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Doorways to Being: Modernism and 'Lived' Architectures

Amy A. Foley
University of Rhode Island, amyannefoley@gmail.com

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DOORWAYS TO BEING:
MODERNISM AND 'LIVED' ARCHITECTURES

BY

AMY A. FOLEY

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AMY A. FOLEY

APPROVED:

Dissertation Committee:

Major Professor       Stephen Barber
                      Galen Johnson
                      Valerie Karno
                      Nasser H. Zawia

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Abstract

Situated in recent scholarship on interiors and architecture in modernist fiction, "Doorways to Being" explores ways in which the modernist novel proposes a phenomenological engagement with the material environment, specifically the body in relation to transitional architectures. The study of thresholds in select modern fiction seeks to answer the essential question of how and why we move in the constructed world from the perspective of phenomenology and cultural studies. This comparative and interdisciplinary dissertation demonstrates how modernist fiction reestablishes the primacy of the sensed physical world in the spirit of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The introduction theorizes the threshold or doorway as thing, object, and contributor to the ideologies of architectural systemacity. The following three chapters respectively study William Faulkner’s enveloping thresholds in Sanctuary, ecstatic thresholds in Virginia Woolf’s Between the Acts, and elevators and the mechanized body in Franz Kafka's Amerika. The fourth and final chapter compares select works by James Joyce and Colm Tóibín, examining the impact of postmodern aesthetics on contemporary architectural narration and national identity. The conclusion extends the phenomenology of architecture in fiction to the realm of modernist cinema, illustrating concepts and techniques of phenomenological film extrapolated from the writings of Walter Benjamin and Merleau-Ponty.
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For Jo-Anne Hazel Coutant
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Introduction

"Threshold Magic": A Theoretical Inquiry

All of my dreams about my family occur in the only house in which I lived as a child. Our house, in my dream as well as in the past, organizes, clarifies, or simplifies the desires of my family. In my dreams, my mother is always inside and my father is outside. The structure of our home makes clear my mother's desire to read and play the piano on a summer day and my father's desire to keep his bees and build boats. The passage between those realms is one I knew well. Our back doorway is one that I frequently traversed. Only now, as part of a compulsion toward self-understanding, do I understand its significance. In my life, the threshold is the ever-open passage between two lives at odds, yet destined to be unapologetically bound to one another.

The frequency of my passage in and out of the house is emblematic of the confluence of the sublime and the material, but also my devotion and entanglement with the two forces of parenthood. Our backdoor is more than an emblem. It is no metaphor. It acquires being in the memory of my body. The skin of my calves recall the temperature and gust of air felt on them while alighting the three wooden steps leading to the door. In the time-space between my last step before opening the door and my grasp of the smooth golden handle is the convergence of two lives into one. In passing through, my body welds and is welded to the lives on both sides.

In one dream, I visited the childhood home of my partner, which I have never visited and have only seen in photos. In my dream, he was a boy of roughly ten years of age. I peered at him through the front screen door as he sat in front of a television
playing his Nintendo. He looked much like he did in photographs I had seen of him at that age, even wearing the faded red shirt from a photo. I marveled that this was possible as I watched him play. I did not dare enter the house. I remember having an acute fear of entering, as if in the process of intruding, I myself would be intruded upon. Despite my conscious insistence that this was a house of the past, it was also the house of my future and that of my partner. The passage between my state of vigilance and the germination of my present fulfillment is also a place of ecstasy, where I await my partner's transition from childhood dependency into our mutual adult companionship. The threshold in my dream is a site of sexual threat and relational prematurity. The gaping of the open door then and there would signal the death of the present moment. This is a threshold before which I chose to wait. The mythic quality of the closed but transparent door supplies the dreamer with security, yet its openness is the source of anxiety. The doorway is an everyday phenomenon, central to our architectural experiences and embedded in the fabric of our moving and being. Its effects on our minds and lives are yet unknown to us and only becoming known as we accept the enigma of living in a world of things that occupy a position of objectivity and subjectivity.¹

The above reflection is but the poetically understood beginning of the following meditation of this singular structure in its most prominent, affective, and effective manifestations. The following is a discussion of the doorway, referred to more broadly as the threshold, as thing and object, as phenomenon, as part of the material world, and as political-aesthetic set of relations in which the body is engaged. Some of the thinkers evoked in this introduction appear to contradict one another in
purpose and methodology. While I stand by my assessment that many of their philosophical differences are justified by their differing inquiries and corresponding questions, many of them are fundamentally at odds. For example, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of structures and Foucault's structures of relational practice are both essential. In his "Foreword to the English Edition" in *The Order of Things*, phenomenology is the one perspective that Foucault out rightly rejects for the purpose of understanding scientific discourse. He suggests that a philosophy which "gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which gives a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity" is ill-fitting to the study of epistemologies in relation to practices. Foucault qualifies his statement according to the purpose and subjects of his project: "The historical analysis of scientific discourse should, in the last resort, be subject, not to a theory of the knowing subject, but rather to a discursive practice" (xiv). He does not discount the study of phenomenology in general; rather, he clearly states its limitations in adequately addressing the complexities of a discourse.

Contrary to the impression that Foucault rejects phenomenology, it seems that Merleau-Ponty makes fewer allowances for Foucault's thinking. In his chapter on "Freedom," Merleau-Ponty categorizes "objective thought" along with Idealism as "two ways of ignoring phenomena." For Merleau-Ponty, Foucauldian discursivity is not quite materialism, which "places the subject into the network of determinism" (PhP 468) since its focus is on multiple and complex relations; however, Foucault's philosophy implies a perspective that is abstract and independent from the experiencing subject. In contrast, Merleau-Ponty's purpose is to describe the relations
of the world from the perspective of a sensing body, which is the only possible
description from a phenomenological standpoint. Merleau-Ponty's description of the
Panopticon, for example, would be sensorially descriptive, particular, and possibly
even void of the meaning with which Foucault imbues it.

Foucault's approach to networks of things according to epistemes and his
positivist leanings distinguish his project from phenomenology. George Canguilhem
clarifies Foucault's episteme as the projection of knowledge sets onto individuals
within a culture:

A culture is a code that orders human experience in three respects—linguistic,
perceptual, practical; a science or a philosophy is a theory or an interpretation
of that ordering. But the theories and interpretations in question do not apply
directly to human experience. Science and philosophy presuppose the
existence of a network or configuration of forms through which cultural
productions are perceived. (76)

In The Order of Things, Foucault proposes that there is only one episteme per epoch
(168). Thomas Flynn frames Foucault as a positivist, writing of Foucault's "archives"
that they are the "locus of practices as 'positivities' to be encountered, not as
'documents' to be interpreted….The claim that these practices are to be registered as
facts, not read as the result of intentions of some sort, gives his archaeology its
'positivist' tilt, an inclination he continued to favor" (30). We read Flynn's commentary
in the context of Foucault's earlier writings and with the understanding of his shifting
focus to ethics and subjectivity later in his career.

The differences between Merleau-Ponty and Foucault become apparent if we
translate Foucault's use of Panopticism in *Discipline and Punish* into a phenomenological context. Foucault's interest in Bentham's Panopticon is from a positivist perspective and based on what it offers the philosopher in terms of episteme. Merleau-Ponty's reading of Panopticism might emphasize the sensorial orientation of prisoners within the structure, perhaps the reversibility of sight between the seen prisoner and the prisoner seeing the single watchman observing him from the inspection house. He might elaborate on the synesthesia occurring between sight and touch, between the prisoner's seeing himself being seen and feeling as though he is being watched. Merleau-Ponty might point to the Panopticon as a specifically inescapable circumstance in which the feeling of eyes upon one's body is acute, promiscuous, and permeating. Foucault's concern for such practices as technologies of power and the relations among bodies as a discursive technique excludes Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological epistemology.

Despite these seemingly irreconcilable differences, the two theorists speak to one another in this book. Merleau-Ponty and Foucault are united against the simplicity of Marxism. Merleau-Ponty's description of the subject's not knowing whether she is bourgeois or proletarian intersects with Foucault's dismissal of material conditions as the only defining parameters of freedom and power. Where does phenomenology end and where are its boundaries? There is a point at which my knowledge of things and relations, through experience and formal education become part of my phenomenology in yet unrealized ways. Is my consequent perception of the thresholds of my life any less "primary" than they were before? Or are they more primary than they have ever been? The following perspectives of the threshold as thing, material,
politic, and aesthetic influence my perception of structures in use.

**Threshold as Thing**

The doorways that organize our lives are relational sites of continual transition, union, segregation, secrecy, envelopment and vision. They persist as cultural talismans that usher us in and out of the various structures of our lives and reside in our deepest memories as pauses and portals between the consciousnesses of our past. The threshold is that which allows us to inhabit and be embedded in the architectural *Dingwelt*.

Thresholds, or doorways, are things. In "Thing Theory," Bill Brown discusses the thing in its relationality to the body, defined by our encounters, and also enigmatic (4-5). Doorways inhabit the realm of object and idea, material and spirit. As Daniel Jütte notes in his recent work on the history of doorways in Western culture, it is an "object onto which we project our anxieties and hopes, as well as a site of power, exclusion, and inclusion" (4). As a thing, the doorway possesses a complex and multiplicitous tradition of politics and aesthetics that is bound to its material. Its psychic presence is stifling at times. The works most frequently cited in regards to architectural consciousness over the last fifty years, including Franz Kafka's parable "Before the Law" and Benjamin's writings on interiors, focus on the prospect of entrance. The doorway is a thing by its invitation toward action, engagement, and use.

The doorway also exists as part of an objective schema. Baudrillard aligns objectivity with fetishism, commercialization, personalization, and an overall systemacity. According to Baudrillard, objects are part of a linguistic and semiological system (9). Barthes' *Elements of Semiology* describes architecture as a cultural
arrangement of system and syntagm. The doorway is created as part of a syntagmatic sequence of various architectural objects, such as windows, walls, roofs, and walkways. If we consider doorways as a syntagmatic element, then the life of the doorway becomes clear. The syntagm of objects allows the individualization of things in which the order and unique appearance of each arrangement is its own speech amidst the collective language of objects as cultural concept.

The doorway complicates the part/whole binary classification based on its function as a purely relational joint and governance of the whole. Indeed, the doorway is simultaneously syntagmatic in its participation in architectural sequence and also systematic since it allows the entire architectural system to exist. Doorways are thoroughly metonymic in that they are misplaced synecdoches. Despite our failure to identify whole architectures by entrances in our language as we do with so many other part/whole systems.ii Though our language does not refer to architecture's reliance on the doorway, architecture as a system is defined by its accessibility and entrance. All buildings are defined by enclosure and interiority, which cannot exist outside of the human experience of entrance. Semiotically, linguistically, and objectively, the doorway is the system.iii

As objects, doorways are essential parts of whole architectures and part of a system of possession. Baudrillard states that all objects exist "to be put to use and to be possessed" (92). Conventionally, objects are our possessions; yet, in many ways they possess us. In A Sense of Things, Bill Brown expresses his concern for the "slippage between having (possessing a particular object) and being (the identification of one's self with that object)" (13). Architectures are similar to language in this regard. Merleau-
Ponty proposes that the "relation of having" speech is "at first masked by the relations from the domain of being" (PhP 179). Possession is an ultimate form of being by which the possessor is automatically brought into relation. In his famous meditation on the act of collecting, "Unpacking My Library," Benjamin contends that objects "come alive" in the collector or owner: "it is he who lives in them" (67). To amend Brown's statement, the condition of the doorway, and architecture in general, is the slippage between having and being had.

Architecture has us, and doorways are instrumental and essential in the process of our being had. Baudrillard argues that utensils cannot be owned since they "refer...one to the world," writing that "what is possessed is always an object abstracted from its function and thus brought into relationship with the subject" (91). I suggest that we are abstracted from the earth by doorways and brought into relation with architectures; however, in this scheme we are not objectified because we are had. In the spirit of Merleau-Ponty, this study seeks to "leave behind, once and for all, the classical subject-object dichotomy" (PhP 179). Philosophers in a Heideggerian spatial tradition have largely proposed that building, dwelling, and Being are one gesture, gathering in the fourfold of saving the earth, receiving the sky, awaiting divinities, and escorting mortals ("Building" 156). Making a place for ourselves in the form of a built structure is the reconciliation of earth and body through the making of a world. We might perceive this action as simply a union, but upon further examination, building also requires abstraction.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger establishes the artwork as the unconcealedness of truth and the making of world. Ultimately, Heidegger reveals the
artwork as the origin of truth and Being (79). He articulates the work as a "fighting of the battle between world and earth,'(48) exemplified in the building as the presencing of truth: "Truth happens in the temple's standing where it is" (54). If the building is a holding of truth and the establishing of world, then entrance into built structures is entrance into a world of things. The doorway abstracts my body from the earth, reconciling body and world. As Heidegger argues at the end of his essay, art is the origin of truth (79). In the sense that structures collect and have us, our bodies our perpetually in a state of being abstracted from our "use value"; instead, we are involved in art. Architectures complicate the concept of art object, since it is always acting as subject on us and our bodies. The status of architecture as art work, object and subject makes the doorway essential to our being in truth and participation in the world of art.

All of the perspectives discussed in regards to architectural thresholds, ontological, material, and semiological, assume the separation of things, object, and body. Merleau-Ponty writes against a philosophical tradition of pure human subjectivity: "Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is one of them. It is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing" (EM 124-25). In the third lecture of his Causeries, Merleau-Ponty says, "Vertiginous proximity prevents us both from apprehending ourselves as a pure intellect separate from things and from defining things as pure objects lacking in all human attributes" (51). He distinguishes things from objects phenomenologically. His definition of each is bound to our varying experiences with objects and things, in which the sensuous body is integral.

Baudrillard and Barthes both theorize objects as part of a system, organization, or code that has been configured according to cultural and linguistic reasons. In the case
of Baudrillard, postmodern culture has brought on the desire to control, codify, and organize objects. We have exchanged the former liberation of objects from space for the postmodern liberation of space from objects (17). The organization of our objects has replaced the use of objects (19). In Barthes' view, objects are material meaning. The body is generally absent and not in relation with objects in the theories of Baudrillard and Barthes. Despite Baudrillard's comment that our possessions "become things of which I am the meaning," he does not suggest physical and sensorial relationality between owner and possession (91). Merleau-Ponty asserts that objects really are things. Things, for Merleau-Ponty, suggest an interrelationality of senses and qualities, as opposed to "neutral objects which stand before us for our contemplation. Each one of them symbolizes or recalls a particular way of behaving" (WP 48). For Merleau-Ponty, things are part of my body's movement. Merleau-Ponty describes things as "acting on me and my body" (WP 47). In the following section, I explore the relationality of doorways and the body. I describe our experience of doorways in the context of architecture and how the doorway acts upon the body.

**Phenomenology of Thresholds**

Heidegger offers an ontology of the body in motion through space and a refutation of the body’s boundary with the world in his essay, "Building Dwelling Thinking":

> To say that mortals are is to say that in dwelling they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations. And only because mortals pervade, persist through, spaces by their very nature are they able to go through spaces. But in going through spaces we do not give up our standing in
them. Rather, we always go through spaces in such a way that we already experience them by staying constantly with near and remote locations and things. When I go toward the door of the lecture hall, I am already there, and I could not go to it at all if I were not such that I am there. I am never here only, as this encapsulated body; rather, I am there, that is, I already pervade the room, and only thus can I go through it. (155)

Heidegger's relationship between body and threshold is visual and ontological. The body's motion toward and being in the doorway is reciprocal with its state of dwelling and mortality. For Heidegger, to pass through is to live.

In theory, the body and the structure are ontologically, poetically and psychologically joined. Maurice Merleau-Ponty contends that they are also phenomenologically, sensually united, that "the body cannot be compared to the physical object, but rather to the work of art" (PhP 152). He describes works of art as "individuals...beings in which the expression cannot be extinguished from the expressed, whose sense is only accessible through direct contact, and who send forth their signification without ever leaving their temporal and spatial place" (153). Merleau-Ponty describes the state of the body as that which is both container and contained, writing that "I am in my body, or rather I am my body" (151).

Merleau-Ponty offers a phenomenological relationality between body and structure in a definitive architectural world. In Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty defines a world as an "open and indefinite multiplicity where relations are reciprocally implicated" (73). An architectural world, then, is a world in which architectures and experiencing bodies are reciprocally implicated. Merleau-Ponty

11
posits the reciprocity of objects within a world: "I can see one object insofar as objects form a system or a world, and insofar as each of them arranges the others around itself like spectators of its hidden aspects and as the guarantee of their permanence" (71). As in Heidegger's description of the door, Merleau-Ponty also understands vision and the gaze as central to Being and participation in the world. Merleau-Ponty describes the "gaze" as "a manner of reaching the object" (69). "To see is to enter into a universe of beings that show themselves...to see an object is to come to inhabit it and to thereby grasp all things according to the sides these other things turn toward this object" (71).

To exist in a world of objects and structures is to be both embedded in and inhabit those spaces. At the same time that objects of our architectural worlds embed themselves in the world of each other, so our gaze allows us to inhabit architectures.

The house is a site of visual reciprocity and envelopment in Merleau-Ponty's example: "The house itself is not the house seen from nowhere, but rather the house seen from everywhere. The fully realized object is translucent, it is shot through from all sides by an infinity of present gazes intersecting in its depth and leaving nothing there hidden" (71). He proposes, as does Benjamin in his call to the use of structures, "a primordial spatiality of which objective space is but the envelope and which merges with the very being of the body" (149). Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of vision includes a reciprocal synesthesia, in which the senses work together toward a performance. For example, he notes that, similar to the distinct but reciprocal aspects in a unified world, the visual and the haptic operate together: "The arm seen and the arm touched, just like the different segments of the arm itself, together perform a single gesture" (153).

The movement of the body in and through architectures is part of the
enveloping experience of that world. Merleau-Ponty cites the experience of sitting at a table and manipulating physical objects: "If I am seated at my desk and want to pick up the telephone, the movement of my hand toward the object, the straightening of my torso, and the contraction of my leg muscles envelop each other" (150). We inhabit objects and furniture in the same way that our bodies envelop themselves. Merleau-Ponty perceives the keyboard as one of many objects made part of bodily space (146).

Against Cartesian empiricism and objectivism, Merleau-Ponty conceives of phenomenology as a "disavowal of science" and as a way of reestablishing the primacy of the "lived" world. He bases his call to once again unite body and mind on the prevalent and ongoing culture of scientism, writing that "Science manipulates things and gives up living in them….To say that the world is, by nominal definition, the object x of our operations is to treat the scientist's knowledge as if it were absolute, as if everything that is and has been was meant only to enter the laboratory" (EM 121-22). Merleau-Ponty's proposition that we "return to the 'there is'" as opposed to the scientific sight from above (EM 122) is essential for our renewed thinking about architecture. The reestablishment of our experience with the material and architectural world relies upon our being within and around it. In the spirit of Paul Valéry's notion of the painter, we must take our bodies with us (EM 123).

Consider Walter Benjamin's comical quotation from Arthur Eddington's 1929 work, *The Nature of the Physical World*. Eddington gives description of a mathematician contemplating the act of crossing a threshold:

I am standing on the threshold about to enter a room. It is a complicated business. In the first place I must shove against an atmosphere pressing with a
force of fourteen pounds on every square inch of my body. I must make sure of
landing on a plank travelling at twenty miles a second around the sun—a
fraction of a second too early or too late, the plank would be miles away. I
must do this whilst hanging from a round planet, head outward into space, and
with a wind of aether blowing at no one knows how many miles a second
through every interstice of my body. The plank has no solidity of substance. To
step on it is like stepping on a swarm of flies. Shall I not slip through?...Verily
it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a scientific
man to pass through a door. (qtd. in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 141-14)

Eddington's description is tongue-in-cheek; however, Merleau-Ponty might agree on
the difficulty of a scientific man's passage through a doorway, since he "thinks of the
object-in-general" (EM 122) and apart from the body's lived experience. The scientist
applies cosmic law to the body in abstraction, ignoring the science of the body in
contact with the architectural body. We may recall Edmund Husserl's line written on
an envelope: "Overthrow of a Copernican theory in usual interpretation of a world
view. The original ark, earth, does not move." In a Husserlian tradition, Merleau-
Ponty urges us to transcend the objective view of a thing "in itself." He insists that "To
have the experience of a structure is not to receive it passively in itself: it is to live it,
to take it up, to assume it, and to uncover its immanent sense" (PhP 269). Our lived
experience with thresholds emanates from their status as non-objective things with
which my body engages in the world.

I have shown how doorways regularly take us up. Part of our "living" the
doorway is the perceptive act of taking it up. Merleau-Ponty’s revisionist theories of
depth and interiority are particularly useful for understanding movement across thresholds, the enigmatic and visual draw of the doorway, and its persistence in our consciousness and memory. His philosophy, that we are “at the origin of everything,” (PhP 264) is best contextualized in his later expression of the chiasm of flesh created between self and world. "One can say that we perceive the things themselves, that we are the world that thinks itself—or that the world is at the heart of our flesh…once a body-world relationship is recognized, there is a ramification of my body and a ramification of the world and a correspondence between its inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside" (VI 136). The philosopher's essential relationality between things, in this case between body and world, necessitates the phenomenon of depth. He identifies an essential falsehood in the empirical denial of depth. Merleau-Ponty explains George Berkeley’s concept that what we perceive as depth is only a kind of breadth, or that two objects that appear to create depth seen in profile reveal the illusion of depth. Berkeley describes depth as merely a “flat” distance between two objects.

Merleau-Ponty argues for the lived phenomenon of depth as a truth, foregoing Berkeley's claims of depth as illusion or simply a distance. He points out that the only way to perceive the depth created by two objects, one behind another, as merely a distance is to perceive them from outside of one’s body or from a supernatural perspective. One would have to be “God” to see depth as a distance between two objects. “For God, who is everywhere, breadth is immediately equivalent to depth. Intellectualism and empiricism do not give us an account of a human experience of the world; they say of human experience what God might think of the world” (EM 266-
Merleau-Ponty exposes empiricism as an imaginative or fantastical endeavor which, despite its historical concern for experience, ignores the senses and corresponding positionality presuming experience. In a sense, he reclaims empiricism as an experiential philosophy.

Merleau-Ponty not only establishes the primacy of the perception of depth; he also describes a new relationality for depth. In “Eye and Mind,” he refutes the laws of classical vision in relation to perspective, color, light and depth. After opposing Cartesian vision, Merleau-Ponty describes the mystery of relationality in depth:

It is not possible that what is at issue is an interval without any mystery, an interval as seen from an airplane, between these trees nearby and those farther away….What brings about the enigma is their connection; the enigma is what is between them. I see things, each one in its place, precisely because they eclipse one another; they are rivals before my gaze precisely because each one is in its own place. The enigma is their known exteriority in their envelopment and their mutual dependence in their autonomy.

Merleau-Ponty goes on to describe depth as the “reversibility of dimensions” (369). His description of depth’s inherent complication and even confusion of dimension affects the everyday experience of depth in architecture.

Merleau-Ponty returns the power of perception to human orientation and claims the “originality of depth” (EM ‘267). Our lived experience with depth is not theoretical, but rather the origin of everything. Our experience with the threshold relies on the primacy and enigma of depth and its dimensions. The front doorway of a house, for example, becomes its own phenomenon when depth is also a phenomenon.
Empirically, the sight of the doorway in relation to an interior person or object is dismissed as merely a distance between the doorframe and the thing inside of the house.

The great perceptive enigma of the open doorway is the depth that it presents the seer and how that interior enigma is experienced phenomenologically. Let us consider the perceptive phenomenon of depth and the open doorway itself. In *Getting Back into Place*, Edward Casey describes how all spaces are brought into relation in terms of Merleau-Ponty's primal depth and envelopment. He writes that envelopment "arranges objects around each other in a scene of mutual implication and simultaneous presence" as opposed to objects perceived as being simply next to each other. As Casey reaffirms, the act of envelopment is only possible because of the body's "hold" on things (68). Another aspect of our confrontation of and envelopment in doorways is our ability to sense depth with our bodies and identify a difference between the near and the far. Our experience with depth brings into relation what we perceive to be "here" and "there."

Casey discusses how our sense and identification of the "here-there relation" is part of our understanding places. One aspect of our relation to places here and there is the "tensional arc" that it produces. There is a directional psychical tension between myself as "here" and also another body or thing identified as being "there," which is created by depth. The tension experienced in the process of perceiving depth is a reconciliation of eye and mind, since the perceptual tension of the eye is also the psychic tension of the mind seeking identification with the other.

When we encounter an open doorway, we experience the depth-producing and
produced tension between the here that is my body, which is exterior to there, and the there that is the interior. We also experience the exterior of the entryway as here and the thing closest to the other side of the threshold as there. Merleau-Ponty's concepts of envelopment and depth describe our two-fold encounters with thresholds. I am enveloped and brought into reversible relations by the doorway's joining of interior and exterior. Whether I am on the inside or the outside of a room or building, I relate to whatever is on the other side. At the same time, I experience the doorway in its tension between places. As the doorway envelops, it is also a kind of abyss by the same aspect of its depth.

Casey refers to Edmund Husserl's abyss created by the tensional arc in *Cartesian Meditations*: "These two primordial spheres, mine which is for me the original sphere, and his which is for me an appresented sphere—are they not separated by an abyss I cannot actually cross, since crossing it would mean, after all, that I acquired an original (rather than an appresenting) experience of someone else?" (Husserl 121). Casey comments on how the here and there "seem to break apart, even repel each other" in the tensional arc (55). Encountering and apperceiving depth is both an enveloping and fracturing experience. Husserl refers to a spatial and metaphorical "crossing," but implicates the material threshold that separates here from there. The "zones" to which Husserl and Casey refer are phenomenological places that cannot be measured mathematically, but only variously by the body, including the body's sides, directions, and depths. As Casey points out, we identify all things as being either here or there; at the same time, our placial identification of things is approximate (55). The material thresholds produce an abyss-like rift and meeting
between interior/exterior, earth/world, and experiencing bodies. In accord with our bodies as not only placial, but also temporal, the doorway presents an alternate temporality in our very crossing of it.

Our bodies' perception and consequent motion around doorways creates a temporal shift. Rooms are the site of our actions and intentions, facilitating and directing our rest and motion at every angle and turn. Thresholds are enigmatic in their depth and foreboding in their temporality. On one hand, the very sight of the doorway is future-oriented. In his discussion of the dimensions of place and the body, Casey writes that the "primacy of vision" in moving through architectures makes us move forward through them (84). This is similar to Heidegger's description of moving through a doorway by virtue of seeing it. Casey explains the inherent corresponding dualities in the movements and orientation of the body between axes, writing that the concept of "up," for example, is often "projected onto" the movement forward (77). Our movements through doorways is one of many gestural examples of how time is spatialized. In the aforementioned dream about my partner, my potential movement into his childhood home is both a retention and protension, in Husserl's terms from "The Structure of Lived Time" (68). To cross a threshold is an encompassing temporal state since it allows one to occupy that which is behind and before, the "here and now" of the present, and also the frontal visual field of that which is forward.

The complexity of passing through or crossing thresholds suggested by spatial philosophy and phenomenology implies an affective importance to the act as well. Our feelings about structures relate to our bodily identification with architectures and also to our historical concern with a structural open/closed dichotomy. Our bodies being in
an open or closed space refers to our own bodily boundaries, having interiors and exteriors, and also our affective states within and without. Heidegger's philosophy of art is preoccupied with the resistance between the open and closed. He posits that "A work, by being a work, makes space for that spaciousness. 'To make space for' means here especially to liberate the Open and to establish it in its structure….The work holds open the Open of the world" (44). In one sense, the doorway is the ultimate opening or liberation of the artwork as well as the opening and making of space. Thresholds seem to exist as perpetually open things since their function is tied to their opening. An open doorway exists in absentia. It is a ubiquitous and universal phenomenon, yet it is an experience made possible by the absence of a thing. Its value and impression lies in its openness and resistance to structural trace.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard subverts the conventional relationality of the door in the pursuit of what he calls "Topoanalysis" or "the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" (8). Bachelard’s intimacy with space is embedded in individual and collective fantasies and memories, or oneirism. One of Bachelard’s most useful topoanalyses is his “dialectics of outside and inside.” He describes the “formal opposition” of insides and outsides which is inherent in the concept of alienation (212). He writes that the “universe of speech governs all the phenomena of being,” relating the linguistic oppositions of what is open and closed. Bachelard describes human ontology as a “surface” that wishes to be both inside and outside, both “visible and hidden.” He unites human ontology with the nature of the door, writing that it is an “entire cosmos of the Half-open” (222). The half-open door holds particular affective power in Western culture, as Jütte discusses.
If we consider the arrangement of the door as part of our semiological system and communication with others, the half-open door is problematic. Jütte describes how it "often signifies unclear relationships or even the approach of death. Also, a partly open door at the center of a scene—in a Dutch genre painting, for instance—often represents an irresistible invitation to eavesdrop" (7).

Architectural theorists have noted the relationship between the experiencing body and architectural configurations. In *Body, Memory, and Architecture*, Bloomer and Moore propose that the correspondence between the "bodily boundary" and the "house boundary," that "front doors and facades almost always exhibit a measure of symmetry….characteristic of body posture, where the eyes and ears are focused for defense" (46). In the same way that we imagine interiors and exteriors of a building and the function of the doorway in their distinction, we also imagine the body in its distinct interiority and exteriority. In the spirit of Bachelard's "half-open" body, Merleau-Ponty's notion of "flesh" blurs the boundary of the body.

Galen Johnson includes Merleau-Ponty in a philosophical tradition that spatializes our Being in the world, emphasizing the porosity and promiscuity of spaces. Johnson describes promiscuity as the "intermingling of seer with the seen, the mixing together of self and world" (*Retrieval* 29). To qualify Merleau-Ponty's notion that we inhabit the world, Johnson writes that it is more fitting to say that our inner life is "in front of us in the places with which we dwell and the relationships we treasure" among other places (30). We see this kind of porosity between perceived insides and outsides in Merleau-Ponty's example of the anger between self and interlocutor in "Man Seen From the Outside": "My interlocutor gets angry and I notice that he is
expressing his anger by speaking aggressively, by gesticulating and shouting. But where is this anger? People will say that it is in the mind of my interlocutor….it really is here, in this room and in this part of the room, that the anger breaks forth. It is in the space between him and me that it unfolds” (WP 63). In these examples, Merleau-Ponty's theory of flesh evolves, in which the threshold as body and architecture becomes evident. Johnson concisely defines Merleau-Ponty's flesh as the "name for the ontological hinge on which the outside passes over to the inside and inside passes over to outside" (31). The exchange and promiscuity of spaces between insides and outsides is emblematized in the doorways we experience, as is the promiscuity of the bodily boundary. It is the open doorway that speaks to our own ontology most deeply and our exchanges with the material world.

**Thresholds and Materiality**

While Merleau-Ponty and Walter Benjamin have divergent overall projects and purposes in their writings, both share a particular interest in what Benjamin calls the "enigma…of what is alive" ("Elective Affinities" 298). Merleau-Ponty is concerned with phenomenology as a descriptive philosophy after studying Gestalt psychology and the works of Husserl and Jean-Paul Sartre. Benjamin, as a quasi-disciple of the Frankfurt School, pursues material history, Marxism, and Zionism as an independent cultural and aesthetic critic for much of his career. While his writings are typically more conceptual than descriptive, Benjamin is interested in the phenomenon of things and materials as we experience them. For Benjamin, things are political and spiritual experiences. The entirety of civilization is emblematized in the thing. Significantly, Benjamin devotes
much of his writing to the historicism and experience of architectures and interiors. His philosophy and memoirs blur distinctions between traditional philosophy and art, giving the reader a *Denkbild* or "thought-image" that carries with it, as biographers Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings point out, a distinctly aestheticized critical form (*Critical 3*). The forms that populate Benjamin's private world are imbued with political and relational meaning for the phenomenal body.

As a progenitor of Thing Theory, Benjamin writes in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” of architecture's sanctity, aura and ability to relate the experiencing subject and art. Architecture is a thing to be experienced sensuously: "Its history is more ancient than that of any other art, and its claim to being a living force has significance in every attempt to comprehend the relationship of the masses to art. Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception—or rather, by touch and sight” (240). Benjamin politicizes art by relating the constructed thing and sensing body. In the process of feeling and seeing the cathedral, the individual is joined with the masses in experiencing a collective history of civilization.

Architecture, depths and doorways figure significantly in Benjamin's memoirs as well. In "A Berlin Chronicle," he describes his lost drawing of a diagram of his life as a "labyrinth," explaining, "I am not concerned here with what is installed in the chamber at its enigmatic center, ego or fate, but all the more with the many entrances leading into the interior. These entrances I call primal acquaintances….So many primal relationships, so many entrances to the maze" (31). Benjamin's doorway is mythic in its suggestion of origins, materially and socially relating the ancient history of the masses with the personal history of the individual. The entrance acts on the
body by bringing it into relation with other bodies and forms.

Benjamin goes further in his mystical and mystified, but still anecdotal survey of nineteenth century materiality. In his recollection of playing hide-and-seek as a child in Berlin, Benjamin considers how one becomes the door:

Here, I was enveloped in a world of matter. It became monstrously distinct for me, loomed speechlessly near. In much the same way, a man who is being hanged first comes to know what rope and wood are. The child who stands behind the doorway curtain himself becomes something white that flutters, a ghost. The dining room table under which he has crawled turns him into the wooden idol of the temple; its carved legs are four pillars. And behind the door, he is himself the door, is decked out in it like a weighty mask and, as sorcerer, will cast a spell on all who enter unawares. (99)v

Benjamin's story is both magical and disconcerting, a statement and a warning of our embeddedness in and identification with the world of objects. The door becomes a metaphor for the monstrosity of having and being had by things and, specifically, architectures. Benjamin also describes the curious horror of helplessly being identified by things in the process of identifying with them. He relates the threshold's threat of death or transformation as described by Jütte, suggesting that our use of the door might potentially transform us into grotesque figures. "Grotesque," literally meaning "of a cave" and evoking the word "grotto," applies to the architectural phenomenon of seeing a person emerge through a door. Benjamin highlights how our use of doorways and Merleau-Ponty's application of promiscuity might be a grotesque intrusion.
The grotesquerie of the door and body in relation to one another also poses a spatial threat to bodies wanting separation. In his section of Das Passagen-Werk on interiors, Benjamin speaks of the entryway as an event that has a sometimes violent grasp on the psyche:

Threshold magic. At the entrance to the skating rink, to the pub, to the tennis court, to resort locations: *penates*. The hen that lays the golden praline-eggs, the machine that stamps our names on nameplates, slot machines, fortunetelling devices…these guard the threshold….Chairs beside an entrance, photographs flanking in a doorway, are fallen household deities, and the violence they must appease grips our hearts even today at each ringing of the doorbell. (214)

Benjamin identifies the doorway as equally enchanting and costly. He includes many anecdotes of himself as a child entering typical Berlin bourgeois homes and schools with trepidation in "A Berlin Chronicle."vi Benjamin's dare to his reader is noteworthy: "Try, though, to withstand the violence. Alone in an apartment, try not to bend to the insistent ringing." He understands the modern threshold as a complete sensuous experience and also an affect. Entrance threatens the personal interior. Benjamin's private experiences and memories about material things are rarely only private; rather, they are portals to collective experiences. He recalls a related memory of being a child and feeling the "demand" of the doorbell before a party: "Society made its way across the threshold of my room, and my rapport with it was established on a lasting basis" *(A Childhood* 136). The doorway and its "magic" are characteristic of Benjamin's later encounter and study of the masses and the distinctive reliquaries of public and private
The intrusion of doorways also allows the capitalist gaze onto a world of commodities. Benjamin's most significant contribution to a cultural study of the doorway is his theorizing of thresholds as political economy. Benjamin's preoccupation with the Paris Arcades emblematizes his larger concern for the material world as a threshold to capitalism. His repeated use of the word "theater" in reference to the early department stores invites the reader to imagine the shopping center as a carefully curated world of display. Benjamin calls *Das Passagen-Werk* "the theater of all my struggles and all my ideas" in a letter in 1930.\(^\text{vii}\) He writes of the "phantasmagorias of the interior—which, for the private man, represents the universe. In the interior, he brings together the far away and the long ago. His living room is a box in the theater of the world" (PW 9). Throughout *Das Passagen-Werk*, Benjamin shows the construction of nineteenth century Paris to be a preparation for twentieth century commodity and consumerism. He notes, "The arcades as temples of commodity capital" (37).

In philosophizing the visual and cultural significance of the Arcades, photography, panorama, miniatures, and film in the late nineteenth century, Benjamin prophesies the coming twentieth century as a theater of consuming vision. The European theater stage itself is a kind of doorway with a perpetually open door. Benjamin makes the open door of the theater the perceptive admittance to economic fantasy. He recalls of Berlin that he "got to know the 'town' only as the theater of purchases…it first became apparent how my father's money could cut a path for us between shop counters and assistants and mirrors, and the appraising eyes of our mother" (Berlin Chronicle 40).

Benjamin's eco-political Denkbilds are often moving, almost cinematic,
descriptions of material ideologies that strike the reader as phenomenological. He is
drawn to Friedrich Theodor Vischer's comment about the relationship between
imperialism and the ladies' dress: "imperialism which spread out and puffs up...settles
its dominion like a hoop skirt over all aspects, good and bad, justified and unjustified,
of the revolution" (AP 68). In fact, Benjamin prefers to understand ideas through
material things rather than as abstract concepts; he writes "The eternal is in any case far
more ruffle on a dress than some idea" (AP 69). The motion of the unfurling dress is
symptomatic of a culture that conquers, dominates, and obscures under the guise of
stewardship. Benjamin describes crossing and hovering over the threshold in a similarly
phenomenological and political fashion. He writes, "Concerning the mythological
topography of Paris: the character given it by its gates. Important is their duality: border
gates and triumphal arches....Out of the field of experience proper to the threshold
evolved the gateway that transforms whoever passes under its arch. The Roman victory
arch makes the returning general a conquering hero" (AP 87). Benjamin's ordering of
things indicates the threshold as a transformative and directive element on its own. As
with Benjamin's other material things, the threshold is a politicized phenomenon by
which materiality acts on the body.

**Politics of the Threshold**

It is difficult to discuss the politics of architectures in the figure of the doorway without
considering the aesthetics of the threshold. Benjamin's oeuvre presents all art in relation
to politics, as exemplified in his well-known summation of war as the aestheticization
of politics and communism's response to fascism as the politicization of art ("The Work"
242). In Benjamin's view, art and collective power always implicate one another.

Jill Stoner theorizes the politics of architecture using literature and theory in *Toward a Minor Architecture*. The most compelling and original contribution of Stoner’s work is her architectural application of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s politics of literature in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. “Blocks, segments, strata, connectors, rhizomes, planes of immanence, lines of flight—all of these describe spatial strategies and spatial effects. I borrow these terms to construct an argument for minor architecture from within the lexicon of minor literature.” Stoner borrows Deleuze and Guattari’s criteria for minor literature: deterritorialization, reterritorialization, politicization and collective enunciation, establishing how these forms, found in Kafka’s fiction, function as both “acts and consequences” (3). These terms are ways of considering the organization of space in relation to action.

Stoner uses Deleuze and Guattari’s terms of striated and smooth spaces to describe spaces that are segmented (often spaces of the state) and spaces that are “without conduits or channels,” implying that all architectures are identifiable and imbued with ideology. Minor architectures “operate in that mercurial, indeterminate state that is the passage from striated to smooth, from closed system to open space” (7). Imagining architecture itself as a prescribed form of power affects our formal analysis of and our bodily interaction with architectures. As an architectural theorist, Stoner offers categories for imagining spaces as active forces that determine our identities, our potential for freedom and our relations to one another.

In addition to her political theorization of architecture, Stoner also identifies and interrogates various myths represented in literature that are essential to spatial
experience. She describes how these myths are legitimized and worked against. Stoner
discusses myths of the interior, the object, the subject, and nature; the myths of the
interior and the subject are most useful for considering depth in relation to thresholds
and subjectivity. The myth of the interior juxtaposes major architecture’s language of
power and minor architecture’s resistance: “Resistance to power can overcome the
authority of these interior segments” (31) While in major architecture, interiors are
“line[s] of force,” minor architecture provides an “art of escape” (22). Stoner’s
configuration leads us to question the purposes of institutional lines of force. Her work
implies a direct relationship between interior forms and the experiencing subject.

The threshold or doorway, etymologically, is a point of relationality between
and among spaces. Stoner addresses the specific spatial relationality of the door:

Door shares its Indo-European root *dhwer with forest. This linguistic kinship
suggests that the two words functioned similarly in early language—that they
referred to the nondomestic, the (door)way out, toward the (forest) hunting
ground… In the realm of minor architectures, all doors lead outward toward
the forest, away from the inexorable domestication through which all sense of
the original, primordial forest has been erased. (38-39).

From a cultural and historical perspective, the door does not simply separate interiors
from exteriors; it joins smooth spaces with striated spaces. It is at once a state of
permanence and change that implies a distinct mode of being for the subject moving
between spaces.

In his interview, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," Foucault explains space
relationally: "There are only reciprocal relations, and the perpetual gaps between
intentions in relation to one another" (356). As discussed earlier, the threshold is both relational and abyssmal. In the midst of complex architectural relations, Foucault believed that the architect's position was also complex: "He is not comparable to a doctor, a priest, a psychiatrist, or a prison warden." He states "the architect has no power over me. If I want to tear down or change a house he built for me, put up new partitions, add a chimney, the architect has no control" (357). Similarly, Stoner identifies the perceived power of the architect as the myth of the subject, though as an architect, her stance is more detailed. She claims that "subjects occupy positions at both the tops and the bottoms of power structures…in the making of architecture, the roles of architect and client both double again, with the result that it is often unclear who is subject to whom. The prefix in all its ambiguity privileges relationships over individuals" (72).

If the structure is a space of complex relations, then so is the doorway. We should embrace Stoner's dictum that "The subject is only meaningful in relation to the object—they manifest each other in dialectical fashion" (75). As aforementioned, the goal of minor or resistant architecture is to find an exit. The doorway is the ultimate line of force. In the view of both Foucault and Deleuze, the doorway is potentially an exit from architectures of power and also emblematic of the gatekeeping necessary to maintain major architectures. Stoner offers Kafka's "Before the Law" as an example of power architecture contrary to architecture's "desiring state—to become exterior, to find an outside" (15). A minor architecture does not seek interiority; rather, it obscures distinctions between the inside and outside (10).

Stoner aligns major architectures with major ideologies found in religion,
government, and economy. Politicized architecture seeks interiority since striated spaces are the most conducive to the organization and management of people. In the twentieth century, a major consideration is the spatialization of the masses, which Benjamin purports is the anticipation of nineteenth century architectures. He describes the many enticing devices of nineteenth century commercial thresholds, designed to augment the desire for interiority: "The business world knows how to make use of the threshold. In front of the arcade, the skating rink, the swimming pool, the railroad platform, stands the tutelary of the threshold: a hen that automatically lays tin bonbons" (AP 86). Benjamin's project considers the doorway as a mass apparatus for major architectures.

Ultimately, Stoner's minor architectures are a call to the freedom of the individual; however, it is not necessarily a private one. It is tempting to consider the private homes of Benjamin's bourgeois world an honorific juxtaposition to the mechanization of the masses in the public sphere; however, as he demonstrates in his artwork essay, Benjamin is a champion for the mobilization and technology of mass culture. The typical nineteenth century home, which he spends so much time describing in his memoirs, is a carefully curated world built on the privilege of aristocracy. It is an intensely interior place, involving "bourgeois coziness" and "satanic contentment…in an aversion to the open air": "To live in these interiors was to have woven a dense fabric about oneself, to have secluded oneself within a spider's web, in whose toils world events hang loosely suspended like so many insect bodies sucked dry. From this cavern, one does not like to stir" (AP 216). Benjamin's portrayal of interiority as a place of power and appropriation supports Stoner's study; his
anecdotes also indicate the threshold's importance as creating and perpetuating the strong distinctions between interiors and exteriors.

The aesthetic movements contemporary to Benjamin are political reactions to bourgeois polarization of spaces, in which the doorway is rearranged and reconfigured within the architectural scheme. In *Postmodernism*, Fredric Jameson contrasts what he calls Utopian high modernist architecture with dystopian postmodern spatial aesthetics. The doorway represents all spatial philosophies throughout time, characterizing the inclination of architects influential to modernist movements, such as Le Corbusier, to strongly distinguish between building and surrounding environment. Jameson argues that the modernist structural facade "radically separates the new Utopian space of the modern from the degraded and fallen city fabric which it thereby explicitly repudiates" (41).

Similarly and from a strictly architectural perspective, Alan Colquhoun characterizes Le Corbusier's buildings in terms of "their physical detachment from their immediate environment" (173). In contradistinction, the postmodern "ought not to have entrances at all, since the entryway is always the seam that links the building to the rest of the city that surrounds it: for it does not wish to be part of the city but rather its equivalent and replacement or substitute" (40). Jameson refers to high modernism as relying upon a distinction between itself and "mass culture…the securing of a realm of authentic experience over against the surrounding environment of middle- and low-brow commercial culture" (63). In light of Jameson's categories, Benjamin's attitude toward the liberation of the masses through mechanically
reproduced art anticipates the postmodern impulse toward the promiscuity of culture
and spaces.

Modernist interiors and exteriors, in Jameson's view, were designed as an
expression of one another, as opposed to the postmodern drive to obliterate all
differences between them (98). We see the depth created by particular kinds of
doorways as a cultural, aesthetic, and political problem of modernism. The
depthlessness upon which Jameson insists is characteristic of postmodernism is
inherent to postmodern architectural form. The privilege of interiority and the
differentiation between interior and exterior spaces is a function of class-based ways
of being.

To further draw on Deleuze and Guattari, the doorway functions as a
mechanism in the desiring machine that is economy. Essential to our understanding of
the doorway is the politicized body in regards to gender, sex, race, and ethnicity, as
well as many other identifications. The doorway assumes particular functions in
Foucault's gendered and sexed scheme of striated spaces. In response to the question
of whether or not architectures could be liberating or resistant, Foucault responds "I do
not think that there is anything that is functionally—by its very nature—absolutely
liberating. Liberty is a practice." Counter to dialectical materialist thought, Foucault
insists that "it can never be inherent in the structure of things to guarantee the exercise
of freedom" ("Space" 355). For Foucault, the function and materiality of the doorway
cannot be divorced from the relations among subjects. Unlike Benjamin, Foucault is
not concerned with laws, institutions, or materiality; rather, he considers all relations,
including those between and among bodies, sex, and spaces.
In his architectural essay, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," Foucault is concerned specifically with the "set of relations" that define external spaces. He writes in regards to thresholds conceived more broadly: "Think of the extraordinary bundle of relations represented by something through which one passes, by means of which we pass from one point to another, and which, in its turn, as the power of passing" (2). In his criteria for heterotopias, Foucault describes the enigma of the doorway in Western culture. The liminality, temporality, depth, and psychically compelling aspects of the doorway make it a distinct space. The heterotopia's deviance and crisis is against the function of the doorway in its political and economic subjectivization of the subject. In so many contexts, the doorway is an apparatus for assimilating the subject into the monolith; however, thresholds importantly occupy a position that is both and neither inside or outside. It is technically a place, but one that is only occupied in states of crisis. Its liminality and indefiniteness is its deviance within the semiology of architecture.

Foucault also defines heterotopias as places that have been altered in history. As discussed in the chapter on Kafka's mechanized thresholds, the elevator is a transmutation of the threshold, one that locates the body in a hyper-vertical space and built with the intention of delivering bodies to new kinds of horizontal experiences. Thresholds have been given a different function, particularly with the rise of corporate and suburban architectures in the mid twentieth century. The doorway is part of a rearranged code of power relations in postmodern society. For example, Jill Stoner refers to the suburbs as a newly conceived space of ownership in which one's house is economically transformed into a "home" and grass becomes a "yard," which is integral
to the postwar American social structure (56). As a heterotopia, the door is transformed into a similar commodity for the new homeowner.

The suburban residential front and back door are instrumental within a system of living and networking. These doorways guide the owner and visitor through the compartmentalized stations of postmodern and contemporary living. The back door invites the insider to a patio and backyard, often identical to that of one's neighbor, allowing enough neighborly surveillance to create the affect of security. The backdoor became a sliding glass door in many suburban homes, influenced by Japanese architecture and modernism, which contributed to the seemingly eyeless postmodern Panopticon. From the interior of the suburban home, suburbanites can observe each other, sometimes just barely over a five foot high fence. The glass door creates the effect and affect of comfort in the ability to observe and be protected by a structure simultaneously.

In addition to the elevator and glass door, other historically altered forms of the door include the revolving door and automated door, both of which are built in response to the relation between the masses and economy. Deleuze and Guattari's vision of economy as both body and machine is relevant here. Mechanized thresholds facilitate and emblematize the compulsive relations of capitalist flows concretely, evidenced in the fact that immobility in an automated doorway or revolving door is potentially dangerous. These mechanisms create a crisis of movement, in which it is personally threatening to self and others to prevent the flow of bodies. These thresholds are psychic preparations for the relations found within the
store or business. As Foucault discusses, the relations of doorways include intentions and materiality.

Particular to the doorway is Foucault's distinction that heterotopias "always presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at one and the same time...Other heterotopias, on the contrary, have the appearance of pure and simple openings, although they usually conceal curious exclusions...one thinks one has entered and, by the sole fact of entering, one is excluded" (6). Foucault establishes doorways as quintessential heterotopias with the idea of an opening. If we consider the rather decentralized postmodern Panopticon in a suburban context, the doorway is both isolating and permeable, yet with the design of self-monitoring. The eye of the structure is everywhere and also dislocated.

His final definition is that heterotopias have "a function that takes place between two opposite poles" (6). The liminality of doorways is apparent in Foucault's description. Stoner's concept of the door as a distinction and reconciliation between smooth and striated spaces works in this case, highlighting oppositions between constructed and unconstructed. In relation to Foucault's first point about crisis and deviance, we understand the occupation of a threshold as a conscious structural and psychic state in which builder and occupant refuses dualism.

Foucault implicitly refers to the compartmentalizing function of doorways in his description of "compartmental sexualities" in The History of Sexuality. In discussing the nineteenth century family as both "cell" and "network," Foucault draws our attention to the "devices of sexual saturation so characteristic of the space and social rituals of the nineteenth century" (45). Despite the seemingly excluding power
of the closed door, Foucault emphasizes spatial lines of force in his configuration. We can imagine the doorway as that which "did not set boundaries for sexuality; it extended the various forms of sexuality, pursuing them according to lines of indefinite penetration….It did not set up a barrier; it provided places of maximum saturation" (47). Foucault prompts us to imagine the home, the dormitory, and the classroom as reciprocal spaces and in flux with power and pleasure. He transcends the entryway as enigma and mythic call to interiority; instead, the doorway is a means to surveillance and penetration.

Proust's thresholds in *Swann's Way* reveal surveillance and porosity as binding activities deeply embedded in the narrator's life of interiors, as shown in his description of his tomb-like bedroom. We are reminded of Benjamin's characteristically interiorized bourgeois spaces: "Once in my room I had to stop every loophole, to close the shutters, to dig my own grave as I turned down the bed-clothes, to wrap myself in the shroud of my nightshirt" (36-37). He has a desire to be both inside and outside. Swann's consuming jealousy of Odette later in the novel is reminiscent of the narrator's earlier feelings for his mother and implicit competition with his father: "And all manner of actions from which hitherto he would have recoiled in shame, such as spying, tonight, outside a window…listening at doors" (389). In the tomb of his interior, the narrator is somehow still outside. He describes the architecture of the soul as always "envelop[ing]" and "surround[ing]" the self; it is that which we are "perpetually struggling to transcend…to break out into the world." People are "situated outside ourselves where we can never reach them" (119).
Proust illustrates not only multiple relations, but also a network of reciprocal and non-oppositional sexual-spatial relations. His childhood tomb is permeable and at the same time separate from the sexual space of his parents' bedroom. He relates the "anguish" of separation, but also an ecstasy that accompanies exteriors (39-40).

Proust's paradox is the desire to be interior and the dissatisfaction with interiority. The many thresholds of the novel, including windows, provide spatial penetrability that aligns with the power and pleasure of sex relations. The narrator and Swann's parallel experiences of waiting behind thresholds are a source of jouissance for them both. He describes the pain felt in hearing his mother approach his room and the "rustling along the double-doored corridor," since her entry into his room would also signify her subsequent leaving. He recalls hoping that his mother would come to him as late as possible "so as to prolong the time of respite during which Mamma would not yet have appeared" (15). The narrator's perceived use of thresholds and the prospect of waiting for them to be penetrated by Mamma are points of affective confusion. His mother's being without is ultimately more pleasurable than her being within.

Foucault and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick both imagine structures and relationships outside of dualism. In "The Weather in Proust," Sedgwick meditates on non-oppositional relations, evoking structures that present themselves most readily in Proust's work. Against the presumed Oedipality of Proust's work, Sedgwick expounds on the relational flux of systems, closed and open, within the text, such as the "architectonic" structure of Guermantes' fountain. "Sometimes things that come around don't go around" (3). Sedgewick asserts that insides and outsides are not necessarily opposites (5), pointing to the overabundance of critical attention given to
spatial barriers in the novel. In contradistinction, Sedgwick speaks to the fluidity of space, indirectly challenging the threshold as barrier: "A creature is seen as plunging vitally into, navigating through, or resting in the midst of an element—water, air—that constitutes as well as supports it" (13). The narrator is within his exterior and also without in his interiority.

Thresholds are also a state-sanctioned dividing practice for the identification and self-identification of bodies. The phenomenological body and the politicized body converge in the more recent American controversy of gender-specific bathrooms. The doorway is not only a barrier; it is also that which implicitly, though not officially, joins members of a group in presumed common sexual practice. The myth of interiority is potent in the figure of the gendered public restroom and, in fact, its mythic status in many Western cultures resides in the distinction of spaces and opaqueness of the restroom door itself.

Years before the recent legislative controversy over gendered restrooms and transgender rights, I recall graduate school professor using bathroom signs as an example of a signifier in a cultural semiological context. These literal signs are inherently problematic in that they often reinforce the monolithic coextensivity of sex and gender. The sign, illustrating the gendered practices of "woman," signifies a code of behavior or performance aligned with being "female." The same is true for the men's restroom. These signs are typically located on the doors of the restrooms themselves. I suggest that the obscured doorways of these places produce what has become a spatially politicized anxiety. The doorway's hidden interior acts as an inaccessible and private sexual threat. In this way, Foucault's "pervert," an identifier
for homosexuality in preceding decades, is transferred to the transgender person. In the media, the transgender identity is conflated with the identity of the "sexual predator." The closed door of the restroom embodies collective hysteria and, by its ability to separate populations and distinguish, prevents collective intervention in the case of a hypothetical threat.

In the context of its topicality and politicization, the restroom doorway becomes a more significant relational sign than the sign itself. It is more phenomenological since it is not merely a signifier that one can read; it is also a practice. As Benjamin said of participating in conquest by passing through the military archway, it is in the act of passing through that one is transformed. In this case, we are transformed in our self-identification. The recent controversy has made clear, now more than ever, the stakes of not performing gender adequately and its perceived physical and public threat. The doorway now threatens with potential difference; in passing through, it promises an eventual encounter with difference. Historically, gendered restrooms are major architectures which operate within a system of power and privilege. We might consider the resistance happening behind the doors of gendered bathrooms as a minor architecture. Stoner further defines minor architecture in writing that "space can be the result of action rather the cause of behavior" (16). Minor architecture results from our actions and bodies, not from previously established structures. The perpetually redefined boundaries between places constitute an ever-changing politic that affects the reading of spaces and engages us relationally.

Modernist Thresholds and Phenomenology
I have discussed the threshold as a location of multiple relations and significations within the semiology of our wider culture. It contains and resists the oppositions and contradictions of the concrete and essential world. The threshold as an experience cannot be separated from the spatialized politics of architecture and bodies. We might also consider our experience with built structures in relation to the narratives we tell ourselves about things and their bearing on our lives. In "The World of Perception and the World of Science," Merleau-Ponty states that "one of the greatest achievements of modern art (that is, the art and philosophy of the last fifty to seventy years) has been to allow us to rediscover the world in which we live, yet which we are always prone to forget" (W31-2). In particular, I formulate the phenomenological space of a specific modernity: modernism.

Bill Brown, Matei Calinescu, David Harvey, and Edward Soja, among others, write of modernism as a movement that contradicts the very basis of its existence. As Calinescu articulates, the use of the term "modernism" was used in the 1920s in reference to the pursuit of modern progress (82-3). Some traditionally imagined modernist movements, such as Futurism, support progress and technology as well as the abandonment of history and knowledge; however, Nietzschean modernism is deeply mythic and historicist. Aesthetic modernism is both a reaction to and incorporation of the popular culture and machine age values of modernity (Harvey 24). Tom Wolfe tells a story of compound architecture's celebration of the machine in From Bauhaus to Our House: "To be nonbourgeois, art must be machine-made. As for Expressionism, its curvilinear shapes defied the machine, not the bourgeoisie. They were not only expensive to fabricate, they were 'voluptuous' and 'luxurious'" (22). The
meeting of politics and aesthetics in modernist movements permitted seemingly incongruous values to coexist.

Modernism resists oppositional pairs and also provides a transitional space in which ideologies are able to grow and change. Brown expounds on the modernist inclination to complicate the distinction between subject and object (12), discussing the works of Henry James as a modern liminal text that engages nineteenth century materialism and the twentieth century reassessment of object relations (187). Harvey observes philosophical shifts in modernism between the world wars, moving from art that embraces the realization of "eternal truths" to perspectivism (30). We see a change in ethos between the writing of Mann's _Death in Venice_ and Faulkner's _As I Lay Dying_. However, many exceptions exist in Harvey's periodization as well, as in the case of Kafka's pre-war work. Though Kafka and Mann were contemporaries, one would not argue that Kafka's _Die Verwandlung_ presents an aesthetic interpretation of knowledge that assumes truth to be an attainable good, as in Mann's novella; in Faulkner's novel, we find the decentralization of knowledge and truth, giving way to perspectivism and the proposition that reality is not a thing to be grasped.\(^{ix}\) Given all of the uncertainty between modernist movements themselves, it is not surprising that the most avant-garde authors of the era achieved an entirely new way of telling and being.

Whether we wish to call modernist narrative techniques "realistic" or "mimetic," scholars recognize various ways in which twentieth century fiction began to echo our most resonant experiences. Erich Auerbach's _Mimesis_, for example, proposes that high modernists, Virginia Woolf in particular, establish the uncertain or unknowledgeable narrator in the novel substantially and for the first time. He
describes the narration of Mrs. Ramsay by the author, exemplified in the sentence, 
"Never did anybody look so sad," as "acheiv[ing] the intended effect by representing 
herself to be someone who doubts, wonders, hesitates, as though the truth about her 
characters were not better known to her than it is to them or to the reader" (535).

Auerbach distinguishes Woolf's narrative voice sharply from her predecessors, such as 
Dickens and Balzac. Woolf's relationship with consciousness and her refusal of 
singular identity, in many ways, borders more on our definitions of postmodernism.

Aesthetic realism must be historicized in order to properly understand its 
importance in the twentieth century. Unlike medieval narratives, defined as realistic by 
their attention to the life of the court, and later eighteenth and nineteenth century 
realistic realism, which acquired realistic status by their representation of everything 
outside of the aristocracy, twentieth century realism and mimesis is defined by its 
concern for consciousness and perception. Modernist mimesis is certainly not divorced 
from its predecessors; high modernists are inheritors of the novelistic performance of 
everydayness. Modernists translate the earlier novel's concern for the rising middle 
class, the social strata, and the performances of private life into the context of modern 
living and its accompanying requirements.

Modernism adheres to a more specific mimetic textual performance of the 
sensing body and consciousness as sense. It is a culture of seeming, facilitated by 
hapticity, perception, apperception, and sensuous intuition. The phenomenology of the 
body and consciousness in modernist fiction is presented as truth. The doubtful and 
reluctant narrator in Woolf is part of the modernist philosophy of perception that 
privileges experience and occludes the existence of objectivity. The works of Faulkner
and Woolf both exemplify a culture of seeming, but with disparate phenomenological effects. Faulkner actually uses the phrase "seems to" throughout his body of work, often in reference to bodily movements, gestures, and choreography. Faulkner's phenomenology is sensuous, but like Woolf, he denies the narrator absolute knowledge of his own characters. Auerbach's comment that the uncertain narrator of *To the Lighthouse* is the author herself applies to Faulkner as well. One of many examples throughout Faulkner's fiction of the speculative observer is in *Light in August*, where Joe Christmas is attacked: "Perhaps Joe did not hear her at all, nor the screaming waitress….Very likely he did not even know that they were already moving toward him. Because with something of the exaltation of his adopted father he sprang full and of his own accord into the stranger's fist" (218). Faulkner speculates about Joe from the perspective of a sensed body and not from a disembodied theoretically objective narrator. The spectator imagining, but unsure of the perspective of his own imagined character is none other than Faulkner himself. Woolf and Faulkner practice a phenomenology of consciousness that joins material and immaterial, which is central to the aesthetic phenomenon of modernism.

Modernism heralds the performance of the lived world. Part of that world is the structure and threshold. Proust's phenomenology of the inseparable and interdependent body and structure joins time, body, and thing. Proust's spatialized temporality transcends the destruction of places, bringing the lost things of his past into the "here" of the "now"; in fact, he dissociates the here from the now, joining there and now. In the following passage from *Swann's Way*, the author confuses body and house as he recalls the house around him. The house imagined as a body with
conjoined parts mingles with the memory of his childhood home, which his body itself remembers:

For it always happened that when I awoke like this, and my mind struggled in an unsuccessful attempt to discover where I was, everything revolved around me through the darkness: things, places, years. My body, still too heavy with sleep to move, would endeavor to construe from the pattern of its tiredness the position of its various limbs, in order to deduce therefrom the direction of the wall, the location of the furniture, to piece together and give a name to the house in which it lay. Its memory, the composite of its ribs, its knees, its shoulder-blades, offered it a series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept….

And even before my brain, hesitating at the threshold of times and shapes, had reassembled the circumstances sufficiently to identify the room, it—my body—would recall from each room in succession the style of the bed, the position of the door, the angle at which the daylight came in at the windows, whether there was a passage outside. (5)

Proust establishes the relation between lived body and lived world in his identification between body and structure. He comprehends and remembers structures with his whole body. In "The Intertwining—the Chiasm," Merleau-Ponty asserts that only Proust proposes an essential relationship between the "visible and the invisible" and that Proust most conveys that ideas "cannot be detached from the sensible appearances." Merleau-Ponty writes "No one has gone further than Proust in fixing the relations between the visible and the invisible, in describing an idea that is not the
contrary of the sensible, that is its lining and its depth" (VI 149-50). In Proust's passage, "things" and "years," the material and the immaterial go together in the narrator's memory. Structural things are central to his conception of time, place, as well as those invisible relational forces that moved and continue to move him among the places of his life.

Most scholars imagine Proust as an early influential modernist among others, such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Paul Valéry, Andre Gide, and Franz Kafka. Particularly in narrative theory, Proust centralizes the subjectivity of the narrator, making way for styles like those of Woolf, Mann, Faulkner, and James Joyce. Modernist relations between the visible and invisible, thing and idea, particularly illuminated in the works of Proust and Woolf, are essential to the reader's experience of lived architectures. As a point of contrast, let us observe a key scene in architectural novelistic representations in Dickens' Bildungsroman, Great Expectations:

We went into the house by a side door—the great front entrance had two chains across it—outside—and the first thing I noticed was that the passages were all dark, and that she had left a candle burning there….At last we came to the door of a room, and she said, "Go in."

I answered, more in shyness than politeness, "After you, miss."
To this, she returned: "Don’t be ridiculous, boy; I am not going in." And scornfully walked away, and—what was worse—took the candle with her. This was very uncomfortable, and I was half-afraid. However, the only thing to be done being to knock at the door, I knocked, and was told from within to enter. I entered, therefore, and found myself in a pretty large room, well lighted with
wax candles. No glimpse of daylight was to be seen. (66)

Like Proust, Pip remembers the built spaces most significant to his development and recalls in detail the events relevant to other expressed events; however, his recollection of space is divorced from temporality. Dickens' writing in the style of the Victorian Gothic novel is spatially dislocated by its disconnection with time's invisible forces.

In contrast to Proust's chiasm of thing and thing perceived whilst "perched upon a pyramid of the past," Dickens' narrative centralizes materiality and visibility. What is less visible, for example Pip's absolute uncertainty and discomfort, remains severed from the perception of the narrator. The presumably older, experienced Pip seems to remember his earliest visit to Satis House without any of the impressions of time and maturity. It is distinctly un-phenomenological in its idealized telling of an experience with the material from the perspective of a person seemingly without a body or memory. Here, we are reminded of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of Cartesian depth in *Phenomenology of Perception* and "Eye and Mind." Like depth, imagined as merely a distance between objects from the perspective of an ethereal hypothetical being, place is described in Dickens from the perspective of a narrator without orientation or experience. A blank-slate narrator is especially implausible from the perspective of Pip Pirrip, whose recollection of his first encounters with Estella and Miss Havisham can only be thoroughly haunted by the chilling unfolding of events to follow.

In addition to the apparent separation of visible and invisible, there is also a noticeable difference between Dickens and Proust's expressed and recalled
relationality between body and building. Proust acts as an architect himself, reconstructing the buildings of his past as they were formed around him with the memory of his body. The determinant forces are the invisible ideas that animate the body into acting with architectures. Dickens, however, recalls his own living motion through Satis house as an opposition. It is a materialist perspective in which the base, those dead materials of the Victorian mansion, are absolute and dictatorial of the weaker and malleable nature of the body. Pip is defenseless against the major architecture of Satis House. Dickens establishes throughout the remainder of the novel the incontrovertibility of the material over the body and the visible over the invisible.

Finally, the gesture of the threshold in Proust suggests the lived quality of modernity and modernism. When he describes his own being "at the threshold of times and shapes," Proust at once dramatizes the function of doorways in our cultural past and identifies the necessity of material-bodily relations for the existence of narrative. The body's memory determines the memories of the narrator. Phenomenological memory redirects narrative memory. The figure of the threshold in modernist fiction is a text in which the liminality of knowing and narrative might exist. The fictive and narrativized threshold is both a realization and an exit. It is the subject body engaging with place that creates and rearranges the culture of a "story."

In the style of Proust, we are reminded of our own ability to recall a childhood home in its sensuous completion. Modernism's grip on the narrative of body and place redirects my personal narrative. The thresholds I narrate in the opening of this chapter exist as they do as a result of my immersion in and receptivity to modernist phenomenology. My own door is seen and felt only from my own pyramid of the past.
I only feel the backdoor of my childhood through the difference in feeling my body pass through the apartment door of my adulthood. I only see the details of my dream through the photos I have of my partner at the age of ten. My own telling relies on inherited ways of interdependent remembering and seeing. The poetry of thresholds in art and memory as well as the philosophies presented complicate the ideologies most embraced by our culture about the structures through which we find our being. The following chapters illuminate the coalescence between modernist fictions and our experiences with liminal structures. Also in the Proustian spirit, these respective narrations and philosophies rewrite our perceptions and ways of telling of our own lived environments.

**Thresholds in Faulkner, Woolf, Kafka, Joyce, and Tóibín**

The following chapters invoke the aforementioned theorists in varying depth and capacities. This book distinguishes itself from others as a result of the author's dissatisfaction with other books. While many critical works assume the task of describing literary ontology, very few answer questions about how fiction teaches us to exist as living, moving beings in the world; for example, how does fiction suggest that we use things? How do we aestheticize those things we have built for our own use? Based on these questions, the most central thinkers and texts in this book are from phenomenological and cultural studies perspectives. The use of thresholds engages the use of things, the experience of use, and the larger meaning that unfolds in the process of use. In response to a lack of phenomenological concern for structures, I develop the ways in which fictive architecture comparatively form and direct the
experiencing subject, ostensibly performing a distinct subjectivity. Each concerned
text proposes a way of our making space with our bodies, as suggested by Stoner.
Each author and text is selected according to works that express a strong philosophy of
modern relations between body and world, summarized in the following terms:
envelopment, ecstasy, mechanization, rhythm, and depthlessness.

In "Beyond the Door": Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and Architectural Envelopment," I
discuss William Faulkner's positing of bodily architectural experience in relation to
modernist aesthetics and gender politics in his 1931 novel, *Sanctuary*. As exemplified
in the character of Temple Drake, Faulkner's focalization of architectures and
doorways works against the historical patriarchy of occularcentrism, representing a
sensuously enveloping architecture that transcends vision. As she encounters various
thresholds, Temple's enveloping senses are revealed as synesthetic, aural, peripherally
visual, visually perceptive of foreground and background, and rhythmic. *Sanctuary*
has been defined by critics not only by its engagement with the popular, but also by its
aesthetics of "becoming modernist" (Lurie 45). I argue that Faulkner's use of
architectural envelopment and transcendence of what Juhani Pallasmaa calls
"patriarchal vision" in architecture places Faulkner's writing outside of and
philosophically beyond modernist aesthetics.

My second chapter, "Ecstasy, Ecstasy: Woolf's Threshold in *Between the
Acts*," establishes Woolf's threshold as a site of ecstasy, implanation, and absorption,
relating the architectural and theatrical threshold in her final novel. I draw on
Benjamin's phenomenology of the threshold as a zone of transfixion in relation to his
concept of the theater and the artwork, in which the viewer is absorbed. Drawing on
Nietzsche's Dionysian ecstasy, Benjamin theorizes the doorway in its temporal unity, as aesthetic frame, spectacle, phantasmagoria, and point of entry. Woolf’s contemplation and absorption before doorways in the novel proposes an ecstatic and rhythmic call and response between body and architecture which is part of a modern ontology.

"Kafka From the Outside: Phenomenal Elevators in *Amerika*" builds on Merleau-Ponty's claim in the fifth of his *Causeries* that Franz Kafka sees the world "from the outside." In his manipulation of the material world and close relationship with things, Kafka adopts the attitude of an inspector as opposed to spectator. I describe how his inspectorial role in his professional life, as evidenced in his office writings, influenced his narrative perspective and approach to the objective world in his literary work. Throughout his writings, the author's establishes mechanical objects as an extension and dilation of the human body. His mechanistic identification is best realized in his portrayal of elevators in his first novel, *Amerika*. I demonstrate how the early elevator's culture of prohibition and risk contributes to a larger phenomenon of fear of disengagement between humans and machines. In contrast with readings emphasizing the inherent alienation of modern technology in Kafka's fiction, I propose that alienation in Kafka is a product of our separation from machinery.

In the fourth chapter, "Rhythm and Depthlessness in Joyce and Tóibín: Modern to Contemporary Thresholds," I use *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to discuss James Joyce's rhythm of text, body, and architecture. Joyce's thresholds are organizing, unified, and repetitive punctuations within his architectural schema associated with the unidentified haunting figure. I illustrate an aesthetic transition in fiction between the
eternally recurring and rhythmic thresholds of Joyce and the contemporary depthless
thresholds of Colm Tóibín. Tóibín demonstrates a waning of affect in conjunction with
the simultaneity and fluidity of postmodern space in his emphasis on rural and
residential Ireland as opposed to Joyce's Dublin architectures. Tóibín's thresholds are
extensive representative spaces of emptiness and indifference.

Finally, my conclusion "'Burst This Prison-World Asunder': A Phenomenology
of Modernist Film" briefly extends the phenomenology of architecture in fiction to the
Camera*, I illustrate concepts and techniques of phenomenological film extrapolated
from the writings of Benjamin and Merleau-Ponty.
Chapter One

"Beyond the Door": Faulkner's Sanctuary and Architectural Envelopment

In his sixth lecture of his radio talks published as Causeries, titled "Art and the World of Perception," Maurice Merleau-Ponty recounts the many gifts of the arts to the philosophy of perception, discussing painting, music, and literature. He challenges us to accept the arts "in their purity."\(^{xi}\) We know that this word "purity" is a problem in phenomenology, invoking the phenomenological reduction, yet Merleau-Ponty would continue to speak of the painter's "innocence" as late as "Eye and Mind." Merleau-Ponty contends throughout his writings that the artwork establishes the lived world as a primary orientation, stating that "Painting does not imitate the world but is a world of its own."\(^{xii}\) In the same spirit that Merleau-Ponty both radically and soundly argues for the primacy of perception as opposed to empiricism or objectivism, he also reclaims the privilege of art as asserting its own philosophy. His project is one of restoration.\(^{xiii}\) Merleau-Ponty looks to art not as merely an elucidation or exemplification of philosophical concepts; rather, the artwork establishes its own world of phenomenological truth.

Merleau-Ponty extends his discussion of poetic literature and language to the novel. Following Mallarmé's distinction between poetry and "chatter," Merleau-Ponty says that the poet "replaces the usual way of referring to things, which presents them as 'well known', with a mode of expression that describes the essential structure of the thing and accordingly forces us to enter into that thing."\(^{xiv}\) He claims that the novel assumes a similar purpose, as an "object of the senses or a thing in motion, which must
be perceived in its temporal progression by embracing its particular rhythm and which leaves in the memory not a set of ideas but rather the emblem and the monogram of those ideas.\textsuperscript{xv} Merleau-Ponty describes a novel that is an object of experience, poetic in its permeability and its construction of an entrance and passage of signification for the reader. I explore how William Faulkner's novel proposes an architectural and choreographic phenomenology that dramatizes and rehearses our lived experiences with doorways. Faulkner emblematizes the motion of the body in relation to an enveloping built world, challenging the aesthetic boundaries of architectural theory contemporary to his writing. In the spirit of Merleau-Ponty and against architectural theory, Faulkner writes a phenomenological world of his own.

\textbf{Faulkner: Body, Motion, World}

"I feel like a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth." These famous words of Dewey Dell in \textit{As I Lay Dying} evoke another kind of reading in which Faulkner requires that the reader read with her whole body. In the act of reading Dewey Dell's body and her sensed fantasy of earth, death, and birth, I am at the same time Dewey Dell, myself, and also the world. Faulkner's world is one of complete sensation, one that includes sight, but more significantly establishes our experience in the world as synesthetic and requiring more than vision. After all, Dewey Dell's earth is equally wild as it is blind. In the desperate and vertiginous passage leading to her bond with earth and sensing, she says, "The dead air shapes the dead earth in the dead darkness, further away than seeing shapes the dead earth. It lies dead and warm upon me, touching me naked through my clothes" (58). For Faulkner, the lived world lies beyond vision; rather,
being exists in the interrelationality of sense, body and world. Over the last four decades, Faulknerians have largely expounded on Faulkner's politicized body as a poetic of race and gender. What remains unexplored is the centrality of the phenomenological body in the world which permeates the consciousness of Faulkner's work.

*As I Lay Dying* is one of Faulkner's most synesthetic and comprehensive descriptions of the sensing body. The Bundrens and their neighbors hear by sight, exemplified in Cora Tull's imagining that one could hear the sound of Cash's tools while making Addie's coffin just by looking at Addie's face: "If we were deaf we could almost watch her face and hear him, see him" (7). The family feels without touching, as when Darl remembers "feeling myself without touching myself" (9). Dewey Dell recalls feeling by sight in her affair with Lafe: "And we picked on toward the secret shade and our eyes would drown together touching on his hands and my hands and I didn't say anything" (23-24). She later "feel[es]" Vardaman's face "with my eyes" (57). Dr. Peabody describes a similar phenomenon of Addie: "Only her eyes seem to move. It's like they touch us, not with sight or sense, but like the stream of a hose touches you, the stream at the instant of impact as dissociated from the nozzle as though it had never been there" (39-40). Vardaman hears without seeing "the bed and her face" (49). He also suggests that he "can see hearing" (52). Faulkner's synesthetic lived body is one of many ways in which the author imagines the body experiencing the world.

In *What We See When We Read*, Peter Mendelsund notes on the phenomenology of reading and perception that "much of what takes place in fiction is choreographic." Mendelsund makes the distinction between the narration of motion
and physical appearance in fiction, using Faulkner as a prime example: "Often, when I ask someone to describe the physical appearance of a key character from their favorite book they will tell me how this character moves through space...One reader told me Benjy Compson from William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* was 'lumbering, uncoordinated’…” (28). The body in its motion and movement is essential to Faulkner's aesthetic philosophy.

André Bleikasten perceptively distinguishes between Faulkner's interest in the body and the poetics of gesture in saying that in *As I Lay Dying*, "What interests Faulkner is not therefore the body but, as Mayoux notes, 'the language of the body'" (69). Bleikasten explains how "actions, gestures, attitudes, all of the movements of the body thus constitute a most revealing pantomime" (70). This is evidenced in *Autour d'une mère*, the theatrical adaptation of the novel in Paris in June 1935 by Jean-Louis Barrault, which relied heavily on "pantomime" and "bodily expression," having only two monologues as text (143-44). The choreography referred to by Mendelsund is quite literal in *As I Lay Dying*, but also evident as a general narrative mode in Faulkner's work. The phenomenology of the body in motion becomes the text that the mind sees in performance in the process of reading Faulkner. Motion is central to the author's aesthetics and philosophy.

Faulkner aesthetic of motion is a performance of his philosophy of change and the necessity of adaptation. In Jean Stein's famous interview with Faulkner (1956), the author states the following:

Life is motion, and motion is concerned with what makes man move—which is ambition, power, pleasure. What time a man can devote to morality, he must
take by force from the motion of which he is a part….The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. Since man is mortal, the only immortality possible for him is to leave something behind him that is immortal since it will always move. This is the artist's way of scribbling 'Kilroy was here' on the wall of the final and irrevocable oblivion through which he must someday pass."

Richard Adams and Elizabeth Kerr, among others, establish the relationship between Faulkner's motion and the possibility for human action, choice, and freedom.

Faulkner's fictionalized motion is always in relation to the world of things. Faulkner contended that the writer is "not really writing about his environment, he's simply telling a story about human beings in the terms of environment" (qtd. in Urgo xi). While his fiction is not concerned with the environment in isolation, Faulkner cannot help but permeate his world with the "terms" of Yoknapatawpha, its built and natural environment. The implied relationality of the body with things is evident in his comment that the artist's act leads to his final motion of passing through the "oblivion." Even the motion toward death is undeniably bound to a sense of structure and place.

The oblivion of the threshold is emblematic of a greater orientation in the world. In his preface to Getting Back into Place, Edward Casey discusses the necessity of motion for human existence in terms that resonate in Faulkner's work:

A tree stands in its own place. Its life is sedentary. It is a life in one place, a life without anxiety….Animal life refuses the immobility of the plant….Pascal also
remarked that 'all of human unhappiness stems from one thing: not to know how to remain in repose in a room.' Changing places is not only a matter of tedium or restlessness…. Even when practical needs are not at issue, we keep putting themselves [sic] into motion, getting out of one place and getting into another, and then still another." (xii)

In Faulkner as well, motion is a part of human restlessness and struggle, but also a necessity for freedom. Pascal implicates the threshold in our motion between rooms, implying that it is the necessary portal between our rooms of eventual discontent.

Inherent to Faulkner's formation of place and body is the directional motion of the body in places. In contrast to Casey's concept of human restlessness, Faulkner theorizes through Anse Bundren how humans are designed for stasis by their vertical directionality:

The Lord put roads for travelling: why He laid them flat on the earth. When He aims for something to be always a-moving, He makes it long ways, like a road or a horse or a wagon, but when He aims for something to stay put, He makes it up-and-down ways, like a tree or a man. And so He never aimed for folks to live on a road, because which gets there first, I says, the road or the house? Did you ever know Him to set a road down by a house? I says. No, you never, I says, because it's always men cant rest till they gets the house set where everybody that passes in a wagon can spit in the doorway, keeping the folks restless and wanting to get up and go somewheres else when He aimed for them to stay put like a tree or a stand of corn. Because if He'd aimed for man to be always a-moving and going somewheres else, wouldn't He a put him
longways on his belly, like a snake? [sic] (31-32)

We should take Anse's reflection as Faulkner's problematization of human inaction and stasis. The author proposes a Christian-influenced belief that the design and directionality of bodies determines their respective purposes, while also revealing the logic of one who would surrender freedom and agency for the security of not having to change. Anse also describes the general friction of a house next to a road, given their contrasting orientations. The horizontality and constant motion of the road disturbs the verticality and stasis of the house, beckoning its upright inhabitants to motion as well.

Dr. Peabody's comments on Anse's confusion between the orientation of the tree and the human contribute to the reader's perception of Anse as one who resists motion and, therefore, change: "He stands there beside a tree. Too bad the Lord made the mistake of giving trees roots and giving the Anse Bundrens He makes feet and legs. If He'd just swapped them, there wouldn't ever be a worry about this country being deforested someday" (38). Peabody's observations are part of a larger dialog and doubt in regards to the ontological body and action in the novel.

However misguided, an important part of Anse's philosophy is the body's interaction with structures and materials. The body, the tree, and the house illustrate Faulkner's vertical ontology, in which the author questions whether humans are meant to move since we seem to share a common design with immobile vertical things. He significantly compares the body with things in their motion, design, and agency. Cash, the builder of his mother's coffin, illuminates in his thirteen theses the relationship between body and wood and their points of stress in relation to their respective positions. xviii He explains that "In a house people are upright two thirds of the time. So
the seams and joints are made up-and-down. Because the stress is up-and-down….In a bed where people lie down all the time, the joints and seams are made sideways, because the stress is sideways….The animal magnetism of a dead body makes the stress come slanting, so the seams and joints of a coffin are made on the bevel" (73). While his concerns are mostly material throughout the novel, Cash's meditations on wood are a way of getting at the essential and sublime. His understanding of vertical being and stationary existence aligns with Anse's concept of the upright body, tree and house.

Cash's theses imply that the body and wood both possess memory. All bodily positions require a corresponding and complementary structure. The house, bed, and coffin are all designed to support the respective directionality of the body as they are. The grain of each structure is built in response to the body's opposing grain, direction, and weight. Cash's mysticism about the corpse is a culminating statement about the body's continuing invisible power and presence. Cash describes a phenomenology of the body's energy in life and death.

Despite the radical disparities between the Bundrens' respective philosophies, Anse and Cash both see the body living, moving, or lying in accordance with the environment. In Cash's view, the body also determines its own material existence and circumstance. Anse and Cash's concern for directionality and the body relates to the body's motion within and through structures. Faulkner's emphasis on direction and motion through structures corresponds with his attitude toward change and progress, suggesting that directional movement through the built environment is also temporal. Ultimately, Faulkner's bodies and structures are acting on each other.
Faulkner's "Strange Threshold"

Faulkner, in writing nineteen novels between the years 1926 and 1962, became known for his performance of southern place through so-called high modernist aesthetics. He comments on his creation of Yoknapatawpha County and the town of Jefferson, fictionalized versions of the Mississippi's Lafayette County and town of Oxford: "I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and by sublimating the actual into apocryphal I would have complete liberty...I created a cosmos of my own" (Meriwether and Millgate 255). Essential to Faulkner's sense of place and his creation of Yoknapatawpha, specifically, are his manifestations of philosophy and subjectivity found in material culture (as Faulkner writes in Sartoris, "Time and its furniture") and in the built environment.

As Thomas S. Hines notes in William Faulkner and the Tangible Past, when Faulkner was not living amongst the varied forms of Greek Revival buildings of the "Old South" in Oxford, Mississippi he received an informal architectural education with his friend and travelling companion, architect William Spratling. Faulkner lived with him in New Orleans and travelled in Europe while Spratling studied and sketched buildings to be published in Architectural Forum (Hines 6). Hines expounds upon the many specific architectures of Faulkner's place and time in relation to those occupying his fiction, primarily those of folk vernacular, neoclassical, neo-Gothic, high Victorian, modernist and public sculptures.

Some critical attention has been given to the ontological and imperialistic
implications of Faulkner's architecture. William T. Ruzicka writes on the fictive construction of place and its meaning, drawing on the history of Southern American and classical architecture. Ruzicka's work indicates fictive architecture as a reflection of authorial intention and as a metaphor for character. Taylor Hagood discusses Faulkner's architecture as the joining of "mythic place" and "imperial space" (5). Despite the thoughtful writing on the prominent presence of architecture in Faulkner's fiction, what is yet to be reconciled is the author's poetic body and the material world. In the spirit of Stoner, my project is concerned with how sensing bodies act upon architecture and how our experiences are narrativized in fiction.

A persistent image in Faulkner's architectural world is the threshold in its many manifestations. Faulkner uses doorways throughout his fiction, often in relation to various subjectivities, imperialism, and Southern society. Back doors are reserved for African American slaves and servants. Despite the threshold's comprehension and envelopment of personal temporality, as I discuss in the introduction, the threshold in Faulkner's work becomes emblematic of a social and political imperial past that is not subject to transition. The image of the "negro" passing through the back door in Faulkner's work is a political identifier and suggests the stagnancy of a postbellum South. The doorway is not a passage to dwelling or being; instead, it proposes non-being. After the death of Emily Grierson in "A Rose for Emily," her servant Toby "walked right through the house and out the back and was not seen again" (58). Toby is shade-like throughout the text, both in his servitude and in his release, in his coming and in his final going. In Light in August, for which Faulkner's alternative title was Dark House, the backdoor of Joanna Burden's plantation home is left open for Joe
Christmas, who is of mixed race, to eat in the kitchen. For Joanna, Joe's entrance through the back and occupation of the kitchen is a signifier of their non-relation.

In *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and the Fury*, thresholds are associated with "civilization" and are frequently feminized spaces of protection against and escape from patriarchal social structures. *AA*’s Thomas Sutpen is remembered to have built his antebellum plantation home, called "Sutpen's Hundred," with the help of twenty slaves and a kidnapped architect. Faulkner writes "He lived out there eight miles from any neighbor, in masculine solitude in what might be called the halfacre gunroom of a baronial splendor. He lived in the Spartan shell of the largest edifice in the country, not excepting the courthouse itself, whose threshold no woman had so much as seen, without any feminized softness of window-pane or door or mattress" (39-40). Sutpen's shell without the enclosure of the door is described as masculine. It is the need for escape and protection that Faulkner, focalized through Sutpen, associates with the feminine. The permeable and feminine house will be an important concept in our discussion of a feminine phenomenology of architecture in *Sanctuary*.

Windows function as thresholds for Faulkner's many white women who find themselves displaced within the social structure of the "New South" in the twentieth century. In *AA*, Faulkner writes that "anyone entering or leaving by a window would be either hiding or escaping" (233). Mr. Compson tells Quentin of the "ladies and children and women slaves coming to the doors and windows of the homes" to watch Sutpen pass (47). In *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin Compson III escapes through a window, allowing her to escape what so many of Faulkner's characters must battle: the "grief of old blood" ("Barn Burning").
Most memorably, Faulkner's doorways act as reorienting emblems of imperialism, often in relation to class, race and gender. Faulkner repeatedly dramatizes what he calls the "boy-symbol at the door" in *AA* (261). In this scene, a young poor white man approaches a plantation house that is socially and economically beyond his reach. The doorway serves as an ideological portal, a myth of material and capitalist apotheosis, referred to throughout the novel as “the design—Getting richer and richer” (AA 260). "He would never again need to stand on the outside of a white door and knock at it: and not at all for mere shelter but so that that boy, that whatever nameless stranger, could shut that door himself forever behind him on all that he had ever known, and look ahead" (261). For Sutpen, the materialist transformation and apotheosis promised by the house's interior is restricted by the doorman and the door itself.xix

Despite the prevalence of architectures in Faulkner's work in general, there are a few select texts in which Faulkner narrates the phenomenological body in and around architectures and doorways, specifically. We witness the boy-symbol at the door in “Barn Burning” where young Sartoris Snopes and his father Abner, a poor white sharecropper, approach the plantation house of his father’s new employer. Sarty is described as "walking on in the spell of the house" (9). In this passage, Faulkner gives us the whole body interacting with the threshold:

He saw the house for the first time and at that instant he forgot his father and the terror and despair both, and even when he remembered his father again (who had not stopped) the terror and despair did not return….Hit’s big as a courthouse….They are safe from him. People whose lives are a part of this peace
and dignity are beyond his touch, he no more than a buzzing wasp....the spell of
this peace and dignity rendering even the barns and stable and cribs which
belong to it impervious to the puny flames he might contrive...

Maybe he will feel it too. Maybe it will even change him now from what maybe
he couldn't help but be.

They crossed the portico. Now he could hear his father's stiff foot as it came
down on the boards with clocklike finality, a sound out of all proportion to the
displacement of the body it bore and which was not dwarfed by anything—the
flat, wide, black hat, the formal coat of broadcloth which had once been black
but had now that friction-glazed greenish cast of the bodies of old house flies,
the lifted sleeve which was too large, the lifted hand like a curled claw. The door
opened so promptly that the boy knew the Negro must have been watching them
all the time, an old man with neat grizzled hair, in a linen jacket, who stood
barring the door with his body, saying "Wipe yo foots, white man, fo you come
in here. Major ain't home nohow."

His father...without heat too, flinging the door back and the Negro also and
entering, his hat still on his head. And now the boy saw the prints of the stiff foot
on the doorsill and saw them appear on the pale rug behind the machinelike
deliberation of the foot which seemed to bear (or transmit) twice the weight
which the body compassed. The Negro was shouting "Miss Lula! Miss Lula!"
somewhere behind them, then the boy, deluged as though by a warm wave by a
suave turn of carpeted stair and a pendant glitter of chandeliers and a mute gleam
of gold frames, heard the swift feet and gown with lace at the throat. (9-11)
Adopting an attitude of bracketing or the phenomenological reduction, Faulkner embraces the suspension of what is objectively known about architecture, allowing him to write some of the most experiential narration of bodies and the material. He describes what it is to be in and move through the built environment. Faulkner's narration of the plantation house threshold is not only ideological; it is narratologically immersive and sensuous. In Faulkner's work, doorways act as sites most impressionable and impressive to our sensing and acting bodies. He describes a threshold that ontologically joins self and world, but also smooth and striated spaces. Sarty believes in the myth of the doorway as a means toward separation and transformation. He confuses wealth and status with virtue, hoping that his father "will feel [the doorway] too" and that "it will even change him" into a better, and specifically feeling man. Instead, Major de Spain's doorway is a site of spatial conflation, where Abner Snopes drags the manure on the outside step in, disavowing all spatial segregation.

Faulkner gives us the many descriptions of feeling that accompany our daily travels through doorways: the exact weight of a specific body as it crosses, the rhythm and cadence of feet as they fall onto wooden planks, the proportions, shapes and textures of limbs and materials. In the same way that phenomenology is a descriptive philosophy, so Faulkner's fiction is phenomenological narrative. In the act of passing through fictive doorways, Faulkner narrativizes a sensuously enveloping architecture that transcends the mythic function of the door.

It is relevant to evoke one of Faulkner's major European influences, Proust, in regards to his temporalized aesthetic exchange between body and building. Faulkner's slow-motion focalization of thresholds in use, exchange between body and material, and
his representations of doorways as porous follows Proust's phenomenology of felt and used architecture in *Swann's Way*. Proust writes:

> How I loved our church, and how clearly I can see it still! The old porch by which we entered, black, and full of holes as a colander, was worn out of shape and deeply furrowed at the sides (as also was the font to which it led us) just as if the gentle friction of the cloaks of peasant-women coming into church, and of their fingers dipping into the holy water, had managed by age-long repetition to acquire a destructive force, to impress itself on the stone, to carve grooves in it like those made by cart-wheels upon stone gate-posts which they bump against every day (80).

In contradistinction from a tradition of holiness created by non-relational and oppositional spaces, Proust describes a threshold made holy by its relational, porous, and promiscuous properties. As we will see, Faulkner similarly takes up sanctity in relation to spatial exchange and penetrability between body and thing.

In "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," Merleau-Ponty insists on the promiscuity and porosity of body and world, rejecting the "age-old assumptions that put the body in the world and the seer in the body, or, conversely, the world and the body in the seer as in a box" (VI 138). In describing the "thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing," (135) Merleau-Ponty proposes that the body is both subjective and objective (137). He speaks of the "hinge" and "hiatus" between one experience and another, but ultimately unites experiences by what he calls the flesh of the world (148). While his primary purpose is to relate experiences seen and unseen, Merleau-Ponty's late philosophy endorses a porosity between body and world, writing that the viewer before the horizon...
"is caught up, included within it" (149). Faulkner's constructed world proposes a phenomenology of seer and seen that include one another as well as the welding together of senses.

Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, published in 1931 and written, according to the author, for the purpose of making money, is historically viewed as his popular attempt at pulp and detective fiction. It tells the story of Temple Drake, a Mississippi college student kidnapped and raped by Popeye, a bootlegger, lifelong criminal and social deviant who is guilty of murder. Horace Benbow, a lawyer recently estranged from his wife and having returned home, decides to take on Popeye's murder case, in an attempt to clear the name of a falsely accused man.

The two primary sites of architectural envelopment throughout the novel are the rural headquarters for Popeye's bootlegging, the Old Frenchman place, and the brothel in Memphis, where Temple is hidden when she is kidnapped. We first see the Old Frenchman place through the eyes of Horace Benbow:

The house was a gutted ruin rising gaunt and stark out of a grove of unpruned cedar trees. It was a landmark known as the Old Frenchman place, built before the Civil War; a plantation house set in the middle of a tract of land; of cotton fields and gardens and lawns long since gone back to jungle, which the people of the neighborhood had been pulling down piecemeal for firewood for fifty years or digging with secret and sporadic optimism for the gold which the builder was reputed to have buried somewhere about the place when Grant came through the country on his Vicksburg campaign.

Three men were sitting in chairs on one end of the porch. In the depths of the
open hall a faint light showed. The hall went straight back through the house. Popeye mounted the steps, the three men looking at him and his companion. "Here's the professor," he said, without stopping. He entered the house, the hall. He went on and crossed the back porch and turned and entered the room where the light was. It was the kitchen. (4-5)

Notice that the Frenchman place as focalized through Horace is linear and dominated by focalized vision with little attention to peripheral vision. Also, many affective differences exist between the perceptions of Horace and Temple. The following is the Frenchman place as Temple first sees it:

The house came into sight, above the cedar grove beyond whose black interstices an apple orchard flaunted in the sunny afternoon. It was set in a ruined lawn, surrounded by abandoned grounds and fallen outbuildings. But nowhere was any sign of husbandry—plow or tool; in no direction was a planted field in sight—only a gaunt weather-stained ruin in a somber grove through which the breeze drew with a sad, murmurous sound.

While Horace Benbow's perspective is laden with local history and a reenactment of the past within the present, Temple's first view is filled with myriad senses interacting with one another. Her eyes seem to linger over the objects in her view as she seeks out the edges of the scene, finding nothing. Temple's perception allows the reader to see, hear, and feel the Frenchman place in its spatial and sensuous entirety.

Faulkner's original version of Sanctuary, written in 1929, was revised in 1931 to include more of Popeye's perspective and backstory. Despite these changes, Popeye's linear and occularcentric movements through the house are preserved. His sensuous
involvement with the physical world remain as mechanized as he is described. Popeye is defined by his lack of feeling and impotence in his depiction as "doll-like" (2). In contrast, Temple Drake's movements within the Frenchman place, between it and the barn are frantic and dizzying for the reader. In contrast to Popeye, Temple's epithet should be "She whirled again" (33). Temple's body is always in motion. It is her "running" and "whirling" that keeps her seeing and feeling beyond all physical boundaries. Temple's vision is that of periphery, touch and sound:

The hall was open through the house. She entered. "Where are you going?" Gowan said. "Why don't you wait out here?" She didn't answer. She went on down the hall. Behind her she could hear Gowan's and the man's voices. The back porch lay in sunlight, a segment of sunlight framed by the door. Beyond, she could see a weed-choked slope and a huge barn, broken-backed, tranquil in sunny desolation. To the right of the door she could see the corner either of a detached building or a wing of the house. But she could hear no sound save the voices from the front.

She went on, slowly. Then she stopped. On the square of sunlight framed by the door lay the shadow of a man's head, and she half spun, poised with running. But the shadow wore no hat, so she turned and on tiptoe she went to the door and peered around it. A man sat in a splint-bottom chair, in the sunlight, the back of his bald, white-fringed head toward her, his hands crossed on the head of a rough stick. She emerged onto the back porch….She advanced again, then she glanced quickly over her shoulder. With the tail of her eye she thought she had seen a thread of smoke drift out of the door in the detached room where
the porch made an L, but it was gone. (33)

In this passage, Temple is acutely aware of all sound and motion, seemingly beyond the limits of her body's location. Temple's perpetual motion surpasses the physical movement of her body, as shown in the phrase, "poised with running." It is as if her senses and perception, and not her corporeal body, are always running. The "tail of her eye" is the key phrase to Temple's visual perception, which demonstrates her attention to the edges of human vision and periphery. Faulkner's phrase also shows the general way in which Temple's vision reaches out beyond what seems to be the natural limits of perception.

Temple's peripheral vision and synesthesia allows her to experience architecture as an enveloping structure in which structural boundaries like the door become porous. The following excerpts demonstrate Temple's enveloping experience of the house and grounds. By this point in the novel, several sexually aggressive men have gathered at the Frenchman place:

"Let her go," Goodwin said. Then she was free. She began to back slowly away. Behind her the woman, entering with a dish, stepped aside. Still smiling her aching, rigid grimace Temple backed from the room. In the hall she whirled and ran. She ran right off the porch, into the weeds, and sped on. She ran to the road and down it for fifty yards in the darkness, then without a break she whirled and ran back to the house and sprang onto the porch and crouched against the door just as someone came up the hall. (50)

Temple's head began to move. It turned slowly, as if she were following the passage of someone beyond the wall. It turned on to an excruciating
degree…Then it turned back, slowly, as though pacing invisible feet beyond the wall. (53)

Temple sees beyond physical boundaries and hears sounds throughout the house. She "stood listening to Gowan and the other man go back into the house" (42) and "could hear the faint guttering the lamp made, and the meat in the skillet and the hissing of the kettle on the stove, and the voices, the harsh, abrupt, meaningless masculine sounds from the house" (43). "She heard a trampling of feet in the hall, a rasping of chairs, the voice of the man who had laughed above them, laughing again. She turned, motionless again, watching the door" (48). In his fictionalized Memphis, Faulkner constructs and deconstructs the myth of a sacred interior through Temple's enveloping sense of architecture: "Popeye drew up before one of the dingy three-storey houses, the entrance of which was hidden by a dingy lattice cubicle leaning a little awry" (114). As in Faulkner's other novels in which the threshold is idealized as an opaque, impermeable thing, Sanctuary also presents the threshold in its porosity.

As readers, we quickly discover that the gritty Memphis brothel is equally porous and enveloping as the Frenchman place. Though she remains physically in her room, Temple is always sensing "beyond the door." She demonstrates a synesthesia in which sight and sound are conflated: "Holding the towel about her she stole toward the door, her ears acute, her eyes a little blind with the strain of listening….She reached the door. At once she began to hear a hundred conflicting sounds in a single converging threat….Low down beyond the door Temple could hear the dogs" (118). Temple repeatedly hears the dogs just outside her door (114, 115).

In the following excerpt, Temple's hearing and perception of events beyond the
door assume a color. Temple sees sound in the brothel: "She heard the door shut and the descending feet, the doctor's light, unceasing voice and Miss Reba's labored breath grow twilight-colored in the dingy hall and die away" (120). Faulkner describes Temple's promiscuity of senses and how the brothel becomes an enveloping experience for her as well, despite that she is always behind the door of her room:

She discovered that the house was full of noises, seeping into the room muffled and indistinguishable, as though from a distance. A bell rang faintly and shrilly somewhere; someone mounted the stairs in a swishing garment. The feet went on past the door and mounted another stair and ceased. She listened to the watch. A car started beneath the window in a grind of gears; again the faint bell rang, shrill and prolonged. She found that the faint light yet in the room was from a street lamp. Then she realized that it was night and that the darkness beyond was full of the sound of the city. She heard the two dogs come up the stairs in a furious scramble. The noise passed the door and stopped, became utterly still; so still that she could almost see them crouching there in the dark against the wall, watching the stair. (121-22) The house was full of sounds. Indistinguishable, remote, they came to her with a quality of awakening, resurgence, as though the house itself had been asleep, rousing itself with dark; she heard something which might have been a burst of laughter in a shrill woman voice. (123)

Temple truly sees, hears and feels the entire house in which she has been made a sexual prisoner. Faulkner describes the strain of physical threat mingled with heightened senses. Terror emanates from the porosity and permeability of both building and body, of an architectonic world in which the door is no protection and there is no distinction.
between interior and exterior. Spaces of building and body are promiscuous. In the person and perception of Temple Drake, Faulkner delivers and deconstructs the myth of the sanctuary, a hyper-interiorized, fantasized space in which the body and architectural interiors are sanctified and severed from the exterior. Instead of acting as a barrier between spaces, the doorway is a vehicle for Faulkner's discovery of promiscuous bodies and spaces. It fails to segregate forest and house, as Stoner points out, bodies or senses. The doorway as a means of protection or line of escape, as it functions in *AA*, is obsolete in the enveloping architecture of *Sanctuary*. Faulkner narrates an architecture in which we are compelled to take up architectures beyond the door itself and beyond vision.

**Politics of Body and Building**

Faulkner's enveloping narration of architectures stands in contrast to a material architectural concept. His narration of bodies through architectures is symptomatic of his circumstances as a writer, as an American, and as an inheritor of a multifarious Southern history. Faulkner narrates using modernist spatial techniques through architectures that are nineteenth century and Greek Revival or what came to be known in the U.S. as the "National Style." In his architecture and prose, Faulkner battles a past that is "not even past" (Smith 26). In *White Pillars: Architecture of the South*, J. Frazer Smith describes the progression of Southern architecture from the one room cabin to the "dog-trot" floor plan, a style which would become the formal basis of all later Southern Greek Revival structures in the U.S. (26). The "dog-trot" developed from the one-room cabin because of the societal changes between the life of a pioneer and a slave owner.
The one-room cabin developed into a two-room cabin separated by a hallway. In pioneer
days, dogs would sleep in the hall or the occasional opossum would make its way
through the hall, suggesting the cabin's alternate title, the "possum-run" house.
Eventually, a porch or gallery was attached to the front and back of the house as well as
a stairway and an identical second floor with a large hall-way in between rooms. A
kitchen was usually added to the back of the house, creating the L shape described by
Faulkner in *Sanctuary* (25-27).

As Hines discusses, Greek Revival was a return to origins and basic forms for
Americans during the nineteenth century and also a reaction against the predominantly
Roman Revival architecture and accompanying notions of a republican government by
the founders. Greek Revival was imagined as a "simpler, purer" form, described as
"serenely discrete structure, related to but interstitially separated from each other, as on
the Acropolis in Athens." It yielded itself to the Southern style of "placing important
buildings in relatively serene isolation" (46). The often sited inspiration for the Old
Frenchman place, the Shipp plantation house is attributed to architect William Turner,
who built Faulkner's own house, Rowan Oak. The Shipp House was built in the 1850s
and abandoned by the 1920s with only the occasional curious Ole Miss University
student to haunt its grounds. Sometime after Martin J. Dain's famous photograph and
Faulkner's death in 1962, the mansion was set on fire and allowed to burn to the ground
(*Lost Mansions* Miller 104-5).

The architectural forms of Faulkner's fiction, from the dogtrot to its grandiose
grandchild, the four-pillar neoclassical plantation home, are a part of Western heritage,
now politically and philosophically interpreted as imperial, occularcentric, and
patriarchal. Juhani Pallasmaa describes how the classical architecture is dominated by focalized vision and visual aesthetics in opposition to peripheral vision and the sensuous body. Furthermore, Pallasmaa discusses the poverty of periphery in architectural design and how it affects our bodily responses to spaces architected for focal vision: "The very essence of the lived experience is moulded by hapticity and peripheral unfocused vision. Focused vision confronts us with the world whereas peripheral vision envelops us in the flesh of the world. Alongside the critique of vision, we need to reconsider the very essence of sight itself" (10).xx Pallasmaa describes the forest as a peripheral and enveloping space, one that "integrates us with space, while focused vision pushes us out of the space, making us mere spectators" (13).

The dog-trot form of many Greek Revival style plantation houses in which central corridors passing through the house are framed by thresholds is the focally-minded space to which Pallasmaa refers. Casey agrees with the effect of vision on our movement, describing how the "straight line appears in rectilinear rooms and especially hallways, walkways, and roads. From a straight hallway, one's vision shoots like an arrow out of the building" (138). It is no wonder that Temple spends all of her time moving through and out of the Frenchman place, since its corridors coerce the body into perpetual movement and exiting.

In *Faulkner's Imperialism: Space, Place, and the Materiality of Myth*, Taylor Hagood defines imperial spaces as the "spaces 'created' by imperially conditioned 'ingrained habits of the mind' and perpetuated by their respective strategies of performance" (9-10). Drawing from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Jill Stoner identifies most structures as major architectures,
architectures of power which use the "language of profit" or the "majority language" (18). The Shipp plantation house as well as Faulkner's own Rowan Oak certainly qualify. The Shipp house contained all of the architectonics of power:

Including rigidly symmetrical square main block and the full-height porticoes with double columns on the front and side facades. Inside, a wide center hall served as a receiving room and divided four large rooms on the ground floor. Plaster ceiling medallions were patterned...A graceful curved stair led to the second floor, where the usual four-room arrangement had been altered for Dr. Shipp's purposes. One long chamber served as a meeting space for the local Methodist church and Masonic lodge members. Across the hall, the "medicine room" held pill and potions which Dr. Shipp dispensed to his patients. (Miller 104)

The original owner of Rowan Oak, the Reverend Robert Sheegog, possessed more than six thousand acres and approximately ninety slaves by the year of his death in 1860 (Lawrence 9). These imperial architectures are part of Faulkner's imagination of the Old South's delusions of grandeur and European aristocratic apotheosis. Thresholds in these plantations function similarly as in Benjamin's account of Roman archways in Paris. He writes that they are the "mythical topography": "Out of the field of experience proper to the threshold evolved the gateway that transforms whoever passes under its arch. The Roman victory arch makes the returning general a conquering hero" (AP 87). The Old South's Greek thresholds, porticoes, and lines of escape symbolically transform each trespasser into accomplices of hegemonic power structures.

Stoner suggests that architectures of power require what she calls "lines of force"
(22). She explains that "If architecture is an art, then its minor mode is an essentially politicized art of escape—challenging our fundamental understanding of container and being contained" (22). As Kafka enacts a minor architecture within architectures of power, so Faulkner enacts an enveloping narrative of architecture as a resistance to the political forces of the past. Temple sees and feels beyond doorways with her peripheral vision and haptic senses. It is Faulkner's disregard for doorways as simply lines of escape or means toward segregation in *Sanctuary* that makes his work truly avant-garde by its phenomenological narration.

In *Vision's Immanence*, Faulkner and film scholar Peter Lurie describes the fragmented and cinematic narrative mode in *Sanctuary* as specifically "modernist," arguing that "In addition to being disorienting, her 'modernist' movement through space offers an alternative to the novel's use of Temple as a spectacle or display" (42). Lurie identifies "the association of Temple with the visual pleasures of the commercial cinema and commodity fetishism, and the modernist fragmenting of space" (44). Against Lurie's alignment of *Sanctuary* and modernist aesthetics, I argue that Faulkner's narration of the phenomenological body and architectural envelopment in the novel places it beyond twentieth century literary definitions.xx

Many architectural theorists propose that the history of architecture assumes a privilege of vision. Pallasmaa defines modernist aesthetics according to an "aggressiveness of vision" (17), ocularcentrism, patriarchy, and hegemony. He writes that "modernist design at large has housed the intellect and the eye, but it has left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories, imagination and dreams, homeless" (19). The primacy of vision is first referred to in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "We prefer
sight to almost anything else. The reason is that this, most of all senses, makes us know and *brings to light many differences between things* (qtd. in Casey 345). In "The Nobility of Sight: A Study in the Phenomenology of the Senses," Hans Jonas writes that "the mind has gone where vision pointed" (152). These sources suggest that the historical preference and privilege of vision has actually dominated the mind. In dominating the mind, vision also dictates aesthetics and our values for engaging with the material world.

In their book, *Body, Memory, and Architecture*, Bloomer and Moore explain twentieth century architecture as a result of Gestalt experiments organized around vision. The direct application of their finding to engineering had flaws, however: "As Geoffrey Scott had observed, there is a distinction between the appearance of bigness and the feeling of bigness that a building gives, and only the latter, he added, has to do with aesthetic experience" (32). Twentieth century aesthetics becomes more conscientious of feelings and the experience of the whole body. As Lisa Heschong suggests in her work on thermal experiences with architecture, "information on peoples' actual use and experience of places tends to be sparse...so little attention is paid to how people ultimately use spaces and what they feel about them. The most illuminating descriptions are often written by anthropologists, literary travelers, or poets" (ix).

In a culture that awaits poetic discourse, Faulkner's architecture describes a resistance between spatial politics. He writes an alternative way of sensing the material world, while also demonstrating major spatial power. The major architecture of Faulkner's world details architectural rhythm, which is dependent on the dominance of vision. Temple Drake experiences the Frenchman place and brothel with the whole body, as demonstrated; however, the focal visual aesthetics created by rectilinear spaces
also guides the body through and to the outside of structures. Casey's rectilinear spaces, as shown in the form of the room, building, and the entire city (138-39), is manifest in the smallest scale of the doorway itself. In the passages cited from Sanctuary, Faulkner's doorways become a site of aesthetic and political resistance, in and around which Temple negotiates between mere vision and the alternative being of the sensing body.

In considering Faulkner's architectures as a spatialized tension between the ocularcentric body and the lived body, major architectures and minor architectures, we might identify the sources of that tension within architectural tradition. The rectilinear design certainly has its roots in nineteenth century bourgeois living, which is also a development of eighteenth century aristocratic and monarchical life on a grand scale. In his chapter on "Rhythm in Architecture," Steen Eiler Rasmussen describes houses as rhythmic in their "variations on a theme within a rectilinear pattern" (127). The rectilinear forms of the door and hallway in a Greek Revival house, such as the Frenchman place, are successors of European Baroque palaces. Rasmussen describes how the "monumental" architectures were not constructed for formal precession, yet appear to be made for the purpose of moving bodies through structures:

Based on dynamic spatial planning with rhythmical series of rooms in which none is treated as an independent unit. This was entirely in keeping with the whole system of Absolutism. The royal residence was formed like an eel trap, that is to say, all movement went in one direction only, each room opening on to another and all leading to a symbol of the regime: a royal statue, a throne room, or an audience chamber presided over by the all-powerful king himself. (142)

The doorways connecting the halls of Faulkner's major architectures function similarly
in that both we and Temple are rhythmically guided through its rooms.

The processional form of Faulkner's imagined structures causes one to wonder to where Greek Revival structures lead the body. Temple is not guided toward a king or a greater room in the Frenchman place; rather, her processional is toward the rear exit of the house. As cited from the novel earlier, all of Temple's running and whirling through and out of the house only leads her toward the barn, where she is sexually abused: "The back porch lay in sunlight, a segment of sunlight framed by the door. Beyond, she could see a weed-choked slope and a huge barn" (33). In the introduction, I discuss the separation of insides and outsides as a mythic function of thresholds. Faulkner again demonstrates architectural reciprocity and porosity in his proposition that there are insides to outsides and outsides to insides. By being outside of the Frenchman place, Temple is somehow still part of the mechanization of the building itself, subject to its affective terror, and guided by its imperialist machinations. Instead of fleeing toward a monarch or monument, the nineteenth century international style leads the body in a symbolic flight from crime.

Temple's processional exit from the architectural configuration is reminiscent of the nineteenth century criminal element. The twentieth century pulp detective crime of Sanctuary is referred to and almost anticipated by the criminal material conditions of nineteenth century structural design. Walter Benjamin cites Edgar Allan Poe's use of furniture in the detective novel as one of many examples of architecture's institutionalization of crime. In "One-Way Street," Benjamin writes that the center of the detective novel is the "horror of the apartments": "The arrangement of the furniture is at the same time the site plan of deadly traps, and the suite of rooms prescribes the
fleeing victim's path" (64). In the same work, he alludes to the deathly nature of bourgeois housing: "the sunless corners where palms stand, the balcony embattled behind its balustrade, and the long corridors with their singing gas flames, fittingly houses only the corpse" (65). Though Benjamin specifically refers to European cosmopolitan apartments, he describes the similar designs of Poe's "Philosophy of Furniture" and those found in Faulkner's Southern American fiction. The reader will immediately envision the Victorian house of Miss Emily Grierson in its bourgeois, necrophiliac splendor. Benjamin calls our attention to the embellishments and luxuries of nineteenth century living, but more essentially the ways in which its architecture cultivated the body's movement in direction and flight.

Critics have elaborated on the influence of nineteenth century novelists on Faulkner's work such as Flaubert, Dickens, and Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment* is permeated with Poe's interiorized criminal spaces with constructed pathways leading from the scene of the crime. Though Alyona Ivanovna never has the chance to flee from her apartment, Raskolnikov's pathways through her apartment during and after her murder illustrate Benjamin's hypothesis of an architecture of criminality. The narrator remarks after the murder of Raskolnikov, "If he had been able to realise all the difficulties of his position, the hopelessness, the hideousness and the absurdity of it, if he could have understood how many obstacles and, perhaps, crimes he had still to overcome or to commit, to get out of that place and to make his way home, it is very possible that he would have flung up everything..." (73). Dostoevsky and Poe's Dupin stories illustrate the nineteenth century apartment as visual mazes in which crime and subsequent flight from it is inevitable.
Benjamin accurately characterizes the relationship between rectilinear forms, the directionality of the body, and the epochal, cultural, material and political forces at work in the nineteenth century apartment building. The use of architectural form in detective fiction described by Benjamin and Poe reveal fluctuating class dynamics and competing ideologies. As the inventor of detective fiction, Poe aligns the American detective tradition with the middle class in general. In *Das Passagen-Werk*, Benjamin notes how Poe describes the new criminals of his detective fiction as "neither gentlemen nor apaches, but simple private citizens of the middle-class ('The Black Cat,' 'The Tell-Tale Heart,' 'William Wilson')" (20). It is noteworthy that Faulkner's fiction generally includes criminals of all social standing. While Faulkner's work reflects a different set of cultural values than Poe, the authors similarly write against a heritage of European aristocracy and corresponding major architecture. Temple's spatial experience in the twentieth century echoes the nineteenth century and specifically Southern American concerns cemented in the literary consciousness by Poe. Faulkner manipulates detective traditions from the previous century to illustrate a fallen South; in the process, he narrativizes a new ontology of the body in relation to built things.

Poe writes in his "Philosophy of Furniture" that Americans "have no aristocracy of blood…the display of wealth has here to take the place and perform the office of the heraldic display in monarchical countries" (367-68). Faulkner, as inheritor of Poe's regional fantasies of Southern crime, horror, and imperialism, makes the monarchical architecture of the nineteenth century central to the crime scene of *Sanctuary*. Just as Faulkner flees a ruinous and ruined empire, so Temple flees the scene of the ruined aristocratic home. The Frenchman place refers back to the Old South in a spirit of anti-
nostalgia and anti-myth. Faulkner emphasizes the building's formation as a product of imitation and disillusionment, ironically filled only by disempowered criminals in the present who care little for its former status. The display of aristocracy is replaced by the displaced outcast, Popeye, who wanders the South aimless and impotent in his quest for nothing and no one.

Temple's experience emblematizes both the objectification of the body in an occularcentric tradition of major architecture and a haptic resistance to it. Faulkner's narration of nineteenth century imperial spaces creates a home for the senses that works against the homelessness described by Pallasmaa. Despite the fact that Sanctuary is critiqued as a novel obsessed with sight, Temple's experience of material spaces is sensually enveloping. Faulkner's doorway possesses an elemental and regulatory power over the rest of his architecture. As an object of focalization and exiting, it is both an architecture of power and a line of escape. Specific to Faulkner's threshold is the making of architecture with our bodies rather than the dominance of architecture over our bodies. Stoner writes of minor architecture the following: "The idealized modernist belief of physical determinism is turned on its head, revealing those conditions in which space can be the result of action rather than the cause of behavior" (16). Temple's creation of enveloping spaces with her body and Faulkner's chiasm of insides and outsides are a testament to the role of the subject in recreating space. Temple reterritorializes the southern planation house not with her eyes, but with her acting body.

How does Faulkner's architectural realization of the phenomenological body reconfigure or perhaps correspond with his longstanding status as one of the great American high modernists? As cited earlier, Lurie, Jacques Pothier, and Bruce Kawain
all recognize Faulkner's "modernist" spatial aesthetics of montage and juxtaposition in relation to contemporary cinema. Claims about Faulkner's debt to cinema is rooted in his Hollywood screenwriting under the direction of Howard Hawks and the general relationship between the spatial perception represented in modernist fiction and emerging contemporary cinema. As demonstrated in the introduction, generalizations about modernist spatiality are contradictory and complex. Compared to postmodern space, modernist space and architecture have been described as "deterministic" and demanding the compartmentalization of space. In contrast, modernist space in fiction is described as "cinematic" since it "appeals to an archetype of kinetic and visual presentation" (Kawain 105). The difference in these two concepts of modernist aesthetics is the advent of the experiencing body made possible through the narrative of fiction and film. The narrated body in motion eludes and explodes architectural categorization.

As aforementioned, architecture may continue to be defined by static principles of spatial organization with general disregard for the experiencing body; however, the motion of the body through those architectures redefines previously conceived architectural epochs. Faulkner's buildings as they are experienced transcend the visual principles of the nineteenth century Greek Revival house; at the same time, they are not particularly modernist or postmodern. We would not say that Sanctuary is spatially or architecturally alienated or alienating, nihilistic or narcissistic, as Pallasmaa describes "many architectural projects of the past 20 years" (22). We would not say that the novel describes a loss of spatial orientation or "hyperspace" as suggested by Fredric Jameson in his theory of postmodern aesthetics (117-18). Instead of the postmodern "absence of
inside and outside," (117) Faulkner gives us interiors and exteriors that include one another. In Temple's perception and hapticity across thresholds, Faulkner illustrates the tension between static nineteenth century spatial directionality and an enveloping architecture that is beyond architectural modernism, beyond the door, beyond vision. Instead of aligning with a modernism that distinguishes spaces, Faulkner aligns his fiction with the phenomenological body.

Faulkner's body and structure share a phenomenology. As a metaphorical building herself, Temple's experience within structures indicates a relationship between architectures and ideologies. The "sanctuary" embodied in Temple at first seems to propose a Judeo-Christian myth-laden belief in purity, sanctity, separation, and safety; Faulkner's title is ironic, of course. Temple's sexual abuse is a rhetorical tool for Faulkner's anti-myth, in which he points to the coextensive porosity and penetrability of the mythic sanctuary and young woman. Both are products of a culture that glorifies and yearns for the fantasized boundaries of the past, incapable of understanding the dominant patriarchal techniques of the present.

In *AA*, Quentin's body, is likened to the hall and also a barracks for a garrison of soldiers. Like Temple's body in *Sanctuary*, Quentin's is porous and filled with the ideologies of both the old and recovering South:

His very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts still recovering, even forty-three years afterward, from the fever which had cured the disease, waking from the fever without even knowing that it had been the fever itself which they had fought against and not
the sickness, looking with stubborn recalcitrance backward beyond the fever and into the disease with actual regret, weak from the fever yet free of the disease and not even aware that the freedom was that of impotence. (12).

In this passage, the old South is likened to a disease and reconstruction to a fever. Quentin's identification with the structure is told in terms of the imperialist South in conflict with the new South. We read Quentin's presence in the opening of AA in the context of his previous appearance and certain demise in The Sound and the Fury. We read Quentin with the assurance of his eventual inaction and impotence, as a vessel of the disempowered members of the former Southern regime. As a "commonwealth," Quentin is defined by his containment of a collective past. The disease and fever of the past are at war within him, and they speak through his body. Similarly, Temple's body houses and participates in the tension between the old and the new; however, her engagement with old architectures is a rewriting of the present.

Faulkner's body-world phenomenology is an ontology and a politic. His thresholds are the exemplification of phenomenological narrative; never static, they are always in relation to the moving, experiencing body. Faulkner resists the mythic function of the door as simply a feature or embellishment in architectural experience, making doorways central to the body's identification with the house itself. The author dramatizes the ideologies between the threshold as a concrete political boundary and the threshold as that which can be rearranged by the phenomenological body. In encountering Faulkner's architectures through Temple, we encounter ourselves. The author narrates the sensing world as a new ontology that is also strangely familiar. It reminds us of our own passages through the built world and also illuminates neglected
liminal experience. Faulkner's focus is not simply being; instead, it is being in the world. The minute happenings between walls and doorways, the insignificant seconds in passage between one compartment and another are central to the germination and realization of consciousness. Faulkner makes the consciousness of buildings the consciousness of self-narration. It is a way of telling that permits living and retelling.
Chapter Two
Ecstasis, Ecstasis: Woolf's Threshold in *Between the Acts*

Recently, Woolfian scholarship has turned its eye to Woolf in relation to the private sphere. Jessica Berman writes that "Woolf seems inevitably caught up with interior habits and spaces that make the private sphere the centre of her life and work" (461). Victoria Rosner expresses that Woolf was a "guiding spirit" of her book on the architecture of private life, writing that "No other major novelist of the period was so preoccupied with the critique of Victorian domesticity or so explicit about the relationship of literary modernism to the changing nature of private life. For this reason she stands at the center of any account of modernist literature that is organized around the radicalization of the domestic sphere" (15). We imagine Woolf "at the center" of interior life, and therefore within its domestic architectures. xxii

Many photos of Woolf are taken inside and around Monk's House and at Tavistock square, contributing to our perception of Woolf in containment. In her portraits, such as the famous 1902 profile photos by George Charles Beresford, Man Ray's photo in 1934, and in the 1939 final photo of Woolf by Gisèle Freund among many others, Woolf appears to be contained, not only within the frame, but also in an idealized interior space. Her photos on the property with Leonard, Lytton Strachey, or T.S. Eliot, though outside of the house, allude to domestic interiors, with benches and wicker furniture centered around a tea table. In most of these portraits, Woolf gazes in transfixon out and beyond the realistic scope of the room. She is simultaneously in place and also beyond. Her vision carries her past the borders of the interior space. It
is Woolf's imagination that carries the reader beyond the containment of interior spaces as well. Interior spaces are apparatuses, fixtures at and within which one might expand consciousness and occupy many positionalities at once. Woolf's work is not only at the center; it is transcendent of the center. Her spatial philosophy overwhelmingly posits a visual ecstasis in relation to the threshold that rather decentralizes interiors throughout her writings. Woolf's architectural phenomenology locates the body in its conscious pause before, within, and also transcendent of thresholds.

Ecstatic and contemplative thresholds permeate Woolf's writings. She hypothesizes another present reality in *A Room of One's Own*: "'I saw a woman today,' as one used to say, 'I saw an aeroplane.' Anything may happen when womanhood has ceased to be a protected occupation, I thought, opening the door. But what bearing has all this upon the subject of my paper, Women and Fiction? I asked, going indoors" (40). It is as if consciousness is entwined with the suspended motion of the body. While the body breaks, the mind travels elsewhere. Later, Woolf envisions the hypothetical and comparative past acting experiences of Shakespeare and his sister: "He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door….Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said" (47-48). In this excerpt, Woolf employs another use for the threshold as she does throughout her fiction. The figure stands before a threshold not only in rapt attention, but also in contemplation of art. The gesture of the theater is a threshold, allowing the simultaneous inhabitance of various ontological modes.

The following chapter traces the ecstasy of the threshold in Woolf's final novel
*Between the Acts* and in some of her most architectural and spatially-oriented works. Despite the abundance of comparative scholarship on Woolf and Walter Benjamin, what we will call their related phenomenologies of the body engaging with the constructed environment have been overlooked. Critics have noted Woolf's thresholds as temporal modes, as vaguely sensorial apparatuses, and as organizational structures. Allan Johnson writes, "In Woolf's fiction, thresholds become black holes of belatedness couched within white walls of newness, intensification and modernity, registering the friction between the past and an immediate understanding of being in a particular place at this precise moment of being" (1). In architectural theory, Marko Jobst describes Woolf's structures and furniture in *The Waves* as an example of "becoming-architecture," borrowing from the language of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Jobst broadly engages Woolf's architectures with Deleuze's "passage of life within language," but does not express precisely what is the sensation of Woolf's architectures (64). Ruth C. Miller discusses thresholds as "boundaries of life." She describes the threshold in *To the Lighthouse* as a "spatial metaphor for the present moment. To pause at a threshold, therefore, is a way of extending the present, an embodiment of Mrs. Ramsay's desire to make 'Life stand still here'" (89). Miller, in particular, alludes to the doorway in relation to the movements of the body.

These scholars recognize thresholds as ontological experiences and as emblematic of political and temporal conditions, but what does Woolf teach us about the modern relationship between body and environment? In *Between the Acts*, Woolf's thresholds ecstatically multiply the motion and experience of the body, allowing simultaneous stasis and dislocation, fixation and procession. The threshold is a rift that
both fixes and dislocates, stabilizes and de-centralizes the body while promoting a singularly absorbed form of consciousness. Ultimately, Woolf illustrates how we respond innately to material and visual rhythms and even mimic the pattern of our world with our bodies, suggesting modern phenomenology as a unified and relational experience.

The rift and liminality of the threshold has particular gravity for Woolf, who occupied threshold positionalities in her everyday and literary life. As Bryony Randall points out, Woolf occupies a liminal standing within the study of modernism. She writes that Woolf is "both a founding figure of modernism, but always already a provoking problem for it" and that her "emergence from the margins of modernist studies…not to mention her own attachment to the marginal, peripheral and non-institutionalised, makes her particularly apt to keep challenging the very definition she continually contributes to constructing" (37). Even in her professional life, Woolf presents the possibility of multiple spatial occupations. Her status both within and without the alleged modernist camp alludes to the ecstatic threshold experiences of her novels, proposing a way of envisioning and leaving oneself while remaining connected.

In this chapter, I write as an inheritor of Mark Hussey's phenomenological scholarship in *The Singing of the Real World*. I also believe Woolf was not concerned with objectivity; rather, Woolf writes a lived world. Hussey's work notably emphasizes the positionality of the body for Woolf's characters. He divulges the embodiment and disembodiment of various characters in *The Waves* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. What is yet to be seen from a phenomenological perspective and also in consideration of the private
sphere is a study of how Woolf proposes we actually live and move in the world every day. Throughout her writings, Woolf develops a distinct language for the realization of places and material things, consisting of specific spatial forms and schemes. Woolf allows the reader a particular ecstasy with places through her narrative that is repeated and reinforced across her body of work.

Woolf's free indirect discourse creates a phenomenon which reconciles the acts of observing and participating. Spectatorship and participation are unified in her use of free indirect discourse. Let us observe, for example, the famous passage from the opening of *Mrs. Dalloway*:

> What a lark! What a plunge! For it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air…feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling (3).

The reader acknowledges that Woolf is describing Clarissa Dalloway; yet, we are permitted to experience the environment sensuously along with Clarissa. In the act of perceiving the landscape of Clarissa's past at Bourton, hearing the sound of the opening door, and imagining the "open" feeling of the air on our skin, we also occupy Clarissa's position. In her many narrations of gestures and interactions with the material, Woolf joins sensing and being for the reader. In the act of sensing, she makes interchangeable the hypothetical experiencing character and the sensing reader. In this process, not only sensing, but reading is a bodily act of being. The ecstasy of the
threshold is the ecstasy of Woolf's passages for the reader. Woolf guides and instructs the reader in an ecstatic response to both thresholds and language.

The passage previously quoted is noteworthy for many reasons. In the context of Woolf's writing of the phenomenological body, it is one of many passages in her work emphasizing the architectural gesture of the body in relation to thresholds. As discussed in chapter one and in a Proustian spirit, the window functions similarly to the threshold in Woolf's fiction; it is both a temporal disjuncture and portal. It is a retention of the past and an uneasy protension of the future. It is simultaneously an apparatus for abiding in the present, allowing Clarissa to pause and survey the moment. This scene in *Mrs. Dalloway* is characteristic of Woolf's thresholds in general. Thresholds signify largely across Woolf's oeuvre, in relation to her positionality as a modernist, and especially in relation to her final philosophies and novel.

Let us first review some essential philosophies of the threshold alluded to in chapter one, which will be discussed later in regards to Woolf's writings. Two relevant aspects of the threshold present themselves in relation to the philosophy of architecture and the threshold in Woolf's writings. Both aspects emerge from the status of the threshold as a place between places. The first is the threshold as rift. In his essay "Language," Heidegger cites George Trakl's poem, "A Winter's Evening," as an example of world and thing brought into relation through the speech of language, which in this case is poetics. Heidegger's analysis regards the poem as an example of language and also a linguistic signification of how "things outside touch the things inside the human homestead" (194).
He describes the threshold as "a whole. It sustains the middle in which the two, the outside and the inside, penetrate each other. The threshold bears the between. What goes out and goes in, in the between, is joined in the between's dependability. The dependability of the middle must never yield either way. The settling of the between needs something that can endure, and is in this sense hard" (201). He goes on to call the "between of world and thing…a dif-ference," which creates an intimacy between inside and outside. Heidegger states that the dif-ference is "neither distinction nor relation," emphasizing the complex positionality of that which is spatially and philosophically in-between (200). He describes it as that which brings unity, yet does not necessarily relate elements of difference. Heidegger also denies that the threshold is explicitly distinct from other spaces. Jill Stoner's etymological discovery of the door in relation to the forest leads to a similar conclusion as Heidegger. The space of the threshold is never solely a joint, nor is it completely separate from its surrounding structures and spaces.

The other important aspect of the threshold in Woolf's aesthetic is ecstasy inherent to the threshold as an in between place. In his description of the Palladio of the Palazzo Chiericati, Edward Casey writes that "structurally, it is between open and closed….to be in its semi-enclosure is to be able to pause between duties or errands" (126). He calls the facade an "amalgam of betweens" (127). Casey suggests that the experience of ecstasy is conjoined to the threshold itself. It is neither temporal, nor spatial; rather, it is placial: "For it is in place that we are beside ourselves, literally ecstatic. In becoming implanted, we emerge into a larger world of burgeoning experience, not only by ourselves but with others" (111). Later, Casey discusses being
in an open room as being within and without, describing it as a "spatial ecstasis" and a "standing out" (130). Woolf's fiction imagines how both the individual and the masses partake in threshold ecstasy. In *BTA*, she illustrates the threshold as a mass theatrical ecstasy and a shifting of consciousness between here and there, fixation and absorption.

The following definitions characterize ecstasy as a disembodiment. The *OED* defines ecstasy, the Greek etymology of which is ekstasis, as "the state of being 'beside oneself', thrown into a frenzy or a stupor, with anxiety, astonishment, fear, or passion." Its definition in pathology and mysticism are related; both perspectives describe ecstasy as a state of distraction in which the connection between mind and body is severed, suggesting disembodiment and mental elevation. It has been applied to "all morbid states characterized by unconsciousness, as swoon, trance, catalepsy" from the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries. Similarly, ecstasy was "used by mystical writers as a technical name for the state of rapture in which the body was supposed to become incapable of sensation, while the soul was engaged in the contemplation of divine things." As a disembodiment and mental preoccupation, ecstasy also acquired an association with emotion and the act of shutting out the intellect: "an exalted state of feeling which engrosses the mind to the exclusion of thought; rapture, transport." Also, notice the emphasis on transportation.

Ecstasy has been associated with bodily transference and transformation; it has also been emphasized by modern thinkers and writer as a product of art. Ecstasy is a sensational welding of the body with a specifically modern attitude. David B. Allison, in his exploration of the ecstasis of music in Nietzsche, describes ecstasis as a
philosophically marginalized experience. He writes that ecstasis is "to be eccentric—to put out of place, to be outside, to be drawn outside oneself, out of one's wits, transported: at once, rapture and dispossession. It has to do with transgression of limits, forms, and boundaries—of oneself, of one's own limits, and, often enough, of imposed limits, laws, and prohibitions" (66). Despite the belief that ecstasy severs mind and body, modern art proposes that the body thinks beyond boundaries along with consciousness. The body puts forward the mind in the act of transcendence.

Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei suggests in her book that ecstasy is a response to the loss of or alienation from the quotidian in modern art (19). Ecstasy draws the individual out of and beyond the ideological and placial zones that have been planned, prescribed, and inhabited. Like Woolf, Benjamin associates bodily and affective ecstasis with the threshold in a modern age.

Scholars have frequently written on Woolf and Benjamin in regards to their philosophies of fascism, their respective relationships with Judaism, their political positions during the Second World War, and their public engagements with culture and aesthetics. More recently, Woolf's understanding of theater and drama have been subjects of discussion, as in the writings of Angeliki Spiropoulou and Pamela L. Caughie. Spiropoulou writes on the theater of Woolf and Benjamin in *Between the Acts* in relation to in-betweenness, suggesting that Woolf's "'between', a borderline, non-definitive term, does not just foster a critique of both the past as received tradition and the present as progress. It may also suggest the possibility of an alternative future" (145). One may ask how this borderline philosophy is achieved in everyday life. Woolf answers not in the abstract; rather, her last novel demonstrates an attitude of
betweenness emblematized in the practical materiality of the threshold. The alterity and unity of the threshold as philosophized in Heidegger's work, as well as the mystically transporting experience of being beside oneself suggested by Casey is central to Walter Benjamin's materiality. Benjamin and Woolf's notions of the private realm, interiors, architectures, and politics speak to each other in their interrelated phenomenologies.

The inclusion of so many notes on thresholds and theaters in Benjamin's *Das Passagen-Werk* and the thematic concern for the two in Woolf's *Between the Acts* is historically and philosophically significant. Benjamin decided to stop working on his "magic encyclopedia" (AP 207) in the spring of 1940 as he fled the German military in Paris and headed for Spain. The famous miscommunication and miscalculations that occurred while Benjamin was held up at the Spanish border led to his suicide in September of 1940. Translators Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings note that Benjamin wrote in a letter in 1930 that *The Arcades Project* was the "theater of all my struggles and all my ideas." Benjamin wondered to Gershom Scholem, his lifelong confidant, what would be the application of his work (x-xi). Similarly, Woolf completed *BTA* in February of 1941 and committed suicide in the spring, the circumstances of which differed greatly from those of Benjamin given Woolf's lifelong dealings with depression. Like Benjamin, she also had her doubts about the relevance of her final work, writing that it was "too silly and trivial" as it stood before further revision (Diary V5). Benjamin and Woolf both leave behind these final and self-conscious works of unprecedented and experimental genres, both concerned with thresholds and theater in relation to emerging modern thought. Both write an
architecture of ecstasis that implaces, transfixes, and absorbs the reader in ecstatic attention to the body, human history, and consciousness itself.

**Benjamin's Schwelle: Waves of Transfixion**

As discussed in chapter one, much of Benjamin's work is devoted to the threshold as a material boundary and delineation of mystical psychic realms. I emphasize Benjamin's thresholds primarily as artifacts of materiality and modernity; however, the philosopher also devotes many of his writings to the threshold as a form of "magic" and an object of concentration. In addition to his discussion of the threshold as a signifier of capitalism and imperialism, Benjamin describes it as a "phenomenon of the boundary." He notes the bodily experience of crossing such boundaries within a city: "As threshold, the boundary stretches across streets; a new precinct begins like a step into the void—as though one had unexpectedly cleared a low step on a flight of stairs" (AP 88). In distinction from his other references to thresholds, here Benjamin illustrates boundaries in terms of their bodily affects. The threshold separating body from void is reminiscent of Husserl's tensional arc referred to in chapter one and the abyss produced by the perceptive difference between here and there (Foley 14-15). Benjamin describes the threshold as a rift between places that are strange to the body. The other aspect of the phenomenal threshold for Benjamin is the psychic state of transfixion and ecstasis that it produces.

Benjamin designates the modern era as a time devoid of markedly transitional events, writing that "we have grown very poor in threshold experiences." According to Benjamin, the few threshold encounters left to us are falling asleep and waking, the
rhythm of conversation, and sexual love. Benjamin's transitional experiences require concentration and the absorption of art. He quotes Louis Aragon, who wrote "Mankind loves to remain transfixed...at the very doors of the imagination." In his konvolute on "Prostitution and Gambling," Benjamin develops the etymological connection between thresholds and the mind: "It is not only from the thresholds of these gates of imagination that lovers and friends like to draw their energies; it is from thresholds in general. . . . The threshold must be carefully distinguished from the boundary. A Schwelle <threshold> is a zone. Transformation, passage, wave action are in the word schwellen, swell, and etymology ought not to overlook these senses. On the other hand, it is necessary to keep in mind the immediate tectonic and ceremonial context which has brought the word into its current meaning" (494).

We should differentiate between Benjamin's respective meanings of threshold and boundary. In his writings on thresholds cited earlier, Benjamin describes the boundary as a threshold; yet, in the last quotation in regards to prostitution and thresholds of sexuality, he urges us to distinguish the two terms. One way to interpret the apparent contradiction is that Benjamin's boundary is a threshold, but his threshold is not necessarily a boundary. In his essay on boundaries and borders in regards to La Frontera, Ed Casey classifies thresholds and brinks separately from boundaries and borders, while categorizing all as edges. He writes that thresholds "possess a broadband quality, but they often serve as the initiatory phases of established rituals." In contrast, boundaries are a "way to demarcate a given place or region—to set it off from other places or regions." A further distinction of boundary from border is that the boundary is permeable (385).
If we apply Casey's definitions to Benjamin's more experiential material descriptions, we realize that Benjamin considers urban boundaries to be thresholds because they are ceremonial and take on a ritualistic quality; however, a threshold is not necessarily a boundary since thresholds are not characterized by their demarcating function. While thresholds and boundaries are commonly porous and permeable, the threshold denotes a transformative place that transcends the boundary's function as an opening between places.

Benjamin interprets the threshold as an incomparable experience defined by its status as a place or "zone." We are held into place and also affected; we are affected by our being held into place. This simultaneous fixity and alterability produces an alternative mental state in which a swell, wave, or surge of experience occurs. Indeed, Benjamin discusses the threshold as pure event. In the face of and within thresholds, we experience the contemplation of the past, present, and future. It is an imaginative state which allows us to enter into an event. In both of the previous excerpts, Benjamin relates event and bodily sensation. The last threshold experiences listed by Benjamin are not only theoretically and abstractly liminal; rather, the experience of mind and body are one. He associates the bodily jouissance of the lover with the swoon or trance of the threshold. Another point, discussed later in detail, is that the threshold is imagined as a frame or theater for viewing. The prostitute in the doorway, cited frequently in Benjamin's memoirs, is associated with the sexual wave occurring at the threshold for the viewer.

Though Benjamin's temporal philosophy has been commonly understood and referred to as "Messianic time," in consideration of his Denkbild prose style we might
also call it "Threshold time." The philosopher's use of the threshold is intimately related to and motivated by his Zionist-Marxist philosophy. Time itself is a doorway, a boundary and point of entrance or exit: "For every second of time was the straight gate through which Messiah may enter" (Theses 264). Benjamin illustrates the threshold as a spatial and temporal experience. The doorway is at once a rupture and a continuum of time and space. In Benjamin's configuration of time, the doorway is, again, a place for waiting and contemplation. The doorway arrests the future for the purpose of redeeming all past events. In Marxist time, Benjamin's threshold acts in opposition to homogenous and chronological time; instead, it is a means for historical materialists to "blast open the continuum of history" (Theses 262). He contrasts the threshold of time with the historicist's linear imagining of events, "like the beads of a rosary." The threshold is a break in chronology or a "cessation of happening," as Benjamin describes Messianic and revolutionary time for the Marxist (Theses 263). Spatially and temporally, the threshold is a place to pause and look backward.

In Benjamin's philosophy, the threshold is essential to our cultural acceptance of the future. As mentioned, Benjamin positions the doorway in some present or future moment in which the past is redeemed, which is in opposition to those actively seek guidance regarding future events. He clarifies the Jewish cultural prohibition of "investigating the future" by consulting soothsayers (Theses 264). In "One-Way Street," Benjamin elaborates on the prohibition of fortunetelling and the threshold in relation to the future. In this discussion, he joins the threshold with time and the body. He writes, "He who asks fortunetellers the future unwittingly forfeits an inner intimation of coming events that is a thousand times more exact than anything they
may say" (88). He relates the desire to consult fortunetellers with affective "inertia" and "submissive apathy"; Benjamin describes the attitude that seeks the future outside of itself as deafened and stagnant. In contradistinction, the messages we already know about our futures are active and activating: "signals pass day and night through our organism like wave impulses." The door of time offers waves of time in Benjamin's philosophy.

Benjamin believes there are consequences for exchanging the advice of our own bodies for those of the fortunetellers, and again, they are joined with the threshold: "We do not go unpunished for cheating the body of its power to meet the fates on its own ground and triumph. The moment is the Caudine Yoke beneath which fate must bow to the body. To turn the threatening future into a fulfilled now, the only desirable telepathic miracle, is a work of bodily presence of mind" (89). Benjamin illustrates the power of the threshold with the body and our own surrender to time in terms of the famous Roman surrender (referred to here as a "Yoke"). Similar to Benjamin's Roman victory arch, this martial threshold signifies a confrontation between two forces at odds: fate and the body. Benjamin suggests that thresholds are not only a point of entry or rupture in time, but also a signal of change and activity. The body and mind become one in their activity; the doorway is the point of bodily and mental presence. The archway is a means toward temporal reconciliation and realization.

In his other writings, Benjamin unites thresholds and the imagination of artwork. In *A Childhood in Berlin around 1900*, he describes the "Mummerehelen":

The story comes from China, and tells of an old painter who invited friends to
see his newest picture. This picture showed a park and a narrow footpath that ran along a stream and through a grove of trees, culminating at the door of a little cottage in the background. When the painter's friends, however, looked around for the painter, they saw that he was gone—that he was in the picture. There, he followed the little path that led to the door, paused before it quite still, turned, smiled, and disappeared through the narrow opening. In the same way, I too, when occupied with my paintpots and brushes, would be suddenly displaced into the picture. I would resemble the porcelain which I had entered in a cloud of colors. (134-35)

Benjamin associates a host of experiences with the threshold in this recollection of an early faerie tale. His threshold depicts our pausing, transfixion, and the act of entering into the artwork. In this story, the doorway and the artwork are one. Both absorb the viewer and demand contemplation in the form of cessation. The anecdote which Benjamin believes to be a metaphor for his own early absorption into things, structures, and artwork is not at all surprising, given his emphasis in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

In his artwork essay, Benjamin famously writes that "the painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations" (238). As with the threshold, the artwork for Benjamin similarly implaces the viewer, suggesting ecstasis. The philosopher implies disembodiment in the act of encountering art. It is not only contemplation that occurs the mind apart from the body; the artwork also allows the viewer to enter into the work. Benjamin refers to the tale from his memoir as a way of illustrating concentration in opposition
to distraction:

A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. (239)

Benjamin suggests that artwork contains its own threshold at which the viewer pauses, contemplates, and enters. The artwork creates the threshold state of transfixion referred to earlier. We might consider the tale itself as a myth of art and ecstasy. Like every good story, it suggests a way of navigation. It is a myth instructing the listener on aesthetic experience.

Benjamin's apparent double mindedness about the function of artistic forms and their contrasting effects on the body is cause for discussion. While in the story itself, the threshold and the artwork are united in their ecstatic and absorbing effects, Benjamin claims that architecture, in contrast, does not encourage entrance or absorption. In the sentences preceding the quoted passage, Benjamin describes states of concentration and distraction in opposition, writing that artwork "demands" our concentration. In the original text, Benjamin uses the word "Sammlung," meaning concentration or composure in relation to the artwork. This definition is appropriate for our understanding of subject-object relations. Linguistically, it is logical that we should be "composed" when confronting a composition. He uses "Zerstreuung" to mean distraction, dispersion, scattering, diffusion, dissipation, or diversion. While
Benjamin implies that these are "polar opposites," a curious slippage occurs between the two words that is characteristic of Benjamin's philosophy and terminology.\textsuperscript{xxiv}

Absorption and distraction are aspects of the same phenomenon. For example, in my discussion of the building and threshold as thing in chapter one, I discuss the threshold as a means by which we are abstracted from the earth and brought into relation with the world of objects. The abstraction of the body by the threshold is similar to the absorption of the body by the painting. In Benjamin's application of architectural distraction or dispersion, the attention of the subject is also absorbed. Despite his proposition that individual and mass artwork have opposite effects, Benjamin establishes the interrelatedness of visual art and architectural structure as forms that similarly absorb us.

In summary, Benjamin philosophizes the threshold as a temporal rupture, a break in the traditional historicist chain of events or chronological time, a location of transfixion and concentration, a spatial-bodily point of absorption, bodily self-realization, a reconciliation of temporal states, a point of entry into art, and an aesthetic frame of vision. The following section delineates the theater as an ecstatic threshold experience as it is theorized throughout Benjamin's writings.

\textbf{Benjamin, Nietzsche and the Threshold of Theater}

Many objects acquire cultural and affective significance throughout Benjamin's oeuvre. The threshold and the theater are recurring and integral forms in Benjamin's architecture. Both apparatuses are objects of transfixion and ecstasis in their many manifestations. Benjamin's language regarding artwork and thresholds implies that the
theater is a combination of the two. The theater in relation to genre is significant to Benjamin's beginnings as a scholar and in his personal life. His *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiel*, focusing on European and specifically German baroque tragedy, was his only completed book and his attempted entrance onto the academic stage. According to George Steiner, this work was rejected by two academic committees at Frankfurt, which propelled him into a career of writing outside of the university (Origin 11). Benjamin's essay, "What is Epic Theater?" details the many aspects of the modern theatrical form in its task to "discover the conditions of life" (150). His writing on alienation and modernity is a direct product of his close relationship and ongoing discourse with Bertolt Brecht.

Howard Eiland cites several words for theater used by Benjamin in various contexts, each of them relating to the act of showing and viewing. Among his many uses of the term is the word, "Welttheater." In his "Exposé of 1935," he philosophizes interior organizations in relation to the masses. He says of the private individual that "His living room is a box in the theater of the world" (9). Benjamin repeatedly discusses fashion in the context of a theater: "This spectacle, the unique self-construction of the newest in the medium of what has been, makes for the true dialectical theater of fashion" (64). He uses the phrase, "Schauspiel der Mode" to suggest a show of fashion, which is directly related to the concept of spectacle. In "A Berlin Chronicle," Benjamin uses the word "Schauplatz" to describe his childhood in Berlin as a "theater of purchases." He writes, "Language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theater" (25). In these contexts, the connotation of theater is more closely related to a scene, as a more abstract and
conceptual use of theater (Eiland, personal communication, July 24, 2016).

Throughout his work, Benjamin's concept of theater is intimately bound to his theory of things, commodification, relations between subjects and objects, and how the growing masses of the nineteenth century had altered our relations with things. In "Walter Benjamin, or Nostalgia," Fredric Jameson describes Benjamin's concept of theater, specifically Elizabethan tragedy, as defined by allegory, and its inherent connection between material things and ideas. He notes that Benjamin's "sensitivity is for those moments in which human beings find themselves given over into the power of things" (60). Jameson identifies Benjamin's definition of baroque theater in relation to objects. In "Allegory and Trauerspiel," Benjamin quotes Novalis' "correct divinations": "Scenes which are genuinely visual are the only ones which belong in the theatre" (191). Even in this earlier work written between 1924 and 1925, Benjamin demonstrates a relationship between the theater and seeing, showing and ideology.

Benjamin's "Schauspiel" contains an important tension between showing and seeing indicated by its etymological components, as is suggested by Eiland (personal communication). Another word associated with the term in German is "Opferschauer," literally meaning sacrifice or sacrificial show. The Greek root of Schauen is thyóskoos, meaning "Sacrifice-diviner." The Greek roots of the English word tragedy has its roots in the "goat song" and is believed to originate from the dramatic contests, during which the winning dramatist would be awarded a goat. Both terms are related to the theme of sacrifice. What is distinct about the German origin of theater, as opposed to the English, is the specific understanding of drama as a visual and also mystical experience with art. In their discussion of Eastern influence on Greek mysticism,
Walter Burkert and Margaret Pinder describe the thyóskoos as one who, similar to augurs or "bird-diviners," read the patterns of birds as omens and interpreted the contents of the animal's liver (49). This ancient ritual, like the origin and development of drama, contained the distinct tension between seeing and showing. Diviner and audience are both held captive in the contemplation of the thing being shown.

Another aspect of Benjamin's theater is the relationality between bodies in the act of showing and seeing. Rainer Nägele discusses Benjamin's theory of baroque and modern drama as a presentation of bodies by the actors and the audience. Other German words related to theater are *vorstellen*, to put forward, present or imagine, and also *darstellen*, to present, represent, or depict (2-3). This "putting forward" refers to the show on stage, but also alludes to the psychic activity of the subject as described by Benjamin. As the show imagines, so does the viewer. Nägele also quotes Peter Szondi in his recognition of theater as an abyss between bodies, as commonly emblematized by the separation of stage and audience by the orchestra: "Man entered drama so to speak only as fellow-man. The sphere of the 'in-between' seemed to him the essential part of his being" (12). The phenomenology of Benjamin's theater contributes to his theory of the threshold as a site of vision, relationality among bodies, and the realization of betweenness.

Benjamin's theater in relation to the shown and seen spectacle of things is most evident in his expression of the "phantasmagoria," repeatedly referred to in the *Arcades Project*. The phantasmagoria draws on the exhibition of commodity, which Benjamin believes is central to the development of modern drama, and also the attention or contemplation of the masses. The arcades of Paris becomes a theater
through the presentation of phantasmagoria. Even in the "Translators Forward," Eiland and McLaughlin describe the phantasmagoria in theatrical terms, writing that it "sets the tone for Benjamin's deployment of motifs, for his recurrent topographies, his mobile cast of characters, his gallery of types" (xii). The phantasmagoria is inherently a type of theater, with its etymological roots in the Greek agora. Similar to his use of the theater, Benjamin's phantasmagoria refers to both the specific apparatus and also the concept more broadly. He alludes to the popular device in the nineteenth century as a predecessor of early cinema and a successor of later theater.

In his first reference to the phantasmagoria, Benjamin joins the artwork and the threshold as aspects of theater and exhibition: "World exhibitions glorify the exchange value of the commodity. They create a framework in which its use value recedes into the background. They open a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted" (AP 7). While Benjamin makes a distinction between the "oppositional poles" of concentration and distraction in his artwork essay, here he envisions a combined absorption and distraction. The market absorbs for the purpose of distraction. Benjamin uses phantasmagoria and theater interchangeably in the previously quoted excerpt on the "private environment," the interior, and the "theater of the world," writing that from this place "arise[s] the phantasmagorias of the interior" (9). One of the common aspects of Benjamin's threshold and theater is his use of the "framework" and vision for both. The frame of the theater is a threshold that the viewer must cross in her absorption into the artwork or vision.

The frame or threshold of the theater is described as a place to which the viewer is transported and also experiences a bodily ecstasy. We find a visual
description of the theater in relation to the material world as Benjamin traces the
difference in European and Greek attitudes toward the concept of the theater:

In the European Trauerspiel as a whole the stage is also not strictly fixable, not
an actual place, but it too is dialectically split. Bound to the court, it yet
remains a travelling theatre; metaphorically its boards represent the earth as the
setting created for the enactment of history; it follows its court from town to
town. In Greek eyes, however, the stage is a cosmic topos. 'The form of the
Greek theatre recalls a lonely valley in the mountains: the architecture of the
scene appears like a luminous cloud formation that the Bacchants swarming
over the mountains behold from a height—like a splendid frame in which the
image of Dionysus is revealed to them.' (Origin 119)

Both of Benjamin's descriptions contain the theatrical concepts he later applies in his
Arcades Project. The theater is at once an idea and also constructed space for show.
Benjamin understands the theater as a frame or lens through which a series of images
is displayed. Benjamin's idea of the arcade, the phantasmagoria, the threshold, and the
artwork are united in his concept of theater.

The phantasmagoria as theater acquires a particular association with illusion
and trickery, which are qualities of the artwork and threshold experiences as well in
Benjamin's writings. He maintains that the "Commune puts an end to the
phantasmagoria holding sway over the early years of the proletariat" (AP 12). In his
use of the phrase "holding sway," recall Benjamin's description of the swell of the
threshold. He associates the threshold, theater, and artwork with hypnosis,
contemplation, absorption, and persuasion. Illusion, like ecstasy, is also a "holding" or
an ecstatic implacement. Benjamin's association of art and the theater with the
threshold, entrance, and implacement is construed as a powerful and dominating
experience. The ecstasy of the theater is manifest in Benjamin's phrase that the viewer
"abandons himself" in the process of watching (14). The ecstasy of the threshold is
joined with the theater in Benjamin's comment that the viewer is "carried away in a
phantasmagoria" when standing on a balcony and looking upon the world exhibition
(18). The phenomenon of both entering and being held by the artwork, threshold and
theater is easily understood as artifice. The duplicitous experience of the theater or
phantasmagoria for the viewer relates to the inherent double-mindedness of
performance, personas, and acting. The theater confronts us with the realms of illusion
and reality.

Benjamin's theory of drama was influenced by Nietzsche's critique of the
Apollonian emphasis on fantasy and dreaming in drama, argued in *The Birth of
Tragedy*. Eiland suggests that Benjamin's concept of Schauspiel would have been
informed by Fredrich Nietzsche's "Schauspielerei" (personal communication). Acting
and masks are thematic concerns throughout Nietzsche's major works. Benjamin's
ideas about the theater and drama in general are defined by the common phenomenon
of display and viewing as well as the ecstatic contemplation of the audience in relation
to the visual. As Steiner notes, Nietzsche's theory of tragedy was most influential on
Benjamin's *Origin* (13); however, we can see throughout Benjamin's oeuvre the
influence of Nietzsche's swift, dynamic prose style and his attraction to opposing and
emerging cultural forces. He cites Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* regarding the
modern mass audience's development from the Greek chorus: "The satyr of chorus is,
first of all, a vision of the Dionysian mass of spectators, just as the world of the stage, in turn, is a vision of this satyr chorus." Benjamin acknowledges the stated and explicit ecstasy Nietzsche associates with Dionysian tragedy, writing that "the ecstatic, whether in the form of the mass of the individual, is—so long as he is not transfixed—only to be conceived in the state of most violent action." At the same time that he draws on Nietzsche, Benjamin also departs from Nietzsche's insistence that the Greek chorus and the onlooking mass are united (Origin 103-104).

The theater and ecstasy are particularly united in Nietzsche's development of Apollonian epic and Dionysian tragedy, repeatedly describing the tragic drama as producing chaos and rapt contemplation: "a radiante floating in the purest bliss and painless contemplation beaming from wide-open eyes" (BT 25). He contrasts the gentle, dream-like contemplation of Apollo with the more violent ecstasy and revelry of Dionysus: "With sublime gestures he reveals to us how the whole world of torment is necessary so that the individual can create the redeeming vision, and then, immersed in contemplation of it, sit peacefully in his tossing boat amid the waves….And let us now imagine how the ecstatic sound of the Dionysian revels echoed ever more enticingly around this world, built on illusion and moderation" (26). Nietzsche again refers to "the ecstasy of the Dionysiac state, abolishing the habitual barriers and boundaries of existence" (39). In Nietzsche's description of theater, we are again reminded of Benjamin's threshold ecstasy, including the bodily sensation of waves, contemplation, as well as the sensing of boundaries. Finally, Allison's exploration of ecstasy in Nietzsche reveals the essential quality of dramatic ecstasis as it exists in Benjamin and Woolf's writings: "disindividuation" and the identification of the ecstatic
viewer with the mass of viewers (71). We find Nietzsche's concept of mass spectatorship and ecstasy at the heart of Benjamin's phenomenology of modern bodies and motion.

Nietzsche's connection between the theater and illusion is also influential on Benjamin's idea of phantasmagoria and trickery. For Nietzsche, watching the actor is also a hypnotizing, ecstatic experience. In *The Will to Power*, in which his first sentence is "Nihilism stands at the door," Nietzsche maintains that "everything turns into histrionics." In his flight from Socratic knowledge and the modern desire for "perfection," (44) Nietzsche likens our understanding of history to an over-dramatization or what he later refers to as "play-acting" (163). Nietzsche's notion of theater and our contemplation of it is different than that of Benjamin since Nietzsche describes acting as a mode of will in which we fool ourselves into believing we have the power to act upon ourselves. His meaning of acting is that we hypnotize ourselves. Acting is self-deception. Nietzsche understands histrionics as a way of seeing ourselves throughout history in our ability to act. Theater as a threshold for vision is relevant for Woolf's theater as well. In his discussion of the "problem of the actor," Nietzsche extends the "inner longing for a role and mask" beyond the physical theater, writing that the "histrionic instinct" is a kind of "hypnotism" (225-26). Especially in *BTA*, Woolf illustrates in the Pointz Hall pageant the historical struggle for the contemplation and ecstasy of the viewer before the threshold of the artwork.

**Woolf's Ecstatic Thresholds**

In her body of work leading up to *BTA*, Woolf philosophizes the threshold as an
ecstatic experience that allows the contemplation of potential temporalities and places. In a state of threshold ecstasy, the body in Woolf's writing reimagines its environment. In so many descriptions of thresholds, Woolf shows the individual sending herself forward into a restructured place so that purportedly concrete space becomes an alterable artwork. As in the previous chapter on Faulkner's doorways, windows in *Mrs. Dalloway* become thresholds. Also similar to Faulkner's thresholds, windows in the novel are a means of escape for spatially and subjectively marginalized identities. Clarissa and Septimus are both in ecstatic contemplation before their respective windows.

The opening ecstatic plunge of Clarissa's consciousness is mirrored in her movement through the house as well. She "felt often as she stood hesitating one moment on the threshold of her drawing room, an exquisite suspense, such as might stay a diver before plunging while sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to break, but only gently split their surface, roll and conceal and encrust as they just turn over the weeds with pearl" (30). Benjamin and Woolf both associate the bodily experience of the threshold with suspense or stasis and also the motion of a wave. The act of standing within allows the contemplation of what is spatially and temporally before the body.

As Clarissa contemplates the abyss, she has the sensation of being drawn out or away. Clarissa's gestural plunge mimics Septimus' actual plunge: She "paused by the open staircase window which let in blinds flapping, dogs barking, let in, she thought, feeling herself suddenly shriveled, aged, breathless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which
now failed" (31). Woolf philosophizes the immanence and transcendence of the body. The threshold is a space in which the material within and without are joined and mingled. Woolf does not describe ecstasy as the mind clearly severed from the body, as understood in previous centuries; rather, the whole sensing self together seems able to perceive herself as she would another person. In the ecstatic thresholds of *Mrs. Dalloway* is the nascent phenomenology of *BTA*, where Woolf endorses the attitude of the mirror and ability to perceive oneself from the position of another while maintaining the self.

Woolf and Benjamin both envision the bodily phenomenon of the threshold as an ecstasy akin to the motion of waves. In *The Waves*, motion and movement are central to Woolf's language and structure. She writes in her diary that she wished to "make prose move—yes I swear—as prose has never moved before: from the chuckle & the babble to the rhapsody" (4 V.4). Woolf most significantly establishes the door in relation to the wave as a rhythm and also as part of her spatial philosophy of ecstasy. The body is likened to a door. Jinny describes her own ecstasy in "giving myself up to rapture" and that her body "lives a life of its own." She describes her body's motion as a rhythm and a doorway: "I meet the eyes of a sour woman, who suspects me of rapture. My body shuts in her face, impertinently, like a parasol. I open my body, I shut my body at my will" (63-64).

Woolf repeatedly associates the opening and closing motion of the door with an ecstatic waiting. Jinny describes the rhythm of a dance in terms of the door's motion and also a unifying, inescapable force in which the body is both taken and held.
This is the momentary pause; the dark moment….The door is opening and shutting….I am rooted, but I flow….We go in and out of this hesitating music. Rocks break the current of the dance; it jars, it shivers. In and out, we are swept now into this large figure; it holds us together; we cannot step outside its sinuous, its hesitating, its abrupt, its perfectly encircling walls. (101-103)

In this novel, the rhythm of the waves and the perpetually opening and shutting door, associated with Percival's arrival, is expressed as an orgasmic ecstasy in this scene. Jinny waits for a break that is unaffected by the door's opening and closing; in fact, the rhythm of the door is the motion of waiting. Jinny voices the cohort's unified anticipation, saying "we look straight in front of us, ready for what may come (the door opens, the door keeps on opening)" (141). Percival's entrance is a fulfillment of a yearned for future and also the group's lost past. Neville describes it as a break in a stretch of anguish, similar to the breaking of a wave: "Oh, then the agony—then the intolerable despair! And then the door opens. He is here" (140).

The motion of the door and the body is essential to Woolf's spatial philosophy and temporality in *The Waves* and throughout her writings. She depicts the expanding and shrinking, closing and opening of the body as a parallel to the threshold. "The circle is unbroken; the harmony complete. Here is the central rhythm; here the common mainspring. I watch it expand, contract; and then expand again" (94). "The mind grows rings; the identity becomes robust; pain is absorbed in growth. Opening and shutting, shutting and opening, with an increasing hum and sturdiness" (257). Particularly in *The Waves*, the motion of the door is applied to the collective body as well as the personal body. The ecstatic body in response to the threshold is apparent. 117
throughout Woolf's earlier works \( ^{xxv} \)

**Threshold Ecstasy in *Between the Acts*\**

Woolf's final novel is composed of Woolf's own "orts, scraps, and fragments," (BTA 188) which she dutifully collects and records from her everyday encounters. Woolf approaches the phrases that become integral to her prose with delight, reverence, and concern. In her 1937 radio talk, "Words Fail Me," Woolf speaks directly to this complexity, emphasizing the wildness and anarchic nature of words when we try to make them functional. She expresses a related disdain for the impulse to "cover…with phrases" the phenomena of living, as Bernard describes the collective response to Percival's death in *The Waves* (265). He remarks, "It is curious how, at every crisis, some phrase which does not fit insists upon coming to the rescue" (184). Mrs. Ramsey reflects upon the phenomenon in her frustration at the "insincerity" of reciting the phrase in her mind, "We are in the hands of the Lord" (TTL 64). Woolf constructs the novel with her intense and compulsive penchant for observing English phrases. Throughout *BTA*, these phrases are the emblems of British consciousness and also collective notions of the "civilization" that Woolf problematizes in narrative.

Woolf's words in *BTA* are "wild" and "experimental" as she imagines in her writing of them (228 Diary V.5). Despite that her readers would describe her final work as structurally and conceptually more conventional than *The Waves*, its language is somehow more liberated. It lucidly performs the interconnectivity and wholeness that Woolf was seeking throughout her fiction. Its invisible threads are endless.

Beginning with the first page, Woolf mimics colloquial platitudes for the purpose of
rethinking its unified discourse. We understand the function of Woolf's thresholds, material life, and environment early in the novel through a voice which recounts the collective epistemology of Pointz Hall.

The threshold of the novel itself is one before which Woolf seemed absorbed, contemplative, and fixed. The language of her diary expresses an attitude of ecstasy in the very writing of the work, one which is later transferred to Miss La Trobe in her desire for the contemplation and fixation of her audience. Woolf writes, "The difficulty is that I get so absorbed in this fantastic Pointz Hall I can't attend to Roger (137). . . . I've been rather absorbed in P.H. hence headache. Note: fiction is far more a strain than biography—thats [sic] the excitement" (172). She repeatedly describes her work on *BTA* as "in between" (289) her other work, such as Roger Fry's biography. There is an ecstasy in her desire to "fix upon" her writing of *BTA* (299). Indeed, the fixation and disembodiment of ecstasy is apparent in her description of writing the novel, using the words, "expand & soar," (310); a "concentration" (311); "'happy'" and "excited" (336 V.5). Woolf's final writing was an absorbing threshold or abyss before which she paused and looked at herself, as on some level she did with all her writings.

The political climate that surrounded the writing of her last novel was a rift and threshold of its own. On June 9 of 1940, Woolf expresses her hesitation in the midst of invasion and potential capture: "I will continue—but can I? The pressure of this battle wipes out London pretty quick. A gritting day. As sample of my present mood, I reflect: capitulation will mean all Jews to be given up. Concentration camps" (292-93 V.5). The process of composing *BTA* consists of many entrances for Woolf, as well as waiting. The threshold of war coalesces with the threshold of theater in this case. The
theater of action that we associate with the world stage is alluded to in Woolf’s writing of a pageant that takes place at the time of international warfare. The alternative titles for Three Guineas, her political work preceding BTA, all allude to the threshold and with an attitude of confrontation, initiation, and change: The Open Door (6), A Knock on the Door (28), Tap at the Door (42 V.4).

In her introduction, Melba Cuddy-Keane writes of the novel's rhythms in terms of waves and polarities:

The novel is suffused with such rhythms of alternation, and it continually challenges its readers with the question of what these rhythms mean. Does Woolf present a society on the verge of extinction, with its history a sad tale of loss, both of meaningful relationships with one another and of a meaningful relationship with the land? Or does this spring pageant adumbrate a society revivifying its potentials for renewal and regeneration, trembling on the threshold of a future that could reform and transform its tarnished, yet nevertheless fertile, past? Or is it neither one nor the other of these stark polarities, but rather some third possibility, inhabiting a realm in between? The tide between yes and no. (xxxix)

Cuddy-Keane explains not only the reading, but also the studying of the novel as a rhythmic, ecstatic negotiation between two poles. The "tide" between things, places, and positionalities is reflected in the tensional arc of each player and audience member. The tension of the threshold throughout is most vividly realized in the tension of the audience before the theater.

Woolf first evokes the image of a seemingly unknown "foolish, flattering lady,
pausing on the threshold of what she once called 'the heart of the house,' the threshold of the library, [who] had once said: 'Next to the kitchen, the library's always the nicest room in the house.' Then she added, stepping across the threshold: 'Books are the mirrors of the soul'" (16). Woolf's description of what seems to be part of the consciousness of the house itself is the first of many important references to various thresholds and the attitude Woolf suggests with each. The lady's recitation of an inherited truism takes place as she pauses in the doorway. This image is the first of many others where Woolf engages, arrests, and enraptures a consciousness in relation to the doorway.

The foolish lady pausing in the doorway gently alludes to the appearance of "Flimsy," Lucy Swithin. In the next scene, Isa is reading the Times story, which describes the sexual assault of a woman as seen through a doorway: "That was real; so real that on the mahogany door panels she saw the Arch in Whitehall; through the Arch the barrack room; in the barrack room the bed, and on the bed the girl was screaming and hitting him about the face, when the door (for in fact it was a door) opened and in came Mrs. Swithin carrying a hammer." These two references are emblematic of doorways throughout the novel, acting as a perceptive theatre and also as a place of being. Throughout the novel, Woolf's players experience the ecstasis of pausing before or within thresholds, both visually and bodily.

As with Benjamin's threshold and theater, Woolf's threshold holds Isa and the reader in place while contemplating the moving images of the news story: "And they dragged her up to the barrack room where she was thrown upon a bed. Then one of the troopers removed part of her clothing, and she screamed and hit him about the face…"
(20). Woolf writes of the doors as if they become the arch. The doorway becomes a theater frame through which Isa may visually enter and contemplate the action before her. Woolf presents the doorway in her final novel as a portal for visions, action, and images. In this scene, the threshold behaves as a private theater for Isa, both removing her from the present moment and also allowing a perceptual disembodiment. As cited earlier, Casey contends that the threshold is a place for standing beside oneself. Even as Isa is before the threshold, she is also moving through it.

We encounter Woolf's pauses before thresholds in many forms throughout her interior world. The characters perpetually pause before thresholds within the house. As she shows William around the interiors of Pointz Hall, Ms. Swithin "stopped. There was a door. 'The morning room.' She opened the door. 'Where my mother received her guests'….She shut the door" (69). Lucy is in contemplation before the rooms most intimately related to her childhood, some of which suggest her early childhood trauma. Furniture also provides perceptual thresholds for the act of pausing. Lucy whistfully notes the relation between body and thing: "We live in others…We live in things" (70). The reader is reminded of Benjamin's similar sentiment about owner and object in "Unpacking my Library," mentioned in chapter one, that "it is he who lives in them" (67).

Lucy, Dodge and Bartholomew stand in front of cupboards and bookcases which are symptomatic of our desire to “miniaturize all the time,” as Bloomer and Moore remark in Body, Memory, and Architecture. They write, “A chest or even an object upon a table may gain importance by recalling the columns and arches and even the roof of a house or a palace” (4). The space of the threshold is defined by the
objects of contemplation within its frame and between its vertical poles, but also the depth of its content. Bartholomew (115) stands in contemplation of "Books: the treasured life-blood of immortal spirits" and "poets; the legislators of mankind" (115). Dodge contemplates Lucy's and his own eyes in the reflection of the glass while "standing by the cupboard" (71). This scene is truly ecstatic in Woolf's envisioned disembodiment of the self and entrance into an alternative mental and visual state. It also anticipates the later ecstatic entrance of Woolf's audience before the threshold of the not only the theater, but also the other frequently alluded to furniture, the mirror.

The patterns of vision and ecstasy associated with the interior threshold are also a part of exterior thresholds. Thresholds in Woolf's external environment abound in the novel and are always in relation to the ecstatic theater. Woolf's threshold-theaters bring into relation the aspects of the palazzio and the theater, in that the threshold is a "burgeoning experience, not only by ourselves but with others" (Getting Back 111). The barn is a potential theater in case of rain, as one of the villagers remarks, "We'll have a play of our own. In our Barn. We'll show 'em…how we do it." For the villagers, the barn is a place for public gathering and a collective viewing of spectacle. It is embedded in the novel's ongoing conversation about "civilization," evolution, and the development of human consciousness.xxvi

The barn is at once an emblem of former civilization and a connection to the history of drama. It is described in relation to the earlier threshold-theater through which Isa envisions the action of the news story. "The Barn to which Lucy had nailed her placard was a great building in the farmyard. It was as old as the church, and built of the same stone, but it had no steeple. It was raised on cones of grey stone at the
corners to protect it from rats and damp. Those who had been to Greece always said it reminded them of a temple….splendidly illuminated when the doors at the end stood open….Now benches were drawn across the floor of the Barn. If it rained, the actors were to act in the Barn; planks had been laid together at one end to form a stage. Wet or fine, the audience would take tea there" (26).

The former excerpt seems to be focalized in relation to Lucy's character and her part in decorating the barn. As is characteristic of Woolf's free indirect discourse, the perspective of the narration is a combination of what might be partially perceived by the characters located within the action and voice of the humanized but unnamed narrating poet. In the following passage, we are given a collective understanding of the barn's history and also Giles' perspective of the barn as an open space seemingly ready for action. "The Barn, the Noble Barn, the barn that had been built over seven hundred years ago and reminded some people of a Greek temple, others of the middle ages, most people of an age before their own, scarcely anybody of the present moment, was empty. The great doors stood open. A shaft of light like a yellow banner sloped from roof to floor" (99). Woolf writes the threshold-theater as a place that invites contemplation and ecstasis. Also, notice Woolf's regular capitalization of the barn throughout most of the novel. Her capitalization suggests that the barn is a proper noun and attached to the property of the house, which is also given a proper name. Like the Colosseum, it is a general noun imbued with communal importance.

Giles' perceptual pause while being confronted with the barn threshold is a continuation of his own contemplation at external thresholds. On his way to the barn, Giles meets a gate, before which he contemplates the new players in the cast of the
novel, Mrs. Manresa and William Dodge. "Stone-kicking was a child's game. He remembered the rules. By the rules of the game, one stone, the same stone, must be kicked to the goal….The gate was a goal; to be reached in ten. The first kick was Manresa (lust). The second, Dodge (perversion). The third, himself (coward). And the fourth and the fifth and all the others were the same" (99). The threshold is not only a place for concentration; for Woolf, it is a place made ready for the weighing of psychic states, philosophies and the reflection of action.

In this scene, Giles contemplates the snake that has killed itself in the process of trying to swallow a frog. As Giles considers the actions of his new acquaintances in terms of lust and perversion, Isa considers the "three emotions [that] made the play of human life": "Love. Hate. Peace." (92). Giles' encounter before the threshold of the gate and its relationship to his self-reflection anticipates the later ecstasis of the audience before the drama and their consideration of its "meaning." Woolf establishes thresholds as places of confrontation with oneself.xxvii

Although the weather is "fine" and the action of the pageant takes place outside, the barn threshold is also a place for pausing: "This fine old Barn…' said Mrs. Manresa, stopping in the doorway. It was not for her to press ahead of the villagers. It was for her, moved by the Beauty of the Barn, to stand still; to draw aside; to gaze; to let other people come first." Mrs. Parker is also said to have been "stopping for the same reasons." Mrs. Manresa "stood smiling, waiting. Then old Mrs. Swithin came in. She was gazing up too…” (101). The threshold and theater are places for many bodies to behold a spectacle in union. Woolf describes Mrs. Manresa and Lucy in a state of implacement and also absorption. In her phenomenology of thresholds, Woolf
develops a philosophy of liminality that is only made possible through the entrance and stasis of the body in between structures.

Woolf continues a threshold phenomenology in her construction of the outdoor theater. Like the interior threshold, the theater perceptively invites entrance and contemplation. The future ecstasy of the audience is projected by the director Miss La Trobe's own ecstatic contemplation of the space. Woolf depicts the outdoor space of the theater in great detail and perceptively arranges the theater as a threshold-frame for the audience:

Rows of chairs, deck chairs, gilt chairs, hired cane chairs, and indigenous garden seats had been drawn up on the terrace. There were plenty of seats for everybody. But some preferred to sit on the ground. Certainly Miss La Trobe had spoken the truth when she said: "The very place for a pageant!" The lawn was as flat as the floor of a theatre. The terrace, rising, made a natural stage. The trees barred the stage like pillars. And the human figure was seen to great advantage against a background of sky. (75-76)

In this passage, the reader is reminded of the images of the earlier news story imagined by Isa as taking place in between the two door panels. Similarly in the pageant, the trees act as a frame through which the reader experiences and contemplates the interiority and depth of the threshold-theater.

In her similar use and construction of thresholds and theaters, Woolf describes both in terms of their width and depth. The liminality of pausing within the threshold is explored through Woolf's many references to the players of the pageant and Miss La Trobe's bodily passages within the framework of the theater. In the following
passages, the director and players are caught between the poles of the theater's frame, similar to the woman's pause in the doorway. The reader is told of Miss La Trobe's plans for a natural theater in the attitude of a fond memory. From its inception, the director imagines the action occurring in between. "'The very place!' Miss La Trobe had exclaimed the first time she came to call and was shown the grounds…'Winding in and out between the trees….There the stage; here the audience; and down there among the bushes a perfect dressing-room for the actors'" (57). Before the pageant, "Miss La Trobe was pacing to and fro between the leaning birch trees" (62). During the play, "A long line of villagers in shirts made of sacking began passing in and out in single file behind her between the trees" (78). The theater forms a framed structure as does the threshold. As E.H. Wright states, Woolf uses the theater as a "framework which sustains the social structure" (305). The threshold of Woolf's theater sustains both the envisioned social structure of Miss La Trobe's pageant and also the structure of the rural English society.

The enclosure of the trees suggests an attitude of performance most obviously in the following passage, where the space is likened to not only a physical structure, but more pointedly, alluded to as a theater by virtue of the birds' movement in between the two columns of the stage setting. The trees form a threshold for the drama of nature's theater:

Waiting for Mr. Streatfield, she paced between the birch trees. The other trees were magnificently straight. They were not too regular; but regular enough to suggest columns in a church; in a church without a roof; in an open-air cathedral, a place where swallows darting seemed, by the regularity of the
trees, to make a pattern, dancing, like the Russians, only not to music, but to
the unheard rhythm of their own wild hearts (65).

Here, Woolf emphasizes the perception of the theater stage as a space in which drama
occurs between two poles, as suggested by interior thresholds of Pointz Hall. The
other essential dimension in Woolf's aesthetics of the threshold is her concern for the
depth of action within its frame.

Woolf's use of the threshold and theater is related to her interest in the distance
and relationality between foreground and background evident throughout her body of
work. Both the threshold and the theater in the novel contain an interchangeable
quality of interiority, perceptive entrance, and depth for the viewer. For Woolf,
foreground and background are integral to her concept of theater, the logic and
language of her narrations of vision, and her overall philosophy. Woolf describes Miss
La Trobe's conceptual depth in her creation of the pageant: "'It has the makings…’ she
murmured. For another play always lay behind the play she had just written" (63). In
regards to the goings on in the lives of the villagers, Miss La Trobe is only interested
in the background, not in the more sensational details of the players themselves. "She
splashed into the fine mesh like a great stone into the lily pool. The criss-cross was
shattered. Only the roots beneath water were of use to her" (64). As cited earlier, Miss
La Trobe finds advantageous the visual relief of the actor's figure against the
background of the sky (76). In her ongoing scheme of foreground and background,
Woolf emphasizes the preeminence of the background.

Just as Isa, Mrs. Manresa, and Lucy Swithin are all ecstatically implanted at
their various thresholds, the director strives for her audience to be contemplative at the
threshold of the theater. Throughout the performance, Miss La Trobe is notably irritated by the audience's lack of concentration. Woolf describes the interruptions of Lucy Swithin, the Haines, and the general mocking attitude of the audience during various scenes (77-81). Woolf writes, "No one was listening" (95). During the Elizabethan sketch and before the tea interval, the audience begins to gain interest in the players, particularly in the idiot and the romance. Similar to the ecstatic relationship between waves and doors in *The Waves*, Isa likens the threshold of the theater to waves, saying "All is over. The wave has broken. Left us stranded, high and dry. Single, separate on the shingle" (96). Isa once again recognizes the threshold as a place for the viewing masses.

Woolf narrates the Benjaminian bodily absorption of the masses in contemplation before the threshold in contrast to Miss La Trobe's rage that the audience is fragmented.

Miss La Trobe gnashed her teeth. She crushed her manuscript. The actors delayed. Every moment the audience slipped the noose; split up into scraps and fragments….Miss La Trobe watched them sink down peacefully into the nursery rhyme. She watched them fold their hands and compose their faces.

Then she beckoned. (122)

For most of the performance, Miss La Trobe unsuccessfully attempts to harness the concentration of the audience, broken by a number of distractions and interruptions such as the empty stage, actors that call attention to themselves rather than allowing the audience to be absorbed in the historical and cultural moment of each particular sketch, and the audience's inability to hear the lyrics of the gramophone. The director
herself experiences ecstasy when presented with the continuously filled threshold of
the stage. It is noteworthy that for La Trobe, this ecstasy is produced by the motion of
the background. Woolf describes Miss La Trobe's hand waving at the cows ecstatically
since they "annihilated the gap; bridged the distance; filled the emptiness and
continued the emotion" (141).

Woolf describes the battle of wills and attitudes of the audience in between
their own distraction and concentration. The author narrates a phenomenology of
ecstasy, in which the threshold, theater and artwork are encountered in completion.
Woolf envisions the self in the audience moving forward at the same time that it is
fixed:

Like quicksilver sliding, flings magnetized, the distracted united….Then down
beneath a force was born in opposition; then another. On different levels they
diverged. On different levels ourselves went forward; flower gathering some
on the surface; others descending to wrestle with the meaning; but all
comprehending; all enlisted. The whole population of the mind's immeasurable
profundity came flocking; from the unprotected, the unskinned; and dawn rose;
and azure; from chaos and cacophony measure; but not the melody of surface
sound alone controlled it; but also the warring battle-plumed warriors straining
asunder: To part? No. Compelled from the ends of the horizon; recalled from
the edge of appalling crevasses; they crashed; solved; united. And some
relaxed their fingers; and other uncrossed their legs. Was that voice ourselves?
Scraps, orts and fragments, are we, also, that? The voice died away. As waves
withdrawing uncover; as mist uplifting reveals. (189)
Upon leaving the ecstatic state, the waves of transfixon recede and the audience is again left to its distractions. Where Benjamin and Woolf's ecstatic thresholds depart lies in Woolf's representation of the viewer as one who experiences art in vacillating states of concentration and distraction. As in Benjamin's Chinese tale, Woolf's audience does enter into the artwork at the end; however, she portrays the spectator as one who is unwilling to be absorbed immediately. For Woolf, the ecstasy of the viewer must be fought over and won. Like Isa's private battle between Love and Hate, the concentration and distraction of the audience is also a dichotomy for negotiation.

The Body, Ecstasis, and Modernity

In the private sphere, Woolf's thresholds appear to be an everyday extension of the social strata, exemplified in Rosner's discussion of thresholds as transitional points between rooms and societies in "Moments of Being." While her thresholds are patriarchal and class demarcations, they are also and to a greater extent secularly sacred sites of the ecstatic and self-multiplicative phenomenology of the body. Woolf employs a practical mysticism in her depiction of supposedly ordinary spaces as having the ability to extend, expand, and duplicate human consciousness. In Woolf's writing, the tensional arc of the threshold, the sensation of being both here and there, is a product of Woolf's preference for sight and vision, as implied by Claudia Olk. As Emily Dalgarno suggests, the power of Woolf's vision is also her ability to see into the invisible, which we witness in the early scene where Isa sees the news story played out through the threshold before her. Beyond seeing into forward spaces, Woolf also proposes that the threshold is a site of extrasensory experience.
Woolf's illustration of thresholds throughout her final novel almost always includes the recognition of depth. Benjamin and Franz Kafka famously envision architectural structures in terms of their interiority as well; the two authors often construct architectures in their writings around the allure and mystique of depth. For example, the depth residing within the door of the law and the response that it elicits from those wishing to enter in Kafka's famous parable is the motivation for Kafka's description. For Woolf, however, the apparent depth that resides within her thresholds is not mysterious; rather, the depth of her thresholds consist of a foreground and background that are always in relation. The sacredness of the threshold for Woolf resides in its relationality rather than it mystique. For Kafka and Benjamin, the most visually interiorized part of a structure is the least accessible. For Woolf, it is an essential and eminently accessible spatial location that is foundational to her philosophy.

The following description from "A Sketch of the Past" illustrates foreground and background as spaces in a theater, according to character and backdrop:

If I were painting myself I should have to find some—rod, shall I say—something that would stand for the conception. It proves that one’s life is not confined to one’s body and what one says and does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions. Mine is that there is a pattern hid behind the cotton wool….these moments of being of mine were scaffolding in the background; were the invisible and silent part of my life as a child. But in the foreground there were of course people. (72-3)

Woolf describes the background, or that which is behind the figures at the forefront, as
a greater and yet undiscerned pattern. The perceptible depth of space through Woolf’s thresholds is accessible and provides an alternative occupation of space. Woolf describes the space of perceptive depth and background as another place for dwelling, beyond one's own body. She illustrates ecstatic being through the projection of the self into the threshold's depth.

In architectural phenomenology, Woolf posits that our bodies recognize and respond to the rhythms of our material environment. Rhythm is generally understood as variation within a pattern of regularity. Steen Eiler Rasmussen describes architectural features, such as windows and doorways, as rhythmic punctuations within a larger architectural scheme. As Rasmussen expresses, the rhythm of architecture is influenced by music and dance: "Rhythmic motion gives a feeling of heightened energy. Often, too, it occupies the performer without any conscious effort on his part so that his mind is free to wander at will—a state very favorable to artistic creation" (134). He gives an example of how we perceive and translate visual rhythm into music: "The ordinary London terraced house from the eighteenth century has three bays with the entrance door at one side. There they stand, in waltz measure: one, two, three, one, two, three" (131-32). As a segmentation within the striated space of a building and singular wall of a larger structure, the threshold is a recognizable differentiation within a regular pattern. Its difference within regularity directs our bodies in such a way that we pause before its rhythmic break. Its irregularity calls to us.

Woolf and Benjamin both understand our bodily perception of thresholds as an ecstatic rhythm; furthermore, both thinkers imply that the body seems to mimic the
rhythm of the doorway. The waltz of the threshold commands the waltz of the body. They suggest the body's unconscious surrender before its power, leading to an alternative state of being. Jinny's opening and closing body in relation to the threshold in *The Waves* implies that the body not only recognizes and responds ecstatically to thresholds, but that it also mimics the doorway's ecstatic rhythm. In contrast to Faulkner's thresholds which must be struggled against and transcended, Woolf's thresholds are rhythmic caesuras that command a corresponding bodily pause. The doorway and body create their own rhythm that is a call and response.

Woolf and Benjamin describe ostensibly disparate structures in phenomenologically similar ways. For example, the theater, paintings, furniture, and also more traditional doorways are all encountered ecstatically by the body. The authors imply rather that the body unconsciously and involuntarily recognizes the form of the threshold in all of its guises. They suggest that threshold experiences are fundamental and that our ecstatic response to them eludes conscious or intellectual apperception. Our recognizance when confronted with thresholds achieves the status of collective unconscious. The phenomenon is presented by Woolf and Benjamin as a cultivated innateness.

Finally, in the context of Woolf and Benjamin's greater concerns for modernity, the authors illustrate the ecstatic threshold as a modern phenomenon, as does Nietzsche. Mark Hussey draws on Judith Butler when he writes, "When Woolf wrote that 'human character' had changed around 1910, she meant that giving an account of oneself in ways that had satisfied a previous generation was no longer tenable" (13). Woolf offers an alternative account of the self in relation to the everyday pathways and
experiences of the individual and in relation to others in her illustrations of ecstasy and material relativity. Despite perceived modernist preoccupation with fragmentation and alienation, Woolf depicts modernity as the unity of self with others. In distinction to Benjamin's general notion of the self-alienated masses, Woolf's prolific and pervasive pattern of the ecstasy of material space presents the reader with an account of the modern individual in a flowing repeated rhythmic union with her environment. Woolf's mind-body and threshold-world are correlates within a unified modernity.
In a fit of sleeplessness on October 2, 1911, Kafka records in his diary the following dream about the eye ware of a "blind or weak-sighted child [who] had both eyes covered by a pair of glasses": "Instead of the usual support going behind the ears, to make use of a lever, the head of which could be attached to no place but the cheekbone, so that from this lens a little rod descended to the cheek, there disappeared into the pierced flesh and ended on the bone, while another small wire rod came out and went back over the ear" (60-61). In many ways, Kafka's dream resembles his fiction. He meticulously describes the dimensions and use of various parts on the contraption and parts of the child's head to the point where the reader cannot tell where the apparatus ends and the child begins. The mechanically complex glasses are aesthetically performative as much as they are designed for use. Kaka's fusion of user and tool suggests a new means of conduct and relationality with mechanized objects and consequently, a new technological ontology.

The following chapter builds on Woolf's noted ecstatic rhythm of doorways and also complicates the suggested stasis of the threshold. Kafka's thresholds perform the beauty of bodily motion, its projected vacillation and variation. His mechanized doorways extend the body's need to dilate its abilities through the use of moving parts and tools. In contrast to scholarship portraying Kafka's machines as an imposition of order upon humanity, I detail Kafka's mechanization as an extension of the body, most fully realized in his depiction of the elevator in his first novel, *Amerika*. 
Kafka's writings have been the subject of many architectural studies. Why include Kafka in a phenomenological study of the constructed world? It is argued repeatedly by some of the most persuasive philosophical theorists of Kafka that his work should be interpreted according to the experiences he presents within his fictive worlds. Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari are among some of the most vocal adversaries of reading Kafka's work metaphorically. In "Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death," Benjamin refers to many aspects of Kafka's culture and writing that refer the reader back to Benjamin himself, such as the significance of the folksong of "The Little Hunchback" and Zionism. Benjamin bluntly and convincingly disavows some readings in relation to Kafka's personal life: "There are two ways to miss the point of Kafka's works. One is to interpret them naturally, the other is the supernatural interpretation. Both the psychoanalytic and the theological interpretations equally miss the essential points" (127). In his lecture on "The Metamorphosis," Vladimir Nabokov similarly warns against overly psychoanalytical, symbolic, and metaphorical readings of Kafka: "You will find a number of such inept symbols in the psychoanalytic and mythological approach to Kafka's work, in the fashionable mixture of sex and myth that is so appealing to mediocre minds. In other words, symbols may be original and symbols may be stupid and trite….No poetical metaphors ornament his stark black-and-white story" (Kafka Project).

Benjamin cites German screenwriter Willy Haas, who wrote that The Castle, The Trial, and Amerika occupy the respective theological realms of Heaven, Hell, and Earth ("Franz Kafka" 127). In the abundance of religious and psychoanalytic readings,
Kafka's works are reduced to metaphor, if not allegory. The apple lodged in Gregor's back in *The Metamorphosis* is a metaphor for the fall of humanity from grace. Gregor as the sacrificial animal alludes to the Messiah, and so on. Likewise, the framed portrait of the woman and the apple in the context of Gregor's waking from a dream alludes to his desire. Benjamin regards these readings as insufficient according to Kafka's purpose. By describing ways in which Kafka should not be interpreted, Benjamin alludes to Kafka's natural resistance to interpretation and also a more likely reading of Kafka that is potentially realistic or experiential.

Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari attribute Kafka's anti-metaphor, experimentalism, and anti-aesthetics to his interpretive resistance. In their *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari quote Kafka's diary entry from December 6, 1921: "Metaphors are one among many things which make me despair of writing" (Kafka 389). In their argument for Kafka's writings as a machine and as minor literature, they maintain that "Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor" (Deleuze 22). Early in the book, their reading acts as a manifesto in a movement toward minor literatures: "We believe only in a Kafka politics that is neither imaginary nor symbolic. We believe only in one or more Kafka machines that are neither structure nor phantasm. We believe only in a Kafka experimentation that is without interpretation or significance and rests only on tests of experience" (7). Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari describe the anti-aesthetics of Kafka's work as a way to "'Grasp the world,' instead of extracting impressions from it; work with objects, characters, events, in reality, and not in impressions. Kill
metaphor….No one knew better than Kafka to define art or expression without any sort of reference to the aesthetic" (70).

If, according to Benjamin, Nabokov, Deleuze, and Guattari, we are not to read Kafka's work symbolically, then how should we read it? Deleuze and Guattari imply that Kafka's work has a particular relationship with the real. They write that they "support realist and social interpretations of Kafka…since they are infinitely closer to noninterpretation" (46). The extent to which Deleuze and Guattari achieve noninterpretation in claiming the writer as a machine and Kafka's works as machines themselves is debatable. Yet another way to consider Kafka's work is as descriptive texts that propose a specific way of living in the modern world. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, Kafka's works are notably free of critique (46). When considering the Dickensian influence on *Amerika*, it is significant that Kafka refrains from social critique much of the time, with the exception of a few instances. While a social interpretation is not entirely ruled out as a useful reading of the novel, it is not entirely accurate either since critics have noted the novel's misunderstanding of American society, even in application to Kafka's depictions of architectures.

If Kafka's work is realist, anti-aesthetic, and not written specifically for the purpose of commentary, then we might also conclude that Kafka's work is practical. Not only do his writings function as machines, producing minor literatures and minor architectures, as written by Stoner; they are also texts that describe phenomenologically, in the attitude of Kafka's explorer and Kafka the inspector himself, a way of being in relation with moving material things. Kafka describes how things work; more significantly, he describes how we work with and in them. Before
considering his world of things, let us first review Kafka's specific phenomenology and his relationship with art.

**Kafka from the Outside**

In his fifth lecture in *Causeries*, "Man Seen from the Outside," Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes about our place in the world and our ability to see ourselves from without. In his writing against the Cartesian "pure self" and his call for us to "tak[e] part in the life of the world," (66) Merleau-Ponty evokes the name of Kafka. Merleau-Ponty theorizes Kafka and Voltaire as parallel figures in their use of alternative and distorted perspectives on human life; however, Merleau-Ponty claims that Kafka does not adopt a view from on high as does Voltaire:

> Our era is destined to judge itself not from on high, which is mean and bitter, but in a certain sense from below. Kafka imagines a man who has metamorphosed into a strange insect and who looks at his family through the eyes of such an insect. Kafka also imagines a dog that investigates the human world which it rubs up against. He describes societies trapped in the carapace of customs which they themselves have adopted…To look at human beings from the outside is what makes the mind self-critical and keeps it sane. But the aim should not be to suggest that all is absurd, as Voltaire did. It is much more a question of implying, as Kafka does, that human life is always under threat and of using humour to prepare the ground for those rare and precious moments at which human beings come to recognise, to find, one another. (68)

Notice that Merleau-Ponty views Kafka's writings as descriptive and particularly
spatial in his perspective of the world. *The Metamorphosis* has been critically significant because of Kafka's precise attention to the imagined perception and spatial orientation of a large insect. Gregor's manipulation of objects and realization of his family from below emphasizes the experience of the individual. For Merleau-Ponty, Kafka sees life comically and from an individual singular perspective in each work, but never in isolation.

As many biographers have argued, Kafka's life is thematically defined by the tension between the needs of the individual and the demands of the family, the spiritual fulfillment of literary work and the necessity of practical work, and the struggle between normative culture and artistic living. Merleau-Ponty states in the same *Causerie*, "There is no way of living with others which takes away the burden of being myself, which allows me to not have an opinion; there is no 'inner' life that is not a first attempt to relate to another person" (66-67). There is no way of knowing if Merleau-Ponty understood the subtextual significance of using Kafka as an example of the reciprocal relations between our inner and outer lives. Kafka's diaries are filled with his feelings of resentment, hopelessness, and depression at always being engaged in familial communal life and not having enough time to write. Despite his feelings of perpetual struggle and the naïve belief that his inner life would be enhanced without his outer life, Kafka's literary work was made possible only by his "living with others."

In *The Space of Literature*, Maurice Blanchot gathers Kafka's letters and diary entries that speak to his understanding of the costs and demands of literary life. Kafka reflects on his now-celebrated novella: "Great antipathy for *The Metamorphosis*."

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unreadable ending. imperfect almost to its very marrow. It would have turned out much better if I had not been interrupted at the time by the business trip” (Diaries 253). Blanchot also refers to Kafka's crisis at the prospect of marrying: "My unique aspiration and my sole vocation...is literature...Everything I have done is a result only of solitude...Married, I will never be alone again. Not that, not that" (qtd. in Blanchot 61). Kafka's desperate desire for a literary life and consequent efforts to preserve his solitude, despite all the distractions, may lie at the heart of his literary precision.

Blanchot explains Kafka's "realism" as a self-exiled writer's attempt to hold onto the world:

The more one is lost outside, in the strangeness and insecurity of this loss, the more one must appeal to the spirit of rigor, scruple, exactitude....He who belongs to the depths of the limitless and the remote, to the distress of the immeasurable, yes, that person is condemned to an excess of measure and to strive for continuity without a single misstep, without any missing links, without the slightest inconsistency. (82)

Like Merleau-Ponty, Blanchot recognizes Kafka's vision from the outside. He also illuminates Kafka's talent and need for grasping the world from a perspective that is strange, transcendent, but also fundamental.

In the end, Kafka's "failure," in the words of Benjamin ("Some Reflections" 145), his acceptance of the rhythms of his life, his regular bureaucratic job and family entanglements allow him to write the burden of being oneself in absolute relationality with the world. The conflict and reciprocity between his inner literary life and his obligations permitted him to describe in detail consciousness, perception, gestures, and
objects. Kafka inhabits the physical world of things, suggesting the importance of the outer life.

The author's office writings, first translated into English in 2009, publicly establishes for the first time Kafka's outer life. In the introduction, Stanley Corngold and Benno Wagner argue for the social and literary significance of Kafka's office work, despite the author's feelings about the insurance company's damaging effect on his literary career. Against his reputation in the literary imaginary as a dejected, unsuccessful, and marginalized prophet as addressed by James Hawes, Kafka was a successful doctor of law, clerk and Concipist, writing "official statements, commentaries, and petitions" at the Prague Institute's Workman's Accident Insurance Company (38). Kafka's organization was under intense scrutiny by employers whose businesses accounted for ninety percent of the Institute's claims of unsafe working conditions. Many of Kafka's office documents contain plans for establishing safer conditions for laborers and correspondence between employers unwilling to make changes or pay for insurance. Toward the end of his career in 1916, Kafka became intimately involved in veteran healthcare after he was assigned by the institute to a committee to build and manage a hospital for shell-shocked veterans in Prague (43). Not unlike Dickens, Kafka made major contributions to Bohemian social change, especially among those of the working class and often in relation to machinery.

In his historical contextualization of Kafka's office writings, Wagner recognizes the long neglected relationship between Kafka's office writings and his fiction (19). One of Kafka's most significant and frequently referred to cases is his "Measures for Preventing Accidents from Wood-Planing Machines," written in 1910 in
response to an Austrian initiative to correct unsafe cylindrical safety shafts.

The hand of even the most careful worker would inevitably slide into the blade slot in case of a slip, or when the piece of wood to be planed is pitched backwards—a mishap that is not infrequent—as he presses it down on the table with one hand and guides it toward the blade with the other. This act of raising and pitching back of the wood can never be either predicted or prevented, since it happens whenever the wood is misshapen or gnarled, whenever the blades do not spin quickly enough or slide out of alignment, or whenever the pressure from the worker's hand on the wood is unevenly distributed. And whenever such an accident occurs, several finger joints or even entire fingers are severed (110-11).

Kafka includes a series of drawings of the planing machine, the shafts, hands in contact with the machine, and hands with missing fingers. Scholars have particularly noted the relationship between Kafka's descriptions of the myriad ways in which the machine might physically harm a worker in this essay and modes of mechanistic torture in "In the Penal Colony" (118). This report holds an even greater importance for understanding Kafka's narration of gesture and tools.

The quoted passage is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it illustrates Kafka's contact with and attention to machinery in his work life. As the editors point out, Kafka was given permission by his employers to attend a course during his work hours at Prague's Institute of Technology to prepare him for assignments such as this previous to his writing of the wood planing essay (116). Secondly, it indicates Kafka's affinity for bodily gesture and the ways in which tools are a part of gesture in Kafka's
fiction. Benjamin suggests that for Kafka, "Each gesture is an event—one might say, a drama—in itself….the gesture remains the decisive thing, the center of the event" ("Franz Kafka" 121). Though Benjamin's use of gesture in his essay could be understood symbolically and linguistically, it is particularly fitting to read his suggestion materially and concretely, given Benjamin's reading of Kafka. The cylindrical shaft passage shows the motion and pressure of the hand in relation to the wood and the shaft as a single gesture. Kafka describes tools as an extension of the body. Finally, this writing exemplifies Kafka's capacity for the observation of mechanical things and typifies the inspectorial voice Kafka employs in his fiction more broadly.

In combination with the objective tone of his office writings, Kafka's Dickensian aloofness produces the outsider's perspective remarked by Merleau-Ponty. In 1913, Kafka published the first chapter of Amerika, "The Stoker." On October 8, 1917, Kafka reminisces about the influence of Dickens on this writing in particular:

Dickens's Copperfield. The Stoker' a sheer imitation of Dickens, the projected novel even more so. The story of the trunk, the boy who delights and charms everyone, the menial labour, his sweetheart in the country house, the dirty houses, et al., but above all the method. It was my intention, as I now see, to write a Dickens novel, but enhanced by the sharper lights I should have taken from the times and the duller ones I should have got from myself (388). Dickens' influence on Kafka is not only thematic; it is also his narrative voice and way of seeing. Like Dickens, Kafka often uses a third person narration that is carefully focalized through a rather Dickensian protagonist, received by the reader as a
normative character, especially in comparison to most others who are outlandish or identifiable according to particular quirks or vices. Though his Dickensian perspective is subversive and ironic, Kafka creates a similar distance between the observing narrator and the protagonist as does Dickens, allowing him to have protagonists like Pip Pirrip or Josef K., both normative for the reader but nevertheless flawed. Similar to Dickens' protagonists, Kafka's protagonists observed from a distance or from the outside lack agency and, instead of acting, are always being acted upon. This attitude of distance and nonparticipation contributes to Kafka's ability to write with an objective tone.

The social circumstances and literary influences of Kafka's life certainly lend his writing to a phenomenological methodology and thinking; even more specific to Kafka is his original intellectual position and the directionality of his observations, to which Merleau-Ponty alludes. In the introduction to *The Visible and the Invisible*, Claude Lefort compares Merleau-Ponty and Kafka's related philosophies. Lefort explains Merleau-Ponty's approach to the interrogation of being as "without origin and without termination, since our questions always arise from older questions and since no answer can dissipate the mystery of our relation with being." Lefort notes Kafka's statement that "things presented themselves to him 'not by their roots, but by some point or other situated toward the middle of them'…the philosopher who frees himself from the myth of the 'root' resolutely accepts being situated in this midst and having to start from this 'some point or other'" (xxvi). Lefort recognizes that both thinkers resist mythic attitudes about origins, resulting in a non-normative and seemingly ambiguous perspective on the world.
For Merleau-Ponty, Kafka's spatial positionality in his fiction is emblematic of his philosophy. The reason for Merleau-Ponty's admiration of Kafka's perspective on the world from down below is intimately related to his criticism of the spatiality of objective thought. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty refers to objectivist thought as a "hovering over" or "high altitude thinking," as Lefort writes (13). Merleau-Ponty argues against this "unfathomable God…stand[ing] over against the flatness of 'technicized' thought" in "Eye and Mind," where he reclaims the phenomenon of depth as experienced by the human body and not as a product of distance observed from above (137). He refers similarly to Kafka's relative spatial orientation of writing from below, which denies both the divine objective perspective and also the myth of human originary thinking that would necessitate writing from within. Kafka approaches human gestures and action spatially from the outside and narratively in the middle. Kafka's spatial orientation validates Benjamin's disavowal of psychoanalytic readings of his works, which would be configured from the inside, and religious readings, spatially envisioned from above.

Merleau-Ponty, like Kafka, endorses the culture of the inspector rather than that of the spectator. He begins his sixth *Causerie* by calling for a "re-examination" of objective and subjective ontology (23), explaining similarly as he does in *Phenomenology of Perception* the ways in which the psychologist has imitated the physiologist in adopting the attitude of "absolute spectator" (19). The spectator observes the mind objectively as the biologist does the body. Like an audience member, the spectator watches the material world play out in front of her without any particular intention or purpose; the inspector assumes the messy business of critically
examining life. Kafka's spectator figure experiences the affect of longing, while the inspector is bound to struggle with the material things with which he has chosen to work. Characteristic of Kafka's vision, neither alternative is comfortable; however, the inspector engages with material things, adopting an attitude of relationality as opposed to difference. Kafka's explorer in the penal colony is folded into the inspector role with the added distinction that his purpose is to travel and research the unknown. The explorer, like the inspector, goes beyond the role of mere spectator.

Merleau-Ponty proposes in "Everywhere and Nowhere" that the boundaries of the philosopher's concerns, that the distinction between her interior and exterior is "interminable." There is no "pure philosophy," exemplified in his description of Marxist psychoanalysis; rather, he claims that the "'healthy man' is not so much the one who has eliminated his contradictions as the one who makes use of them and drags them into his vital labors" (S130-31). Kafka, despite his ardent desire to protect the space of his literary consciousness and abdicate the world of day labor, work culture, and the material, becomes a philosopher in his adoption of the inspector attitude and decision to work within the material forces of a life he felt he did not choose. Kafka engages with and manipulates the machineries of language and systems as a suggested breakdown of mythic beliefs about the separation between interiors and exteriors as well as distinctions between subject and object. Kafka's philosophical vision from the outside makes possible his primary realization of humans in relation with machinery.

**Kafka's Mechanized Aesthetics**
In the remainder of the chapter, I demonstrate Kafka's aestheticization of the body's primary relationship with mechanized tools realized in his representations of elevator use in *Amerika*. The mechanized doorway, or elevator, is an extension of the body, as are the other thresholds in the novel which are also described mechanically; furthermore, the risk associated with the elevator, both textually and contextually, is the risk of the machine without the body and the body without the machine. Contrary to common readings of Kafka's texts which pronounce the alienation of the body within modern structures, Kafka's elevators illustrate the primacy of the body in relation with the machine.

Firstly, Kafka's entire body of work demonstrates the aestheticization of the machine and use in general. Kafka's machines are designed to be viewed as aesthetic objects in motion. Against Deleuze and Guattari's claim that art for Kafka is a "machinic definition and not an aesthetic one," (70) I argue that Kafka's machines are inherently aesthetic experiences. Kafka's descriptive mode and attention to machinery, as discussed earlier, serves his ability to aestheticize apparatuses. Kafka's professional experience in observing machinery is most apparent in the observant explorer of "In the Penal Colony." The Harrow is so aestheticized that the officer even refers to its stages of punishment as a "performance" (147). He describes the machine in its grotesque sublime rhythm and movements, showing the penal device as an object of beauty. It is truly aesthetic in its union of spirit and form, having been designed out of a sense of poetic justice. Many of Kafka's apparatuses are constructed with glass to allow the reader to observe the beauty of their moving parts. The officer explains:

So the actual progress of the sentence can be watched, the Harrow is made of
glass. Getting the needles fixed in the glass was a technical problem, but after many experiments we overcame the difficulty. No trouble was too great for us to take, you see. And now anyone can look through the glass and watch the inscription taking form on the body. Wouldn't you care to come a little nearer and have a look at the needles? (147).

As the officer describes the actions of the apparatus during each hour, watching and appreciating its mechanization is essential to the purpose of the machine. The purpose of Kafka's machine is its performativity.

The aestheticization of his apparatuses is evident in the apparent uselessness of Kafka's machines, as demonstrated in the creature Odradek from "The Cares of a Family Man":

At first glance it looks like a flat star-shaped spool for thread, and indeed it does seem to have thread wound upon it; to be sure, they are only old, broken-off bits of thread, knotted and tangled together, of the most varied sorts and colors. But it is not only a spool, for a small wooden crossbar sticks out of the middle of the star, and another small rod is joined to that at a right angle. By means of this latter rod on one side and one of the points of the star on the other, the whole thing can stand upright as if on two legs….Can he possibly die? Anything that dies has had some kind of aim in life, some kind of activity, which has worn out; but that does not apply to Odradek. (428-29)

Kafka describes the simple machine of the trundling sentient spool in detail. Odradek does nothing but "lurk" around corners, lean near doorways, and roll down stairs.

Much of Kafka's brief tale is devoted to Odradek's appearance and movements.
Despite his disdain for Odradek, the family man is fixated on his habits, where he goes, Odradek's relationship with his family, and how long he will live. Perhaps because of his resentment, the family man is intimately bound to the creature. The two are reflections of one another and their futures, much to the family man's regret, are mutually ensured. In this tale, Kafka demonstrates the reflexivity and connection between human and machine.

In "In the Penal Colony," the union between body and apparatus is written as a destiny. The observation of mechanical motion is an act of self-transcendence. Watching the Harrow is equated with spiritual worship: "Only about the sixth hour does the man lose all desire to eat. I usually kneel down here at that moment and observe what happens…Enlightenment comes to the most dull-witted. It begins around the eyes. From there it radiates. A moment that might tempt one to get under the Harrow itself" (150). Kafka illustrates the intense watching that is prompted by the motion of the machine and accompanying extreme yearning to become a part of it.

Secondly and in addition to aesthetic performativity, Kafka's machines are primary to human experience. Machines are not an aspect of the modern self-alienation from humanity; in fact, for Kafka the separation between the body and machine is a product of modernization. Kafka imagines the body within and in relation to machines. An obvious example of this is the design of the apparatus in "In the Penal Colony," where the officer explains that "the shape of the Harrow corresponds to the human form; here is the harrow for the torso, here are the harrows for the legs. For the head there is only this one small spike" (146). As we will see in his illustration of elevators in Amerika, Kafka shows the body manipulating machines and within
mechanical structures as a desired state. He envisions the machine as the destined unification of body and thing. Kafka's embrace of mechanization subverts the myth of nature, suggesting that what is culturally believed to be most natural, the pure human or animal body without tools, is the most alienated state of being. In this way, Kafka exchanges the natural for the primary.

As with his other machines, mechanical things in Kafka's first novel are objects of voyeuristic fascination and joy because of their aesthetic performativity. Each lengthy technical description is necessary to include in its entirety in order to understand Kafka's proposed relationship between body and machine. Kafka describes in great detail the fantastical desk procured by Karl's Uncle Jakob for him:

It had in its base a hundred drawers of all sizes, in which even the President of the Union could have found a suitable place for each of his files, and what's more it even had a regulator on the side, so that simply by turning the handle one could move about and rearrange the drawers in all sorts of combinations to suit one's every need and whim. Thin little side panels would descend slowly, forming the bottoms of new drawers or the tops of others that rose from below; even after only a single winding, the entire base looked completely different, and depending on the speed at which one turned the handle, everything moved slowly or at a crazy pace. (37)

In the desk figure, Kafka illustrates the need for rearrangement, speed, and differentiation. He also highlights the need to operate the apparatus based upon movement, rhythm, and the desire to determine the motion of another body. Most importantly, Kafka shows our desire for the mechanical body to mimic the human
body. By controlling a lever with one's hand, one experiences the increased motion of the machine. The author emphasizes the potential for a machine to do what the human only wishes he could do. In this scene, the desk is an extension of the body.

The desk is a reminder of a childhood fascination with mechanized toys, which Karl also recalls in detail:

Karl too had often stood before it, bundled up in his winter clothes, continually comparing the revolutions of the crank, which was being turned by an old man, with the unfolding nativity scene, the faltering progress of the three holy kings, the sudden illumination of the star, and the cramped life in the holy manger. And it always seemed as if his mother, who stood behind him, was not paying sufficient heed to all of the movements; after drawing her over until he could feel her body pressing against his back, he had spoken in a loud voice, continually pointing out the less conspicuous figures, such as a small hare lying on the grass in the foreground, which sat up and begged and then got ready to start running again, until his mother put her hand over his mouth and presumably relapsed into her prior inattentiveness. (38)

The distinction between the desk and the mechanized nativity scene is that Karl fulfills his desire to operate the machine in regulating the desk drawers. We see Kafka's inspector attitude in Karl as a child, who compares the movements of the man turning the crank with the movements of the machine itself. Kafka describes a man who seeks to understand the relationship between user and apparatus since the beginning of his life, as is demonstrated in his confession to the stoker, "I've always been interested in technology…and would no doubt have eventually become an engineer if I hadn't had
to go away to America" (6). The interruption of Karl's professional plans as an engineer and his mother's response to his mechanical fixation is an early indication of the prohibition of contact with machinery that haunts the novel in its entirety.

Like Karl's mother, Uncle Jakob is mysteriously adverse to mechanized objects as well:

Unlike Karl, his uncle was by no means in favor of this desk; he had merely wanted to buy Karl a regular desk, and all such desks now came equipped with this new mechanism, which possessed the further advantage that it could be attached to older desks at no great cost. Nevertheless Karl's uncle did not refrain from advising him that he should not use the regulator at all if possible; in an effort to reinforce this advice, his uncle claimed that the mechanism was very sensitive, could be easily ruined, and was expensive to repair. It wasn't hard to see that such comments were merely excuses, especially since one would have needed to add that the regulator could be easily fixed, which his uncle, however, neglected to do. (38)

In these scenes, Karl's mother and uncle fulfill the same role as prohibitors of mechanization. The fear and anxiety surrounding mechanized culture is related to the fear of new technology and divisions between class and labor cultures as exemplified in Uncle Jakob.

In a scene where Uncle Jakob takes him to see his workplace, Karl observes the automated way in which his uncle's employees work and interact with one another. This passage is discussed in detail later as an example of Kafka's severance between the phenomenological body and machine. From this scene and the cultural context of
the novel, one might surmise that Karl's uncle reads the desk as we do: as an emblem of modern automation, mechanization, and bureaucracy. Uncle Jakob encourages Karl to watch machinery, but not to engage with it personally. Manipulating or becoming part of a machine suggests that one is a laborer, destined to be part of the capitalist force, but never permitted to design, organize or manage that force. Uncle Jakob fears his use of the desk regulator for the same reason he fears Karl's participation in secretarial work or unskilled labor. In an age of automation, specialized labor, and imperialism, being drawn into machinery means losing agency and the potential wealth and status that accompanies being the brain of the human machine.

Anthony Northey's Kafka's Relatives: Their Lives and His Writing describes many ways in which the novel is modelled on the lives of Kafka's cousins, Otto, Franz, and Emil Kafka, and his maternal and paternal grandfathers who were both named Jakob. Otto left Prague for Buenos Aires as a teenager, later travelling to New York in 1906. Kafka wrote a letter to Max Brod, wanting to introduce him to his "interesting cousin from Paraguay" (53). Northey writes of Karl's fictional Uncle Jakob and Kafka's real cousin Otto that "nothing seems to steer him from carrying out a plan once he has determined on it" (56). Otto and his younger brother Franz both lived near the Rockefeller estate in Tarrytown, New York, just outside of New York City. Mr. Pollunder's house is a reflection of the comfortable, aristocratic lifestyle in the country that Kafka may have imagined for his cousins in the United States. Otto eventually founded the Kafka Export company (58-9). Another cousin, Emil Kafka, began working at a dry-goods firm in Chicago and eventually moved to Sears, Roebuck & Co. Brochures included photos of vast rooms filled with workers of all
kinds in the process of typing and filing. Emil sent these materials home with letters to the family, and it is possible that these images may have inspired the mad bureaucracy of Senator Jakob's business (61). Kafka's relatives and their various positions in the United States represent a range of social positions, work environments, and relations within capitalism.

Senator Jakob's uncompromising plans to groom Karl to be an educated wealthy aristocrat like himself become clear where Karl is exiled from his home for going to Mr. Pollunder's house for the night, which gets in the way of his studies. Uncle Jakob writes in his last letter to Karl, "it is to my principles that I owe everything that I am" (81). Karl assumes that he will acquire a position like his uncle at some point and knows that the English education provided for him is part of the necessary preparation: "Until I complete my English studies and have become reasonably well acquainted with local business practices, I shall have to depend entirely on my uncle's goodness…You mustn't think that I could already manage to make a decent living—and God preserve me from the other sort" (70). Karl finds himself prophetically part of the very machine that he only watches at his uncle's business. He is cast out from the position of spectator and put into relation with the machine itself.

In *Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari draw our attention to *Amerika*'s status as an exception to much of Kafka's work in regards to its engagement with machinery. "In the 'Penal Colony,' the machine seems to have a strong degree of unity and the man enters completely into it. Maybe this is what leads to the final explosion and the crumbling of the machine. In *Amerika*, in contrast, K remains
exterior to a whole series of machines, going from one to the other, expelled as soon as he tries to enter: the machine-boat, the capitalist machine of the uncle, the machine-hotel and so-on" (8). The philosophers imply, perhaps unintentionally, that Karl does not actually remain exterior to machines, since he must be within the various architectural machines in order to be expelled from them. They illuminate the rhythm of Karl's comings and goings throughout the novel. If he is repeatedly expelled, then he is repeatedly admitted into mechanized structures. Instead of portraying Amerika as a place of permanent and perpetual exile, Kafka characterizes the place in terms of its ongoing and contrasting states of being, which result in extreme movement. What Kafka illustrates is the vibration of the body that is possible in the process of mechanization. The elevator and mechanization of architecture in general produces astonishment and elation. Throughout the novel, Karl is awe-struck when confronted with the motions of the modern threshold.xxxvii

In both Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari theorize Kafka's bodies as objectified parts of apparatuses, as in their discussion of the body as "stone and paper" in "In the Penal Colony" (Anti-Oedipus 212). Although they elucidate the architecture of Kafka's fiction as machinery and Kafka's bodies functioning within architectural machines, which we witness in the capitalist regimes of New York in Amerika, they are unconcerned with how Kafka's work reimagines the material world as an extension of the body or the fabric of being that is woven in the process of use. Deleuze and Guattari are like Kafka's explorer, hypothesizing his machine through aloof observation, to the neglect of the operator who knows the machine through use, which is a role and experience aestheticized in Kafka's fiction.
Amerika emerges out of a fear of automation, the perceived loss of consciousness, control, and the separation between mind and body in the early twentieth century. Kafka envisions the manipulation of the machine in terms of connection, relation, and the fulfillment of human agency. This attitude is prominent where Karl is a lift boy and unable to view the motor that runs the lift. Kafka's contrasting and pervasive image of the body as part of the machine and within machinery, however, is subject to prohibition and risk.

The Joy of Use

Karl first realizes the sensorial joy of the elevator while supervising the move of his new piano. Notice, again, Kafka's emphasis on watching and manipulation as a means of extending the desires of the body:

The building had a special furniture elevator that could easily accommodate an entire furniture vehicle, and it was in this elevator that the piano glided up to Karl's room. Karl could have taken the same goods elevator as the piano and the workers, but since the passenger elevator right beside it happened to be free, he chose that one instead, keeping himself at the same height as the other elevator with the help of a lever and constantly looking through the glass panels of the elevator at the beautiful instrument that now belonged to him.

(39)

Similar to the desk apparatus, the elevator moves via a lever that is controlled according to desired speed. The lift allows the body heightened speed and extreme verticality. The glass parts are conducive to his and our watching. We find Kafka's use
of glass in his description of the apparatus in "In the Penal Colony," which functions similarly in allowing the spectator not only to watch, but also to enter into the apparatus itself. In these ways, Kafka's machines are designed according to the senses and as extensions of bodily intentions. The piano, as another simple machine that Karl can both manipulate and watch, causes him "such wild joy that, rather than continuing to play, he jumped up, preferring to stand some distance away, hands on his hips, gazing at the piano" (39).

Kafka establishes a connection between the body and simple machines in the act of watching and use. Though the mesmerized onlooker kneeling at the altar of mechanization is a motif in Kafka's writings, it is always a product of the yearning to touch, manipulate and, ostensibly, attach the tool to the body. Kafka's brief tale, "A Visit to a Mine," is told from the perspective of a miner observing a group of engineers who have come to survey the mine. He describes two engineers in contrast:

A ninth man pushes a kind of perambulator in front of him with the surveying instruments. Extremely expensive apparatus, deeply embedded in the softest cotton wool. The office porter ought really to be pushing this vehicle, but he is not trusted with it; an engineer has to do it, and one can see that he does it with good will. He is probably the youngest, perhaps he doesn't even understand all the apparatus yet, but he keeps his eye on the instruments all the time, which brings him often into danger of running his vehicle into the wall. But there is another engineer walking alongside who prevents that from happening. Obviously he understands the apparatus thoroughly and seems to be really the man in charge of it. From time to time, without stopping the vehicle, he takes
up a part of some instrument, peers through it, screws it open or shut, shakes some instrument, holds it to his ear and listens; and finally, while the man pushing the instruments usually stands still, he lays the small thing, which one can scarcely discern at a distance, back into its packing with great care. This engineer is a little domineering, but only in the service of his instruments.

(406)
The younger and less experienced engineer longs to manipulate and understand the instruments as does the elder. Kafka shows the apparent smallness of the instruments perceived from a distance by the miner in contrast with their comparable size and proportionality when being used by the engineer. Notice the engineer's manipulation of instruments with an interest in their simple mechanisms, such as the ability to close or shut a part, potentially with the use of a hinge, and how they might extend or increase the senses. The apparatus is a means of projecting bodily powers.

Similarly in *Amerika*, Kafka creates a vital distinction between watching the spectacle of the machine and using the machine. As discussed earlier, Merleau-Ponty establishes a unified positionality and space for inhabiting the world. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, he describes psychical and physiological confluence, the mechanistic motion of the body, and the engagement of the body with the world of objects. Merleau-Ponty posits the body within a system of nodes and tools: "By engaging in the world through stable organs and preestablished circuits, man can acquire the mental and practical space that will free him, in principle, from his milieu and thereby allow him to see it" (89). The circuit is an ongoing exchange or "back-and-forth" between mind and body (90). The systematic relationality of our bodies...
with the world grants us the distance required to adopt a Kafkaesque attitude toward objects, allowing us to be inspectors.

Merleau-Ponty imagines how the body relates to the world and objects as part of the larger system. He writes of the "body schema" as a whole and integrated system consisting of points, insisting that the "body is not for me an assemblage of organs juxtaposed in space" (100). The mechanical configuration of bodily parts working within and for the whole extends to the macrocosmic system of body in and for the world. We extend and project our bodies in the world through the use of objects, instruments, and tools. In the process of explaining the body as not an object, but as a "means of communication with the world," Merleau-Ponty models the larger world after a body that communicates with itself. Glen Mazis clarifies this relationship, writing that it is "not the meshing of literal body parts with inorganic materials but the idea that there is an emerging seamlessness of intention of which the person and the machine as tool are inseparable parts, and both cue each other into the person's projected act toward a goal, find ways to contribute to its unfolding experience, and modify each other in a web of relationships" (77). In the same way that my movement and being consists of the exchange between psyche and physiology, so I experience a back-and-forth between my body and the world or, in this case, objects.

Rather than equating the body with objects or tools, Merleau-Ponty claims that objects become part of the body's structure, as in the example of clothing. He writes that clothing as appendages of the body does not prove "that the organ is comparable to an always available tool. On the contrary, actions in which I habitually engage incorporate their instruments and make them participate in the original structure of my
body [le corps proper]" (93). Tools are extensions of the body's intentional arc, as Merleau-Ponty suggests in his discussion of the keyboard or instrument. "Vision and movement" are our means for relating to and using objects; they are also a projection of our consciousness. Our conscious being is defined by our action and movements, which is why Merleau-Ponty calls consciousness an "I can" rather than an "I think that" (139). The ability for the body to act on the world defines its existence, as Merleau-Ponty suggests when he writes "My body is wherever it has something to do." This "orientation of the spectacle" is "defined by its task and by its situation" (PhP 260). Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on gesture and use echoes Benjamin's concept of gesture as a dramatic event in Kafka, encouraging us to understand gesture as a spectacle.

How does Merleau-Ponty say that we actually manipulate objects, and what is their relationality to our bodies in the process of use? Our use of objects is circumscribed within particular spaces, which "inscribe around us the variable reach of our intentions and our gestures. To habituate oneself to a hat, an automobile, or cane is to take up residence in them, or inversely, to make them participate within the voluminosity of one's own body" (144-45). Karl only experiences elation when he controls mechanical objects. His body habituates in the elevator while using the lever in the same gesture as the elevator participates in the intentions of Karl's body. We must imagine the narration of space as focalized through Karl since Kafka narrates the space of the desk from Karl's perspective. It is as if we, as readers, are seated at the desk as is Karl, watching the various parts of the desk change position, seeing the desk in its varied arrangements as if in montage, and winding the crank in order to observe
its kaleidoscopic motions.

Merleau-Ponty also describes how the forces of the body are multiplied and projected in the body-schema and the making of habitus. He says of our bodies' ability to understand, manipulate, and weld itself to its environment that it is a "knowledge in our hands." He situates the body and tool in space together: "To habituate oneself to a hat, an automobile, or a cane is to take up residence in them, or inversely, to make them participate within the voluminosity of one's own body. Habit expresses the power we have of dilating our being in the world" (145). He clarifies habit by saying that "it is the body that 'understands'" (145). Merleau-Ponty describes an intuitive knowledge of objective space when he pictures the spatial orientation of an organist. "He sits on the bench, engages the pedals, and pulls out the stops, he sizes up the instrument with his body, he incorporates its directions and dimensions, and he settles into the organ as one settles into a house" (146). Our bodies acquire a knowledge of things in the act of use; furthermore, objects extend our bodies. The limit of our bodies is not the limit of our skin. Merleau-Ponty explains that "the subject who learns to type literally incorporates the space of the keyboard into his bodily space" (146). Perhaps Merleau-Ponty's most useful aspect of the body-object relation is that tools are expressive of the body's desires. "No sooner have I formed the desire to take hold of an object than already, at a point in space that I was not thinking about, my hand as that power for grasping rises up toward the object" (PhP 147).

In addition to the extension of the body through simple machines, Amerika also proposes how the mind is extended and projected in its intentionality through the mechanized threshold. Merleau-Ponty writes of the intentional arc that "If
consciousness is an activity of projection, which deposits objects around itself like traces of its own acts, but which relies upon them in order to move on to new acts of spontaneity, then we understand simultaneously that every deficiency of 'contents' has an effect upon the whole of experience" (PhP 138). In Merleau-Ponty for Architects, Jonathan Hale extends Merleau-Ponty's theory of the body schema and the relationship between body and world to the theory of "extended mind" (35). Hale suggests that our reliance on tools for mental organization and labor can be applied to architectural design as well.

Elevators were the foundation of urban modernist architecture, causing a complete structural reconfiguration and resulting in a new architectural experience and way of thinking. Elevators transformed spatial knowledge by ignoring space in between floors (Bernard 58), which we witness in Karl's experience of the Occidental Hotel. Karl races from floor to floor with an architectural knowledge set produced by the elevator (126-27). For the first time, it was possible to visit or live on one upper level floor without having any knowledge of the rest of the building (Bernard 62); however, because of its interchangeability and symmetry, being on one floor was essentially like being on any other. Our isolated knowledge of a single floor is a consequence of how architecture was completely reimagined and redesigned around the elevator. The elevator made the skyscraper possible in the United States and necessitated a uniform symmetrical floor plan (Bernard 36). The elevator added a mechanistic quality to the entire building since, in their uniformity, floors became interchangeable. Kafka's first novel is void of vertical spatial mystique since the possibility of escape and exploration so central to his other works are often a product
of the stairway (Bernard 40-42).

Merleau-Ponty illustrates how machines are extensions of the body. The philosopher's description of the organist is a fitting one for Karl, who manipulates his desk with the same fervor as he does his piano. Although the body is attuned to tools and they are reversibly attuned to the body, the body is not itself a machine according to Merleau-Ponty, who writes that "I have no need of directing [the body] toward the goal of the movement, in a sense it touches the goal from the very beginning and it throws itself toward it" (PhP 97). In thinking about the motricity and knowledge of the body, he deliberately explains that habit is not "automatic" (145).

For Merleau-Ponty, the perception of the body as machine can only be a product of Cartesian dualism. It suggests pure objectivity and the absence of consciousness, which is the reason for our phenomenal being in the world. He aligns the consideration of the body as a machine with the modern psychologist, who is "seeing the body of another person as a mechanism without an interior" (PhP 98). The position of the spectator is significant to an objective view of the world. The philosopher playfully and satirically imagines the arm "as a machine of muscles and bone, as a flexing and extending apparatus, as an articulated object, and the world as a pure spectacle with which I do not merge but that I contemplate and that I point to."

He writes that "only the spectator" projects objectivity onto the subjective world and sees the movements of the body in their distinction from the world (108).

Kafka similarly endorses a phenomenal relation between body and machine, describing the lost unrealized subject as part of a machine. In the world of the penal colony, one who is part of the machine is a subject to a complex bureaucracy,
discipline, and power. Throughout his fiction and perhaps most notably in *The Trial*, Kafka depicts bureaucratic systems mechanistically. Though he does not describe an actual machine, Kafka's descriptions are eerily similar to his passages regarding the penal colony harrow. Rather than engaging with and manipulating machines as Karl does, many figures in *Amerika* appear to be caught up in a machine of which they have no contact.

So it was a business that not only encompassed the purchase, storage, transport and sale of goods on a massive scale but also had to maintain the most precise and uninterrupted telephone and telegraph connections with its clients….Wherever one looked in the telephone room, the doors of the telephone cells were constantly opening and closing, and the ringing was stupefying. His uncle opened the nearest door, and in the sparkling electric light one could see an employee, oblivious to all the noise coming from the door, with his head tucked into a steel band that pressed the earpieces up against his ears. His right arm lay on a small table as if it were a heavy burden, and only the fingers holding a pencil twitched at a rapid and inhumanly regular pace. He spoke into the mouthpiece sparingly, and often one could even see that he wanted to object to something the speaker had said, but before he could do so, he heard further utterances that compelled him to lower his eyes and write. Besides, there was no need for him to speak, as Karl's uncle explained in a low voice, for the same reports transcribed by this man were also transcribed by two other employees, then compared with one another, so that all errors could be eliminated insofar as possible. Just as the uncle and Karl were
stepping out of the doorway, a trainee slipped in and emerged again holding a sheet of paper that already had writing on it. There was constant movement; people ran back and forth in the hall. No one said hello, such greetings having been dispensed with; each person followed in the steps of the person before him, either looking at the floor, which he wanted to cross as quickly as possible, or glancing at the papers in his hands and probably managing to catch only isolated words or numbers from the papers fluttering in his hand, as he ran along. (44)

Kafka's workers resemble mechanistic parts in their seemingly automated "inhuman" movements and their refusal of typical etiquette. People and doorways are part of a larger machine, moving in binary configurations. Kafka illustrates the importance of insides and outsides, open and closed doors, coming and going, and hiddenness and revelation as operations of his machines. In many ways, Kafka's simple machines foreshadow the binary operations of digital machines. Machines consisting of people and doorways are unlike Kafka's elevators in that people are alienated from the structures in which they are a part. Uncle Jakob's business seems to operate all on its own, with "stupefying" regularity. Kafka contrasts the machine that lacks consciousness in which we are caught in a modern age with the machine in relation with the sensing body.

Uncle Jakob's attempt to keep Karl from engaging with machinery and secure his future as an observer of the capitalist machine fails. Kafka's description of the Occidental Hotel is very similar to his uncle's shipping business. The difference is that it is now Karl's place of work, and watching the porters is similar to watching his
fellow liftboys. He does not watch in a spirit of stupefied aloofness as he once
watched his uncle's employees; rather, he is strained in the knowledge that it is his
shared lifestyle. xxxviii

Risk, Controls, and Alienation

Kafka's first novel is embedded in a material and cultural history of risk. The editors
of Franz Kafka: The Office Writings include the case of a risk classification appeal by
Norbert Hochsieder in 1912, a boarding house owner in Austria-Hungary who argued
against the institute's claim that he needed insurance for his elevators. Kafka was away
on vacation during the summer of 1912, so he did not write the report; however, the
editors surmise that Kafka would have been familiar enough with the details of the
case for it to influence Amerika, which he had given up writing in 1911, but resumed
three months after the elevator case. Austrian law in 1905 dictated that hotels with
electric elevators must receive complete insurance coverage. The hotel trade
association responded by insisting that the law only apply to elevator operators. As the
editors explain, the government accepted the amendment; however, the original 1905
law continued to be applied to Austrian hotels, which lead to grievances on the part of
hotel owners who believed their establishments should be exempted from the rule
(210).

Hochsieder writes in one letter to the Institute, "The power that activates my
elevators is generated in the local electricity plant, and in the house there is only a
changeover switch that is locked by the electricity plant and accessible only to its
representatives. The control (a knob) is so simple that it can be operated by any of our
guests at no risk whatever." The editors refer to this "fantasy of motorless motion" as a product of the early nineteenth century fascination and almost spiritual fixation with electric power and gearless machines (209). Hochsieder's case was rejected by the Institute, the Minister of the Vienna court, and the Administrative Court, which was the highest court in Austria-Hungary (210).

Hochsieder's plea includes several important contemporary cultural attitudes toward machinery. One is the general association of machinery with risk, which is a cause and consequence of an increasingly industrialized, capitalist, and bureaucratic society. Second is a fundamental belief in the distinction between command and operations, controls and machinery, mind and body. From a phenomenological perspective, we might align this thinking with Cartesian dualism. Third is the notion of risk in relation to certain kinds of controls, which was a growing concern in the twentieth century when systems were designed with special regard for usability and intuitiveness. We will return to phenomenological representations of mechanical controls and implications for the perceived duality of humans and machine.

Beyond the Institute's elevator case, the beginnings of the elevator is generally embedded in risk and accident culture. In his book, *Lifted: A Cultural History of the Elevator*, Andreas Bernard describes the risks of the elevator at its inception. Elisha Graves Otis, a mechanic, began the first elevator company in Yonkers, New York in 1853. The following year, he introduced his invention at New York City's Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations as a dramatic performance in the style of so many other nineteenth century demonstrations. In Forty-Second Street's Crystal Palace, Otis raised himself fifty feet into the air on a platform, cutting the cable of the elevator once he
reached the top. As a demonstration of the elevator's new spring action safety feature, the platform slowed down before it could reach the floor. The first passenger elevator installation in 1857 in New York City was made possible in the context of the elevator's perceived risk (Bernard 1-2).

Accidents and unsafe conditions were a part of the elevator's beginnings in a mass modern culture. Bernard marks the "elaborately staged prevention of catastrophe" as the beginning of developing fear and hesitation. Accident prevention is a thematic concern in American and German engineering journals at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (23-24). Bernard lists broken cables common in European mines among the most significant accidents and, more prevalently, "manually operated hinged or folding doors of wire mesh on each floor still frequently misled careless passengers wishing to enter the cab into opening them and falling into the shaft." The author cites a Berlin manufacturer whose invention coordinated the doors and cab so that the doors would only open when the cab had arrived at the floor of the opening doors. Despite many security measures and technological advancements made to the elevator, it continued to be a site of fear in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as shown in many horror and action films since (31-32).

Kafka could not have known that the culture of elevator risk and accidents that contextualizes his novel would continue to affect our collective psychology. Many elevator malfunctions in New York City this last year have resulted in deaths and serious injury. Very similar to the accidents of the early 1900s, in October of 2016 a woman in Brooklyn pushed her infant in a stroller into an elevator when the doors opened, but the cab was not there. After falling eight stories, the infant died and the
mother was seriously injured (Feuer). In May of 2016, a technician working on an elevator in a Manhattan office building had his arm severed at the elbow. The elevator had only been installed one month prior to the accident (Fonrouge). In Washington Heights in July 2016, a worker loading goods into a freight elevator was killed when it unexpectedly lifted, "pinning him to the ceiling" (Valentine). Given these vivid examples, approximately only thirty deaths result from the roughly eighteen billion elevator trips taken annually (Kaplan). The fear of the elevator operating in detachment from its controls is made manifest in the technical failings still occurring in elevators. The fear of accidents in elevators is symptomatic of the larger fear of disengagement and disconnection between human and machine, as demonstrated in Amerika.

Firstly, Kafka describes the ritual of lift-boy culture as yet another example of workers becoming precisely moving parts in a labor machine. Karl's "everlasting ride" on the lift is a pure joy that is punctuated by his own body's mechanical operations:

For this everlasting riding up and down in the lift was certainly tiring enough, especially in the evening hours, when there were almost no lulls. Karl soon learned how to give short bows expected of lift boys and always caught the tip in midair....While the elevator was in operation, he stood by the door as inconspicuously as possible, with his back to the passengers, and held the handle of the elevator door so that he could quickly push it aside on arrival without startling anyone....In spite of the number of elevators available, there was often such a bustle, especially after the theaters had closed or a certain express train had arrived, that no sooner had he deposited the guests upstairs
than he was obliged to race back down to collect those still waiting below.

(126)

Kafka describes the precision with which Karl must move his own body in relation to the bodies of things in the lift, such as the doors, the controls, his clothing, and other people. Karl's body is part of the orchestration of things moving through space. In Kafka's description, we are reminded of Benjamin's meditation on "threshold magic," the objects traditionally surrounding thresholds in wealthy homes in the nineteenth century. In the narration of the elevator, we find that the bourgeois threshold talismans described by Benjamin, such as chairs and photographs traditionally kept by the doorway (AP 214), have been transformed into an operator and controls. Bernard characterizes the ceremonial and official aspects of the lift-boy in the early twentieth century as a respected position. In 1908, Prussian elevator positions required particular uniforms, training manuals, apprenticeships, and examinations (149). Appropriately, Kafka imbues Karl's position with the same importance. Karl's apparently mechanized movements are evident of a culture that values and ritualizes this new technology. The ceremonial culture is also part of the early concern for the safety of elevator passengers and the fear of losing control.

Kafka creates a relationship between the elevator's culture of risk discussed previously and the lost connection between human and machine. I suggest that the concern for risk, accidents, and safety is a product of the collective fear of alienation from machinery. Karl's affinity for the elevator and mechanical attunement expresses a phenomenology of manipulation. The following excerpt shows Karl's response to an increased demand for his service:
He also had the option of increasing the usual speed by pulling on a cable that ran through the elevator; but the elevator regulations stated that this was prohibited and even dangerous. Karl never did so while riding with passengers, yet whenever he dropped them off upstairs and there were others waiting below, he became reckless and worked on the cable with strong rhythmical tugs, like a sailor. Besides, he knew that the other lift boys were doing likewise and did not wish to lose his passengers to those other youths. (126-27)

One of the risks of early elevators illustrated in this passage is excessive speed and the inability to stop. Bernard addresses this concern as one of the reasons for so much regulation and officialism surrounding elevator use. He details the mechanical and manipulative challenges of the early electric elevators with levers: "He had to stop the cab just as it reached the intended landing…in hydraulic elevators, he also had to regulate the speed by closing or opening a valve between the water line and the piston by means of a control cable or hand wheel. Although an ordinance of 1893 required a governor on the valve allowing a maximum speed of only five feet per second, slower speeds were at the discretion of the operator." The risk of not being able to control the speed of the elevator sometimes resulted in the lift-boy riding too far above or below the desired destination (151). Elevator riding, for Karl, is both a joy and a necessity for his ability to function as part of the larger machine, the hotel itself. The lever control is reminiscent of Karl's desk and the crank of the nativity scene from his childhood. Its structure allows nuanced mechanical motion that correlates with the intentions of the body.

Karl's mechanical inclination is only strengthened in his work at the Occidental
Hotel, where he expresses a desire to deliver messages via bicycles and motorcycles like the hotel messengers rather than by foot inside the hotel (127). His dissatisfaction stems from his lack of contact with the inner workings of the elevator and that the push-button control allows only minimum participation:

Karl was especially disappointed to learn that the only contact a lift boy had with the elevator machinery was when he pushed a button to set it in motion, and that the hotel's machinists were always called whenever the engine needed to be repaired; for instance, although Giacomo had served at the lift for six months, he had never set eyes on the engine in the cellar, or on the machinery inside the elevator, even though, as he explicitly said, he would have greatly enjoyed doing so. (124-25)

This passage indicates two important points. One is the affirmation of Karl's desire for union with the machine, demonstrated in his longing to see the elevator machinery and engage with it. Kafka illustrates the separation of body and machine as a violation. Secondly, Kafka's inclusion of the push-button control in combination with the lever in his elevator highlights a pivotal moment in the history of elevators, technology, modernity, and modernism.

The 1891 *American Architect and Building News* announcement for the push-button control in elevators seems to be directed specifically at young men like Karl: "Another improvement, which is yet to come, will consist, we think in an automatic stop for the elevator. Nothing is more tedious, clumsy and dangerous than the way in which an inexperienced boy stops and starts an elevator, particularly if he wishes to astonish his passengers by his skill." It is noteworthy that American buildings had
push-button controls first, while many European buildings still used levers and cranks (Bernard 157-58). Some elevators operated with a combination of both the "mechanical" handles and the "electric" push-button controls, which were clearly distinguished from each other as separate technologies in manuals. The language of these documents suggests the felt "reliability" of the older technology and the mistrustful description of the button as a "sensitive device" (161).

Push-button technology provided an entirely other relationship between user and elevator. From the perspective of Merleau-Ponty, the very design of the lever or crank, as is the case with many simple machines such as the pulley, allows the body to be projected into the object. They allow us to throw our bodies toward a goal. Like Merleau-Ponty's automobile or hat, we can make them participate in our bodies. In the act of taking them up and abiding in them, we are dilated. When we use them, it is an act of "hand knowledge." In his essay on mechanical phenomenology, Hans Blumenberg writes of the bell pull or revolving bicycle bell that "When you operate them, you still have the immediate feeling that you are producing the intended effect in all its specificity; there is an adequate nexus between the act of your hand and the ringing of the bell….It's different with an electric bell operated by a push button. The hand's action is related to the effect in a quite unspecific and heteromorphic way—we no longer produce the effect" (Qtd. in Bernard 166). This difference in "production" as opposed to the push-button's "activation" has consequences for Karl's experience of the elevator.

The potential movement of the lever itself seems to simulate the speed of the elevator while allowing the hand to mimic the desired vertical direction of the body.
The lever is a site for the body to act out and affect its desires for the larger machine. Karl's earlier experience of "gliding" in a freight elevator parallel to his piano while manipulating the handle demonstrates the relationship between the body, the lever, and the elevator. Unlike the push-button device, the lever enacts the heightened verticality of the elevator itself, giving the user a sense of control and efficacy.

The push-button control embodies the risk of new technology, fear of inefficacy, and our disengagement from machines. Bernard reviews some of the problems of push-button controls and their relation to twentieth century cultural attitudes: "To imagine an apparatus having a 'life of its own' becomes possible the moment that real-life control systems hide their operation from view" (165). In many ways, the push-button control illustrates the risk of all technology. Since Karl is not permitted to see the inner workings of the elevator and his only contact with its operations is his activation of the button, he is dissatisfied. It is as if the elevator thinks all on its own without his participation.

Our disengagement from machinery leads to a collective culture of inefficacy. The phenomenological qualities of simple machines disappear in the wake of the push-button control. The motion of the lever orients the body in time and space, while any sense of direction, distance, or speed is effaced by the push-button. The button in Karl's elevator also heralds the digital age since it is a binary operation; unlike the crank or lever, it can only be activated or de-activated. Ultimately, this leads to feelings of inefficacy, which Bernard points out continues to be a reality. In his research, James Gleick discovered that, unknown to users, the "door close" button in elevators are frequently not connected to any wires or the wires are never even
installed. Despite this fact, elevator doors are programmed to close on their own (Bernard 174). Our relationship with machines is such that, due to mechanical invisibility, we can never be assured of our connectivity or efficacy.

**Conclusion**

The Nature Theater of Oklahoma is a deranged afterlife of the mania that was formerly America in the novel. Filled with angels, devils, and the fulfillment of Karl's wish to become an engineer. It is the ultimate coalescence of mechanization of art, a "theater that can make use of everyone, each in his place!" (267). We discover in his new position as a technician for the theater that Karl's fantasy is both to be made useful and to use (281). Kafka's proposed relations with mechanized doors directs us to the concept of architecture as a form of play. Kafka's play involves the manipulation of objects and ideas.

In her *Toward a Minor Architecture*, Jill Stoner interrogates the myth of architecture as object, writing that "To play with the laws of architecture and with the disused objects of architecture is to imagine (the major objects of) architecture as a field of play" (69). Stoner envisions architectures as not simply commodities designated by their use value; rather, minor architectures are defined by their "incompleteness and immanence" (68). As in Kafka's other fictions, Karl acts and makes space within major architectures consisting of economic and political structures of power. Harman describes "The Judgment," "The Metamorphosis," and "The Stoker" as Kafka's trilogy of "domestic tragedies." The translator emphasizes the interchangeability of their protagonists evidenced in the fact that Kafka used the name
"Georg" in place of Karl in five places in the original manuscript (xvii). Despite the shared fundamental nature of these figures, the distinction between Karl and the others is his approach to major architectures in an attitude of play and play-acting.

Unlike the architectures of Gregor, Joseph K., and K., Karl's elevators conduct him through the material environment with fewer outlets, less space for exploration, and a deliberate, undeviating course for the movement of bodies. Elevators in Amerika are a program for bodily movement and conduct that Kafka contrasts with the multi-circuited pathways of traditional Kafkaesque architectures like that of Mr. Pollunder. Elevators pose a particular challenge to the resistant protagonist, who must create minor space with his body, as suggested by Stoner, as do Kafka's other hapless young men. Karl realizes his distinguishing method through his aptitude for play and performance. Deleuze and Guattari assert that Karl is in constant exile from machinery, but the finer point is that he continually re-enters. Karl is in a perpetual state of engagement and play. The mechanized nativity scene of his youth is a prototype for his adult world. It seems to be true that there will always be a prohibiting figure who wishes for or enacts Karl's disengagement with structures, but as the childhood version of himself, Karl patiently watches the wonder of the machine, looking for his point of entry.

The elevator is a game in which the object is the beauty of motion. The wonder of many parts in conjunction with one another is the event. In his chapter on demonic possession in the spaces of Kafka's fiction, David Spurr alludes to the action of inhabitation as a necessity of possession. On one hand, Amerika is confirmation of Benjamin's notion that in possessing things, we live in them. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty
alludes to our inhabiting things through space and taking them up. It is surprising that
Kafka's most directive novel for our engagement with modern architectures was
written at the beginning of his career. *Amerika* addresses our modern fear of being
possessed by architectures, which includes a loss of dwelling and the inability to take
up or live within. Karl's resistance to major architectures of capitalism, industrialism,
and bureaucracy is his toying with mechanized spaces. In the culture of control and
misdirected agency fostered by the elevator, Karl acknowledges the rules of the
machine and plays its game. He reclaims mechanical things as objects within his
body's field of play.

Kafka's vision of America and the body united with machines allows an
entirely other state of consciousness and range of abilities. Ultimately, it is the
separation between body and mind, body and machine, and part from whole that
creates what many scholars call "alienation" in Kafka's writings. Kafka envisions the
segregation of body and machine as a state of emergency. It is a risk for us to
disengage from mechanical beings as they are not only extensions of our bodies, but
also models for what we might do with our bodies and the ways in which our bodies
think. In his diary, Kafka questions the human form and function in its motion, "What
is it that binds you more intimately to these impenetrable, talking, eye-blinking bodies
than to any other thing, the penholder in your hand, for example?" (396). From his
vision of humanity from the outside, Kafka sees the body in its strange animation and
sovereignty as related to other moving bodies, as fields of play, and as mysteries with
which we must engage.
In the following excerpt from "The Sisters," James Joyce narrates the boy's perception of a shop façade after the death of Father Flynn:

I went to look at the little house in Great Britain Street. It was an unassuming shop, registered under the vague name of Drapery. The drapery consisted mainly of children's bootees and umbrellas and on ordinary days a notice used to hang in the window, saying Umbrellas Recovered. No notice was visible now for the shutters were up. A crape bouquet was tied to the doorknocker with ribbon. Two poor women and a telegram boy were reading the card pinned on the crape. I also approached and read:

July 1st 1895

The Rev. James Flynn (formerly of S. Catherine's Church, Meath Street) aged sixty-five years.

R.I.P.

The reading of the card persuaded me that he was dead and I was disturbed to find myself at check. Had he not been dead I would have gone into the little dark room behind the shop to find him sitting in his armchair by the fire, nearly smothered in his greatcoat. (5)

Joyce relates text, body, and architecture in his description of the body moving toward the threshold and perceiving objects as they would appear in proximity. As he
approaches the shop, the boy's memory of its façade mingles with the present. As he approaches the door, the decoration, its "threshold magic," becomes visually clear. Attached to the threshold is the haunting figure repeatedly found among Joyce's thresholds and going by many names, among them Father Flynn and Parnell. The vague figure is part of the author's rhythm of the seen and the unseen. Joyce's prose constructs a path of rhythmic experience which the reader unfolds in the act of reading. His fiction does not represent, mimic, or signify architecture; rather, Joyce builds architecture with the text, through which the reader is guided by structures. His writing of thresholds is a product of their material relevance and the attachment between body and building. Joyce writes a "lived" architecture by synthesizing the rhythm of the body, the syntactic rhythm of thresholds within an architectural schema, and the rhythm of the text.

Joyce's rhythmic narration resonates within modernism as an international aesthetic; the motion he narrates or asserts overtly through dialog is a shared discourse among his contemporaries. In chapter one, I refer to Peter Lurie's work on Faulkner and film, which emphasizes the impact of Faulkner's work in cinema on his vision of modernist spatiality and his description of the body's camera-like movement through space. Faulkner was highly influenced by Joyce's narrative experimentalism and aesthetics. Though Faulkner's focalization is more distorted, showing the relationship between Temple Drake's whirling body and her untamed haptic vision of the structures to which she is bound, Faulkner draws on Joyce's narration of the moving body's circumscription, occlusion, and revelation of the material world as it is presented to us visually.
Faulkner's concern for motion and his emphasis on the role of motion in aesthetic experience during his interview with Jean Stein is reminiscent of Stephen Dedalus' Platonic dialogic meditation on art and motion. Faulkner says "Life is motion, and motion is concerned with what makes man move—which is ambition, power, pleasure…The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life." Not coincidentally, in his redefinition of Aristotelian tragedy Stephen also describes the aesthetic arresting of motion. He tells Lynch "You see I use the word arrest. I mean that the tragic emotion is static. Or rather the dramatic emotion is. The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions…The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing" (205). Whereas Faulkner claims that all art arrests life's motion and then reanimates the motion for the viewer, Joyce proposes that motion in life is only created by non-art; both suggest that true art creates a stillness.

Despite Faulkner and Joyce's different respective rhetorical framing, both discuss art, the artist, and the participant in terms of the arresting and proliferation of motion. Faulkner expresses the artist's vocation in capturing life's movement, the emotions that create a related motion in the participant, and the phenomenon of reanimated motion in the aesthetic object that can only occur between viewer and artwork. In this excerpt, Joyce does not describe the work itself as specifically static or in motion; rather it is the psychical state of the participant that is prompted toward inertia and contemplation, as in the ecstasis suggested by Woolf. Motion is a kinesis
which, in Joyce's view, is never a response to true art. Joyce voices a seemingly amoral philosophy of aesthetic experience that is still somehow infused with Christian moralism. Pornography, for example, is not a violation of spiritual purity, but instead it violates aesthetic purity with its hold on the weak and inferior human affinity for that which moves us. Christian rhetoric pervades Joyce's vision of a pure and sanctified art which requires and commands our stillness. Faulkner expands on Joyce's phenomenon of the moving and moved experiencer in relation to the aesthetic object.

Stephen's elaboration on his theory suggests a contradiction. Despite his insistence on ecstatic as the only proper response to art, rhythm is a defining and structuring aspect of motion that is central to Joyce's philosophy of art, language, and being throughout the novel. Later in their discussion, Stephen proposes that "Rhythm…is the first formal esthetic relation of part to part in any esthetic whole or of an esthetic whole to its parts or of any part to the esthetic whole of which it is a part." He describes the participant's necessary "esthetic stasis" when encountering the "rhythm of beauty" (206). In his voicing of Thomas Aquinas, Stephen characterizes the components of objective apprehension. He associates the rhythm of the body with the highest of art forms. Claiming that literature is the "highest and most spiritual art," Stephen says that the "lyrical form is in fact the simplest verbal vesture of an instant of emotion, a rhythmical cry such as ages ago cheered on the man who pulled at the oar or dragged stones up a slope" (214). Stephen describes the motion of art and the body in confluence. Language, music, and the experienced rhythm of the artwork are central to Joyce's formation of self.

Stephen elucidates rhythmic comprehension as a necessity for objective
apprehension. Rhythm is central to the most mundane activity of seeing and realizing a basket in its aesthetic wholeness:

Temporal or spatial, the esthetic image is first luminously apprehended as selfbounded and selfcontained upon the immeasurable background of space or time which is not it. You apprehend it as one thing. You see it as one whole. You apprehend its wholeness. That is integritas…. You pass from point to point, led by its formal lines; you apprehend it as balanced part against part within its limits; you feel the rhythm of its structure. In other words the synthesis of its immediate perception is followed by the analysis of apprehension. Having first felt that it is one thing you feel now that it is a thing. You apprehend it as complex, multiple, divisible, separable, made up of its parts, the result of its parts and their sum, harmonious. That is consonantia. (212)

Notice that Joyce uses a list of terms culturally associated with the aesthetics of music in application to art in general, in this case to visual study. Joyce's points, structure, synthesis, harmony, and balance are effective aspects of his visual rhythm as well.

It is essential that we imagine Joyce's ability to create visual and architectural rhythm in the context of his background in music. Joycean scholarship on music abounds, particularly in relation to the author's musical literary texts. Joyce's father was a singer, among his political and artistic aspirations. His mother played the piano, and his aunts taught music in Dublin (Stewart 19-20). Much scholarship concerns Joyce's penchant for opera, comparing his aesthetic techniques to those of Schoenberg and Wagner. There is also an abundance of criticism on Joyce's text and its formal similarities to musical compositions. When Joyce was living in Zurich in 1917, his
friend and composer Otto Luening recalls attending a concert together, after which Joyce took a musical theme and translated notes into syllables, syllables into words, and words into sentences (Weaver 4). Sebastian D. G. Knowles notes Joyce's rhythmic language in general, and specifically the waltz-like stresses of Leopold Bloom's dialog in "Proteus" of *Ulysses* as well as the breakdown of "sense into rhythm" in "Circe" (xxx; xxxv). Joyce's phenomenologically rhythmic text is both seen and heard in his use of language; it also provides conditions for the reader to feel motion and rhythm in distinct ways.

In *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, Mikel Dufrenne theorizes the phenomenology of aural and visual rhythm respectively, though he describes rhythm as a sensorial intersection of space and time. Dufrenne claims the correspondence and reciprocity of space and time in the aesthetic object (241, 247). "Space is animated by time. Thus space becomes the locus of external movements, since movement establishes the liaison between the time which we are and the space which we are not" (247).

Dufrenne emphasizes how rhythm "characterizes the structure of the phrase and even the entire work" (261). Similar to Joyce's musical perspective of rhythm as integral and essential to the work's wholeness, Dufrenne describes rhythm as an integrated aspect of music that moves the piece as a whole (256). External and objective rhythm, as understood by Boris de Schloezer, is the spatialization of temporality (257). He writes of the aspects of rhythm as having measurable units, being established within a flow, spatial organization, and that it requires a thematic return (258). Dufrenne also emphasizes the regularity of time in the spatialized unit of
the measure, the "possibility of identifying equal intervals between the units and of referring to their repetition" (259).

Dufrenne also understands rhythm according to Kant's notion of "our intuition of space and time," which is opposed to objective space and time (242). In relation to the experiencing subject, Dufrenne describes rhythm as a schema or "method—a means of finding oneself within the musical object—and the imagination presiding over the schema and one's bodily activity are closely linked in this effort" (263). Rhythm can be an objectification of the aesthetic work, but it can also be a means for reconciling body and art. "Thus rhythmic schemata are necessary for the apprehension of the work. They need not be explicitly indicated, as in a musical analysis. They need only be felt. They present themselves as an invitation for us to make the necessary inner movement to place ourselves on the level of the musical object" (263). Finally, Dufrenne emphasizes the "rule" of the rhythmic schemata as central to the existence of the work, writing that without rhythm the musical work "risk[s] annihilation" (264).

Pictorial rhythm is even more relevant when considering how rhythm can be identified and experienced in the literary arts and how the rhythm of language relates to the rhythm of the content taken up by language. Similar to Faulkner, Dufrenne recognizes the phenomenological exchange of motion occurring between artist, painting, and viewer that is reminiscent of the written text. The preexisting motion of the painter affects the rhythm of the work itself. The motion of the viewer in the act of looking reanimates the motion of the created work in the hands of the painter. "This burgeoning movement within the spectator corresponds to a movement in the creator which finds its way into his work" (278). Faulkner's view of the text is also a rhythmic
schema that can only be reanimated and grasped by the reader; Joyce goes even further in writing that the text inspires rhythm in the participant. Dufrenne agrees with Faulkner that "The movement of the represented object is an arrested movement. It goes from motion to immobility. The movement of the pictorial object, in contrast, is a congealed movement which tends to unfold. It goes from immobility to motion" (280). He also seems to agree with Joyce's character about the affect of motion created in the viewer herself in response to the text.

Dufrenne significantly makes a distinction between the motion of the artwork's content and the motion of the work itself, calling the interaction between the two "contamination." Dufrenne even likens the rhythmic dynamics between the pictorial art object and represented object to the linguistic and literary art object.

In reality, representing movement and being movement are two quite different things for painting, and they can be distinguished as soon as the represented object is distinguished from the pictorial object. The truth is that, since the represented object is itself a moment of the pictorial object, one sort of movement can contaminate the other. Represented movement tends to communicate its dynamism to the aesthetic object, which not only represents it but assumes it (in the same way that semantics influences phonetics or the prose sense of a word affects its poetic value). (279-80)

This contamination is inherent to the aesthetic object, and in light of Dufrenne's broader philosophy of motion in art, also inherent to the aesthetic encounter. The movements of artist, pictorial subject, object, and viewer affect one another.

The inability to separate the motion of medium from content is key to the
phenomenological perception, as is the rhythm resulting from the relationship between form and content. Merleau-Ponty writes in the sixth of his *Causeries*, "We have discovered that it is impossible, in this world, to separate things from their way of appearing….Form and content—what is said and the way in which it is said—cannot exist separately from one another" (70-72). He attributes rhythm to beauty, as does Stephen Dedalus in his dialogue, writing in reference to the wholeness of the work in cinema, painting, and film, and literature. "A successful novel would thus consist not of a succession of ideas or theses but would have the same kind of existence as an object of the senses or a thing in motion, which must be perceived in its temporal progression by embracing its particular rhythm and which leaves in the memory not a set of ideas but rather the emblem and the monogram of those ideas" (WP 76). Merleau-Ponty establishes the novel as a movement that emerges between the rhythm of a particular style of text and the act of reading.

It is our task to imagine rhythm not only in the context of Joyce's musical and linguistic fields of play, but also as they relate to his phenomenology of modern being, space, and materiality. Dufrenne's distinction and interrelationality of content and form in the aesthetic object is especially relevant to our consideration of how rhythm is created in Joyce's texts and the contamination between Joyce's narrative style and his description of the body's rhythms in architecture. In his phenomenological narration of the body engaging with material spaces, Joyce describes the rhythm of entering and exiting, the threshold as an organizing and determinant architectural rhythm, and the threshold as a site of visual rhythmic revelation. It is essential that we consider architectural rhythm as a spatialization of the temporal, just as rhythm is conceived of
in music. The temporality of the body in motion makes architectural rhythm possible, since, just as with a painting, it is the movements of our gaze and other senses that reanimate motion in structures themselves. Joyce, in particular, narrates the unfolding rhythm of architectures in correspondence with the moving body. Thresholds in his work provide the necessary unification, repetition and return of rhythm.

Joyce's rhythmic movement is evident at the beginning of his Künstlerroman. His general movements through the architectures of Clongowes Wood College are reflected in Stephen's thinking about language. Joyce describes the rhythms of living almost in montage: "First came the vacation and then the next term and then vacation again and then again another term and then again the vacation. It was like a train going in and out of tunnels and that was like the noise of the boys eating in the refectory when you opened and closed the flaps of the ears. Term, vacation; tunnel, out; noise, stop." Joyce uses the same additive structures in his description of Stephen's movements in and out of spaces throughout the building: "The bell rang for night prayers and he filed out of the study-hall after the others and down the staircase and along the corridors to the chapel. The corridors were darkly lit and the chapel was darkly lit" (17). The rhythm of seemingly endless entrance and exits includes a repetition that is reflected in Joyce's sentence structure.

Thresholds are both a punctuating rhythmic element of Joyce's world and also a site of readerly engagement with the rhythm of the body's motion:

They went together down the staircase and along the corridor and past the bath. As he passed the door he remembered with a vague fear the warm turfcolored bogwater, the warm moist air, the noise of plunges, the smell of the towels, like
medicines. Brother Michael was standing at the door of the infirmary and from the door of the dark cabinet on his right came a smell like medicine. That came from the bottles on the shelves" (22).

In Joyce's narration of the body moving through spaces, the revelation of things corresponds with the body's path. The relationship between body and architecture is especially acute in the author's perspectives from childhood. There are so many doors in Clongowes that Stephen and the reader are given a sense of rhythm and eternal return as expressed in Nietzsche's philosophy. Doorways are a mnemonic and bodily return for Stephen. His path to the infirmary leads him to thresholds that remind him of the affective rhythms of Clongowes emblematized in the feel and smell of the bathwater. Notice also the motif of the figure associated with thresholds in Joyce's architecture, which will be discussed as part of structural rhythm.

In his chapter on "Beauty, Repetition, and Difference," Galen Johnson traces Merleau-Ponty's "primordial unconsciousness" to a Nietzschean understanding of Dionysian rhythm. As Stephen Dedalus expresses the "rhythm of beauty," Johnson similarly makes rhythm and radiance central to beauty (198). Johnson argues that Merleau-Ponty's rhythm is rooted in his concept of the body participating in the "momentum of existence" and our poetic use of language (199-201). Also similar to Stephen's connection between poetry and the motion of the body is Johnson's reference to Paul Valéry's Nietzschean analogy between poetry and dance (201). Steen Eiler Rasmussen's Experiencing Architecture, referred to in chapter one in regards to Faulkner's rhythmic architectures, confirms both Nietzsche and Merleau-Ponty's concepts of rhythm's dependence on the body as he likens architectural rhythm to a
waltz (132).

Difference is required for there to be rhythm, and Rasmussen names voids and solids as potentially different elements within a rhythmic scheme. In naming "voids," the theorist indirectly indicates thresholds and other such openings as essential organizing structures of architectural rhythm. Like Dufrenne and Johnson, Rasmussen extends the rhythm of dance and music to painting, eventually suggesting that rhythm is a necessity and fixture of architectural experience itself. There can be no architecture without rhythm since the use and design of buildings require varying degrees of regularity.

For while the painter may fill a plane within his composition with continuously changing details, the architect is usually forced to create a regular method of subdivision in his composition on which so many building artisans will have to work together. The simplest method, for both the architect and the artisans, is the absolutely regular repetition of the same elements, for example solid, void, solid, void, just as you count one, two, one, two. It is a rhythm everyone can grasp. (128-29)

Joyce organizes the experience of architectural rhythm around the visual and aural punctuation of the void. In Stephen's travels through Clongowes and in Dublin, the threshold behaves as a silence and an opening that is repeated, expected, and promises the return of "solid" forms of architecture.

I have drawn from Nietzsche and Heidegger's writings to develop the threshold as a void or abyss throughout the previous chapters. We should once again acknowledge the significance of the abyss in application to the threshold within a
rhythmic scheme, which is related to Nietzsche's understanding of musical rhythm. Johnson distinguishes the Nietzschean nihilistic abyss from Merleau-Ponty's concept of the void as silence, depth, fullness: "What Merleau-Ponty's aesthetic of the beautiful seeks is the movement through rhythm to the stillness of silence that is the fullness of calm, superabundant life" (207). Merleau-Ponty's void resonates with Woolf's vision of the ecstatic threshold and its still fullness. Similarly, Joyce meditates on the threshold as a silence and void that awaits his presence in order to be grasped in the fullness of its meaning. As part of a rhythmical scheme, the threshold promises Stephen and the reader a return.

As suggested throughout our discussion of rhythm in the arts, rhythm is a concrete measurement of time, whether the rhythmic experience is visual, haptic, or specifically aural. Rhythmic components can be isolated and imagined within a larger elementary flow. The threshold is at once a moment in architecture and a recurrence of moments, which could be likened to Nietzsche's philosophy of eternal return. Johnson points to Nietzsche's reference to the abyss of the eternal return in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (198). In the context of architectural rhythm, it is not coincidental that Nietzsche emblematizes eternal recurrence in the gateway. Zarathustra explains to the dwarf, "This long lane backwards: it continues for an eternity. And that long lane forward—that is another eternity. They are opposed to one another, these roads; they offend each other face to face—and it is here, at this gateway, that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: 'Moment'") (135). Zarathustra describes how the gateway draws together all time and recurring events.

In the following passage, Joyce expresses a rhythm of entrance and exit and
also the cyclical reappearance of thresholds that gives Stephen and the reader the feeling of entrapment and disorientation, associated with Stephen's lack of vision:

He had reached the door and, turning quickly up to the right, walked up the stairs and, before he could make up his mind to come back, he had entered the low dark narrow corridor that led to the castle. And as he crossed the threshold of the door of the corridor he saw, without turning his head to look, that all the fellows were looking after him as they went filing by. He passed along the narrow dark corridor, passing little doors that were the doors of the rooms of the community. He peered in front of him and right and left through the gloom and thought those must be portraits. It was dark and silent and his eyes were weak and tired with tears so that he could not see. (55)

The repetition and recurrence of thresholds is central to Joyce's general presentation of Irish and specifically Dublin identity in the twentieth century as repetitive and without the possibility of exit. We are reminded of the vagabond's monotonous tones in "An Encounter," "circling round and round in the same orbit," how he "repeated his phrases over and over again, varying them and surrounding them with his monotonous voice" (18).

In the language of musical theme, thresholds are an inevitable leitmotif. In the wider modernist culture, the relationship between recurring imagery and the unconscious amounts to a textual and subtextual form of haunting. In the same way Thomas Mann's "Tonio Kröger" is haunted by the recurring blue-eyed love interest and Wagner's "Liebestod" from Tristan und Isolde haunts the scenes of true love and longing in Un Chien Andalou, so Joyce's work is haunted by the often unidentified
figure lurking in the depths of the abysmal threshold. Several scholars have written on ghosts and haunting in Joyce's fiction, which are most relevant and functional in *Ulysses.* In *Literary Ghosts from the Victorians to Modernism: The Haunting Interval,* Luke Thurston contends that modernism's phenomenal aesthetic value lies in its transmission of musical expression and its spectral quality for the reader. He suggests that the spectral in the writings of both Woolf and Joyce "does not confirm or conform to the representational language of the narrative itself; instead it remains fixed unforgottably in a language of the eye or the ear, an unspeakable spectral *punctum* or uncanny music" (128).

Ultimately, Thurston maintains that modernist literature includes "musical performance as an index of an aesthetic event—the luminous cadence of a voice as a figure for the ontological singularity of a life—that exceeds the limited criteria of stylistic beauty, and as such becomes almost the signature event of modernism itself" (144). Joyce's text uniquely joins the senses and arts for the reader. The uncanny music to which Thurston refers is embedded in the fabric of the text, which is both heard and seen by the reader through Joyce's language. As discussed earlier, the contamination between the rhythmic text and signified rhythmic environment creates the described ontological singularity. Thresholds are musically recurring and haunting moments throughout Joyce's texts that repeatedly ask the protagonist a question which he cannot answer.

Stephen's premonitions appear to him in relation to the unyielding, cryptic and circuitous spaces of his small world. Rather than expanding, Stephen's milieu seems to shrink as he grows in correlation with his understanding of Ireland's paralytic and
constrained construction. Joyce writes that Stephen is "Disquieted and cast down by the dull phenomenon of Dublin," (78) having no choice but to return to the same architectural landmarks, such as particular streets, passages, and statues which are revisited in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Dubliners, and Ulysses. Joyce's spectral figures are subjects to be traced and followed through his labyrinthine cities and buildings. Shortly after his realization of entrapment and entanglement, Stephen plays a game where he envisions his academic success embodied by various figures in the street. Joyce shows Stephen "pitting himself against some figure ahead of him and quickening his pace to outstrip it before a certain goal was reached" (78). Joyce's figures are emblems of the ineffable and ineluctable. Ironically, they concretize that which is most politically unattainable and personally mystifying. In his final chapter of Joyce's Ghosts: Ireland, Modernism, and Memory, Luke Gibbons circumscribes ghosts within the context of memory and the loss of nationalism in the figure of Charles Stewart Parnell.

In "The Sisters," Joyce transforms the boy's aunt into a Charonian figure guiding the boy into the realm of the dead. "At the first landing she stopped and beckoned us forward encouragingly towards the open door of the deadroom. My aunt went in and the old woman, seeing that I hesitated to enter, began to beckon to me again repeatedly with her hand" (7-8). More recently, Jack Morgan writes that the story's development of a "ghostly return" is just one of many aspects of its Irish and Catholic Gothicism, as exemplified in the return of the "heavy grey face" of Father Flynn (43). Though Joyce's ghosts are recurring in urban locations, it is significant that so many shadowy figures appear in places of passage and transition. Joyce's
thresholds, like his ghosts, are repetitious and eternal. His thresholds therefore seem to be a fitting home for the haunting figures of Stephen's consciousness. Perched on the boundary between the seen and the unseen, this side of the abyss and the other, "here and there," Joyce's ghosts metonymically signify the threshold's eruption in time and space.

The threshold and ghosts are closely associated in Joyce's description of death as "the dark portals that close our earthly existence, the portals that open unto the unknown and the unseen, portals through which every soul must pass, alone, unaided by its good works, without friend or brother or parent or master to help it, alone and trembling" (114). As Stephen passes through thresholds from passage to passage, he feels that "his soul had been wrenched forth of the sheath of his body, that he was plunging headlong through space" (124). Stephen associates the threshold with the passage into the afterlife, which suggests the relationship between the abyss and eternity:

He halted on the landing before the door and then, grasping the porcelain knob, opened the door quickly. He waited in fear, his soul pining within him, praying silently that death might not touch his brow as he passed over the threshold, that the fiends that inhabit darkness might not be given power over him. He waited still at the threshold as at the entrance to some dark cave. Faces were there; eyes: they waited and watched. (136)

Unidentified figures repeatedly occupy and guard threshold entrances, embodying the rhythm of Stephen's spiritual consciousness and architectural oneirism. In a Bachelardian way, the threshold's rhythm is a compulsive psychic reminder of the
recurring and intertwining political, religious, and symptomatic ghosts of Joyce's narrative.

In the following scene, Stephen sees the threshold figure as a boy. The simultaneous mystery and acceptance with which Stephen beholds phantom figures indicates fluid understanding of space, time, and materiality. The young artist experiences the dimensions of his environment with wonder and intuition, seeming to ponder the definition of humanity in his vision of the skull and apelike figure.

He sat listening to the words and following the ways of adventure that lay open in the coals, arches and vaults and winding galleries and jagged caverns. Suddenly he became aware of something in the doorway. A skull appeared suspended in the gloom of the doorway. A feeble creature like a monkey was there, drawn thither by the sound of voices at the fire. A whining voice came from the door….He answered the greeting and saw a silly smile break over the face in the doorway. (68)

Though we know that the figure is the Dedalus family maid, her shadowy presence in the doorway promises Stephen a recurrence of questioning figures throughout his life and the repetition of encounters with the unknown and unanswered.

In his adolescence, Stephen is again haunted by figures in doorways which he imagines wish to lure him into the abyss with their sexuality. "He wandered up and down the dark slimy streets peering into the gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any sound….Before the doors and in the lighted halls groups were gathered arrayed as for some rite. He was in another world: he had awakened from a slumber of centuries" (99-100). Thresholds are part of a ghostly and otherworldly
transformation. In a Nietzschean and Dionysian gesture, the ghosts of Stephen's boyhood are transformed into a "dark orgiastic riot": "By day and by night he moved among distorted images of the outer world. A figure that had seemed to him by day demure and innocent came towards him by night through the winding darkness of sleep, her face transfigured by a lecherous cunning, her eyes bright with brutish joy" (99). As with the dark figures of Stephen's youth, these women are part of the architectural rhythm he describes in Dublin and in Clongowes.

**Colm Tóibín, Emptiness, and the Flattening of Architectural Experience**

We have many theses on postmodern space and architecture, especially in the theory of Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, and David Harvey. Scholarship continues to be written on space and place in postmodern literature, especially in regard to the dystopian, disorienting, and fantastical. David Spurr identifies the postmodern novel with what he calls "junkspace" and "disaffection" in the fictive architectures of Thomas Pynchon and J.G. Ballard. Patricia García defines the postmodern and contemporary novel according to the dislocation of the body, the obscurity, erasure, and reversibility of the internal and external, the plurality of space, and boundaries as "liquid constructions." The aforementioned scholarship is significantly informed and influenced by general cultural theory on the experience of postmodern space and architecture. Let us review some key attributes relevant to our discussion of a postmodern phenomenology of thresholds, all of which are interrelated aspects of how we experience contemporary spaces.

David Harvey complicates the relationship between modernism and
postmodernism by historicizing the movements in relation to one another, arguing that the modernist understanding of time and space made possible the compressed postmodern experience. He summarizes the works of Lyotard, Foucault, Jameson, and Lefebvre in regards to the differences between modernism and postmodernism.

Harvey relates architectural and textual form in his comparison, writing that "'Modernist' town planners, for example, do tend to look for 'mastery' of the metropolis as a 'totality' by deliberately designing a 'closed form,' whereas postmodernists tend to view the urban process as uncontrollable and 'chaotic,' one in which 'anarchy' and 'change' can 'play' in entirely 'open' situations" (44).

While he acknowledges the significant distinctions between modernist and postmodern aesthetics, Harvey significantly describes the two cultures on a continuum of modernity that created an eventual "space-time compression." He writes "James Joyce, for one, began his quest to capture the sense of simultaneity in space and time during this period, insisting upon the present as the only real location of experience" (267). He describes how socio-political, technological, and aesthetic developments caused an alternate postmodern phenomenology. Harvey's observation of Joyce and the modernist penchant for the present and eternity is evidenced in a modernist understanding of architecture as a means of preserving the eternal present (206). Joyce addresses religious and political ideology in architectures that propose depth, the belief in an origin, and hierarchy. We might imagine that postmodern space de-mythologizes modernist space by endorsing heterogeneity, fragmentation, and simultaneity, though as with all theories, new mythologies must be created in the process. Jameson's *Postmodernism* is the most comprehensive contributor to collective
acceptance of postmodernism as an ideology, aesthetic, and orientation.

One of the most vivid and consequential in all of postmodern cultural theory is Jameson's introductory discussion of postmodern depthlessness and the proliferations of surfaces. He notes how the Bonaventure Hotel's completely mirrored surface "glass skin repels the city outside, a repulsion for which we have analogies in those reflector sunglasses which make it impossible for your interlocutor to see your own eyes and thereby achieve a certain aggressivity toward and power over the Other" (34). We might contrast the postmodern endless procession of surfaces with the seemingly endless layers of interiority in the architecture of Kafka's fiction. The depthlessness of postmodernist aesthetics is related to the loss of a modernist hierarchy of insides and outsides (98). As suggested by Jameson in his description of glossy surfaces and sunglasses, the flattening of space and the absence of a perceived interior facilitates a kind of impenetrability. We might say that Joyce's depths privilege the interior and the sacred, which are equated with power structures. In postmodernism, spatial power is diffused, decentralized, apparently depthless and as a result, all the more elusive and impenetrable. Postmodern power is multiple and fluid by virtue of the loss of depth and replaced by the simultaneity of spaces. One can imagine how depthlessness and the destruction of hierarchy and spatial distinction causes the "liquidity" of boundaries as described by García and specifically in application to the sensorial experience of thresholds.

Jameson's explanation of hyperspace and the dislocation of the body in its environment is part of the phenomenal depthlessness. "This latest mutation in space—postmodern hyperspace—has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the
individual body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and map its position on a mappable external world…this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment" (44). If the body cannot be oriented toward objects in space, then things also cannot be located in particular places. It is not only the space of the body that is mutated; things also lose their places since they are not oriented to other bodies. In the introduction, I explain Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological concept of depth, which requires a perceptually grounded and relational vision of things. Merleau-Ponty explains the phenomenon of depth:

> The enigma, though, lies in their bond, in what is between them. The enigma consists in the fact that I see things, each one in its place, precisely because they eclipse one another, and that they are rivals before my sight precisely because each one is in its own place—in their exteriority, known through their envelopment, and their mutual dependence in their autonomy (EM 140).

Objects that are not perceived as having a defined space cannot be perceived in relation to one another. They cannot eclipse, envelop, or depend on one another. Postmodern hyperspace and depthlessness destabilize the repetitions and rhythms that are inherently part of Joyce's textuality and experience with materiality.

The corresponding "structure of feeling" to the diminishment of spatial depth is what Jameson famously refers to as a "waning of affect" (11). The modernist "age of anxiety," identified with the alienation of the subject as well as individualistic style, is replaced by fragmentation and pluralism (11, 14). Jameson states that this results in a kind of liberation from the individual ego, which "may also mean not merely a liberation from anxiety but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well" (15).
The absence of feeling corresponds with depthlessness. If we follow Merleau-Ponty's consideration of depth is experienced as the relationality between things and made possible only by the gaze, then the primacy of the individual gaze is necessary in order to experience depth. Merleau-Ponty is not referring to a collective unconscious, though he refers to a phenomenon that many of us share. Depth is a source of anxiety for many modernists, and in particular, for Faulkner, Kafka, and Joyce. The removal of depth and the demythologizing of social hierarchy in a postmodern setting replaces anxiety with what we might describe as nothingness or emptiness. What is the architectural structure of non-feeling or how is indifference imagined and experienced materially and architecturally?

Colm Tóibín has been noted by several critics to have repeatedly depicted the Irish environment, at times concerned with Dublin spaces comparable to the writings of Joyce, but mostly departing from urban environments. Though some of Tóibín's fiction set in the Republic of Ireland takes place in Dublin, Tóibín more frequently places his fiction in rural and residential areas in Southern Ireland similar to where Tóibín worked and lived as a child. By comparing the respective architectural and environmental narrative techniques of Joyce and Tóibín, we might draw essential conclusions about the phenomenology of architecture in modernist and contemporary fiction.

First, let us consider the influence of postmodern culture and art on Tóibín's contemporary fiction and how the experience of architecture is transmuted by shifting cultural dominants and aesthetics. In an interview with The Guardian, Tóibín has expressed the influence of Ernest Hemingway on his career in journalism and his
literary tastes thereafter:

I worked from six in the evening to two in the morning. I spent the fine days on the big long beach. My copy of *The Essential Hemingway* has pages stained with seawater. I read *The Sun Also Rises* on that beach in Tramore and I read the great Hemingway short stories for the first time. It made me dream about going to Spain, but it also gave me something else—an idea of prose as something smart and shaped, and the idea of character in fiction as something oddly mysterious, worthy of sympathy and admiration, but also elusive. And more than anything, the sheer pleasure of the sentences and their rhythms, and the amount of emotion living in what was not said, what was between the words and the sentences.

Joyce and Tóibín are both concerned with music and rhythm in relation to language and literature. In my interview with him in May of 2016, Tóibín answers my question about ending novels by saying that he is "more interested in how a string quartet ends, or a piano sonata, than I am in an ending in books. The melody is being played out. It falls, something weakens, then the last notes take on a sort of austere, whispering power" (See Appendix, "An Interview with Colm Tóibín"). The distinctions in rhythm and language between Tóibín and Joyce tell the story of how space is narrativized in fiction and experienced by the reader.

Though most Hemingway scholars have categorized his work firmly within the modernist era, Hemingway's textual rhythm and the relationship he creates between his language and the content anticipates a postmodern phenomenology of space and text. The historical context of his work as well as his thematic and philosophical
perspectives have been closely identified with his contemporary American ex-patriots in Europe and authors in existentialism; however, the ways in which space are translated or omitted from his fiction reaches into a postmodern spatial orientation. Though he was a contemporary of the authors included in this study, Hemingway's spatiality notably occupies a postmodern field. We must look to Hemingway as a model for the author since Tóibín has expressed not being particularly influenced by Joyce. Indeed, paralysis is not the tone or the rhythm of Tóibín's fiction. Hemingway's influence is clear in Tóibín's melancholy absurdism and existentialist approach to narrative.

Tóibín's environment and spatiality is notably residential and rural Ireland. In a 2013 Newsweek interview, Tóibín states the following: "I've never really written about Dublin because I'm not from the city. I came here when I was about 17. It's taken me about 40 years to write about Dublin, and in this last book of stories [The Empty Family] I think there's only one or two set in Dublin….I find I can only really write about a place when I've lost it." Several critics have written about Tóibín and Joyce together, particularly in regards to Dublin. It is noteworthy that Tóibín transplants postmodern concepts, which are so closely associated with the United States, media-saturated urbanity, and late capitalism, into a local and provincial Ireland, which Ed O'Shea calls "Tóibín's ambivalent response to modernization and globalization" (111).

In the same way that Joyce's philosophy is emblematized in the city, so Tóibín's orientation and affect is best understood in a reading of the coastal. Tóibín states that he first read Hemingway on the Tramore beaches. Nautical imagery permeates his novels and short fiction. Some critics have written on Tóibín's fictive
ocean in relation to trauma, alienation, Catholicism, and rebirth, but the strongest philosophical proposal made by Tóibín's oceans is one of indifference. Scenes in Nora Webster, mostly set in Enniscorthy, emphasize the liberation of detachment where Nora is on vacation in Spain (217-18, 225, 269). The ocean's liquidity, openness, simultaneity, dynamism, and indifference present a postmodern stage for Tóibín's dramatization of familial relations, particularly between mothers and sons, as well as national identity and sexuality. In his 1999 novel The Blackwater Lightship set in 1990s Ireland, Tóibín joins ocean imagery with a mother's response to watching her son dying of AIDS. It is one of many scenes in Tóibín's fiction in which the experience of the ocean confirms individual and collective feelings of indifference and surrender as sources of relief:

For some time, then, no one would appear in this landscape; the sea would roar softly and withdraw without witnesses or spectators. It did not need her watching, and in these hours, she thought, during the long reaches of the night, the sea was more itself, monumental and untouchable. It was clear to her now, as though all week had been leading up to the realization, that there was no need for people, that it did not matter whether there were people or not. The world would go on. The virus that was destroying Declan, that had him calling out helplessly now in the dawn, or the memories and echoes that came to her in her grandmother's house, or the love for her family she could not summon up, these were nothing, and now, as she stood at the edge of the cliff, they seemed like nothing. Imaginings and resonances and pain and small longings and prejudices. They meant nothing against the resolute hardness of the sea. They
meant less than the marl and the mud and the dry clay of the cliff that were eaten away by the weather, washed away by the sea. It was not just that they would fade: they hardly existed, they did not matter, they would have no impact on this cold dawn, this deserted remote seascape where the water shone in the early light and shocked her with its sullen beauty. It might have been better, she felt, if there never had been people, if this turning of the world, and the glistening sea, and the morning breeze happened without witnesses, without anyone feeling, or remembering, or dying, or trying to love. (260)

Similarly in "Three Friends," the ocean is an ecological stage which complicates the protagonist's feelings for his lost mother, sexual awakening, and gayness, specifically in a contemporary Ireland that responds to gay lives by simply looking away, as expressed by Tóibín (Appendix). Tóibín's indifferent ocean corresponds with a new heterogeneity, a breakdown of hierarchy, and waning of affect that could not be better expressed in a constructed architecture.

O'Shea writes on postmodern Dublin in Tóibín's collection Mothers and Sons, arguing for Tóibín's postmodern approach to Irish identity in general. He points to the fact that "A Long Winter" is Tóibín's equivalent to "The Dead" in Joyce's Dubliners, noting the postmodern impulse "to simply ignore" originary myths that endorse the belief that authentic Irishness is to be found in the social and linguistic constructions of the Celtic Revival or in the political story that regards the Easter Rising as foundational for the developing Irish state" as is the case for Joyce (110). He describes Tóibín's focus on unused spaces, exemplified in the vacant store which Nancy turns into a chip shop in "The Name of the Game" (107). In Tóibín's provincial take on the
postmodern, this shop is equivalent to Spurr's "junkspace." The fact that shops and markets are central to Tóibín's more urban settings suggests the postmodern shift from centralized to decentralized power. In response to a question about how his relationship with Dublin has been affected by his writing, Tóibín reported being surprised at the civility in response to his publication of *The Testament of Mary.* Tóibín said that Dublin used to be "a much more Catholic place. So, I guess part of the book is this element of loss and loss of the sacred. The loss of something that meant so much to everyone at the time, where now people prefer shopping" (Newsweek). One cannot help but evoke Jameson's statement that postmodern theory, in its uncertainty, holds onto Ariadne's thread to find ourselves in a shopping mall instead of a labyrinth (xi). Even public response to Tóibín's fiction in Ireland suggests a major cultural shift from Joyce's modernist anxiety for power to a postmodern waning of affect.

Despite his decided emphasis on Eastern coastal places in his fiction like Enniscorthy and Tramore, in which he lived and spent summers as a teenager, Tóibín has expressed his attachments to Dublin and Joyce's writing of the city. Tóibín himself writes a detailed guide to Bloomsday using key events and character movements in Dublin from *Dubliners and Ulysses* in his 2012 article in *The Guardian.* Tóibín speaks at length on Joyce's residence near his own house and the significant places to Joyce's fiction in the neighborhood. In an interview, he describes how Dublin's literary history affects him:

> The history sort of thickens experience. It gives experience an extra layer of taste because certain things have happened. In other words, if you find yourself in a Dublin winter, in the top room of a house, being miserable, as I have, then
the fact that Hopkins was not far away doing the same thing, I don't know if it helped or not, but it certainly means that you feel a sort of thickening of the experience. (Newsweek)

Tóibín's response shows that he is not completely ambivalent to his national literary heritage; rather, the author senses a layering of experience to which he must respond even indirectly. We have discussed the rhythmic relationship between text and architecture in Joyce's work. Tóibín creates a different experience for the reader that occurs between text and architecture, between the expression and the thing expressed.

Jameson's phrase for postmodernism as a "structure of feeling" has particular resonance for this project since feelings are associated with physical and material structures in the form of architecture. We can see the waning of affect in Tóibín's contemporary fiction and its relationship with his spatiality. The following is an excerpt from Tóibín's "The Use of Reason," based on the Dublin art thief Martin Cahill:

The city was a great emptiness. He looked out from the balcony of one of the top flats on Charlemont Street. The wide waste ground below him was empty. He closed his eyes and thought about the other flats on this floor, most of them empty now in the afternoon, just as the little bare bathrooms were empty and the open stairwells were empty. He imagined the houses on the long stretches of suburb going out from the city…He thought about the confidence of those roads, their strength and their solidity, and then he allowed his mind to wander into the rooms of suburban houses, bedrooms empty all day, the downstairs rooms empty all night, the long back gardens, neat, trimmed, empty too for all
of the winter and most of the summer. The sad attics empty as well. Defenseless. No one would notice an intruder scaling a wall, flitting across a garden to scale the next wall, a nondescript man checking the back of the house for a sign of life, for alarm systems or a guard dog, and then silently prizing a window open, sliding in, carefully crossing a room, watching for an easy exit. He would open a door without making a sound, so alert as to be almost invisible. (1-2)

Tóibín's use of emptiness, throughout the fiction collection of *The Empty Family* and in this passage, is comparable to what we might call Hemingway's "Nada" effect. Just as Hemingway overtly and compulsively refers to the rain covering the empty Spanish square in "Cat in the Rain," Tóibín fills his reader with the existential vastness, ubiquity, and inescapability of nothingness. Tóibín's constructed spaces are related to the ecology of his oceans in their fluidity.

When Tóibín does explore conceptual or architectural depth, it exists as an ideological challenge to a contemporary disavowal of hierarchy, origin, and history. The protagonist strives for an impermeable surface of reason and is disturbed by his own inability to focus on profiting from his recent painting acquisition, distracted by memories of being in an all boys school as a child:

Something beyond him, he felt, was beckoning; he wanted to leave his mind blank, but he was afraid….When he was finally let out of Lanfad, he brought with him the feeling that behind everything lay something else, a hidden motive perhaps, or something unimaginable and dark, that a person was merely a disguise for another person, that something said was merely a code for
something else. There were layers and beyond them even more secret layers
which you could chance upon or which would become more apparent the
closer you looked. (19)

Tóibín's description of depth correlates with his memory of boys being physically
beaten by monks in a private hall while other monks watched and masturbated. Doors
are central to the enigma of depth:

There was an old light box at the back of the games room. It was used to store
junk. Now there were two brothers standing in it, and the door was open so
they had a clear view of the two boys being punished. He could see them from
the window—Brother Lawrence and Brother Murphy—realizing that the two
brothers administering the punishment must have been aware of their presence
too but perhaps could not see what they were doing. (18)

The depth afforded by the doorway is an ideological return to a Joycean
Dublin, sexual prohibition, unspoken perversions, and the rhythmic compulsion of the
eternal return. The layers of depth, enigma, and mystery threaten and encroach upon a
pattern of perpetually shifting emptiness and flatness of space promoted by Tóibín
throughout his body of work. Material layers as they are described here thwart the
invisibility of the body, the inability to locate it among things, and the body's ability to
transcend the material. The fear and recognition of layers also challenges Tóibín's
production of continuous, tantamount spaces. In contrast to Joyce's rhythmic
thresholds, Tóibín's typical doorways are almost indistinguishable from other
structures as exemplified in the first quotation from "The Use of Reason." When
doors are described in the setting of a house, they are uneventful. Tóibín's lack of
distinction among architectural components creates smooth, rather than striated spaces. Tóibín's rhythm is that of asymmetry, spontaneity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity.

Like Joyce, Tóibín imagines ghosts in intimate relationality with architectures and the state of Ireland. In contrast to Joyce, Tóibín's contemporary hyperspace is both nowhere in particular but everywhere without boundaries. As a result, his ghosts need not be identified with concrete Irish spaces. He writes the following in "One Minus One," in which the protagonist lives in the United States and returns to Ireland to be with his dying mother:

You know I do not believe in God. I do not care much about the mysteries of the universe, unless they come to me in words, or in music maybe, or in a set of colours, and then I entertain them merely for their beauty and only briefly. I do not even believe in Ireland. But you know, too, that in these years of being away there are times when Ireland comes to me in a sudden guise, when I see a hint of something familiar that I want and need. I see someone coming towards me with a soft way of smiling, or a stubborn uneasy face, or a way of moving warily through a public place, or a raw, almost resentful stare into the middle distance. (73)

The figures of Irish nationality which plague Joyce's pages are transformed into umbras of the mind, which are also a product of hyperspace. It is as the art thief vaguely recalls someone saying to him in "The Use of Reason": "Your mind is like a haunted house" (5). The ghosts of memory are fleeting, dislocated, and not guaranteed to return, as are Joyce's ghosts. Since they are not associated with stable, repetitive
architectures bound to eternally present time, their very appearance is unpredictable and uncertain.

The feelings associated with Tóibín's architectures are both influenced by the postmodern waning of affect and by a more contemporary sense of renewal, relief, and emotional dispersion. In contrast to Joyce's paralytic Dublin with its "brown imperturbable faces" that resist all efforts to decode the city with its hierarchized depths, Tóibín's Dublin is a place where his protagonist "moved toward the city center, had that lovely feeling that he had become oddly invisible. No one, he believed, saw him or noticed him; no one would remember him. He as, he felt, at his most powerful….He would go back to the city renewed, unafraid, smiling to himself at what he had done" (38-39). Tóibín's Dublin produces a sense of agency and ataraxia that is part of the contemporary response to the postmodern turn.

Tóibín's postmodern and contemporary thresholds and spaces create a new narrative to be textualized. When describing the "suppression of depth" (43) in the Bonaventure Hotel, Jameson argues that postmodern space creates a new narrative: "We know in any case that recent architectural theory has begun to borrow from narrative analysis in other fields and attempt to see our physical trajectories through such buildings as virtual narratives or stories, as dynamic paths and narrative paradigms which we as visitors are asked to fulfill and to contemplate with our own bodies and movements" (42). In Tóibín's representations of seemingly liquid thresholds and seams is the author's proposal of a new narrative. His refusal of depth is a refusal to imagine material space as limiting and an effort toward freedom; however, it is also a refusal of "lived" engagement within the environment.
The relationship between an experiencing body and mind are essential for grasping the collusion between our experience with the material environment and reading the text. In "One-Way Street," Walter Benjamin's metaphor for reading versus copying a text is described in the act of experiencing a landscape from an airplane flying overhead versus walking through the territory on foot:

The power of a country road is different when one is walking along it from when one is flying over it by airplane. In the same way, the power of a text is different when it is read from when it is copied out. The airplane passenger sees only how the road pushes through the landscape, how it unfolds according to the same laws as the terrain surrounding it. Only he who walks the road on foot learns of the power it commands, and of how, from the very scenery that for the flier is only the unfurled plain, it calls forth distances, belvederes, clearings, prospects at each of its turns like a commander deploying soldiers at the front. Only the copied text thus commands the soul of him who is occupied with it, whereas the mere reader never discovers the new aspects of his inner self that are opened by the text, that road cut through the interior jungle forever closing behind it: because the reader follows the movement of his mind in the free flight of daydreaming, whereas the copier submits it to command. (66)

I would use this analogy to consider the differences in spatial and architectural experience in modernist and postmodern fiction. In Benjamin's description of the flyer's perception, we hear echoes of Merleau-Ponty's critique of empirical depth that is "only a distance." The flier knows the terrain by "law," but has no haptic experience with the land, having not touched it. Meanwhile, the hiker sees and feels each opening
and closing of the land, which emits a power over the movement and reception of the body. While Benjamin's passage seems to glorify the hiker and degrade the flyer, in true Benjaminian style his allegory works as both a glorification and a warning. The flyer is free from the world's power, whereas the hiker submits. Tóibín's smoothed, flattened, and liquid architectures rewrite architectural narrative as potentially minor and resistant to the structures of historical power. Joyce's "lived" spatial narrative suggests the body's compulsive relation to structural power, promising the singular continuous return of the material moment.
Conclusion

"Burst This Prison-World Asunder": A Phenomenology of Modernist Film

Much scholarship addresses the influence of film on the writings of all four of the contemporary authors included in the previous chapters and some also on Colm Tóibín, given his writing of the 2009 novel *Brooklyn* which was released as a motion picture in 2015. Faulkner stands out as a major influence on the motion picture industry since he began as a screenwriter in 1932 and continued writing films and television into the mid-1950s. Among his most famous scripts are *To Have and Have Not* and *The Big Sleep*. All four contemporaries had multiple film versions of their fiction produced during the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Based on the significance of film in their lives as evidenced in autobiographical writings, scholarship abounds on the effect of cinema on motion and image in the writings of Faulkner, Woolf, Kafka, and Joyce. In particular, this book thinks about how these authors contributed to our reading and perception of motion and the use of objects in general, which is extended to their respective phenomenologies of architecture, motion, and their influence on spatial techniques in contemporary cinema.

From our study of phenomenological fictive architecture, we may apply many principles to modernist contemporaries in film. For film to be phenomenological and for it to bind us to the "lived" world, it must simultaneously resonate with our experiences and create a unique experience. As Merleau-Ponty expresses about painting in "Eye and Mind," our senses must tell us that the filmmaker took her body with her, in the spirit of Valéry's statement (123). Merleau-Ponty elaborates in the
Indeed we cannot imagine how a mind could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body—not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement. I have only to see something to know how to reach it and deal with it, even if I do not know how this happens in the nervous system. My moving body makes a difference in the visible world, being a part of it; that is why I can steer it through the visible. (123-24)

Film must communicate the intertwined experience of vision and movement, which is evident in late nineteenth and early twentieth century painting. Arguably, the medium of film has a greater potential for conveying our lived experiences in the material world with its ability to frame and magnify our vision of the moving body in so many variations of speed and rhythm. Merleau-Ponty discusses many minority orientations in his writings, including blindness, paraplegia, and schizothymia. He describes Cézanne's alterity as part of the artist's fluent conveyance of so-called distortions essential to lived experience. Despite our differing bodily orientations, film must possess qualities for the viewer that resonate with bodily experience in general. At the same time, film must create a world of its own, welding together our vision and that of the filmmaker. In "Art and the World of Perception," Merleau-Ponty writes that "painting does not imitate the world but is a world of its own" (WP 71). Throughout *The Flesh of Images*, Mauro Carbone emphasizes Merleau-Ponty's anti-Platonist strain illustrated in his insistence that the artwork is not merely a copy or reproduction of an
In relation to the previous five chapters devoted to a description of how modernist fiction reorients us with the lived world, the following discussion suggests how modernist cinema similarly proposes an alternate ontology and way of experiencing materiality. It is essential that we consider Walter Benjamin's highly anthologized and formative essay on cinema and its contributions to a phenomenology of film, given its influence on media studies and its formulation of a specifically modernist conception of space. Benjamin's writings, read in cultural and media studies, are filled with highly phenomenological meditations. He frequently addresses the motion of the body in relation to technology and how the body is captured in film and photography. Benjamin's discussion of technology in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" is prescient of what David Harvey calls the "space-time compression" of postmodernism. Benjamin writes that through photography, as opposed to drawing, "the process of pictorial reproduction was accelerated." Similarly, "a film operator shooting a scene in the studio captures the images at the speed of an actor's speech." One might think that Benjamin's theory conflicts with Merleau-Ponty's anti-Platonism, since Benjamin endorses the notion of authenticity, including the "original" and reproduction of the "copy." Though these terms are potentially Platonic, we should understand that Benjamin refers to the reproduction of the artwork; in general, he seems disinterested in establishing value judgments about life or reality and its reproduction through art. We should also temper our interpretation of Benjamin's theory of authenticity with his emphasis on the artistic reproduction as an honorific manifestation of art which liberates the participant masses from the
ritualistic and classist cult of the sacred.

Benjamin attributes the phenomenology of space and architecture in film to the "desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly," which the philosopher demonstrates is a widespread cultural phenomenon beginning in the mid and late nineteenth century. He exemplifies this divergent way of experiencing space in his discussions of panorama, photography, miniatures, exhibition culture, and the development of the arcades. He sees film as just another medium symptomatic of the "adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality" (223). Benjamin differs from Merleau-Ponty in his embrace of an objective material reality that exists apart from the use of tools, technology, and the "cutting" of film scenes (233). His distinction between the sensorial realism of the stage versus the distortion of cinema perpetuates the notion of art as a representation of "reality"; however, he describes a technological renewal of ontology. We might explain Benjamin's thinking of art in terms of naturalness, purity, and "aura" by saying that Benjamin is only concerned with the cultural effects of technology and their relation to ideology, in contrast with the phenomenologist's view of art itself as a primary experience. Benjamin describes how film creates wholly alternate orientations with our material environment in a modern age.

Benjamin also emphasizes our extreme identification with the camera, which supports the relationship between film and the discovery of a lived ontology. Our assumption of the camera's position in film has a critical function in allowing us to exist in the world of cinema without having to experience its content in ways that are limiting or that require the same kind of haptic contact (228). It also creates a
reversible relationship between seeing film and being seen, which Carbone describes in terms of Merleau-Ponty's flesh of the world. In a footnote, Benjamin describes the phenomenon of the mass encounter with itself in the use of the camera: "Mass movements are usually discerned more clearly by a camera than by the naked eye. A bird's-eye view best captures gatherings of hundreds of thousands. And even though such a view may be accessible to the human eye as it is to the camera, the image received by the eye cannot be enlarged the way a negative is enlarged" (251). In this depiction, the camera is a substitute for the viewer, creating an identification between the human eye and the camera. Benjamin's scene expresses how the frequent implementation of camera work and the growing ubiquity of film in propaganda created a strong correlation between the seeing masses and being seen. The masses could encounter themselves regularly. Finally, Benjamin points to film's creation of a new ontology of space which it accomplishes by dilating and bringing closer forms otherwise limited in a world without film.

Despite Benjamin's repeated use of "reality" in relation to film, he ultimately proposes film as an intensification of reality and not in contrast to it. He famously compares the cameraman to the surgeon, who "greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body"; with regard to reality, the cameraman "penetrates deeply into its web" (233). Benjamin provides key examples of how film relates the viewer to the world in new ways. Firstly, Benjamin describes how the perception of film has caused a "deepening of apperception" (235). In the following lengthy and detailed description of cinematic spatial transformation, Benjamin explains the spatializing effects of many modernist experimental techniques,
such as montage, close-up, and point-of-view camera positioning. The theorist offers a phenomenological description of things and the body in film:

Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formulations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones "which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, give the effect of singularly gliding, floating, supernatural motions." Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does
psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. (236-37)

Far from suggesting cinematic space in opposition to reality, Benjamin argues that we do not really have knowledge of the world in which we live until witnessing it in a cinematic manipulation of space and time. The handling of things in the world and our relation to them in film makes ontological realization possible. He importantly correlates the movements and sensorial abilities of the camera with those of the body. Benjamin also somewhat shockingly argues that these modernist techniques, often imagined to be distortions of real time and space, are already present for the body without the intervention of film. Cinematic spatial narrative merely emphasizes what is already there.

Benjamin avoids Platonist vocabulary in this passage and suggests in his quintessential style that the motion of film has a mysterious psychological relation to how we experience motion, though not necessarily a mimetic one. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy also designates motion in film as a lived, resonant experience, but is careful to say that the experimental strategies showing bodily movement in film does not rely upon mimesis, as Carbone notes (50). Merleau-Ponty questions, "Cinema portrays movement, but how? Is it, as we are inclined to believe, by copying more closely the changes of place? We may presume not, since slow motion shows a body being carried along, floating among objects like a seaweed, but not moving itself" (EM 144). Carbone illuminates Merleau-Ponty's philosophy in application to film as an internal and external experience detached from the mimesis of the film itself. The identification between eye and camera lens as well as the reversibility of the seeing and seen makes possible a vision that emerges in the film (Carbone 57).
Like Benjamin, Merleau-Ponty imagines a complex relation between seer and seen; he similarly views things and instruments as ways of perceiving to a greater extent when he writes "Our organs are not instruments; on the contrary, our instruments are added-on organs" (EM 138). Finally, Merleau-Ponty and Benjamin both endorse with a Proustian vision film's exchange with the deep psychological past of the viewer. In his discussion on the precession of images, Carbone stresses the "retrograde movement digging a peculiar kind of depth in time….in this peculiar temporality the experiences of our life are involuntarily elaborated" (60). Both philosophers imagine how cinema magnifies and engages the experiences of the viewer.

The spatial film techniques described by Benjamin create another material phenomenology when applied to architecture. Many modernist films dilate lived experience using the techniques reviewed by Benjamin, but none attempt the range of spatial and temporal manipulations as does Dziga Vertov's silent and experimental film of 1929, Man with a Movie Camera. In accordance with Benjamin's theory, Vertov's film is both phenomenologically attentive and focuses on cultural artifacts and materiality as central to our existence in the world. Filmed in a documentary style from almost every imaginable perspective, it is a montage of everyday scenes in Kiev, Kharkov, Moscow, and Odessa. It is thematically cyclical, often filming the same scenes from various positions and returning to them later in the film. In addition to its use of the most avant-garde film techniques of early cinema including slow motion, freeze frames, fast motion, and extreme close-ups, Man is noteworthy for its material emphasis on tools, machinery, architectures, and transportation. It visibly enacts the
reversibility of the eye and the camera lens by periodically showing scenes of the camera in the act of filming or scenes of the camera lens in close-up. The cameraman is filmed from various perspectives, and some scenes emphasize the subjects' looking back at the cameraman. In the spirit of Benjamin's *Passagenwerk*, Vertov shoots wide angle panoramic views from above the cities, showing the insect-like rhythms of urban dwellers and modern technology. Vertov makes architecture and motion part of the mass encounter with itself, reminiscent of Benjamin's expression that architecture is essential "to comprehend the relationship of the masses to art" (240). *Man with a Movie Camera, Metropolis, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, and many other early films reinforce the relationship between the masses and urban architectures.

While he delivers the general exhibition of the masses as a giant machine for the viewer to behold, Vertov also shows things and their users as particulars. Architectures and objects are characters with which we must reckon. Exploring our most intimate contact with things from varying proximities of close and far away, Vertov films people using cranks, levers, gears, pistons, sewing machines, shoes, and braziers. Various thresholds are sites of action and auratic subjects throughout the film. Aura in regards to thresholds in the film is fitting from a Benjaminian perspective since, though they are cinematic and therefore reproduced thresholds, Vertov's doorways are filmed with a concern for their specific time and place. They are part of the fabric of the city. Some scenes show groups of people lined up or moving in clusters toward an elevator lift, a set of French doors, and a revolving door; other scenes show close-up shots of select aspects of doors. Vertov shoots the revolving doors from the perspective of a person confronting them and looking slightly upward,
zooming in on the top of the spindle in the center. He then shoots from the perspective of another viewer standing at a distance, watching people file through the revolving door. The elevator is shown from the perspective of a passenger waiting for a ride, from inside the lift looking out at where the camera was standing to film the lift in the previous scenes, and from the inside while it is moving up and down.

Vertov's montage of architectural moments are perhaps best described in their reception during a contemporary cultural moment by Virginia Woolf who, after seeing Robert Wiene's film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* in 1926, published her article "The Cinema." She judges the cinema not as an isolated art object, but in relation to the viewer, who is "peering over the edge of a cauldron in which fragments of all shapes and savours seem to simmer; now and again some vast form heaves itself up, and seems about to haul itself out of chaos" (381). Woolf's very phenomenological description of film precedes her expression of film's contradiction as both real and unreal in its imposition of detachment from the material: "Shall we call it (our vocabulary is miserably insufficient) more real, or real with a different reality from that which we perceive life?....We behold them as they are when we are not there" (382). Woolf echoes Merleau-Ponty's concept of art that creates its own "reality" and the incapability of art to replicate life as it is lived. At the same time, Woolf and Merleau-Ponty understand the artwork as its own event.

Woolf eventually imagines film as the most avant-garde expression when it finally combines image and thought, motion and emotion. "The most fantastic contrasts could be flashed before us with a speed which the writer can only toil after in vain; the dream architecture of arches and battlements, of cascades falling and
fountains rising, which sometimes visits us in sleep or shapes itself in half-darkened rooms, could be realized before our waking eyes" (383). Woolf characteristically praises the ability for experimental modernist cinema to spatialize thought when she describes an unintentional form in *The Cabinet*: "A shadow shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen. It swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity. For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous diseased imagination of the lunatic's brain….as if thought could be conveyed more effectively than by words" (382).

Amidst her reverence for the phenomenological potential of film, Woolf is wary of its cultural force, prescient of the destiny of popular film, and anticipates the depthlessness of image in a postmodern age. Woolf writes "a strange thing has happened—while all the other arts have been born naked, this, the youngest of the arts, has been born fully clothed. It can say everything before it has anything to say" (383). We realize the extent to which the majority of film has been an empty promise from the very beginning; yet, Woolf proposes film's ability to make us see and think differently. The forms that haunt our dreams and the subjects of our oneiric fantasies are re-experienced in ways that redirect our understanding of them, and perhaps even cause us to confront material forms differently. Woolf warns against the simplicity of representing text with image, of equating our interpretation and understanding of literature with film. Perched on the threshold, she speaks to the imminence of the modernist moment: the remaking of experience and ourselves.
Appendix

An "Austere, Whispering Power": An Interview with Colm Tóibín

Abstract

This interview is a culmination of encounters with Colm Tóibín in Rochester, New York and in Seattle, Washington from 2010 to the present. Relationships permeate Tóibín's fiction and non-fiction, his work as a journalist and novelist. Tóibín has spent much of his career unearthing and troubling familial relations in works such as The Testament of Mary, Nora Webster, and New Ways to Kill Your Mother: Writers and Their Families. This scholarly and writerly interview probes the relationships presented in Tóibín's work between living and working, living and art, psychology and fiction, forms of fiction and national identities, fiction and politics, art and sexuality, biography and narrative, the writing of a novel and our reading of it.

A Special Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Dr. Stephen M. Barber, at the University of Rhode Island, for his advice and contributions to the following interview.

As a student, a teacher, a fiction writer, and as a scholar, I have followed Colm Tóibín's collection of sensibilities: his keen sense of irony, the distance between his characters and themselves, and his ongoing concern for the relentlessness of living. I first read Tóibín's Mothers and Sons as a master's student at the State University of New York at Oswego in 2007. I could not know at the time that this text would
continue to germinate within and throughout my professional life. Tóibín was invited as a visiting author to Monroe Community College in Rochester, New York, where I was an instructor at the time. I was privileged to have dinner with Tóibín after his reading on March 4, 2010.

Tóibín was candid and approachable, giving entertaining impressions of the people he knew. His memories echoed the vague and ascetic relations of his fiction, fertile with enigma and resembling the speculative tone of his own literary imagination. After his reading from *Brooklyn*, published in 2009 and since adapted into an Oscar-nominated film in 2015, Tóibín told stories about his family and life in Ireland as a child. He talked about his grandfather, who was in the Irish Republican Army and his neighbor who grew the most beautiful roses. At an old age, his neighbor was arrested for his rebel activities and executed by the British. Tóibín told a story about his Uncle, who had spent time in prison and, as a result, had developed an aversion to cabbage. Tóibín recalled hearing the women in his family belabor this point while preparing meals after anyone would suggest eating cabbage.

In preparation for Tóibín's visit, I had assigned my Introduction to Literature students his short story, "Three Friends" from *Mothers and Sons*, published in 2007. Upon returning to the text, I remarked Tóibín's endorsement of the everydayness of gay lives. His body of work depoliticizes both gayness and Irishness; rather than politicizing identity, Tóibín empowers his readers with fiction itself. Tóibín's Joycean coding of Irish lives left my students of all backgrounds with many questions, which Tóibín was gracious enough to answer. He said that if any moment could stand for modern Ireland, a subject questioned by many critics at the time, it would be the
moment after Fergus and Mick are intimate in the water and the two other friends turn away after having seen them together. Tóibín restated that the response of Alan and Conal is the modern Irish response to homosexuality. He had debated whether they would throw rocks at Fergus and Mick or ridicule them, but decided that they "turned away nonchalantly," as he describes in the text (178).

My students and I were curious about the mysterious man in the funeral scene who approaches Fergus while he keeps vigil over his mother. As with so many characters in Tóibín's fiction, he is realistic and ethereal. Fergus' interaction with the figure exemplifies Tóibín's narration of events as nuanced, slippery, and always formed to some extent in the realm of the partially perceived and known. Tóibín writes, "This stretch of time appeared to Fergus to belong to a dark dream which took them out of all familiar elements into a place of dim, shimmering lights, uncomfortable silence, the unending, dull, and neutral realm of the dead….If someone were to whisper that this man had come to take away his mother's spirit, it would not have appeared strange to Fergus" (163-64). Tóibín said of this scene that the man was supposed to be a mythological figure. He imagined the man's role in carrying away Fergus' mother as parallel to the friends' driving away with Fergus to the beach rave.

As a doctoral student, I attended a panel with Colm Tóibín and Rachel Kushner at the Association for Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) in Seattle during February of 2014. Tóibín discussed a range of topics, including visual art, the historical novel, and the assertion of the writer within public discourse. Many of the questions put to Tóibín by the audience came out of his 2012 publications of The Testament of Mary and New Ways to Kill Your Mother. At that time, Tóibín had begun
his professorship at Columbia University and was teaching a course in
"relentlessness." His course texts covered a range of genres and periods: Euripides' "Medea," Sophocles' "Antigone," and the writings of Sylvia Plath, Nadine Gordimer, and Joan Didion. I was not surprised at the focus of Tóibín's course, since there is an existential relentlessness to his characters' perception of and negotiation with their respective worlds.

As the theme of the talk was "Image & Idea," Tóibín claimed that as a writer, "You need an image more than you need information." He referred to Thomas Mann as an author who did not operate by information as a cultural value. Katia, Mann's wife, said that you shouldn't ask Tommy since he only knows what is in his books. Tóibín suggested that fiction is inherently visual, experiential, and beyond information. Tóibín said that he believed in using "images that hit the reader's nervous system." Tóibín also refers to the "nervous system" in the following interview, regarding the rhythm of a short story. In his talk, Tóibín went on to discuss the paintings of Tintoretto and Titian as he does in the "Author's Note" of The Testament of Mary. He contends that the "distance between those two paintings is the distance between two forms of narrative, one that attempted to create shape and to inspire, and the other that attempted to register the untidiness at the heart of all human endeavor."

Tóibín stated in his talk that this fiction came out of the question of what Mary's experience might be like from a "modern understanding of trauma." As readers, we witness the results of Tóibín's absorption of both images and his attempt to work "in the space between those two images" (86). In the spirit of Mann, Tóibín struggles
between the two images of Dionysus and Apollo, granting Mary a life that she could not have possessed in either painter's imagination.

In Seattle, Tóibín finally discussed the challenges inherent to writing a historical novel. Tóibín most notably assumes the task of inhabiting historical or literary figures in *The Master*, published in 2004, and *The Testament of Mary*. Ironically, Tóibín cited Henry James, the subject of *The Master* who claimed that the historical novel was "condemned to a fatal cheapness." Tóibín emphasized finding a public moment as a writer and then doing your work in between. He said that the historical book in general needs the "pressing urgency of now." Some of those important public moments discovered by Tóibín are not necessarily in the temporal present, and in the case of Mary, Tóibín emphasizes a now that is essential to our collective ancient past. Some of these moments for Tóibín have been in the present, as with his short story "The Street," in *The Empty Family Stories*. Tóibín's love story about two Pakistani men living in Barcelona mindfully and gracefully accomplishes his advice for other writers. He blends public and private gay lives, illustrating their intersection with conflicting eastern and western ideologies and identities in Europe. He subtly alludes to the larger refugee cultures developing throughout European cities, probing the anxieties of emigration between and within communities at odds. More significantly, Tóibín explores a displaced culture in conflict with itself.

Since these encounters with Tóibín, my own scholarly work and fiction continues to probe the author's literary families. *Mothers and Sons* poignantly translates the unexplored boundaries and burdens of relations between mothers and sons. Tóibín represents the family as an inevitable catastrophe. The mother is a
contradiction in *Nora Webster* and in so many other works. She is, at times, a bastion for her sons, who experience the reduction of life as a whole in the absence of their father; in other moments, Nora is admittedly and mostly unapologetically ill-equipped to recognize her children's needs. Tóibín allows readers to judge his families for themselves, though it is not a judgement that the author seems willing to make for himself. Tóibín's tone is matter-of-fact and existential. Like the waves which govern the external environment of his beaches in works like *The Blackwater Lightship* and *Nora Webster*, Tóibín's characters and their waves of consciousness are preserved in their indifference. The effect is liberation. Tóibín allows us to read his families as we are.

Tóibín never abandons his post as a sculptor of prose. At AWP, Tóibín passed along the advice given to him by a colleague, that the only job of a writer is to look after her sentences and that content does not matter as much as the writer's "delivery and seriousness." Tóibín authentically negotiates between this syntactical world of signification and an indifferent environment. In "The Empty Family," Tóibín meditates on a world without signification: "To focus on a curling line of water, a piece of world indifferent to the fact that there is language, that there are names to describe things, and grammar and verbs" (32). Tóibín is a melancholy absurdist interested in the everyday and, while influenced by fiction authors canonized as modernists or postmodernists, he has internalized his more explicitly and overtly self-reflexive predecessors. His fiction vibrates with the existentialist perspectives of his self-proclaimed influences, such as Ernest Hemingway and Albert Camus. Tóibín read *The Essential Hemingway* and *The Sun Also Rises* in the summer of 1972 at the age of
seventeen, when he was a barman at a hotel in County Waterford ("Best Holiday
Reads"). In my first reading of Mothers and Sons, I recall underlining the repeated use
of the word, "empty" on the very first page of the collection in the story, "The Use of
Reason." This experience paralleled my freshman semester in an introductory
literature college course, underlining the word, "rain" on page one of Hemingway's
"Cat in the Rain." Like Hemingway, Tóibín attends to his sentences with precision and
in contrast to the indifferent things to which they refer.

Tóibín's writings perpetually move the reader between poles of difference and
relationality. As a student of Tóibín's work, I find myself wanting to know about the
relationship between living and working, living and art, psychology and fiction, forms
of fiction and national identities, fiction and politics, art and sexuality, biography and
narrative, the writing of a novel and our reading of it. In June of 2016, Tóibín
responded to the following series of questions about the relationships that permeate his
writing, extending to the reader an invitation to rethink those relationships as he does
in his fiction.

AF: In the chapter on W.B. Yeats of your non-fiction work, New Ways to Kill Your
Mother, you focus on the relationship between father and son and also the tension
between complete and incomplete work. This is what all writers struggle with in some
way. You describe the letters written by John Butler Yeats to W.B. Yeats as being
“from the great unfinisher to the connoisseur of completion” (38). At the same, John
expressed his regret that William joined Lady Gregory instead of staying with his
father in his “concrete life” (39). Do you think there is a relationship between an
artist’s ability to complete and his or her participation in the concrete? Writers handle
writing and living in so many ways. For example, Woody Allen claims that he doesn’t travel much and keeps a regular schedule seven days a week so that he can write every day. This is how he writes and directs at least one film every year for forty years now. For you, what is the relationship between living and writing?

CT: There is no easy solution to the problem of how much work to do and the quality of that work. Woody Allen may end up being the director of one or two good films. All of the others will be forgotten. Yeats, for much of his creative life, wrote poems over four or five months of the year and the rest of the year hung out in London. He even did tours in America and ran a theatre in Dublin. He got energy from that and his work has a forceful relationship with energy. I think that Yeats needed to resist his father not only because of his father’s indolence, but because Yeats’s interest in ‘concrete life’ was slight, but sufficient to keep him going. His instinct was to symbolize, totalize, and it is the tension between that instinct and the concrete image that gives his work such power.

AF: So many of your stories involve people who are alone and sometimes a choice between being alone and being in a relationship. “Sleep” and “The Pearl Fishers” are two that stand out to me, among others. To what extent is loneliness as an experience more productive for you than a relationship?

CT: A story, or even a novel, is closer to a lyric poem that a clear statement of opinion. In other words, no word is the last word. Words are moods. I wrote what you quote; I could just as easily have found an image that suggested quite the opposite and I would
have gone with it had it suited the moment in the story.

AF: Much of your work is concerned with familial relationships. *New Ways to Kill Your Mother* and *The Testament of Mary* strike me as being particularly influenced by psychoanalytic theory and culture. You commented on this aspect of *The Testament of Mary* at an AWP panel discussion in Seattle in February 2014, saying that the work is an imagining of what Mary’s telling would be like from a modern understanding of “trauma.” Have you thought about any of your work as Freudian? Do you consider psychoanalysis to be a means of understanding one’s subconscious?

CT: I wonder if we are not all subconscious and if the conscious will or the surface self is merely like orange peel. But a novel needs orange peel as much as it needs orange. In other words, surface statement, surface feeling, surface dialogue are important elements. But they are always ways of hiding or concealing or revealing what is beneath. I think this was in Shakespeare before it was in Freud.

AF: *The Testament of Mary* has been called a novel. Its construction and close development of one character’s psychologically intense experience is distinctly reminiscent of the continental European novella and especially the German novella, such as *Death in Venice* or *The Metamorphosis*. What were your thoughts about form and structure as you were writing this? Would you call it a novella?

CT: I have no idea what a novella is. Maybe it is a short novel; maybe a long story. I think of my book as a short novel, but I consider the two works you mention as long stories. More happens in ‘The Testament of Mary’; there is more stuff. But I am not
sure. My story ‘A Long Winter’ is almost as long as ‘The Testament of Mary’, but I think of it as a long story. All of the narrative stems from one action. In ‘The Testament of Mary’, there are many such actions.

AF: Many of your characters have a pattern of moving out and away from the conflicts inherent in family life into what seems to be a more liberating and larger social sphere. Do you think it is true for many people that family is that which one must escape?

CT: Yes, we move from being children to adults, from a home that was made for us to a home we create, or try to. This is a very dramatic subject.

AF: I am struck by your short fiction in relation to national identity. You have talked and written about the national and formal characteristics of the Irish novel before. In a 2009 interview, you say that “it’s possible to look at how the novel developed in France and in England and to see it developing in a way that is close to the way that society developed: slow progress, continuity, and people having choices and chances coming their way. You can’t find that in the Brazilian novel and the Irish novel” (3-4). In thinking about the Irish short story, are there particular ways in which Joyce’s short fiction, for example, or any other Irish short fiction reveals a relationship between Irish national identity and the form itself?

CT: I would not like to generalize about the Irish short story. Many Irish short stories do not interest me. I like Joyce’s stories and some stories by Mary Lavin and John McGahern. I like a story by Daniel Corkery called ‘Nightfall’ and Frank O’Connor’s ‘Guests of the Nation’. In recent years I have enjoyed stories by Anne Enright and
Claire Keegan. The point I was making in that interview is that in Ireland we have no great tradition of the novel in the nineteenth century, like France does, or England. We can read those books, of course, but they don’t come from our world. It means we have to make up a world, or live in a more limited and less layered one.

AF: Many authors of the short story have specific ideas about its function and effect on the reader. Poe writes in “The Importance of the Single Effect in a Prose Tale” that “In the brief tale…the author is enabled to carry out the fullness of his intention. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer’s control.” Flannery O’Connor contends that “being short does not mean being slight. A short story should be long in depth and should give us an experience of meaning” (“Writing Short Stories” 1666). She writes that “a story really isn’t any good unless it successfully resists paraphrase, unless it hangs on and expands in the mind” (“A Reasonable Use of the Unreasonable” 1671). What is a short story to you?

CT: I am really not sure about any of this. Maybe a story is closer to a poem. It depends more on rhythm and the mysteries of rhythm than on plot or even character or even drama or conflict. But there are so many types of stories. Maybe many of them depend on one strange turn, one pull and push in the rhythm, that hits the reader’s nervous system. One strange moment - something pure, but also sharp, direct.

AF: What is modern fiction? Is there such a thing, or is all fiction modern?

CT: I don’t know. I notice a lot of irony and general jokiness, a sort of knowingness on the part of the author, many of whom, it seems, have been to college, some of whom
have stayed in college too long. But there are also many novels where this doesn’t happen.

AF: Does postmodernism mean anything to you in regards to literary form, art, and aesthetics? Would you or do you think about the differences between the works of James Joyce and Don DeLillo, for example, not necessarily for their national and cultural differences, but for the temporal shift in western thought that may have occurred between the two authors?

CT: Is Don DeLillo post-modern? I would have thought not. He writes about now and the future as well as the past, but while his tone has a wonderful set of undertones, it is also dead serious and does not openly or covertly re-direct you to other works to which is referring or with which he is playing. He is concerned with the world and has found a way of making his paragraph contain this. There is an earnestness at play in his wryness.

AF: When asked what books you generally avoid in a 2015 interview with The New York Times, you said that you avoid “books about philosophy (especially metaphysics and ethics).” I can’t help but wonder if there is a story or stories behind that remark. Have you had bad or unfulfilling experiences with philosophy? Also, do you consider literature, or some literature, to be philosophy? How are they different for you?

CT: At least mechanics has helped us to make machines. What has ethics done? What has metaphysics done? Indeed, what has philosophy done? In around five billion years, the sun will have used up its fuel and the world will shrivel. Where will we be
then? What will the philosophers have to tell us about Being then?

AF: You are a prolific producer of non-fiction. It occurred to me that some aspect of mystery or doubt seems to be your expressed impetus for writing much of your non-fiction. In the first chapter of Love in a Dark Time, you approach the subject of doubtful intentions on the part of gay writers and ways in which those works have been (mis)interpreted. You seem to strive against the ever-present impulse of literary critics to read queerness into the works of gay writers. In the process of resisting this critical impulse, you also spar with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick several times. You argue against Sedgwick’s claim that “the denial that the secret has a content…is a stylish and ‘satisfying’ Jamesian formal gesture.” You respond that “it is not a stylish or satisfying formal gesture. It is, ostensibly, about a man who realizes that his failure to love has been a disaster” (35). As one interested in the life and philosophy of Sedgwick and also a close follower of your work, I wonder why you and Sedgwick read these same texts so differently. Why do you think Sedgwick reads James as she does? Does your reading differ from hers just on these points or in general?

CT: I admire Sedgwick’s work enormously. All I was doing was trying to refine it, riff on it a bit. She needed to express herself with certainty, I think, because she was working against ingrained and quite lazy readings of James. She needed to be assertive. She did the groundwork. I don’t think we differ that much, except that she is much smarter than I am.

AF: Post-Stonewall, there is nominally gay fiction. Do you ever think of your work as
particularly political? Do you understand yourself as challenging the reduction of literature to the identity of its author? How do you understand your sexuality in relation to your writing?

CT: I am gay and this enters the books in ways that are overt and hidden. Ditto with being Irish. But I suppose the novel is, or should be, or must be in some way, a display of personality, however concealed or shrouded in ironies and artifices. So my books are personal. I write them. But they also come from the world, the world I both know and sometimes am utterly unconscious of.

AF: In *Love in a Dark Time*, you often characterize the range of attitudes assumed by biographers toward their subjects, which is an often overlooked aspect of biography by literary critics who use those same biographies for scholarly ends. You point to biographers who seem to disapprove of their subjects, as in the case of Ronald Hayman and Donald Prater’s biographies on Thomas Mann. Why do you think biographers choose to write about people of whom they may disapprove?

CT: There is a problem about scholars and writers. Scholars in general spent their twenties in libraries. Many writers did not. Scholars are not naturally anarchic. Writers often are. Thomas Mann did not go to college. He knew nothing more than what he wrote about. He devoted himself to his work rather than to his family. If we wanted him to devote himself to his family, or get a PhD, then we might not have his work. Often, scholars want writers to be like them. I notice this in biographies sometimes. But then other biographies are not like that.
AF: I have read Gershom Scholem’s *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship*. It occurred to me that there are some, but not enough biographies on friendships. You have written biographies of gay writers and writers in relation to their families, as well as biographies of individuals such as Lady Gregory and Elizabeth Bishop. Are there other kinds of biographies that you believe are scarce or that you wish to write?

CT: Yes, with Gregory and Bishop, you have two writers whose friendships were deeply important. You get the same with Yeats (but not with Joyce), and with Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster (but not Thomas Mann or Wallace Stevens). I would like to write a few more critical/ biographical books about writers and artists – about James Baldwin, for example, or Yeats, or Cezanne – but there is not enough time.

AF: In your chapter on Francis Bacon, you discuss the tendency of biographers to relate the art and life of the artist, specifically art and sexuality in particular ways, as you say, “there is an interest in connecting a lurid personal life to lurid paintings.” You say that Bacon is a “biographer’s dream of a homosexual, from his father’s rejection of him, to his sex with stable-hands, to his lust for his father, to his wild times in Berlin and Paris” (140-41). How do you understand this impulse in biographies?

CT: Bacon’s real life was in the studio. He was a most thoughtful and serious man. This emerges in his interviews with David Sylvester. But some of the books about him write about how alarming he was when he was in company. He was even more alarming, however, when he was alone, which is why his pictures are so startling still. But how do you write about that energy? He was the only one who knew what it was
like and he did not keep diaries.

AF: There are moments in your writing that can only be described as melancholy absurdism, moments that starkly awaken the reader to the absurd realities of living. In one interview, you refer to the “moral mistiness” surrounding characters in the works of James and Conrad and how they are written as not perceiving themselves politically or personally. Many of your characters perceive their communities with great precision and patience, despite their lack of interest or inability to perceive themselves. These moments are frequent in *The Testament of Mary*. We experience these moments when Jesus’ reputation as the Son of God is constructed quickly and seemingly without question by those who believed they knew him. These absurd moments accumulate until they are overwhelming in the parts leading up to the end of *Nora Webster*. For example, you describe Nora’s inability to recall how the subject of boarding school ever became a reality for Donal. In both works, we have a mother who feels excluded or distant from all meaning-making that occurs in her community. These mothers observe the constructedness of truth in each case. Are there authors that stand out to you as taking on this task as well?

CT: I suppose James in his novels is good at keeping a secret from a character, rendering them oddly powerless – Isabel Archer, for example, in ‘The Portrait of a Lady’ and Maggie Verver in ‘The Golden Bowl’ – because they do not know something, but oddly powerful in other ways. Many of Conrad’s novels are about degrees of perception and ways of missing the point. I am interested in this – it comes most forcefully in my novel ‘The Story of the Night’ – but have never had it
formulated before, so thanks for this.

AF: Many of your narrators are women. It is as though you inhabit these women rather than simply write from a woman's perspective. Are there differences for you in writing the perspectives of women and men?

CT: I am not sure. Writing James in ‘The Master’ and the judge in ‘The Heather Blazing’ involved inhabiting the character, who was male. I can’t see any other way to work. Or there are other ways, but they don’t interest me much.

AF: On the subject of absurdism, it occurred to me as I was teaching Camus’ The Stranger that “Three Friends” in Mothers and Sons has a very similar narrative structure as the beginning of Camus’ novel. Though they seem to suggest fundamentally different orientations and understandings of the world, Fergus and Meursault each experience the mother’s death strangely, followed by a scene that combines the ocean, swimming, and sexual experience and awakening. Are you aware of this similarity? Was Camus’ fiction ever important for you?

CT: It sure was! I read ‘The Stranger’ in my teens and it meant a great deal to me, as did Sartre’s trilogy which no one seems to read any more. I found the same sort of distance from experience in Hemingway, especially ‘The Sun Also Rises’, but also some of the stories.

AF: You have connections with writers who are identified as significant figures in existentialist or absurdist thought, such as Ernest Hemingway and Ernesto Sábato. I have read about your early reading of The Essential Hemingway. You wrote the
introduction for the Penguin edition of Sábato’s *The Tunnel*. You also wrote about Samuel Beckett in *New Ways to Kill Your Mother*. Were you influenced by these writers, specifically their philosophies, in your own thinking and writing?

CT: Hemingway, I think, more than Sábato or Beckett.

AF: I would like to know about endings. What becomes of all the details, all of the vital moments in the middle of a novel by the end of *Nora Webster*? We might compare when Nora’s son Conor is confused and concerned that people could take as many buns as they like from the tray without paying in Bewley’s café with your final image of Nora in front of the fire after burning Maurice’s letters. It is remarkable that, as readers, we hold onto the seemingly smaller moments of a novel in light of its sometimes powerful and self-effacing final moments. How do you think about an ending as you approach it?

CT: I think I am more interested in how a string quartet ends, or a piano sonata, than I am in an ending in books. The melody is being played out. It falls, something weakens, then the last notes take on a sort of austere, whispering power.
Endnotes

Introduction

i In The Straight Gate, Daniel Jütte includes the following study: "In 2011, a group of American psychologists published a study on the effects of walking through doorways, based on a sample group of sixty participants. The psychologists observed that when people 'pass through a doorway to move from one location to another, they forget more information than if they do not make such a shift.' They concluded that 'walking through doorways serves as an event boundary that 'can reduce the availability in memory for objects associated with prior events'" (252).

ii Examples of prominent synecdoches include an identification of the whole by what is the most essential part in that context. For example, the crew of a ship are called the "hands" and the monarch is identified by the "crown." This is not so in architecture, though it is arguable that our emphasis is on interiors. When inviting in a guest or sending one to a building, we say to "Come inside" or "Go inside."

iii Architecture, as a system and study, is not limited to buildings. Many other structures make up architecture that do not entail interiority or require entrance, such as public sculptures. This is why I have said that the doorway defines the system of buildings.


vii Das Passagen-Werk. Introduction. X.

viii See Deleuze and Guattari. A Thousand Plateaus and Anti-Oedipus.

ix Also see Jeremy Hawthorn's Studying the Novel. Hawthorn discusses literary movements in regards to how its writers perceive the potential acquisition of "reality." Modernists are discussed as, admitted by Hawthorn as a risky generalization, having a "monist view of reality but accept that complete knowledge of this reality is impossible" (71). The idea of a singular reality waiting to be grasped by the protagonist, but ultimately unattainable, is present in some work by Mann and Kafka, among others; however, it is wholly inaccurate in regards to much European and American fiction of the 1920s and 30s.

x Merleau-Ponty adds, "and if we fail to see it, that is because we are obsessed with objective thought" (PhP 413).

Chapter One


xii Ibid., 71.

xiii Ibid., 71. Merleau-Ponty writes that "a philosophy of perception which aspires to learn to see the world once more, as if in an exchange of services rendered, will restore painting and the arts in general to their rightful place, will allow them to recover their dignity and will incline us to accept them in their purity."

xiv Ibid., 75.

xv Ibid., 76

xvi See Jay Watson ed., Faulkner and Whiteness (Jackson: UP of MS, 2011); Deborah Clarke, Robbing the Mother (Jackson: UP of MS, 1994). Many articles are devoted to racial bodies in Faulkner's work as historically determined. In particular, see Barbara Ladd's "William Faulkner, Edouard Clissant, and a

According to Bleikasten, the "settings and costumes [were] by the surrealist painter Felix Labisse (143). Antonin Artaud wrote a review in Nouvelle Revue Française entitled "Un Spectacle magique" in July of 1935 (164). This performance is not surprising given the early French obsession with Faulkner.

Jay Watson's chapter on "The Philosophy of Furniture, or Light in August and the Material Unconscious" in Faulkner and Material Culture examines the uses of furniture in relation to narrative. This is also important for understanding the built environment as philosophy in Faulkner.

Sutpen’s white son, Henry, also faces architectural myth and the enticement of interiors or the depth behind the surface. While his father dreamt of a kingdom, Henry is intrigued by urban life, which signifies both decadence and freedom from an old order: "I can see him corrupting Henry slowly into the purlieus of elegance…exposing Henry slowly to the surface aspect—the architecture a little curious, a little femininely flamboyant and therefore to Henry opulent, sensuous, sinful…” (110). The image of the overflowing city is joined with both architectural and materialist language. Bon says, ‘‘But that’s not it. That’s just the base, the foundation. It can belong to anyone’: and Henry, ‘You mean, this is not it? That it is above this, higher than this, more elect than this?’: and Bon, ‘Yes. This is only the foundation. This belongs to anybody”’ (110-11). Like his father before him, Henry realizes the world of objects a field for individual conquest.

While Pallasmaa does not directly cite Merleau-Ponty in his use of "flesh of the world," Merleau-Ponty is directly cited in several places, including his reference to our experience of distance (46) and the centrality of the body (44). It is clear that Merleau-Ponty has generally influenced Pallasmaa’s sensorial reading of space.

It is tempting to categorize Faulkner’s spatiality as postmodern since his haptic world seems to be beyond typical modernist aesthetic designations. The contributors of Faulkner and Postmodernism argue largely for postmodern reading practices and intertextuality in Faulkner. In the final chapter, I write about a postmodern experience of architecture, in which I explore the depthlessness and liquid thresholds of Colm Tóibín’s fiction. In comparison, Sanctuary does not impose hyperspace or depthlessness upon the reader; rather, the reader experiences a phenomenology of architecture and the body that is beyond the jurisdiction of proclaimed modernist spatiality.

Chapter Two

In preparation for writing the previous chapter on Faulknerian and southern architectures, I excavated the depths of the J.D. Williams library Faulkner collection at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. There, I made detailed recordings of the personal library belonging to Faulkner and his family at Rowan Oak. To my astonishment, I found so many works never published or mentioned as part of Faulkner's library by Joseph Blotner or his other biographers. Among mysteries and works by women authors, such as Dorothy Sayers, Agatha Christy, and Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf's Orlando was listed as being found in a storeroom of Faulkner's house in September of 1962, just two months after his death. The idea is often the object of my musing. There is no evidence of Faulkner's awareness or consideration of Woolf during his time, though I cannot help wondering what might have been their understanding of one another.

In my brief research on any relationship between Faulkner and Woolf, I discovered that Faulkner had none of Woolf's writings in his personal library, according to Joseph Blotner's William Faulkner's Library—A Catalogue. In the fifth volume of her diary on June 1st of 1937, Woolf writes that The Years was "most intelligently (& highly) praised by Faulkner in America”; however, a footnote says that “Faulkner’s notice has not been traced” (91). I posted a question about the two authors on the Faulkner scholarship forum and received the following response from Erin Kay Penner:

Nothing of Faulkner's appears in the Catalogue of Books from the Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf, which includes the couple’s books from Monk’s House, Sussex, and 24 Victoria Square, London. But a lot of the books were destroyed, of course, in the WWI bombing of their house in London.
In a footnote to Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems, Carvel Collins offers a puzzling anecdote:

Faulkner’s grandaunt, Mrs. Walter B. McLean, said in August, 1951, that once when she was reading Virginia Woolf’s Orlando and told Faulkner she was finding it difficult, he urged her to put it aside because there was no reason to struggle over difficult reading, that some works are for some people and others for others. He then added, she told me, that people should not try to read books which do not appeal to them almost at once. (Collins 102)

Collins thinks this an odd remark, given that Faulkner was prone to reciting Shakespeare’s The Phoenix and the Turtle in the middle of a conversation. Orlando is also perhaps the least likely of Woolf’s works to be rejected on grounds of difficulty.

Another lead was offered by Eden Wales Freedman:

In "The Wild Palms" section of If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem, Harry Willbourne reflects about his lover, Charlotte Rittenmeyer: "She had a father and then four brothers exactly like him and then she married a man exactly like the four brothers and so she probably never even had a room of her own in all her life" (70). Since "Wild Palms" was published after Woolf’s Room, and because Harry's reflection follows Charlotte's assertion that she wants to secure work as an artist and has found her own studio where she "can work too," it is possible that Faulkner refers directly to Woolf here and that he even supports her claim (through Harry's musings) that women need a "room of their own" to achieve artistic equality with men.

Both authors became canonized during the 1960s and 70s as high modernists, experimental avant-garde novelists and both as politically engaged thinkers. As canonized modernists, the two authors reinterpreted and rehearsed Shakespeare in political and private ways. Faulkner famously made the degrading remark to his daughter, "Nobody remembered Shakespeare's child." The two also had some relation with James Joyce; both encounters were phantasmal and significant. Faulkner's work is heavily influenced by Ulysses and he even spotted Joyce in a Parisian café in the 1920s. According to Mark Hussey, the Hogarth Press rejected a partial manuscript of Joyce's Ulysses in 1918 for logistical reasons (xv Three Guineas). Woolf writes of Joyce's death, recalling his presence at the Hogarth Press, "He was about the place, but I never saw him" (353 V.5). Faulkner has a bizarre relationship with Joyce. We can say with great confidence now that his writing was deeply and irrevocably affected by Joyce. Blotner notes that Ulysses was one of Faulkner's most annotated and read works. Faulkner reported seeing Joyce in a café in Paris during his years abroad. He also claimed at one point to have never read Joyce. Woolf and Faulkner both demonstrate a deference and aloof awe at the figure of Joyce for their generation. In these fragments of direct and indirect contact, I see Faulkner and Woolf reaching across an ocean toward each other, as unlikely as it seems.

The existence of Orlando in Faulkner's storeroom is provocative. It is possible that it belonged to his wife Estelle or daughter Jill. Faulkner had plenty of women authors in his main library, especially Austen and the Brontës. Did he ever read Woolf? What did he know about her? What would he have thought of her work? It is difficult not to interpret Woolf's work essentially in a closet of Faulkner’s house in the context of Woolf's philosophy of fascism and patriarchy as well as Faulkner's notable dismissive and misogynistic comments, despite the complexity of his women in fiction.

It is ironic that Woolf is closeted within the patriarchal social structure emblematized by Faulkner's southern home. Woolf's concern for women and rooms, in regards to the inherited privacy and domesticity of women's lives and work, permeates all of her work. The hiding of her novel situates Woolf spatially and ideologically within and without of modernism as a movement. From a storeroom, Orlando is both in motion and also holds us fast. Her motion through time is absolute transition and singular moment. Woolf reimagines the novel as that which is both within the present and also an exit from temporal finitude. Her architectures similarly create a coalescence of time and place that both flows and stands still. From behind a closed door, her work suggests the opportunity for a "knock at the door," and an eventual "open door," as implied by the early titles of her political work, Three Guineas. The ecstasy of Woolf's thresholds speak to Temple Drake's architectural and bodily envelopment. Woolf's doorways are both here and there, within and without.
Benjamin associates Messianic time with thresholds or boundaries in his allegory of the Paul Klee's "Angelus Novus," in which the "angel of history" always faces the past while a storm of progress forces it forward. While Benjamin does not use the threshold allegory, Jameson describes "Benjamin's experience of time" in his "Walter Benjamin, or Nostalgia": "a pure present, on the threshold of the future honoring it by averted eyes in meditation on the past" (68).

One example of this slippage in terms is Benjamin's use of the term "aura," which is actually associated with self-alienation. Benjamin uses the term “aura” in his artwork essay specifically in relation to “authenticity,” but expands its meaning in his other work. Benjamin describes aura in terms of the “natural,” a phenomenon in which a thing exists uniquely in space and time (as expressed earlier) and by which the subject is brought into relation with the artwork or object. “If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch” (222-23). The “shadow” indicates Benjamin’s understanding of aura as an experience with the art object. We are “imbedded in the fabric of tradition” (223) along with the artwork.

Despite the apparent clarity of Benjamin’s terms in the artwork essay, the word accrues additional and layered meanings given a wider reading. In Cinema and Experience, Miriam Hansen begins with Benjamin’s On Hashish, where he writes that "Genuine aura appears in all things, not just in certain things, as people imagine" (qtd. In Hansen 104). While Benjamin is careful to distinguish artworks and objects that are not reproduced as having aura in his artwork essay, the definition external to the artwork essay expands his categories of ritual and exhibition value. If aura and authenticity are joined in the object’s unique place and time and all things are authentic, then all things are tied to a unique place and time and, therefore, part of a tradition.

Hansen also examines aura as productive and self-alienating process rooted in Semitic spiritual tradition. One of Benjamin’s most influential friends, Gershom Scholem, a respected scholar in Jewish literature and mysticism, published on the Kabbalistic “tselem.” Hansen writes that Scholem’s publication on the tselem is precisely the time when Benjamin begins theorizing the aura in his own work. She quotes Scholem’s description of the tselem in the Zohar as “the unique, individual spiritual shape of each human being.” Another meaning, according to Scholem’s 1930 article, was a prophetic “visionary self-encounter”: "The prophet suddenly sees the form of his self standing before him, and he forgets his own self and [is removed from it; entrückt]...and that form [of his self] speaks with him and tells him the future" (127-28).

Hansen uses Benjamin’s understanding of aura from Jewish mysticism to actually join the aura with self-alienation (130). From this perspective, we might read Benjamin’s theory of ritual culture as that which allows the self-alienation and productivity of exhibition culture to occur. From this reading, the cult value of art before mechanical reproduction and exhibition value afterward depend on one another. Film is not an artwork necessarily devoid of aura, but an alienated re-embodiment of the work that is imbedded in a unique place and time. Furthermore, Benjamin refers to the alienation of experiencing subject and art object in his use of aura.

Thresholds abound in To the Lighthouse, which serve as ominous temporal markers. Open doors are a great concern for Mrs. Ramsay: "If every door in a house is left perpetually open, and no lockmaker in the whole of Scotland can mend a bolt, things must spoil. Every door was left open. She listened. The drawing-room door was open; the hall door was open; it sounded as if the bedroom doors were open....That windows should be open, and doors shut—simple as it was, could none of them remember it?" (27).

In the mode of Benjamin, Woolf contributes to ecstasy and the entrance into the artwork the ecstasy of the artist upon entering her own work. Lily Briscoe's ecstasy consists of wave-like rhythms containing pauses, concentration, and also disembodiment.

For a moment it stayed trembling in a painful but exciting ecstasy in the air. Where to begin?....All that in idea seemed simple became in practice immediately complex; as the waves shape themselves symmetrically from the cliff top, but to the swimmer among them are divided by steep gulls, and foaming crests....With a curious physical sensation, as if she were urged forward and at the same time must hold herself back, she made her first quick decisive stroke....And so pausing and so flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related; and so,
lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she scored her canvas. . . . Down in the hollow of one wave she saw the next wave towering higher and higher above her. For what could be more formidable than that space? . . . Before she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting she had a few moments of nakedness when she seemed like an unborn, a soul reft of body. (157-58)

On separate narrative occasions in *BTA*, Woolf refers to the "cesspool" (3). Lucy Swithin intermittently reads her book on "an Outline of History," which includes a description of evolutionary processes (8). See "The Comedy of Nature: Darwinian Feminism in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*," by Sam See.

Isa also pauses before other exterior thresholds apart from the group during the pageant. She and Dodge walk to the greenhouse, which becomes the rendezvous location for Isa's husband, Giles, and Mrs. Manresa. Isa "kicked open the greenhouse door. Dodge had lagged behind. She waited….They had left the greenhouse door open" (113-14). In this scene, it is as if Isa does not want to enter the greenhouse alone. The threshold is written as a place of congregation and anticipation.

Chapter Three

See David Spurr's chapter, "Kafka and Demonic Spaces" from *Architecture and Modern Literature*;

Jill Stoner's *Toward a Minor Architecture*;

Ayad B. Rahmani's *Kafka's Architectures*.

Kafka was fascinated with American culture, yet many of his attempts to describe it are inaccurate. Reiner Stach and other biographers note that Kafka carried small travel books about American Indians with him. Stach notes that in Kafka's article, "The Wish to be an Indian," he discusses Brazilian Indians, but is clearly thinking of American Indians in his description (91-92). Given that his knowledge of America was mostly through reading and lectures, many biographers write about Kafka's erroneous notions or lack of familiarity with America. Translator Mark Harman cites Kafka's errors in the original manuscript of *Amerika*, the "New York to Boston bridge" (xxvii). Some critics have noted how Kafka's American architecture is more European in style. In his preface to the Willa and Edwin Muir translation, Klaus Mann writes that "every detail of Kafka's description of American life is quite inaccurate, and yet the picture as a whole is filled with poetical truth….The country house of a millionaire near New York is built like an ancient European castle—a typical European castle, in fact" (xv).

Similarly, Benjamin's "Some Reflections on Kafka," written as a letter to Gerhard Scholem, also emphasizes Kafka's concern for the experience of the individual in a culture that seeks to dispose of the individual (143).


Merleau-Ponty writes similarly of gesture as the center of an event and not that which simply suggests something else: 'I do not perceive the anger or the threat as a psychological fact hidden behind the gesture, I read the anger in the gesture. The gesture does not make me think of anger, it is the anger itself" (PhP 190).

I would emphasize Kafka's significant novelistic departure from Dickens. Hannah Arendt says it best in her essay, "Franz Kafka": "From what has been said it should be apparent that Kafka is not a novelist in the classical sense of the nineteenth-century novel. The foundation of the classical novel was a feeling of life that basically accepted the world and society, that subordinated itself to life as it was and that sensed the grandeur of fate as being beyond good and evil" (10). While Dickens devoted his fiction to the revelation of social injustice in most cases, one does not have the sense of resistance or friction between his characters and their worlds. Arendt writes that Kafka "so passionately refused simply to subordinate himself to whatever fate was at hand" (11). This statement especially reveals the difference between Kafka and Dickens. Dickens critiqued Victorian England with one hand and proliferated the fantasized life of the "bourgeois individual," as Arendt suggests, with the other. Dickens' penchant for rags-to-riches narratives attest to his individual's acquiescence to the greater fates.

In the original German, Kafka refers to the explorer as "Der Forschungsreisende" and "Der
Reisende," which suggests his role as a travelling researcher. "Forschung" is research and "Reisen" means to travel.

The officer explains the apparatus to the explorer:

"When the man lies down on the Bed and it begins to vibrate, the Harrow is lowered onto his body. It regulates itself automatically so that the needles barely touch his skin; once contact is made the steel ribbon stiffens immediately into a rigid band. And the performance begins. An ignorant onlooker would see no difference between one punishment and another. The Harrow appears to do its work with uniform regularity. As it quivers, its points pierce the skin of the body which is itself quivering from the vibration of the Bed….You see," said the officer, "there are two kinds of needles arranged in multiple patterns. Each long needle has a short one beside it. The long needle does the writing, and the short needle sprays a jet of water to wash away the blood and keep the inscription clear. Blood and water together are then conducted here through small runnels into this main runnel and down a waste pipe into the pit." (147)

It needs to be studied closely. I'm quite sure that in the end you would understand it too. Of course the script can't be a simple one; it's not supposed to kill a man straight off, but only after an interval of, on average, twelve hours; the turning point is reckoned to come at the sixth hour. So there have to be lots and lots of flourishes around the actual script; the script itself runs around the body only in a narrow girdle; the rest of the body is reserved for the embellishments. Can you appreciate now the work accomplished by the Harrow and the whole apparatus?—Just watch it!...Can you follow it? The Harrow is beginning to write; when it finishes the first draft of the inscription on the man's back, the layer of cotton wool begins to roll and slowly turns the body over, to give the Harrow fresh space for writing. Meanwhile the raw part that has been written on lies on the cotton wool, which is specially prepared to staunch the bleeding and so makes all ready for a new deepening of the script. Then these teeth at the edge of the Harrow, as the body turns further around, tear the cotton wool away from the wounds, throw it into the pit, and there is more work for the Harrow. So it keeps on writing deeper and deeper for the whole twelve hours. The first six hours the condemned man stays alive almost as before, he suffers only pain. After two hours the felt gag is taken away, for he has no longer strength to scream. Here, into this electrically heated basin at the head of the Bed, some warm rice pap is poured, from which the man, if he feels like it, can take as much as his tongue can lap….By that time the Harrow has pierced him quite through and casts him into the pit. (149)

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See Klaus Hermsdorf's article, "Kafka's Amerika."

See Tobias Kuehne's "To Move as the Image Moves: The Rule of Rhythmic Presence and Absence in Kafka's The Man Who Disappeared." The opposition of presence and absence described by Kuehne relates to a host of other existential binaries in the work proposed by the mechanization of architecture and bodies, such as hiddenness and revelation and open and closed structures.

It was worth watching the underporters change shift, which happened shortly after Karl entered. Of course, such shift changes must have occurred often, at least during the day, for there was surely no one who could have tolerated standing behind that window for more than one hour. To signal a change in shift, a bell would ring out, and the two underporters about to go on duty would emerge from a side door, each with his own errand boy. They would position themselves at the counter and for a moment merely observe the people waiting outside so as to determine what stage the information dispensing had reached. If they thought it was the right moment to intervene, they tapped on the shoulder of the underporter whom they were about to replace, and even though he had completely ignored everything that took place behind his back, he understood at once and vacated his position. All this happened so quickly that the guests standing outside were often startled and almost recoiled in fright at the new face suddenly rising before them. The two men who had been replaced first stretched out and then poured water onto their stifling heads as they leaned over two washbasins, which were always kept at hand for that purpose, yet the errand boys who had been replaced could not stretch out yet and spent some time picking up and putting away the objects that had been thrown onto the floor during their shift. All this Karl had absorbed with strained attentiveness within a few moments… (174-75)
Chapter Four

See Jack Weaver's *Joyce's Music and Noise: Theme and Variation in His Writings*; Sebastian D.G. Knowles' *Bronze by Gold: The Music of Joyce*; For a comprehensive review of related criticism, see R. Brandon Kershner's "Joyce, Music, and Popular Music" in *A Companion to James Joyce.*


See Harte's "'The Endless Mutation of the Shore': Colm Tóibín's Marine Imagery"; Murphy's "The Politics of rebirth in Colm Tóibín's 'Three Friends' and 'A Long Winter.'"
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