriched by Professor Ricardo Castro, member of my advisory committee, who would constantly bombard me with references of new incredible novels to read, superb movies to watch. He would also always have a coffee with me to boost up my spirits and make sure I am not loosing my mind during the academically-fruitless days. A passionate philhellene, he managed to make me appreciate my own country and culture more deeply.

Mari Lending, the third member of my advisory committee – whom I never had the opportunity to meet in person – managed to transmit through the invisible waves of Skype and

numerous e-mails passionate confidence in my work. With her torrential comments and enthusiasm she would sharply alert me to shortcomings; suggest insightful alternative approaches; correct every single word and sentence that didn't read properly and always encourage me with a warm glowing smile.

Lawrence Bird, whom I also haven't met in person yet, treated my work with utmost care and edited with patience my draft, offering insightful linguistic suggestions and bright architectural observations. The appropriateness and skillfulness of his editing, which can improve even translations by renowned poets, allowed my voice to become precise and clear.

To reach the moment of submitting a draft to the editor and my advisory committee though, presupposed a long period of time after the moment of my first landing in Montreal; a period incredibly rich and beautiful for me, primarily due to a number of outstanding and special people I had the luck to meet at McGill. My "three cowboys" (in order of appearance) Ron Jelaco, Jason Crow and Paul Holmquist would protect me from any "villains" blocking my way (from collegial deceivers to "armed raccoons" and mice); teach me "a trick or two" on how to survive in the Great White North; correct my English (with Paul holding officially the title of my English Professor); put up with my Greek spontaneity and volatile temperament; and treat me always as an equal fellow cowboy without ever asking me to "make the coffee," as all the women in the countless western spaghetti movies we watched together, had to do. Courtney Jelaco, like all the indispensable behind-the-camera crew, would discreetly oversee us and effectively keep us on track with a patience and kindness of infinite depth.

Suresh Perera would equally watch out for me, bring my attention back to the more important existential questions of life, reminding me constantly with his humorous and caustic advice that there is more to life than the Ph.D., helping me grasp the larger picture. Phuong-tram Nuyen, whose light and delicate presence can release anyone from any unbearable weight, would always be a phone call away in any situation of crisis and would never hesitate to abandon everything and everyone (even her now-husband during what was back then their first date) in order to run to my side. Negin Djavaherian graciously and uncomplainingly took on the role of my good fairy, watching my back, advising me on the difficulties of the process, and at times patiently putting up with my tiredness and nagging. Most recently, my only Greek friend in Montreal, Vilelmini Tsagkaraki, would share hours with me over coffee cups and restaurant tables,

scolding me again and again for not feeling proud enough of myself, encouraging me to stop worrying over issues that were beyond my control, and always (but always) reminding me that she is available for a break, no matter how long, anytime I needed one.

Among all my new Montreal friends, a special place will always belong to my dear Yoonchun Jung. Sitting by chance next to him on our very first seminar as School, when he kindly asked me to spell for him my incomprehensible Greek name, he has ever since stood firmly by my side, understanding, helping, admiring and loving me like an older brother.

There are, though, two people without whom my Ph.D. would probably not have been written: my closest friend Elsa Kiourtsoglou and my brother Stauros. Elsa, with whom, I have walked countless kilometers in different cities around the world (defying maps and navigation systems), overcoming many obstacles on our way towards each other and sharing our deepest fears, dreams and aspirations, has built with me the most vital, loving "space of friendship," where I can, carefree, make all the mistakes I want. It is in this space of ours, where I can breathe freely, that I find the strength to dive back into the dark waters of any ocean that lies ahead of me, with the hope of discovering more diamonds. And then last, but actually first before anybody else, is my brother Stauros, who since he was five years old was ready to fight for me against anyone – literally fight with a knife. All my years in Montreal, he could never understand how it may be possible for his big sister not to finish her research: "Oh well, you just discovered one more way how not to do your Ph.D.," he would always calmly tell me, seeing me "smashed" at the end of every Ph.D. review during the first years in Montreal. His unconditional love for me, his admiration and wise guidance, are stars in my firmament without which I could never imagine beginning any journey.

Table of Contents

List of figures

Chapter 2:

Figure 1: Apollon and Nikolai, sketch by Andrei Bely
(source: http://petersburg.berkeley.edu/bely/bomb.html)

Figure 2: Nikolai, sketch by Andrei Bely
(source: http://petersburg.berkeley.edu/bely/characters.html)

Chapter 4:

Figure 3: Cité du Retiro, sculpture by Philippe Soupault
(source: Pontus, Hulten., ed. *The Surrealist look at art: Eluard, Aragon, Soupault, Breton, Tzara*. Translated by Michael Palmer and Norma Coles (Venice: CA: Lapis Press, 1990), 84-85.)

We wander ignorant of the men and the places.

Virgil, *Aeneid*

“Cityful passing away, other cityful coming, passing away too…”

an introduction

His smile faded as he walked, a heavy cloud hiding the sun slowly, shadowing Trinity’s surly front. Trams passed one another, ingoing, outgoing, clanging. Useless words. Things go on same; day after day: squads of police marching out, back: trams in, out. Those two loonies mooching about. Dignam carted off. Mina Purefoy swollen belly on a bed groaning to have a child tugged out of her. One born every second somewhere. Other dying every second. Since I fed the birds five minutes. Three hundred kicked the bucket. Other three hundred born, washing the blood off, all are washed in the blood of the lamb, bawling maaaaaa.

Cityful passing away, other cityful coming, passing away too: other coming on, passing on. Houses, lines of houses, streets, miles of pavements, piledup bricks, stones. Changing hands. This owner, that. Landlord never dies they say. Other steps into his shoes when he gets his notice to quit. They buy the place up with gold and still they have all the gold. Swindle in it somewhere. Piled up in cities, worn away age after age. Pyramids in sand. Built on bread and onions. Slaves. Chinese wall. Babylon. Big stones left. Round towers. Rest rubble, sprawling suburbs, jerrybuilt, Kerwan’s mushroom houses, built of breeze. Shelter for the night.

No one is anything.

This is the very worst hour of the day. Vitality. Dull, gloomy: hate this hour. Feel as if I had been eaten and spewed.

Provost’s house. The reverend Dr Salmon: tinned salmon. Well tinned in there. Wouldn’t live in it if they paid me. Hope they have liver and bacon today. Nature abhors a vacuum.

> The sun freed itself slowly and lit glints of light among the silver ware in Walter Sexton's window opposite by which John Howard Parnell passed, unseeing.[1]

It is just past noon in Dublin on June 16, 1904 and Leopold Bloom, James Joyce's emblematic Ulysses of the eponymous novel, walks the city's center south and across the Liffey, the river bisecting the Irish capital. He is in search of a quiet place for a "Luncheon interval" [*U*, 204]. "Here we are. Must eat. (…) Feel better then." [*U*, 214] As his smile grows faint and the atmosphere gradually darkens, the haughty eighteenth-century façade of the Trinity College – "Trinity's surly front" – brings his attention to the city's environment. The building's 300-foot neoclassical heavy-stoned front is in attunement with Bloom's heavy mood.[2] The character may on the one hand sense the vitality and bursting energy of the place with every step: the constant motion of the trams – "Trams passed one another, ingoing, outgoing" – the loud resonant metallic sounds they produce – "clanging" – the groups of policemen advancing in their regular measured treads – "squads of police marching out, back" – but on the other hand he senses intensely "the endless, futile routine of things"[3] and the monotony of urban life –"Useless words. Things go on same; day after day". His gloomy disposition in tune with the grayness of the atmosphere, takes him to preoccupations of existential nature. Thoughts about the circle of life, the regular rhythm of birth and death –"One born every second somewhere. One dying every second" – in short "the stream of life" [*U*, 193], "a favorite expression of Leopold Bloom,"[4] overwhelms his mind followed by religious references to the blood of Jesus –"all are washed in the blood of the lamb"– and the potential salvation of eternal life promised by Christianity.

---

[1] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), 208-209.
[2] Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses, A Study* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1955), 202.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Melvin J. Friedman, "Lestrygonians," in *James Joyce's Ulysses, Critical Essays*, ed. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 132.

The city of Dublin, present in every step of his path, keeps drawing his attention and occasionally alters the content of his mental wanderings. A "cityful", meaning as much as a city can hold – as the author inventively coins the term in the model of words like spoonful – appears in and around Bloom, every time his attention returns to the urban environment. The overwhelming presence of the restless transformations of the urban setting – "Cityful passing away, other cityful coming, passing away too: other coming on, passing on" – leads his reflections to a more stable and permanent element of the city's physical appearance: its architecture. Dublin's "piledup brick houses" are delineated in his thoughts, immediately followed by contemplation of the shifting nature of their inhabitation. Ideas like the constant change of tenants wander through his mind – "Other steps into his shoes when he gets his notice to quit" – and then images of houses piled up in cities emerge, cities that decay as time goes by – "Piled up in cities, worn away age after age." The vivid image of Dublin's physical presence leads his mind to the passing of time, as "the modern city in its very dynamism spectacularly enacts the endless cycle of passing away and coming into being, of history itself."[5] Bloom's imagined cities of piled-up houses are indeed rapidly followed by thoughts on the decay of historical architectural monuments brought about by the unavoidable and ruthless effects of time's passage. Examples of massive monuments built at immense cost of labor, like the Great Wall of China dating from the Ming dynasty and the hanging gardens of ancient Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the classical world, are imagined "worn away age after age" as pyramids in sand, build "on bread and onions." It is not only a metaphor inspired by Bloom's growing

[5] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities, Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 129.

sense of hunger, an architecture of edible raw materials, but also a reference to the typical food of the slaves[6] who brought these monuments to life.

The architectural remnants of ancient Ireland sneak into his thoughts. The "Big stones" is a reference to the standing stone circles found in numerous places in the country, monuments associated with Bronze Age burial sites and whose function is the measuring of time.[7] The "Round towers" on the other hand refer to a striking feature of the pre-Norman Irish monasteries constructed from the ninth through the twelfth centuries, used as watchtowers and places of refuge.[8] Both these ancient yet impressive architectural works are imagined by Bloom as made of rubble, meaning built hastily with materials of poor quality: "jerrybuilt". But it is probably due to the fact that many of these impressive towers are still standing at the time Bloom walks in Dublin, that his thoughts move again in time and dwell on more contemporary architectural examples. The houses in the suburbs that sprout like mushrooms – another food-related reference – come into focus, along with Michael Kirwan,[9] a Dublin building contractor who at that time was building low-cost housing in the area just east of Phoenix Park in western Dublin,[10] in the "sprawling suburbs". These contemporary constructions seem even more vulnerable to the passing of time, compared to the historical monuments Bloom was thinking of just a minute ago. They are imagined as "built of breeze" which may refer to not only the simplicity and speed of their construction (in comparison to the historical monuments) but also to the ease of their potential future disappearance. They are made of a gentle wind and they may disperse in the wind as easily, in a casual and lighthearted manner.

---

[6] Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses annotated, Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses*, 20th rev. ed. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 171.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] The last name of the Dubliner constructor Joyce refers to is actually spelled with an 'i'. It is Kirwan and not Kerwan. (Ibid.)
[10] Ibid.

Having contemplated the futile and fragile nature of architecture, Leopold Bloom is lead to conclude gloomily that "No one is anything", "a stark restatement of the biblical preacher's notion that everything under the sun is vanity of vanities, a chasing of the wind."[11] For him the fate of old and contemporary architecture, along with that of people themselves, is blown in the wind: a pessimistic perspective he embodies and feels in flesh. During this "very worst hour of the day" when his body demandingly reminds him of the constant need to refuel, and thus recalls his very mortal nature, Blooms feels as if he "had been eaten and spewed." It is an embodied sensation of the delicate, fragile and impermanent character of the shared human condition, of the fragility of our very bodies, poetically related to the mythological connection James Joyce intended to establish for this particular chapter of the novel's narrative.[12]

The architecture of the city, though, grounds the novel's urban walker in the present moment once more as he catches a glimpse of the Provost House and thinks of his inhabitant, the distinguished mathematician reverend George Salmon.[13] The reverend's last name spurs yet another reminder of food, the salmons packed in tins – "tinned salmon" – which almost instantly sparks another wordplay in Bloom's thought, a pun comprehensible only in a Dublin spatial

---

[11] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities*, 129.

[12] Each chapter of the novel alludes to a different mythological episode of Homer's *Odyssey* (Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses*, 30) Leopold Bloom, the hero of this modern, urban epic walks along the model of the Homeric text, varying the motif of the maritime wanderings among monsters and creatures of mythology with a journey through a city of modern Western civilization. The eighth chapter of the narrative where the excerpt under consideration belongs to is a reference to Odysseus' visit at the island of Lestrygonians. Antiphathes, the king of Lestrygonians, a giant and a cannibal, devours some of Odysseus' men and then leads his tribe in the destruction of all the landlocked ships and the slaughter of their crews. Only Odysseus' ship and its crew escape. (Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses annotated*, 156.)

[13] The provost in residence appointed in 1904, was not George Salmon but Anthony Trail, M.D. *Thom's Dictionary* of 1904, which Joyce was consulting while writing the novel since he was not in Dublin at the time, mistakenly records George Salmon as holder of the position. (Ibid., 172.)

context: "Well tinned in there" is also Dublin slang for having money or being wealthy.[14] And one more thought emerges from the contemplation of salmons suffocatingly packed in tins, one that dismisses the advantages of a wealthy life if that life presupposes the heavy duties and obligations of the life of a reverend in Trinity College's residence – "Wouldn't live in it if they paid me." As a reaction to the depressing thoughts of tinned fish and tinned life, he wishes to eat liver and bacon; an optimistic change of mood attuned with the simultaneous slow appearance of the sun that transforms the gloomy urban atmosphere. The multiplication of the sunbeams' reflections on the displayed silver products of a shop window just across the street from the Provost House – "lit glints of light among the silver ware in Walter sexton's window"[15] – draw Bloom's attention to one of the city's most vivid elements: its inhabitants. John Howard Parnell, city marshal of Dublin in 1904 and registrar of pawnbrokers[16] passes unseeing. Either failing to notice Bloom or avoiding to do so, pretending actually not to have seen him, his stance characteristically points to the common public pattern of behavior in a modern megalopolis, one that became established in Western capitals since the mid nineteenth century and was based on the notion that "each man possessed as a public right an invisible shield, a right to be left alone."[17] Leopold Bloom continued his peregrination until a "warm human plumpness settled down on his brain. His brain yielded. Perfume of embraces all him assailed. With hungered flesh obscurely, he mutely craved to adore" [*U*, 214] and entered a small restaurant for lunch.

---

[14] Ibid.
[15] Walter Sexton was a goldsmith, jeweler, silversmith and watchmaker, owning a shop on 118 Grafton Street, Dublin. (Ibid.)
[16] Ibid.
[17] Richard Sennett, *The Fall of the Public Man, on the social psychology of capitalism*, first vintage books ed. (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1978), 27.

In the few lines describing Bloom's urban stroll just before this mid-day stop, the narrative language captures every thought that crosses the character's mind.[18] It records every minute detail of the multiple, rapidly-shifting and unpredictable influences the city impresses on him, and thus captures the inaudible dialogue that took place between Bloom and the elements of the city – an osmotic interaction prompted by his constant walking in the streets of Dublin. While Bloom peacefully paces the city, Dublin appears to him in cityfuls; the unique measuring unit the author invents. It measures, as I wish to argue, the rich intensity and vividness of the many intertwined elements that constitute an urban environment: its architecture – Dublin's landmarks like Trinity Collage or anonymous buildings like "Kerwan's mushroom houses"; its urban design – "lines of houses," "sprawling suburbs"; the materiality of its physical appearance – "piledup bricks, stones"; its public areas – "streets, miles of pavements"; its urban facilities – "trams in, out"; its social and political institutions – "squads of police marching out" and the city marshal "reverend Dr Salmon"; its financial status – "landlord never dies (…) still they have all the gold"; its commercial nature – "Walter Sextons' window"; the vivid presence of its inhabitants – "John Howard Parnell passed"; and the cultural and mythological elements that constitute its past – "Big stones" and "Round towers." And while one cityful passes away, another cityful comes, as Bloom walks around Dublin and weaves together through his urban stroll the different cityfuls of life he encounters in his way. He senses and embodies the moods and features so characteristic of the Irish capital at the time, along with the more lasting elements of the city's

[18] Numerous researchers have pointed out James Joyces's incredible achievement in meticulously capturing "minute after minute, what happens in a certain place or in the mind of the character," as philosopher and literary critic Tzvetan Todorov puts is. (Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction to Poetics*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 42.) Milan Kundera aptly observes that "Joyce's great microscope" reveals the characters' every thought and offers us a superb opportunity to spy on the fleeting present moment, which completely eludes us. (Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, trans. Linda Asher (New York, N.Y.: Grove Press), 24-25.) Lestrygonians is the chapter of Ulysses in which the inward turnings of Bloom's mind are most in evidence. (Melvin J. Friedman, "Lestrygonians," 136.)

atmosphere: elements related to the city's history, its Celtic mythology, the old and new "urban myths" transmitted by word of mouth in the daily encounters of the city's inhabitants.

In these few lines of narrative the reader is exposed to the rich, complex and overwhelming urban reality encompassing any city dweller, while at the same time catching a precious glimpse of the thoughts this external richness motivates in someone's consciousness. The particularity of the selected excerpt is its unique capturing of how perception of the urban environment occurs, simultaneously contributing to the character's consciousness through his bodily immersion in and perambulation through it. The very act of walking becomes paradigmatic of how the world becomes available to Leopold Bloom. The simple locomotive act of putting one step in front of the other emerges in the novel as one of the modalities, a skill, that can reveal the place of the city to the walker. This urban place appears with all its specificities, its characteristic components, the cultural, social and political elements, and the underlying mythologies that constitute its nature. It is a place that at once defines the walker and tells him what he is in terms of where he is.[19]

Leopold Bloom will indeed wander in many different areas of the city throughout the day, experiencing different atmospheres and moods according to the different neighborhoods, buildings, monuments and people he encounters. All these areas will have a different impact on him and will influence his consciousness and mood accordingly during the course of the day. They are areas he chooses or has to visit based on the different errands he needs to run, the

[19] This understanding of urban place in relation to the urban walker which I propose here, originates in the philosophical writings of Edward S. Casey and particularly his work *Getting Back into Place, Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. The study's premise is specifically to "accord to place a position of renewed respect by specifying its power to direct and stabilize us, to memorialize and identify is, to tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are* (as well as we are *not*)." (Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place, Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), xv.) His work not only offers a valuable reflection on how we might make architecture nowadays, but also stretches the limitations of an architectural practice that insists in imagining buildings floating in uniform space, not connected with a place which is a priori pregnant with meaning.

various events he is obliged to attend, his own personal desires and needs or even intuitions. They all seem to bear unique and different spatial qualities, as revealed by the narrative: spatial qualities that allow Leopold Bloom to fulfill his different aspirations on each respective occasion. Leaving his house in the morning he visits a post-office at a quiet and somewhat remote part of the city to receive in the discreet air of the area a love letter and then indulge in the sensual pleasures of the steamy atmosphere of a public bath. He attends a funeral in Dublin's graveyard, feeling the heavy existential atmosphere of the place, lost in thoughts of his dead son and the suicide of his own father. He visits the offices of the *Freeman's Journal,* a Dublin periodical, diving into the flow of news, ideas and rhetorical journalistic writings that overwhelm the building and make it burst with energy. After lunch in the busy city centre, he finds himself in the tranquility and intellectually stimulating atmosphere of the public Library. As the sun sets Bloom is embraced by the salty air of Dublin's bay where he peacefully strolls on the sand, lost in romantic thoughts of love and *eros*. The night leads him into the mysterious and darker sides of the less respectable areas of the city, the brothels. Just before returning home the "cabman's shelter" [*U*, 704] selling "some drinkables in the shape of a milk and soda or a mineral" [*U*, 704] offers him and his *protégé*, Stephen Dedalus, the cozy protective environment they have been looking for in the midst of the great urban darkness. Their wanderings in Dublin end as they both return exhausted to Bloom's house, the narrative's modern Ithaca.

This peregrination from place to place according to the different needs of the moment and times of day seems to have a particular Irish undertone, consistent with many traditional oral societies. In his study *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception And Language In A More-Than-Human World* (1997), philosopher David Abram explains how in "traditional Ireland, a country person might journey to one distant spring in order to cure her insomnia, to another for

strengthening her ailing eyesight, and to yet another to receive insight and protection from thieves. For each spring has its own powers, its own blessings, and its own curses. Different gods dwell in different places, and different demons."[20] Elaborating on this traditional understanding of the world, Abram discusses the importance of these mythological stories, connected organically with each place's particular spatial characteristics. He explains how stories transmitted orally from generation to generation in traditional cultures become a vehicle for the revelation of each place's particular dynamism, particular character and particular patterns of movement: patterns that subsequently engage the senses and relate them in particular ways, instilling in people particular moods and modes of awareness.[21]

Originating in the traditional oral culture of Ireland is an understanding of place as already embedded with meaning, a meaning preserved and carried necessarily through the stories that are narrated of the place. James Joyce's modernistic narrative of Dublin preserves and reveals in analogous ways the contemporary stories related to (and through) the city's different areas, the modern myths that "haunt" them, and subsequently the power these places have on Dublin's inhabitants. His novel is a compelling example of how in a non-traditional modern world, places are still encountered as possessing meaning and spatial attributes that interact with the people who dwell in them. Like other European authors of the beginning of the twentieth century, such as the Surrealists in France or the Symbolists in Russia, Joyce's novel demonstrates how literature can reactivate, in our modern secular world, the role of mythological stories of places.

It is indeed true that in beginning of the twentieth century, when modernistic hero Leopold Bloom walks through Dublin, "man no longer worships the gods on their heights. Solomon's

---

[20] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous, Perception And Language In A More-Than-Human World*, first Vintage Books ed. (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1997), 182.
[21] Ibid.

temple has slid into a world of metaphor where it harbours swallows' nests and corpse-white lizards,"[22] as Joyce's contemporary, the surrealist author Louis Aragon points out in his novel *Paris Peasant* (1926). Aragon's opening chapter is characteristically titled "Preface to a Modern Mythology." In this work he argues that literature is our means to reveal the new mythologies of a place and introduces the idea that in the age of reason, where everything has been explained and stripped bare from its mysteries, we are again in need of understanding the magic and miracles that surround us. "When the most scholarly of men have taught me that light is a vibration, or have calculated its wavelengths for me, or offered me any other fruits of their labours of reasoning, they will still not have rendered me an account of what is important to me about light, of what my eyes have begun to teach me about it, of what makes me different from a blind man – things which are the stuff of miracles, not subject matter of reasoning."[23] In accordance with this belief, he claims that literature can allow for a knowledge that emerges from the senses, revealing once more the long-forgotten myths of places and showing the new ones that populate them. "New myths spring up beneath each step we take"[24] he concludes, bringing back into focus an element that is of particular importance to my dissertation: the connection between walking and place-specific stories of literature. This is a connection that, as I wish to argue, bears an important significance from an architectural and urban perspective in our contemporary architectural discourse.

---

[22] Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (Boston, MA: Exact Change, 1994), 12.
[23] Ibid., 9.
[24] Ibid., 10.

The Dissertation's Questions

My research seeks to redefine the notion of architectural and urban context by studying a precise form of its manifestation in literary works. It examines novels that can reveal for architects how urban place is far more than a mathematically determined or geometrically precise entity; rather, place can be understood as a bodily-sensed perceptual sphere with the power to influence the course of our actions and have an impact on our consciousness. The dissertation addresses selected novels depicting European cities of the early twentieth century in which the fiction draws heavily upon the cartographic, topological, and topographic realities of each city as experienced in the action. In each of these novels cities arguably become the narrative's predominant "character." These stories reveal specific but elusive qualities of the urban environment: their atmospheres, moods, and inherent "mythologies." The nonetheless fictional plots and characters can disclose for an architectural discourse both how the different city inhabitants perceive a specific urban space according to their diverse preoccupations or prepositions, and also the possible ways that the environment of a city affects our corporeal consciousness through its physical and emotional presence. To attain this end, I specifically focus on stories in which the cities' urban and architectural elements are not fantasies made up by the authors, and in which the characters are described walking in the city, perceiving the space through an active embodied interaction, fully immersed in the place itself.

In this regard, questions of materiality, geometrical and topological relationships, and the way humans appropriate space, become the subject matter. As I look closely into the different literary descriptions of urban walks and wanderings, I am interested in how the geometry and urban layout of each city is lived, how public spaces are experienced by the characters, and what impact they have on them – whether as places allowing interaction with fellow citizens or as

vehicles for political messages and social norms. I examine how important architectural landmarks are perceived, understood and seen by the protagonists, how they orient the walkers in the urban net and what role they play in the political, social and cultural scene of each place. I notice how the cities may transform and change at night when bustling daily life quiets down, and how they then allow for other modes of awareness and self-realizations of a more private nature. I dwell on the general prevailing atmospheres of each city, as felt by the characters in the time periods and urban conditions the novels describe, and I explore how walking allows for both traversal of diverse urban atmospheres *and* their creation.

Special attention is paid to the way the urban configuration and its character or atmosphere, can influence and even dictate human actions. I foreground how the environment of the city affects the inhabitants' corporeal consciousness through its physical and emotional presence, how the perceivers' senses are engaged, and what elements of the urban environment influence and affect the characters' perception and subsequently their decisions. Subsequently I shed some light on the self-realizations and moments of awareness that are materialized in the urban environment.

The Methodology

In my attempt to answer these questions I engage in a phenomenological hermeneutic reading of the literary pieces, an approach which always foregrounds the architectural questions that are the focus of my work. This position values the very *act* of understanding the texts as *historical* and, as such, always connected to the present. This approach is rooted in the philosophical work of Hans-George Gadamer, following upon Martin Heidegger; my methodology also partakes of

Richard Palmer's work on the topic.[25] Although these thinkers' extensively rich and complex work can hardly be summarized here, I would like to briefly outline some specifically relevant points of their thought in relation to my topic. Heidegger's interest in phenomenological hermeneutics arose from a philosophical desire to achieve a deeper understanding of the nature of being.[26] In *Time and Being* (1927) he argues that the world is not an objective entity "out there" to be rationally analyzed; rather, human existence is always a being-in-the-world. He claims that we emerge as subjects from inside a reality that we can never fully objectify and which is inexhaustible in its meanings, constituting us quite as much as we constitute it.[27] This understanding is particularly valuable in my quest to show how, through being-in-the-city walking, *both* the perception of the urban environment is constituted *and* this perception constitutes the walker. Gadamer's interest, carrying on Heidegger's path, arose from a philosophical desire for a more adequate account of how a work of art embodies truths. In his *Truth and Method* (1960) he argues in favor of the importance of the "linguisticality" of human being and the role of language, a point of particular importance for my work and to which I will return in the conclusion. Most importantly, Gadamer highlights that works of art are forms of

---

[25] It is a line of though with significant differences from the School of "realistic hermeneutics," which in the tradition of Wilhelm Dilthey (further developed by Emilio Betti) aims at providing a general theory of how "objectivations" of human experience can be interpreted, arguing strongly for the autonomy of the object of interpretation and the possibility for historical "objectivity" in making valid interpretations. "Phenomenological hermeneutics" as understood by Gadamer, who follows on Heidegger, argues that understanding is a historical act and as such is always connected to the present; from this point of view to speak of "objectively valid interpretation" is naïve, since to do so assumes that it is possible to understand from some standpoint outside of history. (Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics, Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 46.)

[26] In the section of *Being and Time* titled "The Phenomenological Method of Investigation" Heidegger explains the connection between phenomenology and hermeneutics thus: Phenomenology is a means of being led to the phenomenon through a way of access genuinely belonging to it. Such a method is of highest significance to hermeneutical theory, since it implies that interpretation is not grounded in human consciousness and human categories but in the manifestness of the things encountered, the reality that comes to meet us. (Martin Heidegger, *Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, red. ed. (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2010), 26-37.)

[27] Ibid., 53-59.

knowledge and not mere aesthetic objects whose only purpose might be to move us or inspire us. As soon as we stop viewing a work as an object and see it as a world, when we see a world *through* it, then we realize that art is not sense perception but knowledge.[28]

Lastly, Palmer's more contemporary take on the hermeneutical approach provides an eloquent account of how the hermeneutic study of a text is not equivalent to a literary analysis. A conventional literary analysis may be characterized by the lack of a historical sense, understanding the literary work as simply "out there" in the world, essentially independent of its perceivers.[29] Based on Palmer's line of thought as presented in his work *Hermeneutics, Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heideger, and Gadamer* (1969), my approach acknowledges that each literary work I am looking at is instead "a human voice out of the past, a voice which must somehow be brought to life."[30] I engage in a dialogue with my selected texts and expect that out of this dialogue important insights may arise. Moreover my reading involves a broader understanding of the time-frame and the sociopolitical conditions prevailing in each city, along with a meticulous examination of each author's theoretical work (essays, lectures, etc.) and their philosophical or artistic influences and ideas (whenever relevant) regarding the perception of space and the urban reality of cities in which their plots are situated. This background work is important in order to appropriately answer the questions I pose in my hermeneutic dialogue with the literary texts.

---

[28] Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, second rev. ed. (London; New York, N.Y.: Continuum, 2006), 77-87.

[29] Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 5-6.
As Palmer further explains, the preliminary separation of subject and object is the philosophical foundation and framework for literary interpretation. The tremendous fruitfulness of such a framework shows itself in the highly developed art of recent textual analysis nowadays but phenomenology has submitted a radical critique of realistic conceptions of perceiving and interpretation.

[30] Ibid., 7.

The usual questions of literary analysis, such as the rhythm of the literary language, the construction of the narrative, the space of the text, and the language of the novels are not of concern in this dissertation. Furthermore, I try to avoid as much as possible paraphrasing the meanings embedded in the poetic word. Rather I attempt to disclose the metaphors that make explicit the cultural values conveyed in the narratives and their urban contexts. My approach, coming from an architectural perspective, is focused on how the material realities of the cities are registered in the novel, and how the cities constitute a field enabling or curtailing human habits and significant actions, producing positive and negative affective values. In other words, one concern of this approach is how each city's atmospheres convey to the inhabitants a sense of purpose that gives meaning to their lives. As Palmer explicitly explains "understanding of literature must be rooted in the more primal and encompassing modes of understanding that have to do with our very being-in-the-world. Understanding a literary work, therefore, is not a scientific kind of knowing which flees away from existence into a world of concepts; it is an historical encounter which calls forth personal experience of being here in the world." [31] Phenomenological hermeneutics, which I have chosen as the methodological approach for my dissertation, is exactly the study of this latter kind of understanding.[32]

The Basic Notions

Before proceeding to describe the contents of my dissertation, it is imperative to clarify some crucial concepts and their philosophical underpinnings. I will start by elaborating on the importance of walking for our engagement with space, and I will explain how I understand

[31] Ibid., 10.
[32] Ibid.

walking in this particular research context. I will present in some detail the concept of enactive perception, which I try to examine with respect to walking and briefly explain why the well-known figure of the *flâneur* is not an appropriate topic of research in this context. I will then provide a rationale for the choice of novels under examination, justifying the selection of the particular works but also the specific time period of my research, both from a literary and an architectural, urban perspective. I will briefly orient the reader with regards to the existing discourse on architecture, literature and the city, and will underline the relevance of my work for contemporary architectural discourse.

Walking

In my work the act of walking, as an inextricable aspect of our everyday engagement in the city, is considered to be fundamental. It incorporates crucial questions related to our orientation in the urban environment, the walker's bodily status in the landscape of the streets, and the participation of the five senses in this everyday activity (issues deeply connected with matters of space, time and our own corporeality). It is important to clarify that I understand walking as a process that depends on place and reciprocally enlivens it. Lived body and lived place link up with each other in the experience of walking. Informed by Edmund Husserl's observations, walking is understood as an instance of how I build up a coherent world out of the fragmentary appearances that, taken in isolated groupings, would be merely kaleidoscopic.[33] It is a process that includes stops and breaks in its linear continuity, shorter or longer ones. When I walk I am at

[33] Edmund Husserl, "The World of the Living Present and the Constitution of the Surrounding World External to the Organism," trans. Frederick A. Ellison and Lenore Langsdorf, in *Shorter Works*, ed. Peter McCormic and Frederick A. Elliston (Eds. Notre Dame; IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 248-249.

once actually moving and yet experience myself as 'a stable null-object.' In walking, I oscillate between the modes of "keeping still" and "keeping-in-operation."[34] Edward Casey's reading on Husserl enriches the conversation by observing how his close analysis of walking accords to *place* an implicit dynamism it had at first lacked. Place has become, in short, lived place.[35] "In walking we move into a near-sphere of our own choosing, if not of our making. In this sphere, we encounter places as much as we enliven them. The result is a place-world that is the correlate of the ambulatory body – a world constituted by the same body that depends on it for its ongoing localization."[36]

It is crucial to note that this understanding of walking contradicts Michel de Certeau's suggestion that "to walk is to lack a place."[37] Although de Certeau values walking as a practice that weaves places together, he also argues that it is an indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper place and that this process turns the environment of the city into an immense social experience of lacking a place. This experience he claims is "broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but is only a name, the City."[38]

Contrary to this understanding, my approach values walking as a modality of *revealing* place and its unique qualities. Contemporary philosopher Jeff Malpas has pointed out that place is a condition of consciousness in perception. "No experiential space can properly be said to be an objective space, since any experiential space is a space with a clear ordering derived from the

---

[34] Ibid. 250.
[35] Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place, a Philosophical History* (Berkley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1998), 226.
[36] Ibid., 228.
[37] Michel de. Certeau, "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendhall (Berkley, CA: University of California Press), 103.
[38] Ibid.

location, bodily configuration, perceptual capacities and capacitates for movement of the experiencing creature and which are always implicated in any grasp of the ordering supplied within such a space, (…) the concept of object space as such is that of a space removed from any particular experiencing or acting subject and any particular location associated with such a subject."[39] Walking experience and the particularity of specific locations become thus for me a vehicles for talking about architecture and architectural context through literature. Perception of the urban environment through walking, as given in the imaginary descriptions of particular novels, thus connects "emerging (poetic) language" in the sense meant by Heidegger and the hermeneutic approach with the issues at hand. "Seen from the point of view of literary characters (…), space in literature is almost by definition 'lived' space,"[40] and thus the choice of exploring walking instances in cities as described in literature is an appropriate path for my dissertation.

Enactive perception

The literary descriptions of walking I focus on reveal the essentially enactive nature of perception and cognition, most particularly with respect to my study's specific interest: the urban environment. Arguing for the primacy of embodied perception at the roots of being and understanding was Maurice Merleau-Ponty's seminal contribution to the development of Husserl's line of thought. In his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) Merleau-Ponty explains how both perception and emotion are dependent aspects of intentional action – our engaged

[39] Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience, a Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 59.
[40] Klaske Havik, *Urban Literacy, Reading and Writing Architecture* (Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2014), 23.

bodily, sensorimotor knowing of the world. It is Francisco Valera, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch who, elaborating on Merleau-Ponty's argument on the active role of perception, coined the term enactive cognition. According to their work *The Embodied Mind*, *Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (1993), embodied perception leads to a cognition that is not the representation of a pregiven world by a pregiven mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs.[41] This position is an important underpinning of my thesis.

My argument is further reinforced by Alva Nöe's studies *Out of Our Heads* (2009) and *Action in Perception* (2004) which urge that we should not think of consciousness as something that goes on inside us,[42] as it is not neural activity on its own that constitutes consciousness.[43] Nöe argues that consciousness of the world around us is something that we do, something that we enact, with the world's help, in our dynamic living activities. He compares the brain to a musical instrument, which doesn't make music or generate sounds on its own.[44] Without overlooking the important contribution of the brain, he proposes to look at the brain's job in relation to the larger non-brain body and the environment in which we find ourselves.[45] Perceptual experience acquires content thanks to our possession of bodily skills; what he calls the enactive approach is our capacity for a perception not only dependent upon, but also constituted by, our possession of sensorimotor knowledge.[46]

---

[41] Franscisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind, Cognitive Science and Humans Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 9.
[42] Alva Nöe, *Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from The Biology of Consciousness* (New York, N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 2009), 40.
[43] Ibid., 47.
[44] Ibid., 64.
[45] Ibid., 24.
[46] Alva Nöe, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 1-2.

This enactive perception of the urban place, materialized through the bodily action of walking as conveyed in specific works of fiction, is distinct from the walking experience captured by European literature in the wake of Baudelaire. The nineteenth-century type of the *flâneur* which Benjamin explores in great depth through a tremendous accumulation of publications from that period as well as through Baudelaire's writings, seems to keep a clear distance from the city: he is an observer of the urban environment much more than he is a participant in it. The *flâneur* is interested and intrigued by the phantasmagoria of the city, as the city of Paris (in particular) is presented in front of his eyes, with the electrical lights illuminating the streets and the arcades. The city remains in the level of a retinal experience. As Benjamin in his *Arcades Project* (1982) points out, it is no wonder that "preformed in the figure of the flâneur is that of the detective. The *flâneur* required a social legitimation of his habitus. It suited him very well to see his indolence presented as a plausible front, behind which, in reality, hides the riveted attention of an observer who will not let the unsuspecting malefactor out of his sight."[47]

This understanding of the city as primarily a visual phantasmagoria and the *flâneurs'* conscientious attempt to distinctively differentiate themselves from the happenings of the city, even constructing for themselves a pace of walking that would keep them isolated and unaffected from the rhythm of the city itself (like walking with turtles on leashes so that their pace would be defined by the turtles slow pace), is what renders the figure of the *flâneur* extraneous to my project – focused as it is on a figure engaged with the city through walking. The same is true for the nineteenth-century French novels that present the *flâneur*, as well as the majority of nineteenth-century European literature. As literary scholar Burton Pike characteristically proves

[47] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 442.

in his study *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (1981), "the representation of the city in literature remained through much of the nineteenth century the verbal rendition of a static perception."[48]

Contrary to the figure of the *flâneur*, the characters in my novels show how enactive perception of urban space is realized through an engagement that can be fully embodied, subliminal and open to the changes an urban environment may engender in any walking experience. This quest led me to focus into a different period of literary production in Europe, which has proven to be paradigmatically appropriate for my architectural questions: novels published in the 1920s.

The 1920s European scene

Literature

As research from the field of literary studies has shown, "one decisive development in the novel through the late decades of the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth is the practice of conducting the narrative more and more through the moment-by-moment experience – sensory, visceral, and mental – of the main character or characters."[49] The experiential realism of the novel was a searching response to the perceived new reality of the European city, and reached its zenith in the 1920s, the era of what is now often characterized as High Modernism.[50]

Terry Eagleton in his work *Literary Theory* (1996) argues that this development is not something disconnected from the major changes that took place in Europe at the time. The

[48] Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 34.
[49] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities*, x.
[50] Ibid., xi.

continent was coming out of the devastating consequences of the First World War in 1918 and was undergoing dramatic social change. The sterile positivism of science and its myopic obsession with the categorizing of facts was being questioned, while philosophy was torn between such a positivism on the one hand and an indefensible subjectivism on the other.[51] Husserl's philosophical turn towards the phenomena themselves as a reaction to the positivistic crisis of Europe at the time and Heidegger's quest to understand issues of being and human existence developed during this period. Heidegger's *Time and Being* was actually published in 1927.

Partaking of this rich theoretical and cultural context, novelists of the time managed to persuasively register the shifting pulse of experience felt by the individual: how the mind and the sense take in the world, construct it, or on occasion are confounded by it.[52] "Whatever the new objective realities, from architecture to public transportation to the economy, it felt different for individuals to live in the new urban areas, to walk the city streets, to enter into the urban crowds, to be exposed to the exponential increase of noise and bustle, to inhabit an apartment building or a tenement in the new demographic density of the city. The perception of the fundamental categories of time and space, the boundaries of the self, and the autonomy of the individual began to change,"[53] and the literature of High Modernism managed to portray this new world. In doing so it portrayed uniquely many European urban environments of the time by showing the osmotic connection between the city space and the individual; many of these literary individuals are portrayed as passionate, fully immersed city walkers.

---

[51] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory, An Introduction*, second ed. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 47.
[52] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities*, xi.
[53] Ibid.

This is not only due to the fact that walking can ensure an active being-in-the-city, as already explained. The period of High Modernism in literature is also a period at the threshold of the changes that will be provoked in European cities due to the dominant use of cars and the rapid development of public transport. In the 1920s cars are not yet an everyday commodity. There are of course public buses, trams and some private cars, but there are also carriages with horses on the streets. In some of the European capitals like Berlin the metro network is still under construction even at the end of the 1920s. This particular decade is a time period during which everyday locomotion takes place still primarily on foot and it is also one of the last periods where this is the case.

Architecture-Urban planning

It is worth underlining at this point that the 1920s is also a period of exceptional importance in the history of modern architecture and urbanism in Europe, one that follows a significantly different direction than that of philosophy or literature. Positivism and functionalism dominate the architectural production and discourse of the time, while modernism and rational design also seek for an expression of modern life in the design of cities. Le Corbusier's well-known treatise *Urbanisme* is published in 1929 and his writings are revealing of the spirit of the time. The concepts of pure reason in design, functionalism, and clear geometrical form are for him the only way to deal with the European cities that seem to be old and unable to handle the immense changes in population numbers and traffic congestion.[54] In both the schemes he proposes for the

[54] His main thesis is that "such a vast and complicated machine as the modern great city can only be made adequate to function on a basis of strict order. We are to forgo, or to relegate to a minor place, pleasures arising out of picturesqueness or of what is merely pretty, and to confine ourselves to the delights which severe and pure forms can give us. We are to aim first of all at efficiency, for that is the crying need of the moment, but it must lead us on to a fine and noble architecture." (Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells. New York, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1987), p. vi-vii.)

reconstruction of the city, walking is almost eliminated. In the "*Plan Voisin*" for the centre of Paris and the more developed plans for the "City of Three Million Inhabitants," streets are understood primarily to be serving the fast and unobstructed movement of cars; thus they should be designed as straight long lines. Wide thoroughfares are to replace the outdated European roadways, "(for) the forms of our street are not adapted to modern traffic."[55] Moreover, walking in the old curved European narrow streets, he claims, tires the walkers' eyes. "The 'corridor-street' between its two pavements, stifled between tall houses, must disappear. Cities can be something better than palaces which are all corridors."[56]

Le Corbusier's ideas as expressed in his treatise are a development of concepts already present in his 1924 drawings of the *Ville Radieuse*. In these the architect imagined a new city through perspective drawings and sketches conceived from a "flying" point of view and not from the point of view of the walker, expecting that "the car would abolish the human street, and possibly the human foot while some people would have airplanes too."[57] Another visionary of the time, Vladimir Tatlin in Russia, actually designed and tested the *Letatlin,* a personal flying machine. As Robert Hughes critically points out in his *Shock of the New* (1991), it seems that in urban spaces like this "the one thing no one would have, is a place to bump into each other, walk the dog, strut, one of the hundred random things that people do, because they would have surrendered their freedom of movement to the omnipresent architect."[58] Indeed, despite the important successes that are now the landmarks of the history of the modern movement, its fascinating documents, and the use of new materials that unquestionably opened up different

---

[55] Ibid., 120.
[56] Ibid., 75.
[57] Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change*, updated and enl. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 107.
[58] Ibid.

possibilities of architectural expression**,** these early twentieth-century planning visions were seriously flawed. The literary valorization of the cities in the novels of the same period clearly suggests a different approach to the urban condition. It is an approach that is particularly valuable today, since many of the assumptions implicit in early modern planning are still prevalent in urban and architectural design. The novels show clearly what many contemporary architects and urban designers now understand: that the rational and functionalistic approaches of planning that had their origin in nineteenth-century positivism and blossomed with modernity would be insufficient to construe and build places resonant with aspirations of culture.

The selected novels

The novels I have chosen to examine were all published in Europe during this particularly rich (architecturally, culturally, philosophically) decade of the 1920s. Despite the research's particular focus on the specific time-period though, its questions are hardly limited to one historical era. The debate that triggered and motivated them is still present today: how can architects understand the deep and multifarious richness of urban environments, creating places of cultural and social resonance with them?

The three chapters of the dissertation look carefully into descriptions of urban walking in the Russian city of St. Petersburg, through Andrei Bely's novel *Petersburg*, published in its final version in 1922;[59] London, through Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, published in 1925; and

[59] The novel was originally published in book form in 1916. As Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad point out though in the introduction of their translation, Bely was dissatisfied with this first complete edition, and began tinkering with it immediately. "Working more by massive cutting than by actually rewriting, he subjected the text to such changes that the result was virtually a new novel, which appeared in 1922. The 1922 text represents the last

Paris through Philippe Soupault's *Last Nights of Paris*, published in 1928. My choice of novels is meant to be suggestive rather than comprehensive; a selective sampling that highlights one central line of development in what remains a variegated picture. Other novels with relevant characteristics and aspirations such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) taking place in Dublin, Andre Breton's *Nadja* (1928) with numerous walks in Paris, and Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) capturing as the title suggests the central area of the city of Berlin, were also published in the 1920s, describing the respective European metropolis through characters that walk its streets immersed in the cityfuls of life.

The fundamental reason for my final choice of *Petersburg, Mrs. Dalloway* and *Last Nights of Paris* concerns the nature of the descriptions of walking that are to be found in their pages. Their plots overflow with descriptions manifesting the enactive perception of urban space and portraying the osmotic interaction between city and walkers or walkers and city. They are moreover novels least known and studied from an architectural point of view (of the three, *Mrs. Dalloway* is probably the best known to architectural scholarship).

The relationship between architecture, literature and the city

It should be mentioned in this introduction that the relationship between architecture and literature with a particular focus on the city and the urban environment has been explored more elaborately from the perspective of literary studies than that of architecture.[60] In these studies

---

version of the novel that Bely himself created before censorship intervened (Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*, trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978), xxiv.)

[60] The same stands for studies which do not focus specifically on the city but deal more generally with connections between architecture and literature, looking into architectural edifices or even architectural interiors as described in novels.

architecture and the city are seen mainly as devices that can enrich the understanding of the literary texts. The most notable older publications include titles such as *City as a Catalyst: a Study of Ten Novels* (1979) by Diana Festa-McCormick, which explores how the backdrop of the city (not necessarily as an objective image, but predominantly the novelist's vision of the city) works as a catalyst for the plot of the novel;[61] *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (1981) by Burton Pike, whose main intention is to show how literature can contribute to the understanding of culture; and *The City in Literature, an Intellectual and Cultural History* (1998) by Richard Lehan, who argues that city and literature share textuality and that the ways of reading literary texts are analogous to the ways urban historians read the city.[62] Among the most recent publications, I would like to briefly mention *Writing the Modern City: Literature, Architecture, Modernity* (2012), a collection of essays that examines the ways in which literature and architecture have shaped a range of recognizably modern identities; *Conjuring the Real: the Role of Architecture in Eighteenth-and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2011), another collection of essays which dedicates some chapters to issues related to cities of particular relevance to my work; and lastly Robert Alter's *Imagined Cities, Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel* (2005), which highlights the changes in literature at the beginning of the twentieth century and poignantly explains the particularity of the decade of the 1920s and High Modernism, thus

---

Conferences on the connection between architecture and literature are also more popular in the humanities. Among the most recent examples, I would like to mention the Northeast Modern Language Association (NEMLA) annual conference (Montreal, April 2010) which hosted a session dedicated to "Architecture and Literature," the conference "Intersections: Architecture and Poetry" (London, June 2011), organized by The Courtauld Institute of Art, the conference "Spatial Perspectives, Literature and Architecture, 1850 – Present," organized by the Faculty of English Language and Literature of the University of Oxford (Oxford, June 2012), the conference "Descriptions of Architecture and Interiors in Literature," organized by the Institute of History of Art, University of Zurich (Zurich, October 2014) and the conference "Architecture and Literature: Inter-Arts Dialogue" organized by the Faculty of Social Sciences ad Humanities, Universidade NOVA (Lisbon, December 2014).

[61] Dianna Festa-McCormick, *The City as Catalyst*, *A Study of Ten Novels* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1979), 14 -15.

[62] Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature, an Intellectual and Cultural History* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1998), 8.

serving as a valuable point of departure for my work. The contribution of all these works in the general discussion of my topic, among other less well-known studies, was presented in detail in my review of literature that was submitted for examination in October 2012.

Architectural publications and conferences addressing this topic are significantly fewer than these from the field of literary studies; this however seems to be changing as an emerging interest can be noted. Academic events like "Writing Place: Conference on Literary Methods in Architectural Research and Design," organized by the School of Architecture at TU Delft (November, 2013); "Imagining Space, the Interplay of Writing and Architecture," hosted by the School of Architecture, Portland State University with the collaboration of the Creative Writing Department (March 2015); and the forthcoming "Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience," organized by the School of Architecture, McGill University (June 2015), speak to the relevance of the present dissertation's topic within the broader architectural discourse.

With respect to relevant publications, there are a considerable number of works, books and articles on specific literary works or novelists (those related to my literary choices were as well part of my review of literature). Of particular relevance though to the general context of contemporary architectural reality is the recent study *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture* (2014) by architect Klaske Havik. Havik proposes a literary view of the experience, use and imagination of place as an alternative approach to architecture and the city, noting the relative absence of these themes in contemporary theory.[63] Her work explores aspects of the use of literary means and proposes the construction of literary instruments for use in contemporary research, education and design; she sheds a critical light on the prevalent fascination with the

[63] Klaske Havik, *Urban Literacy,* 21.

formalistic and visual aspects of architecture. The premise of her study, a belief my dissertation draws on, is that in literature the experience of space and spatial practices are often much more accurately described than in professional writings on architecture and cities, whether in the form of architectural history, criticism or design theory.[64]

The chapters

The chapters of my dissertation are arranged in chronological order according to the date of publication of each novel. It is an order that coincides with the chronological succession of the time periods each novel's plot describes.

The first chapter looks at the Russian city of Saint Petersburg through Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*. The plot unfolds in a few days during the October of 1905, a troubled period in the political and social history of the city, just before the first revolution in December of 1905. Strikes, protests, and the rise of the communist party are the dominant elements of the broiling atmosphere of the city. This was an atmosphere Bely himself experienced first hand, spending a substantial amount of time in the city during 1905.[65] Taking place in this politically troubled environment, the plot revolves around the impending explosion of a bomb intended to assassinate a high-rank state officer. The majority of the characters' actions and city walks are triggered either by the fear or the anticipation of this explosion. Important architectural landmarks and symbols of the city, which was designed ex-nihilo in the eighteenth century by Tsar Peter the Great, are represented in the narrative under the obscure light of intense political fear and through Bely's symbolist world-view. His understanding of symbolism, Nietzschean

[64] Ibid, 23.
[65] Konstantin Mochulsky, *Andrei Bely*, *His Life and Works* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1977), 64-72.

philosophy and Steiner's anthroposophy are important aspects I discuss contributing to his perception of space and space appropriation.

The second chapter focuses on London through Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, a novel published in 1925. Virginia Woolf was inspired by Joyce's *Ulysses* and fascinated by his innovative literary method of "the internal monologue" (although upset by the excessive way Joyce employed it) and decided to write a female version of the story, giving us the course of one single day of the life of a middle aged wealthy English woman, walking through London. The plot takes place in June of 1924, a period during which Woolf herself was also living in the city.[66] London has just started to overcome the devastating effects of the First World War. It is bursting with vitality, bearing witness to the rise of the middle class and the shifting social status of women. The narrative revolves around the forthcoming night party that Mrs. Dalloway is throwing. The thought of the party and its social implications are in the main characters' minds as London's renowned architectural features and public areas interact with them. Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square and the Strand take part in the plot and determine the characters' decisions and actions.

The last chapter moves to Paris of the Surrealists and looks into the winter nocturnal walks of Phillipe Soupault's *Last Nights of Paris* in 1928. Soupault subtly identifies himself with the narrator of the story and records in writing (which he refuses to qualify as a novel – a position informed by the Surrealists' rejection of conventional forms of literature) his personal erotic feelings for a woman, a prostitute who walks the night side of the city and knows its secrets very

---

[66] Woolf and her husband moved back to London in May 1924, while the novel was still been written, after a two-year stay in the close countryside. Even during their sojourn in the countryside though, Woolf would visit London often, mainly driven by her need to walk its streets and feel its atmosphere as many registers in her personal diary prove. (Anne Olivier Bell, ed., *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, *Volume Two 1920-1924,* first Harvest ed. (New York, N.Y.: Harcourt Brace and Company), 281-301.)

well. The city is a dark, mysterious creature transforming the usual appearance and character of predominant architectural and urban elements such as the Eiffel Tower, Haussmann's grand avenues, the city's parks and the river Seine. The nocturnal walks in the case of this novel are all described through the single perspective of the main character and narrator, who lived and experienced the nocturnal city himself during the winter of 1928.

In each of the chapters I begin by diving directly into the prevailing urban atmospheres as sensed and experienced by the cities' walkers. I present the reader with the nature of walks that are to be found in each narrative; but before focusing on these, I slightly deviate to provide the necessary information about the novel, the characters, or the historical situation of the city at the time. Having covered this basic background information, I then proceed to closely examine the specificities of each walk through the lens of my questions.

I have studied two of the three novels in their original language: English for Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and French for Philippe Soupault's *Last Nights of Paris*. In this dissertation all the excerpts from the French novel are from the English translation by the poet William Carlos Williams. For the selective excerpts from James Joyce's *Ulysses* I have worked with the unabbreviated text of the first publication of 1922, through the Penguin edition.[67] In the case of Andrey Bely's *Petersburg* I worked mostly with the 1978 English translation by Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstead, which is the first complete English translation of the 1922 text.[68] There are four different English translations of the novel[69] but the "scrupulous translation

[67]Although the two excerpts of the novel I look at do not present any major discrepancies between their version in the unabbreviated text and in Hans Walter Gabler's corrected edition. For more on this see: Arnold Bruce, *The Scandal of Ulysses: the Life and Afterlife of a Twentieth Century Masterpiece*, rev. ed. (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2004).

[68] Andrey Bely, *Petersburg*, trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978).

of Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstead is distinctively attentive to linguistic detail,"[70] accompanied "by extensive notes that illuminate many aspects of the Russian context as well as aspects of language that cannot be conveyed in translation,"[71] as Robert Alter has observed. This fact makes me feel less apprehensive than I might otherwise be in dealing with the novel through a translation. As George Steiner eloquently remarks in his study, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1976), which concentrates on issues of inter-lingual translation, "'translation' properly understood is a special case of the arc of communication which every successful speech-act closes within a given language."[72] Translation is fully implicit in the most rudimentary communication,[73] and while on the inter-lingual level translation will pose concentrated, visibly intractable problems, these same problems will abound at a more covert or conventionally neglected level, intra-lingually.[74] Steiner further argues that each translation enriches the tongue in which it takes place[75] and because each language follows its one particular conceptualization of space,[76] I venture to argue that each translation also enriches our perception of lived space. It is with this understanding in mind that I use the translation of *Petersburg* and I dive into descriptions of lived space; and it is this lived space as captured in all three novels, that I am interested in comprehending more fully and deeply in the chapters that follow.

---

[69] The bibliographical references of all the translations are listed in the bibliography. The respective introductions or forewords of these works offered valuable insight in better grasping aspects of Russian culture and language along with the different translators' attempts to transmit them in English.
[70] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities*, 85.
[71] Ibid.
[72] George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, paperback ed. (New York, N.Y.; London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 47.
[73] Ibid., 471.
[74] Ibid., 47.
[75] Ibid., 65.
[76] Spatialization, and the space-time matrix in which we localize our lives, are made manifest in and by every element of grammar. (Ibid., 89.)

Two short notes

In all the following chapters the selected excerpts belonging to the novels under examination are written in grey to distinguish them from the black writing of the rest of my dissertation. For the very first excerpt of each novel in the respective chapter I provide the full bibliographical note in the footnote. All subsequent citations are to the same edition, but for reasons of convenience and economy they are followed only by a page indication next to an abbreviation that signifies the title of the novel: *P* for *Petersburg*, *MD* for *Mrs. Dalloway* and *LN* for *Last Nights of Paris*. The words and short sentences written in grey that are not followed by any such indication are always part of the more extensive excerpt that I have introduced previously.

~ ~ ~

Although it is a commonly followed convention to situate punctuation before the end of a quotation ("….. ,") I deviate from this rule when the quotations come from the novels under examination. That is, only punctuation originating in the cited passage appears within the quotation marks, for example the final period in: "Piled up in cities, worn away age after age." Punctuation proper to my own writing is situated immediately after the quotation marks, for example the final period (black text) in: "Useless words. Things go on same; day after day". My intention for this unusual exception is to present the literary language intact, without any ambiguity as to the original text.

Circulating in "Petersburg, … an infinity of the prospect raised to the nth degree."

"I am a symbolist. My sensory organs are measuring instruments,"[1] wrote Andrei Bely in his memoirs in 1930, idiosyncratically combining two paradoxical notions of perception under one common belief. The metaphorical and suggestive approach to reality advocated by the symbolist writers,[2] and an active engaged embodied interaction with the world that valorizes direct perception and the immediateness of the body as a measure of its surroundings, seem to contradict each other in the authors' statement. This contradiction in both his theoretical and literary writings has indeed been noted by many of Bely's researchers. They have sharply pointed out that despite any possible comparisons it must always be kept in mind that Bely

---

[1] Andrey Bely, *Na rubezhe dvukh stoletti* (Moscow: Publishing Home, 1930), as quoted in Christa Boris, *The Poetic World of Andrey Bely* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1977), 12-13.

The Russian first name of Andrey Bely (Андре́й) appears in two different transliterations in the different English translations of his novels and theoretical work: Andre**i** and Andre**y**. Throughout my research I use the transliteration "Andrei," but whenever the name appears as "Andrey" in titles of cited works, the footnote- references respect the different transliteration.

[2] Symbolism was a late nineteenth-century art movement of French, Russian and Belgian origin. In literature, the style had its beginnings with the publication of Charles Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*. Symbolists believed that art should represent absolute truths that could only be described indirectly; thus, they wrote in a very metaphorical and suggestive manner, endowing particular images or objects with symbolic meaning.

developed a personal and particular interpretation of Symbolism.[3] Steven Cassedy, editor and translator of Bely's theoretical essays in English, clarifies ever further that "to the degree Bely was really writing 'theory of symbolism,' (…) he transformed his model into something entirely different from what it was for his peers."[4] It is thus not a surprise that in many of the novel's urban descriptions the two seemingly contradictory approaches merge poetically, revealing both symbolic and sensorial elements of the city. This fusion offers a unique understanding of Saint Petersburg, in which the symbolic meanings embedded in its buildings or its geographical features co-exist osmotically with their embodied engagement:

> "There, where nothing but a foggy damp hung suspended, at first appeared the dull outline, then descended from heaven to earth the dingy, blackish gray St. Isaac's Cathedral"[5]

Here one of the city's most outstanding and dominant landmarks, Saint Isaac's Cathedral, is described as *both* an outline slowly penetrating the diffused mist – a description consistent with an embodied active perception of a person moving closer to the building (indeed, according to the narrative, a character of the novel approaches the Cathedral by carriage) – *and* descending from the heavens – a representation that emphasizes the symbolical connotations of the religious building in people's consciousness. While in the beginning the dense fog obscures the view of the church in the perception of someone who is at a distance from it – "There, where nothing but

---

[3] As Alexander Woronzoff characteristically argues, to mention only one among many scholars: "although it is interesting to compare Bely's use of symbolism to that of Plato, Blake, Mme. Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner, Swedenborg, French Symbolists, and Hermeticists, it must be kept in mind that Bely put symbolism to his own use." Alexander Woronzoff, *Andrej Belyj's 'Petersburg', James Joyce's 'Ulysses', and the Symbolist Movement* (Berne, Francfort/M.: Peter Lang Publishers, 1982), 3.

[4] Steven Cassedy, "Bely as Theorist," in *Selected Essays of Andrey Bely*, ed. Steven Cassedy (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 6.

[5] Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*, trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978), 10.

a foggy damp hung suspended" – the body's approach reveals its outline. The sensory organs indeed measure the building, its height and its presence – but also its symbolic significance. It is not only the religious nature of the edifice that accounts for the metaphorical image of heavenly descent. Its enormous height renders it significantly dominant in the city's landscape, a presence almost touching the sky, given how for the nearly two centuries since the founding of the city the height of all the buildings had been regulated by statute, with most of them reaching a maximum of four to five stories.[6] As the author himself argues in his essay "The Principle of Forms in Aesthetics," "every true symbol necessarily idealizes empirical reality more or less,"[7] and thus even the transcendental symbolic image of the church includes elements of the sensorial urban experience of the city's dwellers: both the fear and awe that can be felt when somebody confronts the grandiose Cathedral on their way through the city.

It is important to take into consideration that by the time Bely was writing *Petersburg* his perception of the world, along with his symbolist beliefs, were heavily influenced by Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophical ideas.[8] Steiner's extensive work and Bely's selective appropriation of it make the task of tracing these influences particularly demanding – a task this chapter does not seek to undertake – but as recent research on the issue has pointed out Bely was particularly interested in Steiner's Spiritual Sciences. Their most important tenet was that cognition be based on empirical reality and that the objects of cognition belong both to the world we can perceive, and the world we cannot perceive with our senses – because perception is not limited to sense.[9]

---

[6] Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad, "Notes," in *Petersburg*, 302.
[7] Andrey Bely, "The Principle of Forms in Aesthetics," in *Selected Essays of Andrey Bely*, 11.

[8] Anthroposophy, founded by Rudolf Steiner, postulated the existence of an objective intellectually comprehensible spiritual world accessible to direct experience through inner development. Bely had met Steiner in person while in Berlin and had attended many of his lectures. His fascination with Anthroposophy abated after his personal relation with Steiner fell through.

The experience of the soul serves as a source of perception as much as do the eyes or the ears.[10] For Bely, perception of space is thus open to the emotions and feelings that the soul can sense while encountering the world – always in collaboration with the sensations felt and perceived by the senses, in an osmotic correlation between the soul and the world. In his own words, "when the world enters into our soul, our soul begins to resonate. When the soul becomes the world, it will exist outside the world,"[11] as he would write as early as 1903, in his essay "Symbolism as a World View." Many of the novel's place-specific descriptions reveal their full (potential) meaning thanks to this notion, always embedded in them; a combination of perception felt and measured by the body with symbolic truths – emotions and feelings perceived by the soul – in a non-dualistic understanding. And it is through this perspective that the city appears in all its peculiar magnitude as its inhabitants wander through it.

---

[9] Judith Wermuth-Atkinson, *The Red Jester: Andrei Bely's Petersburg As A Novel Of The European Modern* (Berlin: Lit, 2012), 36.
[10] Ibid., 37.
[11] Andrey Bely, "Symbolism as a world view," in *Andrey Bely's Selected Essays*, 78.

The city's prevailing atmospheres

> An icy drizzle sprayed streets and prospects, sidewalks and roofs.
>
> It sprayed pedestrians and rewarded them with the grippe. Along with the fine dust of rain, influenza and grippe crawled under the raised collars of a schoolboy, a student, a clerk, an officer, a shady type. The shady type cast a dismal eye about him. He looked at the prospect. He circulated, without the slightest murmur, into an infinity of prospects – in a stream of others exactly like him – amidst the flight and din, listening to the voice of automobile roulades.
>
> And – he stumbled on the embankment, where everything came to an end: the voice of the roulades and the shady type himself.
>
> From far, far away, as though farther off than they should have been, the islands sank and cowered in fright; and the buildings cowered; it seemed that the waters would sink and that at that instant the depths, the greenish murk would surge over them. And over this greenish murk the Nikolaevsky Bridge thundered and trembled in the fog. [*P*, 9]

This is how the urban environment of Petersburg appears for the very first time to the reader of the novel. It is "the last day of September" [*P*, 12] of "the year nineteen hundred and five" [*P*, 32] and a majority of elements so characteristic to the Russian capital at the time[12] – those elements that give each space its unique character, atmosphere and identity, turning it into a qualitative distinct place[13]– seem to merge in these dense few lines, where Bely introduces to the reader the story's main protagonist: the city. The northern location's cold and rainy, almost unhealthful weather – "icy drizzle that rewards pedestrians with grippe and influenza"; the different

[12] Saint Petersburg was Russia's capital in 1905, when the plot of the novel develops; though in 1922, when the latest version of the novel was actually published, the city had been renamed Leningrad. Bely didn't, though, change the title of his work, restoring symbolically the existence of the city in the Russian world.

[13] Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, xvii.

categories of streets and the buildings' rooftops – "streets and prospects, sidewalks and roofs";[14] the figures normally populating them during the day – "schoolboys, students, clerks and officers"; the homogeneity of their appearance – "a stream of others exactly like him";[15] the numerous prospects of the city's modern urban plan – "an infinity of prospects"; the noisy public space of the roads – "amidst the flight and din, listening to the voice of automobile roulades"; the embankments of the river Neva that impose a physical break in the city's continuity – "everything came to an end"; the river's symbolic, almost metaphysical dimension in people's consciousness, with its volatile waters flooding the city more than 300 times since its foundation causing tragic drownings and terrible casualties – "everything came to an end (…) and the shady type himself"; the islands, and finally the bridges that connect the city's central area with them, are all interwoven in these few lines. They are narrated from the eye-level perspective of a walker, who has just come to a stop – "he stumbled on the embankment" – and this moment of stasis offers him this global urban perception. "The moment of stasis is really a special case of dynamic relations (…) introducing unity and proportion in our understanding of the phenomena surrounding us,"[16] Bely advocated in his theoretical essays, and the "shady type" seems indeed to grasp the totality of the phenomena surrounding him, providing the reader with a most

[14] According to the 1914 edition of Baedeker's historic handbook for travelers, there are three main categories of streets in Petersburg. "Streets of the first class are called *Prospékti*, or Perspectives. Among them there are the Nevski and Voznesénski Prospékts. Streets of the second rank are called *Úlitzi* while streets of the third rank are called *Pereúlki* (lanes)." Karl Baedeker, *Baedeker's Russia 1914*, (London, G. Allen & Unwin; Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), 101.

[15] Since Peter the Great's reign, ukases (official edicts) concerning dress and coiffure had controlled citizens' public appearance. Peter forced the male population of Petersburg to shave their beards and abandon the traditional Russian attire for a more western one that included trousers. Catherine the Great reinforced some of these ukases. It seems that still in 1914 "nearly one-tenth of the male population of St. Petersburg wear some kind of uniform, including not only the numerous military officers, but civil officials, and even students, schoolboys, and others," (Karl Baedeker, *Baedeker's Russia 1914*, 101) all of the figures that are referred to in the excerpt.

[16] Andrey Bely, "The Principle of Form in Aesthetics," in *Andrey Bely's Selected Essays*, 212.

overwhelming image of the city: its topography, its climate, its architecture, its atmospheres, even its political reality, as I will further unpack in this chapter.

This city perspective is described through the shady type's "*lived body* that can afford a 'feel' for the given landscape, telling us how it is to be there, how it is to know one's way around it";[17] thus the place of the city is revealed as capable of telling us "who and what we are in terms of where we are."[18] The "shady type cast a dismal eye about him" and "looked at the prospect", but the impression captured by the literary language is not simply a visual impression or a matter of the mind. Rather, it is a reciprocal relation between the lived body's inner affects and the external experience as perceived through vision: a perceptual relation of particular interest to Bely as I have already explained. Bely's descriptions throughout the novel emphasize the lived experience of place, with characteristic urban elements like the streets qualified in relation to their effect on the human body:

> A Petersburg street in autumn is piercing; it both chills you to the marrow, and tickles. As soon as you leave it and go indoors, the street flows in your veins like fever. [*P*, 17]

The atmosphere of the street in autumn causes a peculiar body effect; both an unpleasant cold sensation and a light prod that can even cause laughter. And it is then further embodied by the city's dwellers, upsetting their vital organs like a fever: symbolically flowing into them.

---

[17] Edward S. Casey, *Earth-mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xvii.
[18] Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, xv.

Returning to the remarkable opening description of the city, the lived experience of place is further captured through an impression of the space's depth as perceived by the shady type, who sees the islands "farther off than they should have been". As Robert Maguire and John Malmstad explain in their annotations of the novel's translation, in this excerpt Bely refers not only to the Kamenny, Krestovsky, and Elagin Islands with their parks and summer houses, but also to the large Vasilievsky Island, Aptekarsky Island and the so-called Petersburg Side of the city, also an island,[19] the latter ones situated actually very close to the point where the "shady type" stops. The Embankment on which he stumbles is the English Embankment, as the preceding narrative reveals, a point directly across from Vasilievsky Island. The narrow width of the Neva at that particular point (approximately 330 meters, compared to an average width of 600 meters) does not suffice to justify the impression of 'further-ness.' Bely clearly does not refer to the measurable numeric distance between the embodied perceiver and the object of his perception, but captures an impression sensed by the soul, which reveals symbolically some of the urban reality of the time. The actual physical distance is enlarged, rendered as something more like a gap, a break in the continuity of the urban atmosphere. To reinforce the impression of a gap, the islands are described as sinking and cowering in fright – another symbolic image – and along with them their buildings seem to cower, to crouch down in fear. The architecture of Vasilievsky Island, an area of the city mainly inhabited by the middle and lower class, seems to be bending to defend itself, in front of the grandiose architecture of the English Embankment. The actual physical connection between the two areas, the bridge, feels and embodies the existing tension thundering and trembling in the fog. The literary image of a robust cast iron structure – the Nikolaevsky bridge which was actually the very first to be built across the Neva uniting the two

[19] Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad, "Notes," in *Petersburg*, 302.

islands – that shakes and noisily quivers, foregrounds once again the difference in the prevailing atmospheres between the city's two main areas. It also powerfully questions both the faith in modernity's progressive achievements, prevalent in the time period, and the city's modern urban plan as conceived and executed by the Tsar Peter the Great, who actually united the two areas. Apollon Apollonovich, one of the story's main figures (as I will explain later) representing the aristocracy of the city, contemplates many times how the "islands must be crushed" [*P*, 11] and that the "Black and damp bridges (…) already thrown across the waters (…) If only they could be dismantled.…" [*P*, 13]:

> Apollon Apollonovich did not like the islands: the population there was industrial and coarse. (…)
> (…) The islands must be crushed! Riveted with the iron of the enormous bridge, skewered by the arrows of the prospects. … [*P*, 11]

His repulsion towards the islands, in addition to the image of Nikolaevsky Bridge that "thundered and trembled in the fog", refer also to the political tension between the middle class and the aristocracy of the city during the fall of 1905, a tension which forced the Tsar in power, Nicholas II, to grant the country a constitution, and lead to the first revolution of St. Petersburg in December 1905.[20]

The impression of spatial and political tension is further disclosed by a subsequent description, given this time from the opposite side of the Neva. A few moments after the shady type's stop at the English Embankment, another character situated this time on "Vasilievsky Island, in the

[20] At the turn of the century, discontent with the Tsar's dictatorship was manifested not only through the growth of political parties dedicated to the overthrow of the monarchy but also through industrial strikes for better wages and working conditions, protests and riots among peasants, university demonstrations, and the assassination of government officials, often carried out by Socialist Revolutionaries. For more on this see: Defronzo, James *Revolutions and Revolutionary Moments* (New York, N.Y.: Westview Press, 2011).

depths of the Seventeenth Line" [*P*, 12] looks towards the central side of the city across the Neva: "From over there pierced Petersburg, both with the arrows of prospects and with a gang of stone giants." [*P*, 13]

The city's central area, the Admiralteysky Island (what in the excerpt is called Petersburg proper), is perceived as hostile towards Vasilievsky Island. The long linear prospects are found only in the Admiralteysky Island, as all the streets on Vasilievsky part are called Lines.[21] The Admiralteysky prospects are understood as sharp-ended shafts threatening to attack and pierce Vasilievsky, potentially bringing about its demise. The very name *prospects* is already a strong indicator of the symbolic power they bear in people's minds. Solomon Volkov, the author of Saint Petersburg's cultural history, has pointed out that Tsar Peter the Great – with the help of the French architect Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond – plotted Petersburg with ruler in hand designing broad, straight *pershpektivy*, a word deriving from the Latin *pro-specto*, which means to look into the distance.[22] The intention behind such a design choice was that the streets could offer clear unobstructed views into the distance and the city would present a clear geometrical pattern.[23] Because of this, nothing of what takes place in Vasilievsky Island can remain hidden from the Petersburg side's prospects that watch over it. This relational quality between the two areas deepens the readers' understanding of their distinct spatial qualities, as contemporary

[21] In 1715 Tsar Peter the Great ordered the Italian architect Domenico Tressinio to devise a master plan for Vasilievsky Island, according to which the banks of the island were shored up and the ground was subdivided by a network of perpendicular canals paralleled by streets. They were laid out straight and were even called "lines," an appellation that they retain to this day. In the matter of residential architecture, all inhabitants were obliged to follow official guidelines; this was to be a city of strict architectural conformity. Four models were developed, three for the "interior," as well as a fourth "for construction along the rivers, where buildings are to be more sumptuous." These designs were engraved and distributed to everyone who received a lot and intended to build on it. Even today Vasilievsky Island retains the broad outlines of the plan dating from this period. (Dmitri Shvidkovsky, *St. Petersburg, Architecture of the Tsars*, trans. John Goodman (New York, N.Y.: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1996), 22.)

[22] Solomon Volkov, *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis (New York, N.Y.: Free Press, 1995), 10-11.
[23] Ibid.

philosophical discourse concerning place and experience would argue. It is of course possible to understand the character and identity of a place from within the place itself, yet as Jeff Malpas explains "this is not only in virtue of the way a particular place allows things to appear within it, but also in terms of the way in which any such place is always itself positioned in relation to other places and provides a certain 'view' of such places."[24]

The prevailing walking patterns

It is therefore through their spatial relations that the city's two main areas (and the novel's focus) emerge, manifesting their unique atmospheres in terms of both time and space – as a vast field with multiple textures in which the characters are corporeally immersed and which can be uniquely captured by literature. As already mentioned in the dissertation's introduction philosopher David Abram discusses the importance of the stories' (in this case literary stories) profound and indissoluble place-specificity, arguing they can reveal that "each place has its own dynamism, its own patterns of movement, and these patterns engage the senses and relate them in particular ways, instilling particular modes of awareness."[25] This intrinsic relation between place and patterns of movement explains why specific and repetitive ways of walking in the streets and pubic spaces of Petersburg are narrated in Bely's novel, while specific modes of awareness along with important self-realizations are related alongside them.

[24] Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience,* 34.
[25] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 182.

The city's inhabitants seem to follow certain habits in their engagement with the city, mainly while walking.[26] These habits could be divided in two main categories. On the one hand, the novel portrays solitary walks, which usually take place when Petersburg 'vanishes' into the night. They are most of the time triggered by the characters' wish to avoid the usually suffocating atmosphere of their domestic environments, longing for the soothing comfort of being at home in the city, as pointed out by literary scholar Peter Barta:[27]

> Away from here! Out onto the street!
>
> He had to start pacing once again, to pace on and on until the brain was completely numbed, so that he would dream no more of phantoms dark. To pace all over Petersburg, to lose himself in the damp reeds, in the hanging vapors of the seashore, and to put everything out of his mind in his stupor and then come to his senses amidst the cozy lights of the Petersburg suburbs. [*P*, 171-172]

In these solitary walks, the city's nocturnal features (electrical lights or night bars) appear more prominent in their interaction with the characters' consciousness; the urban place appears calm, manifesting no evidence of political upheaval and social tension. Inner thoughts or personal fears are in dialogue with the darkness and mystery of the night, while the emerging modes of awareness are primarily related to personal ethical or moral questions.

The other mode of moving in the city takes place during the daytime and seems to usually happen amidst crowds of people who populate and walk Petersburg's grandest circulation

---

[26] This is not to say that exceptions to these habits are not also recorded in the novel but at the same time it should be acknowledged that the mutual interdependence of humans and their environments is exemplified in the existence of paths and trails. As pointed out by Alva Nöe cities are highly-fortified structures of well beaten trails and paths of least resistance, while architecture and the cities to which it gives rise are frozen habits. (Alva Nöe, *Out of Our Heads*, 122.)

[27] Peter I. Barta, *Bely, Joyce and Döblin: Peripatetics in the City Novel* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996), 116-117.

arteries, like the prominent Nevsky Prospect in Admiralteysky Island or the streets by the river's embankments. The city is frequently depicted as deluged with masses of people. Anthropomorphic elements of the city's buildings, like caryatid-columns or bas-reliefs of mythical faces on wall facades, are presented as passive observers of these ever-moving masses:

> Opposite the black of an intersection a caryatid hung suspended above the street. (…)
> And beneath his feet he sees the flow of the myriapod along the pavement, where deathlike is the rustling of moving feet and where green are the faces. (…)
> The circulation was not disrupted: the bowlers continued their deathlike flow. [*P*, 184-185]

In this chapter I will look closely into a number of representative ways of moving through Bely's *Petersburg* following these broad categories.

Walking and Petersburg

Before focusing on literary images of solitary walks and walks in crowded public areas, some important aspects of the city, the novel and the novel's characters need to be understood, or as Bely himself would write: "Here, at the very beginning, I must break the thread of my narrative, in order to introduce the reader to the scene of action" [*P*, 10]. It is first of all worth mentioning that whether in solitude or amidst crowds, walking was a practice particularly associated with Petersburg during the 19th and early 20th Centuries. As researcher of Russian Literature Ulla Hakanen documents in her article "Panoramas from Above and Street from Below," "the stroll, gained greater popularity in the early nineteenth century, as the upper classes followed the

example of Alexander I,[28] who took daily public walks."[29] "The visibility of popular forms of walking increased toward the end of the century, as more and more leisure activities expanded into public spaces; and parks, which previously had been restricted to the aristocracy, were now transformed into commercial facilities that attracted the growing middle classes."[30] Historical documents of the time, like the essay "Petersburg and Moscow," originally published in *Physiology of Petersburg* in 1845 by the art critic Vissarion Belinsky, explain that of the two Russian capitals Petersburg was the space for walking and public life. "In Petersburg, the site of well-developed institutions that support a lifestyle both public and anonymous, the streets are still crowded at midnight: 'Petersburg loves the street, strolling, theatre, café, music pavilions, in short all public institutions.'"[31] Moreover, Belinsky's article points out that "it is comfortable to walk in Petersburg: there are no hills or slopes, everything is flat and even, sidewalks are paved with flagstone, some even with granite – wide, even, and any time of year clean as a floor.'"[32] The ground's flatness and the urban design's linear and wide streets (unlike the narrow streets of Moscow), seem to render the city convenient for walking and socializing in public spaces, both allowing for interaction with others but also securing anonymity if needed. This outcome anticipates the spaces that emerged from the use of similar geometries in urban design during the later nineteenth and twentieth century. While ostensibly undertaken in the name of hygiene and intentionally deployed for the purposes of surveillance and military maneuvers – as was the case with Haussmann's Paris for example – these modern interventions in the city resulted in wondrous places for the public to stroll, and contributed to the eventual growth of urban areas.

---

[28] Alexander I (1777-1825) served as Emperor of Russia from 23 March 1801 to 1 December 1825 and tried to introduce liberal reforms during the first half of his reign.
[29] Ulla Hakanen, "Panoramas from Above and Street from Below," in *Petersburg/Petersburg: novel and city, 1900-1921.* Ed. Olga Matich (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 199.
[30] Ibid.
[31] As quoted in Ulla Hakanen, "Panoramas from Above and Street from Below," 198-199.
[32] Ibid.

Contrary to any controlling aspirations, the streets of Belinsky's Petersburg seem to transmit an air of domesticity, with their clean and even surfaces that could even be described as floors. And although there are moments, particularly during times of sociopolitical turmoil, that the prospects of Petersburg can also function as aggressive "piercing arrows" – as Bely records – in periods of tranquility and general stability the same prospects accommodate carefree urban strolls and facilitate socializing.

From a philosophical point of view, which valorizes the *a priori* existence of place, this observed connection of urban place and walking as architectural program (program understood as the activities that take place in a space), is not coincidental. "There is no doubt that the ordering of a particular place – and the specific way in which a society orders space and time – is not independent of social ordering (…)" as Malpas explains, but that "however this is not to legitimize the claim that place is merely a social construction."[33] We should be aware that "the social does not exist prior to place nor is it given expression except in and through place. It is within the very possibility of place that the social arises."[34] It is thus not surprising that "Bely's *Petersburg* is represented as a place more of streets than of houses," as research from comparative literature studies has pointed out.[35]

Bely's *Petersburg* is actually not the only novel to record the city as an environment that allows for an active walking engagement with it; a place to be experienced, understood and sensed by the body. During the nineteenth century "the 'leisurely discursive practice' of the stroll was also a widely used strategy in fictional texts, in which, instead of defining the temporal sequence or narrative through a fixed point of view, the flow of the text came to be informed by

---

[33] Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 35-36.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities*, 95.

the observer's movement."[36] It is an observation in accordance with Robert Alter's explanation of experiential realism, as presented in the introduction, according to which through the late decades of the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth narrative in many European novels came to be conducted increasingly through the moment-by-moment experience – sensory, visceral, and mental – of the main character or characters.[37] Bely's novel does follow this literary tradition, and it is moreover particularly distinctive in its attempt to get the historical events of the time "exactly right," as Elaine Blair's study *Literary Petersburg* discusses. In some chapters Bely even records the political events reported in the newspapers of the day.[38] The novel might as well have been called "The Last Days of Petersburg" (an antithetical but similar title to Soupault's novel "The Last Nights of Paris") – as has been lyrically suggested by the surrealist poet, editor and translator of the novel George Reavey – given that it provides us with a most vivid picture of the nerve-breaking atmosphere during the last days of the two-century-old city just prior to the Revolution.[39] It was a time when "Arguments in the Streets Became More Frequent" [*P*, 51] and everyone "feared something, hoped for something, poured into the streets, gathered in crowds, and again dispersed." [*P*, 51]

---

[36] Ulla Hakanen, "Panoramas from Above and Street from Below," 199.
[37] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities*, x.
s[38] Elaine Blair, *Literary Petersburg, A Guide to the City and its Writers* (New York, N.Y.: The Little Bookroom, 2006), 72.
[39] George Reavey, "Foreword," in *Saint Petersburg*, trans. John Cournos (New York, N.Y.: Grove Press, 1959), vii-viii.

Following the plot

The novel takes place over nine days, unfolding between September 30th and October 9th of 1905. Its plot weaves around two main figures, Apollon Apollonovich and his son Nikolai Apollonovich – the Ableukhovs – who live in the city. Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov, is a 68 year-old senator,[40] "head of a Government Institution" [*P*, 5] and a particularly frugal man who "would have characterized even his own house with laconic brevity, as consisting, for him, of walls (forming squares and cubes) into which windows were cut, of parquetry, of tables. Beyond that were details." [*P*, 21] He has "a fear of space" [*P*, 52] and rarely walks in the city. He prefers to stare at Petersburg through the windows of his office and move through it, safely sitting in his carriage. Despite his detached attitude to the urban environment though, the city has a calming influence on him because of the pristine geometric clarity of its design:

> Proportionality and symmetry soothed the senators' nerves (…)
> His tastes were distinguished by their harmonious simplicity.
> Most of all he loved the rectilinear prospect; this prospect reminded him of the flow of time between two points of life. [*P*, 10]

In his imagination, the whole planet should be a configuration of linear prospects. While sitting in the center of his black carriage protected from the city by its four walls:

---

[40] The character of Senator Ableukhov was modeled around the historical figure of Senator Konstantin Pobedonostsev (1827- 1907), conservative statesman, professor and chair of civil law at Moscow University, who was seen as the primary conservative influence on Tsar Nicholas II, ruling Tsar during September of 1905. Years later Bely wrote in his memoirs: "I invented nothing; I simply looked at the actions of the persons who appeared before me; and from those actions there was sketched for me alien, unfamiliar life, rooms, work, family relations, visitors, et cetera; thus did the senator's son appear; thus did the terrorist the Elusive one and the provocateur Lippanchenko appear, (…) but I invented nothing, made no contribution of my own; I simply listened, looked and read; while the material was given to me quite independently of me, in an abundance that exceeded my ability to contain it." (Andrei Bely, *Petersburg; A Novel in Eight Chapters*, trans. by David McDuff (London: Penguin Books, 1995), xiv-xv.)

> he wanted the carriage to fly forward, the prospects to fly to meet him – prospect after prospect, so that the entire spherical surface of the planet should be embraced, as in serpent coils, by blackish gray cubes of houses; so that all the earth, crushed by prospects, in its lineal cosmic flight should intersect, with its rectilineal principle, unembraceable infinity; so that the network of parallel prospects, intersected by a network of prospects, should expand into the abysses of the universe in planes of squares and cubes: one square per "solid citizen," so that… [*P*, 11]

Nikolai Apollonovich, the senator's son, is a student of philosophy. For Nikolai the city is not a frightening place but rather an excuse to be away from home, "the past few nights Nikolai Apollonovich had been out Lord knows where" [*P*, 48], away from the awkward relation he holds with his father, with whom he barely speaks after his mother abandoned them and left for Italy with another man.

Figure 1: **Apollon and Nikolai,** sketch by Andrei Bely depicting the difficult relationship between father and son

Early on in the novel the reader realizes that Nikolai has given the revolutionary party some sort of imprudent promise to kill a high-rank officer – a promise he seems, however, ambivalent about. "In a word, he had given his pledge and was obliged to honor it not by honor alone. He had given his promise out of despair. A failure in his personal life had driven him to it. But the failure had been erased. One would have expected the promise to go away by itself." [*P*, 50]

His fellow student Alexander Ivanovich visits him in order to deliver a sardine tin for safekeeping. As the plot unravels Nikolai realizes that the tin contains a bomb with a time mechanism, which he sets in motion; an action that will torment his consciousness throughout the novel. The provocateur Lippanchenko tosses him a letter stating that the party demands that he blow up his own father.[41] This realization takes place in the middle of a masque-ball in which Nikolai, dressed as a red domino, is desperately trying to catch the attention of his beloved Sofya, wife of Sergei Sergeyevich, who though ignores him making him desperate. Apollon Apollonovich participates in this masque-ball as well. After the events in the ball, the narrative mainly explores the changes in the consciousness and emotions of Nikolai and also Apollon, who realizes his son's involvement with the revolutionary party and the menace that threatens his life. As the time bomb keeps ticking, the Winter Palace, one of the city's most renowned buildings and residence of Russia's ruling class, appears to bleed. This metaphor hints at Tsar Paul I's actual murder, an assassination in which his own son Alexander was involved,[42] and reminds the reader how the city's history has been haunted by such atrocities.

---

[41] The topic of patricide was common among the turn-of-the-twentieth century authors who looked at it as both a natural childhood wish for a parent to be dead, seen in Freudian terms, and as a metaphor for breaking with the past, seen in the context of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* Both Freudian and Nietzschean influences have been traced in Bely's *Petersburg.* (Judith Wermuth-Atkinson, *The Red Jester*, 119-120.)

[42] Peter Barta, "Symbolization of Urban Space in *Burges-la-Morte* and in Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*," in *Georges Rodenbach Critical Essays*, ed. Philip Mosley (Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 164.

Considerable scholarship has concentrated on the Nietzschean influences evident in the respective personalities of the two figures (Bely is known to have studied Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*). Apollon Apollonovich bears the name of the God Apollo, introduced into early modernist culture by Nietzsche as a solar god, associated with light, reason and clearness of vision: a patron of the rational, ordered state, of law and justice. Nikolai on the other hand has been seen as bearing elements of the God Dionysus (which in Nietzsche's view is the opposite deity to Apollo) associated more with the dark, intuitive aspects of man's soul.[43] In a chapter characteristically titled "Dionysus," Nikolai appears to say: "it's a truly Dionysian experience, not a verbal one, it goes without saying." [*P*, 181]

In this connection, researchers have also invoked the influence of Rudolf Steiner and his interpretation of the Greek myths, as seen through his anthroposophical concept of the two types of consciousness: the rational, mathematical, or abstract – intellectual consciousness symbolized by the head – as opposed to the intuitive, inspirational, clairvoyant type symbolized by the heart.[44] According to such an interpretation, in *Petersburg* the second type of consciousness relates to the principles of Dionysus Zagreus,[45] and to the character of Nikolai, while the first type of consciousness is emblemized in the principle of Zeus and the character of Apollon.[46]

It is indeed likely that Bely's conception of Dionysus, Apollo and Zeus combines elements from both Steiner and Nietzsche,[47] but Bely's *Petersburg* does not represent one particular philosophical view. His novel is rather a reflection of the new ways of thinking in which the focus of exploration was the human Self,[48] and I wish to argue that while these influences may

---

[43] Robert Mann, *Andrei Bely's Petersburg and the cult of Dionysus* (Lawrence, Kan.: Coronado, 1986), 1-2.
[44] Judith Wermuth-Atkinson, *The Red Jester*, 75.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 76.
[48] Ibid., 135.

indeed offer a possible range of interpretation, the novel portrays interactions of the characters with the city that question and overcome these stereotypical categorizations. With this general direction in mind, let us dive into the city's fascinating everyday embodied urban experience.

Walking among or with others

Walking across columns of conversation

As I have already suggested, the plot's main narrative focus weaves around the seemingly unavoidable bomb explosion. The suspicion of the bomb's existence is communicated to the reader at the very beginning of the narrative through the description of a walker (an unidentified citizen belonging to the revolutionary party), catching fragments of words while passing by people who stand on the pavement. The experience of walking and the body in motion are represented through sound as Bely renders the acoustic presence of the city streets; he shows in effect how consciousness is constituted from a meaningfully ordered configuration of sensations, and how perceptual consciousness involves a sensuous relationship to the world, effected through embodied interactions with it:[49]

> Cutting across columns of conversations, he caught fragments, and sentences took form.
> "Do you know?" was heard from somewhere on the right. And died away
> And then surfaced:
> "They are planning …"

[49] Nick Crossley, *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE), 2001, 73.

"To throw…"

A whisper from behind:

"At who?"

And then an indistinct couple said:

"Abl…"

They passed by:

"At Ableukhov?!"

The couple completed the sentence somewhere far away:

"Abl-ution is not the sol-u-tion for what …"

And the couple hiccupped

And the stranger stopped, shaken by all he had heard:

"They're planning…"

"To throw…?"

Whispering began all around:

"Probable…proof…"

The stranger heard not "prob" but "prov," and finished it himself:

"Prov-ocation?!"

Provocation began its revelry all along the Nevsky. Provocation had changed the meaning of the words that had been heard. [*P*, 15-16]

The stranger of the passage is able to distinguish only shards of the conversation; the phrases that reach him get scrambled, and thus ambiguities proliferate.[50] He is aware of the bomb and the revolutionary party's intention to deliver it to Nikolai, and is already anxious at the prospect of the explosion and "in utter confusion" [*P*, 15] because he has just coincidentally encountered Senator Ableukhov's carriage in one of the city's intersections: an unexpected meeting that spontaneously made him break "into a run." [*P*, 15] Emotions are ways of-being-in-the-world, ways of making sense of and acting in the world; to be in a particular emotional state entails

[50] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities*, 93.

perceiving the world in a particular way – noticing things that one might not usually notice and being affected by what one hears or sees in ways that one may not normally be affected.[51] The passerby's anxiety about the forthcoming explosion, and all of its political consequences, merges with the reality of the street, is confused with the fragmented words overheard while walking, and creates a different reality for him – his own inter-subjective reality in which the frightening news has already spread all over the city. The city is at any rate a place where words get spread – from gossip to public speeches – and these words intervene with the external world that receives and distributes them. As Bely himself argued in his 1909 essay "The Magic of Words," "the word creates a new, third world: a world of sound symbols by means of which both the secrets of a world located outside me and those imprisoned in a world inside me come to light. The outside world spills over into my soul. The inside world spills out of me into the break of day and the setting sun, into the rustling of trees. In the word and only in the word do I recreate for myself what surrounds me from within and from without."[52] Despite Bely's obvious emphasis on language, his argument resonates with Merleau-Ponty's understanding that "the stuff of our 'inner' lives is thus to be found in the exterior spaces or places in which we dwell, while those same spaces and places are themselves 'within' us."[53] Merleau-Ponty would further argue that regarding meaningful perception, the meaning of any subjectively perceived object – and thus the behavior it calls forth – is affected by the spatio-temporal background or context against which it is perceived.[54]

The exchange of words heard through high interference is moreover the auditory equivalent of the field of visual perception that often prevails throughout the novel. Auditory as well as

---

[51] Nick Crossley, *The Social Body*, 85.
[52] Andrey Bely, "The Magic of Words," in *Selected Essays of Andrey Bely*, 94.
[53] As quoted in Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 6.
[54] As quoted in Nick Crossley, *The Social Body*, 67.

visual space is too crowded – there are multiple "columns of conversations" – and everything around the unidentified citizen is in flux.[55] The city is indeed already a carrier of immense political tension, receptacle of turmoil and intensity, with its social configurations poised in a delicate balance. Its political history, crowded with incidents and stories of conspiracies (implemented in many of the Tsars' own lives), colors the atmosphere in advance. In Bely's narrative this richness is embraced in full and is in constant dialogue with his characters' interactions with space. It is not a coincidence that the excerpt referring to the bomb precedes the description of Petersburg's main features, the quotation this chapter opened with. Bely explores immediately the interweaving of an urban environment already embedded with tension and the ebullient inner world of Petersburg's dwellers. Walking is the bodily action that weaves the two together, allowing new meanings to come into being. It weaves diverse atmospheres that reveal space – the Platonic *chora* or "receptacle of becoming" – as a cultural place, with its particular identity. As mentioned already in the Introduction, elaborating on Husserl's understanding of walking, Casey explains how in walking we move into a near-sphere of our own choosing, if not of our own making, and in this sphere, we encounter places as much as we enliven them. "The result is thus a place-world that is the correlate of the ambulatory body – a world constituted by the same body that depends on it for its ongoing localization."[56] This understanding of *walking* (whether pacing in a slow, relaxing rhythm, strolling, running, or even marching) is ever-present in the novel; it is manifested in the inhabitants' enactive perception and creative relationship with the city.

---

[55] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities*, 93-94.
[56] Edward, S. Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 228.

Walking with the thought of a sardine tin in mind

Apart from the unidentified citizen who cuts across columns of conversation, the idea of the forthcoming bomb explosion torments most severely Nikolai Apollonovich, who seems unable to stop thinking about it: "it was not he thinking, but thoughts thinking themselves – something was being thought (…). It was rising above the sardine tin, it had crawled out of the sardine tin into him." [*P*, 218] The moral and ethical questions raised in Nikolai due to his decision are intensified by the city's environment. Influenced by Steiner's Anthroposophy, which emphasized that spiritual development depends heavily on the moral development of the individual, Bely leads Nikolai through a moral torment towards personal change and maturity in which the city's streets will acquire a dominant role:

> He had hidden the sardine tin, it seems, in his desk, and had leaped out of the accursed house. He was wandering about the streets.
>
> But in the streets it still continued to arise, forming, sketching, tracing; if his head was thinking, then it too had turned into the sardine tin which…was ticking with thoughts. [*P*, 218]

Nikolai's mental state is compromised. His fear and guilt overwhelm him and under these circumstances, which almost drive him to madness, the physical presence of the city begins to change in an almost hallucinatory way:

> As he ran across the pavement, he could have touched the colossus of the house, which towered in piles above the street, with his hand. As soon as it began to drizzle, the side of the house began to swim in the fog.
>
> And the stone colossus had now broken loose, and it was lifting out of the drizzle a lace of contours and faintly defined lines – some kind of rococo. The rococo was receding into nothing.

> A wet gleam now appeared on shop windows, on other windows, and on chimneys, and the first trickle gushed from the drainpipe. The sidewalks became speckled with tiny dots and turned dun brown. And a speeding tire snorted mud.
>
> And more, and more, and more….
>
> Nikolai Apollonovich stood in the wet, sheltered by the umbrellas of the passerby. His head began to spin. He leaned against a shop window, and a fragment of his childhood rose before him. [*P*, 219]

As Nikolai's head begins to spin the city's houses seem to swim in the fog, they begin to move and their ornamental elements to dissolve. The misty wet atmosphere of the place magnifies this perception as the rain, just starting to fall, blurs vision; contours and outlines become harder to see. The delicate and convoluted rococo decorations cannot survive the effect of weather. Nikolai stops on the pavement which, filled with water, mud and the umbrellas of others offers him a temporary shelter; the vaporous atmosphere in which he finds himself submerged allows his mind to drift away. It is when his eyes catch the firm sight of a stranger, who silently waits on the pavement across from him, that his mind and attention will be driven back to the urban environment again:

> Who is that there? Over there, on that side of the street? By the colossus of the house? Beneath the pile of the balconies?
>
> Yes, standing there.
>
> Just like him, by a shop window, with an open umbrella, looking at him, so it seemed. But his face could not be made out. What was so special? On this particular side of the street stood Nikolai Apollonovich. As for that one, over there – nothing out of the ordinary, the same thing: just a casual passerby looking around self-confidently. (…)
>
> The outline of his thin overcoat is reminiscent of … but of what?
>
> And wearing some kind of cap with a visor.
>
> Shouldn't he go up to him, the owner of the cap?

> Just go and have a look at the objects, there…. behind the glass in the shop window.
>
> And take the opportunity to cast a fleeting glance at him, a glance seemingly absentminded but actually attentive! [*P*, 220-221]

Nikolai's eyes catch sight of a stranger, a random passerby who seems, though, to remind him of somebody – "Who is that there? (…) The outline of his thin overcoat is reminiscent of … but of what?". He is trying to remember, to find the word that will reveal what the stranger reminds him of; to name the impression caused by the overcoat's outline. "In attempting to name everything that enters my field of vision, I am in essence defending myself against the hostile, unintelligible world that presses in on me from all sides,"[57] would Bely write in his essay the "Magic of the world." His character Nikolai is indeed faced with a possibly difficult situation. He is frightened, in addition to the stress induced by the dreadful act he must commit, that the stranger across him may actually be the husband of his beloved Sofya: Sergei Sergeyevich who, suspicious of his wife's affair with Nikolai, follows him through the city.

His interest in finding the appropriate word for what this stranger's overcoat reminds him of is crucial, given his fear and concerns. "The process of naming spatial and temporal phenomena with words is a process of invocation. Every word is a charm. By charming a given phenomenon I am in essence subjugating,"[58] Bely would add in his essay, and indeed Nikolai is caught in a situation that he wishes he could control. This is why he feels the need to walk closer – "Shouldn't he go up to him, the owner of the cap?". The wet atmosphere still obscures his vision; his body moving closer will assuage his desire to identify the stranger.

---

[57] Andrey Bely, "The Magic of Words," in *Selected Essays of Andrey Bely*, 94.
[58] Ibid.

Figure 2: **Nikolai,** sketch by A. Bely
showing Nikolai Appolonivich in fright,
based on E. Munch's "The Scream" (1895)

The shop window can indeed facilitate Nikolai's inquiry, not only because of its spatial proximity to the stranger, but also due to the glass's reflective properties. On the one hand it could provide him the excuse to approach the stranger as if to look at the merchandise. On the other, it would let him set a more meticulous gaze on him either by discreetly turning his eyes or by studying the stranger's reflection on the glass. Had Nikolai approached the window, both his reflection and the stranger's would have appeared on the glass. In distinction from the self-referential indulgent reflections of a nineteenth-century *flâneur*, the reflective materiality of the window's surface would have served as a mirror that captures the image of the city (buildings, people, activities) and allows the city dweller to observe without looking directly. It would have

been a way of partially hiding in the city, while at the same time achieving a broader perspective on things – "a glance seemingly absentminded but actually attentive!". The blurry nature of these reflections on a wet window sprinkled by the rain would have naturally posed some limitations to this glance, but would have also enhanced Nikolai's camouflage.

Thoughts about the bomb keep emerging; at one point they cause his mind to drift away, interrupting his intention to cross the street and look at the stranger through the glass:

> "What's wrong with me?" thought Nikolai Apollonovich. "This is no time for daydreaming."
>
> Time was passing, and the sardine tin was tickling. He should go straight to his desk, carefully wrap it all up in paper, put it in his pocket, and into the Neva with it.
>
> And already he was shifting his eyes away from the colossus of the house where the stranger with the open umbrella was standing.
>
> And again he took a look.
>
> The stranger has not moved from the spot. He was waiting – for the drizzle to end. Suddenly he moved into the human flow, into those couples, those foursomes. [*P*, 221]

The stranger, who was indeed Sergei Sergeyevich, moved with Petersburg's "human flow" and suddenly appeared in front of Nikolai startling him:

> "Nikolai Apollonovich, you kept staring at me, but you pretended you didn't notice me."
>
> "I didn't recognize you."
>
> "I nodded to you."
>
> What was going on?
>
> The passerby had stopped. The great broad prospect was free of carriages. Neither hooves nor the swish of tires could be heard.
>
> "Look at that!"

> Out of the remoteness of the prospect came a thousand-voiced rumble that grew in intensity. From there hurtled a carriage. (…) When the carriage had flown past, all the bowlers, tricornes, top hats, cap-bands, plumes, visored caps, and shaggy fur caps began shuffling, elbowing, and streaming from the sidewalk into the middle of the prospect. And from a rent in the storm clouds the pale disc of the sun poured forth for a moment in a dull yellow reflection. [*P*, 224]

The appearance of the carriage interrupts momentarily the characters' conversation and the motion of the "human flow" in the busy street. But as the carriage flows by, and with the unexpected appearance of the sun rays, however pale, the "human flow" fills the place again. This massive wave of people crushing the street is perceived by Nikolai as a swarm of hats of all different kinds, "bowlers, tricornes, top hats, cap-bands, plumes, visored caps, and shaggy fur caps". It is an image from the eye level perspective of Nikolai standing on the pavement, and is moreover focused on one particular aspect of the 'flow's' physical presence. This fragmented perception of the individuals populating the place, seen only as hats, is more than a reference to the fragmentation of modern life so vividly depicted in many modern urban novels. Indeed writers in the beginning of twentieth century systematically rendered the urban environment as consisting of bits and pieces[59] reflecting the prevalent feeling that "the identity of experience in the form of a life that is articulated and that possesses internal continuity – and that life was the only thing that made the narrator's stance possible – has disintegrated."[60] In the case of Bely's

---

[59] In the beginning of the twentieth century, "the city in literature became fragmented and transparent rather than tangible and coherent, a place consisting of bits, pieces, and shifting moods; it came to stand under the sign of discontinuity and dissociation rather than community. The cities of Joyce, Woolf, Musil, Kafka, Eliot ("unreal city", Howells and Dos Passos represent the breaking of roots and the snapping of stems in terms of the coherence of urban life." (Pike, Burton. *The image of the city in Modern Literature* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 72-73.

[60] Theodor W. Adorno, "The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. I, ed. Rofl Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York, NY.: Columbia University Press, 1991), 31.

Petersburg, though, this fragmentation adds to the general atmosphere of the city and its anguished confusion. It is a particular way of perceiving and describing the space, one that counts on the synecdochical capacity of language, and will be encountered many times throughout the novel – and that has different connotations in different instances.

Drifted away by the sediment

This "human flow" is not, however, a merely visual entity. It is a primary element of the city's life and physical appearance during the daytime, a powerful stream that washes its streets and imposes on the dwellers particular modes of engagement with the city. There are moments in the novel when the reader has the impression that the city almost possesses its inhabitants.[61] Even this state of possession is, rather than just passive, a form of engagement with the city: it requires a full submergence in the urban environment, and still manifests through Bely's literary language a participatory and active perception. The example of Alexander Ivanovich, Nikolai's fellow student who delivered him the bomb in the sardine tin, is a characteristic manifestation of this non-dualistic relationship of the city dweller with his world. Alexander, who was initially not aware that the bomb he delivered to Nikolai is destined for Nikolai's own father, is deeply upset when he comes to this realization. The fear of the oncoming explosion drives him out into the city, in an attempt to find the revolutionary party's leader and elicit clarifications:

> All the shoulders formed a viscous and slowly flowing sediment. The shoulder of Alexander Ivanovich stuck to the sediment, and was, so to speak, sucked in. In keeping

[61] John Cournos, "Introduction," in *St. Petersburg*, xii

with the laws of the organic wholeness of the body, he followed the shoulder and thus was cast out onto the Nevsky.

What is a grain of caviar?

There the body of each individual that streams onto the pavement becomes the organ of a general body, an individual grain of caviar, and the sidewalks of the Nevsky are the surface of an open-faced sandwich. Individual thought was sucked into the cerebration of the myriapod being that moved along the Nevsky.

And wordlessly they stared at the myriad legs; and the sediment crawled. It crawled by and shuffled on flowing feet; the sticky sediment was composed of individual segments; and each individual segment was a torso.

There were no people on the Nevsky, but there was a crawling, howling myriapod there. The damp space poured together a myria-distinction of voices into a myria-distinction of words. All the words jumbled and again wove into a sentence; and the sentence seemed meaningless. [*P*, 178-179]

Alexander is drawn beyond his will into a glue-like body of shoulders. Bely does not even talk about bodies in their totality but focuses only on shoulders, both a fragmentation of the modern city metaphorized this time by the body, and a focus of attention for Alexander whose own shoulder seems to be the connecting joint with the "viscous sediment" formed by the other shoulders. The shoulders are described to slowly flow, rather than walk or stand; dregs on the street's pavements, settling at the very bottom of a city understood as an immense container filled with elements more important than the shoulders themselves. Alexander's very body in interaction with this urban mass that seems to lack value and dictates his movement – "he followed the shoulder" – is forcefully thrown into the Nevsky Prospect. The moment he encounters Nevsky, he finds himself wondering what a grain of caviar is. The thought is provoked by the prevailing mood and activities taking place in the street – "there the body of each individual (…) becomes the organ of a general body"; a street populated by a mass of

people, metaphorically portrayed as an open-faced caviar sandwich: to be eaten, consumed, devoured. The images of both caviar sandwich[62] and myriapod suggest the imposed annihilation of any individual walking or standing on the Nevsky – "There were no people on the Nevsky". They also hint at the fact that individual will and personal desire have always been perceived in Petersburg's history as subaltern to the common good and social progress. This is an ethos, even a myth, that has haunted the city since its very foundation when thousands of people died as a result of the harsh construction conditions, obeying without complaint the authoritarian demands of the Tsar and his engineers.[63] After this moment of encounter with Nevsky, Alexander's individual thoughts are not his own: consciousness is "outside of his head," as Alva Nöe would argue, describing the now current belief in cognitive science that mind or consciousness is also in the physical environment[64] – "Individual thought was sucked into the cerebration of the myriapod being that moved along the Nevsky."

Once more Bely focuses on the acoustic qualities of the space, and space is this time portrayed as responsible for gathering the numerous voices. The space is felt to be damp, meaning diffused with moisture through the air, and this wet condensation seems to bring the voices together – "the damp space poured together a myriapod distinction of voices". But this time the words that seem to emerge from the human mass of the city are rearranged in

---

[62] References to caviar, and fish in general, are associated with the concept of explosion, as the time bomb keeps ticking away in the sardine tin. (Peter I. Barta, *Bely, Joyce and Döblin*, 36.)

[63] The literary production of the 19th century in Petersburg portrays the city as a menacing presence, a hostile environment; its inhabitants believe that the city is cursed by the fact that it was built on the expense of so many human lives. Authors like Pushkin and Dostoyevsky based the plots of their stories on this perception of the city. It is at the turn of the century that ideas about Petersburg begun to shift and an admiration for the city and its cosmopolitan spirit developed among authors and poets like Alexander Block, Anna Akhmatova and of course Bely. (Elaine Blair, *Literary Petersburg*, 12.)

[64] Alva Nöe, *Out of our Heads*,15-32.

meaningless yet expressive sentences: a public speech almost of the city itself. The words of this speech, each coming from a small fragment of people's bodies – "each individual segment was a torso" – do not add up to intelligible discourse; rather, they are like gestures of anguish and fear. The emphasis on the individual body-parts also refers to the coming explosion, the dispersing of bodies into pieces which is Alexander's constant thought and fear as he merges with the myriapod. Sunk into his thoughts of guilt, he sees the space of the city as entirely constituted of fragments of attire or bodies:

> Rolling toward them down the street were many-thousand swarms of bowlers. Rolling toward them were top hats, and the froth of ostrich feathers.
>
> Noses sprang out from everywhere.
>
> Beaklike noses: eagles' and roosters'; ducks' and chickens'; and – so on and on – greenish, green, and red. Rolling toward them senselessly, hastily, profusely. [*P*, 178]

It is not surprising that these thoughts occur to Alexander while walking among the crowd. The experience of being drawn in the crowd silences his own thought, as described by Bely; instead "of his mind hastening to its next mental preoccupation, as is our tendency in everyday life,"[65] he is fully present among his fellow-walkers and thus fully conscious and mindful of his own walking. The city's words do not distract him this time: the sound of sentences woven together is meaningless. This enactive engagement is augmented by the fact that walking enables an intense awareness in relation to the bomb's devastating effect on human bodies. Walking we confront others, come face to face with them, and see them recede behind us, becoming faceless and even bodiless.[66] This is an integral and primary aspect of the walking experience, which unavoidably

---

[65] Franscisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, 25.
[66] Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, 87.

magnifies in Alexander's consciousness the dreadful outcome of someone's literal disappearance, someone's actual death caused by the explosion of a bomb.

This important realization takes place on Nevsky Prospect. (After his experience with and within the myriapod, Alexander actually assassinates the leader of the party, Lippanchenko, overwhelmed with aversion to the idea of a political organization demanding the assassination of one's own father.) Petersburg and its long prospects have always been perceived as non-Russian in the context of the country, while Nevsky Prospect in particular has always been correlated in people's minds with an important path towards the westernization of traditional Russia, towards a different future that will lead to the overturn of the current state of things, and that will allow for another set of choices and actions to take place. Indeed, throughout the novel, Nevsky Prospect's spatial qualities oscillate between a place that seems to impose social conformity, turning people into a mass, and one that reminds them of the possibility of different moral or ethical choices. As Michel de Certeau has suggested, people in cities are put *in motion* by the remaining relics of meaning related with streets (evoked for example through the streets' names); these insinuate other routes that can be drawn out of the functionalistic and historical order of movement.[67] It is worth dwelling on Bely's very first depiction of Nevsky Prospect in the novel's prologue:

> Nevsky Prospect possesses a striking attribute: it consists of a space for the circulation of the public. (…) Nevsky Prospect, like any prospect, is a public prospect, that is: a prospect for the circulation of the public (not of air, for instance). (…)
>
> Nevsky Prospect is rectilineal (just between us), because it is a European prospect; and any European prospect is not merely a prospect, but (as I have already said) a prospect that is European, because…yes….

[67] Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 105.

> For this reason, Nevsky Prospect is a rectilineal prospect.
>
> Nevsky Prospect is a prospect of no small importance in this un-Russian-but nonetheless-capital city. Other Russian cities are a wooden heap of hovels. [*P*, 2]

The street is understood as an important non-Russian place – differentiating Petersburg from the heap of hovels – that primarily serves the circulation of the public, a quality that Bely characterizes as striking. It is important to understand why this is so. Shouldn't indeed all streets serve this circulation? Beyond its conventional meaning in planning and architecture, circulation is a word that also signifies the public availability and knowledge of something. With his literary image of "a prospect for the circulation of the public", Bely hints at the fact that Nevsky (along with other prospects) will at particular moments in the novel emerge bearing qualities of what Hannah Arendt referred to as the "space of appearance": a space allowing people to raise their own voice and pursue their ethical quests. "The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates all formal constitution of the public realm. (…) Its peculiarity is that unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does not survive the actuality of the moment which brought it into being, and disappears (…) with the disappearance or arrest of activities themselves."[68] Yet, as Arendt also explained, public spaces in European cities that truly fulfill this role (a role originating in the Greek *polis*) became rare during the eighteenth century.[69] If a "space of appearance" is one where people become human through speech and action, one would be hard-pressed to interpret Nevsky as such, where the crowds are described as caviar or a "myriapod". And yet, through Alexander's 'awakening' inside the "myriapod" and the description of Nevsky's European

[68] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd. ed. (Chicago, Il.: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 199.
[69] Ibid.

character, the novel also suggests Nevsky's potential as a site of political protest, as a space of problematic yet effective communication, perhaps hitting upon its contradictions and its potential role as a true public space characteristic of the modern city.

Marching in the strike

As the plot unfolds, this quality to emerge as the "space of appearance" seems to characterize other major streets in the city's center, like the ones by the embankments of the Neva, where important political demonstrations take place. Vasilievsky Island's prevailing atmosphere, one of fear and dread towards the Admiralty, seems to change:

> Shaggy Manchurian fur hats were pouring onto the streets and melting into the crowd. The crowd kept growing. Shady types and Manchurian fur hats were moving in the direction of a gloomy building with becrimsoned upper stories. By the gloomy building the crowd consisted of nothing but shady types and Manchurian fur hats.
>
> And they pushed and shoved through the entryway doors – how they pushed, how they shoved! But how could it be otherwise? A worker has no time to bother with manners. A bad smell hung in the air.
>
> At the intersection near the pavement a small detachment of policemen were sheepishly stamping their feet in the cold. Their commanding officer looked sheepish. Gray himself in a gray coat, the poor fellow kept shouting and deferentially hitching up his sword, with downcast eyes. And from behind there came at him rude remarks, rebukes, laughter and even, my, my, obscene abuse (…). And the officer kept shouting:
>
> "Keep moving, folks, keep moving!" [*P*, 62-63]

The "gloomy building with" the "becrimsoned upper stories" in front of which the strike takes place is presumably, as literary research has maintained, the city's University, situated in

Vasilievsky Island (the part of the city that seemed to "cower" in front of the Admiralty). The individuals (workers in their majority) who pour in the area to join the rest of the citizens *melt* in the crowd, get absorbed by it, become part of it and subsequently cease standing out. Their bodies act purposively and both seek out and reply to meanings within their environment.[70] The crowd of the city seems to consists only of "fur hats" and "shady types" for Bely; shady because of their indignation at the political regime on the one hand, but also shady in a way that implies they cannot be clearly distinguished in the mass, either by the policemen that attend to the scene or by the buildings of the Admiralty area. The urban experience presented is distinct from the one embodied by Alexander earlier: all the people coming together in this occasion share the same intentionality, that of political protest, and this is clearly expressed in their interactions with the city. Policemen are depicted as standing by discreetly, unable or unwilling to react. The occupation of the big linear University Embankment by a massive amount of people weakens the policemen's control, in terms of their power to know who are the people who walk in the streets. It is an interesting reversal of the initial description of this part of the city presented by Bely, in which the Petersburg prospects could pierce and attack the happenings in the Vasilievsky Island. It contradicts the image of the city's urban plan captured by the author, one resembling an almost panoptic view of the space, indicating how the austere urban plan can acquire an oppressive presence for the city's dwellers:

> The wet, slippery prospect was intersected by another wet prospect at a ninety-degree right angle. At the point of intersection stood a policeman.
>
> And exactly the same kind of houses rose up, and the same kind of grey human streams passed by there, and the same kind of yellow-green fog hung there.

---

[70] Nick Crossley, *The Social Body*, 89.

> But parallel with the rushing prospect was another rushing prospect with the same row of boxes, with the same numeration, with the same clouds. [*P*, 11]

The contrasts and contradictions between the former description of the city – plain-looking and uniform – and the massive occupation of the University Embankment reveals how the embodied engagement with the urban environment is not only a mode of political action,[71] an active expression of the citizens' collective awareness, but also a way of changing the city; its image, its physical state, its spatial features, even its odour – "A bad smell hung in the air." It is a "refiguration" of space as defined by Ricoeur, an inhabiting as *response* to the built environment, where the act of inhabiting is understood as a focus not only of needs but also of expectations;[72] the expectation that Petersburg and its prospects will walk traditional Russia to its European future.

[71] Coming from sociological studies, Pierre Bourdieu argues that public opinion can only truly exist in social movements and that for the most part the citizens' habitus disciplines them from political involvement. (As quoted in: Nick Crossley, *The Social Body*, 99.)

[72] Paul Ricoeur, "Architecture and Narrative," in *Identity and Difference*, 66-67.

Solitary nocturnal walks

Wandering in the night's lights and shadows

> Wrapped in furs, Nikolai Apollonovich was making his way along the Moika, his head sunk in his overcoat. Nameless tremors arose in his heart. Something awful, something sweet…
>
> He thought: could *this* too be love? He recalled.
>
> He shuddered
>
> A shaft of light flew by: a black court carriage flew by. Past window recesses it bore blood red lamps that seemed drenched in blood. They played and shimmered on the black waters of the Moika. The spectral outline of a footman's tricorne and the outline of the wings of his greatcoat flew, with the light, out of the fog and into the fog. [*P*, 33]

At night the image of the city differs significantly. The hard physical outlines of buildings, people and objects fade away in the darkness, become shadowy and "spectral". Elements of the city, the carriages for example, are perceived as entities of light – "A shaft of light flew by" – and light's different colors appear dramatically against the blackness of the environment – the bloody red of the lamps on the dark waters of the river. The reflections captured by the city's canals and the river seem intensified: shining, soft, tremulous lights. And the motion of people and carriages is perceived only for an instant, before quickly disappearing from sight; a movement among the many shadows and misty vapors of Petersburg – "out of the fog and into the fog." The city transforms into a misty presence. The predominance of water in the city favors the reflection and accumulation of humidity while the night sky favors the creation of shadows:

> A phosphorescent blot raced across the sky, misty and deathlike. The heavens gradually misted over in a phosphorescent glow, making iron roofs and chimneys flicker. [*P*, 33]

The interaction between the urban environment and the embodied walkers allows for reifications of a more personal and intimate nature to emerge. The city becomes a dramatic setting within which primary human emotions like love and fear of death are played out. The space of the city is also presented differently by Bely, in a more intimate and encompassing mood, more like a surrounding and enfolding environment that discreetly follows the walkers instead of imposing actions on them. A description of a nocturnal walk by the Moika, the small river encircling the central part of Saint Petersburg and effectively making it an island, proves this point:

> "Where are you going?" asked Nikolai Apollonovich, so that he might walk along the Moika with the officer.
>
> "Home."
>
> "That means we're going the same way."
>
> Above the two of them, alternating with rows of windows on a yellow building, were rows of lion faces, each over a coat of arms entwined with a stone garland.
>
> As if trying not to touch on something that was past, the two of them, interrupting each other, talked about how the disturbances of recent weeks had affected Nikolai Apollonovich's philosophical labors.
>
> Above the two of them, alternating with rows of windows on a yellow government building, were rows of lion faces, each over a coat of arms entwined with a garland.
>
> There's the Moika, and that same light-colored, three-storied, five-columned building; and the narrow strips of ornamented moulding above the third story: ring after ring; inside each ring was a Roman helmet on two crossed swords. They had already passed the building. And there's *the* house. And there are *the* windows…
>
> "Goodbye. Are you going further?"
>
> Nikolai Apollonovich's heart began to pound. He was on the verge of asking something. But no, he did not ask. He stood all alone before the door that had just been slammed. He was gripped by memories of an unhappy love affair, or rather, of a sensual attraction.
>
> That same light-colored, five-columned building with a strip of ornamental moulding: inside each ring a Roman helmet on two crossed swords. [*P*, 30-31]

Nikolai and officer Sergei Sergeyevich walk across the canal of Moika, (it is a moment in the narrative when Sergei Sergeyevich hasn't suspected yet Nikolai's involvement with his wife) and the city's buildings 'walk with them'; an unfolding of scenery that follows their slow pace. As their bodies move along the buildings' facades, the repetitive character of the action of walking (progress in space and time one step after the other) is subtly recorded through the repetitive language of the narrative. It seems to describe the features of the buildings once again; small details are either added or altered in each subsequent description, as elements of the urban environment become more prominent as one approaches a building (or an area) and features of the surrounding architecture seem to fade as one draws away. The yellow building that showed only its rows of windows and lions at the very beginning is understood, after a few more steps, as a government building with its rows of windows and lions; and the three-storied building is perceived again with fewer details at the end of the passage as Nikolai Apollonovich is left on his own.

Small details like these,[73] absorbed as a walker's attention falls on the city, distracted by conversation, are not immediately relevant to the topic of discussion; but like elements in a dream they abide by the emotional state the interlocutors are in while walking. The windows upon which Nikolai's gaze stumbles are Sofya's windows and they belong to the house that Sergei enters – "And there is *the* house. And there are *the* windows…"

[73] Bely was the originator of what later became a school of "ornamental prose," a prose that concentrates the reader's attention on small details, independent smaller units. (Konstantin Mochulsky, *Andrei Bely: His Life and Works,* trans. Nora Szalavitz (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1977), 7.)

Near the point where the two men part lies "Nevsky Prospect" along which Nikolai continues his nocturnal peregrination:

> Of an evening the Prospect is flooded with fiery obfuscation. Down the middle, at regular intervals, hang the apples of electric lights. While along the sides plays the changeable glitter of shop signs. Here the sudden flare of ruby lights, there the flare of emeralds. A moment later the rubies are there, and the emeralds are here. [*P*, 31]

Nevsky Prospect at night appears significantly different and paradoxically obscure, despite the fact that it is a *prospect* (a place that enables clear views into the distance) filled with both streetlights – "Nevsky Prospect in the evening is illuminated by electricity" [*P*, 2] – and illumination provided by the shop-signs. The abundance of both public and private light sources seems to blur the vision, creating a spatial atmosphere of a bright obscurity which contains elements reminiscent of fire's sparkling nature – "fiery" – along with inconstant shades of both purplish-red and bright green colors – "ruby lights," "flare of emeralds." As implied by the poetic language, we must imagine a multiplication of reflections to fully envision this place-specific nocturnal atmosphere. The regularity of the hanging electric lamps in the middle of the street, and the bright shimmering of the shop signs from both sides of the street are reflected on the shop windows. We can assume they are captured and reflected further by items on display in windows, particularly by gemstones. The reference to rubies and emeralds speaks poetically about the colors emitted in public space by the early twentieth-century electric signs, but also literally about the merchandise of the commercial spaces on Nevsky.[74] This multiplication of reflections blurs the vision and blinds the walker, who moves among the space's sudden flares.

[74] At least three jewelry shops are to be found on the part of the Nevsky that Nikolai walks, as recorded by Baedeker's travel guide (Karl Baedeker, *Baedeker's Russia 1914*, 101).

Petersburg emerges at night as a multiplication of reflections on glass and water (its shops and canals), elusive, translucent and wet; an airy presence difficult to decipher and hard to grasp.

Following the earlier reference to Sofya's windows – "And there's *the* house. And there are *the* windows…" – Bely once more foregrounds the fact that our perception of space is affected (blurred or distracted) not only because of existing 'objective' spatial qualities of a place, but also because of our co-emerging emotional state. The obscure atmosphere of Nevsky is also Nikolai's (mental) preoccupation, characterizing reciprocally the urban environment. It will soon become evident how Nikolai's emotional state plays a central role in his reasoning:

> Nikolai Apollonovich was not seeing the Nevsky; before his eyes was that same house; windows and shadows behind the windows; perhaps merry voices (…) and *her* voice, *her* voice. [*P*, 31]

Desperate because of the misfortunes in his personal life caused by Sofya' indifference towards him – whatever feelings she shared for Nikolai in the past are now long gone – the character is incapable of 'seeing' anything else but the darkness of his soul. *Eros* is experienced in its most hopeless form; the knowledge that the object of your desire does not (anymore) desire you back obscures every 'prospect.'

Following a path for the first time

In a mood as intense as his son's, Senator Ableukhov too walks the night streets – as Bely depicts for us on one occasion only. But distinct from Nikolai, his pacing is provoked not by erotic despair but by the fear of his own pending assassination. He walks the streets to calm his

fear and delay his return home, where his own son and potential murderer also resides. Shocked by this life-threatening realization and weakened by the political moment (he is a representative of the existing regime and he envisions that the demonstrations will lead to historically important changes) he grasps the opportunity to escort a young girl back to her home, instead of returning to his own following the masque-ball:

> "My dear young lady, may I be so bold as to offer you my arm and see you home? (…)"
>
> The girl saw a little black figure respectfully raising its top hat.
>
> They walked on in silence. Everything seemed wet and old, as if it had receded into the ages. Apollon Apollonovich had seen all this before from afar. And now here it was: gateways, little houses, walls, the girl fearfully pressed against him; for her he was not a senator, but just a kindly old man.
>
> They walked as far as a little green house with a rotted gateway. (…).
>
> In the sky, somewhere off to the side, there was a spurt of flame. Everything was illuminated: a rosy pink ripple of tiny clouds, like a mother-of-pearl web, floated into the flames. The procession of lines and walls grew more massive and distinct. Heavy masses of some sort emerged–indentations and projections, entryways, caryatids, cornices of brick balconies.
>
> The lace metamorphosed into morning Petersburg. There stood the five-storied houses, the color of sand. The rust red palace was bedawned. [*P*, 140]

Through the senator's 68-years-old eyes, everything looks aged. Before his eyes are scenes he is used to watching from the vantage point of his cubic carriage. But now that he no longer maintains the safe distance that he so cherished when traversing urban spaces along prospects of order and political power, the elements of the familiar city are revealed more clearly; his outlook seems to change. He begins to see the city through its small details – "gateways, little houses, walls, (…) entryways, caryatids, cornices of brick balconies" – that reveal the passage of time –

"a rotted gateway"; the people's true nature beyond social titles – "for her he was not a senator, but just a kindly old man"; the actual outlines of its architecture – "the procession of lines and walls grew more massive and distinct." The Senator's initial rational and disembodied apprehension of the city – an infinite unfolding of prospects that expands across the whole planet – transforms into a new spatial understanding informed by his own enactive engagement with the place, the morning Petersburg, the city at dawn, a liminal time known for its capacity in myths and stories from all cultures to reveal reality *as such*. At this moment, he feels vulnerable (unprotected by the power of his political position) and thus more human, allowing himself to experience truthfully the city and appreciate it for what it is.

Conclusion

The novel finishes with the explosion of the bomb, which doesn't physically hurt anyone, apart from damaging a small part of the Ableukhov's house:

> Nikolai Apollonovich ran up to the place where there had just been a door. There was no door: there was a huge gap from which smoke billowed. Had you looked into the street, you would have seen that a crowd was gathering, that a policeman was pushing them back off the sidewalk, and that gawkers, heads thrown back, gaped at the sinister yellowish-lemon clouds pouring out of the black gaps of the windows and out of a fissure that cut across the house. [*P*, 288]

Despite the minimal damage it does, the threat of the bomb and the political reality it expresses triggers a new set of relationships among the characters, leads the heroes into the streets,

transforms their perception of the city and their understanding of themselves: even makes them feel at home in the urban environment.

It could of course be argued that the use of the city in Bely's narrative is really particular to the historical changes that took place in Petersburg during the Fall of 1905 (with the exception of Nikolai's nocturnal peregrination), and do not relate to a more general shared use of the place, offering meaningful architectural lessons about space appropriation and interaction with the urban environment beyond this historical frame. To this claim, I would answer with Merleau-Ponty that history is not the succession of discreet events, past and present, but their cumulative penetration in an unfolding process, and it is habit, as the sedimented effect of the past within the present, that allows this penetration and unfolding to occur.[75] Despite the particular historical circumstances of Petersburg in the year "nineteen hundred and five", peoples' interaction with the city, the elements of the urban environment that influence and affect their decisions and self-realizations, are all characteristic of the place that Petersburg was and still is: a city with broad wide streets "for the circulation of the public", from which began the revolution that overthrew the long established political regime – a revolution which most probably could not have ever started in Moscow.

The novel starts with this *sui generis* qualification of Nevsky Prospect and all the prospects, and through moments of 'break' in the ordinary or anticipated use of space, reveals an understanding of the city that first and foremost contradicts the general common urban planning assumption regarding orthogonal and strictly geometrical environments. Instead of a place of control, designed for smooth and efficient traffic flows, the long linear prospects become spaces for political protest and awareness, places that incite people to embody their ethical decisions

[75] Merleau-Ponty develops this argument in his attempt to contradict Jean Paul Sarte's view as expressed in *Being and Nothingness* that any event is equally possible at any time. (As quoted in Nick Crossley, *The Social Body*, 135.)

and experience personal emotional maturation and growth. They are also transformed into the erotic space of desire (obscure and blurry during Petersburg's nights), where the architecture of the city appears as the manifestation of our perennial lack – of that desire forever unfulfilled for our beloved ones – and the city's small details work as a constant reminder of the reciprocity of love and death, of our mortal human condition and of our ephemerality as inhabitants of this world. In addition, Bely's use of symbolism as a means of transcribing empirical experience and his focus on fragmented details enlarge our understanding of our perception of space: how it is heavily based on emotions, feelings and thoughts already dwelling within us, as well as dialogue with the city's physical appearance – dialogues of different content and nature emerging in different urban places. The novel thus reveals an architecture of the city that invites an embodied dialogue and an attunement with it, dismissing any meaning arising from rational preconceived ideas or prejudices imposed on its physical fabric.

Petersburg emerges as a place whose architecture's ethical implications become clear through the poetics of narration. Both Gadamer and Ernesto Grassi have argued that ethics, rather than being understood as deontological norms (*sophia*), should be articulated through the Aristotelian tradition of *phronesis*, embodied in European cultures in the discipline of rhetoric, through story-telling, and cast into modern literature since the early nineteenth century.[76] Grassi's perspective in *Rhetoric as Philosophy* (1980) in particular demonstrates how it is only through narration and storytelling that one can truly grasp human truths, formulate strategies for ethical action and valorize effective communication in aesthetics.[77] It is therefore hardly surprising that diving into the space of *Petersburg* we can learn more about the ethics embedded in spatial practices than

---

[76] Hans-George Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 146.
[77] Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980).

we can from the often misguided top-down rational dreams of early modern planners. The city appears through literary poetic language as a dramatic setting embedded with socio-cultural and political meanings that influence the embodied experience and consciousness of its inhabitants. Their enactive and bodily-engaged perception of this dramatic setting reciprocally influences the city itself, revealing its eighteenth-century, late Baroque expressive potential, resonant with Hannah Arendt's "space of appearance," in contrast to its obvious early modern attributes, easily misread during the twentieth century as the simple outcome of a rational planning operation.

Walking "somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things"

" 'I love walking in London,' said Mrs. Dalloway,"[1] on the morning of a fine June day, in the middle of Saint James Park, running into her old friend Hugh. She had just left her house in Westminster and, crossing through the park in central London, was walking towards a flower shop on Bond Street, where she was supposed to buy the flowers for her night-party. She characteristically told Lucy, her maid that "she would buy the flowers herself" [*MD*, 3] as the famous opening line of Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* goes. But as if the flowers were just an excuse for her to go on a morning walk, her answer to Hugh's casual question, "where she was off to," was just:

[1] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press), 5.

> "I love walking in London," (…)
> "Really, it's better than walking in the country." [*MD*, 5]

And her mind drifted slowly to her old love Peter Walsh, who "could be intolerable; he could be impossible; but adorable to walk with on a morning like this." [*MD*, 6]

This is how the first pages of Virginia Woolf's[2] 1925 novel set the plot's unfolding, with the ingredients of these initial lines to be found again in many different instances throughout the story: a sudden impulse for a walk in the city, a random encounter with an acquaintance or a stranger, an event or an unexpected happening in the urban environment, and the spontaneous drifting of the mind to personal intimate thoughts and memories of the past, all triggered by London's presence and in a symbiotic relationship with the city, during the fleeting and ever-changing present moment. "Moments of vision, of epiphany, of explosion, of breakup, of *ricorso*; the flash of light or the boom of sound, the striking of Big Ben – all represent the attempt to make something permanent of the moment, to arrest the mysterious and continual flux seen in the ambience of the great city," as Margaret Church has written of *Mrs. Dalloway*.[3] The novel indeed renders the present as a *now* that is incessantly always-already passing, thus creating the need to capture the past through remembrance.[4] In this way the systematic narration

---

[2] Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) who is now considered among the most influential and important writers of modernism in literature because of the use of experimental and innovative literary forms (best known for the use of stream of consciousness), was also a prolific essayist and literary critic, reviewer for *THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMEMNT* from 1904 until her death. She was associated with the Bloomsbury Group, an informal group of writers, artists, philosophers and intellectuals that got its name because its members lived or worked together in the area of Bloomsbury in central London. (Michael Whitworth, *Authors in Context, Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10-11.)

[3] Margaret Church, "Joycean Structure in *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway*," International Fiction Review 4 (1977): 108, as quoted in David Dowling, *Mrs. Dalloway, Mapping Streams of Consciousness* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 11.

of the past becomes, by inversion, a prime modus of articulating the consciousness and experience of modernity: the historical time when the very division between the old and the new was consolidated and a cult of novelty was established alongside a sense of loss of what had been.[5] This constant back and forth in time through the novel (which in a few instances also includes projections into the future) which has been seen to capture the essence of modern consciousness – denoting both how modernity is always at flux and a "tradition against itself"[6] – takes place in a ceaseless dialogue with the characters' surrounding environment. It is the moments when these surroundings are representative of the city itself that are crucial for the unfolding of the plot. I wish to argue that it is precisely at these instances – when the essence of modern consciousness is captured in correlation with the city – that the novel manages to reveal the fleeting atmospheres of modern London as a place in the middle of the 1920s; and this is why the novel can be of particular importance to architects and urban planners.

---

[4] Angeliki Spiropoulou, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2010), 2.

Virginia Woolf was reading Marcel's Proust *In Search of the Lost Time* in 1923: the influence on *Mrs. Dalloway* of Proust's observations of the capacity of a present moment or detail to open up vistas into the past, has been well recorded by numerous researchers. (David Dowling, *Mrs. Dalloway, Mapping Streams of Consciousness*, 10.)

[5] Angeliki Spiropoulou, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History*, 1-2.
[6] Octavio Paz, *The Children of the Mire, Modern Poetry from Romanticism to the Avant-Garde*, trans. Rachel Phillips (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 1-2.

"*The* London novel" [7]

As considerable research has already shown, London is far more than just a background to Woolf's work.[8] In *Virginia Woolf's London*, Dorothy Brewester explains that the city is so woven into the texture of the characters' experiences that "the roar of traffic in the Strand or Kingsway falls differently on different ears in different circumstances."[9] St. Paul's Cathedral or Trafalgar Square keep their physical identity, but change their atmospheres and significance as they enter the consciousness of different characters.[10] Woolf herself strongly believed that "each Londoner has a London in his mind which is the real London, some denying the right to Bayswater to be included, others of Kensington, and each feels for London as he feels for his family, quietly but deeply, and with a quick eye for affront."[11]

Mrs. Dalloway is a novel revealing different aspects of London through the various characters' preoccupations, concerns, memories, thoughts or dreams; well-hidden, intimate worlds that emerge spontaneously in a dialogue between the city and the plot's protagonists as they wander its streets.[12] The characters are defined by the streets they pass through, with aspects of the streets' physical environment introducing thoughts into their unfolding streams of consciousness.[13] "One of these days I will write about London, and how it takes up the private

---

[7] Of all Woolf's work, *Mrs. Dalloway* is the one which critics have referred to as '*the* London novel.' (Jean Moorcroft Wilson, *Virginia Woolf Life and London, A Biography of Place* (London: Cecil Woolf Publishers, 1987), 123.)
[8] Ibid., 12.
[9] Dorothy Brewster, *Virginia Woolf's London* (New York: New York University Press, 1960), 9.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 20.

[12] The landscape of the city streets was of irresistible interest to Woolf: "The fascination of the London street is that no two people are ever alike; each seems bound on some private affair of his own. There were the business-like, with their little bags; there were the drifters rattling sticks upon area railings; there were affable characters to whom the streets serve for club-room, hailing men in carts and giving information without being asked for. Also there were funerals to which men, thus suddenly reminded of the passing of their own bodies, lifted their hats." (Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York, N.Y.: The Fountain Press, 1929), 94.)

life and carries it on, without any effort,"[14] Woolf wrote in her diary on May 26 of 1924, while working on *Mrs. Dalloway*, expressing an awareness for the symbiotic relationship between the inner world of the individuals and the outer world of the city. Her characters indeed exist in two worlds: the subjective world she creates for them (and out of them), and the physical world that she holds too much in awe to alter for a merely fictional pattern.[15] Within the world that is "what life feels like," she put the stones of London,[16] portraying it without any fictional elaborations. "Fiction must stick to facts, and the truer the facts the better the fiction,"[17] Woolf herself believed.

In almost every description of the urban environment and the events occurring in it recorded by the novel, the author reflects the inner world of her characters[18] as influenced by the city, but also portrays how this inner world reflects upon London, revealing alternative atmospheres and moods as the characters move along its streets. The ever-fleeting present moment and the fast-shifting urban conditions that the very act of walking enables – the passing through different areas and atmospheres of the metropolis – merge together and offer a clear and unique sense of the city, particularly because, as I wish to argue, the embodied consciousness of the walker in the city reveals the fallacy of a non-existent present moment as *punctum*, as a distinct point, an instantaneous 'now' with no duration. Walking enables the development of the necessary time-consciousness in the city that allows for the perception of situations and things constituted of aspects that can exist only across time and not simultaneously, like the music melody played by a

---

[13] Susan M. Squier, *Virginia Woolf and London, The Sexual Politics of the City* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina), 95.
[14] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume Two 1920-1924,* ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York, N.Y.: Harcourt, 1978), 301.
[15] Carl Woodring, *Virginia Woolf, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers* (New York, N.Y.; London: Columbia University Press, 1966), 42.
[16] Ibid., 43.
[17] Virginia Woolf, *A room of One's Own*, 17.
[18] Jean Moorcroft Wilson, *Virginia Woolf Life and London*, 12.

band in the street, or the spreading of rumors across the sidewalk.[19] The impression of relentless motion in the novel (the ever-fleeting present moment) ceases when consciousness appears in the city, giving 'thickness' and dimensionality to the urban experience, so that we get a clear and unique sense of London. Richard Hughes, a British novelist writing in the *New York Saturday Review of Literature* one of the first critical reviews after the novel's publication, would indeed observe that in *Mrs. Dalloway* Woolf had made readers experience the city of London, for the first time, as a crystal rather than a fog.[20] And as David Dowling notes, "the novel has important things to say about insanity, psychiatry, politics, the monarchy, war, suicide, and homosexuality, the status of women"[21] – topics on which substantial research has been conducted, but "as well as about what it feels like to sit in a park in London on a summer day."[22]

The plot in the city

The action of *Mrs. Dalloway* occurs within a single day in carefully designated locales of the city.[23] It is Wednesday, June 20th 1923[24] and Mrs. Dalloway, a high-class middle-aged woman – whose name provides the novel's title – is throwing a grand party. Her day's preoccupations revolve around the preparations for the event (flower buying, silver polishing, night-gown darning, last-minute-guests inviting, etc.), a social occasion she considers of great importance; a way to make people happy, offering them a break from the everyday. It seemed that a party was

---

[19] For more on the analysis of time-consciousness in phenomenology see: Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life, Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 317-28.
[20] David Dowling, *Mrs. Dalloway, Mapping Streams of Consciousness*, 17.
[21] Ibid., 15.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Carl Woodring, *Virginia Woolf*, 21.
[24] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, ed. Morris Beja, The Shakespeare Head Press Page (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) 147.

somehow able to bring into sharp focus something that might easily escape into the blur of everyday life:[25]

> Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself, and that everyone was unreal in one way; much more real in another. It was, she thought, partly their clothes, partly being taken out of their ordinary ways, partly the background; it was possible to say things you couldn't say anyhow else, things that needed an effort; possible to go much deeper. [*MD*, 145]

Peter Walsh, her old time love, who had lived in India for the past five years, returns to London that day and shows up in Mrs. Dalloway's house unexpectedly in the morning, confounding her. Their encounter will bring back memories, will raise personal questions regarding their life choices and will lead Peter back into the city, which he had greatly missed, introspecting. Mrs. Dalloway's husband Richard, a high clerk Parliament officer, and their daughter Elizabeth also think about life choices while protected by the city and away from the confining boundaries of the house. The liberating character of the city, as captured in the novel, comes as no surprise. As Victoria Rosner in her study *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* (2005) demonstrates, Woolf's work builds on the tradition already established by a considerable number of English literary works that, "from the late nineteenth century on (…) portray how Victorian spaces could limit personal ambition and dramatize how individuals were constrained by hierarchical and compartmentalized Victorian spaces."[26] Woolf's work moreover comes at a time when the people can appropriate the city again after the end of the war, (and probably appreciate it even more because of that). At a moment also when "thanks, curiously enough, to the

---

[25] Stella McNichol, ed. *Mrs Dalloway's Party; A Short Story Sequence* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973), 9.
[26] Victoria Rosner, *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 8.

European War, which opened the doors to women,"[27] – as Woolf put it in a famous 1929 lecture[28] – the social and political role of women, and thus their relationship with the public life of the city, is significantly changing. Suffrage and the opening of many professions to both sexes[29] would alter the urban landscape of London.[30] The novel renders the modern city as the necessary provider of the freedom to both men and women that the Victorian domestic environment (at least under daily ordinary circumstances and not in the exceptional event of a party) could not offer.

One of the story's complementary characters, but in sharp psychosocial antithesis to the figures already mentioned, is Septimus Warren Smith, "aged about thirty, (…) with hazel eyes which had that look of apprehension in them which makes complete strangers apprehensive too." [*MD*, 12] A former English soldier, psychologically suffering from the post-war trauma of shell shock,[31] Septimus is haunted by the memory of his best friend's death in the battlefield and reads

---

[27] Virginia Woolf, *A room of One's Own*, 106.

[28] In the same lecture, addressing her words to the young modern women of London, Woolf continues: "I remind you that there have been at least two colleges for women in existence in England since the year 1866; that after the year 1880 a married woman was allowed by law to possess her own property; and that in 1919 – which is a whole nine years ago – she was given a vote? May I also remind you that the most of the professions have been open to you for close on ten years now? When you reflect upon these immense privileges and the length of time during which they have been enjoyed, and the fact that there must be at this moment some two thousand women capable of earning over five hundred a year in one way or another, you will agree that the excuse of lack of opportunity, training, encouragement, leisure, and money no longer holds good." (Ibid., 111.)

[29] Virginia Woolf herself had assisted the campaign for women's suffrage, even if only in the menial role of an addresser of envelopes. (Michael Whitworth, *Authors in Context, Virginia Woolf*, 15.) Her well-known essay "Professions for Women" was a lecture she gave at the invitation of the National Society for Women's Service. The society worked to obtain economic equality for women and Virginia's talk argued that women, if they were to enter 'the professions,' must not only obtain legal equality, but also eliminate the ideological barriers to success; foremost among them, the Victorian stereotype of subservient womanhood. (Ibid., 26.)

[30] For more on this see: Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets, Woman, Representation and the City* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1995), in particular Chapter Seven: "The Female Social Investigator: Maternalism, Feminism, and Women's Work," 207-236.

[31] Shell shock was a major challenge to British psychiatry in the 1920s. The term was coined by C.S. Myers in 1915 and meant: "a condition of alternate moods of apathy and high excitement, with a very quick reaction to sudden emergencies but no capacity for concentrated thinking." (David Dowling, *Mrs. Dalloway, Mapping Streams of Consciousness*, 87.)

the city under a menacing light; every sound, every sight, every incident reminds him of the war, "that little shindy of schoolboys with gunpowder" [*MD*, 81] as partly ironically, partly cynically, he describes World War I. His wife is desperately trying to help, constantly encouraging him to "take an interest in things outside himself" [*MD*, 18], closely following doctors' recommendations, but to no avail. In a brief moment when his wife's surveillance lapses, Septimus throws himself from his apartment window as the day comes to an end. The suicide takes place simultaneously with Mrs. Dalloway's party. The parallel narration between these contradictory worlds was actually Woolf's initial intention for the novel: an attempt to adumbrate the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side.[32] And although the emphasis placed on these parallel lives in the city ended up not equally balanced, as Woolf herself realized ("I think I can go straight at the grand party and so end; forgetting Septimus, which is very intense and ticklish business,"[33]) *Mrs. Dalloway* keeps reminding the reader that Septimus is not the only one suffering from the war traumas, but that these traumas have also lead to a rebirth. Woolf writes: "This late age of world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing." [*MD*, 8] These are the qualities and feelings constructing the post-war London as captured by the novel. Woolf's work questions the future orientation of modernity while at the same time revealing its qualities, thus enhancing the experience of the present and the resonant, life-enhancing qualities of the city.

---

[32] Francine Prose, *The Mrs. Dalloway Reader* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2003), 5.
[33] David Dowling, *Mrs. Dalloway, Mapping Streams of Consciousness*, 36.
Woolf was even criticized for that: The novel fails to confront Clarissa with Septimus's persecution. Thus "the very grave criticism of a society that kills the soul comes with very little weight or force." (Ibid., 21.)

The prevailing atmospheres

The most intense sensation that emanates from the city is a feeling of vibrating summer vitality, one sensed intensely by all the 'sane' characters that walk its streets and populate its parks, but also acknowledged by Septimus, who finds it at odds with his psychological condition. It is the salient character of London in June: "For it was the middle of June. The War was over," [MD, 4] as Mrs. Dalloway contemplates more than once during the day. This vibration is present everywhere, obviously felt even in the middle of the park where she walks early in the morning while going to pick up her flowers:

> June had drawn out every leaf on the trees. The mothers of Pimlico gave suck to their young. Messages were passing from the Fleet to the Admiralty. Arlington Street and Piccadilly seemed to chafe the very air in the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved. [*MD*, 6]

The excerpt starts by capturing the domestic warmth of nurturing mothers and allows the reader imagine the cries of newborn babies filling the air of the area of Pimlico. A residential image is delineated. Pimlico is a family district of the City of Westminster where Mrs. Dalloway lives; its very center designed at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the planner Thomas Cubbit in a strict orthogonal grid of residential streets. Parts of Pimlico that started declining at the end of the nineteenth century, included by the 1910s social housing and even slums. By the time Mrs. Dalloway walks through the area, a mix of different social classes populates its residences and streets.

Pimlico's proximity to the Houses of Parliament though turns it into a center of political activity as well. The Labor Party and the Trades Union Congress shared offices on Eccleston Square, in the very heart of the area, until 1928 and Woolf's allusion to the passing messages

catches the political character of the place. The messages are transmitted through airwaves. The Admiralty building, situated in Whitehall on the Northeast side of St. James Park, where Mrs. Dalloway walks, was equipped with an antenna and wireless telegraph by the Marconi Company since 1901 and could exchange messages with ships at sea[34] – "Messages were passing from the Fleet to the Admiralty." Fleet street on the other hand is the world of business,[35] and the next captured vibration is that of a commercial and social nature emerging from Fleet, Arlington Street and Piccadilly. This vibration chafes the air of the park transmitting an urban warmth – "lift its leaves hotly" – which although invisible, can be inferred by its visible results: the waves of 'magically' lifted leaves in the middle of the city.

In four short sentences, Woolf gathers the obscure but unquestionably present atmospheres prevalent in the city and the novel: a domestic, a commercial, and a sociopolitical one, all interwoven with the warmth of the summer. It is actually only one of the many passages in which Woolf will record the invisible vibrations of London, its waves of auras, its atmospheres. Departing from this general literary image found early on in the novel, she will soon dive into the particularities of each atmosphere in different places within the city and explore them in minute detail, always in relation to the characters walking the streets. Their routes and urban paths through the city have been recorded extensively and sketched on maps and diagrams of London in various editions of the novel, academic works, and more recently websites dedicated to the novel. My original contribution will be to provide an architectural urban reading of these walks in relation to the city and its atmospheres.

---

[34] Bonnie Kime Scott, "Notes to *Mrs. Dalloway*," in *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, ed. Mark Hussey (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2005), 193.
[35] Jean Moorcroft Wilson, *Virginia Woolf Life and London*, 13.

In all these city walks the air of London, experienced by the characters in a manner so fully embodied that it even has a taste, – "The fresh air was so delicious" [*MD*, 115] – is portrayed as an important dimension of the city which enlivens, revitalizes, and reanimates the city dwellers. It is presented as a living organism quivering with energy and transmitting the pulse of the city, the 'invisible messages' which unite the citizens, a magical substance interwoven with a rapidly-shifting and ever-elusive urban life; a life that almost talks to them: "seeing life, as I walk about the streets, an immense opaque block of material to be conveyed in me into its equivalent of language."[36]

Walking on time

Before moving into the particular urban walks unfolding in specific central areas of the city, it is necessary to underline that air's most characteristic urban role in the novel is the transmission of time. The sound waves of the city's numerous clocks and primarily Big Ben's fill the novel's pages and the city's streets.[37] The city's air enables the constant recall of the hours over the course of every single day, regulates and keeps things in order. It is a constant reminder felt and sensed even before actually heard by the people walking the streets:

> For having lived in Westminster – how many years now? over twenty, – one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or walking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or

[36] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume One 1915-1919,* ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York, N.Y.: Harcourt, 1977), 214.

[37] David Dowling argues that Woolf got the idea of a city novel organized around the principles of chiming hours from Joyce's *Ulysses*, which she was reading in 1922. (David Dowling, *Mrs. Dalloway, Mapping the Stream of Consciousness*, 11.)

> solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense (…) before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hours, irrevocable. [*MD*, 3-4]

Londoners are accustomed to having a constant reminder of time when in the city. Elizabeth for instance, having lost track of time while wandering carelessly on Strand Street, realizes at some moment that time has passed by and she needs to return home to get ready for her mothers' party. In her attempt to find out what time it is, she starts scrutinizing the place around her looking for a clock: "She must go home. She must dress for dinner. But what was the time? – where was a clock?" [*MD*, 116]

Moreover, since the New Year of 1923, Big Ben was heard even over the radio: its chimes were broadcast to announce the New Year. From 17th February of 1924 it could be heard every hour on BBC radio, along with regular time signal service from the Greenwich Observatory, which was broadcast as a series of six electronically produced 'pips': henceforward, time in Britain was "ratified by Greenwich" [*MD*, 87] every hour that the BBC was on air.[38] In other words, at the time Woolf was writing *Mrs. Dalloway* the growing number of Britons listening to the increasingly popular wireless were becoming more than ever aware off time's unrelenting march.[39]

Scientifically ordered time (what we might call the time of the hours), the flow of experienced, subjective time as well as the flow of human life are inseparable from the impression of Virginia Woolf's London. It is without much effort that we could mark off the intervals by the strokes of

[38] David Bradshaw, "Introduction," in *Mrs Dalloway*, xxxiii.
[39] Ibid.

Big Ben and find out precisely who is walking where and is doing what at the moment that someone else is doing something:[40]

> It was precisely twelve o'clock; twelve by Big Ben; whose stroke was wafted over the northern part of London; blent with that of other clocks, mixed in a thin ethereal way with the clouds and wisps of smoke and died up there among the seagulls – twelve o'clock struck as Clarissa Dalloway laid her green dress on her bed, and the Warren Smiths walked down Harley Street. Twelve was the hour of their appointment. (…) (The leaden circles dissolved in the air.) [*MD*, 80]

The "leaden circles" that "dissolved in the air" and are to be heard numerous times through the day have their literal source in the concentric cast-iron rings of Big Ben's four twenty-three-foot diameter dials.[41] The peals of the city's famous clock, joined by the sound of London's other numerous clocks, dance along with the bodies of the Londoners and fly away with the seagulls of the river; Clarissa takes care of her dress for the forthcoming party, while Septimus and his wife walk for their appointment on Harley Street; a street noted since the nineteenth century for its large number of private specialists in medicine and surgery. After their medical appointment, the Warren Smiths back on Harley Street face existential questions provoked by the inner troubled world of Septimus, magnified by the rhythmical ticking away of time that is heard in the city as they walk:

> Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion, until the mound of time was so far

[40] Dorothy Brewster, *Virginia Woolf's London*, 50.
[41] David Bradshaw, "Introduction," in *Mrs Dalloway*, xl.

> diminished that a commercial clock, suspended above a shop in Oxford Street, announced, genially and fraternally, as if it were a pleasure to Messrs Rigby and Lowndes to give the information gratis, that it was half-past one. [*MD*, 87]

A constant reminder of humanity's mortal surrender to the passing of time, of the surrender to Time's utmost authority, is present in the city; simultaneously a sense that time can be controlled since it can be counted (and thus can even be forgotten) emerges. By forgetting the passage of time, even allowing themselves to be deceived by the city's clocks, that time can be taken for free, the characters can go back to their routine activities and their commercial habits. And these habits take place in a present moment with a temporal thickness and dimensionality, an immediate past and future in the solidity of the city, that make fleeting time cease and the ever-passing present expand in time:

> Looking up, it appeared that each letter of their names stood for one of the hours; subconsciously one was grateful to Rigby and Lowndes for giving one time ratified by Greenwich; and this gratitude (so Hugh Whitbread ruminated, dallying there in front of the shop window) naturally took the form later of buying off Rigby and Lowndes socks or shoes. [42] [*MD*, 87]

One of Woolf's initial ideas was actually to title the novel "The Hours,"[43] an idea that luckily did not materialize, as it would have also overlooked the moments of lack of preciseness and control that the novel captures in the great, messy city and in the consciousness of its inhabitants:

---

[42] When Hugh Whitbread consults the clock outside the fictional department store, the number of characters in both names (which are the names of two well known English suffragettes) R-I-G-B-Y: 5 characters and L-O-W-N-D-E-S: 7 characters, added together, give precisely twelve characters, one for each hour on the clock face. ("Mrs. Dalloway at 88," Anne Fernald, The Awl, ed. Matt Buchanan and John Herrman, accessed August 25, 2014, http://www.theawl.com/2013/05/mrs-dalloway-at-88.)

> (…) but here the other clock, the clock which always struck two minutes after Big Ben, came shuffling in with its lap full of odds and ends, which it dumped down as if Big Ben were all very well with his majesty laying down the law, so solemn, so just, (…).
>
> Volubly, troublously, the late clock sounded, coming in on the wake of Big Ben, with its lap full of trifles. Beaten up, broken up by the assault of carriages, the brutality of vans, the eager advance of myriads of angular men, of flaunting women, the domes and spires of offices and hospitals, the last relics of this lap full of odds and ends seemed to break, like the spray of an exhausted wave, upon the body of Miss Kilman standing still in the street for a moment to mutter 'It is the flesh.'
>
> It was the flesh that she must control. [*MD*, 108-109]

It is in this air that the characters walk and encounter the city, in its vibrant leaden circles of time, its pulsating atmospheres, and its waves breaking upon their bodies. And although Clarissa Dalloway secretly wishes at the beginning of the day that Peter could accompany her on her morning June walk, the walking incidents captured by the literary language are all solitary. (The sole exception is Septimus, who many times is seen walking with his wife; but given his troubled and fragile mental state, he often seems to lack awareness of her presence.) The figures in this story walk on their own, or rush to be left on their own to indulge unobstructed in a walk. Peter Walsh's thoughts portray how particularly grateful he can be for the pleasure of walking alone in the middle of the park:

> (…) at the age of fifty-three, one scarcely needed people any more. Life itself, every moment of it, every drop of it, here, this instant, now, in the sun, in Regents' Park, was enough. Too much, indeed. A whole lifetime was too short to bring out, now that one had

---

[43] Helen M. Wussow, *Virginia Woolf "The Hours": The British Museum Manuscript of Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Pace University Press, 1997), ix.

> acquired the power, the full flavour; to extract every ounce of pleasure, every shade of meaning; which both were so much more solid that they used to be, so much less personal. [*MD*, 67]

These lonely walks reflect Woolf's personal belief that "to walk alone in London is the greatest rest."[44] Solitary walking has the effect of calming the heroes' anxieties and concerns, distracts them momentarily from their pressing preoccupations, or helps them deal with them. And although critical interest in Woolf's London has turned recently to questions of space and mobility of characters and narrators across the city, [45] as Tamar Katz has noted, scholarly interest on these walks often omits the study of extant urban atmospheres and the effects they have on the protagonists' walking through them, as well as how these walks may change the city itself. The novel, as I wish to argue, portrays London as both subject to minute changes caused by the protagonists' walks, as well as the catalyst which makes the characters vulnerable to "the ebb and flow of things" [*MD*, 12] in its environment. Keeping this two-fold urban perspective in mind, let us now focus on these different walks and the specific micro-atmospheres of the various parts of modern London that they traverse.

---

[44] Jean Moorcroft Wilson, *Virginia Woolf Life and London*, 14.
[45] Tamar Katz, "Pausing, Waiting, Repeating: Urban Temporality in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Years*," in *Woolf and the City, Selected Papers from the Nineteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Elizabeth F. Evans and Sarah E. Cornish. Clemson; South Carolina: Clemson University Digital Press, 2010.

The walks

Morning walk on Bond Street

Mrs. Dalloway has set out early in the morning towards Bond Street; a commercial street of which she is particularly fond:

> Bond street fascinated her; Bond Street early in the morning in the season; its flags flying; its shops; no splash; no glitter; one roll of tweed in the shop where her father had bought his suits for fifty years; a few pearls; salmon on an iceblock. [*MD*, 9]

It is a street of no glitter, no superficial qualities, no extravagant displays. Shops with fabrics connected with typical British outfits, like the tweeds, commonly worn for outdoor activities such as shooting or hunting in the United Kingdom, jewelry shops and shops with food constitute its landscape. But while in the flower shop, a

> violent explosion which made Mrs Dalloway jump and Miss Pym go to the window and apologize came from a motor car which had drawn to the side of the pavement precisely opposite Mulberry's shop window. Passers-by, who, of course, stopped and stared, had just time to see a face of the very greatest importance against the dove-grey upholstery, before a male hand drew the blind and there was nothing to be seen except a square of dove grey.
>
> Yet rumours were at once in circulation from the middle of Bond Street to Oxford Street on one side, to Atkinson's scent shop on the other, passing invisibly, inaudibly, like a cloud, swift, veil-like upon hills, falling indeed with something of a cloud's sudden sobriety and stillness upon faces which a second before had been utterly disorderly. But now mystery had brushed them with her wing; they had heard the voice of authority; the spirit of religion was abroad with her eyes bandaged tight and her lips gaping wide. But nobody

> knew whose face had been seen. Was it the Prince of Wales's, the Queen's, the Prime Minister's? Whose face was it? Nobody knew. (…)
>
> Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body. The sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry's shop window; old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; here a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs Dalloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in inquiry. Everyone looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. (…)
>
> The chauffer, who had been opening something, turning something, shutting something, got on to the box. [*MD*, 12-13]

The strong sound of an explosion and the fleeting image of "a face of the very greatest importance" cease momentarily the spontaneous happenings and randomly, even disorderly occurring activities of the street's everyday life. Everything comes to a standstill, people stop walking. The passersby like spectators of a theater or performance, are intuitively participating in the unexpected event; a motor car draws to the side of the pavement, the chauffer is "opening something, turning something, shutting something" in his attempt to fix the damage and everyone looks at the motor car, while traffic accumulates. And the air of the city, in the occasion of this event, informs the passersby with rumors; circulating stories or reports of doubtful truth which are, however, inaudible and illegible – as the literary language argues. Like a fast-moving cloud that can easily dissolve into vapor or rain, a transparent and airy veil, the rumors fall on the faces of the crowd; it is the visible facial changes that are a proof of its existence. Automatically everything becomes ordered, as people seem to believe that an official command has been issued – "they had heard the voice of authority" – and they need to conform. A commonly shared patriotic feeling is transmitted in the street. An inaudible "space of

appearance" and political consciousness emerges indeed for a few seconds, one that has became 'fragile' with the outset of European modernity in the eighteenth century, and fails to survive the actuality of the movement that brings it into being disappearing with the dispersal of men and the arrest of the activities themselves.[46] Despite its fragility though, a momentary bond is created between the randomly passing people, the shops' owners and their clients, on a street that so happens to be called Bond; word that signifies a force or a feeling that unites people; a common emotion or interest. It is worth mentioning that this lyrically expressed bonding atmosphere (an atmosphere of sociopolitical nature) comes at a moment at which the dominant idea of the state is changing in England, a change gradually becoming sensible. As Michael Whitworth explains in *Virginia Woolf, Authors in Content*, whereas the late nineteenth century had been dominated by the liberal ideal of a maximum of individual liberty and a minimum of state interference, the early twentieth century saw increasing acceptance of the idea that the state should restrict individual liberty for the benefit of the whole nation.[47]

The rumors that emerged from the middle of Bond Street bounding and 'restricting' individuals, invisibly travel to Oxford Street – "rumours were at once in circulation from the middle of Bond Street to Oxford Street" – a street on which news changes quicker than in any part of London,[48] as Woolf explains in her essay "Oxford Street Tides." "The press of people passing seems to lick the ink of the placards and to consume more of them and to demand fresh supplies of later editions faster than elsewhere."[49] The walkers in Woolf's case are like the audience of a theater, or the guests at a party, together observing and "enjoying" the spectacle.

---

[46] Hanna Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 199.
[47] Michael Whitworth, *Authors in context*, 30
Whitworth further argues that while Woolf's fictions only occasionally depicted these changes directly, the underlying questions of national and individual liberty are far more pervasive. (Ibid., 31.)
[48] Virginia Woolf, "Oxford Street Tides," in *Virginia Woolf Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 200.
[49] Ibid.

As a small community, they seem to share similar thoughts and feelings despite the interesting paradox that the window, on which their attention is focused, is in seconds rendered opaque. The air is filled with curiosity and mystery, which unites Londoners and brings them back to order.

The sound made by the explosion is moreover described as a throb; a word indicating a loud, regular beat or sound but also a feeling of pain in a series of regular beats. A body metaphor is employed to describe this throb, which "sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body." The unexpected violent sound can be imagined as an irregular pulse in the body of the united passersby, the living 'body' of the city, which could also indicate a first symptom of an illness. This collective body's temperature is indeed rising, a characteristic symptom of any illness. It is because of this irregular beat that the sun feels warmer, that women need to protect themselves from it, opening their parasols. One by one the old ladies spread their sun-umbrellas, which color the atmosphere of the place with their black but also red and green presence, blooming in the street's landscape with a little pop; a delicate light explosive sound as an attenuated echo of the motor's violent explosive sound, or a hiccup agitating the vitals of the city's body.

It is not the sole moment that Woolf will use a medical and bodily metaphor to describe the atmosphere of the city's particular area. A few hours after the explosion, Peter Walsh walking around Oxford and Great Portland Street will contemplate on the morning atmosphere of the city and will find it perfect, punctual and healthy:

> It was a splendid morning too. Like the pulse of a perfect heart, life struck straight through the streets. There was no fumbling – no hesitation. Sweeping and swerving, accurately, punctually, noiselessly, there, precisely at the right instant, the motor car stopped at the door. The girl, silk-stockinged, feathered, evanescent, (…) alighted. Admirable butlers, tawny chow dogs, halls laid in black and white lozenges with white

> blinds blowing, Peter saw through the opened door and approved of. A splendid achievement in its own way, after all, London; the season; civilization. (…) And the doctors and men of business and capable women all going about their business, punctual, alert, robust, seemed to him wholly admirable, good fellows, to whom one would entrust one's life, companions in the art of living, who would see one through. [*MD*, 46-47]

In the splendid morning, life unfolds in perfect rhythm, the rhythm of a healthy heart, which sends blood through the body of the city with a strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement. Because of this even distribution of energy and vitality, everything takes place orderly, punctually, in perfect synchronicity and with no noise, the way a heartbeat is inaudible if one doesn't press an ear closer to someone's heart. The heart of the city regulates all actions discreetly and faultlessly. In this perfectly developing life, one can find one's way easily, naturally, with no need to move clumsily in various directions using the hands to find one's way, with no need to fumble. And the interior of the houses on the streets (which Peter approves of), have impeccably decorated halls with black and white lozenges, with matching white blinds that sense the air current of the city. The domestic health and the health of the body in connection with the health of the city are all woven together in Peter's morning walk.

The bodies in the street also seem to emit health; the bodies of the doctors, the businessmen and the capable women are robust: strong and vigorous. Here capable – "capable women" – means having the ability but also the fitness necessary to achieve certain things, giving the impression that one's life can be entrusted to them, as Peter feels. One's own health is dependent on the healthy atmosphere of the city in the morning.

This is probably why a simple flat tire (car back-fires were a commonplace experience in London in those days[50]), occurring as speculated by the Londoners to the car of the high

authority of the city, the fiduciary of the necessary city order and thus 'health' of London, causes such a big commotion and disruption in the city's body, causing its breath and pulse to pause momentarily, or even be heard more intensely, like a hiccup. Thus a minor incident could cause all those commonly shared feelings that continue to be sensed even after the car's departure from Bond Street:

> The car had gone, but it had left a slight ripple which flowed through glove shops and hat shops and tailor's shops on both sides of Bond Street. For thirty seconds all heads were inclined the same way – to the window. Choosing a pair of gloves – should they be to the elbow or above it, lemon or pale grey? – ladies stopped; when the sentence was finished something had happened. Something so trifling in single instances that no mathematical instrument, though capable of transmitting shocks in China, could register the vibration; yet in its fullness rather formidable and in its common appeal emotional; for in all the hat shops and tailors' shops strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the flag; of Empire. [*MD*, 15]

Not even the most sensitive mathematical instrument, even one that could record the shocks in a country as distant to London as China, would suffice to record the fragile vibration that changed Bond Street for a few minutes. A scientific tool wouldn't be able to grasp the ideas that emerged in everyone's minds as they stopped their walks; the moment their ears and bodies felt the violent explosion, their eyes caught the image of perhaps the Queen and their faces were touched

---

[50] Jean Moorcroft Wilson, *Virginia Woolf Life and London*, 123.

As research has shown the incident also touches on the general traffic problem central London (particularly around Piccadilly Circus) was facing at the time, with buses, hand- and horse-drawn carts, carriages, automobiles and pedestrians all competed to cross streets at a time when traffic signals still had to be changed manually by a traffic officer. Traffic in Piccadilly especially was the subject of many newspaper articles and resulted in multiple government committees, studies and reports during the early 1920's—committees of just the kind that Richard Dalloway (Clarissa's husband), as a Member of Parliament might sit on. (Anne Fernald, "Mrs. Dalloway at 88," ibid.)

by the fast moving rumors, that make them breathe "with the same dark breath of veneration". [*MD*, 14] The writing records an atmospheric change, a change in the mood of people; a slight, almost invisible change, invisible to any other means of representing human reality but so well captured by the poetic language of the novel. The inclination of everyone's head towards the same direction was only the visible sign of these commonly shared sentiments, of the way everyone felt. Faces dressed with dignity stood still, ceased their daily activities, no matter how urgent or important, and were suspended momentarily on the sides of Brook Street. The duration of this moment in the city is infinitely small and subject to change, but consistent with Woolf's belief that the individual identity is always in flux – in every moment changing its shape in response to the forces surrounding it – forces which are invisible emerge, while others sink silently below the surface.[51] Her conviction, clearly manifested in this excerpt, was that the outer crust of the self, one's personality, is a finely-tuned mechanism, sensitive as a seismograph to the slightest vibration in the social environment – one that could be visual like the image of the passing car, acoustical like the sound of the car's backfire, olfactory like the smell of the emitted gas, gustatory like the "delicious air", or even tactile like the sense of the wind on the walkers' skin – and hence volatile like the flux and multiplicity of experience to which it is exposed.[52]

Woolf continues to record the fluctuations of Londoners' behavior, as the car keeps moving. Because of the city's traffic and the car's slow speed more and more people catch sight of it. More city inhabitants feel the same quiver on their spine, and the city enlarges this feeling. The urban environment resonates with the same excitement, agitation and sense of pride, amplifying the sensation. The feeling is already out in the air shared not only by the people but by the city and its different elements as well. But this city change, this feeling shared in the urban

[51] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, second ed., ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), 14.
[52] Ibid.

atmosphere, wouldn't have been noticed without the simultaneous transformation momentarily influencing the crowd. The world around Londoners appeared differently, because they themselves appeared differently, or as Alva Nöe would explain it: the world appeared thanks to the exercise of skills of access towards this world. We achieve the world by enacting ourselves and insofar as we achieve access to the world, we also achieve *ourselves*.[53]

> Gliding across Piccadilly, the car turned down St. James's Street. Tall men, men of robust physique, well-dressed men with their tail-coats and their white slips and their hair raked back, who, for reasons difficult to discriminate, were standing in the bow window of White's with their hands behind the tails of their coats, looking out, perceived instinctively that greatness was passing, and the pale light of the immortal presence fell upon them as it had fallen upon Clarissa Dalloway. At once they stood even straighter, and removed their hands, and seemed ready to attend their Sovereign, if need be, to the cannon's mouth, as their ancestors had done before them. The white busts and the little tables in the background covered with copies of the *Tatler* and bottles of soda water seemed to approve; seemed to indicate the flowing corn and the manor houses of England; and to return the frail hum of the motor wheels as the walls of a whispering gallery return a single voice expanded and made sonorous by the might of a whole cathedral. [*MD*, 15-16]

The literary language manifests the subtle vibration sensed even in the interior of shops or clubs. Men standing in White, the oldest and grandest of London's gentlemen clubs with the celebrated bow window in the middle of its facade, feel the same sense of bond as do people in the street. The tables and even the soda water on them conform too and approve of the gentlemen's posture, status and manner. The tables and glasses, just as the parasols did earlier, return the sound of the passing motor car – reminiscent of the whispering gallery of Saint Paul's Cathedral, a room

---

[53] Alva Nöe, *Varieties of Presence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 12.

famous for its acoustics. The physical elements of the city – the commercial shops that define the limits of its streets, and the gentlemen's clubs – are in a dialogue with the passing car; they reproduce in the city a space similar to a cathedral. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in an age of growing secularism, following the horror of the First World War, the modern city undertakes the role of the cathedral itself. It becomes the place of transcendental experiences, the place offering guidance and consolation from mundane everyday reality, as many characters of the story will feel as the day unfolds.

The 11:30 walk in Trafalgar Square

The first of them will be Peter Walsh, who back in London after five years in India feels various changes in the atmosphere of the city, and becomes conscious of how the old order of things has significantly altered since he was last there. His engagement with and perception of the urban environment around him is marked by careful observation and heightened attention:

> The amusing thing about coming back to England, after five years, was the way it made, anyhow the first days, things stand out as if one had never seen them before; lovers squabbling under a tree; the domestic family life of the parks. Never had he seen London look so enchanting – the softness of the distances; the richness; the greenness, the civilization, after India, he thought, strolling across the grass.
>
> This susceptibility to impressions had been his undoing, no doubt. [*MD*, 60]

He notices that women of all classes wear make-up, that sexual mores seem freer; he is convinced that a change has undoubtedly taken place. People looked different. Newspapers

looked different.[54] Peter himself will feel different as well, transformed by the city during his urban walk. His sociopolitical observations combined with the feeling of a perfectly healthy city environment which he senses, make him, at the age of fifty-five, feel younger than ever. In the middle of Trafalgar Square at eleven thirty in the morning, having just left Clarissa's home:

> And just because nobody yet knew he was in London, except Clarissa, and the earth, after the voyage, still seemed an island to him, the strangeness of standing alone, alive, unknown, at half-past eleven in Trafalgar Square overcame him. What is it? Where am I? (…) And down his mind went flat as a marsh, and three great emotions bowled over him; understanding; a vast philanthropy; and finally, as if the result of the others, an irrepressible, exquisite delight; as if inside his brain, by another hand, strings were pulled, shutters moved, and he, having nothing to do with it, yet stood at the opening of endless avenues down which if he chose he might wander. He had not felt so young for years. [*MD*, 44]

Peter is pausing among the statues in Trafalgar Square, experiencing the classic urban paradox of freedom and anonymity.[55] But his route up Whitehall – a street lined with governmental departments, ministries and a number of memorial statues including since 1920 Britain's primary war memorial, the Cenotaph – and the fact that it is in Trafalgar Square – among the statues of generals associated with imperial campaigns – that he feels free and young again are no accident.[56] As Barbara Penner observes, the spaces through which he passes represent and glorify imperial state power, arousing pride and a sense of belonging in Peter, almost against his will.[57] His feeling of youth, accompanied by the spontaneity also characteristic of the young,

---

[54] David Bradshaw, "Introduction," in *Mrs Dalloway*, xl.
[55] Richard Dennis, *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space 1840-1930* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 162.
[56] Ibid., 162

most probably transports him and lures him into enjoying a playful aspect of the city, following discreetly and for some moments (just for the fun of it) a beautiful woman:

> But she's extraordinarily attractive, he thought, as, walking across Trafalgar Square in the direction of the Haymarket, came a young woman who, as she passed Gordon's statue, seemed, Peter Walsh thought (susceptible as he was), to shed veil after veil, until she became the very woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately; merry, but discreet; black, but enchanting.
>
> Straightening himself and stealthily fingering his pocket-knife he started after her to follow this woman, this excitement, which seemed even with its back turned to shed on him a light which connected them, which singled him out, as if the random uproar of the traffic had whispered through hollowed hands his name, not Peter, but his private name which he called himself in his own thoughts. 'You,' she said, only 'you', saying it with her white gloves and her shoulders. Then the thin long cloak which the wind stirred as she walked past Dent's shop in Cockspur Street blew out with an enveloping kindness, a mournful tenderness, as of arms that would open and take the tired – (…)
>
> (…) On and on she went, across Piccadilly, and up Regent Street, ahead of him, her cloak, her gloves, her shoulders combining with the fringes and the laces and the feather boas in the windows to make the spirit of finery and whimsy which dwindled out of the shops on to the pavement, as the light of a lamp goes wavering at night over hedges in the darkness. [*MD*, 45-46]

The presence of the beautiful woman mesmerizes Peter and carries him away for some moments in an imaginative fictional world, which interplays with the elements of the physical world around him. Initially the woman seems to be transforming into the ideal woman of his thoughts, the dream-lady of his imaginations. This mixed perception (based partly in the real woman he encounters and partly on the one he already has in mind) influences intuitively his bodily posture.

---

[57] Barbara Penner, "The construction of identity: Virginia Woolf's city," in *Intersections: Architectural Histories and Critical Theories*, ed. Ian Borden and Jane Rendell (London: Routledge, 2000), 274.

Peter straightens his back and with a new-found determination he instinctively changes his path in order to follow her. Feelings of excitement overwhelm him, while he is discreetly going after this woman's back, following a light she seems to shed on him in the middle of Trafalgar Square at 11:30 in the morning. Peter feels to be particularly chosen – "a light which connected them, which singled him out" – for this special and unexpected treat that London offers him. The city's traffic, its uproar, its general hubbub, metaphorically acquires a human form, a figure who whispers Peter's secret name through hollowed hands. A deeply personal piece of information – "his private name which he called himself in his own thoughts" – seems to be coming to his ear from the city itself: an intimate secret is shared between Peter and London. The city knows how to address him at this moment of arousing enthusiasm. This imaginary, passionately and bodily sensed message, transmitted once more through the city's air, is mixed with the object of desire whose gloves and shoulders call him further, sensuously saying "'You' (…) only 'you'". Woman and city traffic are merged together, reinforcing Peter's decision to pursue the attractive stranger.

And then London's air once more appears in the foreground. The woman's clothes, her long thin cloak, in full attunement with the wind, seems to be lifting and opening as if to hug him – "enveloping kindness" – and also seems with the sound of a fragile, a tender call to be inviting him closer. This call, instead of the sensual voice the reader might expect, is heard by Peter just as the woman is passing Dent's shop. This shop belongs to Edward Dent and Co. Ltd, the watch and clockmakers to the Royal Family; makers of the Great Clock of the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben, and of the primary Standard Timekeeper of the United Kingdom at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich.[58] An extremely strong reminder of time's passage is mixed with the air

[58] David Bradshaw, "Explanatory Notes," in *Mrs Dalloway*, 176.

and turns the voice of the city into a tender cry, making Peter feel tired and more in need of a consoling human touch than an erotic arousal – "as of arms that would open and take the tired".

But as the physical appearance of the city changes once more, while the beautiful woman walks up Regent Street, Peter can now see her across the clothing shops. He imagines her body merging with the products displayed in the windows – "her shoulders combining with the fringes and the laces and the feather boas in the windows" – and her reflection projected on the shop windows, dissolving the boundaries between exterior and interior spaces in the city. The atmosphere felt on the pavement changes through this new characterization of the urban experience. The existential and charged atmosphere of the ruthless passage of time is replaced by an aura of excessive allure, of expensive or ostentatious decoration, which leaps from the commercial windows and lends its qualities to the street. The city is unfolding its different atmospheres, disseminating before particular shops; and as the walkers pass through them they experience, instinctively and out of their control, changes in mood and physical state. Their perceptions and bodies alter accordingly.

The liberating feeling fully sensed by Peter's united body and mind – "the human frame being what it is, heart, body, and brain all mixed together, and not contained in separate compartments,"[59] as Virginia Woolf would explain elsewhere – this mixing of imagination and inner thoughts with the city's incidents and physical presence, carrying the walker almost against his will in what is an almost indulgent daydreaming combined with an awakened sleep-walking,[60] continues a little a bit longer and further in the city:

---

[59] Virginia Woolf, *A room of one's own*, 20.
[60] Virginia Woolf explores this topic in more detail in her short essay titled "Street-Haunting" published in 1933.

> Laughing and delightful, she had crossed Oxford Street and Great Portland Street and turned down one of the little streets, and now, and now, the great moment was approaching, for now she slackened, opened her bag, and with one look in his direction, but not at him, one look that bade farewell, summed up the whole situation and dismissed it triumphantly, for ever, had fitted her key, opened the door, and gone! (…) The house was one of those flat red houses with hanging flower-baskets of vague impropriety. It was over.
>
> Well, I had my fun; (…) for it was half made up, as he knew very well; invented, this escapade with the girl; made up, as one makes up the better part of life, he thought – making oneself up; making her up; creating an exquisite amusement, and something more. (…)
>
> (…) Where should he go? No matter. Up the street, then, towards Regent's Park. His boots on the pavement struck out 'no matter'; for it was early, still very early. [MD, 46]

A change in the rhythm of the woman's walking is taking place, as she leaves behind the city's noisy grand avenues and turns towards "one of the little streets". Peter feels, reading her slackened footsteps, that a climax of his urban experience is arriving – "the great moment was approaching" – most probably the end. Indeed the woman opens the door of one of the houses and disappears. Peter looks at the basket of flowers hanging by its façade; he senses an air of vague impropriety to be reaching out on the street, as he ends up believing that the woman may be a prostitute.[61]

But this atmosphere sensed before the mysterious house doesn't change Peter's mood, perhaps because its impropriety is too subtle or more likely because the very act of playfully following this woman was already enough to offer him a great amount of unexpected joy; a game in the city in which participation alone suffices to cause pleasure and excitement. He is however well aware that this joy is partly his own making, carried away as he is by the sirens of the city

[61] Richard Dennis, *Cities in Modernity*, 162.

(the traffic's roar, the attractive woman) in imagining and creating fictional scenarios. The city, as a faithful ally, ensured that he could always find his way back. Fully trusting himself in the city once again after the end of his game, he randomly continues his walk, towards a destination that seems to be specific – "Up the street, then, towards Regent's Park" – but in reality towards any possible new path that can appear for him at any given moment. The character's actions and reflections reveal that the moods of the city are *attunements* directly shared and are beyond the control of any person, *attunements* which as Heidegger has argued draw in each new participant like a raindrop into a hurricane.[62] In this Heideggerian understanding of moods, portrayed so explicitly by the novel, people are directly attuned to each other by being always attuned by a shared mood:[63] as Peter, the attractive women and the existing moods of London, emerging in its different parts. The special power of moods is that they make things matter and govern people's actions by inviting them in beyond their control.[64] A seemingly carefree and purposeless urban wandering is endowed with meaning because of the importance and meanings the city's moods bestow on it.

The afternoon walk on the Strand

Another character in the plot that gets carried away by the city, by walking in unfamiliar streets, is Elizabeth Dalloway, Clarissa's young daughter, whose spontaneous afternoon walk will offer the reader a unique glimpse of the Charing Cross area, south of Trafalgar Square. The young

---

[62] Hubert L. Dreyfus,. "Why the Mood *in* a Room and the Mood *of* a Room Should be Important to Architects," in *From the Things Themselves, Architecture and Phenomenology*, ed. Benoît Jacquet and Vincent Giraud (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2012), 25.
[63] Ibid., 28.
[64] Ibid., 29.

woman decides consciously to live behind West End and Westminster, the areas where her mother usually wanders, and proceeds with confidence to navigate the Strand and Cornhill,[65] a newly booming center of commercial and professional life.[66] Absorbed, to her mother's distress, in her friendship with her history tutor Miss Kilman, she goes out that afternoon to the Army and Navy Stores but then, in a moment of spontaneity, she abandons her tutor's company and heads towards Victoria Square, where she waits alone for an omnibus, any omnibus:[67]

> And Elizabeth waited in Victoria Street for an omnibus. It was so nice to be out of doors. She thought perhaps she need not go home just yet. It was so nice to be out in the air. So she would get on to an omnibus. And already, even as she stood there, in her well-cut clothes, it was beginning… People were beginning to compare her to poplar trees, early dawn, hyacinths, fawns, running water, and garden lilies; and it made her life a burden to her, for she so much preferred being left alone to do what she liked in the country, but they would compare her to lilies, and she had to go to parties, and London was so dreary compared with being alone in the country with her father and the dogs. [*MD*, 114]

Elizabeth's initial liberating sensation of being "out of doors", "out in the air" is rapidly obscured by a feeling of distress, as she dwells on the way people compliment her appearance, her well-cut clothes, her physical characteristics. Her tall posture would remind them of a poplar tree, her young age of early dawn or fawns. In the middle of the city on Victoria Street, Elizabeth feels the

---

[65] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), 247.
[66] Susan M. Squier, *Virginia Woolf and London*, *The Sexual Politics of the City*, 102.
[67] Dorothy Brewster, *Virginia Woolf's London*, 53.

From George Shillibeer's horse-drawn omnibuses in 1829 to the first licensed motor omnibuses in 1904 to the enclosed double-deckers of the 1930s, the omnibus was the principal middle class conveyance in central London. It vied with train, tram, and underground transport to provide passengers with an inexpensive and efficient alternative to cabs and later to automobiles. In her three London novels, *Night and Day* (1919), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *The Years* (1937), Woolf subtly marks the transition from horse-drawn omnibuses of the 1880s and '90s to motor omnibuses of the early twentieth century. (Eleanor McNees, "Public Transport in Woolf's City Novels: The London Omnibus," in *Woolf and the City*, *Selected Papers from the Nineteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, 32.)

burden of the social life associated with the city – "she had to go to parties" – and finds London dull and depressing, compared with the privacy she can enjoy in the countryside. Her decision to ride the omnibus and go further away from her home (where she is expected because of the forthcoming party) is motivated by "a desire to escape from the oppressive presence of Westminster, her society hostess mother and the feminine identity which is being trust upon her by society."[68] Slowly though, the ride in the omnibus across working-class neighborhoods, areas of different atmospheres than those of Westminster, changes her mood and motivates her to keep going even further:

> She was delighted to be free. The fresh air was so delicious. It had been so stuffy in the Army and Navy Stores. (…)
> (…) Oh she would like to go a little farther. Another penny, was it, to the Strand? Here was another penny, then. She would go up the Strand. [*MD*, 115]

As she gets off the omnibus and rambles randomly in the city, London will work a subtle change in Elizabeth:[69]

> This was Somerset House. (…) It looked so splendid, so serious, that great grey building. And she liked the feeling of people working. She liked those churches, like shapes of grey paper, breasting the stream of the Strand. It was quite different here from Westminster, she thought, getting off at Chancery Lane. It was so serious; it was so busy. In short, she would like to have a profession. She would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament if she found it necessary, all because of the Strand.
>
> The feet of those people busy about their activities, hands putting stone to stone, minds eternally occupied not with trivial chatterings (comparing women to poplars – which was

[68] Barbara Penner, "The construction of identity: Virginia Woolf's city", 277.
[69] Dorothy Brewster, *Virginia Woolf's London*, 55.

> rather exciting, of course, but very silly), but with thoughts of ships, of business, of law, of administration and with it all so stately (she was in the Temple), gay (there was the river), pious (there was the Church), made her quite determined, whatever her mother might say, to become either a farmer or a doctor. But she was, of course, rather lazy. [*MD*, 116]

Somerset House, home of the General Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages since 1836, casts an impressive and serious aura on the city. Elizabeth starts thinking about people working and how she likes the grey buildings of the churches, which as if partaking of the fragility but also sharpness of a material like paper – shapes of grey paper – appear to face and move forward, against the stream of the Strand. She senses the different atmosphere in this part of the city, one of labor emerging from the working hands of people that have created churches, have built ships, have issued laws and registrations, occupations of no trivial character – unlike the social gossip she often finds herself participating in. All because of the Strand, the main business thoroughfare of central London, Elizabeth allows herself to imagine possible scenarios for her future life, her future profession, alternative scenarios to what her bourgeois mother has in mind for her: a marriage and the bringing up of children. The activity of the street fascinates her, makes her feel determined:

> She looked up Fleet Street. She walked just a little way towards St. Paul's, shyly, like someone penetrating on tiptoe, exploring a strange house by night with a candle, on edge lest the owner should suddenly fling wide his bedroom door and ask her business, nor did she dare wander off into queer alleys, tempting bye-streets, any more than in a strange house open doors which might be bedroom doors, or sitting-room doors, or lead straight to the larder. For no Dalloways came down the Strand daily; she was a pioneer, a stray, venturing, trusting. [*MD*, 116-117]

In order for Elizabeth to find herself in Fleet Street, she needed to pass the crossroad of Strand with Felter Street (Strand narrows down and gives into Fleet after this crossroad), an urban path, bearing the name of London's largest underground river, the Felter River. If Michel de Certeau is right and the names of the streets can even direct people's paths in a city, the relics of meaning putting them into motion and insinuating different routes into the functionalistic order of movement,[70] the subterranean reference brought to mind by the name of the street and in connection with the narrowing of the street's dimensions, may have contributed to Elizabeth's association of her experience walking in this unknown part of London with the interior space of a domestic environment. A change in her embodied engagement with the city is taking place at a subconscious level. Her initial confidence turns into a shyness, a need for discreetness emerging from the unexpected feeling of breaking into someone's house in the middle of the night. The unknown part of the city evokes a sense similar to being in an unknown domestic space. Although in the very heart of London, she feels she has to walk as silently and lightly as possible, on the tips of her toes, to avoid waking up the owner from his sleep. This feeling impedes her from even trying to explore further the by-streets she encounters on her way, embedded as she feels them to be with an air of dense domesticity and privacy. But despite her feeling of intimidation and her change in attitude, walking towards Saint Paul's Cathedral on Fleet Street – an endeavor that required special bodily effort – filled her with a sense of pride. She saw herself as a pioneer, because no one of her family would usually venture into this part of the city:

---

[70] As de Certeau argues "people are put in motion by the remaining relics of meaning (…) Things that amount to nothing, or almost nothing, sym-bolize and orient walker's steps: names that have ceased precisely to be 'proper' (…) They insinuate other routes into the functionalistic and historical order of movement." (Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the city," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 105.)

> She penetrated a little farther in the direction of St. Paul's. She liked the geniality, sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood of this uproar. It seemed to her good. The noise was tremendous; and suddenly there were trumpets (the unemployed) blaring, rattling about in the uproar; military music; as if people were marching; (…) and whoever was watching, opening the window of the room where she had just brought off that act of supreme dignity, looked down on Fleet Street, that uproar, that military music would have come triumphing up to him, consolatory, indifferent. (…)
>
> But it was later than she thought. Her mother would not like her to be wandering off alone like this. She turned back down the Strand. [*MD*, 117]

Elizabeth captures the sound and vibration of the harsh loud military music as she continues to walk towards Saint Paul's Cathedral. Unemployed musicians fill the air with the sound of trumpets, and the military beat is enough to make the heroine feel a sense of dignity, one so intense that she strongly believes it can be felt by anyone who would just open their windows and cast a glance on the street. This musically-spread dignity (yet another of London's invisible vibrations, an acoustic one this time: an element of the city's soundscape, and of sociopolitical nature) traveling upwards towards the open windows – "that military music would have come triumphing up to him" – could even be imagined to penetrate the houses' interiors, consoling the dwellers.

This sense of dignity sensed by the character is felt both because of the music but also because of her proximity to Saint Paul's Cathedral. The late seventeenth-century Baroque Church, rebuilt by Christopher Wren in 1675, was the tallest building in the city in 1923, regarded as a symbol of the monarchy and the British Empire, housing jubilees and weddings and being the final resting place for some of Britain's most famous historical figures. There is a deep sense of historical and emotional attachment between Londoners and the building, and historical research has emphasized the use of Saint Paul's Cathedral as a representation of the

British Empire and its subsequent employment to spread sentiments of imperialism and national identity to the English population.[71] Woolf's literary language evokes these feelings but also questions them. The novel, apart from Elizabeth's reaction to the building, also captures an impression arising during the random walk of an anonymous city inhabitant. His encounter with the Cathedral will provoke in him questions of whether he should alter his course because of all the things that the church can offer him:

> Then, while a seedy-looking nondescript man carrying a leather bag stood on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, and hesitated, for within was what balm, how great a welcome, how many tombs with banners waving over them, tokens of victories not over armies, but over, he thought, that plaguy spirit of truth seeking which leaves me at present without a situation, and more than that, the cathedral offers company, he thought, invites you to membership of a society; great men belong to it; martyrs have died for it; why not enter in, he thought, put this leather bag stuffed with pamphlets before an altar, a cross, the symbol of something, which has soared beyond seeking and questing and knocking of words together and has become all spirit, disembodied, ghostly – why not enter in? he thought, and while he hesitated out flew the aeroplane over Ludgate Circus. [*MD*, 24]

A man carrying a bag full of pamphlets (conveying commercial or political messages) contemplates all the possible sentiments that will emerge upon entering the Cathedral and partaking of the company the place offers among the heroic men of society. He is aware that a comforting, soothing, even restorative effect will be endowed upon him by the building's interior – "for within was what balm, how great a welcome" – but in a secular world where the role of religion is doubtful, and "has become all spirit, disembodied, ghostly", his initial, spontaneous

[71] Rebecca Pierce, "National Identity and the British Empire: The image of Saint Paul's Cathedral," (Thesis of Masters of Arts, Graduate College of Marshall University, 2004), 1.

thought to enter the Cathedral is questioned. The narrative continues, leaving the question hanging in the consciousness of the nondescript walker and the air of the city as well.

The after lunch walk

Just like Elizabeth is reminded of her obligation to return home after her intense encounter with Saint Paul's Cathedral, Mrs. Dalloway's husband is similarly motivated by the city to return home and meet briefly his wife before the party. Richard Dalloway's London, however, conveys a very different mood. He has just finished lunch with Hugh Whitbread and they both find themselves in a state of reluctance and involuntarily pause at the corner of Conduit Street in front of the window of a jewelry shop:

> And Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread hesitated at the corner of Conduit Street (…). Contrary winds buffeted at the street corner. They looked in at a shop window; they did not wish to buy or talk but to part, only with contrary winds buffeting the street corner, with some sort of lapse in the tides of the body, two forces meeting in a swirl, morning and afternoon, they paused. Some newspaper placard went up in the air, gallantly, like a kite at first, then paused, swooped, fluttered; and a lady's veil hung. Yellow awnings trembled. The speed of the morning traffic slackened, and single carts rattled carelessly down half-empty streets. (…)
>
> Aware that he was looking at a silver two-handled Jacobean mug, and that Hugh Whitbread admired condescendingly, with airs of connoisseurship, a Spanish necklace which he thought of asking the price of in case Evelyn might like it – still Richard was torpid; could not think or move. (…) Hugh was going into the shop.
>
> 'Right you are!' said Richard, following.
>
> Goodness knows he didn't want to go buying necklaces with Hugh. But there are tides in the body. Morning meets afternoon. [*MD*, 95-96]

The pause of the men in the corner of the street seems imposed on them, almost despite their will. It is a reaction of their bodies, or even better an attunement of their bodies to the city's currents. The wind, which is described poetically as striking repeatedly and violently – "buffet" – and the bodies' internal forces (described trough a sea-water metaphor: "tides") meet each other at the corner of the street, in a swirl. And because the bodies' tides happen at the moment to be at a sort of lapse, the wind causes them to pause and forces insubstantial objects like newspaper placards or a lady's veil to float momentarily in the air, dancing in spiraling movements. Awnings that are bound and stretched on their frames cannot follow the swirling movement but shake and quiver. The traffic loosens up and Richard Dalloway, although rationally unwilling to enter the jewelry shop on this corner with Hugh, feels unable to resist the tides within his body that bind him to the city and also to his walking-company Hugh, and indeed follows.

In the middle of the shop's interior, faced with various objects of female coquetry, his embodied consciousness chooses its own course: "as a single spider's thread after wavering here and there attaches itself to the point of a leaf, so Richard's mind, recovering from its lethargy, set now on his wife, Clarissa". [*MD*, 97] Almost unreflectively, he leaves the place in order to go find her:

> And, flickering his bowler hat by way of farewell, Richard turned at the corner of Conduit Street eager, yes, very eager, to travel that spider's thread of attachment between himself and Clarissa; he would go straight to her, in Westminster. (…)
> (…) Here he was walking across London to say to Clarissa in so many words that he loved her. (…) – he repeated that it was a miracle that he should have married Clarissa; a miracle – his life has been a miracle, he thought; hesitating to cross. But it did make his blood boil to see little creatures of six crossing Piccadilly alone. The police ought to have stopped the traffic at once. He had no illusions about the London police. Indeed, he was collecting evidence of their malpractices; and those costermongers, not allowed to stand their barrows

> in the streets; and prostitutes, good Lord, the fault wasn't in them, nor in young men either, but in our detestable social system and so forth; all of which he considered, could be seen considering, grey, dogged, dapper, clean, as he walked across the Park to tell his wife that he loved her. [*MD*, 97-98]

Richard escapes the after-lunch lethargy and the tides of the city and walks back to his house, full of gratitude for the ever-present happiness of his life. This state of bliss makes him read with compassion and understanding the marginal and delinquent behavior of some of the city's residents. His mind drifts to a critical position on London's social system and the subsequent judgmental point of view towards one of the city's most renowned architectural and political landmarks:

> As for Buckingham Palace (like an old prima donna facing the audience all in white) you can't deny it a certain dignity, he considered, not despise what does, after all, stand to millions of people (a little crowd was waiting at the gate to see the King drive out) for a symbol, absurd though it is; a child with a box of bricks could have done better, he thought; [*MD*, 99]

The architecture of one of the city's most symbolic buildings is disclaimed as lacking intrinsic value, absurdly appreciated despite its architectural shortcomings. Richard, the high clerk Parliament officer, utters his dislike of politically constraining ideas and sets a new glance on the political reality of the city, valorizing the importance of individual happiness – his own happiness – and the intimate bonds of love and passion.

The night walk

Just before the beginning of the party and the end of the novel, Woolf offers the readers one last walk in the city. In the evening Peter sets out from his hotel in Russell Square to attend Clarissa's party. Walking towards Westminster his expectant mood is in tune with that of London:[72]

> Since it was a very hot night and the paper boys went by with placards proclaiming in huge red letters that there was a heat wave, wicker chairs were placed on the hotel steps and there, sipping, smoking, detached gentlemen sat. Peter Walsh sat there. One might fancy that day, the London day, was just beginning. Like a woman who had slipped off her print dress and white apron to array herself in blue and pearls, the day changed, put off stuff, took gauze, changed to evening, and with the same sight of exhilaration that a woman breathes, tumbling petticoats on the floor, it too shed dust, heat, colour; the traffic thinned; motor cars, tinkling, darting, succeeded the lumber of vans; and here and there among the thick foliage of the squares an intense light hung. I resign, the evening seemed to say, as it paled and faded above the battlements and prominences, moulded, pointed, of hotel, flat, and block of shops, I fade, she was beginning, I disappear, but London would have none of it, and rushed her bayonets into the sky, pinioned her, constrained her to partnership in her revelry. [*MD*, 137]

The nocturnal city, seen from Peter's perspective appears as a woman, a recurrent theme that in its full magnitude emerges with the surrealist authors in Paris and particularly Philippe Soupault, as we will see in following chapter. Similarly to the way a woman changes her appearance from a more casual, domestic outfit – "print dress and apron" – to a formal and celebratory one – "blue and prints" – the day also changes her appearance. She puts on lighter and more translucent materials – "gauze" – and turns into evening. And the evening transparency fades

[72] Dorothy Brewster, *Virginia Woolf's London*, 52.

away and seems to escape the city. But London chases the escaping night into the sky and binds her into a partnership of lively festivities until dawn.

Conclusion

The novel comes to an end as the long awaited party carries on. The preparations for the event and the social reality it speaks of had triggered the actions of the characters, lead them in the streets where they perceived the city anew, were carried away into deep introspection by its moods, atmospheres and auras. The characters defined themselves through these atmospheres while also participating in the creation of additional subtle vibrations quivering in the urban environment. The physical features and boundaries of the characters' immediate environments define and circumscribe their behavior. [73] These environments are literally part of the characters' consciousness, which does not end at the limits of their skulls, while their behavior in turn defines and alters the physical presence of the city: the spontaneously occurring events of everyday urban life are the actions that give meaning to the architecture of London. Human actions and emotions resonate with their urban environments in *Mrs. Dalloway* to reveal purposeful, poetic dwelling *taking place.*

The ways the city is appropriated in Woolf's narrative is, as in the case of Bely's *Petersburg*, particular to the historical changes taking place in London after the end of the World War I. The new social circumstances that allowed for a more active presence of women in public and political life, and the healthy and invigorating social life in the city after the end of the war

[73] Barbara Penner, "The construction of identity: Virginia Woolf's city", 276.

indeed render London as a unique urban environment providing freedom and a sense of community, along with a feeling of infinite future possibilities on many different levels.

The novel starts with the identification of a rhythmical and punctual atmosphere in the middle of June in the center of London, and through moments of *break* in the anticipated order of things, reveals an understanding of the city that contradicts urban assumptions regarding the large-scale noisy, chaotic and crowded metropolis. Instead of places which overwhelms its citizens, intensifying their "emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external stimuli" [74] and thus calling for a protection of their inner life against the domination of the metropolis[75] – as argued by Georg Simmel in the essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903)– the crowded and noisy streets, bustling with uproar of traffic, with their commercial shops, monumental buildings and itinerant musicians, liberate the characters from their everyday preoccupations, concerns and anxieties. Instead of turning them towards indifference, detachment and distance, they invigorate their trust in city life, society and their national identity, awaken their sociopolitical awareness and appreciation for life, and become places where people can embody their personal decisions and experience emotional maturation and growth. They become places that can offer guidance and attunement with life. They moreover allow them to enjoy a carefree attitude of childish naiveté, refreshing their tired bodies in a playful way. Architecture in the city appears as the manifestation of their constant capacity for change, for development and improvement. On the other hand (as in Bely's *Petersburg*) the streets become a human space reminding them of their mortality, their frivolous condition as inhabitants of this world, inviting them to a deeper, more profound and meaningful connection with it.

---

[74] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *On Individuality and Social Forms, Selected Writings*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 325.
[75] Ibid., 326.

Diving into Mrs. Dalloway's London can teach architects and urban planners how a city can become a meaningful home outside home, how city dwellers need the interaction with their urban environment to feel again in attunement with themselves. It is not a coincidence that the author herself felt the need to be in the city while writing the novel.[76]

Unlike the other novels under examination in this dissertation, *Mrs. Dalloway* portrays the city almost tacitly. London emerges through the pages of the novel like a discreet smell, a vague presence, but with the tactical rhythm of the sound of Big Ben and the constant reassuring presence in the characters' consciousness. The urban scenes are ephemeral and triggered by momentary events and happenings, offering an equally ephemeral image of the physical urban environment, one that Woolf thought to be in accordance with modern architectural conditions. In the essay "Oxford Street Tide" she comments on the modern materials prevalent in the city like glass and plaster, and observes that the ephemeral nature of these new materials resembles the ephemeral character of people's desires in the city:

> "The charm of modern London is that it is not built to last; it is built to pass. Its glassiness, its transparency, its surging waves of coloured plaster give a different pleasure and achieve a different end from that which was desired and attempted by the old builders and their patrons, the nobility of England. Their pride required the illusion of permanence. Ours, on the contrary, seems to delight in proving that we can make stone and brick as transitory as our own desires. We do not build for our descendants, who may live up in the clouds or

[76] In the summer of 1922, Virginia and Leonard were, for reasons mostly having to do with Virginia's health, living in the suburbs, where she was beginning to feel increasingly exiled and deprived by her distance from the city. As she began *Mrs. Dalloway* or more correctly, the story, "Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street," which would later turn into the novel, she imagined her way back into the hustle and thrum of Westminster; and by the time she finished the book, she and Leonard had moved back to London, to a house in Tavistock Square (Francine Prose, *The Mrs. Dalloway Reader*…, 2-3.)

down the earth, but for ourselves and our own needs. We knock down and rebuild as we expect to be knocked down and rebuilt. (…)"[77]

The modern city is in a state of constant change; a tendency expressed in both the physical and the mental state of the characters. The city is not only something they inhabit but something that inhabits them as well. It is in and because of the city that Richard Dalloway decides to go to Clarissa and tell her he loves her in so many words, it is in and because of the city that Elisabeth is delighted to be free and contemplates the future professional lives she can embody, it is in and because of the city that Peter Walsh feels young as never before and decides to pursue the fleeting beauty of a woman and it is in and because of the city that Clarissa feels the bond developing among her fellow-citizens. Moods of domestic nature, of political nature and of commercial character succeed each other and mingle with each other in the vibrating urban vitality of modern London in the middle of June in 1923.[78]

---

[77] Virginia Woolf, "Oxford Street Tides," in *Virginia Woolf Selected Essays*, 201.

[78] Few writers have ever been more powerfully inspired by the sense of place. As early as 1906, when Woolf was touring Greece, she would write: "… It is not for people we crave, but for the place. That keeps its magic; so strongly that is seems to send shocks across the water." (Jan Morris, ed., *Travels with Virginia Woolf* (London: Pimlico Press, 1997), 4.)

"Wandering at random driven" by "Paris and her folds, Paris and her faces"

To the reader of Philippe Soupault's[1] *Last Nights of Paris* (*Les Dernières nuits de Paris*), as with Bely's *Petersburg*, the title reveals already the place of the narrative's unfolding: the French capital. It moreover specifies when the events it ventures to present take place, the time of the narrative, which is the dark and mysterious night. As the author meticulously explains in the very opening pages of the story, it is the time when a hush descends over the city making its colors 'disappear' – "The tempest the silence. No longer a sound, no longer a glimmer. The darkness was profound";[2] when our actions become hesitant and less decisive – "The great clock of the Gare d'Orsay, the one on the left, pointed to three, strangest hour of all (…). It was three o'clock,

[1] Philippe Soupault (1897-1990) the surrealist poet, novelist and journalist, was one of the founders of the Surrealist movement. He co-wrote with André Breton the first self-proclaimed book of automatic writing, *Les Champs Magnétiques* (1919); a collaboration that coined the very term *surrealism*, as Breton explained in the First Surrealist Manifesto published in 1924. (A. Breton, "First Surrealist Manifesto," in *Surrealism*, ed. Patrick Waldberg (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965). Along with Breton and Luis Aragon, he was editor of the journal *Littérature* (1919-1923).

[2] Philippe Soupault, *Last Nights of Paris*, trans. William Carlos Williams (Cambridge, Mass.: Exact Change, 1992), 15.

the hour of indecision" [*LN*, 16-17]; and when the feeling that our decisions are less our own conscious choosing but more a reaction to the city's atmosphere and physical presence, becomes more intense – "I said to myself that what I had taken for a sudden inspiration was only obedience to certain special habits which overrun Paris." [*LN*, 20]

The title of the work though also seems to speak of the obliteration of the very place and time it will talk about. Alternative titles like *Last Nights in Paris* or *My Last Nights of Paris* (a title that might actually do greater justice to Soupault's own assessment of the work as his "testimony"[3]), would not suggest this eschatological implication for the French capital. The title of the book seems to prepare the reader for an encounter with the last nights of the city itself; a time after which the place that Paris is, ceases to exist:

> The Parisian night had seized the square; and the black walls, the quays, the bridge vanished as if never to reappear. Long reflections waxed in the monotone of the sky, those colorless rainbows that betray the city and its dawn. [*LN*, 15]

[3] Ibid., 178.
This assessment was in line with the surrealist pursuit to overcome traditional literary forms: the novel was generally a genre not held in high esteem by the group. Soupault was actually expelled from the movement in 1926, along with Antonin Artaud, after Breton's decision for "their isolated pursuit of the stupid literary adventure." Soupault never considered himself not a surrealist as he explained in his essay "Vingt Mille et Un Jours." "*I never accepted being 'excluded.' Excluded from what? By whom? Surrealism wasn't a church, a Masonic lodge, an association of criminals, the police. (...) For me and for many of my friends, surrealism had been and remained an experience that permitted us to liberate ourselves*." (Pontus Hulten, ed., *The Surrealists Look at Art, Eluard, Aragon, Soupault, Breton, Tzara,* trans. Michael Palmer and Norma Coles (Venice; Calif.: Lapis Press, 1990), 82.)

The nocturnal landscape

It is with these indications in mind that the reader finds himself in the sleepy atmosphere of a Parisian café[4] – "The café was taking a little nap" [*LN*, 1] – and is submerged along with the book's only narrator, Soupault himself, in an environment presented through details of taste. The time of the day is given through the eating habits of the café's habitués – "The aperitif hour had passed, and that of chocolate and sandwiches had not yet come" [*LN*, 1] – and the narrator's female company is presented through her drinking preference; a preference which automatically reveals her deep topological connection with the city, as well as her profession:

> Naturally – indeed it was quite the most natural thing in the world – she was drinking a *menthe verte,* since in this city all those whose profession is love make no secret of their devotion to this odd beverage which is nothing but a liquid candy. [*LN*, 1]

This particular place-time perception, materialized through the sense of taste and inaugurated in an environment by definition connected to the excitation of this particular sense – the café – submerges Soupault and his companion in an embodied and mnemonic interaction with the nocturnal city as soon as they leave the place and start walking through Paris. The tastes of the city are imagined to transfigure the nocturnal urban environment, almost with the power of a dream:

---

[4] The Parisian cafés were places of great importance for the Surrealists as meeting places for the exchange of ideas and the pursuit of their surrealist goals. They were comparable to the marvels of the streets, as Soupault and Breton would acknowledge in *The Magnetic Fields*: "What else remains but these cafés where we meet to drink these cool beverages, these watery spirits, and tables are stickier than these pavements where our shadows fell, dead the day before." André Breton and Philippe Soupault, *The Magnetic Fields,* in *The Autobiography of Surrealism*, ed. Marcel Jean (New York, N.Y.: The Viking Press, 1980), 60.

> The lights of a small café splashed with syrup the triangular and morose façades of nameless shops. [*LN*, 4]

Gradually, olfactory aspects of Paris emerge into consciousness too, (not surprisingly since smell is a sense closely related to taste), reinforcing the embodied engagement with the cold night city. Contemporary philosopher Michel Serres has argued that our understanding of the senses and how they interact with the world should include senses like heat, lightness, darkness, etc.[5] Although this most recent philosophical approach was not known to the surrealists in the 1920s, a deeply sensuous perception of the city – involving the traditional five senses and including elements like the darkness of the night and the temperature of time – is captured by Soupault in literary images that reveal emotions, desires and concealed aspects of the city, reciprocally qualifying the urban environment itself as a sensuous and living presence:

> The rue de Medicis along which we were strolling at a fair pace is sad around ten-thirty at night. It is the street of everlasting rain.
>
> It is said that along one side of it is the meeting place of masochistic bachelors. A modest and silent club. Here umbrellas take on the appearance of a flock.
>
> "You know," she said, "that around here are places where you can get coffee with cream."
>
> At this very start the rue de Vaugirard stinks of books. The odor comes from every side. Its friend and neighbor, the rue de Tournon, is more inviting. So much so that I was prepared for a proposal and the address of a comfortable hotel.
>
> At night, the Senate building looks like absolutely nothing. (…)
>
> She who proposed nothing reminded me that because of them the rue de Tournon was indiscreet.
>
> "Quite so," said I. "Cold has no effect on the faces of streets."

---

[5] Michael Serres, *Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, trans. Peter Cowley and Margaret Sankey (London: Continuum, 2009).

"That's just a lot of blah."

I did not insist.

We came out upon the carrefour de Buci, a crossroads which gives birth to a family of short narrow streets, not alleys but dark and full of bad smells. [*LN*, 3-4]

This is how the city's nocturnal environment starts to appear, through the characters' pacing in it, with the movement of the walking itself imposing a new rhythm on the writing, as Soupault would admit.[6] The streets partake of human emotions and mood changes – "The rue de Medicis (…) is sad around ten-thirty at night" – acquire attitudes of human behavior and interact with the walkers – "she (…) reminded me that because of them the rue de Tournon was indiscreet" – while their atmospheric features are presented through literary images of poetic dwelling – "It is the street of everlasting rain" – which subtly transmit elements of their physical embodied characteristics, as in for example the humidity of the night mist and the light, damp vapor of a street like the rue de Medicis, which unfolds next to the Luxemburg Gardens, location of trees, fountains and lakes.[7]

Landmarks of erotic character are mapped out in this embodied nocturnal description – "along one side of it is the meeting place of masochistic bachelors. A modest and silent club" – and people's relation with them is also understood in connection with the already defined wet atmosphere. The popularity of the "modest and silent club" situated on the street of everlasting rain appears through the literary image of a flock of umbrellas gathering in front of its entrance. The umbrellas, which are numerous, protect the club's habitués from the street's rain and also

---

[6] Sylvie Cassayre, *La Poétique de l'Espace et Imagination dans l'Ouvre de Philippe Soupault* (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1997), 11.

[7] The Luxemburg Gardens is one of Paris' biggest parks open to the public since the reign of Napoleon. It was originally the private garden of Marie de Medici's *Palais du Luxembourg*, and its construction, which started in the early 17th C., followed the ideas of a traditional French-Garden. Several water elements constitute part of the garden, including the octagonal central basin, the Medici Fountain and the Fountain of the Observatory.

serve as a veil over their owners' identity, as they are about to leave the city behind them and indulge in surreptitious bodily pleasures.

The wet, erotic nature of the city is enriched by the warm and sweet taste of "coffee with cream" and Soupault's fellow-walker seems to possess a deep knowledge of the city's night secrets – "You know," she said, "that around here are places where you can get coffee with cream" – a form of knowledge, *sapienza*, which is actually related to taste (*sapor*) and is thus based not on reasoning but on immediate perception.[8]

As Soupault and the woman he walks with reach the end of Rue de Medici, the unpleasant odor of books changes the atmosphere. Even after ten-thirty at night, the smell seems to penetrate the facades of the closed bookshops and define the prevailing mood of the street. Rue de Vaugirard next to its "friend and neighbor, the rue de Tournon," which has long been home to numerous antique bookstores, seems bathed in the smell of the torn and touched-a-million-times pages of the books. The discomforting smell diverts the walkers' path toward the nearby rue de Tournon, which seems more intimate and welcoming to Soupault's erotic disposition: a quality affected and magnified by the encounter with the erotic club that makes him envision a night of pleasure in one of the area's love hotels.

At the intersection of rue de Medicis and rue de Tournon, submerged in this rainy, wet, erotic and expectant mood, the otherwise grandiose Renaissance building of the Luxemburg Palace – the upper house of the country's Parliament – "looks like absolutely nothing." Nothing of its architectural superiority and symbolic political power survives in the darkness of the city's landscape, where cold seems able to change the facial features and expressions of the streets:

---

[8] Marco Frascari, "Semiotica ab edendo, Taste in architecture," in *Eating Architecture*, ed. Jamie Horwitz and Paulette Singley (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 193.

their physiognomies.[9] The excerpt is abundant with metaphors of anthropomorphic nature, a constant characteristic of the narrative – with storms stooping to the smallest details and trees bending desperate and mad – while the Parisian night itself acquires for Soupault the status of a woman:[10]

> A woman's umbrella lay flat on the sidewalk and a step or two beyond a glove had been forgotten on a bench. The Paris night grew big with shadows and these lost objects seemed to become a part of it. [*LN*, 35]

The writer's love and sexual desire for the woman he walks with, Georgette, are in this way diffused into the city,[11] and it is clear to the reader from the beginning that the space is described through the eyes of a man in love, through eyes full of desire. Writing on *Eros, the Bittersweet*, Anne Carson argues that "there is something uniquely convincing about the perceptions that occur to you when you are in love. They seem truer than other perceptions, and more truly your own, won from reality at personal cost. (…) Your powers of imagination connive at this vision, calling up possibilities from beyond the actual."[12] Soupault himself will confirm that conviction almost at the very beginning of the narrative, in the most lyric way:

> That night, as we were pursuing or, more exactly, tracking Georgette, I saw Paris for the first time. It was surely not the same city. It lifted itself above the mists, rotating like the earth on its axis, more feminine that usual. As I looked at it, it contracted. And Georgette herself became a city. [*LN*, 46]

---

[9] In the original French text, Soupault himself uses the word physiognomy: "*En effet- fis-je. Le froid n'a pas de prise sur la physiognomie des rues.*" Philippe Soupault, *Les dernières nuits de Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 9.

[10] Rebecca Solnit, "Paris or Botanizing in the Asphalt," in *Wanderlust, A History of Walking* (New York, N.Y: Penguin Boks, 2000), 208-209.

[11] Ibid., 209.

[12] Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, *An Essay* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 36.

This is not the sole incident in which Soupault will perceive the urban environment differently. The ambition to reveal meaning in everyday life motivated much of the work of the Surrealist writers and artists; this is expressed in the movement's manifestos, but more eloquently in André Breton's essay "The Crisis of the Object." In this work Breton called for a creative relationship between the real and what exists beyond the real, revealing the marvelous in everyday life.[13] It is thus not a surprise that during the winter of 1928, when the narrative of the *Last Nights of Paris* unfolds, Soupault is constantly affected by the way the city reveals itself in the cold winter darkness:

> (…) thrilled by the surroundings and this night wherein Paris was confiding to me another secret. [*LN*, 33]

The author, and narrator of the story, already dwells in the city with the intentionality of being open to its mysteries:

> I am not one of those who deny the truth of miracles and when I question myself, I am ready to affirm that it is upon them alone that I can count. The cold, dull realm of actualities, arid and uncultivated as it is, has never tempted me as the goal for an expedition. [*LN*, 37]

His peregrinations are wanderings for wonder, and as the scholar J.H. Matthews notes, "deeply sensitive to the mystery around us, making each man's shadow revolve clockwise about him,

[13] André Breton, 'The Crisis of the Object,' in *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row 1972), 275–80.

Soupault expressed in his verses and prose a need to know more than our eyes can see and confidence that it is not beyond our capacities to do so."[14]

During Soupault's walks, the perception of urban space is characterized by unexpected metamorphoses of familiar places. Ordinary everyday scenes, buildings that have been encountered numerous times, places that have been experienced again and again, get transfigured into dream-like landscapes where poetic dwelling is made possible. The streets, squares, the houses with their different windows, shops with their entrances and inscriptions, the night prowlers, all become a forest of indices – marks and signs – capable of producing an infinite number of metaphors when they are encountered in the company of the woman and resonate with his desire for her. When this specific woman is not part of his experience, reality is perceived as less real or even un-real, particularly because the environment itself is radically changed:

> Georgette had disappeared without breathing a word, leaving me embarrassed and uneasy. Nothing made the night real for me. [*LN*, 15]

Moreover the city appears significantly altered when Soupault crosses through it in the company of other people, or alone:

> The days which followed that night were like a cloud. Motionless and mute, they left not a trace, not one regret. Paris was black and unconcerned. (…)
>
> Paris swelled out with boredom, then slept as if to digest it. [*LN*, 36]

[14] Pontus Hulten, ed., *The Surrealists Look at Art*, 81.

In this chapter, I will explore some of these perceptions of the city. I will initially focus on a number of unexpected urban metamorphoses captured by Soupault as he walks with Georgette. Attuned to the world through his erotic mood, how does the narrator perceive space, what kind of transfigurations of the city does he experience? What kind of feelings emerge in his interactions with the city which, since the story's very beginning, is understood as the space of desire, a spatial quality that colors the atmosphere in advance and interacts with the walkers endlessly? After addressing these questions, I will focus on how perception of the city changes under the spell of different sentimental influences. Given the nature of *eros* itself, (the Greek word *eros* denotes 'want,' 'lack,' 'desire for that which is missing'[15]) feelings like despair, melancholy – "O melancholy, melancholy, that night I understood your power and your slavery" [*LN*, 16] – and even jealousy are aroused and enacted in the dramatic setting of the city. How is the city perceived and understood differently under the influence of so radically contradictory, but equally intense, sentiments? How does the city contribute to Soupault's (self-) understanding when he does not walk with Georgette at his side, when he is alone and longing for her, or surrounded by other people who impose a distance between him and the object of his desire?

Surrealist walking

Two main reasons point to Soupault's narrative as a case study *par excellence* for such an undertaking. First of all, the author draws particularly on his own situatedness in the fertile context of Paris[16] and is willing to explore the unexpected contents of his own impressions.

[15] Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, 10.

"Slave of my impression, I thought of….".[*LN*, 46] These emerging inner thoughts are of incredible value to Soupault, since they are essential carriers of true meaning. In his essay "The Shadow of the Shadow," published in the first issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste* in 1919, Soupault encourages his readers to look really with their own eyes. If they actually do so, "the most extraordinary phenomena will rise up, will come to meet their glances, and they will be left to support their doubts with only a walking stick of marshmallow, which will be called, in this case, habit."[17]

The second reason why *Last Nights of Paris* is a most appropriate piece of literature for my study is that the writing is focused almost exclusively on Soupault's peregrinations in the nocturnal city. Soupault is no more that an embodied walker, determined to wander ceaselessly and even aimlessly in the city:

> "Where are we going?"
>
> I expected that petulant and vicious question. It is the night's query and Georgette did no more than express aloud that eternal interrogation.
>
> One more question without answer, a question one asks of the stars, the weather, the shadows, the entire city.
>
> (…) we sought wandering at random, driven here rather than there by an invincible fatigue. [*LN*, 20]

The act of walking is engaged for many different purposes; from a means to secretly follow Georgette, a way to experience the city with her or even a condition that helps organize memories and thoughts – "Aided by the walk, I endeavored to tabulate my recollections and to

---

[16] Dagmar Motycka Weston, "Surrealist Paris: The Non-Perspectival Space of the Lived City," in *Chora 2: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, ed. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Steve Parcel (Montreal: McGiil Queens Press, 1996), 151.
[17] Philippe Soupault, "The Shadow of the Shadow," in *Autobiography of Surrealism,* 136.

live over again the preceding night" [*LN*, 24] – but most of all as an action meaningful in itself, highly valued in the circles of the Surrealists. For the members of the movement, "the Parisian street was a uniquely well-equipped laboratory in which both literary activities and esoteric research into the hidden dimensions of being could be practiced with success. The confrontation of the individual with the mass, or the structures of the personal psyche with the multiple forms of the urban universe was the key to their program: a confrontation which led to the erasing of boundaries, oppositions and limits, to the 'abolition of antinomies,' the sudden and electrifying penetration of one form or dimension of reality into another."[18]

Following the plot

In order to better grasp the phenomenal experience and erotic perception of the urban environment revealed by Soupault, a short description of the plot is also necessary. The author – echoing the concepts of identity and chance already identified in Aragon's *Paris Peasant* (1924) and Breton's *Nadja* (1928)[19] – is in pursuit of a woman, Georgette, who "possessed a charm to which it was impossible not to succumb." [*LN*, 131] Her mysterious seductive power is tightly connected with the Parisian night itself:

> (…) one could not picture her as living during the day. She was the night itself and her beauty was nocturnal. [*LN*, 49-50]

[18] Alexander Irwin, *Radiant City and the Capital of Desire: Images of the City in Le Corbusier and Andre Breton* (Thesis: M.A., University of Louisville, 1990), 13.
[19] Sylvie Cassayre, *La poétique de l' Espace et Imagination dans l'Ouvre de Philippe Soupault*, 14.

Indeed Georgette, knows the night side of the city and specific areas of it particularly well. As she herself admits:

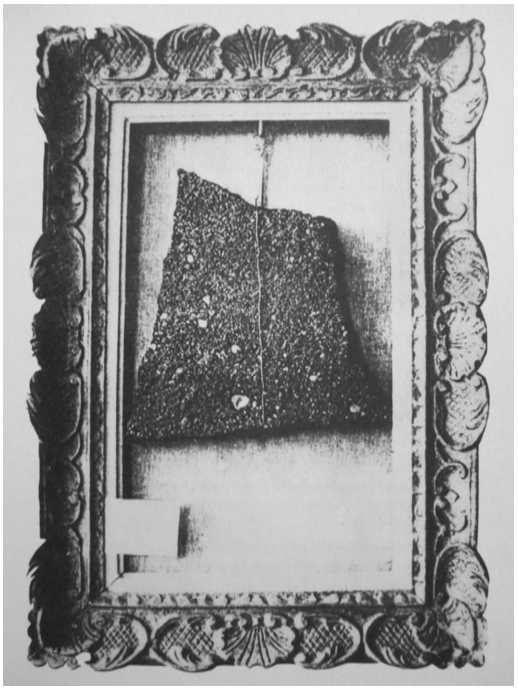
> Everything is so simple when one knows all the streets as I do, and all the people who move in them. They are all seeking something without seeming to do so. [*LN*, 64]

Her job asks for this kind of spatial familiarity. "In each little street she knew some gloomy hotel." [*LN*, 52] Georgette is a prostitute, a woman of the streets and the night, and the narrator's interest in her and consequently in the city fade away with the first crack of sunlight. Every morning Georgette indeed 'disappears' from the city, returning back home, where she lives with her mentally deranged brother Octave. Around her and Octave gravitate a number of petty criminals, professional vagabonds, and dark characters engaged in illegal activities; a gang firmly guided by the figure of Volpe, for whom prostitution, racing and gambling where only some of his occupations. Georgette is his *protégée* but "this protection would not have sufficed to assure him that supremacy which all accorded him." [*LN*, 130] "She accepted the ritual, the authority of Volpe, but only because she was quite satisfied to do so." [*LN*, 131]

The story sets off with a murder, a heinous crime the perpetrator of which Soupault believes he knows. By slowly following random traces and chance threads, he unravels the mystery of the crime, and confirms it was committed by a sailor he had met during one of his nocturnal peregrinations, a figure loosely connected with the gang. In his closer association with Georgette and the members of the gang (particularly Volpe) Soupault realizes that he has been unaware of the city's dark hidden side:

> "It was Paris which I thought I knew and of whose sex and mystery I was ignorant, it was Paris unrecognized and rediscovered, the breath and gestures of Paris, Paris and her supple and silent nights – Paris and her folds, Paris and her faces." [*LN*, 103]

Let us therefore penetrate into this rediscovered erotic and multi-faced city of Soupault's narrative.



"In 1921, it was agreed that each of us should bring two or three paintings to the Salon Dada at the Galerie Montaigne (today the theater "Studio des Champs Elysées"). I, not being a painter, had thought that I should show an abstract work of art. For this purpose, I had picked up a piece of asphalt in a small street near the rue Royale, called Cité du Retiro. I had suspended it in a frame with the title underneath. Placed between two other of my 'works,' Portrait d'un inconnu (Portrait of an Unknown) – an empty frame – and Portrait d'un imbécile (Portrait of an Idiot), which was a mirror, this intrigued people a lot."

Philippe Soupault

Figure 9: ***Cité du Retiro***, sculpture by Philippe Soupault (1921)

Wander for wonders

The reading statue (walking with Georgette)

The first night the narrator walks with Georgette by his side, the city elements seem more alive than ever. The wind breathes life into them and transforms aspects of public space that Soupault considers irrelevant and problematic, for instance the city's abundant statues. He has expressed his discomfort and critical opinion in relation to these public figures, when still in the café with Georgette, describing ironically the rest of the place's clients:

> A few had seated themselves, looking much like those statues that receive gold medals at the salon and adorn public squares – useless, motionless and out of date. [*LN*, 1-2]

These public statues are not appreciated as carriers of the city's historic memory, but as superfluous and anachronistic decorative elements. Yet, while he wanders with Georgette, one of these statues escapes its eternal lethargy and partakes briefly of the city's contemporary reality:

> (…) the strangest events of that evening began to unfold. (…) A sudden wind followed the rain, a wind like a knife blade, a sort of squall that gathered a newspaper dragging along the pavement and placed it with one stroke in the hands of the statue posing in the square.
>
> An open carriage passed in the rue de Seine. (…)
>
> The Republic dropped her paper. The wind drew off and moved toward the Pont-Neuf. [*LN*, 6-7]

The violent and noisy wind – "a squall" – impels the marble statue of the Republic, in front of the *Bibliotèque Mazarine* at the end of rue de Seine,[20] to partake temporarily of the everyday reality of the city, reading the news. Abruptly and unexpectedly a current of air places the paper in her hands and some moments later she herself decides to drop it. The haphazard juxtaposition of the two seemingly unrelated objects, a statue and a newspaper in the cold night, creates a three-dimensional city-collage and opens up a metaphoric place that enlivens the public space and ascribes it a role of participation in the events of the city, contrary to its usual passiveness. The spatial collage reminds us of Lautréaumont's poetic declaration about the beauty of the random encounter between an umbrella and a sewing machine upon a dissecting-table, a phrase which, rediscovered by Breton, came to represent the Surrealist doctrine of objective chance.[21]

Moreover the newspaper, as a carrier of information about the city, is a piece of writing that reveals for Soupault the underlying city's desires. "Buy a daily paper for fifteen or twenty centimes, and in the news you will discover examples, often striking ones, of extraordinary phenomena. (…) I always discover in the newspapers (…) fresh sources of valuable information. Open one of these sheets called: *L'Humour, Paris-Flirt, Mon Béguin, L'Amour en vitesse*, and other publications of that kind. On the last page one sees a column that has many customers: the classified advertisements. Be careful to read attentively, but not between the lines, the demands, the offers made there. You will realize then the strange simplicity of desires. This simplicity that I call strange is also and still a marvelous one. Desires, I wrote that word, desires, such are the

---

[20] The statue of the Republic by the *Biblioteque Mazanin* is the first official representation of the French Republic in the city, result of a competition that started in 1848. It was installed in front of the *Biblioteque Mazanin* in 1880 and was reinstalled in the small square by the Library's side in 1992.

[21] Objective chance, unlike pure automatism, is always more than just a personal experience. It is a medium (tool, method) capable of producing new realities, works of art, and way of life. (Dalibor Vesely, "Surrealism, Myth and Modernity," 88.)

sole witnesses, the sole faithful spokesmen." [22] The literary image of a public statue in contact with the newspaper revealing the desires of the city thwarts the social conventions of the public space in the middle of the night. Arendt's "space of appearance," a space of equal participation, as further reinforced by the symbolic meaning of the stature itself, the Republic, becomes an erotic space of appearance, where the desires of the city's inhabitants are given an opportunity to surface and be heard.

The flashing glacier (following Georgette)

That first night, Soupault's encounter with Georgette is not consummated with the physical fulfillment of his erotic desire. A distance is drawn between them, as other men seem to be after her as well. This distance is drawn even more sharply, as the next time he meets her, it is for the sake of another man. Soupault's friend Jacques, without knowledge of Soupault's sentiments of affection for Georgette, confesses he is in love with a woman, which Soupault only later realizes is Georgette herself. Before this realization, he has already suggested to help Jacques in finding her. This is how he ends up following Georgette with Jacques on his side. Instead of feeling jealous though, this sharper distance between the two, along with the presence of a third person in the scene, amplifies his desire. The space between Soupault and his beloved keeps the desire alive. It is the possession of the object of our desire that actually threatens the desire itself, as Soupault's 'ally; Marcel Duchamp would argue,[23] bringing also to mind Jean-Luc Marion's

[22] Philippe Soupault, "The Shadow of the Shadow," in *Autobiography of Surrealism*, 136-137.
[23] Marcel Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed., Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York, N.Y.: DaCapo Press, 2010), 39.

philosophical position that what we actually most desire is desire itself.[24] This is probably why, for the first time, Soupault imagines an appropriation and use of public space imbued with a similar attitude:

> The avenue de l'Opéra was no longer the stream that I had always followed, nor the highway that one usually pictures. It was a great shadow flashing like a glacier, which one must first conquer, and then embrace as one would a woman. [*LN*, 46]

A place of great familiarity, used thoughtlessly many times in the past, is transfigured. The avenue is not understood either as a continuous flow of people that imposes a rhythm of walking to be followed – "the stream that I had always followed" – or as a major circulation artery to rapidly pass through in order to get to some destination, a means to an end – "the highway that one usually pictures." The public space paradoxically does not appear easily accessible to the walker, as it should according to a functionalistic understanding of circulation-spaces. This is a realization of particular importance to the city, even perverse in a sense, if one takes into consideration that the first architectural treatise to ever conceptualize public streets and roads purely as spaces of circulation – emphasizing issues of practicality and transportation – was written by the French architect Pierre Patte in the eighteeneth century,[25] and was dealing with the streets of the French capital itself, a work that actually prefigured Haussmann's urban interventions. The avenue de l'Opéra was constructed during that exact time, an important thoroughfare of the city's traffic scheme linking the Louvre with the Opera and providing better

---

[24] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago, Ill: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 11-16.

[25] Pierre Patte (1723-1814) was a student of Jacques-Francois Blondel. In his works *Mémoires sur les objets les plus importans de l'architecture* (1769) and *Mémoires qui intéressent particulièrement Paris* (1800) he proposed the construction of rectilinear long roads that would traverse through the old neighborhoods of the city.

access to the wealthy neighborhoods being developed at that time in northwest Paris.[26] Diametrically opposed to this, Soupault's approach perceives the avenue as a place difficult to fully access, that requires the same tenderness needed in the approach of a woman, that asks to be initially respected, loved and admired – "one must first conquer"[27] – and then to be held closely in one's arm – "embrace as one would a woman" – establishing a fully enactive embodied relationship with it. A kind of respect for the public space is aroused, in the same way that Soupault always respected Georgette despite her being a public woman; a prostitute.[28] Public space becomes personal and intimate, and despite its grandiose dimensions or even its cold distance – "flashing like a glacier" – is experienced at the scale of the inhabitant's body: an experience bearing similarities with the bodily pleasure of an erotic encounter.

This quality of place emerging from the city's public spaces, as captured in the narrative, is definitely not of an intellectual order – a "formal" question of proportional relationships (as would be for example the mathematical dimensions of the space of the avenue; its width, length or number of trees on each sidewalk) – or abstract aesthetic values. It rather originates in the erotic impulse itself, in Soupault's need to quench his physical thirst; "the existential condition to which humanity can only be reconciled within the realm of *poiesis* (the making of culture, i.e., art and architecture) and its metaphoric imagination."[29] As philosopher Jean-Luc Marion argues

---

[26] Andrew Ayers, *The Architecture of Paris* (Stuttgart; London: Edition Axel Menges, 2004), 176.
The construction of the avenue de l'Opéra led to the demolition of a poor district between the Louvre and the big Boulevards with numerous narrow streets, which were considered unhealthy and dangerous. (Ibid.)

[27] One of the definitions of the word conquer is: gain the love, admiration or respect of (a person or a group of people)

[28] Soupault actually admits that thanks to Georgette "who was no more than one of the hundred thousands, the Parisian night became a mysterious domain, a great and marvelous country, full of flowers, of birds, of glances and of stars, a hope launched into space." [*LN*, 45-46]

[29] Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Polyphilo or the Dark Forest Revisited, An Erotic Epiphany of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), xv.

"in love I put myself on stage and implicate myself, because in loving I make a decision about myself like nowhere else. Each act of love is inscribed forever in me and outlines me definitively. I do not love by proxy, nor through a go-between, but in flesh, and this flesh is one only with me."[30] Public space, as a woman, is appropriated and loved in flesh; it becomes an extension of Soupault's own body and negates any functionalistic or prosaic use.

The compassionate Eiffel Tower (missing Georgette)

This sensitivity to the public features of the city, an appreciation that attributes to them the characteristics of a beloved human figure and an analogous admiration or respect, is an attitude enacted as well by the intense longing for the beloved, by the acute sense of lack of the significant other. During a lonely night in search of Georgette along her usual itinerary, Soupault enters the garden of Trocadéro:

> (…) I entered the little garden of the Trocadéro at a slow walk, following the leisurely turns of its bicornate paths and stopping now and then to sit upon a bench. This hesitant wandering echoed the jerky pace of my thoughts. I was unable to fix the boundaries between imagination and memory. The little garden and its tiny mysteries grew dark without its being evident that the night had come. One was conscious of being in shadow but there was no soft nocturnal mist. Through the trees the Eiffel Tower took on an impassioned aspect and became a deed of bravery and of pride. She lost, surrounded by stars, her familiar and kindly air that the first years of the twentieth century had given her. At this hour, the garden was almost deserted. Voices alone indicated the presence of others. I dreamed. And she who, towering above me, defied I don't know what, drew me away from all those vain debates, those burdensome questionings. The Eiffel Tower became

[30] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 9.

> more living than I. I had known long since that looking at her from the foot rendered her metallic and architectural, that perceiving her from a distance made her symbolic, and that she changed her appearance and character depending upon whether one admired her from Pantin or Grenelle, from Montmartre, or the Point-du-Jour.
>
> I amused myself, with memory as an aid, by indefinitely varying her silhouette as if I were examining her through a kaleidoscope. Mobility and grace of that sort rendered her sympathetic to me and made of her a veritable friend, living and almost gay. And that evening, to think of her as so near me gave me courage. I esteemed her because on looking at her I realized suddenly that she alone could wrestle with the night and would finally triumph since in the shadows of night and the blue wind of the sky, she seemed brighter than ever, more majestic. [*LN*, 29-31]

The beginning of the walk is defined by a hesitancy expressed as a dialogue between Soupault's inner jerky thoughts and the garden's uneven paths, as imagination and memory are interwoven in this place that confuses the walker' embodied consciousness. In this garden with its tiny mysteries, darkness emerges without there being evidence that night has come, as Soupault cannot feel the soft nocturnal mist that accompanies its arrival.

The image of the Eiffel Tower rendered against the black background of the night and the sparkle of the stars draws his attention to her female figure. Soupault thinks how in a close proximity to the tower, elements of its materiality and its architecture are more prominent, like probably its engineering details, its impressively ornamented joints, its metallic color, its imposing height compared instinctively to that of a human body – "looking at her from the foot rendered her metallic and architectural". In perceiving the Tower from the distance – as memory serves Soupault – the impression that dominates is rather its symbolic power. The Tower's volume protruding from and overlooking the city's body gives the structure the symbolic role of a landmark, a building by default associated with Paris – "perceiving her from a distance made

her symbolic". But even this perception, affected by the distance between the perceiver and the structure, varies depending where the perceiver stands in the city. Pantin, a suburban neighborhood just outside the old walls of the city; Grenelle, a neighborhood by the Seine and at the water level; or the hill of Montmartre – all of these offer unique impressions of the structure's character. The Eiffel Tower is visible from every point in the city, and Soupault engages in a cerebral game in which he juxtaposes his different personal perceptions of it, as if literally using a kaleidoscope. For the surrealists, games and playful procedures were ways to release the visual and verbal poetry of collective creativity, subverting academic modes of inquiry and undermining the complacent certainties of the reasonable and respectable.[31] Soupault's playful disposition toward the Tower enlivens the presence of the monument in the city, takes it out of an impersonal Cartesian map of city monuments and nourishes a personal bond with it. The Tower is transformed into a constant and friendly companion to Soupault's peregrinations through Paris, helping him overcome all of the night's difficulties – "she alone could wrestle with the night and would finally triumph".

It is probably not a random coincidence (Surrealists did not believe in chance anyway) that these thoughts regarding the Tower's presence across distance are activated while Soupault is longing for Georgette. As Erwin Straus would argue in *The Primary World of Senses* (1963), "only insofar as I am directed toward the world, striving for and desiring that which I do not have, and in so desiring the other am myself changed, only then can there exist for me the near and the far."[32] Contemplating Straus's premise, Edward Casey explains that the very possibility

---

[31] Surrealist games and procedures were intended to free words and images from the constraints of rational and discursive order, substituting chance and indeterminacy for premeditation and deliberation. They borrowed children's games, invented techniques to exploit the unpredictable outcomes of chance and accident, and discovered new and creative uses for automatism. Mel Gooding, "Surrealist Games", in *A Book of Surrealist Games*, trans. Alexis Lykiard and Jennifer Batchelor (Boston, MA; London: Shambhala Redstone Editions, 1995), 10-12.

of taking a true measure of space is dependent on this very desire. "The intentional body, then, is a desiring body; when we experience ourselves as far from or near to things, a factor of attraction or repulsion is almost always involved." [33] Georgette is indeed far away, but the Trocadéro garden just across the river Seine from the Eiffel Tower allows the female presence of the Tower to emerge more clearly and replace the figure of the woman in Soupault's preoccupations, reassuring him that the difficulties of the night will be overcome.

The Surrealists were particularly determined to 'read' the Eiffel Tower as a female presence in the city, a perception that would allow them to interpret the whole city as feminine too. The Tower was a recurrent topic of interest for them, as its phallic presence was imposing a difficulty in their conviction that Paris could be metamorphosed into a woman, a 'problem' to which they sought and suggested different solutions. In one of their enquiries into "the possibilities of the embellishment of the town" it was proposed that only the top half should be left, while a more radical solution was offered in a poem by Aragon, aptly entitled "The Transfiguration of Paris":

> But the finest moment was when from between
> Its parted iron legs
> The Eiffel Tower let us see a female sex organ
> We scarcely suspected it had.[34]

---

[32] As quoted in Edward S. Casey, *Getting back into place*, 59.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Louis Aragon, "The Transfiguration of Paris," in *Paris and the Surrealists*, ed. George Melly (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson), 52.

The soothing Seine (jealous of Georgette)

Like the Eifel Tower, other elements of the city acquire a role of companionship for Soupault, and the interaction with them produces unexpected images that help him cope with intense or unpleasant feelings. Jealous over Georgette's interest in talking to another man during one of their walks, he turns his gaze to the Seine, as they happen to walk by the quays:

> To keep my sang-froid, I had to content myself with resource to recollections of all sorts. (…)
>
> Thus flows the Seine ever for those who are throttled by love, fear, religion or madness, those sentiments which are such powerful narcotics.
>
> Near me a drama or what I thought to be a drama was taking place, and here this fatherly river was permitting spring or summer images to approach me: a streamer bedecked with flags, some swimmers whom I found really distressing, and the recollection of an evening I had spent leaning on the parapet of the Pont Marie watching several lifesavers trying in vain to recover the body of an unfortunate suicide. [*LN*, 10]

It is because of the place itself that soothing, pleasant springtime images emerge in Soupault's consciousness at first – "this fatherly river was permitting spring or summer images to approach me" – while what he imagines to be a drama takes place next to him. The fluid waters of the Seine remind him at the same time of the constantly changing conditions of life. The fluidity of water, which is also the fluidity of desire opposing the solidity of matter, was a permanent obsession of the Surrealists.[35] The constantly changing waters, which are also connected with a long history of suicides in the city, lead his thoughts towards other topics. The initial pleasant memories are replaced by unavoidably darker preoccupations:

---

[35] Dalibor Vesely, "Surrealism, Myth and Modernity," 87.

> I knew that places and environment have a profound influence on memory and the imagination. [*LN*, 91]

Memories of swimmers and unsuccessful rescue attempts occupy his thoughts while his gaze is resting on the Seine. Soupault freely indulges in a free association of thoughts in the encounter with the river and opens up his imagination: an attitude that, as understood by the Surrealists, could enable the search of truth – provided this opening-up of imagination was combined with the suspension, if not outright suppression of the faculty of analytical reasoning and the notions of logical coherence and objective unity.[36] The very definition of the word "surrealism" as stated in André Breton's "First Manifesto of Surrealism" published in 1924, explains how it is a pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought; thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations.[37] Much more in Soupault's own "Hymn to Liberty," freedom of movement and thought is celebrated and is a condition considered essential for the writer.[38] This liberating condition is associated with the nighttime; a fact that justifies Soupault's inclination towards his nocturnal urban walks. "When the whole world is sleeping and night, like the oldest of goddesses, turns her head away; when the moon utters its little owl-like cry, then, O Liberty, I know that you are approaching in your silken gown, which is more beautiful than nakedness."[39]

---

[36] Alexander Irwin, *Radiant City and the Capital of Desire*, 23.
[37] André Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism," 72.
[38] Philippe Soupault, "Hymn to Liberty," in *Surrealists Painters and Poets, An Anthology*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (Cambridge; MA: The MIT Press, 2001), 53.
[39] Ibid.

The aching city (walking with Volpe)

One of the "Last Nights" Soupault walks in the city with Volpe and Paris reciprocates with painful emotions. Volpe's presence dramatically influences the perception of space, in what probably could be characterized as the most afflictive way:

> Still wandering on these deserted boulevards were several women who, with bowed heads, came and went in search of the night's last thrills. Sleep froze the houses, now engulfed in silence, and mounted into the sky which paled at its approach. Not the slightest breath.
>
> When Volpe stopped talking, I could hear the murmurs of sleeping Paris. Like a great ailing body, Paris turned and twisted to escape the fever's grip. [*LN*, 116]

The city's houses are portrayed still and motionless, submerged into a deep night sleep, of profound silence. No breathing life is imagined in them – "not the slightest breath" – a death-like condition looms out of the darkness. And as soon as Volpe's voice silences, an aching sound is captured: the environment's acoustic characteristic. Instead of a calm sleepy snoring, a murmur is heard in the city, an almost inaudible utterance of complains, coming from a body in pain. The city, understood already as a female body, is aching – "great ailing body" – and the place is portrayed as moving in a circular direction, almost rotating around its own axis and curling – "Paris turned and twisted" – while simultaneously changing in nature and state, as the word "turn" also suggests.[40] Indeed, the city cannot 'talk to' the walker anymore, as it has done many times already, given that "physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a

[40] The meaning of the word *tourner* in French also talks about a change of state and form. "Paris se tournait et se retournait pour fuir l'étreinte de la fièvre." (Phillipe Soupault, *Les Derniers Nuits de Paris*, 97.)

human being makes before language is learned."[41] Paris says something in a low, silent, indistinctive voice – murmurs – that Soupault cannot understand, and is furthermore perceived as a moving or shivering provoked by a fever. The embodied walker seems to feel this aching movement – which should consequently influence his own movement – as being in the very interior, the *splanchna* of the city's sick body. The urban atmosphere is unhealthy, polluted or infected. It is drastically altered by the presence of Volpe, a man of harmful power over Georgette's body.

The whimsical park (walking in solitude and despair)

This ailing city, in a reciprocal relation with the almost unconscious fear all lovers have of anything that could hurt the well-being of their beloved, is further reinforced by the constant anguish on Soupault's part that Georgette may suddenly disappear. It is an anguish not only caused by his personal intimate feelings. The possibility of Georgette's disappearance is often discussed among the members of the gang. Despite Georgette's connection with them and her status as Volpe's *protégée*, she has adamantly guarded her morning life, establishing a total seclusion from them; a fact causing disquiet to the gang. In a surprising, poetic turn of phrase that reveals the inter-subjectivity of place-bound emotions and alludes to the very title of the book, Volpe confesses to Soupault:

> "If she should ever disappear for one reason or another, what a mess…"
> The cold morning had given Volpe the only drunkenness of which he was capable.

---

[41] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain, The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

> "Tell me, when Georgette disappears, have you noticed that day is not far distant? If she should disappear forever, I have a feeling, and believe me I don't let things muddle me, I have a feeling there would be no more night." [*LN*, 121]

Shortly before the narrative's end and after Octave's death, Georgette indeed disappears from the city. None of the members of the gang seem to have the slightest idea about her whereabouts, and they all conceive a plan to patrol the city in order to find her. Their aim is not only to walk through the areas where she usually plied her trade, but for each one of them to watch a certain section of Paris, covering in that way the whole city.

Although totally unrelated to Georgette's usual itinerary, Soupault is assigned the area of Parc Monceau, an English garden built in the late eighteenth century in the North of Paris, particularly unique compared to the majority of the traditional French-style gardens that are found in the city. For Soupault, the foreign character of the area is immediately a strong indicator that a woman who is Paris herself would never choose the place to hide. His despair anticipates the darkness of his space-perception:

> All is gray in this park: the lake is of aluminum, the paths are sanded with dust, the trees covered with verdigris. The carriages go at a walk, so as not to frighten the sparrows; the nurse girls close their eyes.
>
> I walked about this whimsicality enclosed in a railing and grasped the shadows of hopes as they flitted by. (…) In this quarter dating from 1890, the prostitutes, too, have manners quite out-of-date. They flee to attract, they hum ditties to pass away the time, on the slightest provocation – for nothing at all – they begin to cry.
>
> I was losing my time. The places and people I could see were only snares, vain reproaches. Georgette could not and would not have frequented these streets, this park, these boulevards, cold country of boredom. [*LN*, 161]

The original design of the park, conceived by the eighteenth-century painter and writer Louis Carrogis Carmontelle, could be argued to share some similarities with the premises of the Surrealists. Carmontelle's intention was to create a place where the visitor would encounter unexpected surprises: "It is not necessary for gardens or nature to be presented in the most agreeable forms. It's necessary instead to preserve the charm that one encounters entering the garden, and to renew it with each step, so that the visitor in his soul will have the desire to revisit the garden every day and to possess it for himself."[42] Although the park was significantly altered over the years, and by 1928 was only half its original size and had lost many of its *follies*, elements of its original design intentions were still present. Nevertheless, Soupault doesn't seem to perceive the park in any unexpected or charmingly surprising way. Everything is delineated as dull and nondescript, colored in a hue of ashes – "all is grey in this park". The lake with its archaic colonnade is described as, similarly, light silvery grey metal – "aluminum" – a material the inherent characteristics of which have lead to its widespread use (among other uses) in domestic utensils. Nothing could be more foreign to Georgette, a woman whose domestic quality is utterly unknown to Soupault. The dark and rigid spatial impression is further enriched by the feeling of age: a sense that the place is old, rusty and disused – "the paths are sanded with dust, the trees covered with verdigris" – influenced most probably by the reconstructions of buildings from different eras interspersed in the park, like its Roman colonnade unfolding by the lake and the miniature Egyptian pyramid. Even the carriages that traverse the park's winding paths try not to wake this place from its sleep – "not to frighten the sparrows". And even beyond these markers of time's passage, the prostitutes seem to maintain habits and employ techniques of a past era.

---

[42] Dominique Jarrassé, *Grammaire des Jardin Pairisiens* (Paris: Parigramme, 2007), 77.

For Soupault the whole place seems to behave capriciously – "I walked about this whimsicality enclosed in a railing" – and he seems to feel his hope of finding Georgette slip away from him with every step. The experience of walking through this place for a few minutes has convinced him without question that Georgette would never have frequented this uninteresting and dull environment – "cold country of boredom."

Contrary to this impression, when he was walking alone through Georgette's usual stomping grounds, he had felt more encouraged that he could trace her steps and perhaps even find her:

> In the streets that formerly she had patrolled with such astonishing regularity I could detect phosphorescent traces of her passage, which thereupon labeled souvenirs. When I caught sight of a shadow in the rue Saint-Honoré or rue des Prêtres-Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, I could hardly keep from recognizing it. Sometimes also on coming across a couple entering some small, dingy, sad and dark hotel, it was she whom I saw push open the door. [*LN*, 155-6]

"…For him who becomes solitary all distances, all measures change; of these changes many take place suddenly, and then, (…) extraordinary imaginings and singular sensations arise that seem to grow out beyond all bearing,"[43] Rainer Maria Rilke notes in a letter preceding Soupault's work by just a few years. The narrator of the *Last Nights of Paris* is suddenly left in solitude, deprived of his beloved Georgette; the space of the dark night streets are seen as emitting hazy or dim light – "phosphorescent traces" – that delineate her usual route. In the dark center of the city his vision coalesces; Soupault can recognize the shadows he encounters and see Georgette at the entrance of the area's hotels. Soupault excludes the light of reflective reason that characterizes

[43] Reiner Maria Rilke, *On Love and Other Difficulties*, trans. John J.L. Mood (New York, N.Y.: W.W.Norton & Company, 1975), 118.

modern civilization and technology and moves through 'the space of desire,' which is radically different from moving in Cartesian isotropic space. In this erotic embodied space, architecture appears as obscure as Soupault's sight, and empathetic to its observer's feelings it mirrors his sorrow – "sad and dark hotel". A mood of tristesse hovers in the night atmosphere of the city, and both walkers and architecture partake of it.

It is an architectural image similar to that which Soupault had encountered at the beginning of the narrative, right after meeting Georgette but before he had yet been able to spend time with her, enjoy her company, follow her around in the city or learn about her and her habits. It was a time he though "Paris was black and unconcerned" [*LN,* 23] and he was reluctantly spending his nights in sad cheap hotels, meeting friends of him he was not in the mood to see:

> One of my friends wanted me to do him the great service of going to meet him in a hotel in the center of Paris. (…)
>
> The taxi stopped before the hotel in the rue Saint-Honoré and sped off as soon as I stood upon the sidewalk and had paid the fee for the trip.
>
> The little hotel is jammed between two houses and is unable to display more than one window per floor. It is gray, dirty, almost falling apart. A breeze always whistles about its door. Its shadow is a hole. Two silverware and jewelry shops close it in upon either side and cast the shapes of glowworms upon the sidewalk. I entered the hotel afraid. [*LN,* 37-38]

The building of the "gray, dirty" hotel appears suffocated by the neighboring edifices; its entrance seems to be always windy. The shadow it casts on the sidewalk seems non-existent, a void. Its gloomy presence is almost invisible to those not already aware of its existence. The architecture seems to disappear under the phosphorescent presence – "shapes of glowworms" – that the two "silverware and jewelry shops" cast on the street, distracting the attention of passersby.

Conclusion

The story finishes with Georgette's unexpected return, on a morning when Soupault and the members of the gang are desperately trying to find a way to track her. Out of the blue:

> Someone knocked on the door.
> (…) We all stopped talking immediately. Another knock.
> "Come in," said Volpe.
> And Georgette entered. The cold and the morning followed her.
> "Is it you?" someone ventured.
> "It is I," answered she, and smiled.
> Paris was before our eyes. (…)
> The day and the night began again their round. [*LN*, 174-175]

Her return seems to restore the order of things, to reintegrate the city back to its proper state, to settle the flow of time. Paris emerges as a place where the disclosure of a spatial *eros* becomes apparent through the poetics of narration. Partaking in a deep loving engagement with the city, Soupault rediscovers the embedded meanings of the place itself, realizes things he had never understood before, shares the moods and atmospheres of the nocturnal urban environment which change both him and the city's architecture, and eventually treats the place in a uniquely differently way. The architectural lesson taught through his *enactive erotic* relationship with Paris is one that shows how objective measuring, grandiose architecture, or functional transparency do not account for a necessarily meaningful interaction with a place, many of which were designed with very different aims in sight. It is Soupault's love, and his constant intention to be surprised by space, to discover its miracles, that lead to an embodied spatial comprehension – a knowledge of the flesh; a knowledge almost metaphysical. Soupault's love for Paris is the most important requirement for the city knowledge he acquires, as "in order to comprehend, it is

first necessary to desire to comprehend; put another way, once must be astonished at not comprehending (and this astonishment thus offers a beginning to wisdom); or one must suffer at not comprehending, indeed fear not comprehending (and this fear opens onto wisdom). Philosophy comprehends only to the extend that it loves – I love to comprehend, therefore I love in order to comprehend."[44]

But we do not need to be in love to actually experience an erotic perception of space and comprehend space respectively, as readers and architects. Soupault offers this to us through his literary images; Anne Carson comes to his support, arguing how novels can institutionalize the ruse of *eros*. Through them *eros* " becomes a narrative texture of sustained incongruence, emotional and cognitive. It permits the reader to stand in triangular relation to the characters in the story and reach into the text after the objects of their desires, sharing their longing but also detached from it, seeing their view of reality but also its mistakenness. It is almost like being in love."[45]

Following Soupault on his peregrinations is almost like being in love with the city for ourselves, assessing dimension and understanding proportion through a surrealist perspective that defines the term *straight horizontal* (a term one would imagine as emblematic of reason on a number of levels) as follows:

> "Straight horizontal
> If a thread one meter long falls from a height of one meter straight on to a horizontal plane twisting *as it pleases* and creates a new image of the unit of length." [46]

---

[44] Jean-Luc Marrion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 2.
[45] Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, 85.
[46] Marcel Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 33.

Soupault's unconventional understanding and in-flesh being in the city – strikingly different from the well-known Parisian figure of the *flâneur* – reveals moreover the place's old and new mythologies, aspects of the city that still survive from the past and surface in its present. Elements that usually remain unnoticed and escape the official historiography, like territories of prostitution or illegal activities, define the nocturnal side of the city and create new places "where men go calmly about their mysterious lives."[47] The environs of the Avenue de l'Opéra, for the construction of which a broad area of slum and poor neighborhoods with narrow and dangerous streets was demolished in the eighteenth century, still retained some of their original character, as the streets around it are still populated during the night by the city's prostitutes. The old habits of the city seem to take over with the setting of the sun. Only a few years before Soupault's story, two well-known and large *maisons de tolerance* actually opened their doors in the area, *Hotel de Marigny* in 1917 near the *Garnier Opéra* building and *Un Deux Deux* in the mid-1920s, on 122 rue de Provence, behind the Opera.

Soupault's narrative can therefore be understood as an unconventional mythological and historical account of the city that reminds us how significant places exist in slumber; only by walking through the city ready to be surprised and astonished at every step can we actually understand, activate and enliven them. More than thirty years after Soupault's narrative was published, Frederick Kiesler, the only architect in contact with the surrealist circles, sharing their aspirations and programmatic intentions and strongly advocating an architecture against the functionalistic and sterile doctrines of the modern movement, would articulate for architects this very relationship between space and walking in a similar way: "Space one gets only walking through it. Architecture cannot be experienced by plans, space planimetrically flattened out.

---

[47] Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, 86.

Space, it seems, one gets only by walking, tramping through it."[48] (…) "Space exists in slumber until we awaken it."[49]

[48] Frederick Kiesler*, Inside the Endless House; Art, People and Architecture: A Journal* (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster 1966), 511.
[49] Ibid., 416.

“Literature, … Dublin, Paris, … education, careers, … the past day…”

a conclusion

What parallel courses did Bloom and Stephen follow returning?

Starting united both at normal walking pace from Beresford place they followed in the order named Lower and Middle Gardiner streets and Mountjoy square, west: then, at reduced pace, each bearing left, Gardiner’s place by an inadvertance (sic) as far as the farther corner of Temple street, north: then at reduced pace with interruptions of halt, bearing right, Temple street, north, as far as Hardwicke place. Approaching, disparate, at relaxed walking pace they crossed both the circus before George’s church diametrically, the chord in any circle being less than the arch which it subtends.

Of what did the duumvirate deliberate during their itinerary?

Music, literature, Ireland, Dublin, Paris, friendship, woman, prostitution, diet, the influence of gaslight or the light of arch and glow-lamps on the growth of adjoining paraheliotropic trees, exposed corporation emergency dustbuckets, the Roman catholic church, ecclesiastical celibacy, the Irish nation, jesuit education, careers, the study of medicine, the past day, the maleficent influence of the presabbath, Stephen’s collapse.

(…)

Had Bloom discussed similar subjects during nocturnal perambulations in the past?

In 1884 with Owen Goldberg and Cecil Turnbull at night on public thoroughfares between Longwood avenue and Leonard’s corner and Leonard’s corner and Synge street and Synge street and Bloomfield avenue. In 1885 with Percy Apjohn in the evenings, reclined against the wall between Gibraltar villa and Bloomfield house in Crumlin, barony of Uppercross. In 1886 occasionally with casual acquaintances and prospective purchasers on doorsteps, in front parlours, in third class railway carriages of suburban lines. In 1888

> frequently with major Brian Tweedy and his daughter Miss Marion Tweedy, together and separately on the lounge in Matthew Dillon's house in Roundtown. Once in 1892 and once in 1893 with Julius Mastiansky, on both occasions in the parlour of his (Bloom's) house in Lombard street, west. [*U,* 776-778]

At 2:00am in the early morning of June 17th, 1904 Leopold Bloom and his *protégée* Stephen Dedalus walk towards Bloom's home, on 7th Eccles Street, after a full day of peregrinations in the city of Dublin. They both feel weary and the literary language carries their tiredness, constricted in recording almost cartographically their nocturnal itinerary. The names of the streets that lead to the walkers' final destination are mentioned in order of procession – "in the order named Lower and Middle Gardiner streets and Mountjoy square, west"[1] – and the necessary turns in their route are noted in relation to their geographical coordinates – "corner of Temple street, north". Elements of their embodied engagement with the city, despite their bodies' fatigue, still surface. Particular directions are described through the body's left-right orientation – "each bearing left, (…) bearing right" – while the author meticulously records the changing walking modes: the walkers' weary steps which start at a "normal walking pace" and gradually decelerate – "at reduced pace" – and even cease at moments – "at reduced pace with interruptions of halt". The Church of Saint George with its impressive belfry, work of the renowned Irish architect Francis Johnston – who played an important role in the reformation of the city's architectural landscape in Georgian Dublin – vaguely makes an impression on them. They cross the circus before the church diametrically and this movement, this semi-circular urban path, brings to mind geometrical axioms – "the chord in any circle being less than the arch

[1] Mountjoy Square West is the full name of the street that Leopold and Stephen walk (Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, 564-5.)

which it subtends" – embedded in the geometrical layout of the city and even, as one could speculate, the city's architecture. The church's imposing belfry and main façade, behind a peristyle of ionic columns, bear semi-arched openings, geometrical formations that seem reflected on the urban environment: the very circus before the church.

After this last urban and architectural allusion Joyce proceeds by recording one after the other, without any elaborations or comments, all the topics of conversation that were discussed between the two men during their nocturnal walk. They vary from topics of general interest – "friendship, woman, prostitution, diet" – to themes of a particular European hue – "Paris" – or even subjects of more focused local character, touching on the nation and the city of Dublin – "Ireland, Dublin, (…) the Irish nation"; the city's urban facilities and their influence in the city life – "the influence of gaslight or the light of arch and glow-lamps on the growth of adjoining paraheliotropic trees, exposed corporation emergency dustbuckets";[2] the city's prevailing religion along with other religions of Dublin like Judaism – "the Roman catholic church (…) the maleficent influence of the presabbath"; the dominant educational system – "jesuit education"; and even Stephen's earlier collapse during the day.

And right afterwards Bloom remembers other nocturnal perambulations in the city during which similar topics with other Dubliners were discussed. His memories do not dwell on the similarities of the topics but mainly focus on the dates the conversations took place and the names of his night-walking interlocutors. He remembers the places the conversations emerged – "between Gibraltar villa and Bloomfield house in Crumlin (…) in the parlour of his (Bloom's) house in Lombard street, west" – and also the walking paths that were followed – "between Longwood avenue and Leonard's corner and Leonard's corner and Synge street and Synge street

[2] Exposed corporation emergency dustbuckets refer to outdoor trash baskets to be provided by the Dublin Corporation. The baskets did not exist in Dublin in 1904. This is one of Bloom's "civic self-help" ideas. (Ibid., 566)

and Bloomfield avenue." These urban paths are remembered as walked, each street followed by the next one on the way, each turn as encountered by the body.

The literary language connects specific locations and routes in the city with specific city dwellers, and particular topics of conversations; subjects that Bloom discussed with Stephen as well and the majority of which are characterized by a local character and content. The conversations *per se* are not described but it is not hard for the reader, after having observed Bloom's interactions and inner thoughts during the day, to imagine that these discussions are also abundant with local speech habits, Dublin slang expressions (like the "tinned" reference in the opening passage of the introduction). The local habits of speech and the local character of the topics of conversation emerge during nocturnal walks, as cityfuls of urban life embrace the walkers who, bodily immersed in the city, enactively perceive and interact with it. During the late hours of the night the walkers are more prone to feel tired, their reflexes to get slower, and the surrounding environment to appear darker, less animated, and probably less overwhelming; yet even then walking in the city still manifests elements of the enactive perception of place. Although Joyce characteristically registers fewer and fewer urban impressions at that late hour of the day, selective elements of Dublin's physical appearance and its architecture, like the imposing Church of Saint George, surface in the narrative and the characters' perception/consciousness. It is something noted systematically in the chapter "Ithaca,"[3] the source of the opening passage above; a chapter written exclusively in a question and answer form, constituted in its majority by enumerations of facts and lists of information or data.

[3] This chapter, as its title indicates, describes the return of the modernist hero back home.

As literary scholarship establishes, this particular chapter "renders the bourgeois world in all its detail and potentiality, uniting fact and myth in a classic portrayal of Everyman as dispossessed hero. In its radical form 'Ithaca' bypasses the familiar conventions of nineteenth-century fiction and shows us another way in which the novelist's passion for omniscience can be achieved without violating our sense of individual and local reality."[4] This respect towards our individual and local reality, its acknowledgment by the author and its incorporation in his work as he reveals to us anew a tangible reality, despite literature's fictional character, aligns with a key form of philosophical thinking. That is the understanding of works of art as carriers of a truth speaking the reality of the world we live in, manifesting for us things we thought we knew but we are guided to see afresh. Partaking of this position, in his "Origin of the Work of Art" (1935) Heidegger specifically elevates poetry and poetic language – as a discourse comprised of the language in which we 'dwell' – as the highest and most ontologically profound mode of *alitheia*, of truth.[5] The poetic language of literature or of the linguistic work of art, like the tragedy for example, originates in the speech of the people and does not refer merely to the battle staged or displayed theatrically, as he argues. Much more than this, "it transforms the people's saying so that now every living word fights the battle and puts up for decision what is holy and what is unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flight, what master and what slave."[6]

By liberating language from its everyday prosaic use, as Octavio Paz further argues, and allowing words to recover their original nature, their plurality of meanings – that is to say the

---

[4] A. Walton Litz, "Ithaca," in *James Joyce's Ulysses, Critical Studies*, 405.
[5] Sophie Vlacos, *Ricoeur, Literature and Imagination*, (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 159.
[6] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings*, *from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, ed. David Farrekk Krell, rev. and expanded ed. (New York, N.Y.: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008), 168-169.

possibility of meaning two or more things at the same time[7] – poetic language of literature is a revolutionary action by nature: it reveals this world and creates another.[8] It presents a whole new world while disclosing the *alitheia* of the world we live in, helping us to grasp it and understand it deeper. In the line of hermeneutic phenomenology Paul Ricoeur notes in his *Time and Narrative* (1983-85) that life can only be properly understood by being *re*-told mimetically through stories,[9] implying that we count on narratives to understand our real experiences. And Gadamer further observes that what has traditionally been the role of philosophy, meaning the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, has in recent centuries been undertaken by literature. "The great novels of the nineteenth and twentieth century are closer to the old tasks of philosophy and we should look upon them as the custodians of philosophy's great heritage."[10]

It is a point of view that two of the authors under examination in this dissertation, Andrei Bely and Virginia Woolf, had already argued for before Gadamer. In his 1903 essay "Symbolism as the World View" Bely underpinned the position that in the twentieth century, "after the crisis in thought, it was inevitable that art should come forth to take the place of philosophy as the guiding beacon of mankind,"[11] while Woolf in her 1929 lecture "A Room of One's Own" stated that "fiction will be much the better for standing cheek by jowl with poetry and philosophy."[12]

---

[7] Octavio Paz, *The Bow and the Lyre: the Poem, the Poetic Revolution, Poetry and History*, trans. Ruth L.C. Simms (Austin, TX.: University of Texas Press, 1973), 37.
"Poetic creation begins as violence to language. The first act in this operation is the uprooting of words. The poet wrests them from their habitual connections and occupations: separated from the formless world of speech, words become unique, as if they had just been born." (Ibid., 28.)

[8] Ibid., 3.
[9] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and* Narrative, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, vol. 3 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 209.
[10] Hans-George Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge; MA: MIT Press, 1981), 146.
[11] Andrey Bely, "Symbolism as the World View," 76.
[12] Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own,"107.

Argued both by novelists[13] and philosophers, the narratives and stories of literature are seen as capable of offering us a unique and deep understanding of the reality around us, "our individual and local reality"; concordances with fields closely related to architecture directly point towards the importance of literature for architects and urban planners. The American urban sociologist Robert Park, in the introduction of his 1925 essay "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment" explicitly stated that "we are mainly indebted to writers of fiction for our more intimate knowledge of contemporary urban life."[14]

The Dissertation's Answers

Indeed Bely's *Petersburg*, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Soupault's *Last Nights of Paris* have offered insightful, unique and unexpected understandings of the urban life in Saint Petersburg, London and Paris during the particular time periods in which their plots unfold. My wager has been that the literary descriptions of walking, unpacked here in detail, have revealed the architectural and urban context of these cities in ways that none of the conventional means of architectural representation and research could have done. The literary language of the novels has disclosed layers of complexity and richness in the urban environment and the life of its citizens of a totally different nature than what one might infer from architectural writings such as

---

[13] This position is probably most explicitly expressed by the writer Milan Kundera in his book *The Art of The Novel*: "In its own way, through its own logic, the novel discovered the various dimensions of existence one by one: with Cervantes and his contemporaries, it inquires into the nature of adventure; (…) with Balzac, it discovers man's rootedness in history; with Flaubert, it explores the terra previously incognita of the everyday; with Tolstoy, it focuses in the intrusion of the irrational in human behavior and decisions. It probes time: the elusive past with Proust, the elusive present with Joyce. With Thomas Mann, it examines the role of the myths from the remote past that control our present actions. Et cetera, et cetera (Milan Kundera, *The art of Novel*, transl. Linda Asher (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 4-5.)

[14] Robert Park, "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment" *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*, ed. Richard Sennett (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), 57.

treatises or manifestos. Despite literature's fictional character the novels under consideration, which can be examined like historical documents, reveal factual elements of the cities in the beginning of the twentieth century; elements that are not made up but are related to their historical, social and political realities – ultimately responsible for their atmospheres and 'personalities'. Thus on the one hand my hermeneutic reading bears a historical architectural significance, revealing the atmospheres and moods of these specific cities in the specific time period. On the other hand though it also sheds light on important issues related to how people experience and appropriate the city, interact with long-established or new urban realities, enable and create atmospheres. It proves that the inhabitants' osmotic and engaged relationship with the city can evoke unexpected concepts of space, subvert established public contours and determine different patterns of wandering. Through the enactive walking engagement with the urban place, the experiences captured and described transcend the strict time boundaries of the beginning of the twentieth century and are resonant with more universal and trans-historical concerns about urban and architectural space.

This dissertation set out to answer some particular questions. It looked into novels that could, one would hope, reveal for architects how urban places and buildings are far more than mathematically determined or geometrically precise entities. I have shown that the places in these novels are subject to a notion of dimension and scale distinct from any Cartesian reckoning. Indeed in *Petersburg* the distances are "many-chimneyed" as Apollon Apollonovich feels, sensing the uproar in the factories in the city's suburbs. The islands appear further off than they should have been. The people circulate into an infinity of prospects, into identical rows of boxes, innumerable, one immense cloud. The distances of London are characterized by softness, as

Peter Walsh senses strolling across the grass of Regent Park; the minute, almost invisible transformations of Bond Street are untraceable even by the most sensitive mathematical instrument, one that could record an earthquake in a country as distant from London as China. The distances of Paris are measured with the surrealist "straight horizontal" unit of length. Viewing the Eiffel Tower from her foot renders her metallic; measuring her from a distance makes her symbolic.

The thesis moreover ventured to explore how urban places appear in literature: *place* is understood here as a bodily-sensed encompassing sphere imbued with the power to influence our course of actions and to affect our corporeal consciousness as we walk through it. In Petersburg, Bely's anonymous pedestrian perceives the city's sidewalks as crowded with words, columns of conversations, and feels the need to cut through them with his body. The imagined content of the conversations that seems to have spread along the miles of Nevsky's pavements makes him break into a run. Alexander Ivanovich questions the moral and the ethical consequences of the imminent explosion while he is surrounded by the incomprehensible voice of Nevsky's myriapod, his shoulder mired in the city' sediment. His decision to find the leader of the revolutionary party and elicit explanations is reinforced by the place he is in. Apollon Apollonovich breaks for the first time his habit of crossing the city by carriage and decides to proceed on foot, encompassed more intimately by the city and by the atmosphere of forthcoming sociopolitical change. He acknowledges the inevitable character of the coming events, bedawned by the rosy pink ripple of tiny clouds in the morning sky.

In London, Clarissa Dalloway walks in a district where the leaden circles of Big Ben dissolve in the air; before every striking of the clock she senses a pause, a suspense, a particular hush that

delays her steps and leaves her waiting in exhilaration. The passersby on Bond Street, surrounded by an invisible cloud of rumors and a collectively imagined but inaudible voice of authority come to a stop and remain still, staring silently and with utmost respect at a car whose owner will remain unknown. Their posture will remain stiff and proud until the car crosses Bond Street, glides across Piccadilly, and turns down Saint James Street. Elizabeth's confident walking becomes discreet and shy while passing Fleet Street, which feels like the unknown interior of a private domestic space at night. Her decision to pursue a different future for herself emerges on Strand Street which floods with the lively vitality of new professional and commercial opportunities. Richard Dalloway is unable to stop following his friend Hugh, as the tides of the city influence the tides of his body and push him into a jewelry shop the moment he would prefer to head back to his wife.

In Paris, Soupault and Georgette are surrounded by the sadness of rue de Medicis, "the street of everlasting rain", the book-stink of rue de Vaugirard, and the cold that affects the faces of streets; they remain indecisive and hesitant whether to consummate their relationship and choose to keep wandering in the city. Soupault, walking with Volpe along the city's deserted boulevards where sleep freezes the houses, can hear the aching body of Paris suffering; encompassed by the whimsical and aged atmosphere of Parc Monceau, he decides to change his route and return fast back to the paths that Georgette used to walk, looking for traces of her passage. None of these urban places are merely spaces; all are imbued with emotions and are intertwined with the emotions, and decisions, of those who move through them.

My work also discovered how the novels disclose the way the different city inhabitants perceive urban space according to their diverse preoccupations or predispositions; perhaps an obvious

observation, yet frequently ignored by architects. As Alexander Ivanovich, dreading the possibility of the bomb's explosion, walks on Nevsky Prospect he perceives the people walking next to and around him only as fragmented pieces of flesh or attire: noses and hats. Nikolai is unable to see Nevsky Prospect, full though it is of electric lights, as he is struck by *eros*: before his eyes there is only the house of his beloved Sophia, and his ears hear only "*her* voice, *her* voice." Apollon Apollonovich sees the city differently for the first time, focusing on its small human-scale details – the passing of time manifested in its materiality – after having reached the personal realization that his own life is at stake.

London appears healthy, fresh and robust to Peter, who during five years in India had missed the vitality of this city. Anguishing that he is getting older, he reads in the social changes he observes around him opportunities for new beginnings and refreshing changes. Elizabeth finds the air of Westminster suffocating. The social conventions associated with her life there burden her. Strand and Cornhill Streets give her the impression of a more promising, liberating environment. Clarissa recognizes the divine vitality of Saint James Park, content already with the opportunities her evening's party will offer her guests; while Septimus reads the same environment as confusing and threatening – the peaceful hills of the artificial landscape reminding him of traumatic moments in the battlefields.

A surrealist himself, Soupault already dwells in the city of Paris with the intentionality of being open to its mysteries, "a need to know more than our eyes can see."[15] Walking with the object of his desire, Georgette, content and satisfied, he sees Paris for the first time "more feminine than usual", lifting itself above the mists. In search of Georgette later, overwhelmed with feelings of desire and anguished that she may have disappeared forever, the places and

[15] Pontus Hulten (ed.), *The Surrealist Look on Art*, 81.

people he encounters are "only snares, vain reproaches." Pierced by the arrows of jealousy when other suitors elicit her attention, he chooses to drift away into past memories and thoughts, aided by the ever-moving waters of the Seine.

The dissertation also focused on how through walking, the geometry and urban layout of the city is lived. Petersburg's prospects, controlling and piercing like arrows, are transformed and lived as the "space of appearance," allowing people to raise their own voice, question the political *status quo* and demand a different future for them. Peter the Great's Baroque geometrical city of prospects enables both the possibility of authoritarian control but also the freedom for the Russian people to dream of a revolution, as the 'innovative' geometrical plan created the framework for momentous ethical and political decisions, unlike the urban conditions in the "heaps of hovels" elsewhere in Russia.

London's Victorian interior spaces are felt as oppressive and constraining, but walking in the streets and parks transported by the summer breeze allows for a feeling of freedom and joy. The city's long-established institutions and monuments are perceived as remnants of a past epoch, the control they impose over people gradually fading away. And even though the devastating aftermath of the war created discontinuities in the organic whole of the city – with the destruction of buildings and premises during the Zeppelin Raids – the way the broken urban net is lived and experienced promotes a unity and social bonding that overcomes the physical ruptures.

Paris' impressive, grand and long avenues, imposed by Haussmann on the medieval net of the city to provide for efficiency of transportation and urban control, are experienced as delicate fragile female creatures. Soupault feels the need to embrace the *Avenue de l'Opera* as a woman,

gently conquer her and then caress her softly. Public spaces become personal and intimate and despite their grandiose dimensions are experienced at the scale of the inhabitant's body: an experience bearing similarities with the bodily pleasure of an erotic encounter.

While examining the cities as captured by the novels, the thesis also noted how important landmarks of the cities are perceived, understood and seen by the fictional characters and how they orient the walkers in the urban net. In *Petersburg* the imposing Saint Isaac's Cathedral is perceived as descending from the Heavens and, with its golden roof, appears as a beacon in the misty and foggy environment. The University Building seems gloomy but stands as a symbol of cultural power, attracting the protestors around it and keeping them connected and bound towards a common goal. In London, Richard Dalloway, while he acknowledges what Buckingham Palace stands for to millions of people, reads it as an old prima donna and derides it as without intrinsic value, given the booming sociopolitical changes in the city. Similarly, the anonymous inhabitant described by Woolf questions the role of religion and religious buildings in the secular modern city. Although he knows that entering Saint Paul's Cathedral would offer him a feeling of solace and comfort, he finally decides not to deviate from his route. In the *Last Nights of Paris*, the Eiffel Tower is perceived differently according to Soupault's varying points of view, but in each case is seen as a constant and friendly companion: "a deed of bravery and of pride" helping him, with its luminous presence, to overcome all the night's difficulties. The impressive Renaissance building of the Luxemburg Palace "looks like absolutely nothing."

An answer to the question of how cities change at the night also emerged from the pages of the novels. "Shafts of light" passing by the urban walkers appear in nocturnal Petersburg, when the

city transforms into a misty autumnal presence. Nevsky Prospect is flooded with "fiery obfuscation" while the walkers encounter on their way "sudden flares". The nocturnal city of London, seen from Peter's perspective, appears as a woman dressed in her attractive transparent attire and indulges in lively festivities until dawn. The city of Paris is so magically transformed at night that it is as though the city becomes real only then, and that it becomes so mundane, ordinary and boring under the sun's light that it almost ceases to exist in the daytime.

Lastly, the dissertation was interested in exploring how walking both allows us to traverse different urban atmospheres and also enables their creation. The anguish felt by the Petersburg dweller walking across columns of conversation is one such example. He crosses through an already inflamed atmosphere but at the same time, as he connects words and phrases heard from different people at different places in the street, his own experience intensifies the prevailing mood. As he follows a beautiful and mysterious woman, Peter Walsh crosses different atmospheres. One of these is the heavy breath of the irrevocable passage of time and death emanating from the clock shop. Another is the more frivolous air felt while passing the women's clothing shops. This is itself enhanced by Peter as from his vantage behind the woman, he catches sight of both her form and her reflection in the shop window; superimposed against the background of all the beautiful new pieces of clothing, these create a new and unexpected image which intensifies the erotic atmosphere. Walking around the Luxembourg gardens, the narrator of the *Last Nights of Paris* and his beloved Georgette cross through the inviting atmosphere of rue de Tournon; pacing slowly by the "triangular and morose facades of nameless shops", they feel the air "splashed with syrup"; but also, as Georgette genuinely observes, because of them the rue de Tournon becomes indiscreet.

The time period

The emerging qualities of the European cities and the life experiences captured by the novels and critically examined in the previous chapters do not speak only about the urban places of Saint Petersburg in 1905 or London and Paris of the 1920s; these specific cities also represent a general condition, framing life experiences that in their majority speak to basic human existential quests and feelings. Many of the architectural landmarks described in the pages of the novels still play a dominant role in people's lives. They certainly still carry meanings and symbolic values connected with events in the cities in the specific time periods the novels describe, as well as the already long history of these places long before that particular moment in time.

Some of the prevailing atmospheres felt by the characters are still part of the urban reality of these places as many subsequent novels manifest. To mention only a few characteristic and, in literary terms, outstanding examples, the writings of Vladimir Nabokov and Joseph Brodsky render Saint Petersburg grandiose and impressive, aiding and abetting the actions of its inhabitants.[16] The vibrant summer energy of everyday London springs though the pages of Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1948) – a narrative that also captures political and social similarities with Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* – and Alessandro Baricco's most recent *Mr. Gwyn* (2014), whose central character decides to change his profession and subsequently his life in the middle of green and summery Regent's Park. The quest for erotic fulfillment and sensual pleasures and the sensation of a nocturnal Paris pulsating with desire, 'leaks' through even the lines of Michel Houellebecq's novels, which otherwise primarily depict contemporary life's existential despair and depression.

---

[16] Angeliki Sioli, "Mapping the Experiential Context of St. Petersburg Over Time," paper presented at the 67th S.A.H (Society of Architectural Historians) Conference, Session Title: Changing Face of Urban Cartography, Austin, TX., 2014.

It has not been this dissertation's objective to discuss the diachronically stable elements of these cities' atmospheres and moods, or to trace their inevitable changes. The cities are not static entities and life conditions have changed substantially since 1905 and the 1920s. Nevertheless, while remote from the present realities in these and other cities that must be faced by architects and urban designers, the urban experiences that are captured in these literary works can enable them understand the deep and multifarious richness of urban environments. Most importantly through its focus on walking in the selected novels, my research has established that human understanding – and thus space perception – is first embodied and enactive, apparent in our competent behavior as evidenced in a multitude of quotidian situations: a crucial point of departure in any architectural consideration of "context."

The architecture of walking

Literature uniquely captures the elements that constitute the rich, embodied and complicated experience of enactive engagement with the city. Walking in particular is a modality of interaction where elements of enactive perception are clearly manifested. Because of literature's unique capacity to capture all these different interconnected elements – walking pace, views, sounds, tastes, textures, feelings, mental preoccupations, buildings, architecture, urban layout, happenings in the city, social elements, political facts, mythological traditions, etc. – literary descriptions of walking have also a significant bearing on the understanding of our very own everyday walking experience and daily interaction with the urban environment as dwellers in the city.

On the one hand they bring to light both the subtle and the sometimes forceful way an urban environment influences and impacts our course of action, our consciousness, our perceptions and feelings. On the other hand they manifest clearly how our walking in the city is a catalyst that enables situations, contributes to atmospheres, weaves existing moods together and brings the city to life. By coalescing spatial qualities, creating them, influencing them and also being reciprocally responsive to them, walking emerges as an action critical for architectural reflection. As an action it produces qualities of space, highlights existing ones, binds them together. As a tool for the architect, it allows and enables a deep, embodied and cultural understanding of place, being a significant modality of being-in-the city.

This understanding, felt by the body, perceived by the senses, "understood by the heart," as Bely would argue and seen through eyes that can recognize more than what vision provides as Soupault would add, is what can lead to a genuine appreciation and understanding of place: one that, I wish to argue, needs to stand at the beginning of any architectural creative process. It is an understanding that requires personal engagement with any given place, Heidegger's *Gelassenheit,* that feeling of availability that permits us to simply let things be in whatever may be their uncertainty and their mystery,[17] a decision to be overwhelmed by the reality of a city at a particular time and not try to control it. It is a starting point that can facilitate the grasping of place and its characteristics that easily elude us.

[17] Martin Heidegger, "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking," in *Discourse on Thinking*, a translation of Gelassenheit by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1966).

The function of fiction for architecture

This is of course not to claim that our own distracted walking can itself guarantee such an encounter with a given place and ensure such a heightened degree of spatial awareness; a claim that could be made for some techniques of "walking meditation" for instance. It is the literary descriptions of walking that open up possibilities through such action: drawing our attention to the body's inter-activeness in the perception and creation of space, capturing aspects of the city and its inhabitants' behavior that elude us as ordinary observers. The authors, having cultivated a unique sensitivity in observing and recording the world around them, can sense moods and atmospheres that usually escape our attention, while their skill at 'using' language in a liberating manner that sets their matter – meaning words – free, ultimately allows language to express the inexpressible.[18] Thus, as we have seen, they present us with a valuable panorama of life; but they also manage to foreground the emotional impact of urban architecture on the feelings of the inhabitants. This fact has a particularly important effect on our understanding of place because, as Nick Crossley argues in his study *The Social Body* (2001), emotions are not subjective entities sensed individually by each one of us; instead they are 'out there in the world' and we are able to partake of them because we share a common language.[19] Our architecture partakes of this emotional world as well, in its different cultural and sociopolitical manifestations, and needs to grasp it in order to meaningfully respond and engage in dialogue with it. It thus becomes an

---

[18] O. Paz, *The Bow and the Lyre*, 96.

As Maurice Merleau-Ponty has observed in his essay on the experience of expression that one of the effects of language is to efface itself to the extent that its expression comes across (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Science and the Experience of the Expression," in *Prose of the World*, trans. John O' Neil (London, Heinemann, 1974), 9.)

[19] Nick Crossley discussing on Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1949) and its contribution to a non-dualistic sociology. (Nick Crossley, *The Social Body*, 43.)

architecture materially framing an embodied and social life that is fundamentally bound by language.

To elaborate on this point I want to argue that architecture is not primarily about utility, environmental control, style and fashion, or economic efficiency, as different architectural movements over the 20th and 21st century have passionately advocated – whether functionalism, parametric architecture or sustainable design, to mention only some of the most popular trends. The crisis of modern architecture – perhaps most notably the failed resonance of new buildings with the historical and cultural values from which they emerge – has been discussed extensively by many contemporary architects and architectural theoreticians.[20] The separation of architecture from its inherent connection to the stories of the places it should address is one of the reasons we now often understand the art and practice of building as the product of a creative genius, a top-down process deriving primarily from the creators' mind, instead of a bottom-up process in which the architect orchestrates the elements and qualities of a given site and allows them to be manifested through an appropriate architectural configuration. As Alberto Pérez-Gómez argues "the reduction of buildings to pragmatic institutional shelters, their transformation into tools of political domination, technological efficiency, or economic gain were an obvious consequence of a mentality that rejected poetry as a legitimate form of knowledge and denied the importance of myth for man in coming to terms with the ambivalence of life itself."[21]

---

[20] Alberto Pérez-Gómez's *Architecture and The Crisis of Modern Science* (1985), Dalibor Vesely's *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (2006), Juhani Pallasmaa 's *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses* (2005) and *The Thinking Hand*, David Letherbarrow's *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (2008), are only some of the most representative studies on the issue.

Literary stories of walking in the urban environment can offer architects a means of understanding the richness of city life they should address in their work, as well as the difficulty of the task – involving as it does the contradictions of life: its multifarious, unexpected and magical turns. Virginia Woolf's essay "Modern Fiction" presents the most convincing case in this direction:

> "Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration of complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it."[22]

---

[21] Alberto Perez-Gomez, "The Architecture of Richard Henriquez: A Praxis of Personal Memory," in *Richard Henriquez: Memory Theatre*, ed. Howard Shubert, catalog of the exhibition co-organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Canadian Centre of Architecture, Montreal, 1993.

[22] Virginia Woolf, *Selected Essays*, 9.

The literary imagination

The importance of literature in assisting us to understand reality has been established. There is however one more important benefit for architects who look into place and human situations, conditions of life, through literature; one of a more general nature that I would like to unpack briefly at this point. That is the cultivation of an architect's literary imagination. Approaching a place through its literary stories, through masterful novels that describe and narrate that place, we imagine space differently than we would have by using other representational forms like modern maps[23] or photographs – means employed extensively by architects. Unlike these more traditional modes of representation, literature is a linguistic means of expression *par excellence*, and its influence on imagination is characteristically different. On this front my views partake of the work and thought of two philosophers who have worked extensively on the issues of imagination: Paul Ricoeur and Richard Kearney, who has elaborated on Ricoeur's work.

Most phenomenological accounts of imagination have concentrated on its role as a form of vision, as a special or modified way of seeing the world.[24] This privileging of the visual model is related to the primary role granted to "description" in the phenomenological method. With the hermeneutic turn in phenomenology though (the methodology this dissertation follows), this privilege is significantly revised. Kearney claims that "as one moves from description to interpretation, the imagination is considered less in terms of 'vision' than in terms of

---

[23] Before the birth of scientific cartography in the seventeenth century, maps used to contain many pictographic and topographic elements along with short narratives that would describe, through language, elements there they were representing. These elements have been virtually eliminated in scientific cartography. "Even the purely decorative components of maps, so widely employed in the most diverse cultural settings, have ceded place to strictly utilitarian symbols that have to do with the measurement of space rather than with the landscape of place (…). We are left with the ordinary road map, primarily of practical value, or with the detailed and precise surveyor's map." (Edward S. Casey, *Earth Mapping*, xiii.)

[24] Richard Kearney, "Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutic Imagination," in *The Narrative Path*, *The Later Works of Paul Ricoeur*, ed. T. Peter Kemp David Rasmussen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 1.

'language'."[25] Imagination is assessed as an indispensable agent in the creation of meaning in and through language – what Ricoeur calls "semantic innovation."[26] Replacing the visual model of the image with the verbal, Ricoeur affirms the more poetical role of imagination – that is, its ability to say one thing in terms of another, or to say several things at the same time, thereby creating something new.[27]

In his essay "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," (1979) Ricoeur argues that the productive imagination – before taking shape in any of a thousand possible images – has primarily linguistic origins and that only the emergence of new meanings in the sphere of language can generate images that may be both new and culturally significant.[28] In his *Rule of Metaphor* (1975), taking up Aristotle's definition of a good metaphor in the *Poetics*, he points that a good metaphor is not revealing the similarity between already similar ideas, but between semantic fields hitherto considered dissimilar.[29] He claims that imagination is precisely this power of metaphorically reconciling opposing meanings, forging an unprecedented semantic pertinence from an old semantic impertinence.[30]

The churches like shapes of grey paper that Elizabeth admired on Strand street, Buckingham Palace which in Richard's eyes was an old prima donna facing the audience all in white, London life that like a pulse of a perfect heart struck through the streets, prospects of Petersburg like arrows and buildings like a gang of stone giants, the sides of the Nevsky like the surface of an opened-faced sandwich, *Avenue de l' Opera* a great shadow flashing like a glacier, Paris swelling out in boredom, and Parc Monceau's lake of aluminum, are only some of the metaphors

---

[25] Ibid.,
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 2.
[28] Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *Man and World* 12, no. 2 (1979): 127.
[29] Ricoeur, Paul. *The Rule of Metaphor, Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trasn. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 11.
[30] Richard Kearney, "Paul Ricoeur and the hermeneutic imagination", 4.

encountered in the novels which forged, to use Ricoeur's vocabulary, an unprecedented semantic pertinence from architectural and urban images, thus enriching our very architectural imagination. They are metaphors that allow us to see architectural and urban elements as something unexpectedly different, producing for us new possible meanings and thus encouraging actions that can bring these meanings to life.

It needs to be clarified that this doesn't mean that the innovative power of linguistic imagination is some "decorative excess of effusion or subjectivity," rather it is "the capacity of language to open up new worlds."[31] As Heidegger well points out, poetic speaking is not a conveying of pure interiority but a sharing of world. As a disclosure not of the speaker but of the being of the world, it is neither a subjective nor an objective phenomenon but both together, for word is prior to and encompasses both.[32] "The poetic imagination liberates the reader into a free space of possibility, suspending the reference to the immediate world of perception (both the author's and the reader's) and thereby disclosing 'new ways of being-in-the-world'."[33]

Reading the literary descriptions of an urban environment, the descriptions of its buildings and architecture, the situations of life and events that come to life in it, we are enabled to imagine these new ways of being-in-the-world: because the dual function of imagination as a poetic creation of the new by reference to the old is not just a property of writing but also and equally of reading, as Ricoeur claims.[34] Elaborating on this position Kearney raises the point that yet the imagination needs images. Without any visual aspect, the verbal imagination would remain an

---

[31] Ibid., 5.
[32] Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 139.
Individual subjectivity is from the outset intersubjectivity, as a result of the communally shared, conventions, symbolic artifacts and cultural traditions in which an individual is already embedded.

[33] Richard Kearney, "Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutic Imagination," 5.
[34] Indeed Ricoeur goes so far as to claim than in many contemporary works of art it is the imaginative task of the reader to complete the narrative sketched out and often even deliberately fragmented by the written work. (Ibid., 20)

invisible productivity.[35] The 'seeing as' that linguistic metaphors and language's polysemic nature enable, provides for this lack. The 'seeing as' activated in reading ensures the joining of verbal meaning with imagistic fullness.[36]

Thus the reading of novels can enable an original imaginative mode of space-perception, one that can reveal aspects of each given environment that emerge with and through language; aspects that pictographical modes of representation cannot touch. We can feel the overwhelming presence of New York and its sometimes-frightening urbanity by imagining it as "a labyrinth of endless steps"[37] following Paul Auster's suggestion in *The New York Trilogy* (1987). For his character, the city "no matter how far he walked, how well he came to know its neighborhoods and streets, it always left him with the feeling of being lost. Lost, not only in the city, but within himself as well."[38] We can understand why "Lisbon seems made of absorbent cotton, soaked, dripping"[39] following Ricardo Reis in his walk to the park and imagine buildings that are prepared to encounter rains "with such deafening noise that it seems that the rain is falling throughout the world, that as the globe turns, its waters hum in space as if on a spinning top."[40] We can appreciate the energy of Montreal's most popular thoroughfare Saint-Catherine by 'hopping on the bus with the characters' of Michel Tremblay's *Chronicles of Plateau Mont-Royal* (1978 - 1997) because the novel transmits the vividness of the place and portrays the bus-riders' willingness to absorb every bit of it, as "all along Saint-Catherine going west, noses were pressed to the windows in winter, arms rested on the windowsills in summer"[41] We can have

---

[35] Ibid., 15.
[36] Ibid., 5.
[37] Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 3.
[38] Ibid., 4.
[39] José Saramango, *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, trans. Giovanni Pontiero, 1st Harvest Ed. (New York, N.Y.: Harcourt, 1991), 49.
[40] Ibid., 167.

glimpses in the life of the inhabitants in the city's characteristic walkups through Lance Blomgren's synonymous novel *Walkups* (2000) and allow the linguistic images guide us towards architectural ideas that reveal the marvelous in the everyday: "*5155 Avenue du Parc*. The bathroom is a short walk towards the back. In the shower there is a planter of fresh herbs and a pair of scissors. (…) Cut the herbs in fine pieces and rub them into your skin as you wash. The birds that have followed you into the bathroom fly out through the hole in the ceiling."[42] The list of possibilities and examples of emerging metaphors and polysemic linguistic meanings in literature that are related to architectural, spatial or urban elements are never-ending; we need to look into literature again "not as something distinct from the business of designing buildings, to be enjoyed occasionally at one's leisure like swimming or sleep,"[43] as David Leatherbarrow states, reminding us of the historical fact that before Durand's redefinition of the curriculum of architectural education at the newly formed *Ecole Polytechnique*, at least two centuries ago, architecture and literature were not separated from one another so clearly.

Architecture and language

In the tradition of hermeneutics and phenomenology, it is not only in the form of literature that language emerges in its most creative capacity. As argued by Heidegger, Merleau Ponty and Ernesto Grassi, language is inherently poetic, capable of polysemic expression by virtue of its continuity with the body's expressivity and gestures connected to cultural habits. Language is not

---

[41] Michel Tremblay, *The Fat Woman Next Door Is Pregnant*, trans. Sheila Fischman, (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1981), 19.
[42] Lance Blomgren, *Walkups* (Montreal: Conundrum Press, 2000), 55.
[43] David Letherbarrow, "The Poetics of Architectural Setting: A Study of the Writings of Edgar Allen Poe," in *Architecture and Literature VIA* 8 (New York, N.Y.: Rizzoli, 1986), 7.

to be understood as an arbitrary code, as poststructuralist and constructionist linguists have attempted to do, as a mere system of more or less neutral signs. [44] "Words and language are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are." [45] Grassi's perspective in *Rhetoric as Philosophy* (1980) in particular demonstrates how it is only through this sort of emerging language (and its storytelling) that one can truly grasp human truths and, as a result, to formulate strategies for ethical action and valorize effective communication in aesthetics. Partaking of this theoretical basis and inverting the two components in Ricoeur's thesis, I would like to discuss the fact that that the dual function of imagination – as a poetic creation of the new with reference to the old – is not just a property of reading, as we have seen so far, but also and equally of writing.

This position opens up an interesting opportunity for a more active use of language in architectural thought and design. Employing language as an alternative to sketches, drawings collages, models, and so on to record and work on our architectural ideas and inspiration, could facilitate the generation of authentic architectural images: images that do not spur from a mimetic reflex to pictorial images to which we have already been exposed. Emerging through language, the images I am referring to can allow new, unexpected and culturally-specific architectural possibilities to come to life.

The notion of a connection between architecture and language is of course not new to architectural discourse, a discourse that has often focused on the use of narrative. The popularity of the topic is such that today, even in popular fora for design thinking, narrative is acknowledged as important. According to the guide to architectural terms *Archispeak* for

---

[44] Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "Writing Place: Notes on the Function of Language in Architecture," (keynote lecture, *Writingplace, Conference on literary methods in architectural research and design,* TU Delft, School of Architecture, Delft, November 25, 2013).
[45] Martin Heidegger as quoted in Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 139.

example, architecture can be formed around narrative or narrative can be spun around an architecture. The definition points out that various architects have described the sequential experience of their buildings as an unfolding narrative (a plot) and it also explains how even conventional architectural proposals often need to be presented in a narrative form, in order to tell the story of the design process even in the absence of the architects themselves.[46] It is thus not a surprise that many practicing architects and academics, as Sophia Psarra argues in her study *Architecture and Narrative*, believe that narrative enters architecture, from the conceptual 'messages' it conveys to the illustration of design in models, drawings and other representations, as an integral part of architecture's expression.[47]

What I suggest though is that narrative language and language in general should not be confined to explaining and describing other means of architectural representation. In short, language can be understood as a very rich and original medium to model the imagined architecture in itself. It can be valorized as the primary site of the imagination. It is a common exercise in architectural schools around the world to imagine fictional characters and write about them before proceeding to the design, for example. Why not devise ways to employ language and its poetic possibilities in the design itself and not limit it to narratives that only try to imagine narrative elements related to the architecture? Why should it not engage with architecture itself?

---

[46] Tom Porter, ed., *Archispeak: an Illustrated Guide to Architectural Terms* (London; New York, N.Y.: Spon Press, 2004), 130.
[47] Sophia Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative: the Formation of Space and Cultural* Meaning (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2008) 2.

Word-designs

In the Word Collector design-studio project I taught in McGill at a post professional level, we experimented with such use of language. To start with, the process was informed by readings of selected novels which foreground Montreal, providing examples of how the urban environment of the city and also Montreal's interior spaces are captured through language, and how space is described as experienced. The novels were read and discussed in detail in class, dwelling on the metaphors and on other elements of language that could help the students imagine new architectural possibilities

To cultivate an understanding of language's influence on our imagination, the students were initially asked to comprise a collection of words; words to be found in the city. They were asked to decide on a way to 'materially' capture these words and write a short paragraph for each one of them, describing the emotional or personal factors that influenced their decision. For the project's second part, the students were asked to 'design with words' the appropriate space to exhibit their collection, which would also accommodate a small-scale dwelling for the collector. In these 'word-designs,' the emphasis was placed deliberately on issues of atmosphere: on how the space is lived and experienced from the inside, how the parts of the project – such as autonomous rooms and circulation – respond to particular moods appropriate to their use, and on how they relate to each other in our experience. With these restrictions and priorities in mind, the students' designs had to nevertheless address conventional issues such as how many rooms/areas there are in the project, what kind of rooms and in what kind of configuration they lay with respect to each other, their geometry, materiality and furnishings.

To achieve a fruitful experimentation with language, the students were exhorted to engage different modalities of writing (first or third person narrative, etc.) and different or even

complementary temporalities (describing the space as a thick present on one hand, or imagining the space into the future). The premise was to experiment with the language right away and allow for it to provide new possible architectural representations speaking to the embodied dweller, to describe elements of character and mood of the space, and to explore emotional engagement with it. Their already-completed word-collection was a guide in this process, as it framed many of the spatial design decisions and suggested possible writing paths or forms.

When the designs were completed, the students had as a final assignment to 'visit' each other's spaces and then narrate how they imagined their own embodied experience being in them. This very last part of the course was a way to further examine issues of appropriation but also understand how our own intentionality and pre-conceived expectations always color our impressions and experience of a place.

The suggested approach hardly constitutes a definitive answer to the question of what might be a methodology for the active and creative use of language and literature in architectural education and design. The development and implementation of language-based design is a vast field of research with many variants, factors and elements to be addressed – perhaps especially in today's technologically-driven architectural world – and thus a fascinating one to investigate further. The architectural voices that attempt to offer possible answers to such a quest are gradually increasing in number. For example Klaske Havik's recent study *Urban Literacy*, which I briefly discussed in my introduction, actually suggests different ways "to introduce the gaze of the literary writer in the domain of architecture and urbanism."[48] It dwells on the theoretical background of each suggested method, examines relevant architectural paradigms, and presents

[48] Klaske Havik*, Urban Literace*, 27.

pedagogical examples in which these methods are tested. Architect Rick Joy's 2000 studio at Harvard University entitled "Five Senses," experimented with narrative writing as a means to communicate architectural intentions and experiences. Moreover as the students prepared to bring their models and drawings into the review space, he asked them not to bring anything; they were required to verbally describe their projects as if they were telling a close friend about their fantastic encounter with the built reality.[49] It is not my aim to enumerate the relatively few, but nonetheless extant, examples that argue in favor of an understanding of language for architecture under the terms outlined briefly in this conclusion. Drawing on the findings of my dissertation my future aspiration is to explore what appears to be the fascinating possibilities of language for architecture; for as Richard Palmer eloquently reminds us:

> "of all the variegated symbolic media of expression used by man, none exceeds language in communicative flexibility and power, or in general importance. Language shapes man's seeing and his thought – both his conception of himself and his world (the two are not that separate as they seem.) His very vision of reality is shaped in language. Far more than man realizes, he channels through language the various facets of his living – his worshiping, loving, social behavior, abstract thought; even the shape of his feelings is conformed to language. If the matter is considered deeply, it becomes apparent that language is the 'medium' in which we live, and move, and have our being." [50]

Like language, architecture "is the 'medium' in which we live, and move, and have our being." The cityfuls of life we find ourselves embedded in, with all their multifarious and complex

---

[49] Juhani Pallasmaa, "Thought and Experience in Rick Joyce's Desert Architecture," in *Rick Joy, Desert Works*. New York, N.Y.: Princeton Architectural Press, 20.
[50] Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 9.

interconnections, can emerge through language as the most promising and challenging material for architecture to (be) built with.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bely, Andrei. *Petersburg.* Translated by Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978.

Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. London: Penguin Classics, 2000.

Soupault, Philippe. *Les Dernières Nuits de Paris.* Paris: Seghers, 1975.

———. *Last Nights of Paris*. Translated by William Carlos Williams. Cambridge: Exact Change, 1992

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs Dalloway*. Edited by David Bradshaw. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Secondary Sources

Abram, David. The *Spell of the Sensuous, Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1997.

Adorno, Theodor, W. "The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel." in *Notes to Literature*, vol. I., Edited by Rofl Tiedemann. Translated by Shierry Weber-Nicholsen, 30-36. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Alexandrov, Vladimir. *Andrei Bely, The Major Symbolist Fiction.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Alter, Robert. *Imagined Cities, Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel*. New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2005.

Amery, Colin, and Brian Curran. *St Petersburg*. London: Frances Lincoln, 2006

Andrew, Ayers. *The Architecture of Paris*. Stuttgart; London: Edition Axel Menges, 2004.

Amato, Joseph A. *On foot, A History of Walking*. New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 2004.

Aragon, Louise. *Paris Peasant.* Translated by Simon Watson Taylor. Boston, MA: Exact Change, 1994.

Auster, Paul. *The New York Trilogy*. London: Faber and Faber, 1987.

Bachelar, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964.

Bacon, Edmund. *Design of Cities*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1976.

Baedeker, Karl. *Baedeker's Russia 1914*. London: G. Allen & Unwin; Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971.

Ballantyne, Andrew. "Shops and Subjects," in *Conjuring the Real, The Role of Architecture in Eighteenth-and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, edited by Rumiko Handa and James Potter, 153-190. London: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.

Banjamin, Milica. "Of Dreams, Phantoms, and Places: Andrei Bely's Petersburg." *International Fiction Review* 10, no. 2 (1983): 98-103.

Baricco, Alessandro. *Mr. Gwyn & Three Times at Down*. Translated by Ann Goldstein. San Franscisco, CA: McSweenwy's, 2014.

Barta, Peter I. *Bely, Joyce and Döblin: Peripatetics in the City Novel.* Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996.

———. "Symbolization of Urban Space in *Burges-la-Morte* and in Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*." In *Georges Rodenbach Critical Essays*, edited by Philip Mosley, 161-174 Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1996.

Begnal, Michael, ed. *Joyce and the City: The Significance of Place*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2002.

Bely, Andrei. *Complete Short Stories*. Translated by Ronald Peterson. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1979.

———. *Petersburg: A Novel in Eight Chapters*. Translated by David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

———. *Petersburg*. Translated by John Elsworth. London: Pushkin Press, 2009.

———. *Selected essays of Andrey Bely.* Translated and edited by Steven Cassedy. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1985.

———. *The Silver Dove*. Translated by John Elsworth. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University, 2000.

Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. Translated by Harry Zahn. London: New Left Books, 1973.

———. *One Way Street and Other Writings*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott and Kinglsey

Shorter. London: Verso, 1985.

———. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999.

Biely, Andrey. *St. Petersburg*. Translated by John Cournos. New York, N.Y.: Grove Press, 1959.

Blair, Elaine. *Literary Petersburg, A Guide to the City and its Writers.* New York, N.Y.: The Little Bookroom, 2006.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Ann Smock. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

Blomgren, Lance. *Walkups*. Montreal: Conundrum Press, 2000.

Boris, Christa. *The poetic World of Andrey Bely.* Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1977.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *This Craft of Verse*. Edited by Cālin-Andrei Mihāilescu. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Bowen, Elizabeth. *The Heat of the Day*. New York, N.Y.: A.A. Knopf, 1949.

Breton, André. *Nadja*. Translated by Richard Howard. First Evergreen ed. New York, N.Y.: Grove, 1960.

———. "The Crisis of the Object." In *Surrealism and Painting*. Translated by Simon Watson Taylor, 275-80. London: McDonald and Co., 1972.

———. *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. Translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1972.

Brewster, Dorothy. *Virginia Woolf's London*. New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 1960.

Calasso, Roberto. Literature and the Gods. Translated by Tim Parks. New York, N.Y.: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 2001.

Campel, Hugh. "The City and the Text: Remembering Dublin Through Ulysses: Remembering Ulysses Through Dublin. " In *Curating Architecture and the City*, edited by Sarah Chaplin and Alexandra Stara, 9-22. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2009.

Caroline, Dionne. *Running Out Of Place: The Language and Architecture of Lewis Carroll*. Ph.D. Thesis, History and Theory Program, School of Architecture, McGill University, Montreal, 2005.

Carson, Anne. *Eros, the Bittersweet: An Essay*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Casey, S. Edward. *Getting Back Into Place, Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.

———. *The Fate of Place, a Philosophical History*. Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1998.

———. *Earth-Mapping, Artists Reshaping Landscape*. Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Cassayre, Sylive. *La Poétique de l'Espace et Imagination dans l'Ouvre de Philippe Soupault*. Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1997.

Cassedy, Steven, ed. *Selected Essays of Andrey Bely*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1985.

Caws, Mary Ann. *The Surrealist Look; An Erotic of Encounters*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.

———. *The Surrealist Painters and Poets, An Anthology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.

Certeau, Michel de. "Walking in the City." In *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall, 91-110. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984.

Cope, Jackson I. *Joyce's Cities*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1981.

Crosley, Nick. *The Social Body*, *Habit, Identity and Desire.* London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2001.

Damasio, Antonio. *Descartes' Error, Emotion, Reason, and Human Brain*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2005.

Dennis, Richard. *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space 1840-1930*. Cambridge; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. New York, N.Y.: Perigee Books, 2005.

Dorra, Henri. *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1994.

Dostoevsky, Feodor. *Crime and Punishment.* Coulson Translation. Edited by George Gibian. New York, N.Y.; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975.

Dowling, David. *Mrs. Dalloway, Mapping Streams of Consciousness.* Boston, CA: Twayne Publishers, 1991.

Dreyfus, Hubert L. “Why the Mood *in* a Room and the Mood *of* a Room Should be Important to Architects,” in *From the Things Themselves, Architecture and Phenomenology*, ed. Benoît Jacquet and Vincent Giraud, 23-39. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2012.

Duchamp, Marcel. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*. Edited by Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson. New York, N.Y.: Da Capo Press, 2010.

Duchamp, Marcel. *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp.* Translated by Ron Padgett. New York, N.Y.: Da Capo Press, 1987.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory; an Introduction*. Sec. ed. Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Edwards, Sarah, and Jonathan Charley, ed. *Writing the Modern City, Literature, architecture, modernity.* Oxon and New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2012.

Eco, Umberto, and Liberato Santoro-Brienza. *Talking of Joyce*. Edited by Liberato Santoro-Brienza. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1998.

Ellman, Richard. *James Joyce*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Elsworth, John David. *Andrey Bely: A critical Study of the Novels.* Cambridge, MA; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Tamar Katz, “Pausing, Waiting, Repeating: Urban Temporality in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Years*,” in *Woolf and the City, Selected Papers from the Nineteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, edited by Elizabeth F. Evans and Sarah E. Cornish, 2-16. Clemson; SC: Clemson University Digital Press, 2010.

Festa-McCormick, Diana. *The city as Catalyst, A Study of Ten Novels*. London; Cranbury NJ: associated University Press, 1979.

Frank, Eve Ellen. *Literary Architecture, Essays Towards a Tradition*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1979.

Frank, Joseph. “Spatial Form in the Modern Novel.” In *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction 1920-1951*, edited by J.W. Aldridge, 43-66. New York, N.Y.: Ronald Press Co, 1952.

Frascari, Marco. “Semiotica ab edendo, Taste in architecture.” In *Eating Architecture*, edited by Jamie Horwitz and Paulette Singley, 191-203. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2004.

Fuss, Diana, *The Sense of an Interior, Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them*. New York, N.Y.; London: Routledge, 2004.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981.

———. *Reason in the Age of Science*. Translated by Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981.

———. *The Relevance of the beautiful*. Translated by Nicholas Walker. Cambridge; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Gadanho, Pedro, and Susana Oliveira, ed. *Once upon a place, Architecture & Fiction*. Casal de Cambra, Portugal: Caleidoscópio, 2013.

Gifford, Don and Robert J. Seidman. *Ulysses annotated, Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses*, 20th rev. ed. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2008.

Gilbert, Stuart. *James Joyce's Ulysses, A Study*. New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1955.

Giroud Vincent, *St. Petersburg, A Portrait of a Great City*. New Haven, CT: Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University; Distributed by University Press of New England, 2003.

Gogol, Nikolai. *The collected tales*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York, N.Y.: Everyman's Library, 1998.

Gooding Mel., ed. *A Book of Surrealist Games*. Translated by Alexis Lykiard and Jennifer Batchelor. Boston, MA; London: Shambhala Redstone Editions, 1995.

Grassi, Ernesto. *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition.* Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980.

Gros, Frédéric. *A Philosophy of Walking*. Translated by John Howe. London, New York, N.Y.: Verso, 2014.

Hall, Edward T. *The Hidden dimension*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969.

Hamilton, Heard George. *The Art and Architecture of Russia.* London: Penguin Books, 1983.

Harbison, Robert. *Eccentric Spaces*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.

Harding, Desmond. *Writing the City: Urban Visions and Literary Modernism*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Hart Clive and Leo Kuth. *A Topographical Guide to James Joyce's Ulysses*. Colchester: Wake Newsletter Press, 1981.

Hart, Clive, and David Hayman. *James Joyce's Critical Essays*. Sec. ed. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1977.

Harvey, David, ed. *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. London: Routledge, 2005

Havik, Klaske. *Urban Literacy, Reading and Writing Architecture.* Rotterdam: nai010publishers, 2014.

Heidegger, Martin. "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking," in *Discourse on Thinking*. A translation of Gelassenheit by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, 58-90. New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1966.

———. "Poetically Man Dwells." In *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter, 213-229. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

———. "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964),* edited by David Farrekk Krell, 139- 212. Rev. and expanded ed. New York, N.Y.: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008.

———. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2010.

Hughes, Robert. *The Shock of the New, Art and the Century of Change.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

Husserl, Edmund. "The World of the Living Present and the Constitution of the Surrounding World External to the Organism." In *Husserl: Shorter Works*, edited by Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston, 238-250. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.

Holquist, Michael. "St. Petersburg: From Utopian City to Gnostic Universe." *Virginia Quarterly Review* 48, no. 4 (1972): 537-57.

Howe, Irving. "The city in literature. " In *The Critical point: On Literature and Culture*, 39-58. New York, N.Y.: Dell Publishers, 1973.

Hvattum, Mari and Christian Hermansen Christian, ed. *Tracing Modernity: Manifestations of the Modern in Architecture and the City*. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2004.

Irwin, Alexander. *Radiant City and the Capital of Desire: Images of the City in Le Corbusier and André Breton.* Thesis: M.A., University of Louisville, 1990.

Jarrassé, Dominique. *Grammaire des Jardin Pairisiens*. Paris: Parigramme, 2007.

Jean Marcel., ed. *The Autobiography of Surrealism.* New York, N.Y.: The Viking Press, 1980.

Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the body, Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago, Ill: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Joyce, James. *The Critical Writings*. Edited by Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellman. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989.

———. *Dubliners.* Edited by Jeri Johnson. First Oxford World's Classics ed. Oxford; New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Kearney, Richard. "Paul Ricoeur and the hermeneutic imagination," in *The Narrative path: the later work of Paul Ricoeur*, edited bby T. Peter Kemp and David Rasmussen, 1-31.Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.

———. *The Wake of Imagination, Towards a Postmodern Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Kiesler, Frederick. *Inside the Endless House; Art, People and Architecture: A Journal.* New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1966.

Kleinberg-Levin, David Michael. *The Body's Recollection of Being, Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism*. Boston, CA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985..

———. *The Opening of Vision; Nihilism and the postmodern situation*. New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1988.

———. ed. *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* . Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.

Kundera, Milan. *The Art of Novel.* Translated by Linda Asher. New York, N.Y.: Grove Press, 1988.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Leach, Neil, ed. *The Hieroglyphics of space: Reading and Experiencing the Modern Metropolis*. London: Routledge, 2002.

———. *The Radian City, elements of a doctrine of urbanism to be used as the basis of our machine-age civilization*. Translated by Pamela Knight, Eleanor Levieux and Derek Coltman. New York, N.Y.: Orion Press, 1964.

Le Corbusier. *The City of To-morrow and its planning.* Translated by Frederick Etchells. New York, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1987.

Leder, Drew. *The Absent Body*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Lehan, Richard. *The City in Literature, an Intellectual and Cultural History.* Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1998.

Lending, Mari. "Writing a Life from the Inside of a Drawing: Stendhal's Vie de Henry Brulard ." In *Chora 6: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, edited by Steve Parcel and Alberto Pérez- Gómez, 245-268. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011.

Malmstad, John E, ed. *Andrey Bely, Spirit of Symbolism.* Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Malpas, Jeff. *Place and Experience, a Philosophical Topography*. Cambridge, MA; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Massey, Robert K. *Peter the Great, his life and world*. New York, N.Y.: Knopf, 1980.

Marion, Jean-Luc. *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Translated by Stephen E. Lewis. Chicago, Ill; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Matich, Olga, ed. *Petersburg/Petersburg: novel and city, 1900-1921.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010.

McDonough, Tom, ed. *The Situationsts and the City.* London; New York, N.Y.: Verso, 2009.

Mepham, John. "London as Auditorium: Public Space and Disconnected Talk in Works by Ford Madox Ford, Patrick Hamilton and Virginia Woolf." In *London in Literature, Visionary Mappings of the Metropolis*, edited by Susana Onega and John A Stotesbury, 83-106. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2002.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Structure of Behavior*. Translated by Alden L. Fisher. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.

———. *The Visible and the Invisible*, followed by working notes. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

———. *Prose of the World*, Translated by John O' Neil. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

———. *The World of Perception.* Translated by Oliver Davis. London; New York: Routledge, 2004.

———. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald A. Landes. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2012.

Melly, George. *Paris and the Surrealists*. New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

Middleton, Robin, ed. *The idea of the city.* London: Architectural Associations; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press,1996.

Mochulsky, Konstantin. *Andrei Bely: his life and works.* Translated by Nora Szalavitz. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1977.

Morris, Jan (ed.). *Travels with Virginia Woolf*. London: Pimlico, 1993.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Speak Memory, an autobiography revisited.* New York, N.Y.: G.P. Putnam's sons, 1966.

Nhat Hanh, Thich, and Anh-Huong Nguyen. *Walking Meditation*. Sec. impr. Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2012.

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Untimely meditations*. Translated by R.J. Hollingrade. Cambridge, U.K.; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

———. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Translated by Ronald Speirs. Cambridge, U.K.; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Nöe, Alva. *Action in Perception*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.

———. *Out of our Heads, Why You Are Not your Brain, And Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness*. New York, N.Y.: Hill and Wandg, 2009.

———. *Varieties of Presence*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Ometev, Boris and John Stuart, (complied by Olga Suslova and Lily Ukhtomskaya). *St. Petersburg, Portrait of an Imperial City*. New York, N.Y: Vendome Press, 1990.

Ousby, Ian, ed. *Cambridge guide to literature in English*. Rev. Ed. Cambridge; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

O' Rourke, Karen. *Walking and Mapping; Artists as Cartographers*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013.

Pallasma, Juhani. "City sense, The city as Perceived, Remembered and Imagined." In *Encounters: architectural essays*, edited by Peter MacKeith, 142-146. Helsinki: Rakennustieto Oy, 2005.

———. *The Thinking Hand, Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture.* Chichester: Willey, 2009.

Palmer, Richard E. *Hermeneutics*, *Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*. Evanston; Ill: Northwest University Press, 1969.

Patte, Pierre. *Mémoires sur les objects les plus importans de l'architecture*. Paris: chec Rozet, 1976.

Paz, Octavio. *The Bow and the Lyre: the poem, the poetic revolution, poetry and history.* Translated by Ruth L.C. Simms. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973.

———. *The Children of the Mire, Modern Poetry from Romanticism to the Avant-Garde.* Translated by Rachel Phillips. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Penner, Barbara. “The Construction of Identity: Virginia Woolf’s City,” in *Intersections: Architectural Histories and Critical Theories*, edited by Ian Borden and Jane Rendell, 269-282. London: Routledge, 2000.

Pérez-Gómez, Alberto. *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983.

———. “The Architecture of Richard Henriquez: A Praxis of Personal Memory,” in *Richard Henriquez: Memory Theatre*, edited by Howard Shubert, 9-30. Catalog of the exhibition co-organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Canadian Centre of Architecture, Montreal, 1993.

———. *Polyphilo or the dark forest revisited, an erotic epiphany of Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994.

———. “From Treatise to Story: The Changing Nature of Architectural Discourse from the Renaissance to the Eighteenth Century.” In *The Space of English*, edited by David Spurr and Cornelia Tshichold, 35-49. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2005.

———. “Writing Place: Notes on the Function of Language in Architecture.” Keynote lecture, *Writingplace Conference* on *literary methods in architectural research and design*. TU Delft, School of Architecture, Delft, November 25, 2013.

Pierce, Rebecca. “National Identity and the British Empire: The image of Saint Paul’s Cathedral.” Thesis of Masters of Arts, Graduate College of Marshall University, 2004.

Pike, Burton. *The image of the city in Modern Literature.* Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Pivaro, Alicia, Iain Borden, Joe Kerr and Jane Rendell. *Strangely Familiar: Narratives of Architecture in the City*. New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1996.

Plato. *Timaeus and Critias.* Translated by H.D.P. Lee. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965.

Pontus, Hulten., ed. *The Surrealist look at art: Eluard, Aragon, Soupault, Breton, Tzara*. Translated by Michael Palmer and Norma Coles. Venice: CA: Lapis Press, 1990.

Porter, Tom, ed., *Archispeak: an Illustrated Guide to Architectural Terms*. London; New York, N.Y.: Spon Press, 2004.

Prose, Francine, ed. *The Mrs. Dalloway Reader*. New York, N.Y.: Harcourt, Inc., 2003.

Psarra, Sophia *Architecture and Narrative: the Formation of Space and Cultural* Meaning. New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2008.

Pushkin, Alexander."The Bronze Horseman," in *Collected Narrative and Lyrical Poetry*. Translated by Walter Arndt. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1984.

Rasmussen, Steen-Eiler. *Experiencing Architecture*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1964.

———. *London, The Unique City*. Rev. ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982.

Ricoeur, Paul. "Architecture and Narrative." In *Identity and difference: integration and plurality in today's forms, cultures between the ephemeral and the lasting.* Translated by Huw Evans, 67-75. Milano: Electra, 1996.

———. *The Rule of Metaphor, Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*. Trasnlated by Robert Czerny. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

———. "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality." In *Man and World* 12, no. 2 (1979): 123-141.

———. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences. Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation.* Translated by J. B. Thompson. Cambridge, MA; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

———. *Time and* Narrative. Translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, vol. 3. Chicago, Ill: Chicago University Press, 1988.

Rilke, Reiner Maria. *On Love and Other Difficulties*. Translation John J. L. Mood. New York, N.Y.; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Robert, Mann. *Andrei Bely's Petersburg and the Cult of Dionysus.* Lawrence, Kan.: Coronado, 1986.

Robbe-Grillet, Alain and Alberto Pérez- Gómez. "Paradoxical Spaces in Literature, Film and Architecture: A Dialogue with Alain Robbe-Grillet." In *Chora 2: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, edited by Steve Parcel and Alberto Pérez- Gómez, 245-268. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

Rosner Victoria. *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life*. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Satre, Jean-Paul. *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*. Paris: Gallimard, 1969.

Scarry, Elain. *The Body in Pain, The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1985.

———. *Dreaming by the Book.* New York, N.Y.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

Sennet, Richarded. *Classic Essays on the culture of cities*. New York, N.Y.: Appleton-Century-

Crofts, 1969.

———. *The Fall of Public Man, On the Social Psychology of Capitalism*. New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1978.

Serres, Michael. *Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies.* Translated by Peter Cowley and Margaret Sankey. London: Continuum, 2009.

Shvidkovsky, Dmitri. *St. Petersburg, Architecture of the Tsars*. Translated by John Goodman. New York, N.Y.: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1996.

Simmel, Georg. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." In *On individuality and Social Forms, Selected Writings*, edited by Donald N. Levine, 324- 339. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Sioli, Angeliki. "Mapping the experiential context of St. Petersburg over time." Paper presented at the 67th S.A.H (Society of Architectural Historians) Conference, Session Title: Changing Face of Urban Cartography, Austin, TX, 2014.

Solnit, Rebeca, *Wanderlust, A History of Walking*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2001.

Soupault, Philippe. *Georgia*. Paris: Rachenal & Ritter, 1926

Spars, Elisa Kay. "Leonard and Virginia's London Library: Mapping London's Tides, Streams and Statues," in *Virginia Woolf's Bloomsbury, Aesthetic Theory and Literary Practice*. V. 1, edited by Gina Poots and Lisa Shahriari, 64-74. Basingstoke: Palgrave, Macmillan in association with the Institute of English Studies, University of London, 2010.

Spicker, F. Stuart, ed. *The Philosophy of the Body, Rejections of the Cartesian Dualism.* New York, N.Y.: Quadrange/The New York Times Book Co., 1970.

Spiropoulou Angeliki, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin*. Basingstoke, N.Y.: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2010.

Spurr, David. *Architecture and Modern Literature.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012.

Spurr, David. "The Study of Space in Literature: Some Paradigms ." In *The Space of English*, edited by David Spurr and Cornelia Tshichold, 15-34. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2005.

Squier, Susan M. *Virginia Woolf and London, The Sexual Politics of the City.* Chapel Hill, NC; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985

Straus Erwin. *The Primary World of Senses, A Vindication of Sensory Experience*. Translated by Jacob Needleman. London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.

Surh, Gerald Dennis. *1905 in St. Petersburg, labor, society, and revolution*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989.

Tester, Keith, ed. *The flâneur.* London: Routledge, 1994.

Thoreau, Henri David. *Walking, An Essay*. Edited by Andrew Steevens. Kentville, N.S.: Gaspereau Press, 2008.

Thompson, Evan. *Mind in Life, Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of the Mind* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

Tremblay, Michel. *The Fat Woman Next Door Is Pregnant*. Translated by Sheila Fischman Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1981.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *Introduction to Poetics*. Translated by Richard Howard. Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press, 1981.

Varela J. Franscisco, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch. *The Embodied Mind, Cognitive Science and Humans Experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993.

Verene, Donald Philip, ed. *Vico and Joyce*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987.

———. *Vico's Science of Imagination*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornel University Press, 1981.

Veseley Dalibor. "Surrealism, Myth and Modernity." In Architectural Design, v. 2 & 3 (1978): 87-95.

Vico, Giambattista. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*. Translated by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Vitruvius. *The Ten Books on Architecture*. Translated by Morris Hicky Morgan. New York, N.Y.: Dover Publications.

Vlacos, Sophie. *Ricoeur, Literature and Imagination*, London: Bloomsbury Academics, 2014.

Volkov, Solomon. *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History.* Translated by Antonina W. Bouis. New York, N.Y.: Free Press, 1995.

Waldberg Patrick, ed. *Surrealism*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1965.

Wilson, Jean Moorcroft. *Virginia Woolf, Life and London; A Biography of Place*. London: Cecil Woolf, 1987.

Whitworth, Michael H. *Virginia Woolf; Authors in Context*, New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Wermuth-Atkinson, Judith. *The Red Jester, Andrei Bely's Petersburg As A Novel Of The European Modern*. Berlin: Lit, 2012.

Weston Dagmar. "Surrealist Paris: The Non-Perspectival Space of the Lived City",' in *Chora 2: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*. Edited by Pérez-Gómez and Steve Parcel, 149-178. Montreal: McGiil Queens Press, 1996.

Woodring Carl, *Virginia Woolf*, *Columbia Essays on Modern Writers*. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1966.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. New York: The Fountain Press, 1929.

———. *The Common Reader*. London: Hogarth Press, 1929.

———. *Mrs Dalloway's Party; a short story sequence*. Edited by Stella McNichol. London: The Hogarth Press, 1973.

———. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1915-1919*. Edited by Anne Olivier Bell. First Harvest/HBJ ed. New York, N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1977.

———. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1920-1924*. Edited by Anne Olivier Bell. First Harvest/HBJ ed. New York, N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

———. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Edited by Bonnie Kime Scott. New York, N.Y.: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1992.

———. *Virginia Woolf "The Hours": The British Museum Manuscript of Mrs. Dalloway*. Edited by Helen M. Wussow. New York, NY: Pace University Press, 1996.

———. *Moment of Being*. Second Ed. Edited by Jeanne Schulkind. London: Hogarth Press, 1985.

———. *Selected Essays*. Edited by David Bradshaw. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2008.

———. *On Being Ill*. Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 2002.

———. Jakob's Room. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Melville House, 2011.

Woronzoff, Alexander. *Andrej Belyj's 'Petersburg,' James Joyce's 'Ulysses'and the Symbolist Movement*. Berne, Francfort/M.: Peter Lang Publishers, 1982.

Winfried, Nerdinger, ed. *Architektur wie sie im Buche steht. Fiktive Bauten und Städte in der Literatur*. Salzburg: Pustet Anton, 2006.

Journals:

La Revolution Surrealist. Paris: Gallimard, 1924 – 1929.

Grafe Christoph, Klaske Havik, and Madeleine Maaskant, ed. *OASE 70: Architecture and Literature*. Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2006.

Gorman, Debora, and Louis Gross, ed. *VIA 8: Architecture and Literature*, Journal of the Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania. New York, N.Y.: Rizzoli, 1986.

McCane, Dawne, ed. *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of literature* 35, no. 4 (2002): Literature and architecture. Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2002.

Websites:

Erwood, Adam - Lamb, London-Perrett, Jasmine - Poruthoor, Anjaly - Vangala, Manoj. Mrs. Dalloway Mapping Project, (http://mrsdallowaymappingproject.weebly.com), Georgia Institute of Technilgy, Dr. Crowther English 1102 Section K, Fall 2011.

Fernald, Anne. "Mrs. Dalloway at 88," The Awl, ed. Matt Buchanan and John Herrman, (http://www.theawl.com/2013/05/mrs-dalloway-at-88)

Matich, Olga. (project director). Mapping Petersburg, (http://petersburg.berkeley.edu), Department of Slavic languages and literatures, University of California, Berkeley, 2012.

Movies:

Daldry, Stephen, dir. *The Hours*. Hollywood, CA : Paramount, c2003.

Gorris, Marleen, dir. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Los Angeles, CA: First Look Home Entertainment, 2004.