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THE LATER CITY NOVEL: NARRATIVE FORM AND AGENDA

SUMMARY:

This Thesis is an investigation of the development of the City novel from Modernist times (when the City novel first became popular) to the recent City novel. The reason for this investigation is that while there has been much written on the City novel and its progression from the Modern to the Postmodern or an individual City's change in image, what it is that constitutes or characterises the recent City novel, the grounds upon which it is constructed, has not yet been outlined. It is this task, which this thesis proposes to undertake.

This thesis expects to realise the commonalities of three very different City novels, Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting, Toni Morrison's Jazz and Paul Auster's The New York Trilogy, to establish the grounds for the way the City functions, operates and is portrayed today. These novels will be compared with other City novels; other authors who write of the same City and Modernist novelists to draw out the shape of the City novel. This thesis will also look at the history, tradition and culture of individual cities to provide context and platform for the development of the City. Theories of City texts and ways of reading the City novel will also provide material to engage with to establish the relationship between character and City and how that relationship is negotiated.

The expected findings will establish how the City novel has developed and become modified and the characteristics of the City in today's novel identified.

THE LATER CITY NOVEL: NARRATIVE, FORM AND AGENDA

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Introduction: The City Novel

This thesis seeks to examine the role, function and portrayal of the City in recent literature to establish how it has developed from Modernist times when the fascination with writing about the City first became apparent. I expect to find certain characteristics that will separate today's City text from the Modernist City text and also give it some definition.

The study of literature set in the city has always been interesting because both the idea and the reality of city itself is a phenomenon. From the initial development of cities, the accelerated development of urbanization and the explosion of the population within city walls the city has served to change the way people live and think. The rapid development of the city is matched by the literature of the city. City literature has developed from late nineteenth century literature, precipitated by the industrial revolution. The works that depict the city today have developed from the expressions of the mid nineteenth century authors to a more complex engagement with the city and its inhabitants. It is this engagement this thesis seeks to explore.

Engaging with writing set in the city traditionally follows two forms. One way in which critics might read city texts is in terms of their features. These texts can be viewed through types of character that belong specifically to the city, such as the

passer-by, the *flaneur/flanerie* (observer), the visitor/stranger and the underground/subway citizen. Other features include locations or sites of significance to a particular city (such as tourist attractions) or signs of culture common to most cities. The city can also be read through street encounters or incidents. These encounters instruct and guide the reader to read the city itself. Places of social interaction and entertainment such as cafes, bars and the cinema are also important in reading the city. The home also has a part to play in the reading of the city as unlike homes in the country it becomes a place that can no longer be assigned to the private domain. The city is also close to the ideological centre, containing institutions. These institutions propagate contemporary ideology. These institutions often feature as a major part of reading the city: both in their ideological contribution to urbanization.

The second way in which the city may be viewed is through the geographical features, ideology; myth; iconography; history; traditions of individual cities. Many authors, for specific reasons have targeted particular cities in which to set stories based on the above. In Britain, for example, London has been seen from the mid-nineteenth century as differing culturally from other cities that were built up in the same period such as Manchester and Leeds. London has its own literary heritage as far as city writing is concerned as have many other cities throughout the world. Texts by Austen, Eliot, Wordsworth and Dickens have clearly demonstrated that from the mid nineteenth century that the idea and reality of London is different to that of other cities. It differs on a structural, social, ideological, cultural and economic level. Dickens, for example, who wrote passionately about London and its variety of colourful characters wrote with equal disparagement about the industrial location of Cape Town. Authors wishing to write about the city today inherit both the traditions of

city features and individual cities.

Authors also inherit the history of the development of the city novel itself. The city novel has developed in Western society in what appears to be three stages. The initial exploration of the city in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as cities and their population began to develop at an accelerated rate, the Modernist examination of the city from the 1920s onwards and the Postmodern approach to the city. Upon these three stages I would like to draw. The Postmodern approach in the late twentieth century and its break or continuation from the Modern (which has been explored by Peter Brooker in Modernism/Postmodernism and is referred to later in this thesis) is also worth mentioning. The combination of the three stages of development combined with the two traditional approaches are what I would like to outline in an introduction to the City novel before moving on to the main argument. However I would like to make it clear at this point that I want to move beyond the ideas of viewing the text in terms of features of the city or within a tradition of a particular city and see what three individual texts provide in their contribution. I also want to view the city novel beyond the terms of the Modern and Postmodern. I would like to see how they contribute to the city novel itself, rather than how they merely correspond to the ideas of the Modern and Postmodern constructs of the city.

The novels that have been chosen are Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting (1991), Toni Morrison's Jazz (1992) and Paul Auster's New York Trilogy (1992). All three novels have been viewed in critical terms. The reason that these texts have been chosen is because they all look at the city in a different way. They are also written by highly, visible authors whose preoccupation with any given theme, and their contribution to

City literature is high profile.

In Trainspotting, the city is a site that has been rejected by the characters. The presence of the city is an infliction on their lives: a place that is endured. The characters are not positioned centrally within the city but belong to a marginal subculture. This novel has developed and defined an alternative culture within a city with its own features and characters that do not belong to traditional city tropes, characters and features of Edinburgh, and characters operate differently within the city. In Jazz, the city is a place of attraction and the central characters all migrate to this place. This novel revisits the 1920s to tell a history of the 1920s, which is an alternative to the one readers recognise. In New York Trilogy, the city is a place of negotiation; characters must locate their selves and negotiate a place for their selves. What is interesting about this novel is that not only does it break with the traditional view of New York and portrays an alternative culture of disappearing bodies, selves and identity it also re-negotiates the position of the reader. These three contrasting views of the city and new contributions provide a context and platform for the development of recent City literature.

This thesis will look at all three novels and establish how they have developed from the Modern. By examining these novels in a Modernist context and comparing them to Modernist authors: the Modernist element where the public/private boundaries became eroded and City tropes developed will be revealed. The novels will also be seen in terms of the history of the City, the history of their City and literary history. This will provide a context for the City, which is written about today. The novels will also be explored in theoretical terms and from the viewpoints used by critics. The thesis expects to find that the history of the City, Modernism and theory

have impacted and influenced these novels. However the thesis also expects the development of Postmodernism, the search for self and identity in an uncertain, unstable world, and other theory to influence the novel. The City novel has constantly evolved for more than a century and today's novel and its City is more complex and this thesis expects to find a far more difficult process of negotiating one's way through the City. The role, function and portrayal of the City is expected to have progressed from the Modernist City setting, become more influential. The later novels can be said to offer more than one view of the City.

The City Novel in Scotland: Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting

1:1 City Novels set in Scotland.

The frustration with Scotland is expressed in many Scottish novels, which in the twentieth century have always been influenced by a need for a national identity, which is most commonly realized by language. The question of whether to write in Scottish or English is one of the key questions that needs to be addressed. It is important because it forms part of the conflict between Scotland's struggle for its own national identity and the powerful influence of England's own ambition to incorporate Scotland. Imperial England dominated Scotland, which was politically integrated into British society by the efforts of the First World War.¹ Scotland was also culturally absorbed into English values creating difficulties for its own literature to survive.² One way in which Scottish writers could separate themselves from English culture was by writing in the Scottish vernacular. Poets such as James Logie Robertson who wrote Horace in Homespun in 1886 set the cultural trend for Scotland in writing in the Scottish vernacular. An unfortunate development of this trend was the development of the Scotsman into a ridiculous figure. The English began to patronise the Scots as it was thought little intelligence was needed to understand these poems. This patronising of the Scots was enhanced by the Scottish novels known as the "Kailyard" type which

¹'Introduction: Modern Poetry in Scots before MacDiarmid' in The History of Scottish Literature: The Twentieth Century, Vol 4, ed. Cairns Craig (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989)pp. 1-11 (p.1).

² Craig, The History of Scottish Literature, Volume 4, The Twentieth Century, p.2.

depicted static pictures of country life characterised by cosiness, stereotyped communities and accepted class divisions, which enhanced the idea of the Scotsman as ineffectual.³

At the turn of the century other writers reacted to the Kailyard type of novel in an effort to change perception. Writers such as George Douglas Brown who wrote The Green Shutters (1901) and Lewis Grassie Gibbon who wrote Before Sunset Song (1932) adopted an entirely different approach (Murray, Ten Scottish Novels, p.10). The Green Shutters is filled with malicious, angry Scots that do not conform to the former placid country folk image. Before Sunset Song differs in that it approaches the more complex relationship between the Scots and the English. To portray the difficulty the Scots have in separating their culture from an English one, the main character Chris sees herself as two separate Chrisses, an English and a Scottish Chris that she draws upon to confront the cultural tensions faced at home and school (Murray, Ten Scottish Novels, p.12). The problems invested in the relationship between the English and the Scots are enhanced by the development of the city, community and industry in Scotland: which is why Before Sunset Song broaches complex subjects. Other writers also attempted to look at the figure of the Scots in a far more serious light.

William Blake, for example, attempted to create a form of social realism. From 1918, he wrote out of sympathy for the working classes, drawing attention to their poor socio-economic conditions.⁴ While these writers undermined the image of the homely Scots, the new figure that emerged was not necessarily what these writers aspired to.

The new figure that emerged was more strongly associated with the city than the

³ Isobel Murray and Bob Tait, Ten Modern Scottish Novels, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984) p. 10.

⁴ Alan Bold, Modern Scottish Literature, (London and New York, Longman, 1983) p.224.

country. He was a poverty- stricken, bitter Scotsman, capable of malice. However he had yet to establish a strong national and cultural identity.

William Blake's work had also established a very clear division between the working and middle classes. This division combined with the development of cities within Scotland characterised those cities. The class division itself was emphasised by the development of industry. There was much emigration and immigration movement in Scotland as Scotland had been an agricultural place from which many had been forced to emigrate, from around 1915. As a direct result of this there was also a cultural breakdown as many Scots were forced to abandon country traditions, which were replaced by new City traditions enforced by new immigrants (Craig, The History of Scottish Literature, p.5). These new traditions were inflicted upon the remaining Scots, who were swept up in the industrial city tide and the culture attached to this.

The cities developed; of which Glasgow and Edinburgh were clearly the most prolific. The culture of the acute class division was invested in them. Edinburgh was seen as representative of the middle classes. It was seen as a city of restraint, hypocrisy and insanity (Craig, The History of Scottish Literature, p.5) Glasgow became associated with the working classes and was seen as a city of the working classes, realism, slum areas, downtrodden wives and domestic tyrants (Bold, Modern Scottish Literature, p.230) While the image of the Scotsman in the city developed into one, which was more serious than comical; the class division and the poor economy in Scotland became highlighted. The image of the middle class Scotsman became comparable to his English counterpart, yet the image of the working class Scots was that of a poor, disreputable simpleton.

These new images changed things from a literary perspective. While Scottish culture was being eroded by the arrival of the cities⁵ and its artists undermined by this new culture; a new Scottish literary tradition arose from the emigration from country to city (Bold, Modern Scottish Literature, p.229). An example of this is Neil Gunn's The Silver Darlings, which looks at poverty in Scotland. In this novel the main character Finn is what is traditionally known as a "lad O'Pairs" (Murray, Ten Scottish Novels, p.44). A "lad O'Pairs" is a young man who has the opportunity to escape his poverty by emigrating from the poverty area to the city and studying at university. He is then in a position where he can progress to the middle classes and escape his life of poverty. Finn is this lad. However, Gunn also looks at those who cannot escape their poverty and how they must deal with their conditions and circumstance. He calls for a community that can change their lives for the better through a collective awareness. They can stop being victims of fate or landlords. This novel has a more positive approach than many of the other novels produced around this time. The disillusionment with the erosion of Scottish culture, the economic climate and lack of national identity is present in other works. Disenchanted with Scotland other works such as The Dear Green Place (1966) see the failure of the lad O'Pairs to fulfil his dream. In The Dear Green Place the working class hero Matt attempts against the odds to write a novel.

He is held back by his location, Scotland which he sees as a "null blot, a cessation of life, an absence..." whereas another location might serve to inspire. This changed the view of the working class Scotsman again; he was now also seen as a failure.

⁵ This erosion was due to the development of industrialism (industrial cities) which had no association with the Scottish culture which had developed around the countryside. "Scotland is often stereotypically perceived as a 'quaint nation' populated by heavy-drinking men in kilts loping across misty highlands" according to Mary McGlyn, 'Janice Galloway', *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Vol 21, (2001), 7-19 (p.16)

Another literary tradition that was renewed by the imposition of the city was the dualism inspired by Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and later by the cultural influence of England this dualism is also seen in Sunset Song. In The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (1953) the idea of a split personality or double life is seen as Jean Brodie leads a double life as both mistress and spinster schoolmistress (Murray, Ten Scottish Novels, p.102). Her two lives are associated with Glasgow and Edinburgh. On the one hand her secret life as a mistress is like the lifestyle of working class Glaswegian where immorality reigns. Her life as a schoolmistress actually located in Edinburgh is more like that of the traditional middle class stereotype. The reviving of this tradition is significant as it exposes the hypocrisy of the middle classes in Edinburgh. The division between Edinburgh and Glasgow was becoming increasingly acute and this was reflected even more strongly by later novels.

Gordon Williams, for example, revived another tradition implemented by George Douglas Brown at the beginning of the century. He also portrayed the Scotsman as malicious: misogynistic: bitter. Like Brown, Williams also saw the kailyard novels and the defence of former old Scotia's grandeur as false testimony to the real Scotland. His idea of patriotism, like Brown's, was to tell the truth, that Scotland was not a nation of grandeur but poverty in the city and in the country. In Scenes Like These (1968) Williams demonstrates how living up to the Scottish cultural stereotype created by the Scottish, rather than the English, is equally problematic (Murray, Ten Scottish Novels, p.123). His lad O'pairts, Dunky, succumbs to the model of being a real Scotsman, drunken and foul mouthed. The tragedy of this novel is that not only is his potential wasted but he loses his individuality in an effort to conform to the Scottish model. While his cultural identity is more in keeping with the Scottish model than the English model of the working classes it does not differ greatly and is an

unworthy model. In Walk Don't Walk (1972), William's protagonist is again a lad O parts that seeks to follow a dream. However it is not education that he strives to achieve; he follows the other Scottish dream, American life. Cameron also fails to succeed in escaping his Scottish identity, as he becomes a figure of fun in America (Craig, Modern Scottish Literature, p.244). It is in The Siege of Trent Farm (1969) that Williams unleashes the rage and frustration of being poor and Scottish; as the poor country Scotsmen besiege the farm that has been taken over by the middle classes. This war between the classes escalates into violent and shocking acts as the silent resentment felt by the working classes by the invasion of the middle classes explode into outright male aggression.

What is also interesting about William's novels is that they demonstrate a more complex class division (than that of the Edinburgh and Glasgow poles). Williams makes it very clear in From Scenes Like These that this novel is not representative of the middle classes and exposes the hypocrisy associated with this class in order to reveal the true nature of Scotland and its class divisions. He references Burns in the novel and employs his celebratory pastoral poem, "The Cottars Saturday Night" to emphasise the gap between the poem of beauty and piety and the actual broken homes of the working classes in the country and the city (Murray, Ten Scottish Novels, p.124-9). The homes in this novel are dirty farmhouses and crowded rooms in tenements. The families are dysfunctional; Dunky's father is a drunken cripple and his mother a frigid, class obsessed woman who longs for the pious middle class lifestyle belonging to Edinburgh. The question of class is one that is unavoidable as it affects every life. At school Dunky learns about Burns where he is exposed to middle class hypocrisy. At home he learns about the value of class from his parents. The council

estate where he lives is a site for class contention and potential class war. There are people at the upper end of the council housing scale who consider themselves superior to those at the poor end of the scheme: people who are known as “undesirables”. This new class distinction amongst the working classes is a direct product of city and industrial life where council housing, high rise flats and tenements have been created. It is this type of environment in which the later Scottish writers, such as Irvine Welsh, set their work. Their novels show the development of the city has produced a more complex class distinction where there are new divisions amongst working classes.

The significance of class and the city did not end with William’s novels. This theme continued in later Scottish novels such as Fergus Lamont (1979), which is a Scottish rewriting of Dicken’s Great Expectations (Murray, Ten Scottish Novels, p.195). In this novel Fergus is desperate to become a member of the elite, laying claim to ancestral aristocracy. Unlike, the other Lad O’ Pairts in former novels, Fergus has this ruthless determination to escape from the slums of Gantock. He remains absolutely untouched by the Scottish model of a real man; indeed he exorcises his family and friends in Gantock in his social climb; he is not influenced by their values. He fears they will betray his origins in his attempt to become a member of the elite classes. His obsession with this social climb blinds him to the reality of his situation. For example, he later sees himself as a saviour of Gantock as he has succeeded in escaping.

All the while he does nothing to assist the working classes. There is a split in his psyche, which re-invokes the theme of dualism in Scottish literature; his powerful obsession gives him the will to succeed in escaping Scottish poverty but he still has a duty. However he has become solipsistic and unable to care in a real sense: he may have escaped his working class roots but the cost was high. By the end of the novel he is disconnected from others entirely, he is alone. To escape is not to succeed.

The broken homes and the socio-economic divisions within the working classes in these city novels are also a clear indication of the breakdown of family and working class solidarity.

This led to later Scottish novelists writing from a different perspective. The idea of a Scottish identity was still unclear and the theme of Scottish failure continued to undermine this. In an effort to break with former tradition later novelists such as James Kelman attempted new approaches. In The Chancer (1985) life in the city is disjointed, disconnected and precarious. This portrayal of City life is also portrayed in Welsh's and Galloway's work suggesting that there is a new aesthetic of the City developing in recent and current Scottish writing. There are other changes in the Scottish view. The old working class solidarity, for example, is not present in Kelman's works. Instead the protagonist lives life as though it were a game of chances; all options in the world are equal with no reality, except the present. This character rejects the idea of progressing or escaping his life. Rather he simply changes the focus on being Scottish; he simply exists in spite of or because of the working class situation. In the city there are many opportunities to gamble and take risks or chances. He simply takes such chances to see where they will lead him. He differs from other former characters in that Scottish issues of class, nationality and poverty do not impress upon him. He is liberated and simply lives for the present. Liberation from larger societal forces is also explored in Alisdair Gray's Something Leather (1992). The two protagonists in this novel discover sexual freedom as a means of escape. The containment of Scottish society and its restrictions can be escaped using methods that are not traditional but new.

Alisdair Gray's Lanark (1984) however, is exceptional in breaking new Scottish literary ground. He looks at the idea of dualism in a new light as he writes the story of Duncan Thaw. He writes the life story of this man and also the life story of Thaw's other self: Lanark, who is a figure of fantasy. The story of Thaw continues the tradition of Scottish failure as Thaw embarks on a quest to find love and art and discovers neither. He discovers only despair, desperation and suicide. His story is set in Glasgow and is similar to the working class stories set in this city. This is like many of Gray's former works, which are also set in Glasgow. Through his characters, Gray has often questioned Glasgow. In Janine (1982) one of his characters McLeish suggests Glasgow is characterised by unemployment, drunkenness and out of date radical military. He sees Edinburgh as a city that has had a shadow cast upon it by Glasgow.⁶ Similarly in Lanark, Gray also questions the image of Glasgow? He asks what does Glasgow mean to its inhabitants. He suggests that it is "a house, the place we work, a football park or golf course, some pubs and connecting streets" (Morgan, The Arts of Alisdair Gray, p.72). The city of Glasgow has not given the Scots a national identity or reconstructed the image of the Scotsman. Glasgow does not inspire the imagination. The Glasgows of No Mean City, Laidlaw and A Would be Saint are different cities despite sharing the same name but unlike other cities Glasgow does not have an imaginative aspect attached to it. Other cities are seen in terms of the real city itself and the city that is constructed as a vision or image. Glasgow is seen in the real, not the imaginative sense.

Gray's answer to the problem with Glasgow as a city not seen in dualistic but real terms are to create an unreal version of Glasgow. He states in Lanark that the cities

⁶ Edwin Morgan, 'Gray and Glasgow' in The Arts of Alisdair Gray ed. Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn, (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1991) p.69.

that captivate us and draw us to them are those that exist imaginatively like London and Paris. Glasgow exists imaginatively as a music hall song and a few bad novels.⁷ However, Gray determines to change this idea of Glasgow by creating Lanark (Duncan Thaw's Other) who belongs to an infernal, dark underworld version of Glasgow, called Unthank (Murray, Ten Scottish Novels, p.222). This Glasgow is a fantasy world, like a 1950s film noir Glasgow where the Clyde has dried up, traffic has ceased and the sun doesn't shine.⁸ This is a city of both dread and marvel. It is a place of odd, dark characters such as the evil genius, Sludden who plots to take over the world. He is rather like a character in a comic book. Lanark is the protagonist and originally he sets out to find a world of light and save himself and the woman he loves Rina. This turns into a quest to save the people of Unthank. However, he is duped by Sludden and he fails to save the people of Unthank and brings about his own downfall. Yet his final moments amidst apocalyptic disaster viewed from Unthank's Necropolis (city of the dead) are moments of peace and clarity. This is in keeping with the tradition of the hero who sacrifices himself for his people. This world which is the imagined Glasgow, exists as a dark space, however it is more exciting than the real Glasgow: the tale of Lanark is on a far more epic scale. It deals with larger than life issues. Gray has brought to the Scottish city novel what it was formerly lacking. The city is no longer a place of harsh reality but also an imagined space, a concept an idea of a city and in Gray's own words, "a state of mind (occupied by many people in their twenties)" (Morgan, The Arts of Alisdair Gray, p.74).

In conclusion the problems surrounding the Scottish novel appear to have been precipitated by English cultural domination and the socio-economic decline in

⁷ Alasdair Gray, Lanark: A Life in 4 Books (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1996) p.72 and p.243 in Lanark. This will now be referred to as "Lanark" in the main body of the text.

⁸ Morgan compares it to a combination of "City of Dreadful Night" and "Bladerunner" in The Arts of Alisdair Gray, p.73.

Scotland. As a direct result the Scottish novel became fixated with specific issues. These issues included class, poverty, language and cultural identity. The Scottish novel became increasingly complex due to the development of the city in Scotland, which increased the influence of English culture and accentuated the economic and class divisions. Unable to establish a strong Nationalist identity the Scottish novel became concerned with escaping Scotland. The theme of the Lad O' Pairs, for example, is repeated from Gunn's 1930s novels to William's 1970s material. The theme of Scottish failure also developed and continued from as early as the 1900s in Brown's novels to the 1990s where it recurs in Gray's novels. One theme, which has always been traditionally Scottish and does not cast a slight on Scotland, its cities or its people it's the more neutral theme of dualism, which has continued from Stevenson's 1890s split personalities. The problem invested in the City novels of the twentieth century was that the idea of dualism applied to Edinburgh and Glasgow as separate cities, each representing two different poles of the class system. Gray's Lanark, opened up new possibilities for Scottish culture, Scottish writing and Scottish cities by giving Glasgow dualistic status. Glasgow had a new cultural direction, a new image invested in the city of Unthank giving later writers a new space in which to operate and create a change in image for Scotland, it's cities and its people.

1:2 Reading Trainspotting as part of a Scottish Social Realist Tradition

The Scottish novel is still fixated by the themes of language, culture, identity and nationality. Trainspotting can be quite easily linked with other Scottish novels as it too considers the above. Like the anti-Kailyard novels of the earlier part of the century, this novel refuses to paint any cosy pictures of the Scottish country but focuses instead on the working classes associated with the city. The characters are all city types: junkies, alcoholics, psychos, fraudsters, thieves and wideboys. They all live unstable, unpredictable lives. Like Brown and Gibbon, Welsh writes of flawed Scots, rather than the homely Scots. This is enhanced by the presentation of material in the novel, which consists of a collection of stories disjointedly put together to form the novel. The stories are mainly centred on a group of Scottish youth that choose to abandon tradition. Instead they disassociate themselves from their community. They belong more to the city's underworld and it is there they seize their opportunities to scam and steal to survive.

The language in Trainspotting serves to undermine the image of the homely Scotsman; indeed the notion of the Scots as a poetic idiom. Formerly phonetic language had been seen as simple, even ridiculous, but Welsh's use of phonetic language serves to give authority to the Scottish voice.

“...ye'd think thit Na Na wid ken how anybody thit's different, thit sortay stands oot, likesay, feels, ken? Likesay the woman wi the wine stain n that... but its aw hate hate, hate wi some punters and whair does it git us likesay man?”⁹

The social commentary here and in many other parts of the novel gives voice to a

⁹ Irvine Welsh, Trainspotting (London: Vintage, 1999) p. 129. This will now be referred to as “Trainspotting” in the main body of the text.

Scottish opinion. This is not a new approach in Scottish literature; other novels have made serious social commentary and employed the Scottish vernacular in an aggressive manner.¹⁰ However, the voices in Trainspotting belong entirely to the characters and the authority in the novel is never undermined by external influences such as institutions and characters from other cultures. It is this authority in part that informs the text, which prevents it being subject to former ridicule of the Scots. Not only does this authority allow the characters to speak but the way in which their opinions are delivered shocks romantic notions of Scottishness as the characters revel in repeating non-poetic, obscenities which forcefully deliver and impose their opinions on the reader, shattering the homely image.

The work of William Blake and other Scottish writers established the city Scotsman as poor and disreputable rather than ridiculous, when trying to create sympathy for the Scottish condition. In Trainspotting this image is not challenged in the traditional sense as Welsh does not patronise his characters by asking for the reader's sympathy.

“...he thrashes the Skrewdriver dude's heid wi it, and the boy's dome sortay splits open as he faws oaf his his stool ontae the flair” (p.128). The image here of extreme violence suggests that the stereotype of the disreputable Scotsman is a reality. The novel looks at various stereotypes of city characters that are violent and criminal. The actions of these characters are somewhat beyond disreputable; the violence is extreme and vicious, perhaps beyond what the reader imagines in terms of the stereotype. Is Welsh suggesting then, not that the stereotype is unfair or untrue but that in reality the Scotsman is worse than thought and all imagined and exaggerated fears of the disrepute of the Scotsman are confirmed fears. The extent to which the reader believes

¹⁰ “Sixty years after ‘A Scots Quair’ Irvine Welsh’s ‘Trainspotting’ was to use the same structural devices- a community of self-narrative in dialect- precisely to satirise the pragmatic society of Thatcherism, full of ‘isolated units’ afraid of one another”, Cairns, Craig, The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p.97

in the character, may actually be a reflection of their own prejudice towards the Scottish working classes.

The Scotsman's tarnished image is a point of discussion in Trainspotting. If the stereotypes are present then the issues related to these stereotypes such as the Scottish sense of failure, the anti-Scottish feelings and the need to escape are also present.

Indeed Renton tells us "Ah hate the Scots" and that the Scots are "the lowest of the low" (Trainspotting, p.78) implying the anti-Scottish feeling and sense of failure.

Renton also feels the need to escape and he does for a while when he goes to Aberdeen University. Traditionally the way of escaping Scotland has been through education and Renton is no exception to this. Like other former Scottish characters this does not work out for him and he wastes his talent and opportunity, after he "was forced to leave mid-way through the first year after blowing his grant money on drugs and prostitutes." (Trainspotting, p.147). He now carves out an existence living off the DSS. The waste of his potential is somehow distinctly less tragic than former characters. Dunky Logan, for example, is a more sympathetic character. The difference is that the characters in Trainspotting are very individual. Renton has not lost the ability to think and form opinions, which he frequently shares. The earlier concept of the wasting of one's life, one's potential is not portrayed in the same way. As the Scottish city has developed the focus on the wasted potential has changed from focusing on the fall of the individuals to the wasted potential of many. The tragedy in Trainspotting is not inscribed in the fall of one individual but all over the City. It is inscribed in the untimely deaths and wasted potential of many of the City's subjects.

The City has become increasingly complex in contemporary times then, yet traditional themes remain. The issues of class and identity are still present yet in some ways quite

different. The themes of violence, seen in William's novels are not always seen as a manifestation of the poor working classes anger. Begbie is the most violent character in the novel yet his violence is not necessarily precipitated by such anger. Instead, he provokes violence for its own sake, throwing a glass off a pub balcony for instance to start a fight(p.79).Not only is this violence not driven by class contention, but also it is not supported by others. Spud, Renton and Sick Boy have no interest in joining in with Begbie's fights. Renton actually despises Begbie for his violent outbursts suggesting that Begbie would be a "waste ay a silver bullet" (Trainspotting, p.79) because his prejudice against others is a reflection of his ignorance in Renton's eyes. The class conflict, however, still exists but Renton and his friends have other ways of reacting to this. Renton, for example, verbalises his anger when two middle class women look down upon him and his friends. He shouts obscenities within their hearing, for example, "tea-room hag" so that their judgement of him might actually be worthy. Renton and Begbie exemplify the divide amongst the working classes, which is now a disparate rather than solid group, with its members having very different views of class. The City enables a group of cultures and sub-cultures to be drawn together to be City dwellers. However the way these groups think and identify with one another and see themselves is increasingly complex: it can no longer be simplified as a war between two classes.

Education is the traditional choice of the working classes who wished to escape Scotland. The story of Fergus Lamont demonstrates that in later times the consequences of this choice were severe. If one were to escape Scotland through education and become more affluent then they betray their Scottish culture and working class roots. Fergus makes the decision to abandon friends and family in order

to become powerful. In Trainspotting Renton makes the decision to abandon his community to work in London. However the moral and ethical points regarding his choices are not as simplified as they are in the case of Lamont. Renton still has to make the same choice, to leave Scotland for a better life, but his friends' do not feel abandoned. In the City there are numerous choices and many cities to go to. Substituting one city for another, is no longer regarded as a rejection of one particular City. Renton demonstrates that it is an easy, not a difficult process to make this transition as he fits himself to a London culture.

"You're orlroight Jock, ah tell um in ma best Cockney. Other Scots in London ur a pain the erse," (Trainspotting, p.231).

Renton adopts a London accent here demonstrating a chameleon like ability to immerse himself in the culture and be as a native Londoner whenever it is convenient. The desire to climb socially and economically is one that is understood in contemporary times and the transition from one City to another is far simpler. With geographical and cultural barriers lowered the extreme choice Lamont has to make no longer exists. The contemporary City(s) offer numerous choices and lifestyles. They even offer identities, which can be adopted or changed at any given time.

Establishing a national identity has always been difficult with England overshadowing Scotland. Renton tells us that, "Ah've never felt British. It's ugly and artificial. Ah've never really felt Scottish either though." He does not identify with Scotland or Britain and declares he only feels "total disgust" (Trainspotting, p.228) for any country. This indicates that he does not have a strong cultural identity, which is geographically grounded. He does not have a strong political identity either, condoning the actions of neither class and later declaring that having one political party govern the country is no better than another political party as none will make any difference (p.238). He

does not identify with his working class cultural background, Scottish/British culture or a culture of politics. This makes him quite similar to Kelman's characters that have acknowledged traditional ideas and motivations no longer work. However what links Renton more strongly to characters like the Chancer, is that he is quite disconnected. While Renton might have a cultural identity, or identify with sub-cultures of the City like the drugs culture, he is not rooted in one particular culture and like the Chancer he can move easily from one place, one City, one culture. Similarly, Renton's friends also seem not to have a strong national or cultural identity. Indeed they often barely seem to identify with one another and their loyalty is easily undermined by the opportunity to make a large amount of money on a major drugs deal. Like, Kelman's Chancer, Renton does not waste the opportunity to take the money and run.

Renton and the other characters do not identify with Scotland or its Cities. There is a chapter in the book, "The First Day of the Edinburgh Festival." This title is a sign of the cultural concept of Edinburgh, which is associated with Scottish traditions and celebrations. However, this chapter is entirely concerned with Renton who is travelling the City in desperate search of heroin. It has nothing to do with the festival at all and there is no representation of the tradition of the festival. This suggests that this cultural representation of the city of Edinburgh is not an accurate reflection of Edinburgh.

Indeed the Edinburgh, which Renton and his friends know in a real or imagined sense, is clearly altogether different. The only sense of an imagined Edinburgh or upholding of traditions is through the character of Simon. Simon imagines a strong bond between himself and Sean Connery, who are both from Edinburgh. The affinity he feels with the actor leads him to have conversations with the actor in his head. The

imagined City thus becomes part of a Bond-style world filled with attractive women ruled by Simon and Sean. However, this is more of escapism from the City, than an ideal version of Edinburgh suggesting that Welsh sees a problem in portraying a City that has a mythical, imaginary version attached to it, which holds no meaning for his characters.

In conclusion, Trainspotting invokes many of the themes from earlier Scottish novels. The use of phonetic Scottish, themes of violence and class conflict are all present in the novel and also the Scottish wish to escape. The traditional methods of escape through education are also available. However the way the characters negotiate their way through the City has changed because the City has developed into an increasingly complex place. Other traditions such as working class solidarity or the choice between friends and career are no longer applicable as there are many new choices of lifestyle in the City. There are new dangers in the City that do not necessarily stem from class conflict or the impossible struggle to escape Scotland. There are new issues to consider and former means of resolution such as violence is no longer viewed in the same way.

Instead negotiating ones way through the City presents new problems, such as finding a way of identifying with the City. The characters in Trainspotting have to find an alternative way of making sense of the City and themselves. It is this alternative method of negotiating the City that appealed to readers of the novel and gave it the commercial appeal needed to make it into a film. Bernstein explains the explosive impact this had upon the influence of Scottish literature. "After...Irvine Welsh had become famous for the novel and the film, 'Trainspotting' and with the appearance of a host of other young Scottish writers such as Alan Warner and Duncan Mclean..

there was a widespread talk of a new Scottish literary Renaissance.”¹¹ The significance of this is that what Welsh has to say is recognised and his portrayal of the City is noted and carries some emphasis developing Scottish City novels. Indeed, while Welsh endorses many of the Scottish traditions, such as the stereotypes, he also offers an unusual negotiation of the City that celebrates its darker aspects, finds comedy in horror and simultaneously offers a relentless and harsh criticism of working class solidarity: Thatcherism: and contemporary society. It is this negotiation of the City which is of interest here, as Welsh is speaking through working class characters to offer a very distinct impression of the Scottish City and its people, changing perceptions.

¹¹ Stephen Bernstein, 'James Kelman', *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Vol 20 (2000), 42-55 (p.48)

1:3 The Modernist Element.

Trainspotting (1990) by Irvine Welsh is a city novel set in Edinburgh. Unlike former novels, which associated this city with the middle classes, this novel is written about the Edinburgh working classes. It invokes themes from earlier novels: male aggression, class, poverty and dualism. What is interesting about this novel is that like Lanark, there are two cities in the novel. Both of these cities are Edinburgh, yet one is an underground, dark city and the other surface city is Edinburgh. What is also interesting about the city that Welsh is that he has a Modernist response to Scotland. This is because most Scottish novels have responded to the city on one level, from a working class point of view. While there are some Modernist elements in Lanark, which looks at two Glasgow's, the Modernist element in Trainspotting responds to city novels created outside of Scotland. The Modernist element in Trainspotting looks directly at the disillusionment with the city itself, whereas former novels concentrate on disillusionment with all Scotland. In this section a comparison will be drawn between Eliot and Welsh, because they are both critical of contemporary times to establish the Modernist element in Trainspotting and its significance.

Eliot's disillusionment with the City stemmed from his own concept of the city, which in his view was a place of immorality and vice. He felt that the city was lacking in spirit. He saw the decline of morality as a direct consequence of the development of cities. He thought that people were more concerned with capital than community and religion. His disillusionment is reflected in much of his works, in particular, "The Wasteland" where the title signifies his view of the city as a moral waste ground. In "Gerontion" he portrays the psychological breakdown of the general, Gerontius. It is a subjective response. Gerontius believes that civilization has been shattered by the

development of capitalism and by cities, the sites for its very growth.¹² He is evidently critical of Modern times. Like other Modernists of his time he responds to authority within Art and in “The Wasteland” it are the institutions of Art, ideology and State that are undermined. Like other Modernists he rejects conventional structures and techniques. Instead he formulates a new discourse of experience. His voice projects from the margins, without institutional authority.¹³ This is perhaps his most groundbreaking poem because he undermines institutional authority by exposing the world that they sustain through various enactments. The voice of authority in “The Wasteland” does not belong to an institution but is a voice that gives authority to primal culture, myth and French symbolism. It is the undermining of all institutional power in this poem which gives it strength (Cooper, ‘On *The Wasteland*’, p.21).

There are many artistic influences in the poem which Eliot makes reference to. He references Spenser’s Faerie Queene, Dante’s The Divine Comedy, Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and he quotes two lines from The Spanish Tragedy.¹⁴ He refers to these literary texts to make his points. For example, he references “Purgatory” from The Divine Comedy quite specifically as he feels the city should be purged of moral decay. In the final part of “The Wasteland” in “What the Thunder Saw” he makes an explicit reference to the city in the mountains that “cracks, reforms and bursts” like the volcano, exploding into a purgatory fire. He thinks that moral decay must be purged and understands his views are radical which is why he quotes from The Spanish Tragedy suggesting that in reality he might be speaking a deep truth, which

¹² ‘Eliot’s view of History’ in The Ideology of the Text, ed. Christopher Hampton, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1995) p.117.

¹³ ‘On *The Wasteland*’ by John Xiros Cooper in T.S. Eliot and the Politics of Voice: the argument of “The Wasteland”, ed. Ann Arbour, (USA, UMI Research Press, 1987) p.20

¹⁴ Cleanth Brooks, Modern Poetry and the Tradition, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1939) pp.136-73 (p.38)

may appear, on the surface to be madness. However, he supports his ideas for purgatory by referencing Heart of Darkness. He sees a primal culture penetrated by civilized world of exploitation, corruption and gain.¹⁵ He is not merely referring to the contents of Heart of Darkness as he sees the hypocrisy of Western society and its greed that will bankrupt Europe and the continued exploitation and gain. Eliot makes a conscious use of other texts then to enable him to construct an argument and make his views understood to the Western world.

There are several aspects to Eliot's argument that the Western world has collapsed. In part 1 of the poem, "The Burial of the Dead", Eliot invokes the post-war trauma that has an emotional and psychological bearing on all in contemporary times. He speaks of the dead that haunt the city of London.

"A Crowd Flowed over London Bridge, so many
I had not thought death had undone so many" (lines 62-3).

He continues the theme of death throughout the poem as he speaks of corpses planted in gardens, Hanged men and death by water. The mood and tone is sombre and the weight of all the dead weighs down the poem, emphasised by the brown fog that clouds the city. The desolation and waste portrayed as London is a powerful literary configuration. It engages the reader immediately, engulfing the reader in an overwhelming image of London, where the dead corpses act as a metonymical device for the moral rotting of all society. Engaging with such a sensitive contemporary subject enables the audience to identify with Eliot and respond to his argument.

In the second part of his poem, "A Game of Chess", Eliot invokes the gothic and grotesque.

¹⁵ Stephen Spender, Eliot (New York: Viking Press, 1975) p.121

“I think we are in rats alley
Where dead men lost their bones” (115-6).

This London is perhaps associated with the under or working classes. It is an unclean, unsavoury London. However, “A Game of Chess” progresses onto a far more light hearted portrayal of London. The scene moves to a house where the contrast of a filthy London accentuates the finery.

“In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange, synthetic perfumes” (86-7).

However, the word “synthetic” suggests that exotic casing of her perfumes hides something false. This suggests Eliot is casting aspersions on the nature of materialism: commodities, consumerism and Capitalism.

There is an implication that Eliot is undermining institutions, here, which grows clearer as the scene moves to one set in a public house where various city folk are introduced. Eliot demonstrates a dark humour and a clever use of irony and satire here. He deliberately sets up each city type. One example is of the neurotic woman, who is in conversation.

“You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique
(And her only thirty one)
I can’t help it, she said, pulling a long face
It’s them pills I took, to bring it off, she said” (156-9).

Here, the narrator mocks the neurotic woman as he reprimands her for looking a certain way. Eliot is not merely using dark humour here to entertain. Ironically, the narrator classifies himself with the diseased characters of his own waste, such as the woman with bad nerves, the clairvoyant with a cold and a king’s insanity that may or may not feign.¹⁶ He is also making a point about types of characters such as the neurotic woman who represent the decline of society through all manner of vice such

¹⁶ Louis Menad, Discovering Modernism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) p.58

as drugs and loose sexual morals. Again, he undermines institutions, notably medical institutions. The dark humour and lighter material are disrupted by the penetrative voice of the landlord shouting, "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME" repeatedly throughout; "A Game of Chess". This gives it a sense of urgency that can be read on different levels. Eliot himself may be speaking to the audience here, telling them to act before it is too late, to give up their vices and curb the disease that has afflicted society.

Eliot continues to attack the institutions in society in part three, "The Fire Sermon" where he concentrates on the labour force and the effects of Capitalism. He speaks of the city with some nostalgia, "Sweet Thames, run softly until I end my song" (183) and with great distaste.

"A rat...dragging its slimy belly on the bank/While I was fishing in the dull canal" (188-90).

This image of the polluted Thames, which acts as a metonymy for the pollution of all London, sets the scene for attack on the nature of this pollution.

"At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upwards from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing, waiting" (215-7).

This disturbing metaphor where machine is a metaphor for man is an attack on the labour force and upon Capitalist greed that has turned man into a money-making machine. He is devoid of all that which makes us human. The typist with her "automated hand" who continues to be simply a typist even after she finishes work suggests again that the industry has de-humanized society. Eliot also indicts "the loitering heirs of City directors" weakly giving way to hated metequés so that the city (a holy place of mercantilism) falls into profane hands.¹⁷ The biting humour here

¹⁷ Eloise Knapp Hay, *TS Eliot's Negative Way* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) p.89

emphasises Eliot's revelation of the true nature of the institutions he is attacking, making his attacks all the more devastating.

There is a descent in this section of the poem as it moves from the scathing attacks on institutions to the sound of the bells ringing, "Weialala leia" (290) and the despair of La Pia.

"I can connect
Nothing with nothing
The broken fingernails of dirty hands," (301-3).

The poem descends into the sound of bells, which sound like a foreign and primitive language. Is this Eliot's own despair and private disorder reflected in La Pia's? This is not clear. However, what Eliot does seem to be suggesting is that there is psychological and private disorder established. The private disorders: the nihilistic unhappiness of La Pia, the neuroses of the woman in the pub, the madness of the king, the indulgence of Sweeney and Mrs. Porter. All this private disorder made into public spectacle in the poem suggests again that these broken minds of London act as a metonymy for the mental state of all society. It has been suggested that it is the raped and wounded violated victims in "Burial of The Dead" that represent the poetic ideal rather than the psychologically disturbed for whom Eliot, with the exception, perhaps of the King, appears to have little sympathy.¹⁸

Eliot appears to be even less sympathetic and indeed more critical of the institution of trade and industry in part IV, "Death by Water". He speaks in mythological terms, forewarning of the disasters following the corruption of industry.

"Phlebas the Pheonician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot...Profit and loss.../Entering the Whirlpool/ Gentile or Jew...(311-319).

¹⁸ Tim Dean, 'T.S. Eliot, Famous Clairvoyants' in *T.S. Eliot: Essays on Gender, Sexuality, Desire*, eds. Laity, Cassandra and Nancy Geish, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 33-51

This argument is pointed directly at the collapse of the financial system, which is configured in parts as the “city” in the poem. The financial system has fallen into the corrupt hands of exporters and importers, amongst them the pushing Jews. The idea of death by water whether the financial system itself is metaphorically drowned in the sea of import and export or its perpetrators have drowned in a sea of corruption is open to interpretation. What is implied by this part of the poem is a critique of the economy. Perhaps with great foresight Eliot saw the implications of overseas trade, the potential exploitation of some countries and where other countries have the power to hold the rest of the world to ransom where they have the monopoly on imported items. The mention of the “Gentile or Jew” also gives rise to the idea of the institution of class becoming corrupt. The idea that both Jew and Gentry belong to the same financial whirlpool indicates the segregation of the classes is no longer clearly defined. Earlier in the poem, the narrator also speaks of a cocky clerk. This suggests dissent and disorder in the ranks of the classes and what Eliot sees as a corruption within the institution (Xiros Cooper, ‘TS Eliot and the Politics of Voice’, p.24).

As a member of the upper middle classes, Eliot seems to be feeling threatened by the lower classes, as well as the moral corruption in society. Is this why he abandons institutions in favour of a more ancient and primal authority? In part V, “What the Thunder Saw” there is a definite emphasis on the power of primal culture. The rhythm itself can be likened to a drum beat, and the use of not one, but a few languages that are strange to the reader evokes a sense of the exotic element of ancient culture. It is several cultures that Eliot draws upon to make his final and powerful point. “What the Thunder saw” is a provocative piece on the physical chaos wrought from the collapse

of civilisation. Like in the second part of poem there is a sense of urgency as time is running out. This is suggested by the line taken from the nursery rhyme, "London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down," (426). The collapse of civilisation is upon us, the warning inscribed in the "violet air", in the "falling towers" of many listed great cities. Eliot promises infinite destruction in the final part. After successfully targeting the institutions on which society is based, government organisations, social, economic and Artistic institutions, he now unveils what is left. He speaks of black cavernous spaces with bats. The world he sees is one of hollow and dark, vacuous space. He calls once again for a higher power to replace diseased society. He makes his final call in the last line, "shantih, shantih, shantih" (433) implying a rejection of the institutions of his society and a Modernist call for something other (possibly divine or primal power that is not subject to corruption) than the society of which he is so critical.

Irvine Welsh writes in a way that strongly contrasts with Eliot, simply because he is writing from a working class point of view. Eliot's views are more in keeping with the rigid, restrained sanctimonious, conservative views associated traditionally with the middle classes of Edinburgh. The decay of society that Eliot sees is through sexual deviance; vice and greed. Irvine Welsh, however, is revelling in this viewpoint. Yet, like Eliot he searches for an authority in his writing, which is bound to an institution. Welsh has stated in interviews that he rejects institutions of Art, choosing his own style of writing and like Eliot in this sense he is writing from the margins. What makes Welsh's Trainspotting a work that contains elements of Modernism is the style of writing which rejects contemporary techniques seen as inadequate possibly in describing the "real" Scotland, he also employs Modernist techniques which in turn responds to contemporary authority in Art. This next section, with reference to Eliot's

methods, techniques and social critique will construct an argument that attempts to demonstrate the use and purpose of Modernism in Trainspotting and its significance to City literature.

What cannot be ignored about Trainspotting is that it is written almost entirely in phonetic Scottish. This immediately empowers the narrative voices in the novel and undermines the voices of the English authority within institutions of Art. For example, Renton, the primary narrator describes another character at a pub. He says, “A mosaic shell ay scar tissue and Indian ink, ah presume there’s some cunt inside it” (Trainspotting, p.79). The voice inside the reader’s head as he reads the text is not his own but that of one belonging to the Scottish working classes. The way the character with the tattoos is perceived is through the eyes of Renton, not the reader. What is said is not open to interpretation but a statement the reader must accept as the voice in his head is no longer his own. He must see through the eyes of others. There is no space in which the reader can retreat to interpret the text while he is reading. From the very first line, then, the language in the text has the power to dictate the authority in the text. The authority belongs to a group of young Scotsmen, rather than any institution. Like Eliot, Welsh chooses to engage with an authority outside of institutionalised authority.

Another way in, which Welsh is comparable to Eliot, is, the way in which he targets institutions and exposes their failings. The pattern in Trainspotting is quite similar to *The Wasteland*. Welsh also targets the institutions upon which society is based, government institutions, social, economic and Artistic institutions. His motivation for this is distinctly less clear as Welsh does not see a collapse in the morality and sanctity of society, rather it would seem that this is a social critique. This society is

one that offers little to its inheritors. While his points of reference stem more from this marginalized group of Scottish youth and contemporary, popular culture rather than references to a literary canon the method of critique is highly comparable to Eliot's. Like Eliot, Welsh initially introduces the reader to a city of deterioration: of unrest and corruption. However, it is a post-election aftermath that the reader is introduced to as opposed to post-war society. The Scotsmen that are telling the story and portraying Scotland are not successful or affluent persons but people living in squalor and a deprived state.

Like Eliot, Welsh begins to attack and undermine various institutions upon which society rests. His methods are far more direct than Eliot in some instances. The novel begins with the Edinburgh festival, a prestigious landmark event in Scotland, which the characters deride.

“One of the (china) dolls hands us a piece ay paper wi *Brecht: The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Nottingham University Theatre Group on it. Doubtless a collection of zit-encrusted, squeaky voiced wankers playing oot a miserable pretension tae the arts before graduating to work in power stations which give the local children leukaemia or investment consultancies which shut doon factories, throwing people into poverty and despair” (Trainspotting, p.29).

This is a powerful statement, which sets the course for the rest of the novel. It is a direct attack on the institutions of art and business, exposing the world of art as a superfluous. Ironically Brecht is a Modernist or experimental writer and in mocking his work in particular, suggests that even the most experimental of art does not impact upon Simon. One type of art is as indistinguishable from another and Simon in belying his ignorance about Art is shown up as a philistine rather than the aristocrat he poses as. The business world is exposed as corrupt, valuing profit more than people. However, Simon, who makes the statement indicates that it is not the students who will progress into these institutions and become part of the middle classes who

will suffer; rather it is the working classes, the people who work in factories and can only afford to live in areas where it is unsafe. Business institutions will affect that. Like Eliot, Simon is drawing attention to a contemporary situation when Margaret Thatcher was in power and the society produced. This is politically sensitive material and the dark nature of Simon's internal thoughts enhance his exposure of these institutions as corrupt.

Welsh has already demonstrated a division with the scene at the Edinburgh festival. There is a clear divide between middle and working class, rich and poor. The city itself is divided and restless with the resentment of the working classes (which increases with the other characters statements about institutions) and society, which are comparable to Simons. The city, for these characters is an ugly, corrupt place. It follows that like Eliot, Welsh draws on the grotesque to portray its people. However this is not Art and the use of the grotesque in art in the Modernist sense, Welsh's use of the grotesque is far more base. Again, this use of the grotesque might be seen as poking fun at Art (particularly experimental art), however it seems to be more specifically directed at the art belonging to the Edinburgh festival. Derision of this Art suggests that the symbol of this festival is not one the characters identify with, except in an ironic sense, which is portrayed in certain incidents. One particular instance involves Spud who has an accident, which is described in grotesque detail. "The sheets flew open and a pungent shower of skittery shite, thin alcohol sick, and vile pish splashed out across the floor" (Trainspotting, p.94). This is actually a comic incident where Spud desperately tries to hide the sheets he has soiled from his girlfriend's mother and ends up splattering them everywhere. However the grotesque detail enhances the poor living conditions which the book constantly refers to and complements the various puns on these, for example two chapter titles are "London

Crawling” and “Inter-Shitty” emphasising the poor state of society and life style. With images of the grotesque, Welsh portrays a city of decay and dysfunction.

The dark humour used in these descriptions is comparable to Eliot’s use of dark humour as Welsh also makes some serious points. Eliot makes vicious attacks on various city types and Welsh also makes these kinds of attacks. At an interview for a job Renton tells us about the panel.

“He gets tae nervously ask a question: - Ehm...ehm...Mr. Renton...ehm ...can you, ...eh, .. explain ehm.. your employment gaps, ehm...
Can you explain the gaps between your words, you doss wee cunt” (Trainspotting p.65)

The black humour displayed by Renton here is quite merciless as always whenever he attacks and derides city types such as the nervous interviewer. However, he like the other characters, has many flaws such as his heroin addiction. While the same dark humour is used to describe his habit and lifestyle there are frequent mentions of drugs related deaths throughout the novel which serve as a reminder that the points made about the state of society are serious, that society has produced the drug addicts, psychos and wideboys as well as the hypocritical city types that equally fail the system.

Welsh’s stories about the city types are also in parts made poignant. The war in Eliot’s poem serves to make his points all the more poignant but Welsh relies on individual stories and instances to portray his wasteland. For example, when Renton and Begbie is out one night they bump into a homeless drunk at the abandoned train station.¹⁹

“What yis up tae lads? Trainspottin, eh? He sais, laughing uncontrollably at his ain

¹⁹ “In ‘Trainspotting’, dialect is like the empty shell of Leith Central Station where it is now impossible to spot trains: it gestures to the lost community which dialect had represented in the Scottish tradition and which has now been corrupted into fearful individuation”, Craig, Modern Scottish Novel, p.97

fuckin' wit...Ah wel Ah'll leave yis tae it. Keep up the trainspottin' mind! He staggered off, his raspy, drunkard's cackles filling the desolate barn. (Trainspotting, p.309).

This appears to be a regular incident on a night out which emphasises the degenerate state. However, in this particular instance it turns out that the homeless drunk is Begbie's father, although neither son nor father can acknowledge this. The father is too drunk to recognise his own estranged son and Begbie too embarrassed to acknowledge his father. It is an unexpected, uncomfortable moment that disturbs the text. It reminds the reader that individuals have personal histories that lead to devastating effects. It reminds the reader that society is answerable to longstanding rather than current issues. The society in which we live has not suddenly lost its footing or suffered disaster of apocalyptic proportions but that it has deteriorated into a wasteland.

Welsh, like Eliot looks at the private disorder of the individual and the effects on psyche. While, Begbie is an example of how private disorder affects behaviour the character of Simon demonstrates a greater insight into the psyche. Welsh employs the Modernist technique of stream of consciousness in order to make Simon understood. Simon, interestingly has more than one voice in his head and his thoughts are often punctuated by song. His thoughts are regularly formed with the voice of Sean Connery and he has conversations with Sean in his head. "Fucking toss bags don't you agree, Sean... *Yesh Shimon, I shink you may have a shtrong point thair*"

(Trainspotting, p.29). In Simon's consciousness he has created another dimension to his self in the form of Sean Connery who literally lives inside his head. He has a clear need for affirmation which it seems he can only fulfil with this creation, indicating that he lives in a society where he is alone and isolated and finds no rest or solace other than within the company he keeps in his own head rather than find affirmation

within his own society.

The creation of Sean is a small indication of his private disorder, which is later revealed through a process of stream of consciousness, and he tells us:

“...at least ah know that ah’m still here, still alive...as long as there’s an opportunity tae get off wi a woman...that’s it, that is it, ah’ve found fuck all else, ZERO, tae fill this big, BLACK HOLE like a clenched fist in the centre ay my fucking chest..” (Trainspotting, p.31).

There is a sense of severe frustration, resentment, even anger in Simon’s thoughts.

The use of capitals, like with Eliot’s use of capitals in the scene in the pub, emphasises Simon’s inner frustration and creates a sense of urgency in the search for Simon’s inner well being. Simon is telling the reader that his life and soul are empty. The possibility that Simon may be redeemed in some way, that he may fill the black space inside remains open at this point. However, his chances are an illusion, which is painfully shattered by the death of his formerly unacknowledged child; who may have come to fill this void. The death of the child, enhanced by the location (in a squat filled with addicts) devastates him. He is simply left with a dark emptiness. This is filled with his frustration and despair. His private disorder is not the only example in the novel, and Welsh, like Eliot, portrays a society that suffers psychological deterioration as well as socio-economic decline.

Welsh’s wasteland, unlike Eliot’s is a wasteland for the working classes. His attack on the economy differs from that of Eliot. While Welsh maintains the position that the system is corrupt he also demonstrates that it is flawed.

“They were always sorting out addresses where they could pick up giros from. Rents never seemed to work, but always seemed to have money” (Trainspotting, p.43).

Renton and other characters have found ways to exploit the system and claim money

from the government. They exploit the unemployment benefit system and other systems of benefit such as the free counselling that is offered which has no effect on their various addictions. Renton exploits other government institutions. This includes a dramatic episode in a court of law. He exposes the hypocrisy of the system. He persuades the judge to give him a suspended sentence. He appeals to the judge on the basis that he is an educated person with middle class values. The judge is biased and therefore lenient. However, Renton's partner in crime, Spud is unable to perform for the judge in the same way and he is sentenced to time in prison. Again, Renton exploits this system revealing its flaws.

Like Eliot, Welsh attacks various institutions and reveals their failure to support and sustain society today. However, he not only attacks these institutions of authority and government he also questions the ideology of society. Unlike, Eliot, who questions the values and beliefs of society, Welsh questions the very function of such ideology. Begbie tells us about an argument with his girlfriend.

“It's probably no even ma fuckin bairn anyway. Besides, ah've hud bairns before, wi other lassies. Ah ken whit it's aw about...Ah kin tell ye aboot fuckin bairns. Pain in the fuckin erse” (Trainspotting, p.110).

Begbie is a working class city type and his circumstance is by no means unusual. He tells us here that he has fathered several children, yet gives the readers no further details. Whether he acknowledges these children, whether he has any contact with them are not clear. What is obvious is that there is no stable family unit as the father is absent. The institutions of family and marriage are undermined here, as Begbie and the other characters that also represent young city types do not believe in the sanctity of marriage. Renton, for example, also undermines former ideological beliefs. This includes the institution of the working classes. They find former views as no longer

belonging to society. Their belief and ideology are rooted in something altogether other to ideological institutions, as like Simon each tries to find something of meaning to fill his or her void. Welsh's wasteland is filled not only with the waste of corrupt systems and government but the waste of meaningless value systems and ideological institutions.

While, Welsh, like Eliot seeks to undermine institution and art and deliver a critique of society, his final points are not consistent with a warning of a nightmare future. Unlike Eliot, he is not interested in identifying a solution to the problem. While Eliot views his wasteland as a direct result of moral and political corruption, Welsh acknowledges political and ethical corruption yet does not see solution as invested in moral means. Rather his Modernist city, that is filled with darkness and corrupt city types, has already reached the black cavernous future as his characters have internal black voids. There are no solutions to the problems invested in contemporary society. Finally, Renton (the main character) succeeds in escaping the cities in Scotland. He moves to London. However, his past catches up with him and he is forced to escape to another city in Holland. "He had done what he wanted to do. He could never go back to Leith, to Edinburgh, even to Scotland, ever again" (Trainspotting, p.343). Renton has escaped Scotland permanently knowing that he has cut all his ties with family and friends. This may suggest that without them holding him back he has a chance of a future that he has escaped the problematic society in which he has always lived. However, this is a precarious and uncertain future, based on insecure grounds where he has stolen his friend's money from a drugs deal and used this money to escape. What Welsh really seems to be suggesting is that the problems society has inherited produce further problems. Renton has in no way definitely escaped his former life, indeed in the sequel Porno Simon tracks him down and brings him back to Scotland.

Nothing has really changed; Renton takes his problems with him. Its members perpetuate the problems within society: and government solutions do little to stop this continued cycle. The deceptively upbeat ending of the novel is simply part of its dark Modernist energy. What is really being suggested here, is that the individual is as corrupt as the society that produces him and Eliot's promise of an empty, dark future is now realised in the present day.

However, simultaneously the Modernist energy of the novel appears to celebrate this bleak future to a degree; Welsh does not mourn his wasteland. Welsh performs a critique of contemporary society yet finds the unpredictability and unstable environment for the individual to be at times exciting and as giving agency to his characters. Spud's description of a pub scene differs to Eliot's.

“The pubs, likesay, dead busy, full ay loco-locals and festival types...Sick Boy's scannin the bar for women...chick crazy that kid...Renton and Begbie are arguing...That Begbie, man, it's likesay...that's a fuckin jungle cat. We're just ordinary funky feline types” (Trainspotting, p.153).

The description of characters here is an example of the underlying energy that leads to unpredictability. The characters are all noted here by Spud and what he portrays is a somewhat colourful scene as he speaks of “chick crazy” Sick Boy and compares Begbie to a wild animal. This is a busy scene in the city that celebrates the city wasteland. On the one hand Welsh portrays a society that inhabits a wasteland of corrupt and fallible institutions that leads to the wasted lives of individuals. At the same time he portrays a vibrant city that is powered by a raw, dark energy.

In conclusion, while there are some unexpected similarities between Trainspotting and *The Wasteland*, the two are not comparable, as this is an almost ludicrous

comparison. Yet, the Modernist influence present in *The Wasteland* that challenges authority and institution and modernist techniques are also found in Trainspotting. However, the novel is about a different class of people and has a different set of values to the poem. The novel also employs different voices to critique society and establishes its own authority through a technique that relies on phonetics and cultural references. While both poem and novel describes a wasteland of a city that is filled with filth and corruption; *The Wasteland* is essentially a critique of city and society. Trainspotting offers a critique of society and points to its many flaws, however the novel also celebrates the city in style of other Modernists such as Pound. The dark energy that ensures the novel moves at a fast pace is quite unlike the much slower pace of *The Wasteland* that laments the state of society. Trainspotting shows little nostalgia or regret for the loss of former societies. Instead, what it demonstrates is that while its wasteland might indeed be the black, vacuous future Eliot predicted it is also a city filled with the life of its numerous inhabitants which celebrates the wonder of the Modernist city as well as acknowledging its many atrocities. Welsh, despite his mockery of Art, has inherited the Modernist distaste for the sordidness of the City. Like Eliot he is fascinated with the working classes but he is drawn to the City streets, their waste, their violence, whereas Eliot cannot hide his obvious fear that the working classes might rise up and revolt against the middle classes.

1:4 Stage, Spectacle and the Grotesque Body in the City

The body is unusually significant in the novel. The body is both a receptacle and producer of a variety of substance. Bodily functions and the functioning body are prevalent pre-occupations in the novel. The reasons for the importance of the body is found within the lifestyle of the characters. This lifestyle revolves around drugs. Drug addiction leads to a physical addiction with physical needs and impulses taking priority over mental or emotional well - being. The body is emphasised to a greater degree because of this. Using drugs draws attention to what we put in our bodies and how much. Living this life-style also puts an emphasis on the kind of risks that people take with their bodies, the chances they take which affects their attitude towards life. The body is staged in its drug- induced state, it is made spectacle and shown at its most grotesque²⁰ in the City. In the City there are numerous spaces for spectacle to be displayed. The City also provides a space for the body grotesque, previously a private spectacle, to cross the boundaries of public and private space. In this way the significance of the body, is enhanced by the City itself. This next chapter will demonstrate the importance of the body, how it is perceived and portrayed.

The body is the first thing that is mentioned in Trainspotting. The body is not portrayed in the same way as it might be in other novels, which describe in detail the body beautiful, for example. Instead, the body is the subject, rather than the character. What happens to the body is sometimes primarily what the narrative tells us; what happens to the character is a secondary aspect. The novel begins by telling us that,

²⁰ “A definition of the term grotesque realism is located in Bakhtin’s reading of Rabelais and is dependent on a set of images that describe a transgressive body- one which emphasises the lower stratum, which takes pleasure in bodily functions, and which embraces an interrelation of birth and death. He describes this body as open, protruding, secreting, a body of becoming...” It is this grotesque body which the grotesque body in Trainspotting resembles”, Heather, Johson, ‘Textualizing the double-gendered body: forms of the grotesque in “The Passion of New Eve”’, *Review of contemporary Fiction*, Vol 14, (1994) pp. 43-69 (p.44)

“the sweat wis lashing ofay Sick Boy; he wis trembling” (Trainspotting, p.3). The novel does not tell us about the character of Sick Boy, but concentrates on what his body is subject to. Sick Boy is not alone and interestingly these functions of his body are made public rather than private, as the idea of sickness of any kind, conventionally, is usually private. The boundaries between public and private are crossed as sickness from drug withdrawal is a social sickness, one that is shared and recognised by a group or society of people. What happens to the body is thus given to public space. This is a space provided by the City. This space demonstrates the City’s ability to increase what is public space.

It is not unusual for this novel to focus on the body as subject. Indeed there are many narrative sequences in the novel, which treats the body as the subject. “Growing Up in Public” for example speaks of the changes to which the body is subject: from childhood to teenage hormonal changes to sickness to death. This range of bodily subjections is set against the backdrop of a public occasion (a funeral), a very particular public occasion where bodies are subject to a number of dramatic changes and the body is often the conversation subject. Significantly the body, here, is extracted from the privacy of self to become public spectacle. The narrator tells us:

“The corpse lay in the bed, the covers still over it. They might have closed his mouth she thought. It looked as if he’d expired drunkenly, belligerently, frozen by death as he was arguing about football or politics” (Trainspotting, p.36).

The dead body no longer belongs to its subject but is now public property and subjected to the public gaze, speculation and opinion. The narrator is able to see the body and make comments on how he might have died or his last thoughts. The public body consumes individual body: death is not dignified and private as tradition might suggest.

Instead death is quite grotesque. There is an incident at the funeral where the narrator, Nina thinks Andy is still alive when someone leaves an electric blanket on him and he begins to secrete sweat. She describes how his head, “bobbed to the side, his stupid froze expression never changing, his body limp” (Trainspotting, p.39). His idiotic expression and position combined with his bodily secretions makes him quite grotesque. It is a reminder that the body sometimes has the inability to control itself in death or in life. The situation, however, is that this display of the grotesque is part of a customary, public occasion. The occasion is not sombre; with the body displayed without dignity and the error that Nina makes in thinking Andy is alive, it becomes comedic. The funeral is ruined because its structure and ambience has been ruined and everyone is reduced to laughter. There are other occasions in the book when the body grotesque becomes a figure for comedy. Renton, for example, tells us about a personal problem where he has itching down below. He says:

“Ah cannae scratch it though. If ah start scratchin it, ah’ll infect the bastard. Then ah’ve goat some real problems (Trainspotting, p.91).

The body grotesque is humorous here for other reasons. While Renton will not risk a minor infection by resisting the urge to scratch he regularly injects his body with heroin and other drugs, which are far more damaging. The irony of what he says turns the spectacle of the body grotesque into a funny situation. What the body is subjected to and cannot control creates a space for comedic interjection.

Such comedy is magnified in social situations. For example, after a night on the town when Spud has subjected his body to a variety of alcohol and drugs he is unable to control his bodily functions and makes a mess in his girlfriend’s bed. He fully intends to keep this private matter and wash the sheets at his own house. However, in the city it is far more difficult to keep things private, as even the home is no longer a

private space. His girlfriend's mother decides to take the sheets from him and wash them. Spud explains how the, "sheets flew open and a pungent shower of skittery shite, thin alcohol sick, and vile pish splashed out onto the floor" (Trainspotting, p.94). This is an ugly spectacle, which is enhanced by what is private literally spilling out into a more public situation as several people are now involved such as Gail's father whose glasses are now stained with "brown flecks of runny shite." The situation and spectacle has escalated and it is now magnified by the social situation. Spud, is understandably mortified and cannot wait to leave, while Gail's family are left shocked and disgusted as Spud's inability to control his bodily functions. The tension between those present enhances the spectacle and the grotesque comedy. Again the City, plays a part in creating a space for such comedy by reducing the boundaries of privacy and introducing a state of play where the boundaries of privacy are fragile and given to sudden change.

There are many places to go in the City where the body is subject in a number of ways. When Renton and his friends go clubbing the body is a receptacle for alcohol and drugs. However, the body is also subject to both the male and female gaze. Renton is pre-occupied with how he and others look. He dyes his hair and eyebrows to enhance his image in the female gaze and makes comments on other bodies, indulging his "cheerfully undisguised prejudice against overweight people" (Trainspotting, p.135). His own gaze is cast upon members of both sexes then and he can look in admiration or criticism. He also reads body language, looking at how people's bodies are communicating rather than focusing on what is actually said. When Renton does actually begin a conversation with a woman his concern is not with the conversation topic or language itself but with the physical ability to speak. He says, ..."his brain is now too fucked to respond, taking a well-earned rest from

holding itself together to talk to Dianne” (Trainspotting, p.137). Again, it is the body, which is the subject here, as the chemicals Renton has absorbed are affecting his communication ability. The subject of the conversation is less important. The City comes into play here also because it has social venues like clubs, which emphasise body image. The City creates another public space where the body is subject: subject to intoxication, image and culture. Language and dialogue is limited; by the loud music, drugs and the male/female gaze. The body is a vulnerable subject in the club and control of the body is undermined by the city's subjectivity.

The body of the City itself is a large, powerful driving force. It connects individual bodies to the main body. Renton reminds us how bodies can be connected after he sleeps with Dianne the girl he meets in the club.

“He thought it would just his luck to get HIV from one shag after sharing needles, although never the large communal syringes favoured in galleries, over a period of years” (Trainspotting, p.142).

Renton is connected to the body of the City through his friends, through Dianne, the people at the club in a social sense. However, what he suggests here is that there is another more intimate form of connection through bodily fluids. Individual bodies are linked to others through the exchange of bodily fluids. While the illusion Renton and Dianne perhaps preserve that the exchange of fluids is private (having sex alone in the dark) the exchange itself is a matter of public or social concern. As Renton points out, he might have easily had the HIV transmitted to him during intercourse as bodily fluids are readily and easily exchanged by many people. All these numbers of people are interconnected by the frequent exchange of bodily fluids. As he also tells us, this is not the only means of bodily connections as junkies, like gangs of blood brothers, regularly share needles. This forms intimate connections

between individuals and the endless chain of fluid exchanging bodies. In this way the individual is connected to the body of the City on a physical rather than mental level, identifying with the City on this physical level. It is the body that identifies with the City and the body is therefore its subject.

The City also creates illusions with regard to the body. When Renton first sees Dianne in the club he is “determined to talk to the woman” who has a “good tan and delicate features tastefully picked out by makeup” (Trainspotting, p.134). He sees a sexually attractive woman. However, the next morning he sees a girl who “was the double of Dianne” but “looked barely secondary school age” and “seemed about ten years old” (Trainspotting, p.145). This description of Dianne is in strong contrast to the previous one. Where Renton saw a seductive, woman he now sees a child. This is connected to the City’s ability to create illusions and deceive people into seeing what is not there. The City has atmosphere, artificial lighting and noise amongst its traits to deceive and these contribute into turning a girl into a woman. Renton is deceived by the illusion Dianne and the City present: seduced by both. In this way the City works with the body to produce an image, which may or may not be an accurate reflection of who the person is. The City operates at a superficial level in this; it does not work with the mind. Instead it takes the body as its subject to create illusion and deception.

The City, however, is more invasive than creating illusions might suggest. The City provides space and opportunity for bodies to be subjected to a variety of things.

Earlier the exchange of bodily fluids and the blurring of public and private boundaries was cited as part of the City’s ability to treat the body as its subject and certainly these examples are far more invasive to the body. There are some other serious examples of this, where the body is not a subject of comedy. Renton tells

us about Julie, whose neighbours “burnt her out the hoose” because they were afraid. Julie had HIV and the neighbours were concerned that her body would infect the body of the City, her private infection became publicised and resulted in fatal harassment. Davey exacts revenge upon Al, as he watches him deteriorate from AIDS and repeatedly describes his “scrawny head” and “wizened death mask” creating a series of disturbing body images. Again the City is invasive, as Davey and Al exemplify the individual infecting the body of the City with disease. The story is a painful one. Davey is infected with HIV after following his girlfriend being raped by Al. He fakes the bloody and painful death of Kenny who is Al’s child. The message of revenge is thus conveyed physically to Al on his deathbed. The body is continually subject to death and disease in the novel as many die from a drugs related death. These stories, like the comical stories discussed above, are also concerned with the body grotesque. However, the spectacles created seem to rest uncertainly between the realms of the tragic and macabre.

One death, which particularly affects Renton is the death of baby Dawn. He is haunted by the body of the baby when he attempts to give up heroin. He tells us:

“The bairn has sharp, vampire teeth wi blood drippin fae them. It’s covered in a sick yellow- green slime. It’s eyes are the eyes ay every psychopath ah’ve ever met” (Trainspotting, p.196).

Renton does not see the baby as it was when it was alive but he sees a body of a baby who has been dead for a while. He is afraid and attempts to physically fight the baby, ripping at it’s “soft, plasticine flesh.” This apparition of the flesh haunt both text and City, like the other deteriorating bodies. The deaths of these people are tragic but the impression is made because the body is presented as subject and the physical markings of death and deterioration that appear as signs all over the City like a visual assault. These signs are far more difficult to ignore than the stories and fragments of

stories that tell of the death. This is because these signs are graphic and visual, like the image of the dead baby, which Renton sees or Al's wasting, deteriorating body or the ravaged body of Tommy after he was discovered.

There is another sign of an active, violent body, which appears over the City. The signs of violence are never private but always public. There are of course the marks of violence, which appear on bodies all over the City, the implied violence in the images people present. However there is also a language of violence communicated through the body. The body reacts to potential violence as Renton describes.

“It's like ma eyes huv a life ay thir ain, involuntarily turning tae the side. My face reddens n tingles, as if in anticipation ay a fist or a boatil. These...are...nutty boys of the highest order” (Trainspotting, p.80).

Here, Renton's body seems to almost separate from the self and react physically to the potential violence. He is aware from how other bodies look and body language that there is an aggression waiting to be unleashed. The violent body is also an active body and when activated the individual body infects the body of the City at a rapid rate. In the pub where Renton physically anticipates the violent body the violence spreads through the pub and spills onto the streets in minutes. The language of violence is one, which is communicated, understood and reciprocated very quickly. The City provides public spaces like this pub, which precipitate the violent body and provide spectacle.

The body in the City is subject to many things, then. The body is an absorbent for drugs, disease, infection, pain, fluid and food. The body also expels waste, poison and excesses. The text demonstrates how the machinations of the body can provide a spectacle. The comedy often stems from making what is conventionally private-public. The body grotesque becomes public spectacle in social contexts provided by

the City. The City blurs the boundaries between public and private magnifying such comic incidents as Spud's soiled sheets.

The City also provides illusions concerning the body staging the body to represent what it is not, a dangerous deception as Renton discovers after meeting Dianne. Yet the influence of the City is darker still. What the body absorbs in the City far outweighs what it can rid itself of. Drugs, drink and sex is readily available for public consumption. Yet the traces of drugs, disease and infection remain in the blood and are easily passed to others. The signs of which are inscribed all over the City on various bodies. These bodies are found in hospitals, homes and groups of junkies. It is a reminder that the body of the City is constantly under threat from individual bodies. This is enhanced by haunting bodies; those who are missing because they have died an unnatural and untimely death. The body is subject to the City's devices, vulnerable in public places. The City incites the body to absorb its pleasures, which lead to immediate consequences such as the violence, which can be fatal. The body is the subject of the City and identifies with the City on a physical level, negotiating its way through public space, subjecting itself to what the City offers.

Bakhtin emphasises the carnival and grotesque body spilling its fluids as subversive to gentility. Welsh's subversive here, implies the City and the Body signify what is beyond bourgeois control, perhaps what the middle classes fear but are fascinating phenomena to Welsh.

1:5 The Underworld of the City

To refer back to Gray's problematic of Glasgow in that it does not exist as imaginary space is an issue that might be extended to Edinburgh.²¹ Traditionally, the two have existed as representing the middle classes and the working classes. Welsh is not writing about the middle classes of Edinburgh but the working classes and as such his story is alternative to such traditions. Like Gray, Welsh is aware that the shadow of Glasgow²² might eclipse Edinburgh in achieving the imaginary state, despite its thriving tourist industry. However Gray has already established the myth of Glasgow as a hellish place called Unthank.²³ Welsh does not seek to undo this image in his representation of Edinburgh, yet like Gray he creates an underworld in his City. This is a hellish underworld, which sits on the doorstep of Edinburgh (in Leith). The shadow of Glasgow is not so much diminished as enhanced by this underworld, which is extended to the very borders of Edinburgh and thus Welsh's Leith is more like an extension of Glasgow.²⁴ This underworld is entirely different to the

²¹ "Historically a working class city with little claim to the tradition of the glamour of Edinburgh, Glasgow has long been seen as an industrial town to be dismissed with much of the north of England" according to Mary McGlyn, 'Janice Galloway', p. 15

²² "The alterity is compounded in Glasgow's case by the additional twist of its Scottishness...Glasgow has few markers which would locate it in the imaginary Scotland of novels and ballads", McGlyn, 'Janice Galloway' p. 16

²³ While Gray established the imaginary form of Glasgow as hell, Craig cites earlier social realist work, which inspires this image, quoting Edwin Muir's *Autobiography* (1964). "I realised that all Glasgow, in all Scotland, in all the world, there was nothing but millions of such creatures living an animal life and moving towards animal death as towards a great slaughter house" and comments that, "Muir's Nietzschean release from moral imperative turns into a nightmare of the animal significance of human life: Glasgow becomes a Hell, a Hell of unbearable mechanical repetition", Craig, *Modern Scottish Novel*, p.145

²⁴ As Welsh is portraying a city more like Glasgow this would put him in the same position as the Glaswegian writers. McGlyn defines this position. "Writing from Glasgow is ...doubly peripheral; first one is writing from a Scottish, not British perspective and is therefore exterior, and second one is not seen as being "as Scottish" as those from the highlands or Edinburgh." Interestingly McGlyn associates Welsh with the authors of novels about Glasgow and is seemingly unaware that he locates his characters in and around Edinburgh. She says, "As Scottish writing came into vogue in the last decade...the commonalities of the Glasgow school have overridden important differences. Irvine Welsh, the highly visible author of 'Trainspotting', for instance, is not even from Glasgow...", McGlyn, 'Janice Galloway', p. 12. This suggests that Welsh is superimposing the image of Glasgow on Edinburgh in his novel and what readers see is images of Glasgow, which develop the tradition of this City, rather than Edinburgh.

one created by Gray, however it is a contributor to the notion of City hell. Its purpose is perhaps to acknowledge the difference between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Indeed if Glasgow is hell then Edinburgh must be imagined as a haven. This chapter seeks to explore, with reference to Lanark, how Welsh establishes his underworld, to what purpose and the contribution of this underworld to a tradition of two Scottish cities.

The underworld in Trainspotting is not a fantasy like the creation of Unthank which holds a fantastical mirror to Glasgow in Lanark. In Lanark the underworld is created by what is fantastical. Lanark contracts a disease in Unthank and tells us that he found his “arm was dragonhide from shoulder to wrist, with spots of black on the back of his hand” (Lanark, p.39). This disease is fantastic, as a disease that turns people into dragons do not exist in our world. It is the fantastical manifestation of the eczema suffered by Lanark in his previous life as Duncan Thaw in Glasgow. The underworld in Trainspotting is not so much a world of fantasy but it is an imagined world. It is the manifestation of the imagined worst fears concerning the working classes of the middle classes. It is the hellish space, which stands juxtaposed against the ideal of Edinburgh. Indeed the working classes in Trainspotting are diseased, damaged and poisoned by numerous drugs and infections, but unlike Lanark’s dragonhide their diseases are very much real. The streets are littered with diseases passed from one human to another (like the AIDS virus). The streets are also filled with junkies, like Renton and his friends who are all addicted to one drug or another and Renton has “scabby and occasionally weeping track marks” (Trainspotting, p.26) all up his arm. This, like the eczema, mirrors the Unthank dragonhide. In Unthank, the streets are filled with people are diseased with mouths or dragonhide which are physically manifested, in Leith they bear the marks of all manner of physiological signs which

indicate their disease and/or drug.

In Leith junkie dens, dilapidated houses, squats construct the underworld, dirty flats: filthy and abusive streets. The social spaces are more anti-social spaces as public houses, for example, become a breeding ground for violence. There is an underlying desperation in this underworld, which drives its inhabitants. Renton, is need of drugs. He says:

“Ah’d walk oan ma hands and knees through broken gless fir a thousand miles tae use the cunt’s shite as toothpaste and we baith know it” (Trainspotting, p.20).

Here, he explains the lengths he would go to for the drug dealer upon whom he relies.

Renton’s need for drugs goes beyond what the typical middle class Edinburgh city dweller imagines they would do in times of desperation. Renton has stated that he would perform despicable and humiliating acts that are beyond event what one might perceive as the ultimate humiliation; such acts belong to the underworld, not the ideal City of Edinburgh as it is known. Lanark also feels a sense of desperation.

“His wish to leave the City was powerful and complete and equalled by a certainty that streets and buildings and diseased people stretched infinitely in every direction” (Lanark, p.46).

Lanark is appalled by the City and desperate to leave it, throwing himself into a gaping mouth on the landscape. The view of the City, here, is not unlike the underworld described by Welsh which is also filled with endless streets of disease, drugs and corruption. Like, Lanark’s feelings for Unthank, this is not a place that is beloved by Renton and his friends but one that reduces them to desperate acts, like Renton, who, although not swallowed by a mouth, mirrors the action by diving into a dirty toilet to get back drugs he has dropped in there. This act is perhaps as inconceivable to the Edinburgh city-dweller as it is to be swallowed by a mouth inscribed into the earth.

The people who belong to the underworld are different in appearance. In *Unthank*, people socialise in a drab coffee house where “the whole dump teems with poofs and wogs and jews” (Lanark, p.4). Here, people are differentiated through prejudiced views on the way they look. In *Trainspotting*, there is a similar emphasis on appearance. Renton mentions a range of characters (which he nicknames) from “Planet of the Apes” to “Fat Malcolm” to “an ugly box-headed wanker.” The characters seem larger (and uglier) than life when described this way. Renton also describes “a mosaic shell ay scar tissue and Indian ink” (*Trainspotting*, p.79) which sounds like something inhuman although he is simply describing the man at the bar. However, this description is of something imaginary more than human, more grotesque than real and certainly not comparable to the image of the Edinburgh city dweller. The people are uglified in the City’s underworld and the underworld environment matches this in the way that it looks, dirty and disreputable (in both novels). The minds of the characters also reflect the ugliness and corruption of the City. At one point Renton, tells us about Sick Boy pimping out his girlfriend. He says, “Ah felt sickened at what he’d come tae, what we’d aw come tae...” (*Trainspotting*, p.174) and is forced to realise that he too is capable of despicable acts as Sick Boy reminds him that it was he who brought about Tommy’s fall (by introducing him to heroin). Similarly, in *Lanark*, Sludden does not hesitate to bring down those around him. The Edinburgh city type is not one who would bring himself down to such a low level. It is only in the underworld in *Trainspotting* that such depravity, corruption and degradation is allowed to exist.

The underworld is also a place of enhanced alienation. The City is a place of loneliness and alienation, but in the underworld there is also a loss of hope. In *Lanark*,

Duncan Thaw is bitter and alienated, yet he has friends. Lanark, however, stands alone on the balcony in the Elite coffee house when we first meet him and fails to establish a lasting relationship with anyone. He despairs of the City, telling us that “Unthank is dead and done for” (Lanark, p.424). Renton and his friends are also alienated in the underworld as Renton tells us that when he should have been celebrating, he is despairing. “Ah’m surrounded by the cunts thit ur closest tae us; but ah’ve nivir felt so alone. Nivir in ma puff” (Trainspotting, p.175). The reason for such despair is that he is on a methadone programme, which does not work and suffering severe withdrawal. The public house and the other members of the underworld simply enhance this despair as Renton cannot bear their reminiscing or being in a local pub in Leith after having “heartily denounced Leith” (Trainspotting, p.172). He is not the only character that despairs. Simon fills his “black hole” of emptiness with numerous sexual partners and conversations with an imaginary Sean Connery and Spud despairs of the world when he thinks Renton and Sick Boy are going to kill an animal. While Lanark tries to end his alienation in a quest to save Unthank, the characters in Trainspotting have other means of dealing with despair. The underworld leads to alienation and despair, which is manifested in the various addictions of Renton and his friends, addictions, which perpetuate the alienation and can only cease if they leave the underworld.

To leave the underworld is no easy task. This is because the rules are different. In Lanark the rules are different in Unthank because it is constructed by fantasy. There is no sunlight, no time tracked and no sense of the financial value of things. Lanark tells us, “I never learned to use it (money) for everyone has a different notion of its value” (Lanark, p.23). The City in this sense is difficult to read and negotiate because it lacks the order of the world, as we know it. Unthank undermines Lanark's assumptions too,

and he struggles to “count the days” for example, finding it impossible to establish himself in a City, which constantly undermines him because he cannot make sense of it. Of course Unthank is another world and the City in Trainspotting is not; however there is no sun in Leith either or at least it is not mentioned or noticed by the characters who seem to act mostly at night. Clocks do not track time so much as by need for drugs and while money has value it is rarely earned in the underworld. It is stolen, scammed and blagged. There is difficulty in negotiating one’s way through this City because what happens undermines our sense of institutions such as the legal system. Renton talks his way out of stealing books and Franco hospitalises an American tourist yet they do not get sent to prison. Who lives and who dies is also beyond conventional ideas of justice as Franco lives while Dawn’s baby dies. Social conventions are also beyond what we imagine and certainly do not fit with those of the Edinburgh city dweller as no-one visits Matty in hospital and it is accepted that immediately after the death of Dawn’s baby it is Renton who takes the first hit of heroin, not Dawn, because he is the one who prepares the drug and “It Goes Without Saying” (as the chapter title informs us). This is a world without order as it is known to us, and one where it is only certain members who can negotiate their way and survive in it, just as in Unthank only the corrupt like Sludden are able to survive this place.

There is also no fixed point where the underworld begins and stops. In Lanark, Lanark cannot escape Unthank, except on a temporary basis. While Lanark tries to leave to find other places he is always drawn back to Unthank for one reason or another. In Trainspotting the underworld works in a similar way. Renton goes to London and tells us that, “Cults and subcultures segment and cross-matrix in a place like this. Ye can

be freer here, no because it's London, but because it isnae Leith. Wir all slags on holiday" (Welsh, p.228). Renton feels freer in London yet he still intends to return to Leith. The sense of freedom he feels is the only difference between this City and another. The underworld is still present and Renton is still living the same lifestyle. He derides London in much the same way as Leith, seeing Princes street as "hideous" and "deadened" by "tourists and shoppers" (Trainspotting, p.228). The anti-Edinburgh that Renton and his friends inhabit seems to stretch across Britain. Similarly in Lanark, the fantasy world of Unthank seems to stretch on indefinitely as Lanark and Rima feel free to love at the "hospital" underneath the mountains, but recognise that the place is irrevocably entwined with Unthank as the members of this City re-appear in this hospital and Lanark too, realises this is a temporary release. Like Renton, who is as derisive of London as he is of Leith, Lanark sees that the hospital is no better than Unthank and decides to leave.

The Other in Lanark is Unthank, which is other to Glasgow. Unlike Unthank, Glasgow is not an imaginary space. Kevin tells Duncan, "Glasgow is a magnificent city..." and asks, "Why do we hardly ever notice that?" and Duncan tells him, "if the city has not been used by an artist even the inhabitants don't live there imaginatively" (Lanark, p.243). Duncan is implying that Glasgow has not been idealised through Art and can therefore never be a great City, but mediocre and unappealing. He later tells us that it would be "ludicrous to think anyone in Glasgow will ever paint a good picture" (Lanark, p.293) implying Glasgow will never inspire. Similarly, the characters in Trainspotting are uninspired by their City. They do not think of Leith in the imaginative sense but they understand that they are thought of in the imaginative sense, that they are the creatures lurking in shadows. It is they who make the Edinburgh city-dwellers afraid of the dark. They see themselves through the eyes of

these people, who by day, look at them in disgust and by night “like a rabbit who looks at a weasel” (Trainspotting, p.50) Spud explains to Renton that, “they posh wifies think people like us ur vermin” (Trainspotting, p.160). They are the imagined within the City; uglified in their own eyes and sub-human in the eyes of the Edinburgh City dwellers. The inhabitants of the underworld find this City disillusioned them. Their imaginations are projected towards spaces where they might escape it, Amsterdam or Hollywood. Similarly Thaw’s imagination is drawn to fantasy worlds and his inspiration comes from writers such as Milton. However, finally he rejects Glasgow in favour of a fantasy that leads to his demise.

Edinburgh is an idealised City, however. In Lanark the protagonist attempts to save Unthank by appealing at a world convention. He is told:

“You have come here from my city of destruction, which is rather like Glasgow, to plead before some world parliament in an ideal city based on Edinburgh, or London or perhaps Paris...” (Lanark, p.483).

The implication is that Edinburgh is the ideal whereas Glasgow is a destructive, chaotic, hellish dimension. Glasgow is the anti-thesis to Edinburgh in its imagined form in Lanark. In Trainspotting, Edinburgh is also idealised by people, who say it is beautiful and celebrates Edinburgh in its festival. Renton points out that all they “ken, though is the castle n Princes Street, n the High Street” (Trainspotting, p.115). He is implying that the idealised Edinburgh with its internationally famous landmarks are not the “real” Edinburgh. He explains that one woman saw Princes street and wanted a house there overlooking the castle, assuming everywhere was like this and ended up with a council house with a “view ay the gasworks” (p.115). Renton reveals the real Edinburgh is as ugly as Glasgow and its built up industry, brown river, factories and council houses. The glimpse of Edinburgh from Princes street is

idealised but Renton and his friends see through this illusion. They understand that others do not and even present themselves as part of this ideal image when appropriate as Renton tells some girls he is from Edinburgh, “trying to sound aw fuckin posh” (p.115). While they are susceptible to other illusions presented by the City, this is one to which they are not. Similarly in London, the characters do not idealise the City because they understand the idealised part is just part of the whole City. Thaw is equally disillusioned with Glasgow: unable to imagine it in idealised form just as Renton refuses to imagine Edinburgh or Leith.

To the Edinburgh city dwellers who do see and invest in the ideal form of Edinburgh the underworld of Unthank or Leith is an appalling, hellish place. The society of Leith, their behaviour and lifestyle is unthinkable to the middle classes of Edinburgh. What is understood in Lanark is the human need for love. Lanark’s attempts to love Rima and to protect his son, Alexander, are universally understood. The pain of rejection suffered by tortured artist, Thaw, as he tries to form relationships with women and like June, who constantly leaves him waiting until “it was not possible to pretend June would come,” (Lanark, p.251) reject him. In Trainspotting love does not flourish in the underworld. Shirley tells us:

“Most junkies she had met were closet romantics. Matty was. Shirley had ...loved it when he was open, tender, loving and full of life. It never lasted. Even before the smack a harshness and bitterness would descend... he used to write her love poems.they were beautiful, not in a literary sense perhaps, but in the marvellous purity of the wonderful emotions they conveyed to her. Once...he set fire to a particularly lovely verse ...It was the most hurtful thing Shirley had experienced in her life” (Trainspotting, p.295).

This section tells us that love is elusive in the underworld and that the junkies, like Matty, want to love and express that love, yet they destroy it because it is a dream like all their other aspirations. Matty destroys his poetry because of the squalor of their dwelling, refusing to allow love to flourish in such a place where it will only be taken

away again. In typical Postmodern fashion, like others in the novel, he does not dare to love setting these characters apart from Lanark who continues to keep trying.

In Trainspotting, then, there are few signs of love and no-one seems to want to pursue it. The loss of love is perhaps too unbearable or the poignant moments of pain, such as when Matty's mother mourns the loss of her child are warnings not to love. Others make the decision not to trust love to begin with. Renton explains to Spud that, "love doesnae exist, it's like religion, n likesay the state wants ye tae believe in that kinday crap so's they kin control ye, n fuck yir heid up" (Trainspotting, p.157). Renton's sceptical attitude towards love is echoed throughout the underworld where love seems far beyond the violence, crime, drugs and squalor that is known. Most of the relationships formed are temporary sexual liaisons. Long term relationships are thwarted by other factors, such as Tommy's addiction to heroin which is the cause of Lizzie's abandoning him. Begbie has an unusual relationship with his girlfriend June, who stays with him from fear rather than love, as his misogyny and violence dominate her. Renton's relationship with Diane is brief due to her (too) young age.

Relationships are fragile, disintegrate and rarely last. The institutions of marriage and family have broken down in the underworld and do not function here. In the ideal of Edinburgh love, marriage, religion and family flourish and the structure has coherence. The underworld simply undermines this notion and the middle classes are given to understand that the institutions and culture they value have no value here and the universal notion of love is an absent dream here.

Is the underworld in Trainspotting hell? It seems that although it does not have the conscious hellish design of Unthank that in some ways it must be worse. There is no-one seeking truth or love and the only quests appear to be for more heroin. It could be

seen as a soulless, inhuman space. However, there are events, which suggest this may not be true. In the story of Lanark and Thaw, which is a tragedy, Thaw becomes a murderer and suicide and Lanark is betrayed, fails in both his quest for love and Unthank and is left to die, alone. The protagonist in Trainspotting, is Renton, who, although flawed like Thaw/Lanark is not unforgivably evil like Begbie. Renton, unlike Thaw/Lanark is a far better survivor: he knows how to negotiate his way through the City. He is aware that there are some people who are not to be trusted and he is not duped. He is also more self-aware than Thaw/Lanark and he knows what he has to do to solve his problems. Kelly tells us, "Mark doesnae seem tae really need people" (Trainspotting, p.302) and this is a clue that it is this distance and independence, which enables Mark to leave Edinburgh. Renton manages to get himself a job and seems to be weaning himself off the heroin. He does not have a tragic end but takes a chance when he rips off his friends who follow him to London. This is the only way he sees to be free of the heroin, the influence of the City and its underworld. The ending is not a tragedy, but it is an uncertain one as Renton begins a new life as he goes into the unknown (although in Porno we learn he stops using heroin and becomes successful in business). He is free to re-define him and negotiate a different path in the City. In this sense, the underworld is not a hellish place as Renton is given another chance.

There is also the purpose of the author to consider. While Lanark is autobiographical in parts and Gray himself states that, "Surely everyone wants to be a hero or heroine?" (Lanark, p.565) Welsh does not openly clarify his purpose. Gray cites his influences such as Huxley and Orwell and their influence is apparent in the text. His purpose in creating an imaginary Glasgow (which has always been absent) and to portray our

attempts to try to love even though we fail are also clear. In Trainspotting the key to Welsh's purpose seems to begin with the conscious decision to set the novel in Edinburgh. Traditionally, the working class characters are far more in keeping with Glaswegian characters. Yet they are on the very doorstep of the Edinburgh middle classes and the two worlds are like a juxtaposition of the ideal Edinburgh and hellish Glasgow. Perhaps then, the stories in Trainspotting, show a hellish rather than a real version of Glasgow, set in an underworld adjacent to Edinburgh. These stories reflect the worst fears of the Edinburgh middle classes as the underworld is filled with the working classes, who are all grotesque, diseased, drugged, violent and criminal; each type represented by the main characters who all adhere to one negative stereotype or another. Perhaps this is the challenge Welsh presents. Is this underworld the world of the working classes? Is this a generation of youth, which the middle classes have failed in their solutions to working class problems (solutions which Renton repeatedly demonstrates do not work). In which case the middle classes are being critiqued here. Or if this underworld is believed to be an accurate reflection of reality does this confront the middle classes with their prejudice. In which case all these questions might be simplified by asking the reader one crucial question. Is this a fantasy or reality?

An Introduction to Toni Morrison's Jazz

2:1 African-American Literature and Harlem.

Toni Morrison's Jazz is a novel, like Trainspotting, set in the city. However it is set in Harlem in the 1920s and is often seen as Postmodern by its critics²⁵. It revisits the age of the Modern and aims to undermine both the grand historical narrative of African- American history and the literary history of the 1920s. The pre-occupation with the history of the 1920s relates to the explosion of novels precipitated by the change in economic climate. The American novel itself is a product of urban economic change. It is a product of the most important aspect of nineteenth century American social history, the transition from a rural to an industrial economy (and later, technology). It is this first economic development that led novelists to explore the city that Morrison is interested in.

This period is also significant particularly to African American history, in which Morrison is personally invested, because it is part of the migration period when many black southerners moved to the North cities to embrace a new culture, ideology and lifestyle. The attraction of this new lifestyle was signified by the city of Harlem. The

²⁵ Postmodern readings by various critics can be found in Linden Peach's casebooks on Toni Morrison in both the 1998 edition and the 2000 edition (Toni Morrison: Contemporary Critical Essays, ed. Linden Peach, Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1998 and Toni Morrison Second Edition, ed. Linden Peach, St Martins: Macmillan, 2000), 'Periodizing Toni Morrison's Work from "The Bluest Eye" to "Jazz": the Importance of "Tar Baby"' by Pereira, Martin Walther found at <http://www.geocities.com/tarbaby2007/bluest4.html>, Elizabeth M Cannon, 'Following the Traces of Female Desire in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*', *African American Review*, 31 (1997), pp.235-48, W. Lawrence, 'Postmodernism, Traditional Cultural Forms and the African American Narrative: Major's "Reflex", Morrison's "Jazz" and Reed's "Mumbo Jumbo"', *Providence*, 35 (2002), pp.169-174, Anthony C. Hilfer, 'Toni Morrison's Narrative Strategies', *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*, 33, (1991), 89-96, Dubey, Madhu, 'Narration and Migration; Jazz and the Vernacular, *Theories of Black Women's Fiction*, *American Literary History*, 10:2 (1998), 291-327.

myth of Harlem and the city itself was famous throughout America. Harlem was dubbed the “black city” (although it formed part of New York) enriched by culture, affluence, ideology, freedom and an African-American symbol of hope. However it was paradoxical in the sense that it stood for the future of the race, yet it was also a place of poverty, disrepute and degradation.²⁶ It was also commonly referred to in mythological terms by Rudolph Fisher for example: “Harlem, land of plenty...city of refuge...city of the devil-outpost of hell” (Balshaw, 2000, p.2).²⁷ The dualistic theme of Harlem was represented in both the writings of the 1920s and in later texts. It is the nature of this myth that Morrison is interested in deconstructing, in her exploration of the African-American history of the 1920s, therefore this section will explore Harlem and its many representations to provide a background to Morrison’s interpretation of this period.

The 1920s writers engaged with Harlem often in Modernist terms. These writers were members of the Harlem Renaissance: a middle class group of artists whose ambitious intent was to provide a new structure of ideology and culture, which would give African-Americans an identity, history and culture of their own (one which was not dominated by white Americans and independent of their views). They wanted to give African-Americans a place in literature and in this they succeeded, however their dream of creating a new cultural identity was eventually deferred.²⁸ Yet the literature of the time conveys the paradox of Harlem. Claude McKay’s Home to Harlem (1926)

²⁶ Langston Hughes, also, defined Harlem as a land of plenty and yet also as a dream deferred and the tension between this projected dream and its failure characterises the way it is written about; i.e. in dualistic terms Maria Balshaw, Looking for Harlem, (London, Sterling and Virginia: Pluto Press, 2000) p.2

²⁷ Religious imagery surrounds the myth of Harlem and it is described with reference to the Bible in writings by Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Claude Brown.

²⁸ The Harlem Renaissance has later been critiqued by many for several reasons including the idea that it relied upon white patronage and was constrained by political pressures from black leaders, Eva Lennox Birch, Black American Women’s Writing: A Quilt of Many Colours, (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994) pp. 40-87 (p.41).

for example portrays what the city had to offer for young black men describing figurative and imaginative perceptions of Harlem.²⁹ Van Vechten provides a more sceptical view in Nigger Heaven (1924). Other authors such as Zora Neale Hurston followed a different direction, interpreting the Renaissance in a different way. Hurston embraced black folk culture³⁰, myth and religious themes in her writing: asserting female and black independence. It was writers such as Langston Hughes and Alaine Locke who attempted to give definition and form to what the Harlem Renaissance constituted. These artists asserted the symbol of Harlem and the concept of the New Negro, which upheld the cultural, racial and political rights of African-Americans. However, despite their different interpretations and approaches within the Harlem Renaissance the myth of Harlem is a strong theme and the conscious use of Modernist techniques are apparent in much of the literature produced by these artists. Modernist techniques in the work produced by the Harlem Renaissance Artists, according to James de Jongh celebrate Harlem. “The violent and transforming beauty ‘in the way that it is made’ is a reminder of the fusion of what is literal and figurative, observational and imaginative, in cultural imagery and literary creation”.³¹ Modernist Harlem in this sense can be viewed in Van Vechten’s portrayal of the city where he celebrates it as an urban “heart of darkness”, fusing the literal and figurative and observing it as a place of “profound otherness”³². Although the Modernists of the

²⁹ Artists such as Claude McKay and James Weldon Johnson embraced the positive attributes of the city of Harlem. Johnson saw it a place of security and community while McKay embraced the culture, the glamour, the “uniqueness” of Harlem that allowed blacks to become like the self-expressive characters of African-American folklore, James de Jongh, Vicious Modernism, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 5-15 (p.6-7)

³⁰ Information about Hurstons writings can be found in Black American Women’s Writing, Birch, 1994, pp. 42-85 and Gurleen Grewal, Circles of Sorrow/Lines of Struggle, (USA: Louisiana State University Press, 1998). Zora Neale Hurston asserts the idea of black self-hood in many of her myths, suggesting apocalyptic futures for her oppressors in the tale about the white alligator for example. In this myth the white alligator is tricked by Brer Rabbit into coming too close to the fire and after some time he turns black (Birch, 1994, pg 50).

³¹ De Jongh, Vicious Modernism, pp.1-5 (p.1)

Harlem Renaissance were quite unlike Modernists such as Henry James and Thomas Eliot it has been suggested that they were responding to Ezra Pound's clarion call to "make it new"³³ and thus created the Renaissance.

The city of Harlem proved popular in the literary sense and it was also acclaimed for its uniqueness, in that it became the first self-contained Negro community.³⁴ While attitudes to Harlem remained ambivalent it was still perceived as legendary. Until the depression of the 1930s, Harlem was seen as place of affluence, exotic culture and desire. The depression of the 1930s then revealed the negative aspects of Harlem.³⁵

Maria Balshaw quotes Charles Scruggs who says, "the image of the city as a symbol of community, of home- this image lies beneath the city of brute fact in which blacks in the twentieth century have had to live" (p.5). In the 1930s the image became fragmented as African-Americans became increasingly poor and the city of brute fact came to the foreground in literature. Cultural shadows were also cast as the jazz age passed and stylistic changes included the introduction of jive. De Jongh, for example, gives accounts of disillusioned writers concentrated upon critiquing Harlem in Vicious Modernism (p.20). Sterling Brown is one writer that critiques the Harlem Craze in general in Southern Road (1932) and targets Cullen's "Harlem Wine" specifically.³⁶ Other members of the Harlem Renaissance looked back upon what they

³² De Jongh, Vicious Modernism, pp. 197-213, (p.211)

³³ Craig Werner, 'Jazz: Morrison and the Music of Tradition', in Approaches to the Teaching of Toni Morrison, ed. Nellie Y McKay and Katherine Earle (New York: The Modern Association of America, 1997) pp. 86-92 (p.88)

³⁴ Payton's African-American Realty company won control of a few buildings on the 134th and 135th Streets between Lenox Avenue and Fifth Avenue and from these few buildings a community developed. Black churches, political institutions and social clubs began buying property in the area to accommodate African-Americans and mansions were developed in the area to accommodate persons of affluence such as A'Leila Walker (heiress to the multi-million dollar invention of hair straightening) and Lilian Harris Dean who headed a real-estate empire (De Jongh, Vicious Modernism, p.6-8).

³⁵ The death rates of Harlemites was 42% higher than the rest of the city, infant mortality, violent death, venereal disease, malnutrition, juvenile delinquency rates were at least double the rates in the rest of the city. Education was poor, with school attendance as much as 100% in turnover and the relaxed attitude to drugs, gambling and alcohol increased existing problems relating to poverty (De Jongh, Vicious Modernism, p.9).

had created with a degree of scepticism. Langston Hughes, for example, indicates implicitly in “Jazzonia” that the Harlem artists may have embraced the city and the Harlem Renaissance all too readily and naively.³⁷ Claude Brown criticised Harlem in Manchild of the Promised Land referring ironically to the book of Exodus and the plague afflicting the first born in Egypt implying the first born of Harlem was afflicted by drug addiction.³⁸ There is also an increasing social awareness in the works of Nicholas Guillen, Hurston and Dorothy West, paying particular attention to race issues.³⁹ However, the promise of Harlem was not entirely forgotten. James Weldon Johnson saw Harlem as “the recognised Negro Capital” and Claude McKay still recognised its importance.⁴⁰ It seemed that despite the Depression of the 1930s, Harlem remained a cultural and racial sign. Writers continued to position themselves between the polarized opposites of Paradise and Hell.

The 1940s introduced further changes though the Depression had not lifted. Some authors such as Langston Hughes wrote nostalgically about Harlem in The Big Sea (1940), contributing to its fabled status with its vision of Harlem’s unparalleled,

³⁶ Sterling Brown continues to make an issue of alcohol abuse in the 1930s with poetry such as “Maumee Ruth” which tells the tale of a mother whose children did not mourn her on her deathbed because they were stupefied by Harlem wine (‘City of Refuse’ in De Jongh, Vicious Modernism, pp.15-33 (p.20)

³⁷ “Were Eve’s Eyes/In the first Garden/That bit too bold?” (Jazzonia). This religious imagery, from the poem, implicates those who invested in the Harlem Renaissance as viewing the city as paradise (like the first garden). However, the unthinking of the consequences and ignoring the warning signs of socio-economic decline, racism, alcohol, drug abuse and other social realities, African Americans rushed to occupy Harlem as Eve did view the apple”, (De Jongh, Vicious Modernism p.12-22).

³⁸ De Jongh, Vicious Modernism, pp. 137-46 (p.138)

³⁹ Guillen looks at the race issues that have developed between Cubans and African-Americans which is less perceptible at surface level in his essay “El Camino de Harlem”, in De Jongh, Vicious Modernism, pp. 48-72 (p.55) while West and Hurston examine interracial issues in stories about “colourism” where black people with lighter skin viewed themselves as superior in social status to those with darker skin”, Sandi Russell, Render Me My Song: African-American Women Writers from Slavery to the Present, (London and New York: Pandora, 2002), pp. 48-60 (p.52-4).

⁴⁰ James Weldon Johnson makes his views clear in Black Manhattan (1930) while Claude McKay does not see the Depression Era as diminishing the significance of Harlem in Negro Metropolis (1940) in A. Robert Lee, ‘Harlem on My Mind: Fictions of a Black Metropolis’ in The American City, ed. Graham Clarke (London and New York: Vision Press, 1988) pp. 62-86 (p.67)

dazzling rich diversity of colour, culture and class. “At almost every Harlem upper-crust dance or party, one would be introduced to various distinguished white celebrities...” according to Hughes.⁴¹ However the introduction of social realism within African-American writing in the 1940s had a sobering effect on any taken in by Hughes’ Harlem. Ann Petry’s The Street is a primary example of this type of literature that moves away from the Modern to present an urban reality that is comparable to hell. In this novel the protagonist Lucie is subjected to discrimination because of her race and colour; many attempt to exploit her and she struggles to survive.⁴² In Petry’s work no one escapes the experience of socio-economic and racial determinism. The overcrowding of African-Americans and the emerging ghetto into which Harlem was metamorphosing caused writers to explore social realism. This style of writing later developed as the material of social protest.

The idea that Harlem could be presented in dualistic terms was undermined by the writers of social protest. The 1940s had produced several riots in Harlem that destabilized the idea of Harlem as a haven.⁴³ The 1960s introduced The Civil Rights movement and other political movements, yet progressive advancement did not enable those living in Harlem to escape poverty and race-related problems that dominated their existence and consumed them.⁴⁴ A second group of Harlem writers emerged as contemporary issues precipitated social protest writing: headed by Petry,

⁴¹ Further in formation can be found about Langston Hughes and this novel in The Harlem Renaissance.

⁴² Ann Petry viewed Harlem as an area jam-packed with black people subjected to oppression and exploitation – a vision not far removed from the idea of African-Americans crammed into ships, destined for a life of slavery, Hannah Wirth Nester, City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel, (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.85-111 (p85) and Russell, Render Me My Song, (p.49).

⁴³ Ralph Ellison references these riots in The Invisible Man (1952) and the details of these can be found in De Jongh’s ‘The Inner City’ in Vicious Modernism, pp. 137-46 (pp.137-42)

⁴⁴ Various accounts of the poverty of the 1950s and increasing degradation are found in Vicious Modernism, James De Jongh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel, Hannah Wirth- Nester (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and The American City; Literary and Cultural Perspectives, ed. Graham Clarke (London and New York: Vision Press, 1988).

Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison. The city of hell by now became the dominant mode of African American expression. Richard Wright's underground of the city is composed of human and animal debris which is a metonymy for a diseased society. Ellison's famous Invisible Man (1952) vacillates between dream and nightmare, but emphasises the atrocities of Harlem. Atrocities include issues of race and the uncertainty of the Harlem of the 1950s. This Harlem is full of tricks and pitfalls. Strangely, despite no longer advocating Harlem as an idealised location and offering a powerful critique of this city it is also still offered as the only possible location for African-Americans.⁴⁵

The 1950s and 60s then introduced an element of violence into the literature precipitated by the sign of Harlem. During the 1950s Harlem had declined as a symbol of promise and the Harlem dream was disappearing. However, the arrival of Malcolm X and the political movement of the Black Muslims (which stood for the assertion of black men) gave Harlem a sign of hope when their protests initially against police brutality began. However the violent nature of Harlem increased through riots and protests and was revealed in the literature of the time such as Warren Miller's Cool World (1959) and Shane Steven's Go Down Dead (1969).⁴⁶ Other novelists produced material of a more political nature, such as Langston Hughes. In Hughes' The Best of Simple (1961) he explains that "Be-Bop" comes from policemen beating the heads of Negroes with billy clubs.⁴⁷ Yet, the 1960s

⁴⁵ Criticism on Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison found in Clarke, The American City, (p.7), Wirth-Nester, City Codes, (p.92-6) and Balshaw, Looking for Harlem, (p.5)

⁴⁶ Both novels are about adolescent gangs in Harlem and see Harlem as divided into territories. Other novels that follow a similar pattern include The Real Cool Killers (1959), All Shot Up (1960) and The Big Gold Dream (1960) (Clarke, The American City, p.80-81).

⁴⁷ Examples of the portrayal of increasingly vicious racial stereotypes and racial politics in literature including that of Hughes is in 'A Knowing So Deep' by Judylyn S Ryan in Approaches to Teaching the Novels of Toni Morrison, eds. Nellie McKay and Kathryn Earle (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1997) pp. 154-160 (p.159)

also produced a degree of division in the nature of the works produced by men and women. Maya Angelou, for example, in I know why the Caged Bird Sings (1969) celebrates survival, female selfhood and identity and is not characterised by the hating aggression and violence of many male authors. Instead it focuses on the inspiration of surviving. Angelou's work seems to contain an inner anger directed at a numerous sources, acknowledging multiple racial issues. Indeed it is far removed from Richard Wright's Black Boy (1945) which rages against white oppression.⁴⁸ The implication is that black men and women were not always united with a common purpose. They had differing views of identity and self-hood, for example.

However some women still chose to speak out in protest about issues of race and socio-economic problems, such as Sonia Sanchez who cites heroin in Homecoming (1969) as the new African-American killer (Russell, Render Me My Song, p.85). Yet the division between men and women widened as male literature reflected the violence of Harlem and the sign of assertion of men introduced by the Black Muslims. The problem for black women was that the political organizations defined their role as one, which should support their men no matter what. Female writers such as Angelou and Morrison herself reacted in the 1960s and 1970s by defining an identity of their own and spoke of black issues particular to women such as the oppression of women by white and black men. Rosa Guy's A Measure of Time (1983) exemplifies many of these issues in a story of one woman's battle to survive in a world where men are free abuse black women with little consequence. Other authors, like Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni and Carolyn Rogers protested against this in a far more overt way by defining women in opposing terms to how men defined them, for example

⁴⁸Carol Boyce Davis, Black Women: Writing and Identity, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.121-48 (p.122-4)

celebrating women who were loud instead of quiet.⁴⁹ While this did not modify or develop the motif of Harlem itself; their street poetry introduced stylistic changes to city writing. It gave the City a raw, edgy definition. Other female writers also focused on empowering women: they attempted to create black female identity in the struggle to survive in the city and this emphasised female presence in Harlem. Male authors changed views of Harlem, it became seen as a gangland, a ghetto, representing the violent aspect of Harlem.

To summarise, by the 1980s and 1990s Harlem had developed into an area that was seen as a ghetto rather than a cultural or racial symbol of hope. However Harlem retained its mythic significance. From the 1920s, when it initially flourished as the Promised Land for African Americans, to its critique that began in the 1930s, the social realism and social protest writing that saw Harlem at its lowest point as representing the problems of the African American people in the 1940s to the violence, political and race protest material and street poetry of the 1960s and 1970s inspired by the political situation, Harlem remained a place of importance. From its origins as a cultural symbol, through to its other representations as a ghetto or a political sign; writers continued to be inspired to write of it. Whether, it is seen as a city of heaven or hell, it is still the black city to write about because it was the first city (within a city) for black people. It was also representative of the American Dream.

While many of the issues of race have been resolved and political rights have been fought for and won the 1980s and 1990s still sees Harlem as a contentious space.

⁴⁹ Caroline Rogers and others rebelled against the submissive posture of supporting men. They were not ashamed of being loud, brash and gaudily dressed. This is reflected in the controversial street poetry (which later developed into rap) of Sonia Sanchez, for example, who writes “play black/songs/ To drown out the shit/Screams of honkies” from ‘Black/Record/Buyers’ (‘Black Talk, Black Judgement’, Russell, *Render Me My Song* p.85-90).

Claude Brown tells of a group of young black drop-outs trying to survive under the rules of ghetto culture in The Children of Ham (1976) and the film Boyz in the Hood (1991) tells a similar story. However, the legacy of Harlem is that is not and cannot be accommodated by a singular explanation. Whether authors, such as James Baldwin resort to myth to tell us about Harlem and its enduring motif of the juxtaposition of heaven and hell or others such as Chester Himes relate to the streets of Harlem to portray this city, Clarke tells us, “ultimately Harlem remains the choice of city to write about for African-American authors and what this city is and represents is still yet to be defined” (p.78).

Many late twentieth century novels have revisited the 1920s. The 1920s has particular appeal because it marks the time of the aspirations of the Modern. It marked new beginnings as African- American culture began defining itself. Authors such as Rosa Guy and Langston Hughes has chosen to write about Harlem in the 1920s. Toni Morrison is therefore not the first author to write about the working classes of this period. Like these other novels, Jazz must respond in some way to the development of the idea of Harlem. However, unlike former novels Jazz seeks to deconstruct the myth that has developed around Harlem. Jazz does respond to the textbook history of the 1920s but like Beloved was triggered by a real news story as the central story revolves around a Van Der Zee photograph from his collection in The Book of the Dead.⁵⁰ The dead girl in the photograph was shot by her lover and died without revealing his name. The story in Jazz imagines the events of how this came to pass and the conclusion to these events. This novel also responds to the Modern and Ezra Pound’s

⁵⁰ Van Der Zee was a famous contemporary photographer who created his famous book of the dead by taking pictures of New York subjects who had recently passed away. There was also a story or myth connected with each portrait emphasising the significance of each subjects death. Details of this book can be found in ‘The 1990s: Jazz (1992) and Paradise (1998)’ in Peach, Toni Morrison: Contemporary Critical Essays, pp. 126-71, (p.131)

call to “make it new” as even lines of the novel testify in asking the reader to “make me, remake me”.⁵¹ Like the members of the Harlem Renaissance, Morrison responds to the call. She also responds to the literary motif of Harlem as her protagonists Joe and Violet move to a city “better than perfect” expecting to live in Paradise, only to discover the “hellish” aspects of the city. However, what is significant about Jazz is that it does not simply respond to the events and style of the 1920s and invoke the ideas of the Harlem Renaissance, instead it responds to a broader range of Art concerned with Harlem. Following this introduction to Harlem literature there will be readings of this historical novel, which correspond to different eras of writing. This thesis intends to ask how Morrison adopts and adapts the literary techniques of the 1920s Modernists, how is her knowledge of the Postmodern used and how far is the work a social critique of life in the City in the manner of the 1930s writing.

If Jazz responds to Ezra Pound’s call to “make it new” by asking readers to “make me, remake me” at the end of the novel this might be an indication of a response to the black and white Modernists of that period.⁵² This introduces European Modernism as it is was this Modernism, which inspired the American Modernists. The European Modernists inspired Black and White Modernists, because this writing was pre-occupied with the City, particularly Capital Cities and it seemed the Americans were obliged to imagine their Cities also. The white Modernist movement in Europe was a response to authority within Art. As traditional ways of living became undermined by the development of cities, industry and technology;

⁵¹ Toni Morrison, Jazz, (p.223). This will be referred to in the text from now on as “Jazz.”

⁵² Kubitschek sees Morrison as acknowledging various Modernists such as William Faulkner. Faulkner’s Go Down Moses has a character strikingly similar to Hunters Hunter in Jazz. Kubitschek also alludes to Dante, seeing Morrison’s Beloved, Jazz and Paradise as corresponding to Dante’s The Divine Comedy: Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso, Missy Dehn Kubitschek, Toni Morrison: A Critical Companion, (West Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1998) pp. 139-62 (p139)

ways of writing also changed. The rise of the city had the power to de-stabilize ideological institutions and practices such as fields of religion and morality, which no longer adhered to strict Victorian codes. The Modernists searched for new ways of writing to portray a world that had changed. Indeed Modernist fiction is often defined by a rejection of conventional structures and techniques as they were seen as inadequate in portraying new ideas. It is not that the Modernists necessarily agreed with these Modern changes; indeed Eliot for example, is particularly critical of Modern times. However, the subject of writing is predominantly the Modern change particularly those within cities. Modernists became fascinated with the phenomenon of the city dedicating cities much attention and analysis. Stephenson explains, in order to analyse and write about the effect of the city on the subject, Modernists turned to alternative styles of writing and introduced new literary techniques, which could express deeper concerns with individual subjective consciousness and the popular interest in psychology.⁵³ These new techniques included interior monologue and stream-of-consciousness. A comparison with Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway⁵⁴ is useful at this point to examine how Morrison invokes the Modern in her view of the city because she also invokes the contemporary popular interest in psychology with her psychoanalysis of the city and its characters.

Voices are emphasised through Modernist techniques and in turn Morrison also employs these and emphasises the voices of her characters. It is useful to look at Woolf and Morrison's voices in the city to demonstrate how Morrison responds to the white Modernists. Stephenson tells us, Virginia Woolf herself, sees the work of her

⁵³Randall Stephenson, Modernist Fiction: An Introduction, (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore and Tokyo: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) pp.1-8.

⁵⁴ Toni Morrison has been compared with Woolf before and Sula has been compared to Mrs Dalloway in Lisa William's The Artist as Outsider in the Novels of Toni Morrison and Virginia Woolf, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000) but I have not found any comparison between Jazz and Mrs Dalloway.

immediate predecessors as “restricted by outdated modes” and has therefore made a conscious effort to employ “contemporary literary techniques” (p.6) Kristeva, sees her as making the break with fictional convention with her use of interior monologue, whilst not taking it to the extremes of Joyce for example who uses the technique of stream of consciousness. Woolf makes the break with the idea of the autonomous subject by disrupting linearity and achieving simultaneity, which modifies the status of the subject presenting characters that are fractured rather than unified and whole.⁵⁵ Her famous novel, Mrs. Dalloway offered a view of the city of London, which emphasises the blurring of public and private boundaries. In earlier novels by Austen and the Brontes, these boundaries were clear as the majority of social interaction, business transactions and decisions took place within the home. However the development of industrialised cities meant there were more opportunities for life to be experienced outside the home: in streets, cafes, shops, restaurants and social clubs. Characters thoughts in the Modernist city novel are subjective, but portrayed collectively and private thoughts are juxtaposed with public places. This emphasis on private thoughts portrayed collectively in the street is also to be found in Jazz. Like Jazz, Woolf’s novel portrays the private and public perspectives of men and women and their engagement with the city. Her novel also demonstrates various literary features specific to the city novel. These features may also be found in Jazz. The comparison of the two novels will demonstrate how characters in Jazz negotiate their way through the city and the significance of the city to the novel.

Mrs.Dalloway, like Jazz is a novel that follows the lives of three central characters as they make their way through the city. They are all linked to each other, yet walk the

⁵⁵ Julia Kristeva, ‘The Abject and the Semiotic’, Psychoanalytic Criticism ed. Sue Vice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), pp. 151-74 (p.170)

streets separately. Peter is the former love of Mrs. Dalloway and he searches for her. Mrs. Dalloway's journey through the city leads her to reflect on her past and her imminent social event: her party. Septimus Warren Smith's journey is also reflective and yet his engagement with the city is of a darker nature. He eventually commits suicide, which is synchronised with Mrs. Dalloway's party. Virginia Woolf incorporates many of the literary motifs of the city into Mrs. Dalloway including significantly that of the city observer or the *flaneur/flanerie*.⁵⁶ All three characters make observations within the city, about themselves and their surroundings. Their observations include observations of city "types" which are read metaphorically. The ideas of the "romantic girl", the "copper lady", the "young lovers" and the "veriest frumps" are all observations of people seen within the city and read within its context.⁵⁷ All three observers are not presented as autonomous, but as fallible, misreading their subjects. Peter, for example, follows a young girl seeing her as a mysterious, romantic figure: an object of desire. He loses sight of her and can only see an older woman. Yet he projects his desires onto this woman seeing her as what the romantic figure she may have represented when she was younger. Peter, follows the tradition of the bourgeois male *flaneur*, inscribing the female subject onto his landscape as the object of his male gaze. Mrs. Dalloway subverts this tradition by avoiding his gaze. He becomes distanced from her "For there she was"- but she is not

⁵⁶ Parsons tells of the idea of a *flaneur*, a bourgeois male observer of the city who identifies inhabitants of the city and "reads" them and identifies them. The *flaneur* has been an integral part of city literature as early as Dickens who wrote of male observers in his novels such as Hard Times. Later, the idea of a female observer/streetwalker is identified by Parsons in many Modernist novels. The female *flaneuse* is identified as early as 1900 in the novels of Henry James. The trope of the *flanerie* is invested in such characters as Maria Gostrey. She is an active, autonomous character who guides her reader through the city and a social sense of cosmopolitan Europe and the customs of its inhabitants, Deborah L Parsons, Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) pp. 1-17 (p.6-8)

⁵⁷ Ways of reading city types features in many Modernist novels and as these are often mis-readings which are more telling about the observer than unknowingly observed the idea that the city itself is deceptive as it provides the context for these mis-readings is apparent. Misreading and streetwalking in Mrs. Dalloway is found in Wirth-Nester, City Codes, p.98-100.

“here”.⁵⁸

It is not only Peter, however, who misreads his subjects. Mrs. Dalloway herself misreads what she sees. There is an intense moment between herself and an old lady. Engaging with the literary motif of the strangers face in the window, Woolf portrays a moment of intimacy between two strangers as Mrs. Dalloway and the old lady meet each other’s gaze.

“She parted the curtains; she looked. Oh, but how surprising! - in the room opposite the old lady stared straight at her!” (Dalloway, p.189).

The old lady eventually puts the light out and encloses herself in her own private world from which Clarissa Dalloway is excluded. In turn the old lady is excluded from Clarissa’s party and the moment of intimacy between them is extinguished as if it had never happened. They never come to know anything of each other as if they had never seen and noticed each other. The idea that people who live in the city are always in the position of missing something is present. The city-dwellers only have a partial view of their world and are constantly excluded from aspects of the city and each other’s lives (this is a strong theme within the novel and one, which finally takes root in the character of Clarissa from whose space we are all excluded). The strong links between the central characters, who barely interact, makes the idea of exclusion, poignant. The idea that the city is a place of alienation is the one of the themes that prevails. However, significantly, the bond formed between person and place (city and self) as characters negotiate their way through the city is stronger than those formed with each other. This bond usurps the theme of alienation in part as characters are integrated into the city.

⁵⁸Mrs Dalloway, Virginia Woolf (St. Ives, Penguin Classics, 1996) p.197. This will now be referred to in the main body of the text as “Dalloway.”

Indeed despite themes of isolation, exclusion and alienation, the portrayal of the city is a romantic one. The wandering strangers in the city with hidden secrets of love and pain, is an idea that is romanticised in this city. The city itself enhances the idea of the stranger in the city as a romantic notion. For example, Peter alone in Trafalgar Square romanticises the scene with his contemplations.

“As a cloud crosses the sun, silence falls on London...Effort ceases. Time flaps on the mast. There we stop; there we stand...Where there is nothing, Peter Walsh said to himself: feeling hollowed out, utterly empty within. Clarissa refused me, he thought” (Dalloway, p.48).

Peter’s search for self, love and romance is experienced through these intimate interior monologues like the one above. His quest, which is performed in the streets of the city can be likened to the traditional romantic quest of the knight. The female object of desire, like Clarissa, is usually unobtainable until the end of the story. However, unlike the knights in traditional stories of romance Peter subjects many women to the position of being objectified. Clarissa subverts the notion of the traditional romance as she eludes the male gaze and is finally, ultimately unobtainable for Peter and the reader. There is an element of desperation in the quests of Peter and Bradshaw, for the City is destined to fail them. Sir William Bradshaw cannot save Septimus Warren Smith when he treats him for shell shock and general mental debility and Peter’s loses Clarissa. The theme of romance is thus subverted and any form of resolution takes place in the Country as the City encourages desire, hope and romance: only to replace it with exclusion, disillusionment and alienation for all characters, until all they have left is the constant of the city. They are no longer independent of the city and the city is always assimilated in their thinking.

Jazz differs from Woolf’s novel because it concerns working class characters. It is a complex novel that develops a stronger sense of culture shock when its characters

migrate to the city. Unlike in Mrs Dalloway the characters struggle to make sense of their selves in the city to the degree where the city almost destroys them. The novel is violent and the working class characters differ entirely in their beliefs. They are also presented with cultural, racial and political issues. These issues act as a barrier to their integration into city life. In Mrs. Dalloway they are pre-occupied with their superficial bourgeois social scene. There are no barriers to integration into city life because they belong to the ruling classes who have developed and dominate cities. Their negotiation of the City is shifting because women are becoming emancipated and they feel a need to ensure their survival in the imperialistic warfare and the sacrifice of characters like Septimus will no longer suffice to ensure they continue to establish themselves in the same way.

However in terms of techniques Jazz is comparable with Mrs.Dalloway because it invokes the Modern and attempts to subvert literary form within City literature. While Mrs. Dalloway looks at the city of London, Morrison's novel explores the black city of Harlem, reclaiming the high Modernist Art present in Mrs. Dalloway for the African American working classes. However, the City is key to what happens to both sets of characters and plays an active role in both novels in the way that it inspires the characters to behave and think in certain ways.

“There is no air in the City but there is breath, and every morning it races through him like laughing gas brightening his eyes, his talk and his expectations” (Jazz, p.34).

The quotation refers to the male protagonist in this novel whose name is Joe. Like Peter, Joe is also influenced by the City and filled with desire, which he later projects onto Dorcas.

Desire is a powerful and intoxicating; the City awakens human desire. Peter, influenced by the City, walks across Trafalgar Square where “came a young woman

who, as she passed Gordon's statue, seemed, Peter Walsh thought (susceptible as he was), to shed veil after veil, until she became the very woman he had always had in mind" (Dalloway, p.51-2). This quotation from Mrs. Dalloway demonstrates that the City not only incites desire but distorts perception, just as Peter in this instance "susceptible as he was" to see the young woman as the manifestation of all his fantasies. In turn, Jazz, portrays desire as both incited and shaped by the City in a similar way, as this quotation describing how women in the City affect men, demonstrates.

"But if she is clipping down the big-city street in heels...or sitting on a stoop...dangling her shoe from the toes of her foot, the man, reacting to her posture, to soft skin on stone, the weight of the building stressing the delicate, dangling shoe, is captured" (Jazz, p.34).

Like Peter, the men in Harlem are instantly aware of the "deception" yet succumb anyway. The City shapes men into desiring subjects and women the objects of that desire.

Joe also has a quest, which is to find his estranged mother. However, the City finds him another object of desire in the form of Dorcas with whom he becomes fixated because she "blesses his life and makes him wish he had never been born" (Jazz, p.40), and begins an affair with her. He becomes alienated from his wife and in his loneliness pursues Dorcas, tracking her down through the streets of the city. Similarly Joe is destined to fail in his quest as Dorcas, like Clarissa with Peter, eludes him. She chooses another lover and upon finding them together Joe shoots Dorcas (almost without meaning to) and like Clarissa she is lost to him. However, the subversion of the romantic quest in Jazz is of a darker nature than in Woolf's tale. Peter accepts Clarissa is lost to him and both he and Clarissa have their feelings confined to the private realm. Yet in Jazz the romance between Joe and Dorcas that develops into a

dangerous obsession overflows into public space as it reaches its violent climax. Both novels explore the psychology of desire and the significance of the lost mother. The traditional story of the quest and romance is completely distorted as Joe also finds that his mother is finally also unobtainable, as well as the substitute he finds in Dorcas. It is Golden Gray, another character, who succeeds in this quest. He is looking for his father and it is he who also finds Joe's mother. Joe is left devastated by the deceptive City that inspired hope and desire to the degree that it consumes him. His quest(s) fail and in the immediate aftermath of his unimaginable actions the degree of his obsession is made horribly apparent to him: previously he had been oblivious of his psychological degeneration.

Joe's lover Dorcas might seem comparable to Peter's fantasies and objects of desire but finally she, is more comparable to Septimus Warren Smith because the City fails them both: resulting in their deaths and they become self-sacrificing victims. Like Joe, the City affects how Dorcas thinks and behaves. Dorcas is strongly influenced by the music that is played in the City streets. At seventeen, "Dorcas thought of that life-below-the-sash as all the life there was" (Jazz, p.60). The City is a place of desire and enticement for Dorcas. Dorcas submits to the City and her own desires for Joe and Acton. However, the reader is not subject to what it is that actually precipitates the affair between Joe and Dorcas. What he whispers to Dorcas through a "crack in the door" the reader is never actually privy to, although this moment of significance marks the beginning of their fated love affair. The City, operates in a similar way to the city in Mrs. Dalloway as the City will not reveal everything, there is always something missing, like the scene where the old lady and Clarissa acknowledge each other through the window. However, Dorcas, is a subject of the

city. Like Smith, she is unable to negotiate her way in the City. Just as Sir William cannot save Smith, Dorcas, cannot be saved by her Aunt, as “the yoke Alice had knotted around Dorcas neck frayed till it split”(Jazz, p.68). Unlike Smith, the psychological effects of War are not what causes Dorcas’s psyche to split and fragment leading to her death. Rather it is the splitting of Joe’s psyche when his quest for his mother and Dorcas can no longer be separated in his mind.⁵⁹ The dominant City challenges the masculine self to the point where men become de-stabilized when they perceive themselves to have lost control over what happens in their lives. Septimus was unable to control the war and its aftermath and Joe is unable to prevent Dorcas from leaving him. Peter survives, merely because he acquiesces to the dominant City and accepts Clarissa does not belong to him. Septimus, misreads the City, believing he is in control and like him Dorcas also misreads the City which makes her think she can act how she likes without consequence leading to her death. However it is Violet’s psychological breakdown and misreading of the city, which is the most interesting. Like Clarissa, Violet is an independent subject of the city. She is not like Dorcas who is subject to and submits to the traditional male gaze, but like Clarissa independently negotiates her way through the City. Like, the other characters, she mis-reads the City. She, like Joe, is excited about moving to the City. “Like a million more they could hardly wait to get there and love it (the City) back” (Jazz, p.32). However, Violet is like Joe and fails to obliterate her private misery in the space of the exciting city.⁶⁰ Unlike Joe she does not acknowledge her private misery:

⁵⁹ Yeoman clarifies what happens here as “the implicit connection between transcendental/modernist fragmentation/violence, and the site of the involuntary as being reinforced and rendered explicit in Morrison’s Jazz”, Kim Yeoman, ‘Involuntary Vulnerability and the felix culpa in Toni Morrison’s Jazz’, *Southern Literary Journal*, 33 (2001) pp.124-33 (p.126).

⁶⁰ Griffin suggests the reason that Joe and Violet have problems in the city is because, “without the maps provided by Southern Ancestors they are ill-equipped to navigate the Southern landscape”, Farrah, Jasmine Griffin, *Who Set You Flowin’? The African American Migration Narrative*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp.184-99 (p.187)

her need for love. Instead the city slowly and painfully reveals her unhappiness that is caused by a void that should be filled with a child. The fractures within her psyche are revealed by the City itself: when she sits down in the street, she steals a baby from the street and she buys dolls from the shops to sleep with.⁶¹ The cracks in the pavement cause Violet to stumble and sit in the street, the baby's sister gives Violet the opportunity to take the baby by placing her in Violet's arms, too busy chasing her own desires in the form of the City's music to pay attention to her responsibilities and the streets are crammed with shops with windows filled with dolls. The City provokes Violet into revealing these fractures as it presents temptation, opportunity and context. She also buys parrots, one which will only say, "I love you", which can be heard in the streets. Her private pain is publicly revealed by the incidents on the street, enhanced and reinforced by the parrot's cry, and the boundaries between public and private are crossed in a similar way to those in Mrs. Dalloway. Violet, it is revealed, overestimates the ability of the City to fulfil her life. The excitement of the City, the prospects and the beauty of the "nightsky booming over a glittering city," (Jazz, p.35) are not enough to cover the cracks in Violet's psyche. Violet, like Joe, like Peter and Clarissa is left disillusioned with the city and alienated from her husband. The themes of alienation, loss and exclusion in Mrs. Dalloway are repeated in Jazz as Violet, already having lost her child and distanced herself from her husband is excluded from society because of her abnormal behaviour.⁶²

⁶¹ "Violet's urban life in Harlem is characterised by the alienation, isolation and fragmentation she feels in what should have been the promised land", Angelyn Mitchell, 'Sth I know that Woman: History, Gender and the South in Toni Morrison's Jazz', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 31 (2004), pp.49-63 (p.55)

⁶² Indeed the City emphasises this abnormal behaviour and draws the readers and city dwellers attention to Violet. As Paquet- Deyris tells us, "the imagery of crevices is highly disruptive- City and narrative are filled with "sidewalk cracks" which trick readers and characters into "tripping" over the cracks", Anne Marie Paquet-Deyris, 'Toni Morrison's Jazz and the City' *African American Review*, 33 (2001), pp.219-31 (p.226)

In many ways, then, Jazz is similar to Mrs. Dalloway. It recovers many of the themes that appear in the Modernist city novel: of alienation, exclusion, loss and the splitting of the human subject into a fragmented being. Both novels break with traditional form and literary convention; subverting the theme of romance and the role of women.

Clarissa is not a conventional heroine; she is active and escapes the male gaze. Violet is also an active character and is not subject to the male gaze. Although Dorcas is subject to the male gaze this is a choice for her and she is not a traditional romantic heroine because she is accessible for both Joe and Acton. The protagonists, Joe and Peter are not traditional heroes, imposing their notions of romance on different women through a misreading of the city, which leads to the inevitable failure of their quests.

The narrative form also breaks with convention as linearity in both novels is disrupted. In Jazz, the story itself is begun after the death of Dorcas and is disrupted by events that take place before her birth and death. The story does not follow a linear time scale. The narrative also introduces a break with literary convention as in Mrs. Dalloway the use of interior monologue exposes the psychological dimensions of the characters and in Jazz the narrator is not autonomous, despite the allusion to the idea she is a Goddess.⁶³ For example, in Mrs. Dalloway, Peter thinks about his fantasy woman. "Well I've had my fun...creating an exquisite amusement, and something more. But odd it was...all this one could never share- smashed to atoms," (Dalloway, p.53). This intimate glimpse inside Peter's head, which reveals his innermost thoughts and desires, which as he thinks, he cannot share with others, expose the psychology of his character in terms of what he finds attractive and fantasises about. In Jazz, the

⁶³ Various readings of Jazz find evidence that the narrator is Nag Hammadi the Thunder Goddess. For example, in 'Experiencing Jazz' by Eusebio L. Rodrigues, in Toni Morrison: Contemporary Critical Essays, ed. Linden Peach (Houndsmill, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), pp. 154-69 (p.164)

break with literary convention is manifested in part in the Goddess narrator, who reveals her fallibilities in her own interior monologue, "It was loving the City that distracted me and gave me ideas" (*Jazz*, p.220). She admits here, that she was wrong in her predictions, and that the City had deceived her as well as its inhabitants; her psychological susceptibility is revealed. Both novels see this break with literary convention significant to the portrayal of the psychological aspect of their characters. Both novels also see the City as affecting the psychological make-up of characters. As the Goddess in *Jazz* tells us, "it's a condition: the range of what an artful City can do" (*Jazz*, p.118). The City conditions people to live think and behave in a certain way. The group has a psychology as well as the individual. Great interest in psychology developed after the First World War because it enabled people to come to terms with repercussions such as shell shock, which is portrayed in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Similarly, the psychological effects of the loss of an unborn child in *Jazz* are explored as Morrison too, examines psychological breakdown. This interest finds expression in Modernism. In invoking this Modernist element in *Jazz*, Morrison is able to demonstrate the disintegration of her characters psyche and explore the relationship of the City to its people.

However, despite invoking the Modern and exploring the themes found in *Mrs Dalloway* and employing literary techniques to explore both the City and characters; *Jazz* does not see the world with the same view as Virginia Woolf. Morrison does not agree with Woolf's ideas that finally, one is alone in this world. Rather, *Jazz* offers another resolution to its story that does not leave its characters so entirely disillusioned, without hope and alienated from others. While it is demonstrated that Joe and Violet can no longer cover the cracks in their private selves and they are

driven to drastic action with catastrophic consequences the story does not end here. The violent climax to Joe and Violet's story where Joe shoots Dorcas and Violet attempts to cut her dead body does not wreak permanent chaos and destruction on those left. Instead, haunted by the image of Dorcas, both Joe and Violet seek answers. Violet turns to Alice for comfort in a strange turn of events and Joe turns to Violet. They re-build their own relationship and build relationships with Alice and Felice. These bonds are powerful enough to cross differences in age, gender and class. These functional relationships replace their dysfunctional relationships. Both Joe and Violet accept what they cannot have and the City is no longer a place of devastation but a place where they can live out their lives peacefully. Indeed the Traces, have now become enabled by City life.

Jazz moves on from the Modernist implications of living in the City (which suggest alienation) and offers an alternative resolution. This novel does not see the fragmentation of social identity as leading to a sordid wasteland unlike the white Modernists. The novel implies that it is possible to negotiate ones way through the city: that one can adapt if one accepts the idea of community rather than the City itself as providing the solution to private issues. Woolf sees her characters as connected yet able to possess independence, essential to life. The City enables this independence and enables characters in Mrs. Dalloway to become conditioned to City life, separating themselves from others, yet remaining connected through their relationships with the City itself; minds meet through the medium of the City. The City is seen here as a mystical place retaining memories. Morrison has responded to this and rejected it seeing it in part as a self-protective delusion.⁶⁴ On the one hand her

⁶⁴ Craig Werner, 'Morrison and the Music of Tradition' Approaches to the Teaching of the Novels of Toni Morrison, ed. Nellie Kay and Kathryn Earle (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1997) pp. 86-92 (p.89)

narrator embodies the voice of the City yet she does not have the power to anticipate people's minds. Thus, the Modernist vision of life in the city is altered in Jazz through the notion of community.

What can be concluded is that living in the City in both novels is a condition. While both sets of characters are from different classes; both have to negotiate their way in the City. While the characters in Mrs. Dalloway (with the exception of Septimus) bond with the City and align their belief and values within this context, the characters in Jazz discover this negotiation is a complex and challenging process. In Mrs. Dalloway the characters belong to an exclusive social circle, which is pre-occupied with the superficial, such as Jim Hutton's red socks "his black being at the laundry" (Dalloway, p.179). It is largely through their relationship with the geo-physical space of the City their true depth or place in the social hierarchy and degree of social conditioning is revealed. In Jazz, however, the characters do not belong to the ruling classes and, the issues they face, as a class and a race (such as racism and poverty) are magnified by the City. They do not have the support structures that Woolf's characters might access, such as family, friends and social institutions in the City.⁶⁵ The City also amplifies their private pain as they try to negotiate their way. These characters are drawn to the City in the same way as the Modernist characters from Mrs. Dalloway are drawn to the City. It affects their impulses, their desires. However, they are not in the strong position of the ruling classes and their private pain spill into the public realm and they are unable to bond with the City in quite the same way as

⁶⁵ However, Stern suggests that the beauty business to which both Joe and Violet subscribe did offer a social and cultural support network. "Scholars are now suggesting that, overall, the black beauty industry championed 'culturally discrete symbols and practices' and fostered social networks and bonding rituals among black women. Beauty parlours and kitchens where women gathered and door-to-door sales to friends and neighbours 'enhanced the web of mutual support and assistance integral to black womens culture'", Katherine Stern, 'Morrison's Beauty Formula' in The Aesthetics of Toni Morrison: Speaking the Unspeakable, ed Marc Conner (USA: University of Mississippi Press, 2000) pp. 77-92 (p.82). Violet and Joe estrange themselves from this community when Joe has an affair with Dorcas and Violet begins to act strangely.

the white Modernist characters. They need to bond with each other and form a community in order to negotiate their way through the City. In this way Morrison demonstrates the attraction and influence of the Modernist City and realises its pitfalls.

2:2 Narrative Styles within City Walls

While Morrison presents a different vision of life in city using Postmodernist techniques,⁶⁶ her narrative style responds to both the black and white Modernists⁶⁷ of the 1920s.⁶⁸ The narrator in Jazz is the Goddess that tells or retells the story leading up to the moment when Violet desecrates Dorcas corpse, which is when the book begins. “When the woman, her name is Violet, went to the funeral to see the girl and to cut her dead face they threw her to the floor and out of the church” (Jazz, p.3).

The narrator rushes straight into the climax of the story like she cannot wait to tell the reader. She then employs memory and the past in order to reveal and explain the tragic events. The use of memory and re-visiting the past to tell a story is a technique also employed by Woolf, and a comparison of these will demonstrate how Morrison has employed Modernist narrative devices and themes in her novel. The narrative style in Mrs. Dalloway engages with devices of repetition; particularly the repetition of the past in both the memory of the characters and the narrator. The narrative voice

⁶⁶ Postmodernist techniques include the ironic/knowing revisiting of the past, the undermining of narrative and literary convention and extensive referencing to other texts and theory. Page, for example, finds Derridean concepts such as the difference, the trace and the breach are useful in understanding the characters of Jazz, Philip Page, ‘Traces of Derrida in Toni Morrison’s Jazz’, *African American Review*, 29 (1995) pp.55-66. Other critics talk about the signifying “trace” and “tracks” in Jazz. Badt, for example, refers to the ultimate desire which motivates the characters (the mother) and is signified by the “tracks” in Jazz, “the desire to which Jazz and the City speak...the tracks that lead to the mother...the jazz record, the acne on Dorcas’ face, the City streets”, Karin Luisa Badt, ‘The Roots of the Body in Toni Morrison: A Mater of “Ancient Properties”’, *African American Review*, 29 (1995) and also see Carolyn M Jones, ‘Traces and Cracks: Identity and Narrative in Toni Morrison’s Jazz’, *African American Review*, 31 (1997) pp.481-95 and Pereira who talks about “Trace signifying on Jaques Derrida’s concept of the trace left by the absent sign in the process of signification”

⁶⁷ “Recently, scholars, such as Ann Douglas, began to acknowledge the conjoined contribution (rather than separate black/white contributions) of Modernists and acknowledge the vital, cross fertilization that occurred among different artists of different races and mediums,” Roberta Rubenstein, ‘Singing the Blues/Reclaiming Jazz: Toni Morrison and Cultural Mourning’ *Mosaic*, 31 (1998) pp. 147-64 (p.151).

⁶⁸ Indeed Morrison can be specifically linked with Mrs Dalloway. Rubenstein points out that while there are no chapters each new section of the narrative responds to the last in her essay. Roberta Rubenstein, ‘Singing the Blues/Reclaiming Jazz: Toni Morrison and Cultural Mourning’ (p.160). Call and Response is a theme in the novel and one of Morrison’s responses echoes Woolf’s narrative. In the last chapter of Mrs Dalloway, Peter asks “But where is Clarissa” (p.189) and there is a delayed response, then the reader is told, “for there she was” (p.198). In Jazz, the “call” is “But where is she?” (p 184) and the reader is told, “There she is” (p.187). This echo is clearly no accident and it precipitates the response in this thesis to compare Mrs Dalloway and Jazz.

in this novel is linked with the concept of human history. This narrator is autonomous because she knows the past and present and has intimate knowledge of all the characters, for example, Sir Harry.

“But no. Sir Harry could not tell Clarissa Dalloway (much though he liked her...) his stories of the music-hall stage” (Mrs Dalloway, p.178).

The narrator reveals that this is because Sir Harry sees it as inappropriate for someone of Clarissa’s class, yet Clarissa is unaware of this. The narrator is also empowered because of her knowledge of the past and also because she dictates the story’s temporal form. She moves towards a future by re-telling or re-capitulating the past in the present. Her retelling of the story brings the past up to the present to complete a whole past, moving toward a closure, which will unify past, present and future in a perfect temporal whole.

The narrator in Mrs. Dalloway does not simply exist in the form of another character or in the traditional form of the narrator who simply tells the story. Instead as Mrs. Dalloway, herself suggests, “Nothing exists outside us except a state of mind.”⁶⁹

This implies that the narrator is this “state of mind” which is eternally present without their knowing, yet violates them with an invasion of their lives, their privacy, their minds. The narrator often tells the reader the characters thoughts as they wander through the city. For example, Peter’s thoughts are revealed as he walks through the city. “Clarissa refused me he thought” (Dalloway, p.48). The narrator’s presence is sometimes marked by the conventional “he thought” or “she thought” which punctuates the narrative throughout the novel. These conventions also mark the power and control of the narrator who decides what to reveal to the reader. The

⁶⁹ ‘Mrs. Dalloway: Repetition as raising of the dead’ by J. Hillis Miller in Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse: Contemporary Critical Essays ed Su Reid (London: Macmillan, 1993) p.47-51.

characters are powerless in this sense in which of their private thoughts can be revealed. This also gives the narrator power in how they might be portrayed because it is she not they that determines which of their thoughts and actions are to be made public. The narrator herself rarely reveals her own thoughts and on the occasions that she does these are not the thoughts belonging to private, interior monologue but her opinions that she wishes to be made public, in her sermon against “Proportion” and “Conversion”. The narrator, is subject to all knowledge of the characters past and present and therefore in an autonomous position to tell the story in the linguistic and temporal style that she has chosen and gain the trust of the reader as she chooses to reveal the private interior monologue of the characters rather than her own thoughts.

The narrator, who represents a “state of mind” outside of the characters is in a lofty position. It is as if she is looking down upon them in the city and tracks their movements. She uses locations and elements in the city to unify the minds of the characters. She then pervades these private, disparate minds. For example, their private responses to the same things, such as the skywriting aeroplane is a means of connecting their minds. Other connections include the places where the characters walk and significant aspects in the city that all characters recognize such as the chimes of Big Ben, even though they may mean different things. In the case of the clock chimes; Woolf unknowingly anticipates the emotional and ideological meaning of the chimes in the First World War, which become significant for everyone in the city of London. The unifying of the minds by the narrator, however, is not merely contrived by her. It is implicated in the novel that all minds are connected on some level. Lady Bruton feels, “as if one’s friends were attached to one’s body, after lunching with them, by a thin thread” (Dalloway, p.113). This theme of spiritual connection repeats itself throughout the novel in various ways that can be seen in

binary terms such as the fear/ attraction of life and death and falling/rising to nothingness, the rise of society culminating in the party and the fall of the individual expressed in Septimus' suicide. The overall opposing terms of individual and universality, however, are only brought together through the narrator's use of external locations and objects within the city or the idea of spiritual connection which is the one element in the novel the narrator may not have control over. Yet she still retains a great deal of power. Woolf's autonomous narrator, who represents a "state of mind" (which is not theirs), can also reflect the minds of others: however she can only connect each mind through the medium of the city.

The narrator in Jazz operates in a similar manner in terms of how the story is told through recalling the past and through re-memory and directing the temporal form of the novel. Like the narrator in Mrs. Dalloway this one is powerful; she is not a character in the story but Nag Hammadi, Thunder Goddess⁷⁰, she has access to the characters pasts and their minds and she has the freedom to voice her opinions. However, this post-modern narrator is surprisingly different from Woolf's modernist absence of a definite narrator; she is not autonomous, omniscient like a Victorian novelist despite our expectations based on the suggestion she is a Goddess. This is revealed by the first words of the novel, "Sth, I know that woman. Know her husband too" (Jazz, p.3). This introductory speech is written in colloquial language as if the narrator is on familiar terms with the reader. The "sth" implies a gossipy tone and that the narrator is narrating from a street level and is on a par with the working class city dwellers of the 1920s. This is unlike Woolf's reader who appears aloof from her characters.

⁷⁰ It is thought that the quotation from The Nag Hammadi, which is a preface to the novel indicates the narrators identity.

The narrator in Jazz does not remain distanced from the reader and readily gives her opinions on the private lives of the characters. She tells readers:

“Violet is mean enough and good looking enough to think that even without hips or youth she could punish Joe by getting herself a boyfriend and letting him visit in her own house. She thought it would dry his tears up” (Jazz, p.5).

In this way the unconventional goddess intimates herself with the reader. She speaks like a neighbour gossiping in the streets of the city to another. Her manipulation of how the characters are portrayed is more overt than the selection of characters’ thoughts provided by Woolf’s narrator, because she implies certain characteristics such as Violet’s “meanness” through her own opinions in addition to the conventional method of revealing what “she (Violet) thought”.

Both Woolf’s and Morrison’s narrators do not follow conventional narration.

However, Morrison’s narrator introduces a further break with tradition as she demonstrates a lack of autonomy and stability. This narrator struggles to understand the people and the history of a people that belong to the story that she is narrating (Peach, Toni Morrison, p.164). This makes her a fallible figure and her narrative fragmented, as she has to acknowledge her mistakes and change her opinions about her characters. She clumsily interprets the mechanics of the ideology of racism in her reading of the Golden Graham character and is forced to question herself. “How could I have imagined him so poorly?” (Peach, Toni Morrison, p.160). She recognises that Golden Gray is not the selfish, arrogant, racist man who has decided to kill his black father because the colour shames him but someone who is struggling coming to terms with pain of his fathers abandonment, his racial heritage and the conflict within his own ideology. More specifically in terms of individual’s histories, she does not for – see the healing triangle between Joe, Violet and Felicity but anticipates history

repeating itself in a destructive process, leading the reader to believe this.

“Violet invited her in to examine the record and that’s how that scandalizing threesome on Lenox Avenue began. What turned out to be different was who shot whom” (Jazz, p.6).

Of course, by the end of the novel the reader is fully aware that nobody was shot.

What is evident however, is that the narrator is not one that is to be trusted and that she does not have the power to provide an objective, lucid account of the history of a people and she cannot provide an accurate account of the private histories of individuals.

The role of the narrator demonstrates that perhaps this history of a people (that follows an alternative pattern to that in history books) and the private histories of individuals are too complex in their nature to be fully known or understood; that fragments of histories, from various points of view are all we have to make sense of. Just as Woolf has undermined the idea of autonomous characters, Morrison continues this de-stabilizing project as she extends it to what constructs us- history, culture, narrative...acknowledging these Postmodern ideas and seeking to subvert our conventional notions of what these are.

The narrator is thus dis-empowered by her inability to comprehend that which she narrates. The location of power does not lie with the narrator but with the people who make up the City itself. The narrator in Mrs. Dalloway is able to represent a state of mind; in Jazz, it is the City that represents a state of mind, which pervades the minds of City dwellers and they subscribe to this. For example, the City is represented as an ideal as well as a place, an ideal to which the inhabitants subscribe. The narrator tells us, “A city like this makes me dream tall and feel in on things” (Jazz, p.7). The City is a place “better than perfect” for the migrants from the South. The City is also a place

where stars are “made irrelevant by the light of thrilling, wasteful streetlamps” (Jazz, p.34). In this way the City forms a collective consciousness, collecting the individual consciousness of the narrator, characters and anonymous migrants.⁷¹ In forming collective consciousness the City is also able to represent a state of mind as it convinces those living in it to think and act in certain ways that are specifically related to the City. This idealised state of mind represented by the City is one of many which affects the characters.

“Up there in that part of the City...the right tune whistled in a doorway...can change the weather. From freezing to cool” (Jazz, p.51).

Again, the City is idealised here, because no place has the real power to change the weather; however the idea that the City is powerful enough to do this indicates that the City can represent an idealised state of mind which is also an illusion: operating on a subconscious or dream level. This fantasy version of the City suspends our belief in what is actually possible in the City, yet it represents the state of mind found in much of the 1920s literature about Harlem. It sees the City as a sign of hope; a symbol of paradise.

The City operates on two levels, the myth and the actual place. The City as a place also forms a collective consciousness. What happens in the City affects the characters perception of themselves. The drums from the protest parade, for example, affect Alice. “Then suddenly the drums, like a rope cast for rescue, the drums spanned the distance and gathered them all up and connected them” (Jazz, p.51). The drums that protest against racial violence affect how Alice feels. She sees them as a uniting force for African –Americans, yet the drums lead her to think of angry and violent thoughts: disrupting her pacifist personality. The City as a place can have a dangerous

⁷¹ Gurleen Grewal, ‘A Hearing of History: Jazz’ in *Circles of Sorrow/Lines of Struggle*, Gurleen Grewal, (Louisiana: Louisiana State Press, 1998) pp. 119-137 (p.124-5)

effect. The idealist state of mind is dangerous in the sense that it allows people to hope and dream that the impossible is possible, but the City revealed as a space introduces a state of mind beyond disillusionment and disappointment. The City introduces a dangerous state of mind that makes Joe think of himself as a hunter (once again) in the narrow streets tracking down Dorcas and killing her. However, it is Violet who is the most affected because it splits her psyche.

“...She sat in a drugstore...wondering who on earth that other Violet was that walked about the City in her skin; peeped out through her eyes and saw other things. Where she saw a lonesome chair left like an orphan in a park strip facing the river that other Violet saw how the ice skim gave the black railing’s black poles a weaponry glint” (Jazz, p.89).

Violet develops another self, which is nicknamed “Violent” and which she refers to as the other Violet.⁷² Violet’s dualism is parallel to the dualism of the City as her violent self reflects the dangerous, dark state of mind represented by City as a place. Her other self is motivated by the City as an ideal (although she does not reflect this). This drives her ambition as a hairdresser and economic elevation to better living conditions, for example. In “Violent” the state of mind of the City as a place is revealed through her violent interracial conflicts, her stealing of a baby and the cutting of Dorcas’ corpse. This state of mind responds to the 1920s writers portrayal of Harlem as a dualistic sign that represented hell as well as paradise. In *Jazz*, Morrison gives this sign further definition through her narrative structuring of the city. She equates the City as an ideal with Paradise and the City as a place with Hell.

⁷² Domestic violence and crimes of passion were very visible in the newspapers of the 1920s. They were not condemned as “moral transgressors against middle class norms but seen as unstable women who had lost control” and “almost uniformly the sole explanation given for the woman’s resort to violence was the single, psychological motive of jealousy” which (loosely) places Violet among these women after she tries to stab a dead rival. Morrison undoes this stereotype of domestic violence, undermining the conventions of historical records. Stephen Knadler, ‘Domestic Violence in the Harlem Renaissance: Remaking the Record in Nella Larsen’s *Passing* and Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*’, *African American Review*, 38 (2004) pp. 99-119 (p.105).

The narrative structure is more complex in Jazz, than Mrs. Dalloway, because the narrator in Mrs. Dalloway represents both the individual consciousness of the characters and an omniscient state of mind. In Jazz, the narrator is a flawed representative of individual consciousness. The outside state of a far more powerful form invested in the City represents mind. Collective consciousness in Mrs. Dalloway is merely implied through the idea of everyone and everything being connected on a spiritual level. However, the City in Jazz is able to represent a collective consciousness. The element of the spiritual is located in a different area. The connection of Golden Gray (Violet's first love) and Wild (Joe's mother) is no coincidence. "To see the two of them together was a regular jolt: the young man's head of yellow hair... next to her skein of black wool" (Jazz, p.167). The two figures become part of myth, of legend and Joe and Violet can only connect with them on a spiritual level: not in the physical world. Again Jazz refers to the writers in the 1920s as the source of inspiration for its mythological and spiritual themes. Joe sees the love between Joe and Dorcas as paradise, which responds to the idealism of the City. However, Joe does not see paradise from the biblical point of view. He tells Dorcas: "I told you again that you were the reason Adam ate the apple and its core. That when he left Eden, he left a rich man" (Jazz, p.133). Joe sees the Adam and Eve story as one with a happy ending. Adam is not miserable because he is banished from Paradise, but he is blessed because he has Eve and the taste of the first apple.⁷³ He sees that he is blessed because he has Dorcas and the first taste of her, even though they are not in paradise: they are in a rented room where he is committing adultery. Sin in the City is indulged and perceptions of morality distorted just as Joe distorts the original story

⁷³ Many of the authors in the Harlem Renaissance subverted Biblical stories and Morrison is re-writing that tradition here. Claude Brown, for example, makes ironic reference to the book of Exodus and the plagues of Egypt in Manchild of the Promised Land. Further details of this are in, de Jongh, Vicious Modernism, pp. 137-46 (p.138)

here. What is right and what is wrong is not a simple concept. The City influences people with its music. Alice sees this as promoting vice. The City, allows a person to have many choices. The narrator tells us, "I like the way the City makes people think they can do what they want and get away with it" (Jazz, p.138). Joe and Dorcas would like to do what they want and get away with it and Joe's subversion of the biblical story gives him agency, enabling him to do what he wants and realign his beliefs and values accordingly.

In conclusion, the narrative pattern is a complex feature of Jazz. On the one hand it responds to the high Modernist techniques in the form of interior monologue and individual consciousness such as is found in Mrs. Dalloway. However, the narrative in Jazz includes Postmodern techniques such as the paradoxical narrator who is both powerful Goddess and fallible subject of the City. In this narrator traditional forms of storytelling are subverted as the narrator corrects herself on what she has previously told the reader. Traditional stories themselves are subverted in their re-telling and the Postmodern techniques of undermining traditional narrative both in terms of form and the narrative itself is present here: questioning reader's assumptions about storytelling. However, this combination of Postmodern and Modernist techniques contribute to the re-evaluation of the City itself as a vital and powerful presence in narrative. Morrison's re-negotiation of the position of the City itself is by far the most significant. Previous definitions and roles have been reversed as the City as the balance in power has shifted. In the 1920s writings about Harlem, the City has traditionally been subject and defined in terms of a sign which can represent heaven or hell. In Jazz it is the City itself that re-defines its own position. The City holds the power in this novel and as a result it is the City that defines the rest of the world in relation to it. The City defines how people think, act and feel and engages with all



its inhabitants to form a collective consciousness and a dualistic state of mind.

2:3 History in Jazz.

While Jazz invokes the Modern and responds to the white Modernists of the 1920s, the Modernist view offers only one dimension of this novel. Unlike the white Modernist modernists who wrote about the ruling classes living in cities, Morrison has made a conscious choice to write about the lives of working class people. Jazz also responds to the social realism of the novels about Harlem in the 1930s. Jazz is an historical novel that analyses closely the relationship between ideology and the city dweller's response. Morrison deliberately incorporates the historical background to her story, from the Plantation patriarchy, to the Great Migration of the 1870s to the 1900s. The story then picks up on the significant political events between 1900- 1920. Morrison does not speak of the affluence of those living in Harlem which is observed by the writers of the Harlem Renaissance but of the struggle of the working classes to survive which relates far more closely to the fiction written in the 1930s by writers such as Ann Petry. Before looking at Jazz in terms of its realist content and its investment in social realism it is necessary to acknowledge a conflict of interest within Marxism as far as Modernism is concerned. The Marxist argument between George Lukacs and Berthold Brecht is of interest here because Lukacs saw Modernism as unable to represent what is "real" unlike more traditional writers who were able to convey the (Marxist) class conflicts, socio-economic positions and dominant ideology of contemporary times. Brecht, however saw Modernism as offering a new and worthy contribution to Art, which represented the reality of their time.

To elaborate upon this argument between Lukacs and Brecht, in order to establish it within the context of the novel in question, one must view what each has to say about

Modernism. Lukacs, argues for traditional realist writing seeing it as more valuable than what he terms new types of realist. Traditional realists have something to say about contemporary ideology and the socio-economic climate. In Tolstoy's work, for example, Lukacs sees the "revelation of the exploitation of the working classes, which is not so much explicit but implicit, in the rich texture of Tolstoy's text."⁷⁴ Lukacs sees Tolstoy amongst other realists as a champion of social progress. He is an active participant in social life and his relation to society critical to our understanding.

Lukacs sees realist writers as those with the ability to present a complex world underlying the diversity of manifestations present within the narrative in a coherent unified foundation to all human destinies. A specific example of this is Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilyich. In this story the protagonist suffers a terrible death, mentally rather than physically, as the sum of his terrible life and cruel actions is presented before him as the realization that he is treated indifferently as he is told he is to die shortly, just as he treated others indifferently in sentencing them to death occurs.

There is a coherent, unified foundation to his destiny, which is revealed in the end as he is treated in death as he treated other in life together with the implication that the other characters in the story fulfil their destinies as his death avenges those he has wronged. Lukacs, it would appear sees realist writing as writing that teaches a reader about contemporary society, individual characters and their relation to that society.

The structure of these realist texts offers a coherent structure of that society. It follows then that Lukacs is critical of new literary techniques that disrupt the

⁷⁴ George Lukacs, 'Tolstoy and the Development of Realism' in Marxists on Literature: An Anthology, ed. David Craig, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1975), pp.282-309 (p.287). Lukacs sees the real, dramatic and epic movement of social happening in Tolstoy's work and also cites by way of example an extract from Ressurrection by Tolstoy. "He had nothing more to do than to don a beautifully pressed and brushed uniform, which not he but others had made and brushed" (p.288). This is typical of many descriptions in this text, which, according to Lukacs do not so much shed light on the specific qualities of the objects described but stress the social implications which determine the use of such objects (p.289).

traditional means of realist writing. Lukacs sees writers, who employ techniques that tell dis-unified stories, without coherent structures impart with difficulty an understanding of the society.

It is Modernist writers whom Lukacs targets to critique as realist writers. The problem with Modernist writers according to Lukacs is the structure of character, environment and portrayal of culture. He says:

“If the writer merely occupies an observational post in relation to reality, which means he regards bourgeois society critically, ironically and often turns away from it in disgust” (Lukacs, Marxist's on Literature, p.284).

In turn, the Modernist's subjects tend to be shallow and unlinear and isolated characters of purely private interest and their relationships to each other are often shallow in their social motives. Psychological problems are substituted for social problems and separated from their social and historical foundations. One could look at Woolf's narratives from Lukacs perspective. Woolf's character in Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus Smith is portrayed through his psychological problems. In Septimus, Woolf sees the disintegration of personality as matched by the deterioration of the outside world. Consider Eliot's writing, for example, The Wasteland, is an example of the decay of the outside world and it is matched by his characters, such as his housemaids “sprouting despondently at the gates”. Eliot himself sees this phenomenon of portraying human personality as, “shape without form, shade without colour, paralysed force, gesture without motion.”⁷⁵. Perhaps, Lukacs would also object to the cracks in the three main characters in Jazz because they are mirrored by the physical cracks in the City itself: on the pavement and in the poor housing areas. While Morrison uses Postmodern techniques, she draws upon the

⁷⁵ George Lukacs, from ‘The Meaning of Contemporary Realism’/ Bertolt Brecht, from, ‘The Popular and Realistic’, Modernism/Postmodernism, ed. Peter Brooker (London: Longman Group PLC, 1992) pp. 37-45 (p.41).

private psychology of individual characters like the Modernists, rather than refer to a grand, social narrative. However, what Lukacs objects to greatly in terms of characters in Modernist writing are the over-emphasis on individual consciousness. In Woolf's novels, the use of interior monologue dominates over the idea of an outward reality. Gottfried Benn suggests that, "there is no outward reality but human consciousness building and modifying old and new worlds" (Brooker, Modernism/Postmodernism, p.41). However, Lukacs sees that the negation of outward reality as the loss of an integral part of realist writing. He sees the use of techniques such as the stream of consciousness used in Joyce and Faulkner's works as bordering on the absurd particularly when related through characters who have had a series of psychological breakdowns. The thoughts of such characters create an inconsistent view of human nature and man is thus reduced to a fragmented creature, living an experiential existence in an inexplicable world.⁷⁶

Modernist writers have implied that the understanding of reality and the world in which we live is impossible due to its complex and intricate nature. Writers such as Woolf have, opted to portray a psychological understanding of individuals rather than attempt to understand an outer reality by exploring social problems through their characters. Lukacs sees the development of Capitalism as responsible for the change in literature. He sees the inability of authors to participate in Capitalism as their own sort of life as leading to their diminished capability of producing real plots and action. The result of this leads to the portrayal of society and history becoming like a "dead, petrified, reality". Eliot's Gerontius is an example that may support this, because here, history is rejected in its entirety and the society in which Gerontius lives

⁷⁶ However Yeoman argues that Morrison's characters are not reduced to this. "Morrison's novel would not simply draw on a pack of stereotypical stock characters but rather depicts a complex working of the characters' psychological and behavioural patterns", Yeoman, 'Involuntary Vulnerability' p.130

is like a dead world to him; it holds no future. Eliot is disillusioned with his society seeing the advance of Capitalism as detrimental to social morality. However, the writers unable to participate fully in their own society reveal a social reality that is for Lukacs; a dreary desert. Could Morrison's Jazz be viewed in a similar way? Morrison rejects the grand narrative of history in favour an alternative, private history of individuals. Yet, her choice to write about the 1920s rather than contemporary times does not imply that Morrison is not in touch with her own society but that she is participating in her society. Also, unlike, in Gerontius, the world of history is very much alive and active. It seems Lukac's ideas have different implications for Jazz than the Modernist novels; that the argument that it is a non-realist text may not be so easily argued.

The social reality, to which Lukacs refers, is linked to the shift in action towards the urban scene. The increasing division of labour between country and city has produced an emphasis on urban writing. The relationships between man and nature, man and object are replaced by the relationship between man and commodity contributing to the new shallowness found in realist writing. As a result, writers such as Eliot use the hopelessness and desolation of the surface of Capitalism as their medium of presentation. In The Wasteland, for example what Lukacs sees as dead scenery and depthlessness of subject and character are present in his presentation of the city based upon this desolate surface of Capitalism. Modernists do not seek deeper engagement with the subject and portray the very real horror of Capitalist life in the cities. This is not to say that this is no longer possible, as Lukacs refers to The Death of Ivan Ilyich. The Capitalist world that Ivan was so readily part of crumbles before him when he learns he is to die and he now desires humanity and human contact far too late. This is

an example of the connection between the larger socio-historical background and characters with a coherent, unified destiny that Lukacs refers to earlier, and sees as absent in Modernist writing. Again, if Jazz is seen in this context the question of whether Lukacs' notions of a realist text can be applied, are raised again. On the one hand the individual stories to connect to a larger socio-historical background of racial identity, oppression, class, economics and so on. On the other hand, the characters do not have coherent, unified destinies, as the narrator's attempts to predict and draw out coherent, unified destinies based on these predictions fail. According to Lukacs new realists do not present their characters with unified, coherent destinies, yet they also do not refer to the larger socio-historical background. Instead they choose to negate outer reality in favour of engaging with the concept of individual human consciousness. Upon these grounds Lukacs argues that the new realist writers do not represent reality with the degree of understanding that traditional realists do. Upon these grounds it is difficult to determine the position of Jazz in the debate on new realist writing. Given this problematic, the notion of realism and the position of the text must be otherwise considered.

Bertolt Brecht offers an alternative view of realist writing. He sees realist writing as a concept that should not be restricted by formal, literary, aesthetic and conventional criteria. He does not see any mode of writing as being dominant in the production of literature; he does not see that there is a pure or singular form of realism. This might indicate, that unlike Lukacs, who clearly sees traditional realism as the dominant mode of the production of realist works, that it may be difficult to establish the grounds on which realism might actually viewed if there is a lack of criteria.

However, Brecht, himself, defines Realist as: "laying bare society's causal network/ showing up the dominant viewpoint of the dominators/ writing from the viewpoint of

the class that has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting human society/ emphasizing the dynamics of development/concrete and so as to encourage abstraction” (Brooker, Modernism/Postmodernism, p.43). Upon these grounds he looks at Realist writing. Therefore its definition is not one that relates to literary criteria. Modernist authors, as well as traditional realists, can easily produce realist texts under these conditions. Yet, beyond this, Brecht suggests that old methods, traditions, techniques can wear out or fail as reality alters. If reality alters, then to represent it the methods of representation must also alter.

Modernists might represent reality through a psychological portrayal of human consciousness. Woolf’s Septimus Smith represents the reality of the War’s effect on society, not just the newfound emphasis on psychology itself and the pre-disposition to categorise mental illness (which is also implicated in other characters in her novels) but the direct relation of effects of the war to society. The presence of shell-shock, the presence of displaced war victims in society and defining their place or misplace in that society and the very grounds for this presence as a social problem is implied through the connection of the demise of Septimus and the premise of Clarissa’s party rather than merely the psychological portrayal of an individual consciousness. In Jazz the reality of migration and integration into the City might be very well represented by the characters mental cracks as this difficult process applied to a society of African-Americans who migrated from the Southern county to Northern Cities. In Brecht’s view, “the complex nature of the world cannot be adequately recognized by people who do not use every possible aid to understanding.”⁷⁷ In this way, the use of literary techniques such as those used by Woolf can be seen as tools to portray the

⁷⁷ Bertholt Brecht, ‘Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction’ in Marxists on Literature: An Anthology, ed. David Craig, pp. 412-21 (p.417)

contemporary world; while traditional techniques may not have been adequate in the portrayal of the unsolved social problems precipitated by War, which take their root internally within the complex psychological problems within human consciousness, rather than as they appear in the form of a social problem, a displaced people within society.

According to Brecht's notion(s) of reality, this can easily be viewed as Realist writing because Woolf writes from the viewpoint of the dominating class who view persons such as Septimus as part of the existence of mental illness within society and see psychologists and doctors as the solution to this problem, which is a broad solution to this pressing problem. Woolf also writes from Septimus's individual viewpoint as he belongs to the ruling classes and suffers the mental illness which positions the problem where it cannot be ignored; amidst the ruling classes.

Brecht's view, then, demonstrates that he sees new literary techniques as contributing to a greater understanding of society. While Lukacs would argue that the portrayal of individual consciousness is no substitution for coherent characters and outer reality and that the portrayal of history and society suffer as a consequence, Brecht offers further evidence. He draws upon Piscator's experiments in the theatre. "Piscator (and Brecht, himself) experimented in the theatre with the exploding of conventional forms. The chief support for these experiments was found in the most progressive cadres of the working class" (Brooker, Modernism/Postmodernism, p.44). This group welcomed new innovative ideas that aided the representation of truth and the real mechanism of society. They rejected ideas that seemed like machinery working for its own sake, seeing it as outdated. It is important to note here, that their views coincide with the Modernists who also saw ideas working for their own sake as no longer

filling a purpose. They, therefore, consciously chose to inform their readers with new literary techniques that represented the truth about reality. Truth here is significant in the representation of reality to both the working classes referred to and the Modernists. If indeed the idea that society is too complex to fully understand or represent in its entirety then the representation of individual consciousness is a truth more easily and readily grasped and indeed more possible to portray.

The Modernists have also enlightened readers to the idea of fragmented subjects. Portraying people as fully rounded characters is not a truthful representation of reality and the Modernists have concentrated on individual consciousness and the inner voice speaking. As the Postmodernists question narrative convention and truths, they have explored subjects in greater depth. Indeed, Morrison's Jazz could be seen as an example of this. The characters in this novel are fragmented subjects living in a complex society that is indeed more easily portrayed through individual consciousness. Morrison, herself is attempting to reveal truths about the 1920s through her story and thus more accurately portray that society. However, regardless of literary techniques employed, Brecht makes the significant point about realism in that it cannot be judged by form and convention and according to his definitions of realism, as we can see by the example of Woolf, Modernist writers can also be realist writers, even the champions of social progress that Lukacs advocates as realist writers; they simply differ in their approaches and their concept of what constitutes reality as they focus on the inner reality of individuals as opposed to the outer reality of society.

How can Jazz be positioned in terms of this argument? Brecht does not see the method or style of writing as key to realism but the content and what the text succeeds

in portraying as constitutional of the realist text. Jazz portrays the society of the 1920s in terms of history (the Grand Narrative), class, race, economy and ideology. The hierarchy and ideology of both the black elite class and the dominated class is laid bare. The black elite is not so much portrayed through bourgeois values and city culture but made present and critiqued in the novel. Morrison also emphasises political and social development of the African Americans, which Brecht also sees as key to a realist portrayal of a society. However he also suggests that the writing should stem from the viewpoint of the class that provides the broadest solutions to social problems, whereas Morrison chooses to write from the viewpoint of a working class experience (rather than above them). They do not have power as they are the class with the most social problems and most in need of a solution, which as an oppressed society, they seem unable to generate themselves. The solutions that Morrison presents at the end of the novel concern working class individuals integrating into and engaging with Northern City life. Indeed Morrison writes of a divided, dysfunctional class who do not contribute to the dominant ideology.

Lukacs, on the other hand, does not see writing from this viewpoint (the viewpoint of the society that offers the broadest solution to social problems) as crucial to constructing a realist text. Lukacs is interested in the text, which can portray the class conflict: such as the Death of Ivan Ilyich. Ivan serves his purpose in portraying a society at large through the eyes of the individual. Similarly, Jazz portrays what is wrong with society through the private histories of her characters. However in this Postmodernist novel the characters are not autonomous, coherent and rounded like Ivan, but fragmented. They do not follow clear, linear destinies unlike Ivan. The notion that they have clear destinies is an illusion that is easily shattered when the narrator admits that she is wrong about history repeating itself. However the ending of

the novel, like the ending of the Death of Ivan Ilyich is similar in that it is a traditional ending in terms of narrative style, with a sense of closure as the characters all have destinies. Dorcas is fated to die; Joe and Violet find peace, stability and reconciliation to city life. From Lukacs point of view Jazz would certainly not be representative of a traditionally realist text because of its Postmodernist literary techniques. Its fragmented characters and an emphasis on human consciousness and indeed collective consciousness within the City are also outside Lukacs' views. It nevertheless informs the reader of social practices, ideology and working class problems. It seems then, that there is an argument, from both Lukacs and Brecht's point of view to pursue the idea that Jazz is a historical text; containing Marxist elements. The next section proposes to explore the above outlined arguments to see how they operate in this novel.

Morrison is clearly making a point in that unlike the 1920s Modernists such as Woolf, who write about the ruling classes, she chooses to write about the working classes. Authors of social protest material such as Ann Petry also choose to write about the working classes. In choosing to write about these classes Morrison wants to say something about the history of the working classes and engages with the socio-economic realities of the time. These are usually largely absent, from a working, class point of view, in contemporary white and black modernist literature. It follows, then, that a Marxist reading of this novel might produce the elements of the text, through an examination of the portrayal of the working classes, which could equally engage with Lukacs' concept of a realist text.

It is because Jazz is set in the 1920s and not the 1990s, which was when it was written that history plays a key role in a Marxist reading of the novel. Before moving on to

the nature of ideology and the position of the working classes in this novel it is important to establish the historical aims under which Morrison is writing. Unlike Modernists who wrote of their own day and were excited by the New, Morrison must have other reasons to write an historical novel about Harlem. If Morrison chooses to write about a history that has been overshadowed by traditional narrative, it appears that she has something to say about the history of the working classes which is significant from a Marxist viewpoint because it concerns knowledge about the class, culture and ideological issues of the time.⁷⁸ However, engaging with history and ideology within the City is a complex subject as both operate on more than one level. To address the historical and ideological issues Morrison is attempting to engage with it is important to look at how she engages with history in the country. It is important to see what she is attempting to do more clearly and clarify that Jazz is a novel engaging with an alternative historical narrative.

Morrison opts for an alternative narrative, for example when she writes about the Plantation Patriarchy without direct reference to the background of this institution. Morrison tells the story of a mulatto child born into this patriarchy. Unlike most mulatto children in literature, Golden Gray is not a figure of tragedy⁷⁹. He is brought up in a white society and is wealthy. His mother is white and it is her choice to sleep with a black slave. She and a servant, True Belle, the grandmother, bring him up of Violet. When he finds out that he has a black father he seeks to find and kill him,

⁷⁸ clearly states what she sees as Morrison's aims. According to Davies, "Morrison demystifies Master historical narratives, she also wants to raise "real" or authentic African American History in its place", Kimberly Chabot Davies, 'Postmodern Blackness: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and the End of History', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 44 (1998) pp.242-253, (p.244).

⁷⁹ Many mulatto figures in literature are tragic ones such as the story of Tom in Mark Twain's Pudd'n Head Wilson which tells the story of a slave who swapped her own and her master's child with her master and mistresses' son. She does this to avoid having her own son be sold down the river. Twenty years later her crime is discovered and her own son is sold down the river.

echoing the Greek myth of Oedipus. However, he finds his father and does not kill him but instead eventually accepts his racial identity. This story subverts traditional notions of the Plantation Patriarchy. Traditionally it was the men who exploited black female slaves and their mulatto children were brought up as slaves. Morrison subverts conventional ideas of the Plantation Patriarchy as Gray's mother does not conform to the ideas of women born into the Plantation Patriarchy, which see all women as the property of white men.⁸⁰ In giving birth to a mulatto child she introduces the infiltration of slaves into this elite class undermining their status as an elite white group. Literary and mythical convention are also subverted as the story of a mulatto is not a tragic one and the tragedy inherent in the myth are successfully avoided. A pattern is established by this example of the story of Golden Gray as Morrison seeks to write a narrative counter to that of American literary and historical tradition. A counter narrative successfully undermines what the Grand narrative tells; the Plantation Patriarchy, racial stereotypes, female stereotypes and literary stereotypes are all successfully targeted and criticised. As far as Brecht and Lukacs are concerned, only Brecht might see this as a realist text because the characters are not coherent and autonomous, or representative of one class or another, and their ultimate destinies are uncertain.

However, after the novel is relocated to the city, it becomes increasingly complex for two reasons. Firstly, while Morrison continues to write a counter narrative, parallel to this is the implicit presence of the Grand Narrative juxtaposed against the alternative historical narrative. Secondly the story set in the city focuses upon the private histories of individuals in a city, relayed in a Modernist style that blurs the boundaries

⁸⁰ "Within the economic, political and social system of slavery, women were at the nexus of its production. White women of the elite planter class were viewed as the means of consolidation of property through marriages of alliance between plantation families and they gave birth to the inheritors of that property," Greta Grewal, *Circles of Sorrow*, pp. 118-39 (p.130)

between the public and private. This gives the reader a dualistic history of individuals- one that is externalised and public, which the rest of the city sees and one that is an internalised private history. Morrison employs the Grand Narrative to establish the working class position. When Joe and Violet make their journey to the city, the novel speaks of them boarding “the coloured section of the Southern Sky” (Jazz, p.30) signalling the existence of racial segregation laws. The novel explains the racial position. It refers to the great migration: “The wave of people running from want and violence crested in the 1870s; the ‘80s; the ‘90s but was a steady stream in 1906 when Joe and Violet joined it” (Jazz, p.33). The reasons for this migration are also specifically divulged. There are references to the “veterans of the 27th Battalion betrayed by the commander”, those urged by “Mr. Armour, Mr. Swift, Mr. Montgomery Ward” to break strikes only to be dismissed and the “two thousand Galveston Longshoremen” (Jazz, p.33). All these references to the Grand Narrative relays the reasons for the Southerners moving north. They move for socio-economic leverage and to escape the racial persecution and ideology.

The dualistic private histories of individuals relate to this grand narrative. For example, Joe, who has his home burned down in Vienna by white men, is forced to migrate. Having arrived in the city, the presence of the Master Narrative remains in the form of the presence of the injured veterans for example who provide a reminder of the reality of the working class situation for Joe, Violet and the other inhabitants.

This narrative, which is only select parts of the Grand Narrative acts as a background of evidence to support Morrison’s portrayal of the working classes. The 1920s historical and literary narrative portrays Harlem as a place of affluence and

opportunity, yet the reality differs from this in Jazz.⁸¹ On the one hand the working classes such as Joe are inspired by political events in the North such as the president offering Booker T. Washington (a black politician) a sandwich in his home (p31.). Such events indicate an end to racial stereotyping and persecution. However, the presence of the veterans, the protest march (p.58) and the newspapers reporting news, such as the *Amsterdam*, *The Crisis*, *The Messenger* and *The Age* (p. 199) all suggest the presence of oppression which, is other to opportunity and affluence. Indeed Morrison suggests through her characters that these Newspapers do not reveal all information available to them. When it is reported that a white man has been arrested for violently attacking a black man, Dorcas comments that this is a good thing to which her father angrily tells her that it has only been reported because it is news. “She explained to me what he meant: that for the everyday killings cops did of Negroes, nobody was arrested at all” (*Jazz*, p.199). The insertion of a private narrative in the home of Dorcas (which unlike the newspapers is not subject to public scrutiny) implicates that the Newspapers have only told the story because it is controversial and have not disclosed the shocking abuse of power by the police, which is an issue for all African Americans. This fictional insertion here undermines conventional history, implying that documents of evidence such as newspapers, have not told the truth. These aspects of the Grand Narrative, combined with another alternative private narrative (which is complementary to the Grand Narrative) indicate that the struggle for an end to persecution and racist ideology is not won in the North. The idea of a struggle for the working classes is present because the private narrative implies they have to contend with racial prejudice in the North as well as the South.

⁸¹ Harlem was created by Payton’s Afro-American Realty company in 1904. By 1911 it had become the neighbourhood of choice. By 1920 it had become a stylish, attractive, established, black community (De Jongh, Vicious Modernism, p.6).

However racial contention differed in the North because the behaviour, attitudes and ideology of people in the North differed from that in the South. On the one hand Morrison demonstrates the appeal of the city for her characters. "There in a city, they are not so much themselves as their stronger, riskier selves" (Jazz, p.33). The city offered the opportunity to improve oneself and live a more affluent lifestyle is present as Joe and Violet both begin building businesses; Joe sells cosmetics and Violet is a hairdresser. However their lifestyles are far removed from the glamorous lifestyles of the hair-straightening millionaire (A'Leila Walker). Both Joe and Violet work long hours to better themselves. Joe, for example, also works nights as a hotel porter. Socially, there are also changes, as the introduction of the "Nineteenth Constitutional Amendment" in 1920 which gave women the right to vote and was characterised by a moral shift and an accelerated pace of life".⁸² The influence of such Nationalist, political and cultural movements are more prominent in the City. The protest march (p.58) in Fifth Avenue, for example, is a presence that is experience first hand and impossible to ignore because it invades their private lives as it is in the streets amongst them. The Grand Narrative, which is exemplified by this protest march, is impossible to avoid unlike in the South. The ideology, which stems from this narrative also affects and influences their lives. The dual influence of the Grand narrative and private narratives such as the whisperings about racial injustice that takes place in the city shape the way the working classes think and behave. It would seem that the class struggle indicated here by the dual narrative is situated in the conflict.

The ideology behind the grand narrative suggests that the influence of the myth or

⁸² Deborah H Barnes, 'Movin' on Up; The Madness of Migration in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*' in *Casebooks: Toni Morrison*, ed. Linden Peach, pp. 283-95, (p.142)

sign of Harlem led to certain expectations. The leaders of the Harlem Renaissance portrayed it as a place of wonder and opportunity. It has already been established that Joe and Violet had to struggle to elevate themselves economically. However the struggle to survive socially is of greater significance in the novel. The dominant cultural sign of the New Negro is prominent here. The 1920s introduced new political and cultural signs such as the image of black self-hood, the sign of the New Negro. This sign was at the foreground of the Harlem Renaissance and developed by its leader, Alain Locke who wrote The New Negro in 1925. The New Negro was self-assertive, militant and free from the power of whites to define his identity and aspirations. It became the new cultural dominant and the presence of various clubs, for example, the National Negro Business League. Morrison calls upon this sign, which belongs to the Grand Narrative and uses it in an ironic and knowing sense when she relays the private history of Joe. He tells us: "I changed myself once too often. Made myself new, one time too many. You could say I've been a new Negro all my life" (Jazz, p.129). However, Joe is unable to embrace this concept in the way the black elite intended it. He has changed himself seven times: these changes have been directed by white people. For example in 1917 he was attacked by whites and was "brand new for sure because they almost killed me" (Jazz, p.128). The private history of Joe demonstrates that the working classes were unable to interpret the sign of the New Negro in the same way as the Black Elite because of their differing socio-economic circumstances. Yet Joe is able to re-make himself over and over revealing his capacity for resilience. While the idea of self-actualisation was never to materialise for Joe and the other working classes as they still struggled against oppression from white people (which violent racial attacks such as the one on Joe served as a constant reminder). Joe has learned to interpret and use the sign of the

New Negro: enabling his own survival.

While the Harlem Renaissance brought such ideology of affluence, social and political elevation; Joe cannot assert himself in the same way. While the Harlem Renaissance introduced ideas to re-orient the meaning and valuation of race so that black people might assume a new stance of assertion rather than defence; the working classes still needed to defend themselves. Joe tells us about a time when he attempted to assert himself. "Decided to buy me a piece of land. Like a fool I thought they'd let me keep it. They ran us off with two slips of paper I never saw or signed" (Jazz, p.129). The opportunities described by the Harlem literati are far removed from Joe's disappointing experience where his attempt to assert himself leaves him crushed and humiliated. The journey to Harlem signifies the conflict between political ideologies, where Joe is inspired by Booker T. Washington's meeting with the president and the actual political state of play as the Jim Crow laws force Joe and Violet to move carriages five times. In economic terms, Joe and Violet are forced to begin scraping a living in Harlem until they can afford to remove themselves from the "stink of Mulberry Street" and the "flesh eating rats" on West Fifty Third" (Jazz, p.127). This Harlem that they live in does not compare to the myth of Harlem with its dazzling culture, class and famous parties. The private history of Joe and Violet also reveals how "the rents got raised and raised again" and "the stores doubled the price of uptown beef while whitefolks stayed the same" (Jazz, p.128). However despite the idea that the Harlem Joe and Violet come to inhabit does not accord with the mythical Harlem. The ideology is nevertheless absorbed by Joe. He tells us, "the coloured troops of the three six nine made me so proud it split my heart in two. Gistan got me a job at another hotel...I had it made. In 1925 we all had it made" (Jazz, p.129). This is significant because it suggests that the working classes absorbed the Grand Narrative,

which belonged to the black bourgeois, adopting it as their own. This problematises the idea of the class struggle because a paradox occurs where the ideas of self-actualisation influence thought and behaviour, yet offer no solution to the reality of racial oppression.

Of course the private histories of the characters indicate that social practice did not accord with the ideology of the Grand Narrative. Joe recognises the ideology of the New Negro and attempts to adopt and embrace it, yet he cannot identify with this sign because his own history is one of oppression and when he makes himself new it is to survive not because he chooses to. The private histories of Violet and Joe are very telling in the instance of this sign and the other cultural ideology that persuades them to internalise ideas of self-hood and affluence. The structure to these ideas is coherent and the position of blacks is an autonomous one. However, Joe and Violet, are fractured characters. They cannot put this ideology into social practice. Violet for example is an untrained hairdresser, who relies on word of mouth for custom. However her business is also damaged by word of mouth when her private misery becomes subject to the public eye, such as when she cuts Dorcas corpse. Yet before her images of building an affluent lifestyle for herself and Joe are shattered.

“I call them cracks because that’s what they are...Sometimes when Violet isn’t paying any attention she stumbles onto these cracks, like the time when, instead of putting her left foot forward, she stepped back and folded her legs in order to sit in the street” (Jazz, p.23).

Violet’s private cracks manifest themselves in asocial behaviour. Yet her behaviour does not reveal the source of her problems. Violet is actually suffering the loss of her unborn children and cannot have more. She stares at dolls in shop windows, buys one to sleep with and fills her house with birds to cover the loneliness and pave over the cracks. The ideology of affluence and self-hood are of no value to her private life as

her potential affluence is damaged by her social behaviour; her fractured self is unable to achieve autonomy. The struggle of the working classes is not merely invested in the idea of racial oppression but in the struggle to come to terms with already internalised middle class ideology that cannot operate in social practice.

While Violet can engage in the world of work, she and Joe have sacrificed reproduction and family work to economic survival and reproduced similar structures imposed on them by slavery: they are workers and consumers without maternal or paternal roles.

The ideology of the Harlem Renaissance and the sign of the new Negro has little value in character's private lives. However this ideology is also dangerous to the working classes who adopt it as their own. The belief that Harlem is a haven that offered African-Americans the chance to become autonomous and successful is a powerful ideology. The idealism surrounding the idea of migrating to Northern cities such as Harlem was realised by many in the Great Migration. Joe and Violet also internalised such ideas. "He took his bride on a train ride electric enough to pop their eyes and dance on into the city" (Jazz, p.107). The language of idealism here indicates they have dreams and illusions of the city.

However, when they arrive in Harlem it is not what they had come to expect. The liberation from racial oppression and poverty is an illusion made clear by the private narratives relayed. The oarsmen, the veterans, the race riots, the newspaper reports and the Jim Crow Laws are from incidental to the narrative. Yet in addition to the struggle against oppression is the readiness to accept the idealistic ideology, which has no place in the reality of their private lives. While this ideology has a liberating effect there are dangerous consequences, which the novel makes clear through the

migration.

The complexities of migration are explored in this novel. It deals with two types of migration: the voluntary migration, which is part of the Great Migration belonging to the grand narrative and the private histories, which tell of, forced migrations, such as when Joe's home in Vienna is burnt to the ground (Jazz, p.127), True Belle and Vera are forced to move after it is discovered she is carrying a black man's child and Violet has to leave when her mother, Rose throws herself down a well. The disruptive nature of this type of migration severs families and forces people to re-evaluate their beliefs, attitudes. Violet, for example, does not want children after her mother abandons her, thinking that the city, its affluence and Joe will be sufficient in fulfilling her. Joe seems equally disinclined towards the idea of raising children after his mother abandons him. Having changed their attitudes to what is important in life it is not surprising that Joe and Violet adopt the liberating idealistic ideology invested in Harlem. They feel that what they seek or desire can be found in the city. Violet tries to fill her life with dolls and parrots yet, "just as her nipples lost their point, mother-hunger had hit her like a hammer" (Jazz, p.108). Violet cannot confront and accept that she cannot have (any more) children. She is unable to adapt to life in the City. Joe thinks he has found a replacement for his mother in Dorcas and invests everything into their relationship. "I didn't choose to fall in love, I rose in it. I saw you and made up my mind" (Jazz, p.135). However when she leaves him he tracks her down, like his former attempt to track down his mother, and shoots her. The dangerous ideology of idealism that makes Joe think he can change himself into a "new" Negro seven times and makes Violet think she can prosper in the city without children leads to inevitably tragic consequences when the illusion of the black

bourgeois ideology is shattered and with this their inherent beliefs. The attempt to invest in the ideology of the black elite despite being unable to reconcile economic elevation with private happiness demonstrates an inability to accept the reality of their situation. What is also a significant revelation in the alternative narrative is that there is no alternative working class ideology. The working class African –Americans unlike the black bourgeois did not have a coherent, unified, definitive identity and the instability of being subject to so many ideological and socio-economic changes through migration undermined the idea of establishing a working class identity; the black working classes are portrayed as incoherent, unstable, fractured and lacking definition.

Identity for the working classes was already unstable, before Violet and Joe reached the City. They had also already suffered racial oppression. However the question of identity is further complicated in the city because of interracial relations. When Joe and Violet eventually get the money to move “uptown” (p.127) they find their economic elevation is not paralleled by social elevation. Joe and Violet find that in the city the home becomes a location of public contest and contention, rather than a private space. The grand narrative of racial ideology operates here. The idea that black colour represents inferiority is present. Joe and Violet find new racial tensions in the form of friction between blacks and lighter skinned blacks. Joe explains:

“ When we moved from 140th Street to a bigger place on Lenox, it was the lighter skinned renters that tried to keep us out. Me and Violet fought them, just like they was Whites” (Jazz, p.135).

Joe and Violet only become involved in this inter-racial conflict when they have improved their economic status. This implies that the working-class struggle operated on a social level as well as an economic one. Interestingly, Joe and Violet both understand the way in which the lighter skinned tenants think, believing him or

herself to superior because their skin is lighter. To be perceived as white is to be perceived as superior in terms of socio-economics, beauty and race. Violet demonstrates this when she points out to Alice that she thinks Joe was attracted to Dorcas because of her pale skin. Joe and Violet realise that the lighter-skinned tenants want to exile them because their presence will undermine their perceived social status as members of a racially superior class. As Joe points out, they had to fight them “just like they was Whites”. Morrison sees the class struggle as more complex than it is described in the Grand Narrative as a pure racial divide between black and white people. Again it is demonstrated how the gap between ideology and reality causes a breakdown in identity as the lighter skinned blacks struggle to adopt a white identity and a false reality at the expense of establishing their own identity. They also undermine the identity of darker skinned Americans, such as Joe and Violet, who can no longer adopt the view that the African American race is a united one, as they are betrayed by their own society.

It is not only the lighter skinned blacks that are prejudiced against working class people like Joe and Violet. There are those such as Alice who are strongly influenced by strict, Christian bourgeois values. Alice associates the working classes with what is wrong with culture and society, the violence and loose morals. “Alice Manfred knew what kind of Negro that couple was: the kind she trained Dorcas away from. The embarrassing kind” (Jazz, p.179). Alice is referring to Joe and Violet whom she sees as unfit to associate with her niece because they are part of the bad element of society. They do not share the strict morals, values and ethics that Alice lives by. Alice has been brought up differently. “They (her parents) spoke to her firmly but carefully about her body: sitting nasty (legs open); sitting womanish (legs crossed)...switching

when you walked” (Jazz, p.76). Alice resents women like Violet who are free to express themselves, even if it is sexually or with violence, because she, herself, is repressed. Alice’s values belong to the Grand Narrative of Christian bourgeois values but the private narrative of Alice’s story reveals this prejudice within the African American society where African Americans were rejected by their own race not because of their socio-economic status but their differing values and ideology.

The ameliorative change through migration to the city combined with the racial, cultural and socio-economic issues meant that living in Harlem in the 1920s was not so much a city of idealism but a location of contention where there was a continual struggle to survive.⁸³ There was a struggle to survive under such conditions where the racial abuse, interracial discrimination, and poor living conditions undermined the working classes. The ideology and culture that did not fit in with their social practice led to unrest.⁸⁴ The fight between Joe, Violet, exemplifies this unrest and the light skinned renters, which is also the pre-cursor to the death and violation of Dorcas. The problems, which Joe and Violet have to contend with in living in a City which promises paradise yet in reality becomes a place of hell for them lead to their ultimate crimes. They cannot close the gap between social realities and ideology, they have no power to resolve the class conflict in which they are embroiled and they cannot solve the problem of their own identity as their private problems become too much for them to bear. Joe is unable to lose his mother, child and lover and as Dorcas represents all three of them he becomes desperate to track her down and get her back. He finds her

⁸³ Significant changes in geographical venue also affected this class struggle because as Middleton points out these changes led to the encounter of major discrepancies in social reality as relationships with people, cultural convention and political ideology differ greatly from place to place, Barbara Williams Lewis, ‘The Function of jazz in Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*’ in Middleton, 2000, pp.271-81 (p.287)

⁸⁴ The unpredictability of migration and urban life led to lawlessness and violence exemplified by the East St. Louis riots in July, 1917 according to Nancy Peterson, ‘Reconstruction of African –American History’ pp. 200-217, 1993, p.206).

only to shoot her. Violet cannot bear the loss of her children and she knifes Dorcas corpse, making her the scapegoat for this loss. The illusory world they have created for themselves is finally shattered by this violent act in which the instability of their lives is inscribed.

The story of these lives in the City, which can be likened to the social protest material of the 1930s and 40s because a Marxist reading reveals the importance of socio-economic factors and the conflicting ideologies of the time as crucial in terms of offering an explanation as to why Dorcas dies.⁸⁵ However, Morrison also offers a solution in her novel, which is largely absent in the former social protest material. In one sense Morrison's novel is made of the material of social protest as she is revealing through her private narrative, which is carefully contrasted against the grand narrative's social injustices. The private narrative is revealing a truth about the history of the black working classes in the 1920s, which is largely overlooked. Yet Morrison does not call for a form of justice to be done (except in terms of accepting the possibility of an alternative history), unlike the material of social protest, because she is writing about history. Her resolution is far more peaceful. Morrison calls for community in Jazz. Joe and Violet are not punished by a higher authority. Instead they are left to their own devices and to solve their own problems. The novel offers a utopian resolution rather than a tragic conclusion. Violet seeks out Alice and makes amends with her, which is difficult but Violet persists until Alice relents and they talk things over and become friends. Joe is able to forgive himself when Felice seeks him out to tell him that Dorcas "let herself die" by refusing to go to hospital. Joe and

⁸⁵ Comparable material includes not only Petry's The Street where the working class identity was undermined and racial exploitation was in operation but also Hanberry's A Raisin in the Sun which tells the story of a family offered money to move from a home amongst white tenants because they did not want their status undermined by a black family which is parallel to the issues that Joe and Violet have to contend with when they tried to move to Lenox Street.

Violet make peace with one another and they become re-integrated into society through Alice and Felice. The solution is one that is given through the private narrative but the implications for community as part of a grand resolution are indicated as a key step for the progression of the working classes.

In addition to providing the material of social realism Morrison's novel echoes the ideas formed in the material of the 1930s and 40s, those of social protest. In Petry's vision of Harlem no one escapes the experience of socio-economic and racial determinism. Similarly in Jazz, there are no characters that escape this. This novel effectively incorporates the Harlem that Petry engages with. Yet, Jazz, also demonstrates the root of social problems located frequently in the gap between ideology and social practice. There is also a psychological investigation in Jazz that is missing from the former social protest material. This novel examines the psychological effects of living in Harlem, which manifest themselves in private histories. In terms of engaging with Jazz as a realist novel that invokes the social protest material from the 1930s and 40s; this novel contributes further to the notions about Harlem as a hellish place, afflicted by socio-economic depression and racial oppression. The Harlem, Morrison describes, is not entirely a hellish place. While she acknowledges the problems and enlightens us to their root cause, implying the social problems precipitated by the depression era were far more complex than imagined and were already beginning to establish themselves in the 1920s, Morrison does not see the situation as one without hope. Economically, Joe and Violet were able to elevate themselves and they were also able to escape some of the racial violence and oppression they experienced in the South. While Harlem is not presented as a haven, Joe and Violet manage to resolve some of their issues and find a degree of inner peace when they unite with others.

They do not find the paradise promised by the myth, but they do not suffer an eternity of poverty and despair. Morrison re-envisioned the construct of Harlem of the 1930s to present a complex city of conflicting ideologies and ideas that affects its inhabitants psychologically. The city engages with its dwellers on these levels rather than merely as a place that determines racially and socio-economically people. In this way, Morrison offers another dimension to the literary legacy that speaks of an oppressed people, trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and racial abuse.

2:4 Stage, Spectacle and the Construction of the Body.

If Jazz can accommodate the 20s, 30s and 40s in its reading of Harlem, then the 1950s is also significant. The novel that best exemplifies the Harlem of the 1950s is Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. In this novel stage, spectacle, the body and racial and political ideologies are important themes. However, before looking at this novel in comparison to Jazz, it is important to outline another ideology specific to women which appears in Jazz because this ideology relates to the construction of the body. The significance of the ideology of perceived notions of beauty is portrayed in Jazz. The notions of beauty to which all women are subject, regardless of class or race, have been installed within culture since the plantation patriarchy. To be beautiful meant to have fine, straight, light hair, pale skin, blue eyes. The psychological effects of this imposed ideology on black women were devastating because these women could never achieve that ideal or any of the outlined standards of beauty. Morrison has already foregrounded this ideology and its psychological consequences. The Bluest Eye (1970)⁸⁶ concentrates on the story of a little black girl who thought that because she was black she was ugly. She thought that blue eyes would make her beautiful. She becomes obsessed with having blue eyes until she is driven mad by this desire, believing she actually possesses them. In Jazz, the portrayal of female beauty differs in that it is staged and constructed, valued aesthetically and not viewed as an unobtainable desire.

⁸⁶ Duvall actually argues in his essay that Morrison "has read and is recasting Invisible Man" in "The Bluest Eye" and sees Morrison's address to Ellison in Soaphead Church's letter to God", John N Duvall, 'Naming Invisible Authority: Morrison's Covert Letter to Ralph Ellison', *Studies in American Fiction*, 25 (1997) pp. 241-54 (p.248). Given this established link with Morrison it follows that the link between Jazz and Invisible Man is one to explore further.

The psychological effects here are quite different to those in The Bluest Eye. Yet beauty and the ideology of beauty is a significant aspect of the 1920s Harlem culture and important to the understanding of Jazz.

It is useful at this point to draw upon a comparison with another novel, which can also be read in a Marxist context. The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde is mirrored by the photograph(s) of Dorcas. The pictures are significant in both novels. The Picture of Dorian Gray is linked to Jazz through the common trope of a significant portrait that changes. In Jazz the image of Dorcas is dualistic. There is the photograph of the dead girl in the Van Der Zee collection upon which the story in Jazz is based. The traditional story of the girl who was killed by her lover, yet would not name him is a story of sacrifice, which is subverted in Jazz. The story of Dorcas in this novel is one of a shallow, manipulative girl: a girl who had an affair with a married man. However the portrait in the novel itself is a photograph of Dorcas, which resides in the home of Joe and Violet and serves as a constant reminder of their crimes against her. The photograph of Dorcas is perceived differently as Joe and Violet view it. "The face stares down at him without hope or regret and it is the absence of accusation that wakes him from his sleep..." The photograph haunts Joe. However Violet sees something else. "The girl's face looks greedy, haughty and very lazy" (Jazz, p.12).⁸⁷ Violet is haunted by Dorcas in the sense that she is a rival for Joe's affections. The photograph overshadows both their lives and each obsess over Dorcas. Joe cannot forgive himself for killing her and Violet tries to find out all she can about Dorcas so that she can use the information to win back Joe. Both Violet and Joe finds peace

⁸⁷Pereira explains this difference in viewpoint. "Dorcas photograph is a sign of the dead girl which makes its difference (differ and defer): marks the trace of her presence in Joe and Violet's minds as well as her absence in death, which signifies differently depending upon the beholder", Martin Walther Pereira, 'Periodising Toni Morrison's work from "The Bluest Eye" to "Jazz": the importance of Tar Baby' at <http://www.geocities.com/tarbaby2007/bluest4.html>

when they form relationships with Alice and Felice. In turn, the photograph changes to a happy, smiling face for both Joe and Violet.

The portrait in The Picture of Dorian Gray operates in a way that is almost the reverse of this as it bears the scars of his crimes until he dies and bears them himself. As a member of the aristocracy he leads a life of leisure and luxury. His crimes are not excused or explained. Joe and Violet belong to the working classes where such crime is located. Yet for Dorcas; her perceptions of life differ. The lifestyle of Dorian is the lifestyle Dorcas seeks. She wants to lead a lifestyle of luxury and beauty and leisure.

She attempts to lead this lifestyle through a series of theatrical acts. She constructs “Dorcas” as a thing of beauty, performs the role of one who is gazed upon. She says:

“I wanted a personality and with Acton I’m getting one. What pencil thin eyebrows do for my face is a dream... at home I have shoes with leather cut out to look like lace” (Jazz, p.190).

She equates creating herself as a thing of beauty with the acquisition of personality indicating her values lies at surface level. Like Dorian she possesses a kind of beauty that she intends to preserve and ensures she is gazed upon by all of society. The aristocratic lifestyle is one that attracts her, it is the lifestyle idealised by the Harlem Renaissance who wrote of the culture, colour, glamour and parties. In other words it is the myth of Harlem that entices Dorcas, rather than the place where she actually lives. However, paradoxically, Dorcas seeks this lifestyle in the dark jazz clubs, the streets and the music of the 1920s. This lifestyle is located in the areas of the working classes. Like, in The Picture of Dorian Gray, these are dark areas, potentially spaces of violence and vice. The first time Dorcas stages herself and constructs herself as an instrument for men’s gaze it is in a jazz club. To attract the attention of men Dorcas turns to the ideology of female beauty, emphasising her pale face and light hair.

“There was a night in her sixteenth year when Dorcas stood in her body and offered it

to either of the brothers for a dance” (Jazz, p.64). The idea that Dorcas should “stand” in her body means that the whole of Dorcas is invested in her body. This staging of herself, and the emphasis placed on aesthetics means that like Dorian who stages himself in the box at the theatre on repeated occasions, surface and aesthetics for both characters dominate over depth.

Dorcas and Dorian invest everything into their public image then. The staging of the body is the point when it is most vulnerable. For Dorcas, the most significant moment in her life is the initial staging of her body. It even eclipses the death of her parents to which she barely reacts in comparison.⁸⁸ The devastation she experiences when she is rejected reveals this.

“Dorcas has been acknowledged and appraised in the time it takes a needle to find its opening groove. The stomach-jump of possible love is nothing compared to the ice-floes that block up her veins now. The body she inhabits is unworthy. Although it is young and all she has, it is as if it had decayed on the vine at budding time” (Jazz, p.67).

The image of death, which forewarns of her imminent, untimely death also suggests the importance of the image of the body. This is because consciousness in the City is heightened by the presence of others. Dorcas becomes increasingly aware of what she looks like, what others look like and the notion that she must compete with others for attention. The only way to compete for attention is through staging herself. The City emphasises the idea of exclusion. Dorcas has been kept away from the jazz clubs, yet she can still hear the music in the City’s streets and has been drawn to it. Dorcas desires to be included; the only way she can be a part of the myth of Harlem is by being beautiful and vibrant enough to be included. Her hopes of joining the social set

⁸⁸ The rejection of Dorcas by the brothers is physical. They do not even speak to her. This reconfirms the obsession with the body and the emphasis on the superficial. Katharine Boutry, ‘Black and Blue: The Female Body of Blues Hunting in Jean Toomer, Toni Morrison and Garyl Jones’ in Black Orpheus, ed. Saadi A. Simwawe, (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc, 2000) pp. 91-118 (p.103)

of people that represent the myth of Harlem are crushed when the brothers (members of this elite set) reject her. However, Dorcas, decides to invest in her public image with the dream of belonging. Her investment is powerful: the significance of her image is demonstrated through her photograph, which remains on public display in the home of Violet and Joe, long after her real self is gone.

Desperately unhappy because she has invested her all into her body and it has been rejected, Dorcas despairs. However the City provides for her in the form of Joe. It is here that the City directs and stages events; Dorcas and Joe do not wield power or control here. She is in a vulnerable position because the myth of Harlem seems far removed from her. It is significant that Joe meets her in the City, whilst selling cosmetics. His trade is key to her response to him because his cosmetics are a means of access to beauty and the myth of Harlem and so Dorcas begins an affair with Joe. It is not because she desires him but because he desires her and can provide the leisurely and luxurious life-style she desires. Dorcas stages their affair in a series of theatrical events, probably inspired by what she has seen at the cinema.⁸⁹ She does not view their affair in real terms. For example, she has no regard for Violet and does not see the limitations Joe's marriage imposes on their relationship. Dorcas is more interested in the public role that she can play in the City. All she sees is the staging of herself: the image of herself as an object of desire and this role is the role she plays for Joe. He understands that in order to keep her interest that he must also play the role of desirer. He says; "I brought you treats, worrying each time what to bring you

⁸⁹ The Nineteenth Constitutional Amendment in 1920 gave women the right to vote and was characterised by a moral shift and accelerated pace of life. This was enhanced by the jazz music which acted as a catalyst for the sexual liberation of men and women. Social institutions such as jazz clubs and the explosion of the motion picture into the popular status it enjoys today enabled the creation of an exciting, free world which Dorcas is highly influenced by and sees herself as part of this world rather than one in which she is brought up which is characterised by Christian bourgeois ideology 'The 1990s: Jazz (1992) and Paradise (1998)' in Peach, Toni Morrison; Casebooks, (p. 142).

that would make you smile and come again the next time. How many phonographs records? How many silk stockings?" (Jazz, p.134). Joe is aware that Dorcas is shallow. That she responds to superficial objects such as stockings and chocolate rather than engage with him on an emotional level. The gifts are part of the lifestyle of luxury and affluence belonging to the Harlem myth. Again depth and surface come into play, as Dorcas stages their love affair, valuing the idea that she is desired and the gifts that confirm this above Joe's love for her.

Dorcas tires of Joe when she meets Acton because he is younger and more attractive. It is his body and his image that cause her to choose him over Joe. His aesthetic value takes precedence again over Joe's deep feelings for her. Acton represents an access route to the social group, which represent the myth of Harlem for Dorcas. Acton has influence rather than affluence, but he can take Dorcas to parties and dances. He can access parts of the City (which Joe cannot) from which Dorcas was previously excluded. Dorcas once more stages their relationship. She wants to be seen with Acton and constructs a scene in the dance-hall where they can be viewed, admired and envied by society. "She stretches up to encircle his neck. He bends to help her do it. They agree on everything above and below; muscle, tendon, bone joint and marrow co-operate" (Jazz, p.188). Again the emphasis is on the body and the body image presented to society. Dorcas invests herself in the image they present as a couple. This is more important to her than their engagement on an emotional level. "Other women want him- badly- and he has been selective." Dorcas is more concerned about the fact that he is an object of desire than how he treats her- "he has never given her a present or even thought about it" (Jazz, p.188). What Acton represents as an object of desire himself, and as part of the social make-up of the City is what appeals to Dorcas. She

is easily able to move from Joe to Acton. She practises how to break up with Joe in the mirror as she simply views this as another act she is about to stage; unable to comprehend the pain she will cause Joe. When she does leave him she says, "You bring me another bottle of cologne I'll drink it and die you don't leave me alone" (Jazz, p.189). The threat of suicide is purposefully entered into her speech for Joe that she has carefully constructed, for dramatic effect. Dorcas believes she has control of the situation because she has staged these events: the relationship with Acton and the break-up with Joe. However, her staging of events and the positioning of her own bodies and other's has only the power to control at surface level. The City itself is a far more powerful director, with the ability to stage events of greater significance.

This power to control the positioning of the body is one Dorcas readily appropriates. For example, Dorcas happily takes on her new role as the girlfriend of Acton. Dorcas behaves differently with Acton.

"Acton, now, he tells me he doesn't like the way I fix my hair. Then I do it how he likes it. I never wear glasses when he is with me and I changed my laugh for him to one he likes better" (Jazz, p.191).

Dorcas changes herself to suit Acton easily because she operates on a surface level. Acton, implied by his name, also operates on a superficial level, by acting out the role of Dorcas boyfriend and getting her to change herself at surface level. In this way the two of them conform to an image that is part of the social scenery of the City. He, like Dorcas, is not interested in depth. When they are together, both are far more concerned with how they present themselves to others and become part of a social scene. When Dorcas is shot by Joe, for both of them, their primary concern is the bloodstain on his jacket. She worries about incurring his displeasure; he is concerned about the spoiling of the image he has presented. Neither of them acknowledges what has really happened as this is outside the myth of Harlem and they only want to

indulge in the aspect of the City that forms this. Dorcas does not have control over Acton. She also has no control over Joe, who will not allow her to leave him and tracks her down, only to shoot her, an event the reader anticipates, but Dorcas cannot. This event is very public and in part directed by the City; a City that convinces Joe he is a hunter and leads him to Dorcas.

Although the men in Dorcas life are subject to her staging of events and indeed participants, they are secondary figures in this. In terms of stage and spectacle women are the primary focuses. Violet is also a woman who is a spectacle of events. Violet, however differs from Dorcas in that she does not consciously stage these events.

“It never happened again as far as I know- the street sitting- but quiet as it’s kept she did try to steal that baby although there is no way to prove it” (Jazz, p.17).

Violet is a spectacle in the streets of the city in both events. However, she does not consciously stage them. These events are not explained from Violet’s point of view and when Violet reviews the spectacle she has made of herself it is as if she is seeing someone else behave like this- her other personality- Violent. It is as if the City catches Violet in the cracks of its streets and trips her, tricking her into revealing psychological cracks. Dorcas does not fall into the cracks on the streets but is drawn in. She responds to the illusion and spectacle of the image of the Harlem. She consciously stages events: even her final act of death. She becomes a spectacle in the street like Violet, yet unlike Violet, who tries to disassociate herself from stage and spectacle; Dorcas embraces it. When Joe shoots her she does not pay attention to the fact that she has been injured, she is more interested in the spectacle of the event. She says, “I ought to be wide awake because something important is going on” (Jazz, p.92). Dorcas disassociates herself with what is happening to her in order to engage

with the spectacle of the shooting. To Dorcas, what is happening is unreal, as she has been participating in the illusory realm of the image of the City. A return to the City itself, a place of violence, ugliness and fragmentation is unlikely, as Dorcas cannot reconcile the place with the myth of Harlem with its beauty, colour and vibrancy.

Finally, Dorcas stages the ultimate event, which is her own death. She looks in on herself, becoming a spectator to her own finale, her death. "Heads are looking to where I am falling" (Jazz, p.192). It seems misplaced that Dorcas should be so conscious of public appearances. It is also strange that in her consideration of Joe whose name she refuses to reveal, she should think of the consequences of his trade.

"They need me to say his name so that they can go after him. Take away his sample case with Rochelle and Bernadine and Faye inside" (Jazz, p.193).

Again the idea of his trade being foremost in her mind appears to be misplaced.

However, Dorcas's attachment to the world is one that is shallow. Her sense of value is located in objects and her connection to him is also located in these objects. Yet this emphasises Dorcas's inability to assimilate what is really happening and to separate her death from public spectacle. Her concerns for the party and the crowd of people who watch her, her concerns for Joe and his cosmetics all link in with the myth of Harlem, which is where, her sense of self, identity and City are located. She knows that her final act is significant and she chooses a self-sacrificing role, choosing to die without revealing her lovers name. Thus Dorcas has chosen to be the silent heroine and ironically it is this self-sacrifice rather than all her other efforts, which ensures she becomes part of the legacy in the myth of Harlem as her story lives on.

In terms of this ideological representation of women through Dorcas, in taking on the role of a beautified, desired object, the internalising of this ideology leads to the prioritising of surface over depth. This relates to the literature about Harlem of the

1950s, best exemplified by Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. In this novel, and indeed several others of the time, the theme of colour is significant because the colour of a person's skin is an identifying feature. Ellison's character, "invisible man" sees his colour as making him invisible during the day as white people ignore him. He chooses to emphasise this by living underground. However when he wanders the streets at night, he is perceived by white people, as having certain characteristics. For example, he takes on the role as rapist for a white woman who desires him as her lover, yet can only take pleasure from him performing the role of rapist (Wirth-Nester, City Codes, p.98). The colour of his skin is significant to invisible man because it makes him take on roles such as the rapist and perform them. He also stages himself and makes a spectacle of himself in the way Dorcas stages events. The difference between them is that while Dorcas desires to be seen and stage herself in public view, invisible man wants to be seen, not stage himself as an object of desire. The significance of colour differs here: while Dorcas embraces her pale skin and wants to be desired because of it, invisible man struggles with his identity as a black man and the emphasis on surface.

Performing and staging in the streets of the city is significant in both novels. The street scenes in both novels are like forms of street theatre. In Invisible Man there are forms of violent intersection between public and private such as when an old couple are evicted and their clothes thrown out onto the street. This spectacle is highly comparable to the one where Violet and Joe physically defend their right to live on Lenox Street against the lighter-skinned tenants. Other forms of public spectacle are exemplified in City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel which border on the ridiculous or ludicrous, such as when invisible man is pushed on the street at night by

a white man. He angrily defends himself by pushing the man back and discovers the following day that the newspapers have published a report on him as the white man has reported the incident as an attempted mugging.⁹⁰ Violet similarly looks back on the incident where she tries to cut a dead rival, unable to comprehend what she has done. "The usher boys...who carried *that* kicking, growling Violet out while she looked on in amazement" (Jazz, p.92). Violet sees her actions as if they were the actions of someone else, just as invisible man reads the paper that printed the story about him and it is as if it were about someone else because his actions were so misunderstood. The theme of public spectacle grows in both books until it climaxes in the death of a character. Dorcas is shot and stages her own death in Jazz and Todd Clifton is killed symbolically for political reasons, and his death. The street spectacle in the city is significant in both novels. The notion of performance and theatre is as much a part of the city streets in Harlem as it is part of the music clubs and black theatres that are famed for this.

If theatre is not something that merely belongs to the stage but is actively present in the streets of the city through the various roles taken on and played out by characters then the iconography of the streets also takes on a new and significant dimension. The street iconographies in *Invisible Man* are signs of a dark and sinister Harlem. For example, Todd Clifton selling Sambo dolls presents a dualistic, or paradoxical image. The sambo doll represents black men as grinning, idiots and Clifton is perpetuating this image by selling it. *Invisible man*, resents this sign, and smashes a "jolly nigger" moneybox because of how it portrays black men (Wirth-Nester, City Codes, p.99). However, Clifton is making money from this cultural symbol and improving his economic status through its commercial rather than cultural value. He is in a sense

⁹⁰ Hannah Wirth- Nester, City Codes, pp.65-85 (p.68)

exploiting racist ideology. Invisible man shows us the city in this way and introduces a dualistic consciousness. He too commercially exploits the figure of the black man through his act as a street minstrel. However when he paradoxically paints his face black he is threatened with police arrest. His attempt to make a point about black minstrels as an entertainment for white people, is seen as politically dangerous and a threat to white people. Ellison provides a double consciousness here, where the invisible man provides an insight to his own views on how he sees things and also how he, as a black man, is seen.

Dualism also operates in the streets of Harlem in Jazz. Street iconography is equally significant. The dualism stems from the idea of the grand narrative and the alternative narrative that is told in this novel. In the streets there are many signifying human features such as the war veterans, the blues men, jazz musicians and those like Joe and Violet who work in the cosmetic industry. These people represent the working classes who have sought opportunities in Harlem. There is also the street protest march and street riots that signify the political unrest of the 1920s. Unlike in Invisible Man there is no sign of authority or organized political movements indicating the streets here is not reached by the State. However, there is a sinister aspect to the iconography on the streets, such as the silent protest against the violent assaults upon black people. The influence of the cosmetic industry is also part of the darker nature of street iconography. Joe and Violet's lifestyles serve as a strong contrast to the grand narrative that speaks of the success of the cosmetic industry and the riches of those such as A'leila Walker. The role of cosmetics and the ideology behind it is also an important one. While the invisible man paints his face black to make a political point about white entertainment the role of cosmetics differs

in Jazz. Dorcas tells us about Joe. “He let me draw lipstick pictures in places he had to have a mirror to see” (Jazz, p.191). For Dorcas, the use of lipstick is childish here. It betrays the true nature of their affair in that she is too young for him. It is also one of the many images of the cosmetic industry that appear in the novel. It links in with the ideology that persuades women to try to conform to the white ideal of beauty.

The darker nature of this ideology, which can have devastating consequences and leads to the priority of surface over depth, is present throughout the novel. Just as colour and body image play an important role in Invisible Man, in Jazz they equally have a significant part in the story. Invisible Man and Jazz have much in common as far as the way the streets of Harlem are portrayed. Stage, spectacle and body image are significant in each. There are many events staged in Invisible Man, such as the street performances. The events in Jazz are staged for personal gain rather than for political purposes. Public spectacle in both novels is very similar in the acts of street violence. However, in both novels the subjects of public spectacle are rarely in control. The ways in which the body image is presented and the significance of the body in each novel is perhaps where there is the most contrast, in Invisible Man, colour is a strong indicator of how people are perceived. Invisible Man is seen as mugger, rapist, field nigger and gang member in different places and at different times. Dorcas is seen as a “dumpling child”, a “bitch”, a rival, an innocent and a lover in different places. This is often enhanced by her pale colour. Violet is seen as “crazy”, lonely, fragmented, kidnapper, business woman and “Violent” due to her unusual behaviour in the street.

The City then affects how people are seen. There is a struggle to present oneself in the way one wishes to be seen, this struggle is enhanced by the presence of the city. Yet,

Dorcas, is able to present a body image that makes her desirable to men. She invests everything into that appearance, rather than her image as a person, which is the image that is mis-read. Her physical appearance is more important because she has also invested into white bourgeois ideology that operates at surface level. The invisible man on the other hand invests into the meaning of body image in how it reflects the inner self. He tries to locate his self in the city streets, a self that is not dictated by racial ideology, an image that reflects his real self, and not a stereotypical image that operates at surface level. Violet and Joe, however, invest more into the appearance of others as beauty tradespersons. It is because they are more concerned with the appearance of others that they do not notice their own public images slipping to reveal their private selves. Violet does not realise she is exposing “Violent” and that other cracks form to reveal her desire for a child, such as when she shops for a doll or “steals” a baby. Joe is unaware his true nature as a hunter, tracking his mother, becomes increasingly apparent, as he discovers tracks in the City (such as the patterns of bad skin on Dorcas’s face). He does not strive to maintain his image as a friendly cosmetic salesman and he is revealed as a hunter.

In terms of the city of Harlem, both novels see a prevailing motif of the body image within city walls and the significance of what the body and colour represent ideologically, metaphorically and literally. What is different about Jazz in its construction of the body is that it is not only racial ideology, which is inscribed onto the body. Invisible Man, on the other hand, negotiates his way through the city as a symbol of racial ideology. His Harlem is a city that defines how people are seen. The relationship between the city and body image constitutes how people are seen. The Harlem, portrayed here is a city of deception and mis-readings. Race and individuals are misunderstood. The City tricks people into perceiving others as something they

are not. The racial ideology inherent in every individual contributes to this. Meaning in this Harlem is connected to the surface and the eye. What is seen and how it is seen is how meaning is assigned to individuals and objects. For example, how invisible man is seen when he paints his face black signifies an act of political defiance to white people. When he is seen throwing away the broken “jolly nigger” the package is taken to signify a consignment of illegal drugs and he is seen as a gang member. Deception in the city is simplified here; it relies upon race relations and racial stereotypes.

The Harlem in Morrison’s vision is also one of deception. However, the deception extends beyond the reading of objects and people at surface level and the idea of the relationship between signs and signified becoming distorted through misread signifiers. Morrison’s Harlem is certainly one where characters misread the city. However the city is not only misread in terms of race. Other ideological factors contribute to the deceptive element of the city. For Dorcas it is the myth of Harlem itself (what it promises), the ideology of beauty, which relates specifically to women, the mis-readings of other people and the City itself all contribute to her being deceived. Dorcas tells us, shortly before she is shot, “Anything that happens after the party breaks up is nothing...It’s like war...Inspiring. Glamorous...In war or at a party everyone is wily, intriguing; goals are set and altered; alliances rearranged” (Jazz, p.191). For Dorcas, there is nothing outside the party, nothing outside of the myth of the city. War, peace, love and death are all part of this world: Dorcas like the others fight to be part of it. Joe does not see the Dorcas that wants to invest in the Harlem myth, which means nothing to him, he sees Dorcas as a sign of what she is not, believing she loves him until she betrays him. In turn Dorcas misreads Joe

believing she controls their relationship. Jazz, demonstrates that the emphasis on surface in ideological terms precipitates problems in the city and that the relationship between sign and signified is not a direct one, similarly to in Invisible Man. However, what Jazz, also demonstrates is that the myth of Harlem creates and contributes to numerous ideologies and the emphasis on surface over depth (investing in the myth rather than the real Harlem) that perpetuates the idea of the City as a place of deception.

2:4 Language, Music and Metonymy.

Language is an important feature in Jazz. It is not stylistically comparable to the white Modernist's writings in the 1920s. It is also unlike the material of social protest.

However it is more comparable to some of the black modernist writings of the 1920s, such as Claude Brown who write employing a colloquial "street" style of language.

However, this style of language became most popular in the 1960s and 1970s when street poetry with a political agenda became popular. The narrator's language is like

that of an intimate friend confiding in the reader. "I'd say Violet washed and ironed those handkerchiefs because, crazy as she was, raggedy as she became, she couldn't

abide dirty laundry" (Jazz, p.118). Her language is also colloquial as she confides in the reader. This is ironic because the narrator is a deity yet her language and

knowledge of people (or sometimes lack of it) brings her down to street level in the city. This street style of speaking is comparable to the politicised "street" poetry

because it gives the impression that this is a voice that can give an accurate view

about the truth about what is happening in the city streets and the reality of working class life. Despite the narrator's inability to understand the true nature of people, she

is still present in the city and is reliable visually and acoustically. Others in the city also speak as she does, such as Violet herself, her hairdressing clients, Joe and

Malvonne. It is this street language that identifies and unites the characters in a

working class struggle to survive. It is this language that brings the narrator closer to

her characters as opposed the traditional omniscient voice. However, the political

edge to this language is also established through the narrative asides such as when she

tells us, "So many whites killed the newspapers would not print the numbers" (Jazz,

p.57). This indicates that both she and indeed people on the street know about

political events that the authorities hide. This is like the style of the street

poets of the 1970s who speak out about racial politics and its effect on the working classes in reality: rather than attempt to engage with government politics.

This way of communicating, using street language is effective in persuading the reader to see that this alternative, localised narrative is more accurate in terms of the truth than the grand narrative because the narrator uses the reader as a confidant and the source of information is more reliable than documented evidence such as newspapers, which the reader already knows, are subject to editing. However, in addition to this style of narrative is the use of the influence of music in the 1920s culture of Harlem. The narrator speaks of the features of the city and the way in which she speaks about music portrays its influence. “Blues man. Black and Bluesman. Black therefore blue man” (Jazz, p.119).⁹¹ She speaks as if she were caught up in the rhythm of what she sees and hears in terms of musical and cultural symbols. As if she was narrating to a rhythm, beat or song that she hears in the background. The narrator and other characters often stop to acknowledge music which they hear in the background and are not only influenced by what they hear in terms of listening to the music, but it affects the way they think, feel and act. “It faked happiness, faked welcome, but it did not make her feel generous, this juke joint, barrel hooch, tonk house music” (Jazz, p.59). While she is strongly influenced by the uniting qualities of the drums in the street protest march, Alice mistrusts the jazz and blues music she hears, fearing its influence. She continues, “It made her hold her hand in the pocket of her apron to keep from smashing it through the glass pane...” (Jazz, p.59). Her response is uncharacteristically violent. Dorcas, on the other hand is inspired by the music. “Oh the room-the music...This is the place where things pop”(Jazz, p.192).

⁹¹ “Black and Bluesman” is a reference to a famous jazz song. Rubenstein also points out that “peg leg” in *Jazz* is a reference to Peg Leg a famous blues singer in ‘Singing the Blues’ and suggest that this is a “protest against white appropriation of African- American music’ (p149.)

Dorcas enjoys the excitement and liberation of the music from the dance halls. Music influences each character differently. To understand the role of music and locate it within the city the separate styles of the blues and jazz and their connection to each character must be established.

The role of blues music is quite different to that of jazz. Blues music was fading from popular culture to be replaced with jazz music. Blues music became increasingly associated with the South and the country while jazz was associated with the City. Blues singing was usually centred around tragedy such as the loss of a lover and the blues singers were catapulted into popularity only to be replaced as quickly by the fickle crowd. This attitude of the crowd is signified by the attitude of the brothers who quickly appraised and rejected Dorcas at the dance.⁹² It is also represented by Acton, who demonstrates his superficial feelings for Dorcas after she is shot and his concern is with his stained jacket rather than his lover. His role is comparable to that of a blues singer agent who tries to modify his singer in order to please the fans.⁹³ Joe is more comparable to an obsessed fan who adores Dorcas and her pale skin. His obsession grows until he stalks her and kills her. Dorcas herself, takes on a blues role, highly

⁹² However, Baker sees the rejection of Dorcas by the brothers as more relevant to jazz music because he suggests that the jazz music was superficial and its popularity was not to last which is signified by their swift rejection of her, 'Houston A Baker Jnr. from, 'Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance', in Modernism/Postmodernism, ed. Peter Brooker, pp. 107-113.

⁹³ Boutry offers an interesting reading that portrays Dorcas as the quintessential blueswoman. Dorcas like the blues singers possesses the coveted pale skin and seeks to respond to the objectifying gaze of men. The imaginative space that appears to exist in music is an orphic trick as music magnifies human desire giving characters a false sense of agency (p.104). Dorcas and Joe are possessed by this false sense as each seek to control what happens. Like the blues singers Dorcas is surrounded by the sexuality, violence and tragedy that characterises the blues singers career. Like the short lived careers of the blues singers, Dorcas short life is tragically cut short by Joe who shoots her and she is replaced by another female singer who she hears (and significantly knows the words by heart) and another woman- the hostess who takes care of Acton. She ultimately becomes a blues woman when she dies taking on a blues persona, calling herself "Mama"; having lived the last part of her life like a blues song since she began the affair with Joe, Katharine Boutry, 'Black and Blue: The Female Body of Blues Writing in Jean Toomer, Toni Morrison and Garyl Jones' in Black Orpheus, ed. Saadi A. Simawe.

influenced by the music. The last thing she hears before she dies is a woman singing a song. "I don't know who is that woman singing but I know the words by heart" (Jazz, p.193). These are her last words signifying the extent of the influence upon her life. In terms of the blues it influenced her to invest her all into her body and subject herself to the objectifying gaze of men and to take Joe as her lover and engage in a "bluesy" affair.

In turn, Joe engages with the blues music in having an affair with Dorcas. However the world of the blues is clouded by violence and loose morals, which is why Alice does not trust it and how it affects her and the violent thoughts it incites her to have. The affair between Joe and Dorcas is part of this world of the blues, which is exciting and forbidden yet also foregrounds a pattern of violence. This violence is initially situated in Alice's thoughts, but becomes part of all their lives when Joe shoots Dorcas. In turn, it affects Violet who becomes "Violent" when she attempts to cut Dorcas dead body.⁹⁴ Significantly, when Violet steals the baby, it is because the girl looking after the baby has gone to buy "Trombone Blues" (p. 22). The blues music is dangerous for all characters then: because it encourages such actions. The world in which all of the characters live, however, is already violent. The racial violence, which is inflicted upon Violet and Joe, has little to do with the blues. However the music emphasises this violence, makes it part of their world and makes it part of the way in which they live their lives- a blues lifestyle. The blues in the city and in the lives of the characters is situated uneasily because the loose morality and violence that accompany it are accommodated all too readily by the characters and it is not until

⁹⁴ Violet explains her attempt to cut Dorcas by saying she wanted to do "something bluesy." Jan Furman explains this in her essay 'City Blues', by saying that invoking the blues period in *Jazz* meant that mixed signals are sent out. The blues sends out happy and hostile messages and it is interpreted as happy or hostile depending upon what is happening already in the lives of those that are influenced by it, Jan Furman, *Toni Morrison's Fiction*, (USA: University of South Carolina Press, 1999) pp. 118-31.

after tragedy occurs that they are able to wonder and reflect upon the consequences of their actions. Violence is an accepted part of their world when they engage with the blues, like it is in Black Boy or Cool World. This is interesting that it should link with the male authors of the 1960s because they located violence in their novels in a way female writers such as Maya Angelou did not. There is a link between Jazz and the avant-garde art and popular culture of the twentieth century as the world of the social and the world of violence (the anti-social) collides and integrates and both feature in images of the city's music.

Jazz music plays a different role in Jazz. In the city and on the streets the bluesmen featured are like a haunting, displaced presence, disconnected from the rest of the city. They are generally the "old uncles" who sing mournfully, "Where-did-she-go-and-why man. So-lonesome-I-could-die man" (Jazz, p.118). The song is not connected to the vibrancy and culture of the city but fills the air with words that could apply to anyone or no one. However the jazz musicians are far more active in their role as they invent their own music and encourage their listeners to work at making their own destiny.⁹⁵ "In that cool, dark place a clarinet coughs and clears its throat waiting for the woman to decide on the key" (Jazz, p.64). The personification of the clarinet implies a liveliness to the music and an idea that the music has a mind of its own and can go anywhere. It is anticipatory rather than regretful. The place of jazz music in Jazz is fresh and innovative and it appears when there are solutions and inspires the characters to unite. The most striking incident is the one where Felice brings an Okeh record to Violets house. This meeting between Joe, Violet and Felice is significant

⁹⁵ Baker makes the point in Modernism/Postmodernism that the blues music is far more strongly connected with the South than the North, that in the city its influence is less great because its roots are in the South where dispossession and violence are more likely to be found. In the North jazz has a stronger connection because people are building new lives and re-inventing themselves, like the jazz music that is re-invented each time it is played, pp.103-7.

because it marks the moment when Violet and Joe stop grieving. Violet learns to let go of her love for Golden Gray and concentrate upon re-building her marriage and Joe forgives himself for shooting Dorcas when he learns how she let herself die. The jazz music is connected with this incident because it signifies a fresh start where Joe, Violet, Felice and Alice start over and build their lives, making up their own rules and destinies rather than repeat history as the narrator suspects will happen.⁹⁶ Overall the jazz music plays another important role as it is complementary to the style of the narrative, which is inventory⁹⁷, rather than following a linear structure or following the grand narrative closely it has a non-linear structure borrowing from postmodernist styles and follows an alternative narrative. Jazz music, then has a positive influence upon its listeners leading them to make their lives better and to find their own way in the world.⁹⁸

The composition of Jazz can be compared to the composition of texts for female writers such as Morrison. The desire for women to speak was personal rather than aiming to speak for a whole race. They also spoke about problems that related specifically to women. Writers such as Angelou and Kincaid wrote often from personal experience and other writers such as Morrison and Walker followed their desire to speak personally and search for the black female self (Davis, Black Women, p.122-7). The style of jazz music is relevant in its individual composition because it relates to more personal, individual accounts and the idea of a search for identity as

⁹⁶ Ellison defines the jazz impulse as defining and creating the self in relation to community and also that jazz can function as an act of individual assertion, Craig Werner, Approaches to the Teaching of the Novels of Toni Morrison, ed. Nellie Y Mckay and Katryn Earle, pp. 86-92 (p.87)

⁹⁷ Kubitschek sees that the characters must change their roles from static destructive blues roles to dynamic jazz roles, Missy Dehn Kubitschek, Toni Morrison, pp.139-62.

⁹⁸ While Baker warns that jazz music is superficial in Modernism/Postmodernism, the jazz music is connected with positive events in Jazz. It is possible his warning might be linked with the socio-economic position of the working classes, which was overlooked, clouded by the music, culture and colour of the time. The 1930s bought this situation to light and the popularity of jazz music did fade. Jazz does not overlook these problems as it tells the story from a working class point of view- however it also demonstrates the strong, yet positive influence of jazz music on those living in the 1920s.

each composer makes each piece of music his or hers. However, as Brooker, pointed out in his reading of Jazz, the popularity of this music was to fade, as it did not overshadow the growing social problems centred in and around Harlem. Indeed in Jazz, while the music is complementary to the personal narratives of the characters it is not enough to prevent the acts of violence and tragedy that befalls them. It cannot cover the interracial violence, the riots and the psychological damage that affects all the characters.

Morrison employs metonymy in her novel to account for injustice to an entire race. While Morrison does not rage against injustice she quite clearly demonstrates through her alternative narrative the socio-economic problems in Harlem that the grand narrative does not account for and the writers of the Harlem Renaissance appear to overlook. Other writers use metonymy in City novels. In Wright's Black Boy, metonymy is used in his city features. He features dead rats, human debris and aborted fetuses in his underground, a metonymy for a diseased society (Wirth-Nester, City Codes, p.89). Similarly, Morrison engages with the blues to portray a society subject to violent lifestyles. Invoking the blues in this text relates to this violence. For example, when Dorcas is shot she hears a woman singing. Morrison speaks of women in particular, women Alice dreams of, with weapons, such as Violet's knife. "Alice once worked with a Swedish tailor who had a scar from his earlobe to the corner of his mouth. "Negress," he said. "She cut me to the teeth..." (Jazz, p.77). Alice knows there are dangerous, violent women in and around Harlem. She secretly desires to give in to her own violent urges and engage with violence. Metonymy in Jazz is used to portray and locate this violence. The blues represent the complex relationship between the characters and violence.

Jazz music also features as a metonymical device in the novel. Jazz music is used to portray the complex relationships between characters as they seek to form a community and also how the characters operate as individuals against society. Joe, for example, having internalised the ideology of society that suggests he models himself on the New Negro, later rejects this sign in favour of settling down to spend his last years in Harlem. He no longer tries to change again and gives up the search for his mother. There are other devices in this novel, which relate to male protest material. In Invisible Man, the invisibility can be seen as a metonymical device that relates to the ignorance of society. In Jazz, the streets are comprised of broken figures. The figures in the city, such as the blind men, the oarsmen, men with broken limbs and the war veterans can be seen to represent the psychological devastation of migration that is manifested physically in these broken and worn out bodies. This emphasises the cracks that appear in Violet's psyche. There are other psychological effects in the city that relate to race and ideology as well as migration. The opposing figures of Golden Gray and Henry Lestory also appear in terms of metonymy as figures that represent the complex racial attitudes of the time. Race is no longer configured in binary terms because racial hybrid heritage blurs the boundaries between what is black and seen in negative terms and what is white and seen in positive terms.

The Harlem portrayed through music and metonymy is one that relates to the 1960s and 1970s construct of Harlem by male authors of that period. The emphasis on violence is part of this vision of Harlem. The Harlem of the 1960s was seen as a ghetto of socio-economic problems, racial oppression and a place that precipitated violence for its own sake. Morrison invokes the blues to portray the violence of Harlem. However the violence, although born from the sufferings of the working class

in terms of their living conditions is not the violence of gang wars seen in novels like Cool World, but a violence precipitated by the struggle to survive emphasised by the ideology of the blues. Some of the violence in the novel is political, such as the beatings Joe experiences or the murder of Dorcas' father, which stems from the race riots. However, the overall tone of the novel is not an angry one, rather it explores the psychology behind the violence of two unlikely characters, an old couple, in order to explain the nature of violence in Harlem. Jazz, moves beyond the examples of violence to explain the complexity of ideology, migration, socio-economic and political factors and in turn the psychological damage to people to account for Harlem being (in part) a place of violence. Jazz looks at the hellish and heavenly aspects of Harlem in terms of this theme of violence and it implies that violence is not a resolution as both Joe and Violet suffer the consequences of their actions. Violence is part of the hellish aspect of Harlem, and the implications of peace and unity in the resolution of this novel indicates a critique of the idea of Harlem as a violent, ghetto.

In terms of language and music, Morrison also responds to the female writers of the 1960s and 1970s. Women wished to express themselves and create a female self and identity. Morrison captures the style of the street poets in the language employed in Jazz. The sharp, gossipy tone of the narrator and her tendency to adapt her speech to a beat that she hears is highly comparable to the street style of those such as Sonia Sanchez. However the role of jazz music is more comparable to writers such as Maya Angelou and Rosa Guy who independently search for the female self. Jazz reflects these ideas with the presence of jazz in its inventory and innovative form and in the style of the narrative, which re-invents the idea of a violent end to the story, offering a peaceful alternative. The music and style of the narrative incorporate the edgy, raw definition of Harlem and also the ideas of developing a space within Harlem for the

female self. Yet this female self is yet to develop, however its premises are demonstrated in Jazz. The confident, aggressive self that is reflected in the ideas of the street poets is found in the aggressive women (who carry weapons) and indeed “Violent” in an exaggerated form. The ideas of those like Angelou are reflected in the interactions between women such as Alice and Violet who embark on a voyage of self-discovery. It seems as if Jazz is demonstrating the potential hell and paradise for women in Harlem- lives of violence and subjection to men and also ideas of self-actualisation and identity.

2:6 The Harlem Motif in Jazz.

The Harlem in Jazz does not merely confront the image of Harlem as it is portrayed in other literary works and historical documentation. The Harlem presented in this novel is a complex city that invokes literature from the 1920s to the 1990s. It also invokes literary styles from the 1920s to the 1990s as its medium of presentation. Jazz invokes the Harlem motif originating in the 1920s where Harlem was seen as a location of both paradise and hell. Morrison engages with this motif to demonstrate how the myth or image of Harlem represented a place of Heaven. The reality of Harlem, the city itself, contrasted against the myth represents the more hellish aspects. Morrison also invokes the Modernist style used to portray the city, however, interestingly it is the white Modernists she chooses to model her style upon. In employing white Modernist techniques Morrison is able to portray the City as state of mind, a place that integrates reality with fantasy, the myth with the living city to provide the experience of this city. The City plays an active role both as a myth and a real city in shaping the way its inhabitants think, feel and behave. This is not a City that simply operates on dualistic, binary terms but has more to offer. It is not a City that is as easy to read as when it is set in these terms as the narrator and the inhabitants demonstrate in their mis-readings of the city. Harlem can be seen by its inhabitants as a place of opportunity and liberation, yet it can also be constricting because city dwellers become disillusioned when the affluence and liberation is insufficient in fulfilling their lives. In thinking the City is endlessly provident is the main way in which the City is mis-read and it provides the crux between the polarities of Heaven and Hell on which the City operates.

Further to this the hellish City is emphasised in the 1930s and 40s, because of the

depression era, which uncovered previously unacknowledged problems in the City of Harlem. These problems overshadowed the myth of Harlem, which was a symbol of hope. Morrison engages with the material of social protest, to produce a dimension of social realism in her novel, which lays bare the complex racial relations within the city and also identifies the root to the previously identified social problems. She sees that the effects of migration, the psychological as well as socio-economic effects led to a dis-united working classes that had no identity of their own. The struggle to adopt bourgeois ideology, which did not fit in with social practices, left the working classes displaced and struggling to survive, despite political events suggesting racial harmony. Further to the complexity of racial and working class relations, Morrison identifies the deceptive nature of the city in how it identifies its inhabitants. This is connected to the writings of the 1950s which saw Harlem as dangerous, deceptive place. Morrison demonstrates how conflicting ideologies served to confuse how meaning is assigned to individuals and society. The significance of colour and body image is not related purely to racial ideology, but other ideologies and the precedence of surface over depth also come into play. The City operates in conjunction with these ideologies: with depth and surface to figure as a space of deception and danger.

The violence in the City, is also what make it dangerous; again the violence is not purely race related but stems from a number of social problems and ideology. It is not only the ideology of the dominant culture which presents a problem, but the development of subcultures or what might be referred to now as mass or popular culture is also influential. These subcultures of jazz music, cosmetics and the idiom of the blues also have their place in the city. These influences speak to the city dwellers making them believe in the fantasy of these worlds. The blues influences the actions

of the characters which leads to violence, just as political struggles in the 1960s and 70s located violence in the city in writings by male authors. The jazz music in the city also speaks to its characters allowing them to begin the journey of self-discovery and find a place in the city, much like the female voices in the 1960s and 70s. Here the city is a place of both anxiety and unrest due to the violence and influence of the city itself. It is also a place that offers the space for the discovery of the self and ultimately identity.

Morrison's Harlem, then, differs from the image of the Harlem that originated in the 1920s. While her Harlem includes some of the polarities of heaven and hell, they are specifically located in the myth and the actual Harlem. Her Harlem, has long since moved from these polarities and incorporates many of the aspects from the 1930s to the 1970s. Morrison's Harlem is a complex city that speaks to its inhabitants; it represents a state of mind, a collective consciousness and the ability to influence both thought and behaviour. This city is far more powerful than the one described in the 1920s and it interacts with its inhabitants on a far deeper level. However, an interesting question to pose at this point would be to ask what it says about Harlem in the 1990s. Why return to the 1920s to learn about the Harlem of 1990? Perhaps it is because many of the problems and influences originating in the 1920s are present in the 1990s. While, many grew disillusioned with Harlem, seeing it as a ghetto rather than a cultural symbol it may be that Harlem retains some of that significance in the 1990s. While the violence and social problems are inherent in Harlem signified by films of the 1990s such as Boyz in the Hood (1991) where the opportunity to leave the ghetto and make a life and identity for oneself is counteracted by socio-economic problems, the culture of Harlem is still present. There are many forms of music still influencing the city, in particular street music such as rap. The Harlem of the 1990s is

still rich and diverse in culture and colour. Perhaps, Morrison is suggesting that the problems of the 1920s still exist in the 1990s and that a return to the beginning of problems located in the city are to return to when the city first developed. A return to the roots of the working classes in Harlem is a beginning to the solutions of a ghetto area in a crisis of identity. Morrison does not offer all the solutions for the 1990s, but a beginning in the search for self, identity and a united working class in a city that was once full of promise.

The New York Trilogy

The City of New York and its relationship to Literature

New York, like Harlem, is seen in dualistic terms. New York operates upon two fundamental, yet paradoxical poles, the sublime and the atrocious to which writers respond. Herman Melville and Walt Whitman are seen as figureheads representing the atrocious and sublime: because they both took such opposing views of the City.

Melville saw the City horizontally in Bartleby the Schrivener (1853) whereas Whitman looked at the city vertically in "Manhattan" (1860). In Whitman's poem the City is presented as "a tangle of images alive with transcendent presence" as he sees a "city of wonder, of promise, of energy, spirit and light. The vertical growth of the city here is redolent of its promise and ultimate condition."⁹⁹ To quote "Manhattan",

Whitman speaks of:

"Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender strong/light splendidly uprising toward clear skies."¹⁰⁰

It is clear that the iconography of the City fascinates him, from the progress of the Modernist city found in the "growths of iron" to the mythical aspects, such as the view from the bridge. Whitman blends the legend of New York and its future, anticipated in the poem, of the Flat Iron Building (1901), the Brooklyn Bridge (1887) and The Empire State Building (1931). Whitman celebrated and recorded all he saw in the City in Manhattan. He has been criticised for this view, "Emerson said he expected Whitman to make the songs of the nation but he seems content to make the inventories."¹⁰¹ While Emerson is undermining Whitman's poem he nevertheless

⁹⁹'The Sublime and Atrocious Spectacle: New York and the iconography of a Manhattan Island' in The American City, Graham Clarke (New York: New York Press, 1990) pp. 36-62, (p.37)

¹⁰⁰ Clarke, The American City, (p.36)

¹⁰¹ Marcus Cunliffe, The Literature of the United States, (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 143-63 (p.155)

draws attention to the content of the poem which describes a huge number and range of what can be seen in the City. There is so much to see that to include everything it must almost be reduced to a “list”.¹⁰² The “inventories” of Whitman also imply that his view is without criticism, that his vertical view encompasses all that is to be seen, announced and enjoyed.

Herman Melville portrays a different image of New York in Bartleby the Schrivner: it is an atrocious, anti-city, nightmare in comparison to Whitman’s dream. Melville, unlike Whitman, became disillusioned with New York and democracy. His New York is more like the places described in the works of Gissing or Poe.¹⁰³ Bartleby “is a character who neither speaks nor moves: seemingly the apex of urban alienation and meaninglessness. The City is a trap, and Melville’s eye seems paralysed.”(Clarke, 36). New York is a dark, lifeless, claustrophobic space, perhaps like “the grimly blackened city in Bleak House.”¹⁰⁴ The black prison bars and the scratching on the wall in dark corners are part of the iconography of Melville’s story and like Dicken’s novel this is Gothic imagery.¹⁰⁵ The fears of Modernist advancement (business and commerce) destroying the souls of people and places is realised in this tale. Bartleby is stifled by the City, he deteriorates in an office and later a prison environment, until he wastes away to nothing.¹⁰⁶ Just as Whitman anticipates the building and development of New

¹⁰² Stuart Hutchinson also suggests that Whitman produced lists of people, for example in “Songs of Myself”: Clarke notes he lists people from the crowd, “pedlar, bride, opium eater, canal boy, conductor, one-year wife, factory girl,” emphasising individual types in ‘Henry James: The American City and the Structure of Experience’ in The American City, pp, 198-217 (p.207-11).

¹⁰³ Gissing and Poe saw the City as a spectacle of atrocity in their gothic imaginings of it.

¹⁰⁴ Gothic: The New Critical Idiom, Fred Botting (New York and London: Routledge, 1996) pp. 123-138 (p.124)

¹⁰⁵ Where the Gothic had once been located in the dark forests and ruined castles of the country, in the City the dark alleyways were the gloomy forests and subterranean labyrinths. The reality of the City’s horrors related more to the society and social order of the present, rather than fears displaced onto a distant past. Botting, Gothic, (p.123)

¹⁰⁶ Melville was not alone in anticipating the rise of Capitalism and the problems this would bring. Similarly Mark Twain tells a cautionary tale about the development of cities and industry in a dark, predictive image of Modernity where modern technology destroys all life with a mechanical holocaust,

York, Melville anticipates the overcrowding and consequential social problems in his vision of the City.

The former optimism found in Melville's work is crushed by the horizontal view of the City. Like the gothic imaginings of the city found in the works of Dreiser or Crane who see the street as both grotesque and nightmarish, Melville portrays a view of a world where desperate scribes scratch out their existence on black walls.¹⁰⁷

Stephen Crane, who was pre-occupied with the effects of environment on shaping lives, extends this idea of an atrocious world in his works. In A Girl Named Maggie (1882), Crane describes the experience of the City. "Further on in the darkness she met a ragged being, with shifting, blood-shot eyes and grimy hands"(42). This disturbing vision is also found in the photographs by Jacob Risis called "How the Other Half Lives" in an appalling spectacle of poverty, deprivation and the overcrowding of a large population in 1890. Yet, Alfred Steieglitz, also looking at Manhattan sees the wonder that Whitman saw and also marvels. According to Peter Brooker, however, "his vision of New York does not include human subjects. His vision remains suspended from the streets, he sees his subject(s) vertically and actually set the precedent for skyscrapers to be magnified in height leading the eye upwards."¹⁰⁸ Yet even in this limitless, all-encompassing, marvellous space there seems to be no place for Bartleby and Maggie. Brooker argues that the figure of Bartleby, with his world of static lifelessness cannot fit Whitman's (and Steieglitz's) aesthetic because he represents a stifling space which would restrict Whitman's vision

Malcolm Bradbury, The Modern American Novel, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) pp.3-11 (p 5)

¹⁰⁷ This is very much in keeping with the idea of the City Gothic where the material horrors of social depravity and criminal corruption displayed in Gothic representations displayed a disaffection with what was happening in the City (Botting, Gothic, p.127).

¹⁰⁸ Peter Brooker, New York Fictions, (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1996) pp. 27-79 (p.34)

of myth, energy and process (37-9).

The two views of New York, the horizontal and the vertical are irreconcilable.

However, the space between the two enabled the Modernists to insert their own views of New York. In The Great Gatsby, for example, Clarke argues that Fitzgerald is able to see both views. Nicholas Carraway, initially sees, “the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps” (45), a view that is consistent with Whitman’s. He later becomes disillusioned with New York, as for him; it falls from grace and he sees the city “has limits” (69). Dreiser also sees the tragedy of the American Dream and challenges its idealism in An American Tragedy (1925).¹⁰⁹ The dark nature of his material is more concurrent with Melville’s black city, than Whitman’s dream. The implications of what Melville saw in terms of a capitalist nightmare are present in this novel. Marakovsky, like Melville, also saw the atrocious in New York in terms of the underlying forces and divisions in the city, racial oppression, poverty and appalling working conditions for the working classes.¹¹⁰ It seems Melville’s atrocious New York is located in the evils of capitalism, which is often envisioned, even manifested in terms of the Gothic by writers such as Dreiser, Crane and indeed Melville himself. Whitman’s vision of New York portrays a wondrous sight, which detracts from the corrupt part of New York, which Melville illuminates.

The disillusionment with the City was a theme common to Modernists. While many did not choose to imagine the City in a Gothic light, nevertheless their view was often more in accordance with Melville’s. Eliot, for example, spoke of stifling and static space of the city. In “The Wasteland” (1922) and he speaks of “housewives sprouting

¹⁰⁹ Bradbury provides an account of Dreiser’s work in The Modern American Novel, pp.20-47, (pp.20-26)

¹¹⁰ Brooker provides an account of Marakovsky’s work in New York Fictions, p.45-50.

despondently” and “that corpse you planted last year in your garden”. Yet what Eliot laments is a loss of faith in people, seeing the City as lacking in spirit and Christianity. Other Modernists such as Hart Crane celebrated the city in “the Bridge” (1930) and connection people formed with the City, including Whitman, who “is the principal hero of the bridge” yet, “the homeless figure of Poe haunts the poem,” indicating the poem’s intention to celebrate is undermined by other aspects of the City.¹¹¹ Pound also celebrates the City, echoing some of Whitman’s aesthetic in his work.¹¹² Yet some, such as Edith Wharton, found fault with the City, for reasons other than the advancement of technology. The Old New York Community is threatened and marginalized by the City. “In The American Jungle (1925) Waldo says, ‘I saw no scintillating city... What I saw was a conglomerate of buildings, formless with haphazard shapes, a phalanx of skyscrapers formidable from the distances as an old comb lacking half its teeth.’”¹¹³ The Modernists both criticise and praise New York. While the critical Modernists see some different flaws from Melville, their view is nevertheless closer to his horizontal view, simply because Whitman’s view is absent, whereas those that celebrate New York share Whitman’s appreciation of the City and decide Melville’s view has no place in their City.

This ambivalence was affected in the 1930s by the depression era, which precipitated new realist writing. “The *New Masses* sponsored a club for new writers in New York and their slogan was, “Art is a Class Weapon” setting a new precedent for Marxist

¹¹¹ Marcus Cunliffe, The Literature of the United States, pp. 403-31 (p.422)

¹¹² “My City, my beloved, my white! Ah slender/Listen! Listen to me, and I will breathe into thee a soul. Delicately upon the reed, attend me/. His use of the colour white invokes Whitman” in ‘New York from Melville to Mailer’ by Alfred Kazin in Literature and the Urban American Experience, ed. Michael C. Jaye & Ann Chalmers Watts (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1981) pp. 78-97 (p.81).

¹¹³ Bremer explains, “Edith Wharton’s view is that New York is a lost city, with an old deadening community. She sees a declining aristocracy...sees this aristocracy as having a deadening effect on New York and a disjunction between them and a growing upstart plutocracy”, in Urban Intersections: Meetings of Life and Literature in United States Cities, Sidney H Bremer (University of Illinois Press: Chicago, 1992) p.119-22.

material and social concern.”¹¹⁴ There was a strong call for writers from a working class background. Michael Gold’s Jews Without Money (1930) is a ghetto novel “depicting the immigrants arriving from Ellis Island to be plunged immediately into a city of urban chaos and religious inertia. The City is seen as a ‘jungle’ and a ‘prison’ and defeats all attempts to make it a ‘circus of pleasure.’ It is a place of political corruption, street violence and Tammany Hall exploitation which defies all those who dream of America as the land of opportunity.”¹¹⁵ This is a City seen in socio-economic terms. It is a place of conflict and energy: in stark contrast to both Whitman’s serenity and Melville’s static space. Yet another view of New York is offered by Don Passos who simultaneously perceived Whitman and Melville’s vision. “It was marvellous. It was hideous. It had to be described.” According to Brooker, “Dos Passos’s enthusiasm for this city is evident and in contrast with the pessimistic views of the Modernists. Dos Passos writes about the energetic city, the roller coaster ride of capitalism and the ethnic diversity of citizens. Yet alienation is a major theme for Passos, and it is accentuated by gender, class and race ” (51). The 1930s sees New York as a corrupt, contentious place, with a displaced mass of working class people struggling to depose the bourgeois, many of who, are immigrants. It is a place of alienation for the dispossessed minorities and also for the native New Yorkers who have to struggle to maintain their position, culturally, economically and socially in a City that has evolved into a place, not so much of technological advancement but of metropolitan. The New York visualised here is not static or marvellous, but energised with a sense of agency as its inhabitants join in the struggle of the masses to survive. On the one hand there is a disillusioned view of the City with its poverty, alienation

¹¹⁴ Malcolm Bradbury, The Modern American Novel, pp158-196 (p.158)

¹¹⁵ Malcolm Bradbury, The Modern American Novel, pp. 123-158 (p131)

and oppression and also a highly dense population with its heady mix of culture and class that provides a startling contrast against the background of the architectural landmarks.

The late 1930s and 40s embraced the energy, struggle and conflict which shaped New York. Writers, such as Henry Miller, who wrote Tropic of Cancer, attempted new, experimental ways of writing. Such writing inspired those who wrote about New York to look at it in a way that differed from the early 1930s in that it concentrated more upon visual impressions; rather than in Marxist terms. Clarke cites Federico Garca Lorca, who, for example, noted the visual impressions of New York. "In 'Poeta En Nueva York' he sees a filthy New York where dawn brings 'Four pillars of slime/and a storm of black pigeons/that dabble dead water'" (51). Like Miller, Lorca finds a dark energy at work. Here, the dark energy is embodied in the "storm" of pigeons, a reflection of the anxiety Melville portrays at the prospect of the crowd density he foresaw. The City aesthetic began to change, influenced by the growing phenomenon of cinematic film: which produced its own images of a disturbed city. Hitchcock's use of film noir, heavily influenced perceptions of the City, anticipating the figure of the "hard boiled detective" which is most commonly associated with New York. Hitchcock's Shadow of a Doubt (1943) for example, shows in the opening shot, "a camera panning over a scene of urban decay and an enormous iron bridge, a monument of progress and design dominates a cityscape of burnt-out cars, a dilapidated street where children are playing baseball...to the shaded interior of a room where Charles Oakley lies on a bed, smoking a cigar."¹¹⁶ These are all images and City tropes that are recognised today. They form part of the film noir aesthetic in

¹¹⁶ Roland Hughes, 'Shadows and Doubts: Hitchcock, Genre and Villainy' in The Devil Himself: Villainy in Detective Fiction and Film, ed Stacy Gillis and Philippa Gates (London: Greenwood Press, 2002) pp. 107-17, (p.109)

the City. The story that Hitchcock tells is also connected with the progressive attitudes in the city: which the anti-hero, Oakley, cannot accept or control. Unable to prevent the growth of female independence and technological progression, he attempts to murder his niece. This is a deceptive City, Hitchcock portrays, where things are not as they seem and the ugly aspect of human nature is exposed. Novels followed in similar suit, seeing cities in neon lighting, which amplified the violence, disorder and psychic extremity (similarly to Hitchcock's film), novels such as Willard Motley's Knock on Any Door (1947). Such novels explore urban landscapes of horror, the protagonists are often social victims and/ or like, Oakley, violators of society's values. The City's energy here is located in the powerful forces of the masses and the body of the city (the locus of power and energy) and more important than the view of the individual, for example in the form of the flaneur. While a series of images in film and novel provide a complex and exciting visual of the City, Whitman's vision is absent, absorbed by a violent, chaotic body of the City.

The view of New York developed through the focus on the body of the City, as social realist and naturalist novels and cinematic visions progressed. The naturalist progression can be seen in works by Saul Bellows. His novel The Victim (1947) focuses on the mass of the city. His New York, according to Clarke is "filled with a jostling crowd who struggle to survive in a conglomeration of mutual misery and Darwinian style of competition. The city itself is impersonal, cold and mechanical. It has an air of anonymity as it is directed by a faceless government and an administration, both of which have an agenda" (51). The idea of a mysterious government can be linked with the Marxist agenda and social realists of the period. The City is connected to the whole of American society, however through ideas posited and features such as the government introduced in the 1940s literature. David

Riesman acknowledges the paranoia surrounding American power in The Lonely Crowd (1950) and Arthur Miller acknowledges the failure of the American dream in Death of a Salesman (1950). The idea of New York as an alienating presence, the crowds of city dwellers as paranoid and restless and the state of political unease (perhaps precipitated by the Second World War) is present in both social realist and naturalist material. What has changed is the focus on city and body of the city. While earlier material emphasised the design of the city, there is a shift from this to an emphasis on the body of the city coming to represent the whole of American society. The City itself returns to Melville's dead, static existence; energy, movement and agency is located in the masses, which take the foreground while the City building is a malingering and deteriorating presence.

A change in literary style from Modernism to Postmodernism, and from realism to fantastic factuality, developed in the 1960s and 70s, signifying another modification to New York. The New York Trilogy (1988) is representative of the Postmodernist text: challenging ideas about language, genre and identity. Donald Barthelme, returns to the paradox of the atrocious and sublime, moving from the real to the ideal, repeating this in City Life as characters constantly re-construct the city.¹¹⁷ Brooker explains, "His text is liberated by a Postmodernist view of New York which allows the mis-location of self and the opportunity to challenge, subvert and reinforce former ideas" (67). E. L. Doctorov also challenges views of New York in Ragtime (1975) using the concept of rags to represent the fragmented and marginalized in the City.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ In "The Glass Mountain", one of the stories in City Life, tells how the protagonist begins his journey at street level (a horizontal view). At the bottom of the glass mountain he finds mad people and corpses (the real) and so he begins his ascent. At the top he finds a princess (representative of the ideal) and he throws her on the heap of bodies.

¹¹⁸ "The language in the text links the structure of New York's tenement blocks to a structural upheaval of the earth and the people of the city such as the immigrants are linked in with the theme of rags, as

Yet the fantastic factuality novels saw madness as the main contributor to history, culture and society. Saul Bellows Mr Sammler's Planet (1970) looks at the body of New York; which is seen through the one, remaining eye of Mr Sammler. Mr. Sammler sees the City as violent, dilapidated, atrocious and insane. Cunliffe, tells us that for Saul Bellows, "New York signified a frenetic, brutal megapolis" (415). Norman Mailer, who also wrote in the style of fantastic factuality, also saw a profane, frustrated and mad New York. According to Kazin, however the source of this madness is a combination of a duplicitous American freedom that is at once a source of... a power that is intoxicating and a source of overpowering guilt."¹¹⁹ In both styles of writing however, the people of New York, appear to be fragmented, disconnected and the City itself appears to be in a state of flux, often portrayed as deteriorating.

The focus upon language in the pursuit of the Postmodern, added a new dimension to the way the city was perceived. Formerly, the way the eye saw had often dominated the image of New York. However writers such as Auster and Don DeLillo, wrote in what is often termed as "metaphysical" writing to portray the City in another way.

Don De Lillo looks at the language of the City in Americana (1971), where the discourse of workers is emphasised through office jargon and corporate clichés and the City becomes re-structured linguistically. In White Noise (1984) mass replications and technological advancements also redefine and de-humanise the City (it is accessible mostly through the media) and the language of the dead, the "white noise" is what technology may access and unleash on the City. In Auster's The New York Trilogy, it is notion of the original, pure language that was first spoken that is

the 'scraps' of other nations" according to Kenneth Millard in Contemporary American Fiction ed. Malcolm Bradbury (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) (p.115)

¹¹⁹ Alfred Kazin, "New York from Melville to Mailer" in Urban American Experience, p.91

explored and the City's power, rather than technological power, destabilizes identity. The anxiety about self and identity is perhaps manifested in its most extreme form in Brett Easton Ellis's American Psycho (1991) where Patrick Bateman, as suggested by Bilton, "fears he is being turned into an indistinguishable copy like a human print from a Xerox machine."¹²⁰ Bateman reacts violently to this fear and becomes a sadistic killing machine. According to Annesley, it is the language and iconography of consumer culture that is at stake here. This drives Bateman to behave as he does. He points out the constant references Bateman makes to his possessions, such as his swiss watch and BMW. "The value of these items is encoded in the brand name and it is the discourse of consumerism that is emphasised here."¹²¹ The New York here returns to the one Melville sees. Like Bartleby, Bateman is stifled by Wall Street and feels trapped by New York. However, New York is presented in a new way, through discourse. The images of New York are transmuted by language, a language emphasising mass production and replication and New York itself a City re-producing a variety of discourses, images and iconography emphasised by its architecture of which images are continually re-produced.

The iconography of New York is perhaps more strongly associated with Whitman. Yet the development of the City and consumer culture meant that New York invested in signs and images, rather than monuments and these signs and images that poets like Frank O'hara see as representative of New York. In "A Step Away From Them" the images are very visual. "where labourers feed their dirty/glistening torsos sandwiches/and coca-cola with yellow helmets/ on..."¹²² The urban iconography is very recognisable to New Yorkers and the line endings breaking up the familiar

¹²⁰ Alan Bilton, An introduction to Contemporary American Fiction, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002) pp. 17-46, (p.21)

¹²¹ James Annesley, Blank Fictions, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp.84-87, (p.85)

¹²² Frank O' Hara, "A step away from them" in Clarke, The American City, p.58

imagery has a disruptive but playful effect and prevents the well-known iconography to appear banal. However, the focus changes here, as this New York is far more like Whitman's City, as it is celebrated and the iconography featured appears stylistically rather like Whitman's lists, as like Whitman, O'Hara is receptive and responsive to what he sees. Similarly The New York Trilogy responds to the iconography of New York, celebrating the Modernist architecture in places and acknowledging the language of myth that accompanies these marvels. Other writers however reject the language and iconography of New York. In Douglas Coupland's Generation X (1991) the characters find New York's banalities stifling and are concerned about the possibilities of becoming quite like Melville's scrivener. They search for a private place in a City dominated by public space. They want to find somewhere that is not polluted by media, consumerism and corporations. They attempt to live peripherally on the margins of society, situating themselves on the outskirts of a City they have rejected. Ironically New York is quite empty for those that wish to escape it, are driven mad by it and are disillusioned by it, such as Bateman and Coupland's characters yet the same consumer culture, corporation and iconography and so on is what fills, even crams New York and is acknowledged by writers like O'Hara.

The views of New York are changing with the introduction of new ways of seeing the city and writing from different perspectives. New York and other cities are often view in relation to the rest of American society. Jay McInery's Bright Lights, Big City (1984) looks at the breakdown of the family unit. He demonstrates the danger of the iconography and signs of the City and the effect they have on people and relates it to a wider context. The iconography of the City distracts people, modifies their values, their beliefs, their culture, their goals. The effects of advertising and the New York social scenes are highlighted in this novel. Millard explains that, "this is a world of

intense social activity, which ironically accentuates the banality of a life of loneliness, isolation and alienation.”¹²³ Tom Wolfe questions society in a different way in Bonfire of the Vanities (1988) using the geography of the City as configuration points for the different classes in society, for example the upper classes are located on Wall Street. The novel looks at both ends of the spectrum, yet finds conflict, disorder and corruption. While the novel exposes the upper classes for their exploitation of minorities and the working classes and has a different approach to the City, compared to McInery, the world that is portrayed is intensely active, social and fragmented. Auster’s The New York Trilogy is also comparable in that although its focus relates to Western literary theories it is an active city filled with stories, mysteries, quests and multiple identities. These appear to increase the mass of the body of the City. This New York is powerful as body of people and their City as it can act as representative for all America. However individuals in these novels are lost, fragmented and disjointed, dwarfed by the enormity of the City itself. Perhaps these novels recognise the magnitude and marvel of the City, as did Whitman, however they do not simply seek to celebrate but to critique.

The image of New York has since been re-defined from its initial beginning as a spectacle of both the sublime and atrocious. The Modernist city Whitman anticipated and dreamed of became a reality. However the Modernists were concerned with re-defining the city in stylistic terms, and employed Modernist techniques to describe a City that writers (such as Dreiser and Fitzgerald) marvelled at only to grow disillusioned with the City after the development of Capitalism introduced a lack of morality and ethics that made it a place closer to Melville’s vision. The economic

¹²³ Malcolm Bradbury, The Modern American Novel, pp. 261-285, (p.266)

depression of the 1930's enhanced the disillusionment with the city, however writers did not draw upon Melville's static world but saw it as a site for struggle and the ideal ground upon which to set the material of social protest. The idea of the city as a place of energy is continued into the 1940s, yet it is a dark energy, located in the body of the City influenced by images of the Gothic and Film Noir. The body of the city become increasingly paranoid, individuals become alienated and the deterioration of the structure of the City (acting as the body) and the deterioration of human consciousness (the mind) into madness in the late 1940s. Fantastic factuality novels magnified this by relating the madness of the City to the rest of America. However the Postmodernist style of the 1960s brings another view of the city as the city is now "read" (as well as viewed) through a series of signs and discourses. Auster, Doctorov and DeLillo uses a variety of discourses to portray New York. O'Hara, Ellis and Auster also use iconography as signs for people to read in order to negotiate their way through New York. McNery and Wolfe demonstrate that as much as these signs and language of the City can be used to negotiate ones way and that the City can be mapped through socio-economic co-ordinates, for example, the City can also distract and deceive. The former ideas of the 1940s and 50s where power is located in the masses and body of the City and the City is weak and dilapidated is reversed here as the City is powerful enough to disperse and divide the body of the City leaving individuals lost, alienated and fragmented. While the image of New York has changed many times the defining terms of the atrocious and sublime still remain. New York has developed into a City unlike that which Melville and Whitman saw, but it still retains their legacy and that of other contributors throughout the twentieth century, and this legacy must be invoked in order to define or re-define that space.

3:2 Re-working the Detective Genre

The New York Trilogy investigates the role of the detective. The novel draws our attention to the traditional role and narrative of the detective.

“The detective is one who must search through this morass of objects and events in search of the idea, the thought that will pull all these things together and make sense of them.”¹²⁴

This is a traditional assumption of the role of the detective. The trilogy tells us this in the first instalment, City of Glass, which tells us the story of an author who takes on the traditional role of the detective to solve a case. Quinn, the protagonist, who assumes the role of the detective, models himself on detectives like Sherlock Holmes.¹²⁵ To refer back to the quote, the notion of the detective that Quinn invokes appears to be one that restores order where there is chaos after a careful process analysis and deduction, a process more readily associated with the Holmes or Poirot model. These detectives are super- sleuths or alpha detectives, able to solve mysteries and crimes beyond that of ordinary policemen. The reader also performs a role in these stories, which is that of the detective as the reader too tries to figure out the solution to the mystery or crime. The genre is well known and the formula is fixed and not to be deviated from. However, Quinn’s identification with

¹²⁴ Paul Auster, The New York Trilogy (London and New York: Faber & Faber, 1998) p.8. This will be referred to as “N Y Trilogy” in future references to this text.

¹²⁵ Lewis tells us that, “it is to Edgar Allen Poe’s character, Augustus Dupin-the prototype of the old school of detective- that Quinn turns to for advice in “City of Glass.” He copies Dupin’s dictum that there must be “an identification of the reasoner’s intellect with that of his opponent” (The New York Trilogy, p.4)”, Barry Lewis, ‘The Strange Case of Paul Auster’ in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 14 (1994), pp.53-64 (p.56).

Swope adds, “Edgar Allen Poe’s Dupin, a bastion of logic who becomes popularised in the form of Sherlock Holmes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century...”, Richard Swope, ‘Approaching the Threshold(s) in Postmodern Detective Fiction: Hawthorne’s *Wakefield* and Other Missing Persons’ in *Critique*, 39 (1998) pp.207-228 (210).

Saropore sees Quinn as a “hard boiled” (see footnote 37) detective because of his fragmented background and his commitment to his case which is “Sisyphus-like.” Madeleine Saropore, ‘The Detective and the Author: City of Glass’ in The Red Notebook, ed. Dennis Barone, pp. 71-85. This thesis agrees insofar as Quinn is more “cut out” or designed to fulfil the role of the “hardboiled detective” and disagrees in terms of the style and method of detection, which Quinn adopts, as it is more like the old school detective. It can be viewed that he adopted a style not suited to his character or the City in which he lives as New York demands a different style of detection to London, which is discussed later in the thesis.

the traditional detective presents a problem. Quinn is an inexperienced detective, taking on the role in contemporary New York, America, rather than in early twentieth century, bourgeois Britain. The detective's role is determined by certain variables, in particular his location. The space he inhabits is determinant in producing him. The role, Quinn has chosen, thus does not fit with his environment. The New York detective tradition contrasts strongly with the British tradition and it is important to establish this type of detective to understand the role, which fits with the New York environment, before analysing Quinn's attempt to invoke the super-sleuth.¹²⁶

Detectives in New York do not simply follow a formula where they use the clues presented to them to solve a crime. The New York detective does not simply rely on such clues but his knowledge of the city and the streets, which ensure his survival as much as his ability to solve crime. For example, in Richard Price's Clockers (1992) the detective is comfortable and familiar with the streets. However he also has to contend with "racial tensions and social concern", which is not present in the Holmes stories.¹²⁷ The personality of these detectives is not like that of the superior, intellectual like Holmes, but stems from a tradition developed by writers such as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammet who created what is termed as the "hard boiled" detective. These detectives are flawed, fragmented, sometimes corrupt or dealing with a corrupt system, subject to failure in work and in their personal lives

¹²⁶ Herzogenrath differentiates between the British sleuth and the American Tough detective. He speaks of the British detective story, which dwells upon the mystery as a logical puzzle to be solved, the British sleuth representing a logical mind in a positivistic world where the boundaries between good and evil are usually clear. In contrast the "hard boiled" New York detective lives in a fragmented, corrupt world where the dominant principle is utility. In reaction to this Modern world the detective operates on the margins, using his own personal sense of honour to drive his work ethic. Whereas the classical detective simply restores order the "hard boiled" detective does not necessarily demand a solution in his work as immediate problems are often resolved as a symptom; the body of reality remaining infected. 'Looking for clues: The Detective Story' in An Art of Desire: Reading Paul Auster, Bernd Herzogenrath (Amsterdam: Rudopi, 2005), pp. 15-26 (p.22)

¹²⁷ Peter Brooker, New York Fictions, p. 127-155 (p.138)

and working in a complex and deceptive environment. They work in an environment, which is often featured in crime noir novels, which have developed from the figure of the hard boiled detective and his gothic city environment. Writers such as Elmore Leonard and George V. Higgins have produced crime noir, which feature these flawed detectives. Willet points out that these detectives are identified and personified by these flaws, such as “the indulgent, overweight Nero Wolfe. Hammett’s Nick Charles is a whiskey swilling detective, now a common trope in the crime novel and film...Burke is like a mythic, urban comic strip figure like Dick Tracy.”¹²⁸ Willet also notes that sometimes the detective can figure as unreal in the crime noir environment, yet he is also real in the sense that he is flawed...

New York detectives are often involved in cases that are not clearly defined in terms of morality and justice, as social factors frequently provide grey areas. Violent novels, like those by Chester Himes who invented the famous Harlem detectives Coffin Ed and Digger Jones, portray an underworld filled with grey areas. According to Willett, “both detectives frequently breach the regulations in order to establish the law on the streets. Their commitment to their job is born out of rage; a rage which is the product of powerlessness, frustration and prejudice” (62). The job of the New York detective is more vocational than the impersonal Holmes model and driven emotionally. Indeed the New York detective becomes so involved and invests so much of himself into his role that it takes a consuming precedence. For example, in Heat (1995) the detective allows his personal life to disintegrate in his ambition to catch a gang of criminals. This detective, like most of the others, is working alone (a few, like Himes detectives work in pairs) as the New York police cannot be relied upon. The history of

¹²⁸ Willett, Ralph, The Naked City, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) 49-72, 54-5

the New York police also figures here as unlike the history of the British police, the New York police have in infamous legacy of prejudice, abuse of power and brutality. The law does not necessarily serve justice; if the law is corrupt, unlike it is in Holmes stories. In All Shot Up (1960) two detectives steal \$50,000 to restore their own kind of justice: by using it to benefit the disadvantaged children in the community. Willett attributes this gulf between the law and justice to a number of issues in addition to political corruption and social injustice. “In Ed McBain’s Downtown (1989)...intertextuality confuses appearances, names conceal other names and identities of people and numbered streets are displaced by deceptive or meaningless names (51). In this City, the detective is far more fallible and vulnerable than Holmes figures.

In The New York Trilogy, a problem is presented for the detective who identifies with the Holmes model in an attempt to solve a crime in New York. This detective is Quinn, an author who takes on a case after receiving a call late at night in the first part of the trilogy, “City of Glass”. However, the woman making the call, asks for “Paul Auster. Paul Auster of the detective agency” (N Y Trilogy , 9). This immediately breaks with the Holmes tradition where the identity, mission and role of the detective is distinct. This is a mystery, which fits New York, a City where people are not what they seem and their agenda is unclear. There are also two cases to be answered here, that of imminent case which is part of the detective tradition and another case in the form of a literary case questioning the form of detective fiction by positing the author as a potential character. In choosing to respond to the call and take on the role of the detective, Quinn becomes intoxicated by the romantic notion of the detective, which when set against the background of New York, is very attractive. As Cheretier points

out, the setting is “exotic” and the novel would be “far less attractive if it were titled “The Iowa Trilogy”¹²⁹, indicating that the reader too is seduced by the glamour of the New York detective and can identify with Quinn’s need to become Auster and take on the case. Quinn’s background is also fitting that of the New York detective. He is a solitary and fragmented subject; who has lost his family. However, Quinn is also an author, not a hardboiled hero and as such he identifies with the Holmes detective, attempting to apply such principles to the New York case.

How well can the Holmes tradition be adapted to the streets of New York? This is another investigation, examined through Quinn. For Quinn, what appeals is the form of the mystery story. “In the good mystery there is nothing wasted, no sentence, no word that is not significant” (N Y Trilogy, 8). Quinn intends that his real life case should follow the formula of the mystery and he will solve the case through meticulous analysis of the clues presented to him. However, despite his logical assertions he finds negotiating his way to the Stillmans a task he does not control.

“I seem to be going out he said to himself. But if I am going out, where exactly am I going? An hour later, as he climbed from the number 4 bus at 70th Street and Fifth Avenue, he still had not answered the question” (N Y Trilogy, 12).

Unlike the hardboiled New York detective, Quinn is not street smart and does not easily identify with the City, itself. However, he easily assumes the identity of Paul Auster and meets the Stillmans who tell him that Peter Stillmans father (who abused him) has returned and they need Quinn to track Stillman senior. The characters are also typical New York figures as Virginia Stillman is like a femme fatale and Peter Stillman is the mysterious, pale figure lurking in the shadows who suddenly appears behind Quinn. Quinn, accepts the Stillmans at face value and begins to indulge in the

¹²⁹ Mark Cheretier, ‘Paul Auster’s Pseudonymous World’ in *Beyond the Red Notebook*, ed. Dennis Barone (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) pp. 34-43 (p.35)

role of the detective by smoking a cigarette and blowing smoke rings, a feature he sees as belonging to the detective figure. Quinn develops his role by speaking and acting like a professional detective. He tells Virginia, "Your sexual habits or lack of them, don't concern me, Mrs. Stillman... If a fact has no direct bearing on a case, I have no use for it" (N Y Trilogy, 25). Quinn fails to acknowledge that Peter and Virginia have conflicting stories, preferring to adopt the logical, analytical approach where he simply studies the clues directly related to the case. Quinn continues his formulaic style of detection as he tracks down Stillman Senior.

He sees his duties and the case as very clear; he needs to protect Peter from his father, even though signs such as Peter Stillman's inability to communicate properly and his conflicting statements indicate that this is a New York case and subject to ambiguity and grey areas. Quinn does not doubt his own abilities when he arrives at the train station to see Stillman Senior arrive. However, he discovers, "Directly behind Stillman... another man stopped... His face was the exact twin of Stillman's" (N Y Trilogy, 55-6). Quinn, the investigator is now faced with the choice of two people to follow, one of who could be (or not) the real Stillman. How can a detective who has all the necessary tools of the job including significantly a photograph of Stillman, still be thwarted in his attempts to engage with the case? What powers does the detective possess that enable him to make the right choice in who he follows? If he is presented with what seems impossible, the notion of the doppelganger (a mythical gothic double) then his powers of logic, reason and deduction are rendered useless. The mystery seems to be increasing rather than unfolding and Quinn's case is very much undermined.

Quinn chooses to follow the first Stillman. "This shabby creature, so broken down

and disconnected from his surroundings- surely this was the mad Stillman.” (N Y Trilogy, 56). Interestingly Quinn equates Stillman’s socio-economic debilitation with mental deterioration, perhaps in the same way the upper class Holmes might have arrived at the same conclusion. Yet Quinn is still not certain he is following the right suspect as in New York such a conclusion may not apply as it may in Victorian London. This self-doubt breaks with the tradition of the self-assured Holmes detective. Self-doubt is far less unusual for the New York detective who deals with ambiguous cases. The City itself heightens the tension, shrouding Stillman in mystery. Quinn follows Stillman, “as if by design, he kept to a narrowly circumscribed area, bounded on the north by 110th Street, on the south by 72nd street, on the west by Riverside Park, and on the east by Amsterdam Avenue” (N Y Trilogy, 58). The New York detective relies on his knowledge of the City to track criminals and Quinn appears to be using his knowledge. However, he is relying purely on geographical knowledge, a logical rather than a psychological understanding or mapping of the City. This type of knowledge is insufficient in the deceptive New York City, which, along with Stillman defies this methodical approach. “Although Stillman seemed to be in a fog, he nevertheless knew where he was going” (N Y Trilogy, 56), yet to Quinn his wanderings appear apparently aimless in time. Stillman seems protected by the fog and becomes a “Man in the Crowd”¹³⁰ type of figure blending in with the City. Indeed later, Stillman literally blends into the city. “The old man had become part of the city. He was a speck, a punctuation mark, a brick in an endless wall of bricks” (N Y Trilogy, 96). Quinn’s geographical, logical knowledge of the City is insufficient, then; to track a criminal in New York. The City has illusory devices such as the fog that shrouds Stillman and these devices enable Stillman to hide or disappear into the

¹³⁰ Stillman becomes like Poe’s “The Man of the Crowd”, a man who simply was a figure that kept within a crowd and his follower eventually realised that this was all his purpose amounted to.

very structure of the City.

Quinn does not fathom that his skills of logic and reason are not matched to his environment. He enhances his application of these skills and buys a red notebook to help him to solve the mystery of Stillman. He applies his reading skills to Stillman's wanderings and discovers that Stillman is spelling out "The Tower of Babel", literally inscribing these words on the City itself. The Tower is significant to Stillman because he wrote a book theorising the notion of a pure or natural language relating to the Tower. "The pure language, Stillman believes will save us from the linguistic exile is one lost since the collapse of the Tower of Babel."¹³¹ This clue, however, subverts the notion of apprehensible, logical clues. Unlike Sherlock's logical clues, which are linear in nature, have one true interpretation and lead somewhere this is a clue, if indeed it is a clue, which does not necessarily lead towards a resolution of the case. However, this is the type of clue that the New York detective experiences, where even the clues are not as they seem in a deceptive City. Indeed Quinn has established that Stillman is sending him a message, which may mean that Stillman is mad or that Stillman is letting Quinn know that he is aware of his presence or there is also a possibility that Quinn is vulnerable to the illusions created by the City, and is thus deceived into establishing a pattern that isn't there. Unlike Holmes, there is a possibility that Quinn is delusional. Bilton tells us, "The way a detective determines meaning is like a pathological obsession in making patterns and exposing meaning. However the question posed here is: are such patterns projected or real? The novel suggests that the detective may not discover a hidden meaning but arbitrarily impose one" (55). The Holmesian method is subject to fallibility in New York, as

¹³¹ Alan Bilton, *An Introduction to Contemporary American Fiction*, pp.51-91 (p.66)

Quinn may be imposing a pattern or following a pattern that will distract him from the real clues presented to him to solve the case.

Quinn decides to play the part of deceiver and re-gain the upper hand. He poses as Peter Stillman in order to trick Stillman into revealing his intentions. However, he is unable to interpret the riddles in which Stillman speaks. Stillman does warn him, "For example, I am currently in New York. Tomorrow I could be somewhere else... Here today, gone tomorrow" (N Y Trilogy, 84). It is Stillman who tricks him because he disappears. "Quinn could walk through the streets every day for the rest of his life and still he would not find him. Everything had been reduced to chance, a nightmare of numbers and probabilities. There were no clues, no leads, no moves to be made" (N Y Trilogy, 91). The Holmes method of detection is brought to inevitable end after a succession of failures. It is possible that the New York detective may have been more successful in keeping track of Stillman, applying scepticism to his riddles and relying on chance or luck or underground contacts to enable him to find Stillman again.

Quinn, is failing as a detective yet he is unable to abandon his case. Instead he exerts more effort and camps outside the Stillman's apartment. He is unable to see that his case is becoming more of a mystery as it regresses into a mystery rather than progresses towards a solution. In taking up residence outside the Stillman's home, Quinn is moving further from private to public space, spending more time in the City than his own home. The boundaries between working life and private life are also increasingly blurred as the case (and potentially the City itself) begins to absorb him.

Quinn begins to live on the streets in his extended version of a stakeout where he

looks on the Stilman's residence.¹³² His horizontal view from street level begins to change his perspective and priorities. Ralph Willett suggests that this is because Quinn's spying exposes other things outside the case, such as social injustice, as Quinn becomes a dissenting under-consumer, which leads to his own downward mobility making him merge with the City. The blank concrete walls and reflective walls reveal nothing of what happens inside buildings (and this is true of the Stillman apartment) and therefore corporate activity, for example, is seen to take place "between the lines" whereas poverty is forced into the margins (Quinn himself is increasingly less visible to others when he lives on the streets). Willett explains, "The City can be indicted here as a physical representation of the socio-economic relations of late capitalism." (55). Quinn is forced to look outside the case and unlike the hardboiled detective who is driven to continue the case even knowing he will fail or Holmes who continues knowing he will succeed despite impossible circumstances, Quinn begins to lose his focus on the case.¹³³ Finally it is not the case, which absorbs him as the case is solved, ironically by Auster, who informs Quinn that Stillman is dead, it is the City itself. "Remarkable as it seems no-one seemed to notice Quinn. It was as though he had melted into the walls of the City" (N Y Trilogy, 117). Quinn becomes the ultimate anti-detective at this point because he is absent from everything else including the case, indeed he himself is now a case because he has disappeared and all connections are severed (the Stillmans are now all dead or missing). The only trace is Quinn's red notebook, which Auster finds and this will not lead him to Quinn.

¹³² Quinn's spying on the Stillman's without their knowledge can be linked to contemporary paranoia about surveillance. "Alienation is compounded by the very real sense in Postmodern society of "technological persecution" at the hands of an unseen Other" according to Nicol. This idea is asserted through Quinn's surveillance emphasising the sinister aspect of the story. Bran Nicol, 'Reading Paranoia: Paranoia, Epistemophilia and the Postmodern Crisis of Interpretation,' *Literature and Psychology*, (1999) pp. 1-17 (p.12)

¹³³ An example of the hardboiled detective's obsession with his case is exemplified by The Pledge Mike Nicholls, (1992) a film portraying a detective who cannot relinquish his case, seeing the murderer where others do not until finally he is trapped by his own delusions waiting by the river for a murderer day, after day, who will never appear.

Quinn has fully reversed the detective case from a solution (where he takes on the case) to the mystery of his own vanishing into City walls, which will keep their secrets.

The detective stories in The New York Trilogy are, like *City of Glass*, stories with cases, which become more mysterious, detectives who find absence rather than presence, incoherence rather than structure and absurdity or mystery rather than meaning. This relates to the novel's overall investigation into the detective genre. The second part of the trilogy deals with far more informed characters than the naïve Quinn, however and the detective is not susceptible in the same way. Blue and Black (the main characters) are more than aware of the reality of the hardboiled detective.¹³⁴

Blue tells Black:

“Half the men in America would give ten years off their retirement to live the way you do. Cracking cases, living by your wits, seducing women, pumping bad guys full of lead- God there's a lot to be said for it.

That's all make-believe, says Black. Real detective work can be pretty dull”
(N Y Trilogy, 184).

The glamour of the New York detective is an illusion the characters in *Ghosts* are not fooled by. Blue is a detective the reader can believe in as he promises success unlike Quinn who is simply posing as a detective.

In *Ghosts* there is more than one case to be answered: by Gold who tries to solve an unconscionable crime, the murder of a child and by Blue who is hired by White to follow Black. These detectives are “hard boiled” detectives and they fit the

¹³⁴ “The “Hard-boiled” conventions that Auster draws on frequently were established in the Black Mask Stories of the 1920s and most notably, in the novels by Hammett and Chandler. The European Mysticism and intellectualisation of Dupin and Holmes, is replaced by pragmatism. Cases are no longer puzzles solved by an amateur's deduction, but are city-wide, solved by a professional...the hard-boiled detective is a populist, an uncommon common man” according to “Gareth Wyn Curtis, ‘Who dun’it? Detective Fiction and the Mystery of Authorship in “the New York Trilogy” in his (unpublished) Mphil thesis, The Novels of Paul Auster, (2001), pp.43-89, (p.44).

New York environment. Indeed Bilton points out that, “he (Blue) is like a generic hero, a stereotypical man of action, masculine and potent” (73). Blue fits the stereotype of the “hard boiled” detective in other ways; he knows the City and its illusions and he is a spirit swilling hard man. The use of colour to identify Blue and the other men and the 1940s period setting invokes the film or crime noir. Their names do not inform the reader but invoke what is unknown, like the “thin man”, the “third man” from the Hollywood films of the same title. Tarrantino’s later crime noir “Reservoir Dogs” makes a point of naming its characters after colours to keep their true identities secret. The figures of the crime noir are present like the femme fatale (Violet, the prostitute who has a soft spot for Blue), the good woman (Blue’s fiancé) and the narrative voice, which tells us in reference to Blue’s stakeout, “The address is unimportant. But let us say Brooklyn Heights, for the sake of argument. Some quiet, rarely travelled street not far from the bridge- Orange Street perhaps” (N Y Trilogy 138-9). The narrative voice undermines the reader’s position as the secondary detective, working with Blue to solve the mystery, because Blue is distanced and displaced from the reader. The reader cannot place or imagine precisely where Blue is because the narrator has deliberately withheld this information. This means that the reader cannot rely upon their geographical skills to move through the City with Blue. However Blue is a New York detective and can rely upon his knowledge of the City. He knows about the City in the geographical and mythical sense and can relate the myth to the physical City with stories for example, relating to the building of the Brooklyn Bridge. Blue is a fitting and “real” detective (unlike Quinn, Blue is a professional) perhaps one the reader might expect to solve the case. Blue is a man of agency; a detective hero who measures up to his position when he watches Black. Blue is able to use the City to negotiate his way through his case. He knows Black

through observing how Black moves through the City. Blue tells us, “Mostly he just wanders through the streets, looking at odd bits of scenery, clusters of random data, and even this only happens in spurts” (N Y Trilogy, 172). Black’s movements are like Stillman’s here, fragmented and disjointed. However unlike Quinn, Blue is able to keep track of Black and not deceive him into reading into what is not there. He records only the facts in his notebook such as what newspaper Black reads. Blue also disguises himself on several occasions to obtain further information about Black, such as his disguise as a “tramp”, where he poses on the street, unlike Quinn who is reduced to living on the street. Black is far more controlled in disguising himself and using the City to blend in; he is aware of where the disguise and the real Blue begins as he still intends to recover his old life when the case is over. He is also aware of what is illusory in the City and how to read these illusions. When Black “walks down the street and vanishes around the corner” (N Y Trilogy 188). Blue knows that this is not a sign of his failure (which is how Quinn interpreted the disappearance of Stillman) but instead he interprets this as a sign that Black wants him to make his move. His interpretation proves correct as Black does want Blue to make a move and bring about a resolution. Unlike Quinn, Blue is not the type of detective who will simply bring about his downfall and disappear.

While it may seem as if Blue has a far better chance of success than Quinn there are ways in which Blue becomes reduced, his masculine agency stripped away and his case collapsing. Like other hardboiled detectives he becomes increasingly obsessed with his case as Black reveals nothing of his intentions and this frustrates Blue to the degree where he takes greater lengths to discover Black’s plans. His personal life begins to suffer and he loses his fiancé, however this is not what leads to his reduced

self. Other hardboiled detectives have suffered personal losses and continued to pursue the case. However three significant things happen to Blue. Firstly his engagement with geographic space is initially one with which he is comfortable and familiar. He roams New York by car or foot and is at ease tracking and keeping tabs on Black. However Black begins to move less and less and Blue is reduced to keeping track of him by foot, then pacing the room of his stakeout apartment and finally like the man who spies in Hitchcock's "The Bedroom Window", Blue is simply reduced in movement to sitting and watching Black who is either reading or writing at his desk. Blue loss of geographical space in which to operate reduces his movements until he becomes a still man (awkward and trapped like Peter Stillman) and thus loses his agency.

Blue's spying on Black does not merely restrict him physically but psychologically. Willett suggests "his spying on the other man s like a symbol of electronic surveillance by bureaucratic and police organisations alluding to the way commodities watch us by turning the self into the third person who only exists in this observational capacity" (55). In this way Blue's self is reduced. Thirdly Blue's masculinity is reduced by the intimate and emotive relationship that develops between himself and Black. Blue changes and begins to become more like Black, by reading the same novel. Black becomes his whole world and his words to Blue when the two meet are intimate and poignant as the interdependency of their relationship is revealed. While Black is trying to tell Blue that he is a detective following someone and that the man he observes, "...needs my eye looking at him. He needs me to prove he is alive," (N Y Trilogy, 184) his words have as much to say about the relationship

between himself and Blue.¹³⁵ While there is no clear evidence of homo-eroticism within the text the intimacy between the two is clear, as Black points out in the end holding a gun to Blue's head, "It's just going to be the two of us together, just like always" (N Y Trilogy, 195) and it is this relationship with a man that emasculates Blue.¹³⁶ When Blue finally realises that there is no end to this case, this obsession unless he ends it he becomes enraged and like other "hardboiled" detectives he resorts to the language of violence.¹³⁷ He has been "reduced to nothing" as he tells the reader repeatedly: his only chance to regain his life is to end it (violently) with Black. He thinks of shooting him and cannot bear to do it and in turn Black is unable to pull the trigger he points at Blue. Blue ends their destructive obsessive inter-dependency by beating Black to a pulp¹³⁸ before disappearing from the City, just like Quinn.

In *City of Glass* it is the detective (who is not a real detective) who fails and in *Ghosts* the case collapses (because there is no real case), however in *The Locked Room* it is the boundaries between criminal and detective, which undermine the story. The narrator is trying to track down his childhood friend, Fanshawe so that he can find out what happened to him. However his search for Fanshawe turns into a dangerous

¹³⁵ Herzogenrath tells us that there is a romantic attitude in hardboiled detection as the detective reacts to a fragmented and modern world where the naïve opposition of good and evil does not hold and the individual detective operates on the margins of legality relying on a personal code of honour in his book, *An Art of Desire: Reading Paul Auster*, (p. 21). This romantic attitude is present in the Trilogy and it emphasises the (unspoken) intimacy between Blue and Black as Blue tries to construct his case according to his own personal code of conduct unwittingly bringing him increasingly closer to Black.

¹³⁶ Indeed, Curtis tells us, "It is through the successful solving of the crime related quest that the detective consolidates his masculinity", Curtis, *The Novels of Paul Auster*, p.48, which suggests Blue's inability to solve the crime undermines his masculinity further still.

¹³⁷ Sarapore points out that the tension of the hardboiled style is precipitated by "the detectives intervention which seems to inaugurate violence and additional crime- the detective seems linked to legal and criminal society- but he remains on the side of the law and tension is resolved in his ultimate commitment to right over wrong" in *Beyond the Red Notebook*, ed Dennis Barone, p.76. While the boundaries between law and criminality may be blurred in Blue's case, it is important to note that resolution through violence is part of the style of the hardboiled detective and not surprising that it should be invoked in Blue's story, yet not in Quinn's as his classical style has no call for it.

¹³⁸ Zilcosky tells us that "Blue destroys Black, thus establishing the figure of the dead or dying author criminal, common to all three novels" which inverts the process of the reader identifying with the detective and emphasises the reversal of the detective triumph. John Zilcosky, 'The Revenge of the Author: Paul Auster's Challenge to Theory', *Critique*, 39 (1998) pp. 195-207 (p.203) .

obsession until it is no longer clear whether the narrator or Fanshawe is the real villain. The narrator decides he wants to kill Fanshawe, yet Fanshawe warns him in a letter, "If by some miracle you manage to track me down I will kill you" (N Y Trilogy, 239). The reader is thus faced with the issue of who is the criminal, where their sympathies and detective impulse lie. The reader follows the narrator in his quest to search out Fanshawe, not because he has the moral high ground but because the impulse to detect override our character sympathy and finding Fanshawe is the solution to mystery. Another reason why the reader follows the narrator on his quest to track down Fanshawe is because the narrator is present whereas Fanshawe is absent in geographical terms and within the text. The reader is directed towards the quest to find Fanshawe however the detective figure has collapsed here as neither Fanshawe nor the narrator, represent the hardboiled or classic detective. As the previous parts of the trilogy demonstrates both types of detective are destined to fail. For the narrator who invokes the detective for personal rather than work purposes, the progression into mystery is similar. He too, fails to find Fanshawe, as susceptible to the City as Quinn and as vulnerable as Blue because of his feelings for Fanshawe until Fanshawe decides to be found. The detective, then, amateur or professional, classical or hardboiled, hired or voluntary is found to be vulnerable and fallible.

3:3 Metaphysical or Anti- Detective

The detective is a vulnerable figure in The New York Trilogy and unlike detectives in traditional stories he is destined to fail. There are other detective stories, which have been classified as anti-detective or metaphysical fiction, which also see the failure of the detective. It is important to establish how far the trilogy is a metaphysical detective or anti-detective novel in order to get to the roots of its main purpose. After all, like other metaphysical works it is not only the investigation of the detective genre, which is at stake here as there are other significant investigations. What is of interest here is what contributes to the detective's failure, why should the detective genre be subject to critique. Looking at the three parts of the trilogy there are contributing factors such as the City itself, geographical and environmental factors, Modern society and self. In this next chapter it would be useful to establish what are the greatest influences on the subversion of the genre and the most significant contributions to the ultimate failure of the detectives in each story. This chapter is concerned with investigating how far the trilogy is a metaphysical novel by analysing the criteria and comparing it to another piece of anti-detective fiction (Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49) and finding out what leads to the detectives failure and what part the City contributes in terms of its society (or body), its design and the myth of the City.

The notion of the metaphysical detective according to Merrivale and Sweeney, "is a text that parodies or subverts traditional detective story conventions with the intention or effect of asking questions about mysteries of being and knowing which transcend

the mere machinations of plot.”¹³⁹ Certainly the trilogy subverts the traditional detective story and matches much of the criteria that Merrivale and Sweeney and other critics suggest. Gates, uses two films, *The Usual Suspects* (1997) and *Se7en* (1995) to exemplify how meta-detective themes are used. The themes are that the detective is not heroic and does not restore order (Detective Kujan in *The Usual Suspects* does not work out that Soze is the master criminal in time and Soze escapes). The second theme is that the City is a labyrinth (in *Se7en* the City is “nameless, timeless and endless) (188). Clues and evidence are ambiguous, strangely meaningful or utterly meaningless (Verbal’s story is revealed to be meaningless fabrication in *The Usual Suspects* whereas the use of the seven deadly sins to name Doe’s crimes are disturbingly meaningful). Ideas of missing people, doubles and lost, stolen or exchanged identities are also present in metaphysical narrative (In *Se7en* Doe functions as a double for the detectives also wanting to rid the world of evil). There is finally an absence or self-defeating nature of closure (such as when Verbal reveals all offering a sense of closure which is self-defeating as he is free and order not restored) (188-90).

Gates identification of metaphysical themes is of significance when applied to The New York Trilogy. The themes all apply to the trilogy. None of the detectives restore order, indeed as Merrivale suggests, “the detective becomes the murderer he has sought” (188). The narrator in *The Locked Room* seeks to kill Fanshawe towards the end of the novel. The City certainly plays an active part as it is like a labyrinth in *City of Glass*, particularly, as there seems no way out of the endless streets therefore characters can only disappear into the City, rather than out of it. Clues and evidence

¹³⁹Philippa Gates, ‘Getting Away with It: Villainy in the Contemporary Hollywood Detective Film’ in Gillis & Gates, *The Devil Himself*, pp. 183-96 (p.188).

are ambiguous and misleading in all three parts of the trilogy and become increasingly so when the detectives read into what is not there such as Quinn's seeing the letters spelling out "the tower of Babel" or the narrator accusing perfect strangers of being Fanshawe in disguise. Missing people, doubles and lost, stolen and exchanged identities appear frequently in the trilogy as Quinn steals and loses identities, finds his suspect has a double and becomes missing, along with his suspect. Blue has several disguises he uses to change his identity and finds his suspect is his double. The narrator exchanges identities with Fanshawe, who is his missing double. There is an absence of closure to the trilogy as Quinn, Blue and Fanshawe are still missing and what has been resolved, such as the narrator finding Fanshawe is self-defeating because it is Fanshawe who tells him where (precisely) to look. The New York Trilogy employs metaphysical themes to make its points, which go beyond the exploration of the detective themes to analyse society and self.

The deconstruction of the detective genre works through the use of themes and devices and what is investigated is not simply the genre itself but aspects of self and society. The City, it is important to note, plays a vital role in both the undoing of the detective and his case and also a role in the investigations, which extend beyond that of the individual and his case. To demonstrate how the role of the City is crucial and how it works it can be done by comparing the metaphysical investigations of The New York Trilogy and The Crying of Lot 49. Both novels are concerned with relating the role of the detective with the role of the reader and the role of the author. Both novels look at relating the concept of the detective to ideas of self. In both works the cases, which are investigated, also present questions about society. An analysis of the two novels, both of which are set against the background of the City, will demonstrate how the detective and his case in a metaphysical or anti-detective novel has more to

say about self and society than the detective and his case. Some argue that the anti-detective novel is not about the detective and his case but the author's other investigations.¹⁴⁰ The specific use of the genre and how it is used, as well as to what purpose is also at stake here and from this view, where Pynchon and Auster are compared, the figuring of the detective genre is as crucial as its use in relation to the City as much as the novels' other investigations in relation to the City. The reader, the author and the detective will therefore be investigated to establish the grounds on which Pynchon and Auster make their arguments about self and society.

Detective stories are not read like other books. Readers engage and identify with the detective, assuming his position and like the detective, working to figure out the solution to the case. The reader is like a secondary detective, analysing all the clues and actively trying to restore order like the detective. The reader shares in the detectives frustrations and exuberance as he follows him. The metaphysical detective novel is aware of both this process and the reader's knowledge and expectations of the conventions of the detective genre. Both The New York Trilogy and The Crying of Lot 49 actively work to create a position for the reader as detective and emphasise the readers role. The Crying of Lot 49 is a title of mystery in itself and before the reader engages with the novel he is set the task of working out what exactly is the "crying of Lot 49." It is not until the last page that the author reveals that the "crying" refers to the auctioneer "crying" the sale of Lot 49 which is a collection of stamps. This device sets up the reader to play Master detective, wanting to understand the mystery of the title and also to follow Oedipa in her attempts to discover the mystery surrounding Lot 49. The New York Trilogy employs a similar device with the title of the first part

¹⁴⁰ Herzogenrath, for example, argues in "Looking for Clues: The Detective Story" that The New York Trilogy is not actually a work of detective fiction but an investigation of language in An Art of Desire, 2005 pp.15-26.

of its trilogy. *City of Glass* is not a self-explanatory title but one that does not express a clear meaning. It is not until the reader has read *City of Glass* that its true meaning becomes clear in that it refers to the reflective agency of the City, which only reflects, back to Quinn what he already knows, leading him to regress rather than progress in his case.

The City in The Crying of Lot 49 is “less an identifiable city than a group of concepts-census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, shopping nuclei, all overlaid with access roads to its own freeway.”¹⁴¹ Unlike New York City, which is an identifiable place, the City or cities in Pynchon’s novel could be any city. The detective, Oedipa Maas, is an amateur detective who is supposed to be the executor of the estate belonging to a former lover. She discovers that a part of the estate, a collection of stamps (Lot 49) may not be what it seems. The stamps may be part of an underground postal system called WASTE, which is used by city dwellers who do not trust the US government postal system. Oedipa’s investigations lead her to investigate the history of this alternative postal system whose origins are found in the seventeenth century. “What Oedipa is doing is very much like reading a book” according to Frank Kermode.¹⁴² This strengthens the link between the reader and the detective as what Oedipa does is like reading a book as she follows a literary trail from a seventeenth century play to a bookshop to a library to the writing on the wall which give her the clues about the underground postal system. Like Quinn, Oedipa literally reads the signs inscribed on the City to give her clues. She finds that her former lover may be linked to the Trystero conspiracy and play a part in the underground postal system.

¹⁴¹ The Crying of Lot 49, Thomas Pynchon (London: Vintage, 2000) p.14 which will be referred to as the abbreviation “Lot 49” in the text from now on.

¹⁴² Brian Stonehill, ‘Paradoxical Pynchon’ in The Self Conscious Novel, Brian Stonehill (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Press, 1988) pp.141-56, (p.152)

Like the detectives in The New York Trilogy, the conclusion is withheld from detective and reader. Oedipa never learns the secret of the Trystero conspiracy as the novel ends when Lot 49 is about to be “cried”, just as Quinn, Blue and the Narrator do not learn the secrets of Stillman, Black and Fanshawe.

The secrets are withheld from the detectives leading them to fail in their cases. The City plays an enormous part in preventing the detectives from success. The physical make-up of the City is labyrinthine like. There are endless streets and bars in The Crying of Lot 49 and in The New York Trilogy the City is a vast landscape for a variety of projects and outside of the City it is as if nothing exists. In *The Locked Room* the narrator actually leaves New York in search of Fanshawe only to find himself wandering another City (Paris). The geography of the City is an art to be mastered. As has previously been discussed, it is only Blue who has the geographical knowledge to search the City. Both Quinn and the narrator cannot grasp the geography of the City and both lose their “suspects.” Geography does not work in the City in a logical way, however. One cannot simply continually wander from one location to another without some form of disruption from the City. Stillman, for example is wandering the City, which is halted by the broken objects he feels compelled to pick up. Oedipa’s sense of geographical space is also disrupted in Pynchon’s novel. One time she gets into a car with Metzger and “rode with him for two miles before realising that the whimsies of nighttime reception were bringing them KCUF from the Kinneret, and that the disc jockey talking was her husband, Mucho” (Lot 49, 55). The radio disrupts her sense of distance as Oedipa had thought herself a long way from her husband, yet the sound of his voice brings him suddenly close. The City disrupts the linear progression of the detective’s journey as he moves from clue to clue. In turn, the detective’s double, the reader, also has their journey

disrupted as they are subject to the same distractions.

The City does not merely disrupt the journey of the detective however, but offers up false clues. Oedipa thinks she hears and sees the signs of the WASTE system everywhere. “She grew so to expect it that perhaps she did not see it quite as often as she was later to remember seeing it. A couple-three times would really have been enough. Or too much” (Lot 49, 85). Oedipa becomes confused as to how many times this sign has repeated itself. This sign is a clue, which could be misleading her. The City is tricking her into thinking she sees it when she does not or that she hears it when she does not. This is part of the City’s illusory capabilities to show clues that are not there, to invent clues for the detective and lead him on a false trail or to repeat signs endlessly until their origin is obscured. For the reader, who is also following the same clues, the narrative explanation that Oedipa may be seeing signs which are not there, has a significant reflective effect. The journey, the incidents, failures and successes of the detective reflect back onto the reader and the reader begins to feel lost reading the book, doubting whether they have accurately kept track of the WASTE symbol in the novel, whether they have acknowledged it too many times or not enough. For the detectives in The New York Trilogy the clues are repeatedly misleading. Quinn follows signs and clues at the end of his story, which have nothing to do with his case. There is a similar effect on the reader, as he too must lose his grip on the case along with Quinn, becoming lost amongst Quinn’s words and slipping in the attempt even to understand what Quinn was actually writing about (as this is not revealed).

Further to the idea that the City offers false clues is the idea that within the body of the City is those that do not exist as their real selves. There are characters who seem

beyond that which is real in The Crying of Lot 49, such as “an uncoordinated boy who planned to slip at night into aquariums and open negotiations with the dolphins, who would succeed man” (Lot 49, 85). Similarly Stillman, who plans to re-create a perfect language by experimenting on his son, Black who writes the ultimate detective story and Fanshawe who seems beyond his own destiny, re-designing the “grand scheme” of things to enable the narrator to replace him, all seem beyond what is real. This is taken further when the notion of the double is taken into account. All three have doubles or doppelgangers, which confuses their true identity. The detectives also negotiate their way beyond what might be real through their stolen and created identities. Quinn loses his own identity in taking on Auster’s. Blue creates identities through numerous disguises but cannot control the multiple of selves he creates as Black, for example, mistakes him for a dead poet, creating another identity for Blue. The narrator is manouevered into taking Fanshawe’s identity and losing his own. The confusion with identity, doubles and unreal characters causes another problem for the reader as he cannot trust the people around him. From within the body of the City it is impossible to see what is authentic and what is false, whose identity is genuine, whose story is real. In following the detective along this trail of false identities the reader is vulnerable, as he cannot trust what he sees. The detective who acts as the readers double also affects the reader in another way. In Pynchon’s novel it is Oedipa’s marriage, which is surrounded by a string of affairs, positions the reader in a space with a fragmented background within which to operate. In Auster’s trilogy it is the detectives who constantly change their identity, which positions the readers in a fragmented space as they are identifying with detectives (doubles) with multiple identities and selves, rather than coherent autonomous characters.

Doubles, multiple identities and uncanny characters provide another major disruption to the linear progression of the detective's case. What offers additional confusion in The Crying of Lot 49 is the appearance of characters whose purpose may or may not have anything to do with the case, such as Oedipa's psychiatrist, Dr. Hilarius or the Paranoid band members. The purpose Dr. Hilarius actually serves presents a new case and Oedipa, distracted from the Trystero Conspiracy intervenes when Hilarius barricades himself in his office and provides the solution to this case as "a number of nervous patrolmen approached Hilarius, holding up strait jackets and billy clubs they would not need" (Lot 49, 96). While the patrolmen with all their weapons and equipment fail, Oedipa resolves the case by talking to her psychiatrist. In an ironic twist of fate the patient becomes the doctor and the reader has a taste of the detective success in resolution. Yet Oedipa's powers of seduction, persuasion and communication is insufficient to solve the Trystero Conspiracy. The solving of the immediate crisis involving Hilarius has simply obscured the larger picture and presented further problems in negotiating one's way through the City, solving the case. Similarly in The New York Trilogy there are also disruptions from characters who may or may not be connected to the case. However, in the trilogy what truly obscures the linear progression for the reader is that characters who do not belong in parts of the trilogy appear. In *City of Glass*, there is a character called Paul Auster, who has the same name as the author. In turn characters from *City of Glass* appear in other parts of the trilogy such as Stillman who is attacked by the narrator from *The Locked Room* who insists he is really Fanshawe. This undermines the reader's careful navigation of the trilogy and his negotiation of the City, as this is not a conventional or logical progression for the reader: the characters appear to be displaced and not belonging to the case. The reader's understanding of the case appears to be

undermined as he follows the detective on a case where he cannot make sense of things as there is no apparent logical reason for certain characters to be present.

Finally, the outcome then, is that the reader, following the same path as the detective is undermined by the City and its illusions: inevitably fails with the detective to solve the case. Bilton explains, “in conventional detective fiction the reader is empowered by the eventual solution of the case, feeling he has “mastered” the text, exhausted all possibilities and is in the same omnipotent position as the detective/author. This is an illusion as he follows a pre-ordained trail” (53). However, looking at the evidence above it can be seen that the metaphysical detective story has the opposite effect, shattering this illusion and disempowering the reader. This disempowerment is magnified by significant moments in the text, which reverse the effect of significant moments in the traditional detective story. Such moments include what has been discussed above: the reader follows a pre-ordained trail of false clues, illusions, false identities, multiple identities and an obscured sense of time space and location. The linear progression of reader and detective is interrupted and becomes disjointed. Finally there is a moment of collapse where this progression is halted permanently.

In the traditional detective story there is a similar moment, a triumphant moment where the detective reveals all to an audience (often manifested in a crowd of characters) which bears witness to his triumph. The detective at this moment is focused, he is with agency, he is the centre of attention and autonomous. To refer to Lacan’s mirror stage is perhaps relevant at this point as the detective sees himself reflected in the eyes of others and he is omnipotent. In the reflected view of others he is like the child that sees and (mis) recognizes itself as autonomous the first time it

sees it self in the mirror; instead of a fractured being. The detective thus reverts back to this stage as his glory is reflected back at him through his audience. He does not see himself as flawed but whole, complete as he has mastered his case. The reader, as his double, shares in the idea that the case is mastered by his self and the reader, too, momentarily sees himself as autonomous at the instance when he discovers the secrets contained in the text. Of course the reader who is following the metaphysical detective story follows a similar pattern leading up to the final significant moment when it is revealed, not that the detective has solved his case: but that he has failed. The moment when Oedipa is about to hear the “crying” of Lot 49 may or may not reveal the secret, but since the book ends at this point the detective and reader fail to reach the moment of revelation. The moment of triumphant recognition is altogether absent and both reader and detective are left in a state of suspended meaning, undermining any sense of autonomy. Similarly in the trilogy, Quinn fails to solve his case and the defining moment for Quinn is when he discovers someone else living in his apartment and realises he is homeless in the true sense, having lost his home, identity (he is posing as Paul Auster), his means of living (he is no longer a writer or a detective as his case is solved) and his sense of self (he has no ties to the world). The recognition of this homelessness is the reverse of what the detective experiences in solving his case. Quinn sees himself as he really is- a homeless man with no purpose or identity- broken. In Lacanian terms he sees himself as fractured, even disintegrated in the mirror view of his self. The consequences for the reader are also disastrous, as the reader has followed Quinn closely waiting for the moment when he too will have all the answers. However the reader is left alienated from the truth. He is (like Quinn) locked out of the apartment without purpose or direction. The reader can no longer follow Quinn as he disappears, another case, which will also not be solved

by Auster and the narrator). Trapped in this space, the reader's sense of satisfaction displaced by dissatisfaction, the reader also subscribes to Quinn's recognition of himself in the mirror and the reader too sees a frustrated, fractured self.

In *Ghosts* there are also significant moments. The fragmentation of the detective follows a similar process in *Ghosts* until Blue, like Quinn has a moment where he recognises what he has become. The cracks of his fragmentation are perhaps more obvious than Quinn's because Blue begins as an almost autonomous figure with connections: whereas Quinn, the lone writer, does not. Blue's moment of recognition occurs when he sees that Black upon whom he is spying is looking at him (p.169). Whether Black is being paid to watch Blue or chooses to watch Blue, Blue realises there is no case to be answered; the two of them are simply mirroring each other, Black is his double. Blue looks at Black and in this moment recognises himself as fractured, broken, marginal. His former life has been taken from him and he has been reduced to one without real purpose or existence. The reader who has been following the detective abruptly realises that this is what he is doing, simply watching Black. The role of the reader as the detective's double is revealed here. The illusion that the reader masters and solves the case is shattered and instead the notion that the reader simply observes and watches the detective at work, rather than actively contributing to the solution of a given case is presented in *Ghosts*.

The case in *The Locked Room* is different from the first two parts of the trilogy because there are a series of significant moments which similarly to The Crying of Lot 49, where Oedipa is about to find out about the Trystero Conspiracy, create an absence where there should be a moment of recognition. The narrator of *The Locked Room* has been searching for Fanshawe throughout his life whether Fanshawe is

present or absent. The narrator first discovers that he cannot follow Fanshawe when they are children and Fanshawe informs him of a “magic box” where he goes to dream, yet only he can enter or the magic will be lost. The narrator and the reader are forever locked out of this magic box; it is inaccessible. The narrator discovers Fanshawe will go to other places where he cannot follow, such as when Fanshawe lies in a freshly dug grave or writes an indecipherable text. The narrator’s interest in Fanshawe grows into an obsession as he is denied access to parts of Fanshawe. He tries to replace him in adult life, taking over his career and family. However the narrator still feels fragmented because he does not have access to Fanshawe’s secrets including where he is. He has to find Fanshawe to either find out his secrets or kill him, as this is the only way the narrator can claim the life and identity of Fanshawe for himself.

There are further significant moments such as when the narrator mis-recognizes Fanshawe, seeing him where he is absent, in the face of strangers. Again these are moments of absence when the narrator should be recognizing the real Fanshawe. Finally when Fanshawe agrees to one last meeting there should be a significant moment when the narrator sees Fanshawe or unlocks his secrets somehow. Yet Fanshawe does not allow the narrator to become his coherent, whole self. He will not see the narrator but only speak to him through a locked door and the red notebook which should contain all the answers for the narrator, is written in a way the narrator can make no sense of. The moment when the narrator and Fanshawe should look at each other and the narrator see himself in Fanshawe are absent. There is no scene of recognition to which a Lacanian interpretation can be applied. Perhaps it is more interesting that this scene is absent as what is suggested here is that because the

narrator cannot look at Fanshawe and see himself then there is no self to see, the image of the narrators self is altogether absent. He needs Fanshawe to see himself and Fanshawe is not there. When the narrator misses the moment of recognition, the idea that he himself is absent or does not exist is posited instead. Indeed, without Fanshawe's identity the narrator does not have one of his own: even his name is not revealed. This absence of a moment of recognition at the end of the novel has further ramifications. The reader, at this point in the text, as the narrator's double also does not exist, like the narrator he is nameless and without identity, chasing after Fanshawe's identity like the narrator. Locked out of Fanshawe's room, the reader, experiences a moment where like the characters, at the end of the book, when the pages run out he must disappear.

The detective genre has thus been subverted by the metaphysical detective story. However the greatest challenge is offered not to the genre itself but to the reader. In both The Crying of Lot 49 and The New York Trilogy the experience of the reader is different to that which is experienced when reading the conventional detective story. The effects of mastering the case and sharing the detective's autonomy are reversed. In each part of the trilogy the effects of mastering the case and sharing the detectives autonomy are reversed and the reader is increasingly alienated, isolated and embroiled in further mystery rather than answers like the detectives he is reading about. In the case of Quinn, the cracks increasingly begin to show themselves as Quinn moves from one failure to the next until he finally recognises that he is a fragmented being, which in turn is reflected upon the reader (his double) showing the reader, he too, is a fragmented being. Blue demonstrates that the art of reading a book is not like the art of a detective at all. The idea that the reader actively solves the case along with the detective is an illusion: the reader is a passive observer and does not have super-

ordinary detective skills. Again this shows the self is not autonomous. Finally the examples of Oedipa and Fanshawe demonstrate in missed moments of recognition, when things that should be revealed are not, that there is absence where there should be presence that there are parts of the self that are missing or not revealed, that the self is not a coherent whole. Disturbingly, there is no point of reflection or recognition for the narrator and his self is not revealed through Fanshawe. He is denied the parts of Fanshawe that he is missing revealing the self to be lacking. Because the narrator does not have an image of him; the reader is also denied an image of his self. Unable to see himself the reader is forced to disappear when the text ends suggesting an absence of self or identity.

While the texts implicate the reader in their challenge to conventional notions of self as coherent, whole and autonomous, there are also some implications for society at large. The images and themes in the anti-detective novel suggest that it is not simply the notion of self that is challenged. The themes in the novels are all connected to the City, suggesting its part is significant in this. The novels refer to a society of City dwellers, part of the body of the City. After all what is outside the City in The Crying of Lot 49 or The New York Trilogy? In both, events take place in cities that stretch endlessly. Oedipa Maas sees the City as a place of streets, shops and social spaces. New York is a never-ending wasteland for Quinn, filled with broken objects, broken people, broken language. The City is an iconographic place for Blue with each icon signifying something, from the building of the Bridge to the manufacturers of Black's soap. In *The Locked Room* the City provides an endless maze in which Fanshawe can hide from anyone. The City is a place that provides at once a home and a place of identification. It is not society or other individuals with which the detectives identify,

but the City itself. The detectives identify with the City in different ways, however, which is why they perceive it differently. This identification causes Quinn to negotiate a new space for himself on the streets, Blue to re-build the myth of the City, inflating it with other stories and investing himself in it as the stereotypical hardboiled detective. Fanshawe identifies a magical City filled with forbidden places and secret spaces only he can enter.

If the characters do not identify with society, but the City, this suggests the City dictates behaviour, attitude and culture of these individuals, rather than society.

However, it is not simply the detectives, but other characters that also identify with the City, rather than society, such as the character of Stillman who assumes that the City will provide him with the framework to complete his language project. This would suggest that that many, rather than few individuals identify more with the City itself, than its inhabitants. Indeed the society that is portrayed in the metaphysical text is shaped by the City. In the City crowds it is possible to see doubles, people with false identities and missing people. Quinn certainly finds the missing people, those without identity when he lives on the streets. Blue finds those with false identities and changes his own identity easily, blending in with the crowd. The narrators world is filled with doubles, from Fanshawe to Fanshawe's family which act as doubles for the author's family. Does society make-up much of what appears in the metaphysical novel's themes. Are people indeed non-heroic, fragmented individuals, alienated and isolated from society as they choose to identify with the City more than others? Is society filled with those who are missing, lost in the City? Does society consist of people with identities in a state of flux, where we can borrow, steal, exchange and lose identities rather than remain stable with a fixed identity? Is the body of the City so dense in its crowd of people that the illusion of doubles is created

or do we simply mistakenly think we recognise people over and over de-stabilizing ourselves, through a process of continued mis-recognition? Perhaps these are the challenges offered by the metaphysical novels, which suggest we are fragmented selves, our cracks and split subjectivity revealed and mirrored by the City. The City shapes us and its body of people, our society. This destabilizes the individual further with its missing bodies, identities subject to constant change and our doubles which undermine our sense of uniqueness and agency.

3:4 The Images of the City

It has been seen how the characters see and identify with the City in different ways.

Unlike in Pynchon's novel where the City could be any City, Auster's City can only be New York. Images and ghosts of the past haunt it. It has a legacy which Auster invokes in all three parts of the trilogy. The characters each understand New York in different ways, however, invoking different aspects of it. They do not identify with the City, so much as a place but in terms of history, literature, theory and culture; all play a very important part in the construction of the City. They do not identify with other characters so much as the literary ghosts of New York. These ghosts haunt the characters sign-posting their way as they journey through the City.

The purpose of looking at New York, in this context is to demonstrate how the image or myth of New York sustains the City itself. The City is not known through its endless streets, its labyrinthine maze, its shops or it is simply like any other City. New York is understood in terms of its legacy making it different from other Cities and enabling the characters to identify with it. This section will look at how this legacy constructs New York for its characters in the trilogy and argue that the reality of New York can only be apprehended in this way, or it would simply be a city like any other.

Edgar Allen Poe is perhaps the ghost haunting the trilogy that invokes the impulse to detect in the trilogy. In *City of Glass* Quinn's pseudonym is William Wilson, a character from a story of the same title by Poe, and it William Wilson who Quinn sees as the author and producer of the detective stories Quinn writes. This is significant as the trilogy can be read as a re-working of the William Wilson story. The William Wilson story is about a man who is followed everywhere by his double, a double which Wilson cannot escape. The double thwarts many of Wilson's plans such as

cheating at cards to win money. Eventually Wilson is driven to murder his double in a drink-fuelled rage only to have his double tell him he has just murdered his self: leaving Wilson staring into a mirror. In *City of Glass* the story also picks up on this pattern of doubles as Quinn follows Stillman and in losing Stillman he realises that he is lost. The Wilson story of doubles is subverted, as it is the double (Quinn) who is tricked, not Stillman. In *Ghosts* Blue follows his double, Black, until like Wilson he violently confronts him. What is different here is that Wilson is already always aware he has a double: it is the revelation that Black is Blue's double that drives him to the violent end and it is Black who is left beaten. In *The Locked Room*, the narrator is Fanshawe's double and it is the double that seeks to confront and kill the Other. As Auster tells us, "Finally these stories are the same story" (233).

The story lines are linked to Poe, then. However the City in which these stories are set invites other ghosts to construct its myth. Melville is one of the major presences in all three parts of the trilogy.¹⁴³ There are references to Melville's work and the narrator in *The Locked Room* makes an overt attempt to insert Melville into the text and his construction of the City. He introduces himself as Melville to a man he believes is Fanshawe. He says, "The name's Melville. Herman Melville. Perhaps you've read some of my books" (N Y Trilogy, 296). In this way, the authentic Melville (as the narrator ensures there is no confusions with this Melville and a possible other) simultaneously becomes part of the text and the City as his legacy is referenced here. What is more significant than invoking Melville to act as one of the text's signposts is, as Chenetier points out, "the obstinate walls on which characters more than a little reminiscent of Bartleby attempt, as fully fledged scribes themselves, to read or

¹⁴³ Chenetier explains, "Melville provides the patronyms of characters that are fictitious in the second degree... an ironical "Call me Redburn" comes to relay in a letter from Fanshawe... the re-current use of let's suppose or "lets say"... under the invocation of Ishmael" in Marc Chenetier's "Paul Auster's Pseudonymous World" in Barone, *Beyond the Red Notebook*, pp.34-43 (p.40)

inscribe the signs of their identity and of their obscure desire” (Barone, Beyond the Red Notebook, 40). This means that Melville’s signature is all scrawled all over the City by the various characters in the trilogy. If invoking Melville fills the City with scribes then some aspect of what Melville saw in New York is incorporated into the trilogy.

This is not to say that this is an atrocious New York that is being constructed.

Whitman is similarly made present when a disguised Blue is told by Black that he bears a remarkable likeness to Walt Whitman. Blue tells Black, “Every man has his double somewhere. I don’t see why mine can’t be a dead man” (N Y Trilogy, 174).

Inserting not only Whitman into the text, but the idea that he is Blue’s double is worth noting. It implies that Blue brings Whitman to his construction of the City. He positions himself in the space of the uncanny by posing as someone else, triggering the wonder of the City that Whitman saw. Blue also sees this wonder and he is opened up to a mythical New York filled with stories about the building of the Brooklyn Bridge, for example. He also reads magazines with stories of wonder such as the story of a climber who finds his lost father preserved in ice twenty five years later in *Stranger Than Fiction* (p.152). He is also influenced by high art and reads Thoreau and Hawthorne because Black does, but he finds himself constructing New York from these novels, as much as the magazines he reads. This emphasises the Whitmanian view of New York as a place of wonder, although Blue sees other aspects of New York. The trilogy invokes Melville and Whitman then, enriching the creation of the City.

Literary history haunts Blue and Black. They exchange stories about Whitman and

Hawthorne¹⁴⁴ and read Thoreau. The stories of these authors, the magazines and films Blue watches also relate to his case. Black tells Blue: “But still when two great writers meet, history is made, and it’s important to get all the facts straight” (N Y Trilogy, 177). However, while history plays this role in haunting the two men, their lives and the City: not all facts are straight. History is not straightforward but complex and like literature it is textual. One historic text references another; such as the meeting between Thoreau and Whitman which Black refers to. This meeting references other material relating to the two authors and the literary debate about the two. History is biased like literature and we cannot get all the facts straight. Indeed the meeting we are told of may be as fictitious as the two characters discussing it. However the meaning within history as it is in literature, is found in its references. When the two men read Thoreau’s Walden (1854) it is about the renunciation of a social life for an introspective one: which is the path that both men follow in *Ghosts*. When Blue and Black discuss Whitman who had his brain removed after he was dead they both joke about it. Blue suggests Whitman is like the “scarecrow” (p.176) and Black immediately understands that Blue is implying that Whitman is like the scarecrow from the Wizard of Oz. Both history and literature are communicated and a culture of referencing is established between the two.

History and literature are explored in *Ghosts* to discover what they have in common. Both are haunting presences and both are understood through the nature of referencing. In *The Locked Room*, the idea of linking historical and literary ghosts to the text is further emphasised. The main character, the elusive Fanshawe whose absence haunts the text and other characters is named after the title of Nathaniel

¹⁴⁴ Lewis argues in “The Strange Case of Paul Auster” that “the three novels of the New York Trilogy illustrate Hawthorne’s moral, that, “by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing place, altogether” (*N Y Trilogy*, p.5).

Hawthorne's first novel. His story *Wakefield* that is told in *Ghosts* has striking parallels to *The Locked Room*.¹⁴⁵ The story is about a man who deserts his family for no apparent reason and lives only a short distance away from them, keeping watch. He even passes his wife in the street, only to remain unrecognised. Finally he returns many years later and she lets him into the house.¹⁴⁶ Fanshawe is like Wakefield in that he too deserts his family without apparent reason. Like Wakefield, he too, claims to have been close enough to pass them in the street without being recognised (p.309). The narrator fears that Fanshawe, like Wakefield, will return one day to be let in the house by Sophie. Like the connection to Poe's story, to films such as Mitchum's Out of the Past, to other authors, *The Locked Room* and the other parts of the trilogy reference other stories.¹⁴⁷ The same story is not retold: Fanshawe is not like Wakefield and has no intention of returning.¹⁴⁸ Yet the presence of the literary ghosts remain, emphasising Fanshawe's own presence in the text as a literary ghost. The notion of a culture of references and inter-textuality, combined with the idea of cultural representations such as ghosts suggests that the City itself is mediated through this. In this way the City in *The Locked Room* is created as a haunted place; haunted by the ghosts of authors and texts.

¹⁴⁵ Swope argues that one of Blue's former cases, "Gray" (*NY Trilogy*, 166) also reflects Hawthorne's Wakefield in his essay, 'Approaching the Threshold(s) in Postmodern Detective Fiction: Hawthorne's *Wakefield* and other missing persons', pp.207-28, (p216)

¹⁴⁶ The link between Fanshawe and Hawthorne's story of *Wakefield* is explained more fully in "The relationship within the Narrative Structure of Paul Auster's New York Trilogy" by Nicholas Dawson at <http://www.bluecricket.com/auster/articles/dawson.html>

¹⁴⁷ Golden argues that all three parts of the trilogy can be linked to Hitchcock's films. The voyeurism of "City of Glass" links it explicitly to "Rear Window", but it more closely resembles "Vertigo" as it includes the major theme of the Double, "Ghosts is therefore a better match for "Rear Window" and finally "The Locked Room" is associated with "Psycho". Strengthening these links is the idea that Ayuster uses Hitchcockian themes and style, such as the "red herring" plot and an appearance in his own work. Cameron Golden, 'From Punishment to Possibility; Re-imagining Hitchcockian Paradigms in The New York Trilogy' *Mosaic*, 37, 2004, pp.93-209

¹⁴⁸ Tyree links Fanshawe to Hawthorne's 'Fanshawe', rather than Hawthorne's 'Wakefield'. He sees Auster's treatment of Fanshawe is comparable to that of Hawthorne's. "Fanshawe is a creation given up for adoption, entirely disowned and repudiated, if not actively stifled or murdered" and so... "Fanshawe is to be hidden in a locked room" and in this way he figures in Melville's static prison world. Quotes from Tyree, Jim, 'Fanshawe's Ghost' in *New England Review*, 24 (2003), pp.76-86 (p.77,78 and p.85)

The construction of the City is not merely mediated through overt references to past authors. There are other ways in which past authors inform the text. Melville and Whitman's legacy of the atrocious and sublime is present, for example. The Stillmans, the reduction of Blue's activity and Fanshawe's self imprisonment all reference Melville's static world.¹⁴⁹ Quinn's and Stillman's fascination with the streets, Blue's marvel at New York's landmarks and the City as a place, which feeds the narrators imagination, where he "can give birth to a thousand imaginary souls" (N Y Trilogy, 252). Yet it is not simply the authors who have been named which subscribe to the creation of the City. The Modernist authors, for example, who saw the City as a place of disillusionment, also contribute to its construction. Quinn, for example, celebrates the City in which he live. "...this finally was all he ever asked of things: to be nowhere. New York was the nowhere he built around himself..." (N Y Trilogy, 4). Paradoxically Quinn celebrates the City as a place of emptiness, the same emptiness which, Modernists such as Eliot criticised, as their disillusionment with the City stemmed from the idea that it was soulless. The narrator of *The Locked room* becomes disillusioned in a similar way, as for him Fanshawe is the heart or soul of the City. When he can no longer find Fanshawe and the City hides Fanshawe from him, the narrator becomes increasingly disillusioned with the City. In this way the Modernist view of the City is incorporated into the text, and into the character's constructions of New York.

The gothic city images that arose during the 1940s are also present. In *City of Glass* for example, the idea of the doppelganger, Frankenstein and his son are present. In *The Locked Room*, however it is the ideas of Bellows and Motley that can be seen.

¹⁴⁹ It can be said that Quinn, Blue and Fanshawe all become still men (Stillman) as all begin travelling the city by car, train and bus and are slowly reduced to still, static, Bartleby-like figures.

The narrator's dangerous obsession with Fanshawe represents the body of the city which is restless and dangerous. The narrator's obsession with Fanshawe can also be seen as representing an obsession with death as the character of Fanshawe invokes the gothic sublime. "Fanshawe's compulsion to a death like solitude was established in childhood through figurations of the sublime," according to Bernstein who cites Fanshawe's climb into a "magic" box and into an open grave as examples.¹⁵⁰ The idea of the "locked room" becomes increasingly clear as this acts as a metaphor for the relationship between the narrator and Fanshawe. It does not merely represent an idea that the narrator is always excluded from knowing or reaching Fanshawe. The locked room is an idea that stems from representations of the world of the gothic. Mandoff explains that the locked room relates to an "inside and outside which is the Gothic dimension; inside and outside is the line along which protagonists move, between experience and innocence, danger and security, chaos and order, conscious and subconscious..."¹⁵¹ This gothic dimension informs the City. It is full of locked rooms, dark places, illusions, secrets and deception. The narrator's obsession with Fanshawe and his journey through the City in search of Fanshawe calls this Gothic dimension of the City into being. The narrator is like the gothic protagonist who is trying to negotiate his way inside believing that this will lead him to Fanshawe. Mandoff explains that "the inside and outside are places in the same universe" (50). The narrator and Fanshawe live in the same City yet one belongs to the outside and one to the inside. The City is constructed from more than one perspective then, as Fanshawe admits that in New York, "I came close to a kind of horror there" (N Y Trilogy, 309). Fanshawe lives in the "inside" realm of the City then and the narrator who lives on the

¹⁵⁰ Stephen Bernstein, 'Auster's Sublime Closure: *The Locked Room*' in Beyond the Red Notebook ed. Dennis Barone, 1995, pp. 88-105 (p.96).

¹⁵¹ Mark S. Mandoff, 'Inside, Outside and the Gothic Locked Room Mystery,' in Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression ed. Kenneth W Graham (New York: AMS Press, 1989) pp. 49-62 (p.49)

outside cannot access him and is forced in the end to leave Fanshawe locked in his room. The City thus continues to incorporate the inside and outside without collapsing these boundaries.

Other later influences include Postmodernists. Bernstein suggests *The Locked Room* is comparative with Beckett's "The Unnamable" as there is a nameless narrator and a concern with solitude and also DeLillo's White Noise as "similarly it develops an interrelationship between plotting and death" (Barone, The Red Notebook, 99-100). However the significant connection with the Postmodern authors here is not simply the literary references but the postmodern pre-occupation with language. Language is important in Postmodernist texts and often the medium through which the city is conveyed. DeLillo employs office jargon to show a bleak place in Americano, where the discourse of office workers has a de-humanising effect, enhanced by the increase in technology. Ellis also sees technology as dehumanising and employs the discourse of consumer culture in his novels. This replaces depth with surface. Auster employs the language of the detective and replaces solution with mystery. However, his interest in language extends beyond the reduction of people through a given discourse. There is evidence in the text to suggest that Auster investigates language itself as the source of frustration to people. The characters in Auster's work become alienated by the City and language. Quinn discovers the answer to Stillmans theory of language and Stillman alienates himself in trying to discover this. Fanshawe writes the anti-thesis to this theory and alienates himself from the narrator who cannot follow his text. The City takes each character on a journey to discover the solution to the mystery of language. Investigating language itself, rather than engaging with a particular discourse alienates the characters from everyone else in the City. The

advance of technology does not alienate the characters but the notion that they cannot find the answers they seek.

The City itself is constructed and understood through a series of discourses: the investigation of language itself removes the characters from others in the City. When the City is presented in the form of images, mediated through language or understood in historical or cultural terms it can be communicated to others. When the characters identify with the City it can be communicated to others. For example, when Blue identifies with the City as a place of the strange and marvellous this can be relayed to the reader. The City can be communicated even as a banal place. O'Hara for example, celebrates the discourse of the City with his poems of everyday urban iconography. Auster, also uses banality in the City. He describes more than once Quinn's bodily functions. The use of banality relates to the humour of the novel and indeed of the City, rather than a stifling constituent of the City. The banality connects readers to Quinn, rather than disconnects as it does in Delillo or Coupland's work. Instead it is the unfamiliar or the uncanny that distances readers from the text. The banality in the City is rare and precious, rather than dull and predictable in the unstable world of the City, which is subject to changing representations. What is beyond communication and disconnects the characters from the reader, other characters and the City is the investigation into language. When Quinn finds the solution to Stillman's theory the City recedes from the text, it is reduced somehow, the reader is lost and the other characters have no connection to him. When Fanshawe writes the anti-thesis to Quinn's solution he too loses his connections to everyone and everything. The City then is not found through the investigation of language itself but through an investigation into its discourses, references, culture, history and literature. The City is thus mediated through language and its images are constructed through language as

much as through a visual approach.

The Underworld of the City

The view of the City, from a vertical or horizontal angle shows “New York as an inexhaustible space, a labyrinth of endless steps...” (N Y Trilogy, 3). In this vast space there is room for more than one representation, more than one dimension, more than one discourse. To refer back to Pynchon’s The Crying of Lot 49, there is an underground movement where an alternative postal system has been established. The City, here, works on two levels. The surface level is one where the US Government Postal system is the one which is known and used, yet beneath this surface is an underworld of secrecy and mystery with secret signs, iconography, words and texts, which belong to an underworld of the City. Similarly there is an underworld in The New York Trilogy which consists of authors, theories and texts. This is an underworld, which like the one in The Crying of Lot 49 is not complementary to its surface level counterpart, but like its Other. The New York, which is represented by authors, theories and texts are well known like the US Postal system. Readers recognise famous authors such as Melville and Whitman and the literary canon of authors, which is invoked through the text. Readers also recognise the images such as the gothic imagery and iconography and the discourses of the City. However Auster’s underground system of authors is Other to the recognised literary canon of writers. Auster’s authors are unknown “ghost” writers who write texts that are “unread” and challenge recognised theories that have been acknowledged as having validity to their basis. In this chapter this thesis would like to present an argument, which demonstrates that there is an underworld in Auster’s City and how this operates.

In *City of Glass* there are several authors. There is Quinn, Stillman, Auster and the

narrator. Quinn, like the other authors is unknown.

“No book by William Wilson ever included an author’s photograph or bio-graphical note. William Wilson was not listed in any writer’s directory; he did not give interviews.

His agent’s secretary answered interviews, and all the letters he received. As far as Quinn could tell, no one knew his secret” (N Y Trilogy, 5).

Quinn is ultimately a ghostwriter because he writes under a pseudonym and no one can connect his work to him, yet his texts still exist. As far as the reader is concerned

Quinn is entirely unknown, as the reader has no access to the content of his work yet

his work haunts the text. Ghosts who materialise through the City haunt him:

and at the train station, “with great clarity and precision he saw Bartleby’s window

and the blank brick wall before him” (N Y Trilogy, 52). In this way Melville is

inscribed into the City and in turn Quinn’s Suicide Squeeze becomes part of the

make-up of the City as a girl sits in the train station reading it. Just as the characters in

the trilogy discuss famous authors like Melville and their works: this is mirrored by

Quinn, discussing his own work, with the girl at the station (p.52-3). Quinn’s work,

like the work of famous authors haunts the text and City.

Although Quinn’s work haunts the City: the other makes a far deeper impression

authors. Stillman’s work consists of an alternative solution to language, which is

literally buried in the streets of the City to be unearthed only by Quinn. His work

haunts Quinn, even before they meet as Quinn discovers the experiment performed on

his son to find the secret of a pure or natural language. Quinn’s curiosity as a reader

makes him read and critically engage with Stillman’s work. He does not necessarily

agree with Stillman, for example on the point of who served as secretary to John

Milton (p.45) but Quinn’s interpretation of the text is available to the reader (unlike

Quinn’s own texts of which the reader knows nothing of the content). Quinn is able to

describe this theory of language, which unlike the known theories or theorists, which

haunt the text at surface level, has no authority. Instead this theory belongs to an alternative system of theories, authors and fiction and it is those that are part of this system, like Quinn, who can access it. It is only those like Quinn, therefore, that can understand significant aspects of this text and interpret the clues into meaning, such as the date calculated by Dark, which was when the foundations would be ready for the resurrection of Babel. It is Quinn who realizes that this date 1960, is the same year Stillman locked up his son.

Further to this Stillman's theory is scattered all over the City. Quinn finds reference to the theory inscribed in the streets as Stillman spells out the Tower of Babel like a secret sign that those who do not belong to the underworld of the City have no concept of. The City is full of broken objects, disconnected, broken, people and dilapidated buildings. These all relate to Stillman's theory of language as he tries to name each broken thing in the City to make the language, if not the object, whole again. Stillman explains that he is creating a language to fit our fragmented world, "a Languages that will at last say what we have to say. For our words no longer correspond to the world" (p.77). The flotsam and jetsam, the disowned and abandoned make up the underworld of the City and act as a metaphor for Stillman's theory of language and a metonymical device for the use of language itself, which is general and non-specific like the objects, which clutter the City. Quinn reads the signs of the theory and notes the broken objects. He is drawn further into investigating and learning about Stillman's theory rather than concentrating on the case. He disguises himself to find out about Stillman's intentions only to discover more about the theory. Stillman explains that he is collecting the broken objects so that he can name them as they really are. Since they no longer perform their original function their original

name can no longer be applied according to Stillman who intends to re-name all these objects and create an infallible language which is able to name all objects, a language where the signifier and signified have a perfect relationship. Quinn's interest in Stillman's intentions towards his son, are now transferred to an interest in the problem of language.

Quinn becomes increasingly absorbed by the theory of language and the City into which it is inscribed. Quinn becomes part of this underworld of the City. He starts to see, hear and feel things that others can't. "The air around him was soft, almost sweet, as though it no longer belonged to the city" (N Y Trilogy, 111). He is beginning to move from one dimension of the City to another. He is less able to function in the City as he has known it and moves from his home to the streets where the theory is inscribed, an almost unconscious movement towards Stillman's text. Quinn changes the way he lives, his sleeping, his eating and he chooses to live in a metal bin which is filled with the broken refuse which plays a part in Stillman's theory, as these are the objects Stillman intends to rename. Quinn himself undergoes physiological changes as he becomes more like a "Robinson Crusoe" which he does not mind seeing that "he had been one thing before and now he was another" (N Y Trilogy, 121). In this physiological, surface change he is able to blend into his new environment, which consists of the city's underworld as well as identifying with it on an internal, spiritual and intellectual level. He has changed in other ways too, preferring to adopt a multitude of identities such as Paul Auster, Peter Stillman and Max Work rather than a single, core identity. He finds that the underneath the surface the City does not operate in the same way and "Quinn was not surprised that the front door at 69th Street opened without a key" (N Y Trilogy, 127). He has become part of this alternative world, and he no longer relies on what is logical or factual. He no longer

relies on food, sleep, housing or money: in the underground world of authors and writing it is writing in the red notebook which sustains him and which leads him to write the solution to Stillman's theory of language.¹⁵²

Quinn's solution occurs when he is fully embedded in the underworld of the City, when those that walk the surface of the City no longer see or "notice" him. He is no longer visually or linguistically present in this world. He belongs to a group of alternative authors and his writing changes when it begins to merge with the natural world.

"Quinn no longer had any interest in himself. He wrote about the stars, the earth, his hopes for mankind. He felt that his words had been severed from him, that now they were part of the world at large, as real and specific as a stone, lake or a flower. They no longer had anything to do with him" (N Y Trilogy, 131).

Quinn's writing has changed: transcending his earlier texts, his detective notes, even himself. It is as if he has reached an epiphany of language as he becomes part of a linguistic underworld, which seems to defy visual and geographic space; the world Quinn presents the illusion that it is only made up of his text. He provides the answers Stillman could never find, solving Stillman's case. He is able to write words, which close the gap between the epistemological world and the physical world where each word exactly corresponds to its signified: the relationship between sign, signified and signifier is perfect and infallible. Again the reader has no access to this text and Quinn cannot be followed in his new world of a pure language. The reader has lost the opportunity to access the pure language and the collapse of the Tower of Babel is echoed as the red notebook ends.

Stillman and Quinn are not the only authors in the text. The narrator and Auster also

¹⁵² Bilton explains in An Introduction to Contemporary American Fiction, that "Quinn is seen as completing Stillman's linguistic experiment," (69).

belong to the underground movement of authors, but their presence is not registered or manifested in an underground wasteland of a City full of broken objects and fragmented language.¹⁵³ Instead the boundaries between fiction and reality are disrupted by the character of Paul Auster who shares his name with the author of the trilogy. There are other aspects of Auster's life inserted into the text such as the name Daniel, which is shared by Quinn and Auster's real-life son and according to Dawson, "the women in the trilogy are facsimiles of Auster's wife Siri."¹⁵⁴ The inclusion of this character has a de-stabilizing effect on the reader, as he does not belong in the text but to the real world. What is perhaps interesting about this character who acts as a double for the real-life Auster, is that he does belong to the underworld of authors and texts that do not fit with the surface of the City. There is an implication that the double could be the authentic Paul Auster and that the real-life author has taken his work. This is implied through the fictional Auster's theories relating to authorship authenticity. He questions the authorship of Don Quixote, referring to "the book inside the book Cervantes wrote, the one he imagined he was writing" (N Y Trilogy, 97), which of course reflects upon *City of Glass* the book inside the trilogy that his double (Auster) imagined he was writing. This provides some confusion over the question of author authenticity. However there is also a suggestion that it is the influence of the underworld of the City and its authors that have a stake in the authenticity of authorship.

The underground authors have the ability to influence author authenticity because they are the unknown authors who have often concealed their identity, hidden behind

¹⁵³ Quinn and Stillman's dimension or vision of the City is much like Eliot's concept or construction of the City in "The Wasteland."

¹⁵⁴ "Paul Auster's Urban Nothingness" by Nicola Caleffi at <http://www.bluecricket.com/Auster/Articles/Dawson>

real authors and pseudonyms. Author authenticity is obscured in the underworld of the City where the rules that apply to known authors such as Whitman are not applicable. Auster's double, the manipulative character of Paul Auster, demonstrates this effectively. Firstly, he manipulates Quinn who "felt like taking Auster in his arms and declaring his friendship for life" (N Y Trilogy, 95), gaining his trust before abandoning him until he had completed his text (the red notebook). The idea that Auster is the author's double also reminds us that he, like the author is in a powerful position and able to place Quinn in a vulnerable position and manipulate him, making him take the case that leads further into a underworld entrenched in mystery rather than a logical solution. Secondly Auster speaks of the Don Quixote text which he is investigating on the grounds that Quixote manipulated everything, that he "orchestrated the whole thing himself" to see "to what extent would people tolerate blasphemies if they gave them amusement?" (N Y Trilogy 99-100). Here Auster, implies that he has manipulated the whole text himself as orchestrates the red notebook, which tells Quinn's story is the positioning of the narrator who interprets the text. Finally it is the real-life Auster who is the double, not the character in the book, perhaps challenging the reader as to what he might tolerate so long as he finds it as amusing as the character, Auster. There is no master detective or arch criminal in the trilogy, but in an underworld of authors, Auster is the master or "super" or "arch" author, the one who controls the other characters like puppets, deciding who, when and where should disappear or not.

A similar pattern occurs in *Ghosts*. Unlike Quinn, Blue is able to negotiate his way through the underworld of the City, reading magazines and other material by Gold and other unknown authors.. He is a far stronger character and aware that in this space in the City the usual rules do not apply. Indeed he engages with the underworld

by appearing in numerous disguises including appearing as Whitman, thus undermining author authenticity in much the same way as Auster. However Black is still able to tell Blue in the end that: "At least I know what I've been doing. I've had my job to do and I've done it. But you're nowhere Blue. You've been lost from the first day" (N Y Trilogy, 196). Perhaps the mistake Blue makes is thinking that knowing the underworld is not sufficient, although he does not allow this world to manipulate him to the degree that Quinn does. However, he is not an author and does not write his own text, becoming instead obsessed with the contents of Black's work which (like the reader) he cannot access. Perhaps Blue's mistake is to think he can exert some degree of control in this world without taking on the role of an author himself, limiting himself to the role of observer or reader. In this way Blue has become the writer's tool for Black, who has orchestrated this and successfully reduce Blue to a shadow of himself and empowered himself as an author in doing so.

In *The Locked Room* the narrator is not part of the underworld of the City. This is a constant source of frustration for him as he makes every attempt to cross the boundaries between the two dimensions of the City, which operate like the Gothic inside. The narrator is always looking for a route inside, as this will give him access to Fanshawe. He goes to extreme measures to do this including having sex with Fanshawe's lovers and Fanshawe's mother. Unlike Blue and Quinn who are struggling to negotiate their way through an underworld of authors and texts; the narrator is desperately attempting to become part of it. Fanshawe entices him with his writing and his ironic announcement in a letter that "writing was an illness that plagued me" is something that the narrator "clung to...as evidence of a new trick" (N Y Trilogy, 240). The narrator is clearly drawn in by everything that Fanshawe does:

the more that he denies writing texts, seeking his family, money and so on the more the narrator seeks to find him not believing what Fanshawe says as it is always a “new trick.” The narrator cannot find Fanshawe, however, even when Fanshawe claims to have passed him in the street implying that Fanshawe exists in another dimension, one that cannot be seen by city-dwellers such as the narrator who only see what is present at surface level.

The narrator continues to be frustrated by Fanshawe’s attempts to keep hidden.

The City, which Fanshawe inhabits, is one that is not known to him. While it might be the “Neverland” that Fanshawe speaks of in his book by the same title, or “Blackout” (another text) the narrator and indeed the reader will never know. The narrator has always been distanced from Fanshawe’s world telling us his actions were “a piece of magic” (N Y Trilogy, 213), or “though I was present, the event that was sealed off from me” (N Y Trilogy, 222). The narrator cannot reach Fanshawe and the reasons for this is implied by a number of suggestions in the text. One reason that the narrator may not be able to access Fanshawe is that he may not be his double but his Other. This is implied when Fanshawe stops a racial attack on the narrator. The reason the narrator cannot access his world is because it is Other to him. This idea is later confused by Fanshawe’s mother insisting they were like “twins” on more than one occasion. However there is also another suggestion from the narrator himself that “No one can cross the boundary into another-for the simple reason that no one can gain access to himself” (N Y Trilogy, 249). The narrator cannot cross the boundary to become Fanshawe except on the outside where he lays claim to his family, work and money: yet he cannot access his inside. However when he publishes Fanshawe’s work there are rumours that Fanshawe is an invention, a hoax and that he is the real

author.¹⁵⁵ This is another possibility; that Fanshawe is the narrator. He is another of the narrator's selves, an invention that the narrator has convinced himself is a real and separate person, yet he is not. Certainly the narrator is loath to claim Fanshawe's texts, more so than his family, as this will make him Fanshawe's "executioner." Yet there are no answers, simply possibilities, none of which allow us access to the unknown underworld of authors and writing in *The Locked Room* and this exclusion is what frustrates the validity of textual possibilities.

The underworld of the City in *The Locked Room* is unknown and inaccessible to the reader. For the narrator, who tries to force himself into this world, it is indeed a trick. All he is presented with is a world of illusions where logic is undermined, such as the appearance of Quinn in *The Locked Room* who may or not be the same Quinn from *City of Glass*. The narrator at last has the text that will give him access to this world and Fanshawe. However all finds is that:

"all the words seemed familiar to me, and yet they seemed to have been put together strangely, as though their final purpose was to cancel each other out...Each sentence erased the sentence before it, each paragraph made the next paragraph impossible...He had answered each question with another question, and therefore everything remained open, unfinished..." (N Y Trilogy, 313).

Fanshawe has written a text, which breaks all the surface rules of authorship, because it deliberately fails its author in that it is incommunicable. Words are disconnected to other words, sentences do not make sense and paragraphs are not linked. It is a chaotic dissemblance of language. It defies reading. It echoes the collapse of language from the Tower of Babel. The gap between the epistemological world and the world of physical being are widened: each word referring only to itself. Each word bears no relationship to the physical world. The last link between the work and the physical

¹⁵⁵ Tyree reveals another dimension to the illusion of the authorship claim. His essay on Fanshawe who figures in Hawthorne, Highsmith and Auster discusses how this figure operates in literature. He explains, "Auster's Fanshawe hides behind the narrator, manipulating him at a distance and creating through him a public literary persona" in Jim Tyree, "Fanshaw's Ghost" pp. 76-86 (p. 79)

world is destroyed is the red notebook which the narrator destroys in frustration. This erases the relationship between the physical and epistemological world. Finally for the narrator it is a “trick”: there is no access to the inside through language.

For the reader there is also another trick being played here, one which suggests the narrator may not be the dupe of Fanshawe. The key to *The Locked Room* is the identity of the narrator. As Alford tells us, “In Auster’s work the solution to the mystery is not the discovery of the criminal ‘Other’ but how that other is implicated in the self-constitution of the investigator.”¹⁵⁶ The identity of the narrator is implicated in the relationship between himself and Fanshawe. There are two arguments to which it would be interesting to refer. Alford argues in “Mirrors of Madness” that it is Auster who is the narrator in *The Locked Room*, on the basis that the narrator’s family mirrors Auster’s and that also the narrator claims authorship to *City of Glass* and *Ghosts*. If the narrator is Auster, this is another way of reminding the reader who is controlling what happens in the text. However, Jym Tyree makes another interesting argument, regarding Fanshawe. He sees Auster’s interest in Fanshawe as an interest in the story of what happened to Hawthorne’s book of the same name. He explains, “Hawthorne, desperate to destroy his first work, ‘Fanshawe’, hides Fanshawe almost pathologically in a Dimmesdale-like fashion, as if he really had committed some unforgive-able crime” (Fanshawe’s Ghost, p.183). This loosely describes what happens to Fanshawe in *The Locked Room*, implying (a far as this thesis is concerned) that this story is the story of the disowned text. This makes Fanshawe the personification or characterisation of a text. Thus the narrator, irrevocably linked with his own “work” which he seeks to destroy, must be Hawthorne. In the end, the

¹⁵⁶ Steven E. Alford, “Mirrors of Madness: Paul Auster’s ‘The New York Trilogy’” *Critique*, 37 (1995), 17-33 (p.19).

narrator (Hawthorne) destroys what he thinks is 'Fanshawe' (the text) but he has the wrong text and 'Fanshawe' still exists, locked away. It is also possible for Hawthorne to be the author of the preceding texts as they have been seen as re-writes of his work, suggesting he is the "true" author not Auster.

However, whether one looks at Auster or Hawthorne as the narrator or sees the identity of the narrator as belonging to someone else, the endless cycle of contradiction prevents the positive identification of the narrator. Instead the underworld of un-identified persons offers endless possibilities of discussion and theory.

In the end what happens to the underworld of authors and texts? While the texts remain the authors seem to vanish once they have completed their texts and no longer function. Black and Fanshawe for example, both meet with violent ends precipitated by the frustration of the other characters. The narrator of *The Locked Room* breaks down when Fanshawe cannot give him the answers he desires.

"You're a fool," I said, unable to think of anything else... Then overwhelmed by my own weakness and stupidity, I started pounding on the door like a child, shaking and sputtering, on the point of tears" (N Y Trilogy, 312).

The narrator's frustration at being denied answers reflects the reader's frustration. Similarly Blue is also frustrated as he beats Black into a pulp in his rage. Perhaps Stillman is also frustrated as he commits suicide. The frustration is born out of a helplessness to solve the mystery. The mystery of what happens to Quinn, Blue and Fanshawe still remain. The skills of the reader/detective are useless in uncovering the mysteries belonging to the author underworld. The reader and detectives knowledge has in fact been used against them. As Gates tells us the "meta-detective story...plays with audience expectation" because we "know detective story

conventions”(190). Similarly the trilogy plays with the characters and readers knowledge and expectations with the creation of an underworld, which denies solutions.

We also know about narrative conventions, author conventions and theoretical conventions. The City underworld in this text does not merely play with expectations relating to the detective genre but to our sense of author, narrative and text. The narrator explains the incredible bond between himself and Fanshawe.

“He was the one who was with me, the one who shared my thoughts, the one I saw whenever I looked up from myself” (N Y Trilogy, 206).

This bond between the narrator (with whom the reader identifies) and Fanshawe is unnatural. This makes the bond between author and reader unnatural. The balance between author, text and reader is undermined here. There are many other instances in which the authors and texts do not match our expectations. The reader expects to be able to read the texts of the authors yet he cannot read Quinn’s, Black’s or Fanshawe’s texts. From a theoretical point of view this undermines Derrida’s famous declaration “there is nothing outside the text”: ironically there is nothing inside these texts, which is communicable to the reader. On the other hand we can read the City purely as text as it is mediated through authors, theory and text in which case what Derrida claimed seems absolute here. Barthes’s theory of language, Foucault’s writings on author, text and reader, Baudrillard’s sense of hyper-reality and a world built on illusion also seem to be present, here. The numerous reflective devices, the doubles, the uncanny means that Lacan and Freud might also be invoked and like Derrida their theories may be supported or undermined as the text subjects itself to constant contradictions.

The reader also expects that the author may write under an assumed identity; yet these authors have multiple identities and those who claim to write the stories in the trilogy (the narrators) are altogether nameless. The narrative also defies what the reader knows. We are aware of meta-detective stories; unlike classical narratives they do not have closed endings. However these narratives break other rules. The author appearing in his own novel, characters such as Quinn and Stillman appearing in the third part of the trilogy and author-characters disguised as other authors such as Melville and Whitman precipitating an endlessly referential cycle of authors known and unknown. The theories of language and text discussed in the trilogy and their solutions are also unknown to the reader; they simply serve to provide an alternative canon of theory. The underworld of the City, then is one that consists of an underground movement of authors, theory and text (which breaks the conventions as we know them) which offers a marginal or alternative literary canon.

The literary canon belonging to the underworld of the City is in sharp contrast to the literary canon to which the text draws upon to illustrate the construction of New York. The well-known, well traversed, New York is not reflected back in the construction of the underworld, rather it is a distorted reflection of a strange and illusory place, where what is known becomes unknown, what is logical becomes illogical, what is solution is reflected back as mystery. There is something at play here, which has caused all this chaos. The clue that the reader is given is the meta-fictional joke, which is played out between Quinn and Auster. When Quinn calls him, Auster explains that he is not a detective but an author. Quinn then points out that, "You're the only one in the book" (N Y Trilogy, 94). The joke is that while Quinn is stating that he is the only Auster in the telephone book he is also the only Auster in the trilogy. Of course what Quinn might also be unwittingly pointing out is that Auster is the only authentic

author/detective in the book. If Auster is the only authentic author amongst all the other characters then he is the key to the underworld of the City.

This is an underworld of which we only catch glimpses, in our doubles and our illusions. It is a parallel world in which we can believe in, nevertheless, a romanticised, mysterious world of unknown (unpublished) authors, text and theory. This is a world to which we simply do not have access. Who is the master of this world? Who creates this deceptive world where the rules can be broken and logic undermined to produce chaos where there should be order. Of course all answers lead back to the author. The narrator of each part of the trilogy plays a game with the reader, subverting narrative conventions to undermine the reader's understanding and making it difficult for him to negotiate his way. The narrator of *City of Glass* (tongue in cheek) blames Paul Auster, who, "I am convinced has behaved thoroughly badly throughout" (N Y Trilogy, 133). The same narrator who is to reveal that *City of Glass* is only "half the story." The story is based on what is written in the red notebook. The narrator, proves himself untrustworthy in the end because he begins the story prior to Quinn's writing in the red notebook so he must have fabricated it in part. The further the reader begins to search into a particular idea the more questions must be asked and mystery invoked. If we assume, however, that Auster is the master author and the narrator's comments are part of the illusion he draws then it is, as the narrator of *The Locked Room* suggests, a "trick", one that is exposed when Auster explains his theory of authorship relating to *Don Quixote* and one, which we "tolerate" given that it, amuses us.

However, there are some other more serious ideas at work here. In the underworld the rules are changed and in this way Paul Auster offers a challenge to theory. It has been

seen how the conventions of traditional narrative have been changed, the conventions of traditional theory are also questioned. Auster offers a challenge to Barthes and Foucault's famous essays. He questions Barthes, "Death of the Author" by asserting both the mysteries surrounding *Don Quixote* and ideas throughout The New York Trilogy that this text is being manipulated and of course appearing in this text. "Paul Auster quite literally rejects theory's imperative to die or disperse: he appears, conspicuously, throughout his novels."¹⁵⁷ Auster is not simply the master author but also the master detective in his text as overall he investigates the author-function, the author presence and the power of the author to manipulate character, text, narrator and reader.

However the investigation of the author may not be the master-case, which Auster investigates as much as the case of language, where the characters search for a referent outside language (mentioned earlier) can be observed. "The New York Trilogy deconstructs logocentrism, a primary subject of Derrida's subversions...Logocentrism, the term applied to uses and theories of language grounded in the metaphysics of presence is the "crime" that Auster investigates."¹⁵⁸ The correspondence between sign and signifier, searched for by Stillman, discovered by Quinn and obliterated by Fanshawe is a primary concern here, for the self exists only insofar as language or text grants existence, as Auster demonstrates by making his characters disappear from the text. Ultimately, his City of New York, too, only exists in terms of its heritage, its' images, its' illusions, its' underworld as far as language will permit it. On the other hand language is a powerful tool, which

¹⁵⁷ John Zilcolsky, 'The Revenge of the Author: Paul Auster's Challenge to Theory' in *Critique*, 39 (1998) pp.195-207.

¹⁵⁸ Alison Russell, 'Deconstructing The New York Trilogy: Paul Auster's Anti-detective fiction', *Critique*, 31 (1990) pp.71-85.

mediates this City to us and while we can never learn the secret of language as Auster never reveals this, the City and its numerous authors are made known to us through Austers series of investigations as the Master author/detective.

A Conclusion of Three Cities

The City novel has clearly undergone some considerable development since the Modernist Era. However, what this thesis demonstrates is that there are some commonalities between all three novels, despite their being by very different authors writing about very different cities.

All three novels respond to the Modernist pre-occupation with the City. While Morrison and Welsh encompass the celebration of the City in their novels; Auster portrays the Modernist disillusionment. Modernist themes and techniques are also employed by Morrison and Welsh, such as the use of “stream of consciousness”. Auster engages with the ghosts of earlier authors in and who have written of his City. The themes and tropes of the City introduced by the Modernists such as the flaneur/flaneurie are also present in their novels as many characters wander the City. However some of these themes such as the blurring of private/public boundaries have been developed. In all three novels what are private thoughts, actions and feelings become public knowledge and the public boundary now dominates the private boundary. In Trainspotting bodily functions and private thoughts are laid bare. In Jazz the private pain and misery of her characters is revealed by the City itself and in The New York Trilogy the constant surveillance, investigation and spying performed by the characters are very intrusive.

The idea of the City as an alienating place is also emphasised in the novels as they all portray characters who are also isolated, lonely, fractured and alone. The Modernist notion of negotiating one’s way through the City using geographical skills is also present as the novels do portray a geography of the City. However this notion has also been developed as the characters in all three novels utilise other skills to negotiate the

City. Quinn learns to read the City as text as well as land as he reads letters inscribed onto the City and Blue has to use his knowledge of the streets to solve his cases.

Violet and Joe have to develop knowledge of the City in order to understand how to live in it and Welsh's characters need to know where to go to feed their addictions.

It is not just Modernist history that influences the novels. As Auster, recognises, by his inclusion of literary ghosts, the construction of a City is based upon its history and culture. It is because the two views of New York were developed by Whitman and Melville, who precede the Modernists, that the two haunt the text and the City.

The jazz artists of the 1920s and the traditions of also haunt Morrison's work the beauty business. Jazz is also informed by the politics, racial aesthetic and the Harlem Renaissance, as unlike the other two novels it is not set in contemporary times. Welsh's novel is haunted by the Scottish traditions of violence and disillusionment and the Scottish stereotypes that developed over the last century.

There is a history of the City and also a literary history attached to a given City and this is inherent in all three novels.

Where the novels may differ is in their construction of their individual Cities. While all three novels offer views, constructions and images of the City; they are very much views attached to a specific City rather than a generalised view of the City. Welsh's City glorifies the hellish aspect of the City as he revels in the dark alleyways, the decrepit buildings, the squalor and vice. His (re) construction of Edinburgh's Leith is more a vision associated with the traditional perception of Glasgow. Morrison's City celebrates the promise of Harlem, the opportunities, the colour and culture whilst balancing this with the warning that the City incites desire and its promises are filled with the pitfalls of loneliness, pain, prejudice and violence.

Auster's City however is filled with the never ending search for the promise of the City. This is always undermined by alienation, loss and fragmentation.

There is clearly more than one view of the City in each novel. What is common to all three is that each has an underworld in the City. Auster's underworld is constructed by authors, language and text and is a world that can only be mediated through language. This world also features riddles, mazes, mysteries and an endless cycle and re-cycle of references. Welsh's underworld is the one belonging to the drug using, disaffected youths that are his characters and is not the Edinburgh that readers are familiar with, but a hellish place closer to our vision of the imagined Glasgow than Edinburgh. Morrison's underworld is implied by the paradoxical heaven and hell of Harlem, the underworld being the hellish aspect of Harlem, the "cracks" in the pavement which characters fall into and the heavenly part comprising of freedom and opportunity. All three novels also connect their City to its traditions and famous features. For example, Welsh talks of Princes Street in Edinburgh, Morrison mentions famous musicians and the train line from South to North America and Auster speaks of the New York icons such as Brooklyn Bridge. This gives the reader the over-view or view of the City surface, giving the underworld context. The underworld is interesting because, despite vast differences in the novels, this has manifested itself in a large proportion of all three texts. What is underlying the surface view is of significance as it is here that the individuality of the City and the author's perception of that City are present.

To outline the development of the recent City novel, based on the evidence offered by the texts studied; firstly there is a recognisable shift from Modernism in terms of style, technique and trope. While all three texts acknowledge Modernism and are

informed by some of the techniques and tropes, there are also other techniques, which appear in the novels. The tropes have also been developed as the City as the site of alienation has now become a site for fragmentation, broken selves, and lost/stolen identities, missing persons, infectious bodies and paranoia. Other tropes including negotiation of the City using geography has also been given to change as the more recent novels imply that there are other skills needed to negotiate the City space. The City is also more powerful as it extends its influence in these developed tropes, its influence in reducing the private domain and enhancing the public world and also its ability to affect individuals in their thoughts, actions and behaviour- inciting them to see what is not there, to think differently and to take action.

The authors of these novels set in the City, seem very aware of the influence and power of the City, that it is illusory and often deceives its dwellers. The City is not a background against which the novel is set. Such is the significance of the powerful City, that the three authors reveal its influential and deceptive nature through manifesting these traits in the form of an underworld of the City. This underworld is juxtaposed against the surface image. Thus the City is presented in its real (geographical) terms, its imagined state, developed by its tradition and its character. To clarify the three main characteristics of the recent City novel, based on the evidence of this thesis... The recent City novel can be identified by its relationship with the Modern, its relationship with its dwellers and the development of more than one view of the City, portrayed by the presence of a City underworld.

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