Spanning Spaces:

The Spatial Perception of New York in Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, Lola Ridge's 'The Ghetto', John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*, and James Baldwin's *Another Country*

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis explores the ways in which spatial perceptions function in the urban modernist literature of New York in the early to mid-twentieth century, using primary texts by Hart Crane, Lola Ridge, John Dos Passos, and James Baldwin. By employing a theoretical framework based on concepts by David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre, the thesis explores how these four writers portray the material realities of life in the city, and how they imbue the physical infrastructure of New York with symbolism, using the urban space as a means to discuss both the city's, and the nation's, place in the modern world.

This research makes a methodological intervention in understanding American modernism, highlighting the importance of space and spatial perception to close reading these works, and how their depictions of New York and its physical infrastructure, particularly bridges, are closely related. The thesis covers a large span of time, beginning in 1918 and ending in 1962, but this extensive timeframe offers an important insight into how New York's literary representations chart the oscillating nature of America's national identity throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

The thesis is structured thematically: the first two chapters focus on poetry that broadly characterises New York as a space full of optimistic potential, whilst the third and fourth chapters consider novels with a more pessimistic outlook on both the city and the country. Chapter 1 looks at Hart Crane's epic modernist poem *The Bridge* (1930) and discusses how Crane portrays the Brooklyn Bridge as a symbol of 'wholeness', and how he equates relationships between spaces with spiritual idealism. Chapter 2 explores how Lola Ridge's poem 'The Ghetto' (1918) similarly views New York through an optimistic lens, but by focusing on the Jewish ghettos of the Lower East Side and its inhabitants, she identifies an embryonic American political culture that she predicts will spread across the city and beyond.

By exploring John Dos Passos' depiction of New York in the novel *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), chapter 3 contends with how twentieth-century industrial capitalism makes the city an inescapable and apocalyptic space. Chapter 4 turns to James Baldwin's novel *Another Country* (1962) and how it similarly represents New York as a hopeless space, but specifically for its black population. However, Baldwin's relationship with liberalism means that he still manages to harbour hope that the city, its inhabitants, and the country, can change and embody the idealistic principles communicated by Crane and Ridge.

Fundamentally, this thesis demonstrates that considering the spatial perceptions of New York in these four twentieth-century texts provides important insights into the texts themselves, but also the role New York plays in representing America and its place within modernity.

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INTRODUCTION

> Steel and electricity had created a new world. A new drama had surged from the unmerciful violation of darkness at night, by the violent blaze of electricity and a new polyphony was ringing all around with the scintillating, highly-colored lights. The steel had leaped to hyperbolic altitudes and expanded to vast latitudes with the skyscrapers and with bridges made for the conjunction of worlds.
>
> - Joseph Stella, 'Autobiographical Notes'

Presently, there are twenty-one bridges which connect the island of Manhattan to the rest of the world, including the Roosevelt Island Bridge which spans the eastern half of the East River. These titans of the city's infrastructure help maintain Manhattan's status as 'the city that never sleeps' and, allow the island's residents, commuters, and tourists to traverse the East River, the Hudson or the Harlem River, day or night. These bridges connect Manhattan, not only to the other boroughs of New York City, but to the American mainland in all its spatial diversity. New York, and Manhattan specifically, is a city that is clearly in dialogue with its surroundings and its externalities through the intimidating physical presence of the island's bridges. The materiality of the city's relationships with other spaces makes New York and Manhattan a unique setting to think through how spaces interact and relate to one another.

Brooklyn Bridge, and specifically the role it plays in John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), served as the initial inspiration for this project. In the novel, it appears as a monument to urban alienation and the industrial inhumanity of the modern city, reminiscent of Henry James's depiction of Manhattan and the Brooklyn Bridge in his chapter 'New York Revisited' from *The American Scene* (1907). However, upon then reading Hart Crane's *The Bridge* (1930) I found other meanings and associations entering the bridge's mythos and these affiliations appeared to be in direct opposition to those I had identified in *Manhattan Transfer*: mobility, community, and even spiritual optimism. Despite these two texts being published within five years of each other, and both written by writers within similar literary circles who could broadly be considered leftist (at least at this point in their respective careers), their interpretations of the Brooklyn Bridge were vastly different and subsequently presented two very different versions of New York City. I therefore began to ask myself what role the bridges of New York City play in the literature that tries to define the industrial city space in the twentieth century. Through asking this question it became apparent that what I was really asking was a much larger question: how does spatial perception function in the urban modernist literature of twentieth century New York City?

By using the physical infrastructure of the city (with a particular focus on bridges) to anchor my argument, I explore the ways in which spatial perception and interpretations of the modern city space inform and shape the literature of New York City between the latter end of the second industrial revolution and the early nineteen sixties. By focusing on literary depictions of New York space, one can also map how America's national identity is tested and continually reconsidered. As the two different symbolic underpinnings of Brooklyn Bridge presented by Dos Passos and Crane show, the bridge is more than simply a material object. It can also be a symbol of the city and the nation itself. In his book *Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol* (1979), Alan Tratchenburg claims that John Roebling, the German born civil engineer who designed and built the famous suspension bridge, wanted to infuse the Brooklyn Bridge with the Hegelian trait of *Wirklichkeit*, 'the unity of essence and existence, of the inner world of life and the outer world of its appearance'.[1] In Roebling's spirit, my argument seeks to think through the physical and spatial implications of bridges and spaces in *existence*, but also to consider how spatial relationships impact questions of class, gender, race, relationships between characters, and America's place in the newly emerging modern world: to consider spaces in *essence* as well. To clarify, in this context *essence* refers to a Platonic ideal of the bridge, it's role as a symbol, synecdoche and metaphor, whilst the *existence* refers to the concrete materiality of the bridge and its infrastructural functions.

The first section of this introduction will examine the physical and mythological scope of the Brooklyn Bridge, and in doing so develop how this thesis uses the materiality of New York's infrastructure to actualise the more abstract ways in which spaces are considered in this project. This will then be followed by a section detailing the cultural and historical relevance of New York and why it is both the perfect setting and object of study for the larger literary, socio-political, and spatial questions that the thesis explores. The third section will lay out how my interpretations of bridges relates to geographical and spatial theories, focusing chiefly on the works of David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre, whose studies underpin many of the project's literary assertions.

Richard Haw wrote that with 'each new voice the bridge's image has grown, its cultural lexicon incorporating new concerns and new interpretations'.[2] In this thesis I add to this cultural lexicon through my interpretations of the literature, history, and the city space.

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[1] Alan Trachtenberg, *Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 68.
[2] Richard Haw, *The Brooklyn Bridge: A Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p. 7.

The Brooklyn Bridge: Monument, Myth and Metaphor

John Roebling's inspiration for the Brooklyn Bridge is said to have struck on a winter's day in 1852 whilst he was crossing the East River on a ferryboat.[3] Upon realising his intentions he wrote that '[i]t is a want of my intellectual nature to bring in harmony all that surrounds me. Every new harmony I discover is to me another messenger of peace'.[4] He saw the bridge as a way of uniting, not only Manhattan and Brooklyn, but also as a way of uniting the entire nation, making the continent, in the words of Willard Glazer, 'entirely spanned' into a utopian totality.[5] Indeed, this was the theme of the opening ceremony of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883, where the Honorable Abram S. Hewitt equated the completion of the bridge with a harmony between spaces, as well as creating a relationship with ancient history, saying that the islands were 'joined again, as once they were before the dawn of life in the far azoic ages'.[6] America was now truly a union, a physically traversable continent harking back to the prehistoric Pangea. The association between space and time is immediately curious and displays that the physical existence of the bridge ignited the cultural imaginations of those who witnessed it, imbuing the structure with a mythic dimension immediately.

This mythic quality also extended to the literature that became associated with the Brooklyn Bridge, and particularly the writing of Walt Whitman, who encapsulated the optimistic dream that was, and is, the backbone of American liberal ideology, and is a dream that I identify within the poetry of Hart Crane too. At the bridge's re-unveiling ceremony in 1945, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia performed a reading of Whitman's 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' from *Leaves of Grass*, despite the poem having been published in 1856, thirteen years before construction of the Brooklyn Bridge even began. Predictably there is no mention of a bridge in the entirety of the poem and the reason it was read was that the sponsors of the re-unveiling were so confident that Whitman must have written a poem exalting the famous bridge that they announced the inclusion of a Whitman poem without first checking if there was even an appropriate verse. To some perhaps the lack of a bridge within the poem, or even the envisioning of one, might make the poem seem insufficient as a tribute to the great monument of American engineering. However, a reading of the poem has now become a standard commemorative practice and so the physical presence of the bridge itself must not be strictly necessary in communicating what the bridge has come to mean.

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[3] Trachtenberg, *Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol*, p. 67.
[4] Ibid, p. 59.
[5] Willard Glazer, *Peculiarities of American Cities* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers Publishers, 1886), p. 316.
[6] William C. Kingsley, Franklin Edson, Seth Low, *Opening Ceremonies of the New York and Brooklyn Bridge*, *May 24, 1883* (The Brooklyn Eagle Job Printing Department, 1883), chap. 6.

The poem opens with the line 'Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!'[7] The image of the poet or speaker looking into the waters of the East River and acknowledging his reflection in the flood-tide immediately establishes a recognition of the non-corporeal. Both the distinction and blurring of the physical and metaphysical realms are present within this line as Whitman addresses the water through his own intangible reflection. There are two realms or spaces being created here, the physical world and the abstract. The speaker's ability to be physically present and immersed in his physical surroundings whilst simultaneously inhabiting a disembodied and more abstract space continues throughout the poem. At various points the speaker thinks of all of those who have crossed the river before him, and all those who shall continue to after he has gone, telling the reader that they are all 'more in my meditations, than you might suppose'.[8] He is constantly thinking of himself in relation to those around him, and those who have or will complete the same journey throughout history.

Whitman describes the crowd crossing the river as a 'scheme', a mass arrangement of individuals with one shared purpose, so that the individual feels at one with everyone else: 'myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme'.[9] The community Whitman is evoking not only includes the other passengers on the ferry, but also '[t]he similitudes of the past and the future'.[10] This is why the poem resonates so strongly with the Brooklyn Bridge in the cultural imagination. In imagining all those who in the future will cross the East River, Whitman almost predicts the bridge's essence, despite not being able to envision its existence. Although the bridge itself does not appear in the poem, Whitman uses his metaphysical connection to all those who experience the exultant joy of travelling between Brooklyn and Manhattan to help create the myth that became synonymous with the bridge itself. Crossing the river becomes an act of union, whereby Americans are forming relationships, not only with the land and the city spaces, but with each other, no longer bound by the limitations of time or space.

The connection between Whitman's poetry and the Brooklyn Bridge has been emphasised in culture ever since, with Lucy Kennedy presenting a fictional version of Whitman in her novel *The Sunlit Field* (1950) that imagines him literally predicting the existence of the bridge.[11] Although this moment is clearly a flight of fancy, what is true is that the intangible, metaphysical space that Whitman's poem inhabits is the same imagined space that the Brooklyn Bridge creates in the cultural imagination. Those on the ferry with Whitman and Roebling, and those who would

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[7] Walt Whitman, 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, ed. By Michael Moon (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), p. 135.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid, p. 136.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Lucy Kennedy, *The Sunlit Field* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1950), p. 274.

eventually walk underneath the towers of Brooklyn Bridge are all a part of the same scheme, congregating across time and space. Not only are the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn bridged, but so are the American people, connected through an imagined or metaphorical bridge that spans the vastness of time, creating a potent American myth. What Whitman describes in this poem is an idea I also will employ in this thesis: what I have so far called the *essence* of the bridge. What I mean by this is using the material space of New York City and its bridges to speak about the ways in which intangible considerations such as human relationships, socio-political issues and cultural questions are navigated by my chosen texts. Whitman's poem, although without an explicit bridge, creates an imagined bridge that joins both the people of the two cities, but also those throughout the expanse of history. The unity that crossing the East River inspires within the people of Brooklyn and Manhattan is a joyful interpretation of this essence or bridging gesture, as the relationship between the spaces mirrors or *reflects* the relationships between the American people. This optimism that is imbued in the act of bridging is one that is intrinsically tied to the myth of the Brooklyn Bridge, but also an outlook which will be vital in my own interpretation of my chosen texts' relationships with bridges and space. However, it is certainly not the only outlook associated with the Brooklyn Bridge in either existence or essence.

In 1907 Henry James published *The American Scene*, a book which documented his tour of America in 1904 and 1905 after he had spent the previous twenty-one years living in Europe. I wish to focus on his chapter 'New York Revisited' to present another interpretation of the New York city space, and the Brooklyn Bridge, to act as a counterpoint to Whitman's exultant poetry. James's return to New York saw him engage with the kind of urban criticism that some of the early modernists such as T. S. Eliot would employ to describe and characterise industrial London. James felt that New York had similarly become a site of intense industry and ugliness, but without the dignified charm of some of the European industrial 'centres', seeing New York City as a 'monstrous organism'.[12] James's thoughts and feelings whilst travelling up the East River and looking upon the city's bay are a stark contrast to Whitman's musings whilst in almost the exact same geographical location, perhaps dispelling the mythic unity that Whitman experienced with his future geographical companions.

> One has the sense that the monster grows and grows, flinging abroad its loose limbs even as some unmannered young giant at his first 'larks,' and that the binding stitches must for ever fly further and faster and draw harder; the future complexity of the web, all under the sky and over the sea, becoming thus that of some colossal set of clockworks, some

[12] Henry James, *The American Scene* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907), p. 75.

> steel-souled machine-room of brandished arms and hammering fists and opening and closing jaws. The immeasurable bridges are but as the horizontal sheaths of pistons working at high pressure, day and night, and subject, one apprehends with perhaps inconsistent gloom, to certain, to fantastic, to merciless multiplication.[13]

Haw notes that James's response to the city manifests as a nightmarish prophecy of a city that is 'eating away at its past'.[14] James presents New York as a city which contains a tension between its past, present, and future – an opposition to Whitman's perception of space and time in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry'. Whilst James identifies a beauty in the architectural achievements of yesteryear, the bridges that cross the water are 'brandished arms and hammering fists', propelling New York into a future dominated by machines, industry, and capitalism. The bridges themselves are 'pistons' that move like clockwork, inexorably driving the city forward into a future of 'gloom'. This is a portent of the victory of machines over humanity, art, and culture.

James's reading of the bridge and by extension New York, as a distinctly modern, industrial space is certainly understandable. As Trachtenberg notes, the Brooklyn Bridge did increase the volume of traffic into Manhattan, and in doing so helped concentrate extreme wealth into the business section of the city, making it a space of intense capitalist enterprise and perpetual economic growth.[15] The more commercial mythos that the Brooklyn Bridge contains is evident in the number of companies that have used the image of the bridge to advertise their products: Chesterfield cigarettes, Coca-Cola, Maxwell House coffee, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Singer sewing machines, Vaseline and Absolut vodka – and this is only a small selection. More than three American banks have used the bridge as their logo, Bugs Bunny and Mae West have 'sold' the Brooklyn Bridge on television and it has become one of the most photographed landmarks on earth.[16] It is undeniable that the bridge has become a symbol for business, profit and 'merciless multiplication'.

James's grim view of New York City and the Brooklyn Bridge is just as integral to this project as Whitman's, as the tension between the two exemplifies the multiplicitous nature of the city space that resonated with me when I compared *Manhattan Transfer* and *The Bridge*. As will become evident throughout this thesis, these two contrasting reactions to the bridge and the city continue to influence the urban literature of the twentieth century and reveal a division in America's national identity and how we perceive America's place in the modern world.

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Haw, *The Brooklyn Bridge: A Cultural History*, p. 61.
[15] Trachtenberg, *Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol*, p. 129.
[16] Haw, *The Brooklyn Bridge: A Cultural History*, p. 4.

However, something that both Whitman and James agree on is that the city holds a central position in their imaginations. It is a focal point in which the bridge (in existence or in essence) acts as a means of reaching outwards beyond the city limits. Whitman is bonded through time to those in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Despite espousing that 'distance avails not', the poem acts as a way of drawing those external peripheries to him, making New York a central meeting point for all the generations of Americans that eventually congregate over the East River.[17] Similarly, James's New York is a creature 'flinging abroad' its legs, drawing from the 'complexity of the web'. His description suggests a spider, sat in the centre of a vast matrix of silk and drawing from what it catches. The monstrous city is at the centre, and the bridge is also central, acting as a piston that consumes everything surrounding it. Therefore, New York City becomes a centre in the imagination, a centre of culture, immigration, and industry. The bridges that surround Manhattan are a means of communicating with external, outsider spaces and bring them, in effect, into the city. To think through how the Brooklyn Bridge and New York City can be considered as both an emblem of optimistic liberal potential, and a testament to modern mechanical horror, but also how the city can become a symbol for the whole nation, I will briefly discuss the Albert Gleizes painting *Sur Brooklyn Bridge* (1917).

Figure 1: Albert Gleizes, *Sur Brooklyn Bridge*, 1917, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/1470> [accessed 19 December, 2022].

[17] Whitman, 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, p. 137.

Albert Gleizes was a self-trained painter known for experimenting within the Cubist movement. In 1915 and 1917 Gleizes spent time in New York City where he was inspired by the energy of the metropolis.[18] In his painting *Sur Brooklyn Bridge* we as viewers are met with a startling and vibrant image of the bridge itself. Richard Haw describes the painting as a 'terrifying explosion of energy, of metal, lights and stone' before writing that it is 'difficult to determine whether Gleizes's canvas is a celebration or a condemnation, an evocation of modern vitality or its predicted collapse into chaos and destruction'.[19] The ambiguity contained within the painting is why I feel it is an apt embodiment of my own reading of both New York City and bridges in both the concrete and the abstract. Firstly, there is a chaos inherent in the work: bright curves of colour representative of the city lights burst from the middle of the canvas, cables and wires dissect the image at juxtaposed angles, and sharp Cubist cuts in the perspective confuse and splice the bridge, the city, the sky, and the river into one overwhelming monstrosity.

However, the chaotic and somewhat horrific image this conjures is also alluring and almost joyful. The city lights explode out from their origin, passing over the Cubist cuts and blurring the distinctions between the disjointed sections of the work. By compromising the typically hard definitions between the cuts, Gleizes instead allows the colours to ripple outwards beyond the limits of the frame, gesturing towards other spaces beyond the bridge and the city. Similarly, the cables and wires of the bridge splay out at various angles from no definitive source, and end somewhere beyond the canvas itself, implying a relationship with other spaces that cannot be contained in one artwork. The city and the bridge are so scrambled by Gleizes's lines that interrupt the flow of the image that there is the impression that the city is not a coherent, singular space, and instead it is made up of various contrasting elements. A network of snapshots and scenes exist, that are all connected through the bridge's cables and the ever-expanding lights of the city that then continue past the limits of the painting's borders.

Although Gleizes' moral judgements of the modern city are hard to decipher, and there is something of the Whitmanian and the Jamesian in its chaotic yet vibrant depiction of the Brooklyn Bridge, it certainly shows New York to be an amalgam of different colours, shapes, and spaces. The city skyline is visible, in two broken chunks at the top and bottom of the frame, there are patches of natural earthtones with dark blues and stark greens, juxtaposed with the vibrant reds, purples and yellows of the city lights. The bridge itself is visible in random patches throughout, with its wires dynamically reaching beyond the edges of the frame. Not only are the distinctions

[18] Karole Vail, 'Collection Online', *Guggenheim*, 2023 <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/1470> [accessed 19 December, 2022].
[19] Haw, *The Brooklyn Bridge: A Cultural History*, pp. 62-63.

between the different urban elements blurred, but so are the distinctions between what is within the painting's borders and what is not: what is within the city and what lies outside of it. As such we get an impression of the city that contains far more than what is within its geographical boundaries, and in doing so the painting suggests the presence of the rest of the nation. In *Sur Brooklyn Bridge*, the bridge itself signals the city that unfolds before it, but both Brooklyn Bridge and New York City also become national and perhaps even global symbols. Like in Whitman and James, as well as the texts that I discuss in this thesis, the material spatial infrastructure of New York houses vast symbolic meanings: when we analyse space and the way spaces are perceived and characterised far more than just the space itself is revealed.

The Modern(ist) City: Why New York?

Having established how the spatial infrastructure of the city provides the foundations for my discussion of New York City and its twentieth-century literature, I now want to justify why I have chosen New York to be the focus of this project, and why the modernist literature written in and about the city is the most appropriate lens with which to explore the intricacies of twentieth-century urban life.

To start with the most basic reason for choosing New York City as the focus of this thesis: it is the cultural signifier of the modern city. When thinking about the modern American city, the image that occurs in most people's minds, I would wager, is the iconic Manhattan skyline. It is the city that perhaps best exemplifies in the cultural imagination what a modern city is. The transformation from 'Old New York', a European colonial outpost, into an iconic modern metropolis, is one that occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries during the American industrial revolution.[20] Rem Koolhaas tells us that '[e]specially between 1890 and 1940 a new culture (the Machine Age?) selected Manhattan as a laboratory: a mythical island where the invention and testing of a metropolitan lifestyle and its attendant architecture could be pursued as a collective experience, where the real and the natural ceased to exist'.[21] New York, and more specifically Manhattan, then, becomes a physical manifestation of modernity itself, a spatial experiment in which modernity could be fully actualised, and this perception of New York is one which all four of my primary texts engage with. Therefore, to analyse and explore the way space functions in the modern American city, it seemed impossible to avoid New York.

Building upon the importance of New York, specifically in the first half of the twentieth century, was also its relationship with the arts and specifically modernist culture. Modernism is a notoriously

[20] Christoph Lindner, *Imagining New York City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 4-6.
[21] Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1994), p. 9.

slippery term to define fully, as exemplified by Susan Friedman's attempt in 'Definitional Excursions' (2001) where she writes 'the center comes into being as it dissipates. Modernity's grand narratives institute their own radical dismantling. The lifeblood of modernity's chaos is order. The impulse to order is the product of chaos. Modernism requires tradition to 'make it new'. Tradition comes into being only as it is rebelled against'.[22] This series of contradictions aptly demonstrates modernism's fraught and elusive nature, but one can gather from Friedman's definition that at its core modernism is a movement intent on breaking with or recontextualising past convention to communicate the paradoxically chaotic organisation of modern experience. Using this definition, the newly created modern city, and especially New York as a physical and spatial demonstration of chaos, order, and the tension between the two, is intrinsically connected to modernist arts. William Scott and Peter Rutkoff state that 'New York artists reflected, analyzed, and helped to construct their city […] narrative and expressionist, factual and mythical, rhythmical and dissonant, formal and improvisational. Across styles and mediums, New York artists addressed modern urban life'.[23] Whether through the literary salons and magazines that influenced New York fashion and culture, the Ashcan artists experimentally mapping the city, or the architects who were literally shaping their surroundings, modernism and the city were indelibly related to one another. Modernist arts were on the frontline of attempting to understand what it meant to exist within the modern city and so in studying the modernist literature written in and about New York there exists a unique insight into what modern life and the modern city meant to those who lived within it. Therefore, modernist literature acts as an instrument for probing how space works within the modern city, the literature both reflecting and forming the realities of modern life in New York.

Inextricably tied to the American artistic movements that found their home within New York are the leftist politics that inform all four of this thesis' primary texts. The artistic and intellectual community that famously congregated around Greenwich Village from the late nineteenth century incorporated radical politics into their work and life, evident in the many politically oriented literary publications that sprung up over the course of the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries. The huge number of immigrants that were entering into America via New York City also brought with them their European brand of class consciousness. Paul Buhle writes that although the realities of life in America were no secret, North America 'played a strange and remarkable role in the fantasy lives of nineteenth-century Europeans', and 'the promise of a better life upon emigration nevertheless

[22] Susan Friedman, 'Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism', *Modernism/modernity*, 8.3 (2001), pp. 493-513 (p. 510).
[23] William B. Scott and Peter M. Rutkoff, *New York Modern: The Arts and the City* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. xvii.

played an analogous role to Socialistic visions of reform or revolution'.[24] Between the liberal arts movement and the ever-growing working-class population, New York's reputation was one that contained a very particular attachment to leftist politics that still continues to this day. As these politics are not only a key aspect of my own arguments in this thesis but also inform all the texts I will be discussing, my focus had to be on New York.

The confluence of American liberal beliefs and its ties to both the arts and the city of New York can be found, again, in the work of Walt Whitman. In *Democratic Vistas* (1871), Whitman posits that modern American political life requires 'a religious and moral character beneath the political and productive and intellectual bases of the States'.[25] This character, he claims, will be created through what he sees as the dominant artform of the period: literature, and particularly poetry, which he calls 'the stock of all'. He writes that should a small number of great American poets come forth, 'mounting the horizon like planets, stars of the first magnitude, that, from their eminence, fusing contributions, races, far localities etc., together, they would give more compaction and more moral identity (the quality to-day most needed) to these States, than all its Constitutions, legislative and judicial ties, and all its hitherto political, warlike, or materialistic experiences'.[26] He sees writers as the source of America's political and moral foundation, uniting the nation, including its 'far localities', and creating an identity steeped in moral righteousness and what we would now consider typically liberal values of tolerance and unity. Whilst in this text Whitman is calling for the American people to accept and embrace this national morality from new American artists, the American space he sees as representing this character is New York, and his hope is that the inner life of its population can rise to the promise of the modern city space.

> I am now again (September, 1870) in New York City and Brooklyn, on a few weeks' vacation. The splendor, picturesqueness, and oceanic amplitude and rush of these great cities, the unsurpassed situation, rivers and bay, sparkling sea-tides, costly and lofty new buildings, façades of marble and iron, of original grandeur and elegance of design, with the masses of grey color, the preponderance of white and blue, the flags flying, the endless ships, the tumultuous streets, Broadway, the heavy, low, musical roar, hardly ever intermitted, even at night […] the assemblages of citizens in their groups, conversations, trades, evening amusements, or along the by-quarters – these, I say, and the like of these, completely satisfy my senses of power, fullness, motion, etc., and give me, through such

[24] Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the United States* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 20.
[25] Walt Whitman, 'Democratic Vistas', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. James E. Miller, Jr. (Cambridge MA: The Riverside Press, 1959), p. 457.
[26] Ibid, p. 459.

> senses and appetites, and through my aesthetic conscience, a continued exaltation and absolute fulfilment. Always and more and more, as I cross the East and North rivers, the ferries, or with the pilots in their pilot-houses, or pass an hour in Wall Street, or the Gold Exchange, I realize […] that not Nature alone is great in her fields of freedom and the open air, in her storms, the shows of night and day, the mountains, forests, sea—but in the artificial, the work of man too is equally great—in this profusion of teeming humanity—in these ingenuities, streets, goods, houses, ships—these hurrying, feverish, electric crowds of men, their complicated business genius (not least among the geniuses), and all this might, many-threaded wealth and industry concentrated here.[27]

What this long exaltation from Whitman shows is that the space of New York City is a testament to the potential of the American people. Similarly to Koolhaas' observation that New York is a concentrated version of modernity, Whitman sees New York as a concentrated spatial representation of American potential, a space central in his imagination and the site from which his version of America could be born. In the same way that the European Romantics and the American Transcendentalists had looked to the natural world for inspiration, and to communicate the spirit of their respective time periods, Whitman sees New York as fulfilling that role within the modern American experience. It is the space that will help shape American literature, and subsequently America's moral character. Like in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', the nation itself is contained within New York, and Whitman's work continually enforces the idea that New York is *the* modern American space which represents the country, but at times even the world. For example, in his poem 'Broadway', Whitman describes this central focal point of the city: '[t]hou, like the parti-colored world itself—like infinite, teeming, mocking life!'[28] Whitman, in grandiose and typically excessive terms, asserts here that not only does Broadway and New York represent America, it is a representative of life itself. These principles laid out by Whitman are so foundational to the texts that I am analysing in this thesis, but also American literature throughout the twentieth century and beyond, that focusing on New York was the best way of articulating the spatial, socio-political, and literary questions that this thesis asks, whilst also gesturing beyond the city and considering the national and global dimensions contained within both my chosen texts and New York's urban spaces.

I do want to briefly mention that, as is often the case within the cultural imagination, New York City almost becomes synonymous with the island of Manhattan and as a result this thesis does not

[27] Ibid, p. 462.
[28] Whitman, 'Broadway', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 360.

contain any texts that focus solely on any of the other boroughs of New York. Although this can be framed as a shortcoming, I wish to briefly justify this decision and speak to the reason Manhattan became the logical locus of this project.

The first reason is one that I have already briefly mentioned, and that is the presence of Manhattan's bridges, and the way in which these structures act as a physical embodiment of the intellectual work this project is undertaking. As I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, Manhattan is obviously in dialogue with other spaces. By 1950 there were seven bridges crossing the East River alone, connecting Manhattan to a multitude of spaces beyond its borders. When thinking through spatial relationships and bridges in *existence* and in *essence*, using Manhattan grounds the project with the material bridges in both the city and in the literature as well. Although Lola Ridge's poem 'The Ghetto' (1918), the focus of the second chapter in this thesis, does not directly contain references to Manhattan's bridges, the spatial relationships that the poem articulates and engages with are analogous to the other texts I engage with which use bridges as a key feature throughout. As in Whitman's 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', the lack of a physical bridge does not mean that the relationships articulated by bridges are not present within the text.

Sam Roberts writes that by the middle of the twentieth century, city planners such as Robert Moses had woven together the 'loose strands and frayed edges of New York's metropolitan arterial tapestry' and created vast bridges and parkways that meant the unique bridged infrastructure that was present in Manhattan did reach all the New York boroughs.[29] However, Manhattan was the first modern city to encounter this kind of physical relationship with other spaces on such a huge scale in the United States. In modernist terminology, Manhattan is where the city and its bridges were 'made new' and so it is the bridges of Manhattan that have retained a mythological status and cultural focus. As such, Manhattan and its literature is the most appropriate focus of this project and the best means with which to think through how spaces interact, interrelate, and intertwine.

Having spoken about the bridges that make Manhattan a space in dialogue with its surroundings, another aspect of the island that makes it a logical focal point for this project is the relationships and differences between different spaces within the city itself. As Jane Jacobs states in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), '[d]iversity is natural to big cities', which, according to Jacobs, is due to 'the immense numbers of parts that make up a city, and the immense diversity of those parts'.[30] This diversity includes the spaces that make up Manhattan. We can see this just in observing the parts of the city that are encountered in the ensuing chapters of this thesis, including the mythical shorelines of the East River, the financial district of downtown, the cultural

[29] Sam Roberts, 'Reappraising a Landmark Bridge and the Visionary Behind It', *The New York Times*, July 2006 <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/11/nyregion/11bridge.html> [accessed 12 December, 2022].
[30] Jane Jacobs, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* (New York: Modern Library Edition, 2011), p. 187.

centre of Broadway, the bohemian community of Greenwich Village, the ghettos of Harlem and the Lower East Side and the privilege of uptown and Washington Heights. Unlike many other large American cities, Manhattan's presence on an island means that physical space is limited, and so rather than traditional urban sprawl to contain such a multitude, during the time this thesis focuses on Manhattan becomes a concentrated amalgam of diverse city space. As Jacobs observes, 'diversity, of whatever kind, that is generated by cities rests on the fact that in cities so many people are so close together, and among them contain so many different tastes, skills, needs, supplies, and bees in their bonnets'.[31] As the population of Manhattan skyrocketed in the early decades of the twentieth century, so did the number of diverse and interrelated city spaces. When describing the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Mario Maffi writes that it was a 'cosmopolitan microcosm in which it was enough to cross the street in order to enter a different world'.[32] Although Maffi is specifically speaking about the Jewish ghettos of the Lower East Side, his use of the word 'microcosm' hints at the fact that the Lower East Side was microcosmic of Manhattan itself, a space not only in dialogue with other spaces, but in dialogue with itself, with its own spatial diversity.

The dialogue within the city, as well as the relationships with spaces outside of it and the artistic and political movements that helped shape it, make Manhattan a compelling space to consider when looking at urban perception in the twentieth century: a space that I feel best serves this project and captures my own imagination more than any other.

Bridging Spaces: David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre, and Spatial Perception

I now will briefly explain the theoretical underpinning of the thesis. This involves an introduction to the works of geographer David Harvey and spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre, as their writing provides this thesis with a theoretical framework with which to talk about space. Both Harvey and Lefebvre's works serve to unite my analysis of New York's physical infrastructure with the cultural and socio-political themes that all four of my chosen texts engage and wrestle with.

I will begin by looking at David Harvey's *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (2009) as one of the key texts that informs my own perception of space in this thesis. Harvey justifies the importance of geographical study throughout the text, pointing out that since the global mapping of the Renaissance period, historical and political evolution has relied upon certain geographical knowledges.[33] Therefore, any work that claims to deal with historical, political, or cultural concerns should have an appreciation for geography. However, Harvey's position as a geographer and a

[31] Ibid, p. 192.
[32] Mario Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land: Ethnic Cultures on New York's Lower East Side* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), p. 67.
[33] David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 130.

Marxist thinker makes his thoughts on space particularly relevant to my work, as he oscillates between dealing with material space and the more abstract implications of space. What I mean by this is that as both a geographer and a Marxist he focuses on the material features of space, as well as the social, abstract, and immaterial factors that contribute to the ways in which space is perceived. Harvey engages with Marxist dialectical thought, which is also true of Lefebvre, in that material considerations are separate from ideas and the immaterial, but the two realms are constantly shaping one another. As Marx writes in *The German Ideology* (1932) '[t]he production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life'.[34] Although this dialectical logic is important for my own work, as the more abstract assertions are always connected to the material spaces I am discussing, the complex and substantial history of the dialectic is not the focus of this thesis, and so it is not discussed at length. However, my use of dialectical logic is further foregrounded in my second chapter where the interplay between political practice and political consciousness (what Marx calls 'praxis') is an important contributor to my analyses. I will return to the material and abstract ways of perceiving space, but first I want to highlight how Harvey's appreciation of both the *existence* and the *essence* of space is reminiscent of Hegel's *Wirklichkeit* that was attributed to Roebling's intentions when imagining Brooklyn Bridge. Harvey's spatial theories frame the idea of a bridge between the physical and the metaphysical that I introduced when thinking through the meanings of the Brooklyn Bridge, and so *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* has become a foundational text in this thesis.

Harvey's aim is to think through and conceptualise a form of cosmopolitanism that avoids, or at least accounts for, the pitfalls of a purely neo-liberal or globalising form of cosmopolitanism that he claims exists in the early twenty-first century. Although this intention is certainly related to this thesis, it is not where I want to direct my focus. Harvey's influence on this project really comes from his definitions of space in what he calls 'the first dimension'. He separates space into three distinct categories: absolute, relative, and relational.

Absolute space is 'fixed and immovable […] a preexisting, immovable, continuous and unchanging framework'.[35] This is space in its simplest form, a clearly identified plot of land, with dimensions, an identifiable physical presence and even borders and restrictions. As Harvey states: '[n]o other person can be exactly in your or my space at a given time. Location in absolute space and time is, therefore, the means to identify the individuality and uniqueness of persons, things,

[34] Karl Marx, 'The German Ideology', *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 180.
[35] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 134.

and processes'.[36] This is space purely in *existence*, a literal and material way of perceiving space that is objective, as it prioritises space as definitive and distinctive in as much as it can be named and identified by name on a map. Harvey associates absolute space as the 'exclusionary space of private property in land and other bounded entities' making it the realm of the capitalist who perceives of space in absolute terms to package and sell it.[37] This perception of space as absolute is the most societally pervasive way of seeing space in the first half of the twentieth century in which most of my chosen texts are written and set, especially when considering the city space of New York and Manhattan. States, city plans, and urban grids all belong in the realm of absolute space and were key signifiers of the modern world. The concept of absolute space is often employed in this thesis to outline how city spaces are manipulated by capitalist interests which, in turn, cultivates the modernist theme of alienation and discontent within the new and ever-changing modern world.

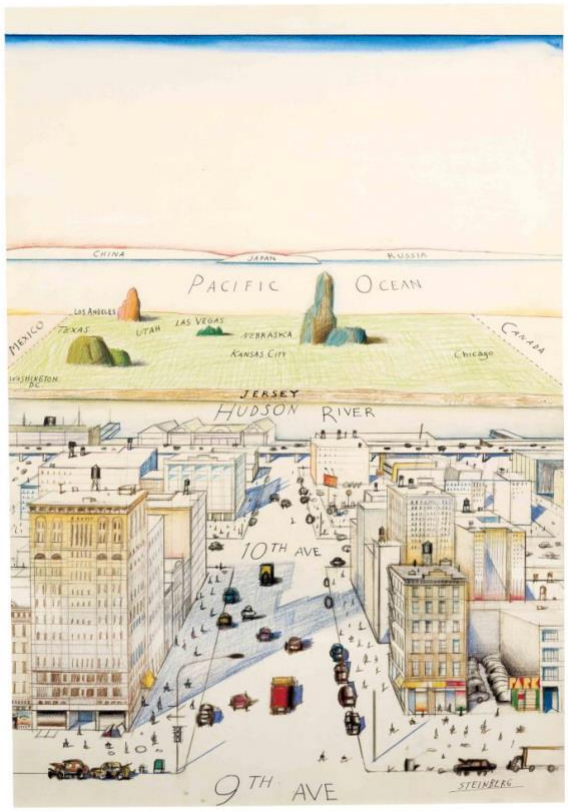

Figure 2: Saul Steinberg, *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, March 29th, 1976, Private Collection. The Saul Steinberg Foundation <https://saulsteinbergfoundation.org/essay/view-of-the-world-from-9th-avenue/> [accessed 20 December, 2022].

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

Harvey's second category is relative space, which he calls the space of '*processes and motion*'.[38] It is in relative space that space really becomes bound to time, which Harvey then refers to as space-time. Relative space relies on an understanding of relativity within the works of Albert Einstein, in that space is perceived based on what is relative to the perceiver. Harvey explains relative space by contrasting it with absolute space: '[m]any people can be in the same place relative to me, and I can be in exactly the same place as many other people relative to someone else'.[39] Therefore, the perspective of the observer is paramount in relative space, as the observer dictates the spatial frame. A work that exemplifies relative space, and one that Harvey does briefly refer to, is Saul Steinberg's *View of the World from 9th Avenue* which served as a *New Yorker* cover in 1976 (see Figure 2).

This parody of the perspective of a typical New Yorker shows that, relative to the observer, New York, and specifically Manhattan, constitutes most of the world, whereas colour and significance gradually fade as the viewer thinks of spaces beyond the Hudson River. The movement from a three-dimensional foreground into the two-dimensional white masses that constitute the horizon display that relative space can create completely different maps from those based in absolutes. Locations, distances, and even time, become relative concepts based on the relativity of the observer. Harvey uses Marxist terminology to define relative space as the realm of 'transportation relations and of commodity and monetary circulation'.[40] Space can be measured not only by distance, but by cost, transportation links, or time. It is a perception of space that is concerned with movement because it is flexible to changes in perspective, which absolute space is not. It is therefore useful to consider relative space when thinking about physical bridges, as they are a means of disrupting spatial relativity. If Steinberg sketched a bridge between the intersecting street that occupies the centre of *View of the World from 9th Avenue* and the brown smudge of the Jersey Shore, then the spaces beyond the river would alter dramatically. Relative space features throughout my discussions of twentieth-century New York, particularly as a way of conceptualising the effects of modern transportation, such as the New York subway, or as a framework for considering how individual characters subjectively perceive and experience the city in relation to both the people and spaces around them.

However, relative space-time is still limited and complicated by some important considerations. As Steinberg's cartoon starkly exhibits, relative space implies subjectivity, a singular viewpoint which imposes an order on the way space is perceived. As Harvey writes: '[t]he spatial frame varies according to what is relativized by whom'.[41] Although relative space contains multiplicities and is

[38] Ibid, p. 135.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

changeable, its reliance on the point of view of the observer means that it will always rely on a singular perspective, even if it can include many singular perspectives. We can again see this in the Steinberg cartoon, as the New Yorker's perspective becomes the centre from which all other space is measured and relativised. If the capitalistic certainty of absolute space was a cause of modern alienation and dissatisfaction within my own reading of twentieth-century modernism, then relative space, although broader and more inclusive of multiplicity, is still circumscribed by the limits of singular perception. An even more expansive spatial category is required to fully appreciate how space can be perceived in the modern world.

Harvey's third and final spatial category is relational space, and this is the way of perceiving space that most potently informs my own readings of my chosen modernist texts. Relational space is not bound by absolute locations or borders; it is also not necessarily limited by relative space-time or perspective. In the case of relational space, the hyphen is removed, and we move into the realm of spacetime, where space and time cannot be extricated from one another at all. Relational space 'cannot be understood by appeal to what exists only at some point' and instead must be considered in relation to 'everything going on around it within that field of flows, in past, present, and even future'.[42] Relational space posits space as connected to everything from everything including a body's memories,[43] dreams, the imagination, experience 'accumulated directly or indirectly from their engagements with the world, as well as a wide array of anticipations and hopes about the future'.[44] Harvey uses this concept of relational space to explain the unquantifiable and immeasurable spacetime that things like dreams, and the imagination exist within. The way this thesis uses Harvey's third spatial categorisation is as a way of connecting his abstract realm to the physical infrastructure of the city. Relational space is a concept which gives shape to the connection between the existence and the essence. For example, in the first chapter relational space helps us to grasp how Crane uses the physical arch of the Brooklyn Bridge and its twinkling lights as a symbol for the heavens that span eternity. Whilst Crane is focusing on the absolute space within which the Brooklyn Bridge is situated, he continuously moves away into the abstract, oscillating between past, present, and future, and even into the realms of religion and myth. Harvey's idea of relational spacetime provides a way of understanding these spatial and temporal gestures into the abstract, whilst also keeping the physical presence of New York in play. As was the case in Gleize's *Sur Brooklyn Bridge*, the city and the bridge are at the centre of the frame allowing the multitude of relationships to emanate beyond it. It is by perceiving space relationally that the physical

[42] Ibid, p. 137.
[43] I am purposefully using the term 'body' for the sake of inclusivity. Here the word 'body' can include not just an individual human body (more closely associated with relative space), but collective bodies and non-human bodies.
[44] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 137.

infrastructure of the city can become a representative of intangible connections and associations such as in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' when Whitman imagined the multitudes who had crossed the river in the past, and who would cross that river in the future. He was perceiving the space of the East River through connections to the past, present, and future, as well as through imagination and aspiration.

Harvey then continues by introducing a second spatial dimension which is influenced by the works of the spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre. I will now turn my attention to Lefebvre to give this thesis a broader framework with which to talk about the city space in relation to time, or spacetime. The influence of Lefebvre is recognisable in Harvey's relational space, which Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space* (1974), referred to as 'conceived' and 'perceived' space. Lefebvre posits a triad of 'conceived', 'perceived' and 'lived' space which all work together dialectically.[45] I will not linger for too long on Lefebvre's triad, as ultimately, I think Harvey's idea of relative and relational space is both similar to Lefebvre's triumvirate and more useful to my own literary approach. The important aspect here is that Lefebvre recognises the role of people within a space in defining its character. Space must be '*lived* through its associated images and symbols' so that it can be both conceived (understood through our knowledge and experience) and perceived (understood through our senses of being present in the world).[46] Like Harvey's definition of relational space, Lefebvre concludes that space must be considered via immaterial factors such as memory, imagination and understanding from those who exist within said space. Whilst the idea of lived, conceived, and perceived space works to support Harvey's notion of relative and relational space, the work by Lefebvre which most clearly expands upon the importance of individuals lived experiences in shaping space is his posthumously published *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (1992).

Lefebvre separates rhythms into two categories, the cyclical and the linear. These two types of rhythm work as a dialectic and so intertwine and interfere with each other constantly. He states that cyclical rhythms originate in nature 'days, nights, seasons, the waves and tides of the sea, monthly cycles etc.', whereas linear rhythms are rooted in social practice and 'imposed structures'.[47] Due to Lefebvre's recognition that in everyday modern life within a capitalist society the 'commodity prevails over everything' and that social space and social time are dominated by the market, linear rhythms become readily associated with capitalism: '[t]he linear is the daily grind'.[48] Of course, it can also be argued that there are elements of the market that work cyclically, such as production and reproduction and the working day. All of this to say, our daily lives and particularly

[45] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 39.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid, p. 18.
[48] Ibid, p. 40.

those within the modern capitalist city space, are dominated by a cacophony of different cyclical and linear rhythms. Lefebvre states that these rhythms should work as a symphony, a polyrhythm that allows the dialectic to continue working effectively. However, Lefebvre argues that capitalism 'erects itself on a contempt for life and from this foundation: the body, the time of living'.[49] Therefore, capitalist rhythms become at odds with the rhythms of the people, and so an arrhythmic clash occurs between linear and cyclic rhythms, different cyclic rhythms and different linear rhythms.

Rhythmanalysis is a foundational concept in this thesis as the modern cityscape becomes an example of arrhythmic clashes and the hierarchy of rhythms in modern life. All my central texts in some way display how the clashing rhythms contained within New York City inform the way characters respond to the city space, and I focus on these clashes particularly in my chapter on *Manhattan Transfer*. Although Lefebvre notes that cyclical and linear rhythms are always dialectically in tension with one another, the tension is exacerbated and taken to an extreme within the city and so must be considered when exploring the spatial tensions of New York City in the twentieth century.

Harvey and Lefebvre provide concepts that are central to my exploration of space and twentieth-century literature because they provide a clear theoretical framework with which to talk about the different ways that New York City's infrastructure informs the narratives, characters, and themes of the texts themselves. But these spatial theories also help reveal that the way spaces are perceived can translate into more abstract considerations and can have wider socio-political implications. For example, in the first chapter on *The Bridge*, Harvey's concept of relational space is used to connect Crane's descriptions of New York, and specifically the Brooklyn Bridge, to his primitive understanding of a globalised culture and society as well as his yearning for spiritual connection. Similarly, in chapter 3 on *Manhattan Transfer*, rhythmanalysis provides the lens through which Dos Passos' depictions of social disease and degradation are viewed alongside the commercial machinations of the city. I will refer to both Harvey and Lefebvre throughout this thesis as a way of grasping the interrelationship of the material and the immaterial, the existence and the essence.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 discusses Hart Crane's *The Bridge* alongside David Harvey's *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*. By dissecting sections of the poem using the vocabulary of Harvey, and the work of Crane's contemporary and friend, Waldo Frank, the chapter traces the various ways that

[49] Ibid, p. 62.

Crane perceives space to create an epic poem dedicated to the utopian potential he saw in modern America, much like his spiritual and literary inspiration, Walt Whitman. Through analyses of Crane's treatment of technology, mythology, history, and spirituality, I discuss how Crane uses the existence and essence of his central image and symbol, the Brooklyn Bridge, to articulate spatial and spiritual connection that emanates from the local dimensions of modern New York City, and extends across spacetime, creating a historical and global sense of wholeness.

Chapter 2 focuses on Lola Ridge's poem 'The Ghetto' and identifies how Ridge similarly presents New York, and specifically the Jewish ghettos of the Lower East Side, as a site of potential transformation and optimism. Reading Ridge's treatment of the Jewish immigrants of the Lower East Side via the language of Lefebvre and his concept of 'lived space', the chapter explores how Ridge depicts the city as being shaped by its inhabitants. This section once again draws upon Harvey to discuss how the spatial infrastructure of the ghetto itself becomes a way for Ridge to explore different spatial, cultural, and political relationships, much like Crane does with the Brooklyn Bridge in the previous chapter. However, where Crane creates a mytho-historical timeline to situate the modern city space, Ridge is more concerned with the relationship between people and space. Although their focuses might be different, Crane and Ridge share an optimism for the future of America and articulate this optimism through their poetic tributes to New York City.

Chapter 3 turns from modernist poetry and generative city space to the modernist novel and apocalyptic urban space in John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*. Throughout the novel Dos Passos consolidates his view that the modern city is a space of degradation and death, and this characterisation of the urban space often comes from the characters being unable to see New York as anything other than a totalising and hellish nightmare. When I describe the city as 'totalising', what I mean is that characters cannot comprehend anything beyond its limits, it becomes like a prison from which they can see no escape. The chapter traces Dos Passos' literary lineage to naturalism to explain why Dos Passos imbues the city itself with agency over the characters and makes the urban space into a physical embodiment of the ills he identifies within modern society. Dos Passos, like Crane and Ridge, uses New York's physical presence and its specific infrastructure as an anchor for his themes and critiques, but whilst the methods might be like the writers discussed in chapters 1 and 2, his conclusions differ dramatically. Rather than the sense of wholeness that Crane inspired, spaces and characters are distant and alienated, and New York is not shaped by those within it like Ridge's view of the Lower East Side suggests, but instead the space dominates those within it. I explore how Dos Passos comes to these bleak conclusions by analysing the novel's treatment of space and its characters, and reading the text alongside Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*.

Chapter 4 situates James Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962) as a novel that is concerned with the process of enacting a better future for a city and a country torn apart by racism and inequality. Although this novel was written decades after the other main texts that are analysed in this thesis, I argue that *Another Country* bridges the gap between the hopeful conclusions of Crane and Ridge, and the pessimism of Dos Passos, and is therefore useful to consider as it attempts to navigate the horrors of the first half of the twentieth century, whilst still speculating over a better future. Like in *Manhattan Transfer*, Baldwin adopts an almost naturalist, deterministic view of the city to articulate how modern existence is impossible for the black population of New York, creating a familiar sense of doom. However, Baldwin also appreciates that space is 'lived' and can be shaped by its inhabitants, giving the novel an enduring glimmer of hope, despite the misery that is depicted. By once again using the language of Harvey and Lefebvre to explore the relationship between space and character, but also analysing Baldwin's complex relationship with liberalism, I examine how the development of Baldwin's characters over the course of the novel's narrative reveal the painful reality of life in the city for black Americans, but how the novel also advocates for this reality to change, starting with individuals, and translating into spaces, nations, and finally the world.

Finally, the conclusion will look at the dominant themes that repeat throughout the four main chapters of the thesis and examine what these texts' spatial perceptions of New York City say about America in the twentieth century. I assert that by analysing the ways in which New York, and space more generally, is depicted by these writers, we not only gain unique and complex readings of these four texts, but also a glimpse of how the American national identity drifts between an idealised, utopian dream, and the sometimes-brutal ugliness of lived reality. I will finish by briefly considering how this thesis' conclusions can be considered in a more recent and contemporary American context.

CHAPTER 1: Hart Crane's *The Bridge* and Spatial 'Wholeness'

> It is a European city no longer, it is America. It is itself imperial New York. Plenty of time yet, man and machines. We are so young yet. Wait and see, wait and see what New York will do.
>
> - Sherwood Anderson, 'New York: A Documentary Film'

This chapter examines Hart Crane's modernist epic *The Bridge*, which sees the poet expressing his Romantic reverence for New York City in the early twentieth century, a reverence filtered through the synecdoche of the Brooklyn Bridge - a sublime emblem of industrial power and progress. I focus on the role the bridge plays as a symbol of union between spaces. By reading *The Bridge* alongside the works of Waldo Frank and David Harvey's *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, I will reveal how Crane's poem contains a multitude of ways of perceiving space. By the final section of the poem, 'Atlantis', the poem has made the Brooklyn Bridge a symbol of connection on a global, universal, and mytho-historical scale.

Like the symbolic bridge Crane employed, the poem spans the gap between focusing on the specific urban space of New York, while also gesturing outwards towards modernity more broadly, and how space was configured in twentieth-century America. Although the poem itself is grounded within Manhattan, Crane uses New York as a representative of the modern city, as well as the entire nation of America, a space Crane affiliated with modern expansion and innovation. New York's role as the spearhead of America's association with modernity was, in part, due to New York's prominence as the fastest growing modern city in the world culturally, economically, and vertically, with the skyline gaining one hundred feet between the years 1920 and 1926.[1] This growth had a huge influence on Crane viewing New York as the physical embodiment of modernity. He moved back to the city in 1923 (the same year he began formulating the ideas that would become *The Bridge*), just as it began to expand into the modern metropolis we recognise today, exemplified by large building projects such as the opening of the Yankees Stadium in the Bronx that year. Crane had flirted with being a New Yorker since dropping out of high school, having moved back and forth between his hometown in Cleveland, and New York City. By 1923 it was clear that Crane was interested in establishing New York as his artistic base after the warm reception of his poem 'For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen' (1926) and then expressing his designs for *The Bridge* in letters to friends and colleagues. However, by Crane's own admission he saw this seemingly local

[1] Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (London: Picador, 1996), p. 435.

poem as expansive, calling it 'a mystical synthesis of America' concentrated within the image of the Brooklyn Bridge.[2] The relationship between New York City and the global expanse correlated with Crane's own relationship with the city, as he used New York as a geographical and cultural base, but often used money from patrons and menial jobs to gain passage on ships that took him around the world, spending time in France, Mexico, and the Caribbean.[3]

Like the poet himself, the poem uses New York City as a foundation, but then within various sections, stanzas, or even single lines, suddenly transports the reader to far-flung times and spaces, creating an expansive poem that attempts to promote a sense of 'wholeness' (an idea borrowed from Crane's influential personal friend, Waldo Frank) by the end of the final section, 'Atlantis'. The poem uses the connective symbol of the Brooklyn Bridge to unite America and the world across time and space, creating a new American myth in the tradition of Walt Whitman. Like Whitman, Crane also saw America as having the potential to usher in a bright modern future. This utopian reading of the poem has been the consensus among some critics since its publication, although some have felt it achieves these aims with varying degrees of success.

After the poem was published by the Black Sun Press in 1930, *The Bridge* attracted significant criticism, most notably from two of Crane's personal friends, Allen Tate and Yvor Winters. Both applauded Crane's lofty intentions but felt that Crane lacked the historical specificity to justifiably create the new American 'epic' poem. Winters famously claimed that *The Bridge* had 'no narrative framework and so lacks the formal unity of an epic'.[4] These criticisms offended Crane, who wrote to Winters and expressed his anguish over what he felt was a personal betrayal. Tate and Winters' criticisms reveal a narrower view of what an epic poem could be, as both were looking for a singular epic hero to anchor the poetic narrative. Contemporary critics are generally much more forgiving of Crane's more experimental formal compositions as following what are now recognisably modernist traditions of collage and allusion. As contemporary critic Lawrence Kramer notes, '[i]t assembles itself from micro-narratives about actions and desires widely separated in both geography and history. It recounts those narratives in poetic forms ranging from strict rhymed quatrains to virtual delirium (sometimes both at once)'.[5] However, even if there is a lack of unity in the form, there is certainly an intention within the content to create a sense of spiritual unity, which was where mid- to late-twentieth century critics turned their attention.

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[2] Clive Fisher, *Hart Crane: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 167.
[3] Ibid, p. 257.
[4] Yvor Winters, Review of Hart Crane, *The Bridge* (1930), 'The Progress of Hart Crane', *Poetry*, 36.3 (1930), pp. 153-165 (p. 153).
[5] Lawrence Kramer, 'Annotating *The Bridge*', *Hart Crane's The Bridge: An Annotated Edition*, ed. Lawrence Kramer (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), p. xv

Hyatt H. Waggoner was one of the first critics to consider *The Bridge* in broader terms than just whether it was satisfactorily 'epic' in scope. Instead, he sees the poem as one which embraces modern technological progress and considered modernity as a signifier for human spiritual development. He writes 'the first step in its creation must be the "affirmation" of the sum total of the American past and present, the second a "transcending" of these facts; or that man's increasing technological mastery over nature is a good symbol of his increasing spiritual health and closeness to God'.[6] Waggoner's reading of *The Bridge* as a poem concerned with integrating modern innovation into American myth-making and poetry is confirmed by Crane himself in his essay 'Modern Poetry' (1930):

> unless poetry can absorb the machine, i.e. *acclimatize* it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles and all other human associations of the past, then poetry has failed of its full contemporary function. This process does not infer any program of lyrical pandering to the taste of those obsessed by the importance of machinery; nor does it essentially involve even the specific mention of a single mechanical contrivance. It demands, however, along with the traditional qualifications of the poet, an extraordinary capacity for surrender, at least temporarily, to the sensations of urban life […] I mean to say that mere romantic speculation on the power of and beauty of machinery keeps it at a continual remove; it can not act creatively in our lives until, like the unconscious nervous responses of our bodies, its connotations emanate from within – forming as spontaneous a terminology of poetic reference as the bucolic world of pasture, plow, and barn.[7]

As Crane himself concluded, technology, or 'the machine', must not be worshipped in and of itself, but incorporated into our poetic vocabulary, and, by extension, our everyday existence. Technological innovation becomes part of a larger environment, that includes pre-established natural images of 'pasture, plow, and barn', and fulfils the potential Crane saw in both contemporary poetry and the new modern world he was witnessing take shape.

In 1980 Helge Normann Nilsen published *Hart Crane's Divided Vision: An Analysis of The Bridge* in which he built on Waggoner's findings but included the influence of the writer and critic Waldo Frank, a friend of Crane's and someone who Nilsen saw as having a major influence on Crane's poetry. Nilsen wrote the 'aim of Crane in *The Bridge* was to present a revelation of spiritual unity in

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[6] Hyatt H. Waggoner, *The Heel of Elohim: Science and Values in Modern American Poetry* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), p. 159.
[7] Hart Crane, 'Modern Poetry' (1930), *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose*, ed. Brom Weber, 3rd ed. (New York: Liveright, 1946), 261-262.

America, a sense of "the Whole" as Waldo Frank puts it'.[8] This sense of wholeness is important to both Nilsen's and my own reading of *The Bridge*. Frank in his text *Our America* (1919) wrote that 'America is a complex of myriad lights playing upon myriad planes. As a *Unit* it exists only in the eyes of the beholder'.[9] The 'beholder' then would be an individual who could see America as one unified environ, a space containing multitudes that interact and relate, to form a kind of cohesive whole. As Nilsen explained 'Frank was trying to articulate a vision of a relation to reality which included a sense of spiritual unity in the materials of modern society […] Frank held that American culture was chaotic and fragmented, and that the American people must learn to conceive of reality as an organic whole of which each individual feels himself a part'.[10] Nilsen argued that this was part of the intention behind *The Bridge*.-Crane is piecing together many seemingly disparate elements of modern American life in order to create spiritual unity by the ending section 'Atlantis'.

Paul Giles takes a more granular approach with more attention paid to linguistic detail in his text *Hart Crane: The Contexts of The Bridge* (1986). Rather than attempting to interpret the meanings or intentions of the poem concretely, Giles dissects Crane's use of puns and paradoxes, arguing that these provided the principle guiding structure of the poem. Most notably for my own reading of the poem, Giles shows that within *The Bridge* Crane positions America as a commercial enterprise; capitalism is the dominant social force that gives order to the modern world. Giles does note that 'Crane's personal feelings about American commercialism were ambivalent. His family were staunch Republicans, and his father was a highly successful businessman, owner of a maple-sugar cannery and subsequently a founder of the Crane Chocolate Factory'.[11] However, despite this contradictory outlook, the poem itself contains a more definitive logic of commercial critique, particularly the ways in which it dominated urban spaces in the sections 'Quaker Hill' and 'The Tunnel'. In his biography of Hart Crane, *The Broken Tower: The Life of Hart Crane* (1999), Paul Mariani acknowledges that Crane was considering the pervasive nature of twentieth century commercialism when he wrote a letter to Bill Wright stating that 'America *was* big business, and sooner or later everyone bowed to that inevitability', although he was also quick to note that this fact did not mean 'surrendering one's nobler and better aspirations'.[12] Despite some ambivalence towards rampant American commercialism, the inclusion of Crane's feeling that business was ignoble correlates with the poem's more forceful position against American capitalism. Giles also mentions that Crane spoke in an interview in 1919 of 'how he disliked the "oily smugness" around him which he said

[8] Helge Normann Nilsen, *Hart Crane's Divided Vision: An Analysis of The Bridge* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), p. 17.
[9] Waldo Frank, *Our America* (New York: Boni and Liveright Publishing, 1919), p. 8.
[10] Nilsen, *Hart Crane's Divided Vision: An Analysis of The Bridge*, p. 21.
[11] Paul Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of The Bridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 30.
[12] Paul Mariani, *The Broken Tower: The Life of Hart Crane* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), p. 51.

the American poet must "fight against"".[13] This possible reference to the oil industry, or a more general observation about industrial capitalists, suggests that, even if Crane's attitude was one which saw commercialism as both extraordinary and obscene, he did position himself, and by extension his work, in opposition to those spearheading New York's transformation into America's business capital. Therefore, Giles's reading of the poem as one that is pregnant with, and critical of, the ideology of capitalism adds a more overt political dimension to criticism of *The Bridge*.

More contemporary criticism of Crane and *The Bridge* is still somewhat divided, although more generally the poem is seen as more of a panoramic triumph than an abject failure, as early critics branded it. However, there is still contention over Crane's success, with Adam Kirsch in 2006 calling *The Bridge* an 'impressive failure' that focuses on 'bleached, school-pageant figures'.[14] This assessment of Crane's limited view of American history will also play a part in my own analyses. Meanwhile Langdon Hammer, a contemporary defender of Crane's literary legacy, submits that Crane 'revalue[s] failure', and that it is the poem's chaotic elements which give it its visionary qualities.[15]

Crane is certainly more visible in the literary consciousness than he ever has been, with Paul Mariani's biography revitalising his reputation (so much so that it was then adapted into a major motion picture in 2011), and excerpts from *The Bridge* appeared from the sixth edition of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (2002-2018) to the most recent tenth edition. More recently Robert Savino Oventile wrote a chapter in *Modernism and the Anthropocene: Material Ecologies of Twentieth-Century Literature* (2021) entitled 'Hart Crane: A Poet of Our Climate' in which he focused on the 'Cape Hatteras' section of the poem, following Crane's famous punning to argue that Crane is commenting on the need to burn fossil fuels for modern technology to function. But there has not been a host of critical material written on Crane despite his inflated presence in the cultural zeitgeist. As Brian M. Reed noted in *Hart Crane: After His Lights* (2006): '[t]his publishing-world burst of interest has not, however, coincided with a proliferation of academic books on the author […] Crane has suffered a demotion of sorts, from a writer worthy of a monograph unto himself to one who receives no more than a chapter or two in a longer study'.[16] Despite this having been written nearly twenty years ago, the same remains largely true. Even in this thesis Crane and his work is limited to a single chapter due to the project's broad thematic focus on space in twentieth-century New York literature. Lawrence Kramer in his essay 'Annotating *The Bridge*', which served as the

[13] Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of The Bridge*, p. 30.
[14] Adam Kirsch, 'The Mystic Word', *The New Yorker* (October, 2006) <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/10/09/the-mystic-word> [accessed 13 January, 2024].
[15] Langdon Hammer, 'Hart Crane's View From the Bridge', *The New Yorker Review* (November, 2017) <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2017/11/24/hart-cranes-view-from-the-bridge/> [accessed 13 January, 2024].
[16] Brian M. Reed, *Hart Crane: After His Lights* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), pp. 4-5.

introductory chapter to his annotated edition of *Hart Crane's The Bridge* (2011), stated that a possible reason for the poem's relative absence from contemporary conversations is that it is 'a hugely difficult work' that is 'simply incomprehensible without special knowledge, often special knowledge that is not readily available today'.[17] Kramer's annotated edition of the poem is an attempt to combat this incomprehensibility and to provide the appropriate context for some of the more abstruse passages. Although this valuable resource from Kramer is now over a decade old, Crane is still not written about as much as he deserves. In this chapter I will close read *The Bridge* through my own critical lens, adding to previous critical conversations, but also adding to the small choir of voices that currently grapple with Crane and his remarkable poetry.

My own understanding of *The Bridge* builds upon many of the readings I have already mentioned, particularly the works of Waggoner, Nilsen, and Giles. However, there is a specificity in my focus, as this chapter looks at the ways in which Crane perceives and articulates space in *The Bridge*. Writers such as Nilsen and Kramer have gestured towards the spatial dimensions of the poem, Nilsen in his acknowledgement of Waldo Frank's concept of 'wholeness' and the role of the 'mystic' who could see themselves as a part of a larger, global 'whole' , and Kramer in some of the specific imagery used in the poem such as Crane's use of the eagle and the serpent. However, these observations are rarely the writers' focus and instead serve as a small part of a larger study. Billy Ben Feng Huang published a paper in 2016 entitled "'A Walk in Between" – On Hart Crane's Imagination of Representational Space and Representations of Space in *The Bridge*'. This paper sought to discover whether Crane's vision of urban space correlated with Henri Lefebvre's theories of representational and representations of space. Whilst this paper, like this chapter, reads 'The Bridge' alongside Marxist spatial theory, its scope is severely limited. The paper analyses only two short sections of *The Bridge* and is ultimately a short comparison between Crane and one specific part of Lefebvre's work.

This chapter examines the spatial dynamics of *The Bridge* methodically by discussing a variety of ways in which Crane considers space throughout the entirety of the poem. By using what David Harvey calls his 'first dimension' of understanding space and time, I can articulate more precisely how Crane uses space to communicate his vision of, and for, America in *The Bridge*. Although Crane and Harvey's contexts, intentions, and conclusions differ, something they have in common is that they are both attempting to understand how spatial relationships operate in the modern world. Crane's focus on 'wholeness' and spatial connection are born from him witnessing the beginning of what we would now call globalisation, and this ubiquitous spatial dynamic dictates the global relations of our contemporary world. Harvey formulates these categories of absolute, relative, and

[17] Kramer, 'Annotating *The Bridge*', *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. xiii.

relational spaces to more accurately understand how spaces operate within a globalised, capitalist world. These were the global conditions that Crane was seeing take shape in the early twentieth century. Harvey writes that 'many of the key terms we use to characterize the world around us – such as *city, state, community, neighborhood, ecosystem* and *region* – cannot properly be understood without a prior consideration of the character of both time and space'.[18] Therefore, by employing Harvey's terminology and using it to extrapolate Crane's conception of time and space in *The Bridge* I am able to more definitively analyse the spatial perceptions present in the poem.

I have chosen to structure my argument thematically since some sections of the poem will necessarily need to be revisited and to have gone through the poem sequentially would become hopelessly unwieldly and repetitive. Therefore, this chapter is split into three sections: 'Technology and the World', 'Time and Space' and 'The Commercial City Space'. As previously stated, some of these themes are very present in earlier readings of the poem, but their spatial focus allows those readings to be given new dimensions and detail. I should also mention that the annotations by Kramer are referenced throughout the chapter where the allusions or references in the poem are so specific that they needed some of his 'special knowledge'. Finally, it is worth noting that due to the nature of Crane's writing there are instances where my analysis may home in on a small section of the poem, or even a single line or word. This is necessary as Crane's writing is so full of allusion, punning, and specific referencing that at times something as minute as word choice or a small deviation in 'narrative' can mean a great deal. This may appear to be attributing a lot of importance to a seemingly insignificant moment, but in *The Bridge*, I would argue, there are no insignificant moments.

Technology and the World

Throughout *The Bridge* are references to the new modern world that Crane was witnessing take shape throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century. As previously mentioned, Crane saw a need to 'absorb the machine' into the vocabulary of poetry to create a literature which represented contemporary America. To do this Crane often includes passages which used both classically poetic references alongside modern, technological imagery. Within the proem 'To Brooklyn Bridge' Crane writes:

> Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift
> Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars,
> Beading thy path – condense eternity:

[18] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 133.

And we have seen night lifted in thine arms.[19]

Here the traffic lights that line the Brooklyn Bridge are likened to sighing stars, which Lawrence Kramer suggests is a reference to the classical Greek conception of the music of the spheres.[20] The distinctly modern image of the traffic light is married to the heavenly and classically poetic image of the heavens, mixing the two oppositional realms of modernity and the divine. The bridge itself is an 'unfractioned idiom', an unbroken and yet unknowable (from the Greek 'idioma') path that is 'beaded' by the celestial traffic lights. By bringing the stars down to earth, the bridge can 'condense eternity', bridging the machine both to the heavens and to poetry itself, with the word 'idiom' suggesting that the bridge also represents language and poetic imagination, allowing poetry to, in Crane's words, 'acclimatize' with modern technology.

However, contained within 'To Brooklyn Bridge' is also a more literal acknowledgement of the bridge's function in condensing space. The next two stanzas continue:

Under thy shadow by the piers I waited;
Only in darkness is thy shadow clear.
The City's fiery parcels all undone,
Already snow submerges an iron year …

O Sleepless as the river under thee,
Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,
Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend
And of the curveship lend a myth to God.[21]

Crane shifts his focus back to the materiality of the Brooklyn Bridge itself, emphasising its physical size by drawing attention to its long shadow that is only visible when the bright lights of the city are extinguished at night. What follows is a description of how the bridge, in joining together Manhattan and Brooklyn, connects New York City to the rest of the nation, as it vaults 'the sea' and bridges the city with its 'iron' and man-made 'fiery parcels' with the 'prairies' dreaming sod'. Although the '[v]aulting' and 'descend[ing]' bridge creates a 'curveship' that brings a material form to the divine, it also literally joins two spaces together, and in doing so becomes a modern

[19] Hart Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, ed. Marc Simon (London: Liveright, 2001), p. 44.
[20] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 4.
[21] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 44.

technological marvel by reorganising modern American space and condensing the land by making the city and the rest of the nation more accessible.

The theme of spatial reorganisation through technology continues into the 'Ave Maria' section of *The Bridge*, where we are transported back to 1493, onboard Columbus' ships voyaging back to Spain having reached the New World. Columbus' journey is described, once again, in both natural and technological language: 'Here waves climb into dusk on gleaming mail; / Invisible waves of the sea, - locks, tendons / Crested and creeping, troughing corridors / That fall back yawning to another plunge'.[22] Although Crane is now invoking fifteenth-century technologies, their effect is the same as those found within the proem. The sea is reflected in the metal chainmail of the soldiers on board the ship, and therefore made smaller, condensed within the man-made armour. Human invention can master the natural expanse of the ocean, shown by its containment within the mail of the soldiers onboard the ship. The waves are then described in both bodily and mechanic language of 'locks [and] tendons'. The 'locks' here may be a pun on the kinds of locks that can control the water levels in canals, allowing ships to pass through unimpeded. A similar mastery over the elements is suggested here, as the waves become 'troughing corridors' in the wake of Columbus' advanced ships. 'Troughing' also suggested a kind of hollowed-out curve in the ocean, harkening back to the 'curveship' of the Brooklyn Bridge found in the proem. As the Brooklyn Bridge was able to unite Manhattan with the continent, so too were Columbus' ships able to bridge America with Europe, showing how technological advancement refigured global spatial relationships. The link between Columbus' ships and Brooklyn Bridge is corroborated by Kramer, who draws attention to this couplet later in the section: 'Some Angelus environs the cordage tree; / Dark waters onward shake the dark prow free.'.[23] According to Kramer, the phrase 'cordage tree' figuratively refers to the ships' masts and rigging, whilst also referencing the suspension cables of Brooklyn Bridge.[24] By conflating descriptions of the ships with the bridge, Crane reveals that modernity and technological advancement can unite previously disparate spaces. As in the proem where the unity between Manhattan and Brooklyn was also seen as a unity between the earth and the heavens, the ships (and by extension the bridge) are 'environed' by '[s]ome Angelus', implying that spatial unity also equals a spiritual or holy unity.

The use of ships, the bridge, and spatial mapping to express the potential of modern innovation and technology reoccurs later in the 'Cutty Sark' section of the poem. Here Crane briefly returns to his spatial base, New York City, situating the reader in South Street, in Lower Manhattan, which was an American commercial centre. It was famous for its port on the East River, near both the

[22] Ibid, p. 47.
[23] Ibid, p. 48.
[24] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 14.

Brooklyn Bridge and the Williamsburg Bridge. The poem describes the view of various clipper ships as seen from South Street and the Brooklyn Bridge, one of them being the Cutty Sark itself. Through these ships Crane references the global reach of New York City, with the song 'Stamboul Nights' emanating from a nickel-slot pianola which sings of '*Sweet opium and tea – Yo-Ho! / Pennies for porpoises that bank the keel! / Fins whip the breeze around Japan!*'.[25] The references to Istanbul and Japan here show how the clipper ships encircle the globe from East to West Asia. Using the link established by Crane between ships and the bridge, this section can, like 'Ave Maria', be read as a testament to the modern city's role in creating global unity, both spatially through acting as a centre for trade, immigration, and transport links, but also again spiritually. The connection between spatial and spiritual unity can be found here in 'Cutty Sark':

> I saw the frontiers gleaming of his mind;
> or are the frontiers – running sands sometimes
> running sands – somewhere – sands running …
> Or they start some white machine that sings.
> Then you may laugh and dance in the axletree –
> steel – silver – kick the traces – and know –
>
> *ATLANTIS ROSE drums wreathe the rose,*
> *the star floats burning in a gulf of tears*
> *and sleep another thousand –.*[26]

The stanza begins with the I of the poem perceiving the 'frontiers' of the sailor's mind, which are sometimes 'running sand'. This moment recalls the sandy shores of the various countries and continents that this drunken sailor would surely have seen, having crossed many spatial frontiers on his travels before returning to the city. There is also the reference to the sands of time, the running sands of the hourglass, uniting time, and space within this one image. The 'axletree' again refers to the global circling of the clipper ships, like the circling wheel about the axle. The image is also mechanical and modern, with the 'steel' and 'silver' of the axletree recalling the 'silver-paced' image of Brooklyn Bridge from the proem, the connective emblem of Crane's modern America.[27] However, once again these spatial images of wholeness and connection are married to suggestions of utopian futures and spiritual unity, as it foreshadows some of the imagery found in the poem's

[25] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, pp. 71 and 73.
[26] Ibid, p. 72.
[27] Ibid, p. 43.

final section, 'Atlantis'. The most obvious one is the phrase 'Atlantis Rose' which emanates from the pianola. Like in the final section of *The Bridge*, this image refers to the lost underwater city of Atlantis which has now risen and floats on the surface of the water. As it does later in the poem, Atlantis stands for a city of utopian potential, its presence a kind of spiritually fulfilled version of New York, strengthened by the rose, an image that Kramer calls 'cosmic harmony'.[28] Kramer also points out that the rose would have been a symbol found on maps to signify wind direction, which again points towards Crane's association between the spatial whole and the cosmic whole.[29] However, the Atlantis Rose, at this point in the poem, only exists in song, it is still yet to be given material grounding. The utopia suggested is only potential. But something which is tangible is the 'white machine that sings', a reference to the bridge, as it is described in 'Atlantis' as the 'whitest flower' with 'white choiring strings'.[30] The marriage between machinery and song contained within this image portrays the bridge as both an embodiment of modernity, but also a spiritual symbol, one that connects the machine with transcendence. Although at this point in the poem Crane is aware of the modern city's potential to become a kind of utopian ideal, the way in which it comes to being is across the bridge, through connection and relationships between space and mysticism.

This reading of the poem as one that is seeking unity within America comes from the writing and influence of Waldo Frank on Crane. The two met in 1923 and were friends for the rest of Crane's short life. Nilsen felt that Frank's sense of 'the Whole' was particularly influential on Crane, which Nilsen explained as 'the concept of a unified universe which has been breaking in Europe and is being shattered in America'.[31] Frank focused on the division between religion and science which he felt should be reconciled as both seek a wholeness, one logically and one emotionally, or spiritually. Together, they could create a satisfying sense of unity. Nilsen wrote that Crane, when writing *The Bridge*, felt that he was becoming the kind of mystic that Frank had outlined in his text *The Re-Discovery of America* (1929).[32] Frank felt that the 'mystic' was that rare artist or thinker who was conscious of 'the Whole of Being', someone who was aware of the individual's role as a part of a larger spiritual community – '[t]heir sense of wholeness, without abandoning the personal which is its core, reaches beyond it. Since they are called mystics, it is well to call their sense of the Whole the mystic sense.'.[33] In other words, the mystic would be an individual who could see themselves and the world around them as 'whole'. Nilsen felt that this was what Crane was attempting to do in *The Bridge*. By elevating Brooklyn Bridge to a mythic symbol of unity, he was

[28] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 64.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 107.
[31] Nilsen, *Hart Crane's Divided Vision*, p. 25.
[32] Ibid, p. 28.
[33] Waldo Frank, *The Re-Discovery of America* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 24.

able to marry the scientific, technological world of modern-day New York (and by extension America) to the spiritual world of poetry and beauty. My own reading adds to Nilsen's by showing how Crane is also showing how spatial unity, the perception of spaces as interrelated and bridged, signals the kind of spiritual unity Frank and Crane were seeking.

This kind of spatial unity would not have been a common way of perceiving space in the early twentieth century. Michael Rubenstein and Justin Neuman in their text *Modernism and Its Environments* (2020) tell us that 'they [moderns] instead thought of plural environs rather than the singular environment'.[34] Space was perceived as fractured and divided, a part of the shattered 'Whole' that Frank saw in Europe and, to a greater extent, in America. What we have seen in both 'Ave Maria' and 'Cutty Sark' is that Crane, by using the invention of ships capable of sailing the globe, was attempting to perceive space as a 'whole'. Through technological innovations, spaces are bridged to one another, displayed by Crane's omnipresent Brooklyn Bridge. Crane's acclimation with the machine in his poetry, whether it is the machines of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries or those of his own age, united the lands of America and those of the rest of the world. Looking now to 'The River', Crane was also able to show how both the continent of North America, and the globe could be made whole through machinery and technology.

'The River' begins with a rapid series of images, creating the kind of sensory overload typical of the modern world: 'Stick your patent name on a signboard / brother – all over – going west – young man / Tintex – Jalapac – Certain-teed Overalls ads'.[35] The reader is met with a barrage of billboard ads, almost as if they are whizzing past the window of a train carriage. As Kramer notes the Certain-teed ads (a building materials company) referenced by Crane contained images present within *The Bridge*: planes, ships (even Columbus' specifically), and the New York harbour and skyline.[36] These ads, illustrated by Herbert Paus, ran from 1925-1929 and depicted a giant, shirtless, muscular man looming over various scenes of modern life, particularly urban life. This depiction of a modern man can be seen in one ad caressing a globe, one hand draped over the horizon band and the other on the meridian, whilst along the lower half of the illustration there is an amalgam of modern city skylines with ships and trains travelling out of the cities' docks as if they are coming out of the ad towards the onlooker. Below the illustration reads: 'World Wide Distribution Makes Certain-teed Quality Available Everywhere'.[37] The global scope of the modern world is packed within this advertisement, with the ships and trains from the illustration allowing spaces to no

[34] Michael Rubenstein and Justin Neuman, *Modernism and Its Environments* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 4.
[35] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 57.
[36] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 33.
[37] 'Certainteed Herbert Paus', American Art Archives, [n.d.]
<https://americanartarchives.com/paus_certainteed.htm> [accessed 25 January, 2024].

longer be separate environs but bridged to one another via modern invention. The man's size even recalls Frank's idea of the modern mystic, the individual who can see themselves as a part of a unified 'Whole', as he is able to straddle the entirety of the globe, touching both the latitude and the longitude of the entire world.

What follows in the next three stanzas are more rapidly moving images of modern life:

> save me the wing, for if it isn't
> Erie it ain't for miles around a
> Mazda – and the telegraphic night coming on Thomas
>
> A Ediford – and whistling down the tracks
> a headlight rushing with the sound – can you
> imagine – while an Express makes time like
> SCIENCE – COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST
> RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE NORTHPOLE
> WALLSTREET AND VIRGINBIRTH WITHOUT STONES OR
> WIRES OR EVEN RUNning brooks connecting ears
> and no more sermons windows flashing roar
> breathtaking – as you like … eh?
>
> So the 20th Century – so
> whizzed the Limited – roared by and left
> three men, still hungry on the tracks, ploddingly
> watching the tail lights wizen and converge, slip-
> ping gimleted and neatly out of sight.[38]

References to technological inventions and inventors, the Erie Railroad, the Mazda lightbulb, Thomas Edison and Ford Motors, follow each other in quick succession, creating a sense of speed and overwhelming energy, a reflection of the machine-age itself. The kinetic energy and fast-paced rhythm of the poetry is made manifest by the Pullman Sleeper train that 'roar[s] by' the three men in the final stanza. All these references build an image of modernity as full of innovation, new-ness, and change. The stanza suddenly shifts into capitalisation, changing the narrative voice in a way that is akin to the 'newsreel' sections of John Dos Passos' *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), where portions

[38] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 57.

of headlines, newspaper clippings and song lyrics are dropped into the narrative. Here in *The Bridge* the move to capitalisation interrupts the stanza like a radio that has just been switched on with its volume turned up fully, announcing 'SCIENCE – COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST RADIO'.[39] Kramer stated that this line suggests that radio is replacing the Holy Ghost, much like Science and Commerce replace the Father and the Son in this twentieth century twist on the Trinity.[40] However, referring back to Waldo Frank's sense of 'the Whole', we can read this moment as a union of technology and spirituality, whereby the radio does not necessarily replace the Holy Ghost, but instead creates a sense of spiritual unity in the modern world. The radio connects seemingly disparate spaces, from the North Pole to Wall Street, as well as reporting on polar exploration and stock trading across the globe. It creates a global community, a spatial 'whole'. By using religious imagery here as well, we get the sense that this community, brought together through the radio, is bonding people together too, 'connecting ears' like sermons do. Spatial and spiritual unity come hand in hand, strengthened by Crane's reference to William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1623) by mentioning sermons, stones, and running brooks. In Shakespeare's play Duke Senior, exiled in the woods, says that in the country one: 'Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything'.[41] By mixing this espousal of the land's generative spiritual knowledge and power with technological images of radio, wires and science, Crane becomes one of Frank's mystics, a poet who acclimatised to the machine and made it a part of his poetic vocabulary so that science and religion are bridged with one another, and their union facilitates spatial connections on a global scale.

So far in looking closely at the sections 'Ave Maria', 'Cutty Sark' and the lyric poem 'The River', I have identified the ways in which Crane perceived space as a part of a 'whole'. Crane's connective symbol of the Brooklyn Bridge has been combined with the explorative ships of Columbus to imbue a mythic quality to America's 'discovery', making it the first step in a process of unity that, according to Crane, is on the cusp of realising its potential in his contemporary moment. Trade routes facilitated by clipper ships, travel between cities and states by train, and holy communication via radio waves, all serve to connect spaces, to bridge them to one another and facilitate a sense of modern wholeness. The ways in which I am reading Crane's spatial perception can be clarified by looking to David Harvey's study *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*. Harvey splits space into three categories: absolute space, relative space, and relational space. So far, my readings of *The Bridge* engage particularly with the final two, relative and relational. Relativity was first theorised by Albert Einstein in the early twentieth century and served as the basis for Harvey's relative space.

[39] Ibid.
[40] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 34.
[41] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Leah S. Marcus (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), p. 35.

The fact that Einstein's theory of relativity was almost concurrent with Crane's own work meant that during Crane's life the interlocking of space and time was still a recent and revolutionary perspective within the cultural zeitgeist.[42] The ways in which Crane perceived interlocking spaces via modern technology falls within Harvey's idea of relative space, as relative to the modern man in New York in 1930, the world felt closer and more connected than ever before. Like the Brooklyn Bridge does at the very beginning of Crane's poem, relative spatial perception can condense space and bridge the gaps between spaces. Crane could feel a personal connection to the global journey of the Cutty Sark because, as Kramer noted, Crane's own favourite whisky was imported via this clipper ship.[43] Similarly, seeing the Certain-teed ads around Manhattan displayed how the products one was consuming or using were also being consumed or used by people on the other side of the globe. The distance, both physically and introspectively between spaces and people, was being reduced within Crane's modern world. As Harvey explained, relative space includes modern transport links such as aeroplanes, railroads, and city subways, as well as the ways in which products and profit can be distributed at ever increasing rates throughout the world which 'transformed spatio-temporal relations' and changed the ways in which space can be considered and even traversed.[44]

The other spatial category that I have identified thus far in *The Bridge* is relational space. Relational space ties spaces not only to those spaces around it, but to intangible considerations such as collective memory, dreams, and aesthetics. In other words, space is not a thing unto itself, but something that must be considered in conjunction with the relationships between people, places, and things within that space. For example, the interplay between the cables of the Brooklyn Bridge and the rigging of Columbus' ships causes Crane to connect America, and New York specifically, to the European countries of Spain and Genoa, but also to China and the West Indies. The collective memory of America's origins (from a European perspective at least) that Crane invoked in 'Ave Maria', again, brings a sense of unity between spaces, across spatial as well as temporal gaps.

The connection Crane makes between spatial unity and spiritual unity also falls within the realm of the relational view. Crane was associating the relationships between absolute and relative spaces with religion and mysticism. It should be noted that this is not a defined and specific religiosity as Crane was personally disengaged from any specific religious cause, despite his mother's family's dedication to Christian Science. Paul Mariani writes that '[f]or her [his mother's] sake he was willing

[42] Even though the etymology of 'space' (espacement) means 'intervals', which does relate space to time. However, culturally it was theories of relativity that were developed in the nineteenth century that brought the two together.
[43] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 60.
[44] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 136.

to pretend an interest, though he would never be a disciple of anything but poetry'.[45] The word 'disciple' is appropriate when speaking of Crane's dedication to poetry, as we have already observed that within *The Bridge* Crane imbued his verse with a religiosity. By perceiving space relationally, I have connected Crane's yearning for spirituality within his poetry directly to the way he perceived space. In the proem I identified the relationship Crane sees between Manhattan and the rest of North America, the bridge that joined the 'iron' city with the Westerly prairies. But this moment of spatial unity is also a moment of spiritual unity, as the 'curveship' of the bridge lends 'a myth to God'.[46] In uniting spaces and creating 'wholeness', to borrow Waldo Frank's terminology, the bridge also materialises the myth of 'God', which is not necessarily a Christian, or any specific god, but a broader sense of spirituality and poetic mysticism – something beyond the material world of absolute, or even relative space. Physical and metaphysical spaces are bridged together, creating two realms of 'wholeness'. Harvey defined this relational perception of space as the point where 'mathematics, poetry, and music merge, where dreams, daydreams, memories, and fantasies flourish'.[47] Whilst the spiritual closeness Crane evokes cannot be measured in the same way the condensing of physical space can be, Harvey insisted that these elements of spatial perception cannot be dismissed because they are not quantifiable.[48] This 'relational terrain', as Harvey called it, is as important to discussing spatial dynamics, and is particularly vital when looking at Crane's mythic and mystical associations, even if it is 'challenging and difficult terrain'.[49] By using Harvey's terminology, we can attach a vocabulary to the ambitious, and at times misunderstood, aspirations of *The Bridge* to poetically explore the ways in which spatial and spiritual relationships were shifting in the twentieth century.

The turning point in the spatial and spiritual dimensions of *The Bridge* comes in the 'Cape Hatteras' section of the poem, with another rumination on nineteenth- and twentieth-century technology: the aeroplane. The section begins with an epigraph from Walt Whitman's 'Passage to India' (1872), which contains familiar themes of technology's ability to unite space: 'The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done'.[50] From this quotation we can identify the relative perception of space we have seen in *The Bridge*, as now that the world has been mapped and the oceans spanned, the voyage is done, there is no distance left to travel, the world has become condensed and accessible. Whitman's poem also connects with the relational perception of space I have identified as present within *The Bridge*, with Whitman bringing a spiritual and religious

[45] Mariani, *The Broken Tower: The Life of Hart Crane*, p. 36.
[46] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 44.
[47] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 139.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Whitman, 'Passage to India', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 293.

dimension to spatial connections and modern technology: 'A worship new I sing, / Your captains, voyagers, explorers, yours, / You engineers, you architects, machinists, yours, / You, not for trade or transportation only, / But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul.'.[51] Whitman explicitly moves beyond the idea of material spatial relationships, as it is not simply the modern wonders of transport or trade that interest him, but also how these connections impact the soul and create a sense of spiritual accomplishment as well.

These themes from Whitman's poem continue in 'Cape Hatteras', where the wonders of aviation are spoken of as refiguring humanity's physical make-up: 'Dream cancels dream in this new realm of fact / From which we wake into the dream of act; / Seeing himself an atom in a shroud - / Man hears himself an engine in a cloud!'.[52] Crane's acclimatisation to the machine is manifested physically in that in the same way a human body is made from atoms, machines, and in this case the plane, contains human bodies. This association elevates machinery and technology beyond simply being objects or tools for human use but breathes life into machines on an almost biological and physiological level. In doing so, Crane fulfils his own desire for machines and technology to operate 'like the unconscious nervous responses of our bodies, its connotations emanate from within – forming as spontaneous a terminology of poetic reference as the bucolic world of pasture, plow, and barn'.[53]

The invention of the plane is then elevated further in its ability to physically, and in a more abstract or 'relational' way, bridge the gap between the heavens and the earth.

> Stars scribble on our eyes the frosty sagas,
> The gleaming cantos of unvanquished space …
> O sinewy silver biplane, nudging the wind withers!
> There, from Kill Devils Hill at Kitty Hawk
> Two brothers in their twinship left the dune;
> Warping the gale, the Wright windwrestlers veered
> Capeward, then blading the wind's flank, banked and spun
> What ciphers risen from prophetic script,
> What marathons new-set between the stars![54]

[51] Ibid, p. 289.
[52] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 78.
[53] Crane, 'Modern Poetry' (1930), *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose*, pp. 261-262.
[54] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 79.

The relatively recent invention of the plane in the early part of the twentieth century, as well as the surge in the number of high-rise buildings, had revolutionised everyday perceptions of space. Pictures of these views, such as Richard Rummell's *Bird's Eye View of New York City* (1896), are described by Douglas Tallack as permitting 'a plurality of overlapping points of view […] overlapping perspectives can be included all at once'.[55] This is ostensibly Harvey's idea of relative space, spatial perception that is relative to a particular view, and is therefore changeable and fluid. The panoptic effect this has blurs the two dimensional and the three dimensional to create multiple perspectives within one image, or viewpoint. Crane's use of 'warping' conveys the distortion of space that occurs from the air, enhanced by the word 'blading' – a pun which conflates the wings of the plane with the destruction of traditional spatial perceptions. Crane combines the explorative technology of the Wright Brothers with the spirit of poetic imagination, describing the stars they are reaching for as 'sagas' and the air they sail through as 'gleaming cantos'. By doing so Crane connects the planes with the Brooklyn Bridge of the proem, which was described as an '[u]nfractioned idiom', a physical emblem of language and poetry. This association also connects the planes' physical exploration of space with Crane's own spiritual exploration of humanity and modernity occurring in the poem. Once again relative and relational space bleed into one another, as the plane's ability to rise to the heavens and run marathons between the stars takes on spiritual meaning when it is related to divinity and creative inspiration. The skywriting of the planes becomes the spiritual writing of the poet.

However, the heights that modern invention can now reach, both physically and metaphysically, can come at a terrible cost, and one that Crane does not shy away from in this section of the poem:

> O bright circumferences, heights employed to fly
> War's fiery kennel masked in downy offings, -
> This tournament of space, the threshed and chiseled height,
> Is baited by marauding circles, bludgeon flail
> Of rancorous grenades whose screaming petals carve us
> Wounds that we wrap with theorems sharp as hail![56]

The 'bright circumferences' are reminiscent of the encircling of the globe that Crane reveres in earlier sections of the poem, whether in the global trade of the Cutty Sark or the new worlds that

[55] Douglas Tallack, 'Bird's-eye views of New York City, 1880s-1930s', *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, cultures, spaces*, ed. Peter Brooker & Andrew Thacker (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2005), p. 116.
[56] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, pp. 79-80.

were made accessible via Columbus' ships. However, the optimism Crane had injected into humanity's mastery of new spaces has been sullied by war. The space is described as 'threshed' and 'chiseled', violent images that hark back to the warping and blading of the previous stanza. Despite the violent interruption of spatial understanding and perception that the planes were doing and are still doing in this stanza, the violence is also transferred into real human violence. This disillusionment is clear when the 'marauding circles' of the grenades, an image which, in a different context could have been seen as reminiscent of the global encircling of ships witnessed in previous sections, now becomes a bludgeoning image of death, written in the poetic and pastoral language of flowers. The description of the exploding grenade as 'screaming petals' signals that not only has the aeroplane been twisted into a tournament of destruction, but its symbolic association with poetry and imagination has as well. An acclimatisation with the machine requires a recognition of all aspects of modern technology, including its capacity to wreak death and destruction upon the spaces it conquers.

Despite Crane's recognition of the darker aspects of modernity, the poem does not lose its faith in technology and its role in spatial and spiritual connection. Even within Crane's rumination on the horrors of war there is hope, which takes shape again through the mighty curvature of the Brooklyn Bridge. Crane continues to describe the dogfights of the planes on the aerial battleground, and eventually one is hit by a shell which punctures its engine. The stanza then structurally follows the descent of the plane:

Now eagle-bright, now
quarry-hid, twist-
-ing, sink with
Enormous repercussive list-
-ings down
Giddily spiralled
gauntlets, upturned, unlooping
In guerilla sleights, trapped in combustion gyr-
Ing, dance the curdled depth
down whizzing
Zodiacs dashed
(now nearing fast the Cape!)
down gravitation's
vortex into crashed

…. dispersion … into mashed and shapeless debris. …
By Hatteras bunched the beached heap of high bravery![57]

The once 'eagle-bright' planes that signalled new possibilities and perceptions have become grounded, spiralling down through the air, mirrored by Crane's use of caesura and enjambement. The 'Zodiacs' that the planes had connected with, echoing the Brooklyn Bridge's 'beading' path between the heavens and the earth, now lie 'dashed' amongst the debris of the planes. Kramer's notes state that Cape Hatteras, on the North Carolina coast, was infamous for its challenging ocean currents, leading to its reputation as a graveyard for boats and ships. Therefore, the plane wreckage in this section fuses with the historic shipwrecks along the Cape (as well as the ships from previous sections of the poem), making it a 'symbolic locale marking the grave of any "high bravery"'.[58] Crane did not wish to ignore modernity's pitfalls and succumb to what he called a 'program of lyrical pandering to the taste of those obsessed by the importance of machinery'.[59] Instead, it is positioned as beautiful and empowering, whilst also being destructive and horrific, like the natural world which Crane saw as an equally important part of the modern poetic vocabulary.

However, Crane's faith in the potential of modern technology returns in the very next stanza, enabling the poem to soar back towards the heavens after its terrible descent onto the Cape. 'The stars have grooved our eyes with old persuasions / Of love and hatred, birth – surcease of nations …'.[60] After falling to earth with the war plane, Crane takes the reader back up to the heavens, reassuring us that they are eternal, and despite the setbacks of war and death, the stars have 'grooved' themselves into the eyes of every human throughout time, and will outlast love, hatred, birth and the demise of nations. The poem's thematic descent and then immediate ascent creates another 'curveship', intimating that Crane's bridge will still carry modernity into a utopian future. He continues in this reverie by invoking one of his muses, Walt Whitman, whose poetic inspiration takes on a kind of divinity, allowing Crane to still see the possibility for ascent. 'O Walt! – Ascensions of thee hover in me now / As thou at junctions elegiac, there, of speed / With vast eternity, dost wield the rebound seed!'.[61] Despite Crane seeing modernity as at a 'junction', one that is full of death and mourning, through Whitman's poetic inspiration there is the potential of spiritual rebounding.

[57] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 81.
[58] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, pp. 70 and 80.
[59] Crane, 'Modern Poetry' (1930), *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose*, p. 261.
[60] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 81.
[61] Ibid, pp. 81-82.

Although the final two sections of the poem, 'The Tunnel' and 'Atlantis', narrate the spiritual descent and ascent of Crane's modern moment through the spatial infrastructure of the New York Subway and the Brooklyn Bridge, he prefigures the climax of the poem within his invocation of Whitman here in 'Cape Hatteras'. The poem returns to the city by alluding to Whitman's own connection with Brooklyn Bridge (or at least the bridge's symbolic significance) found in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry': 'And it was thou who on the boldest heel / Stood up and flung the span on even wing / Of that great Bridge, our Myth, whereof I sing! / Years of the Modern! Propulsions toward what capes?'.[62] Whitman, despite writing his poem before the construction of Brooklyn Bridge, 'flung the span' by creating the bridge's mythology of creating spatial and spiritual closeness, uniting time and space and poetry and the city, all by crossing the East River between Manhattan and Brooklyn. By bridging spaces Whitman saw a bridge between peoples, a shared 'whole', shown in the lines: 'What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in my face? / Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?'.[63]

Despite Crane's acknowledgement that the modern world had propelled itself into Cape Hatteras, joining the wreckages of planes and ships, it is clear that Crane believed that redemption was possible, that the trajectory could be changed and society could be propelled to other, less destructive 'capes'. To solidify this belief Crane directly references Whitman's poem 'Years of the Modern' (1865). In this poem Whitman predicts a glorious future in which technological advancement will bring about a global community: 'With the steamship, the electric telegraph, the newspaper, the whole sale engines of war, / With these and the world-spreading factories he interlinks all geography, all lands; / What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of you, passing under the seas? / Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one heart to the globe?'.[64] It is noteworthy that Whitman uses geographical links to see the people uniting and sharing 'one heart', the organ most associated with emotion, love, and the transcendental. As in *The Bridge*, spatial bridges signal spiritual and divine ones. The relative perceptions of space that the ships, telegraphs, and factories afford allow a relational perception of space to occur, whereby dreams, feelings and poetry can inform space as well, creating one world space, a 'whole' within which humanity is connected. This sentiment concludes the poem in 'Atlantis', but not before Crane details the descent of modernity in 'The Tunnel'.

'The Tunnel' once again sees Crane focus on a key modern technology, the New York Subway. Opened in 1904, the subway was the solution to a problem that faced the city as large modern buildings, and the L-trains, began to demand more and more space. Sunny Statler, in the article

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[62] Ibid, p. 83.
[63] Whitman, 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 119.
[64] Whitman, 'Years of the Modern', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, pp. 139-140.

'Subway Ride and Subway System in Hart Crane's "'The Tunnel'" wrote that by 1925, the year before Crane wrote 'The Tunnel', the average New Yorker rode the subway 276 times a year.[65] The alienating subway experience that this section details was mirrored in Crane's experience of writing it. He wrote to Waldo Frank that the composition process was 'rather ghastly, almost surgery'.[66] However, the use of the word 'surgery' suggests a kind of healing through pain, which is the overriding theme of this section. Despite 'The Tunnel' being the main moment of conflict in Crane's poem, his faith in modernity remains as this section transitions into the final section, 'Atlantis'.

In a 1926 letter to his patron, Otto Kahn, Crane explained 'The Tunnel' is a warning against 'the encroachment of machinery on humanity; a kind of purgatory in relation to the open sky'.[67] Despite the contrast this description has with the skies of 'Cape Hatteras', I identify this section of the poem as one which speaks to the same 'elegiac junction' present in 'Cape Hatteras', albeit within the physical infrastructure of Manhattan. Crane immediately situates this section of the poem in relation to the earlier sections that detail technological and spatial exploration by homing in on the intersection between Times Square and Columbus Circle. Kramer notes that this intersection is marked by a pillared statue of Columbus, erected in 1892 and adorned with his ships and an angel holding a globe.[68] The reader is immediately reminded of the poem's earlier themes of technological innovation and spatial bridging, just through the reference to Columbus. The angel that features on the columned statue can be linked to the Certain-teed ad detailed earlier, connecting 'The Tunnel' with the relative perception of space that I identified within that image. However, like the descent of the planes in 'Cape Hatteras', we are pulled down from the lofty heights of Columbus' column into the New York Subway, marking the moment of dark conflict within the poem. As soon as the eye enters the subway the expansive and global spaces that were suggested in Columbus Circle are diametrically juxtaposed with a fast-paced succession of images that bring about a claustrophobic and close atmosphere:

> Be minimum, then, to swim the hiving swarms
> Out of the Square, the Circle burning bright –
> Avoid the glass doors gyring at your right,
> Where boxed alone a second, eyes take fright

[65] Sunny Stalter, 'Subway Ride and Subway System in Hart Crane's "The Tunnel"', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 33.2 (2010), pp. 70-91 (p. 71).
[66] Fisher, *Hart Crane: A Life*, pp. 311-312.
[67] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 112.
[68] Ibid, p. 113.

-Quite unprepared rush naked back to light:
And down beside the turnstile press the coin
Into the slot. The gongs already rattle.[69]

The use of 'swim' in relation to moving through the crowd conjures the shipwrecks from 'Cape Hatteras': as the people sink below the surface of the New York streets there is a sense of drowning and being pulled down by the 'swarms' of people – strengthened when in the next stanza Crane described the subway as 'rivered under streets'.[70] These 'swarms' also recall the crowd of the undead that 'flowed over London Bridge' in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), giving this entry to the subway the feeling of entering the underworld, a liminal space of death, despair and 'fright'.[71] The back-to-back images of the glass door on one side, the sense of being 'boxed alone' and then the cramped turnstile, compound the uncomfortable sense of absolute space which has literally been limited by the subway tunnels.

As well as the claustrophobia present in the subway tunnels, Crane also reveals a disconnect within the way space can be perceived relatively within the speeding subway car. 'In the car / the overtone of motion / underground, the monotone / of motion is the sound / of other faces, also underground –'.[72] Within these lines Crane displays the separation between the motion of the subway car, the 'overtone of motion', with the motion of people within the car, 'the monotone of motion'. The subway car is speeding through the tunnels, reducing the perceived distance between different parts of the city, relative to the perspective of the passengers. Simultaneously, everyone within the subway car appears motionless and still. In *Imagining New York City* (2015), Christoph Lindner articulates this dichotomy: '[t]he subway car itself, which frames and contains the scene, signals mass transit, rapid movement, urban circulation. Yet the interior view of the car presents an image of immobility'. There is 'additional tension no longer just between togetherness and seclusion but also between motion and stasis, traveling and waiting, direction and drifting'.[73] The way space is perceived by Crane within 'The Tunnel' is inherently fractured, and by using Harvey's terminology of relative space, we can determine that this is partially because of the tension between the rapid movement of the car and the stasis of its passengers, recalling again their role as an undead mass. As the space becomes more fractured and unreadable, so does the poem itself. The use of

[69] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 97.
[70] Ibid, p. 98.
[71] T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', *The Waste Land and other poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1999), p. 25.
[72] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 98.
[73] Lindner, *Imagining New York City*, p. 165.

the word 'monotone' to describe the motion (or lack of motion) of the passengers reflects the passages of overheard and contextless speech the Crane dictates from the subway car:

> "'Let's have a pencil Jimmy – living now
> At Floral Park
> Flatbush – on the fourth of July –
> like a pigeon's muddy dream – potatoes
> to dig in the field – travlin the town – too –
> night after night – the Culver line – the
> girls all shaping up – it used to be –'.[74]

This word collage is almost completely unintelligible and mirrors the fractured sense of space, creating a confused, alienating quality to the section. The form reflects the content with dashes and line breaks separating the fragments of speech, breaking apart the stanzas in the same way that any earlier sense of a spatial 'whole' is being broken down and atomised by the subway, shown by the interjection of disconnected spaces of Floral Park in Queens and Flatbush in Brooklyn.

The optimism evident in earlier sections of the poem has disappeared and this descent into the urban underworld is even reflected in the shift in Crane's poetic muse. Rather than the hopeful expansiveness of Whitman, Crane instead turns to the macabre of Edgar Allan Poe. The use of what Harvey calls 'relational space' has been altered, as instead of the expansive city space connecting Crane with Whitman's journey across the East River, the subway space caused Crane to instead be transported to Baltimore and ruminate on Poe's gruesome death: 'And when they dragged your retching flesh, / Your trembling hands that night through Baltimore - / That last night on the ballot mounds, did you, / Shaking, did you deny the ticket, Poe?'.[75] Rather than seeing modern spaces as connected to spiritual enlightenment, global community and poetic inspiration, the subway space is related to violence, mysterious murder, and the death of poetry.

Despite being described as a 'swarm' earlier in the section, the crowd of commuters are not represented as a community or a 'whole'. Instead, their status as a swarm dehumanises them, and despite their grouping together as a mass, they are also described as a 'penguin flexions of arms'.[76] Their bodies appear as fractured as their speech, the space they are occupying and, we can assume, their mental states. Friedrich Engels referred to the modern phenomenon of urban alienation when examining the crowds of London in the nineteenth century, calling it the 'dissolution of mankind

[74] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 98.
[75] Ibid, p. 99.
[76] Ibid, p. 97.

into monads, of which each one has a separate principle, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme'.[77] The physical separation of Crane's crowds into constituent parts reflects their inner separation, the absence of a modern, urban community. Lindner strengthens Engels' observed juxtaposition by seeing 'the subway as a space that simultaneously brings people together and keeps them apart'.[78] Crane continued the theme of 'atomisation' in the stanza describing the subway's stop at Chambers Street:

> The intent escalator lifts a serenade
> Stilly
> Of shoes, umbrellas, each eye attending its shoe, then
> Bolting outright somewhere above where streets
> Burst suddenly in rain. … The gongs recur:
> Elbows and levers, guard and hissing door. [79]

The 'serenade' of people are firstly reduced to the constituent parts of shoes and umbrellas. The fractured bodies signify the disconnection the crowd are experiencing, and they are unable to be considered a whole being. Their lack of personal 'wholeness' is important when considering how Crane's friend and influence, Waldo Frank, saw universal wholeness and the role of the 'mystic'. Nilsen wrote that Frank saw the mystic as one who saw 'that his own self is, or should be, such a whole'.[80] As Crane's subway riders are broken down and fractured, reduced to appendages and body parts, the 'universal whole' that both Frank and Crane sought after is not possible within the hellish space of Crane's subway. Despite the rain that falls upon those who have left the purgatory of the subway, recalling Eliot's spiritually revelatory 'damp gust / Bringing rain' in *The Waste Land*, for those still onboard, the disembodied elbows of the guards foist them back into their alienated and fractured space.[81]

Despite the continued alienation that those still in the subway car are experiencing, 'The Tunnel' does end on a hopeful note. We saw at the Chambers Street platform that those who left the subway on the escalator, despite being fractured into estranged body-parts, were also described as a 'serenade'. This descriptor seems paradoxical considering that they are also separated into 'shoes' and 'umbrellas', unable to look at each other and consider themselves as a unit. But, as a 'serenade'

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[77] Friedrich Engels, *Conditions of the Working Class*, trans. Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1920), p. 24.
[78] Lindner, *Imagining New York City*, p. 164.
[79] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, pp. 99-100.
[80] Nilsen, *Hart Crane's Divided Vision*, p. 25.
[81] Eliot, 'The Waste Land', *The Waste Land and other poems*, p. 39.

not only are these people associated with the open air, contrasted with the claustrophobia experienced underground, but also music and harmony, insinuating a community, as a song or melody requires a singular and collaborative effort. This moment of song can also be contrasted with the 'overtone' and 'monotone' of motion that Crane used to describe the friction inherent within the relative space of the subway car. The insinuation here could be that there is the potential for the fractured nature of modernity to be reconciled and bring about a more utopian modern future, as suggested in earlier sections of the poem. The previously mentioned Eliotic revelation of rain that suddenly bursts upon exiting the subway brings both a contrast and association with the 'Thunder' of the subway engines, which are described as 'galvothermic here below'.[82] The 'Thunder' continues Crane's references to *The Waste Land*, and particularly the section 'What the Thunder Said', which contains the sounds of thunder, heralding the healing rain which signals the potential for prosperity after the horrors that Eliot had perceived in the early parts of the twentieth century. Here in 'The Tunnel', there is healing rain that falls on those above ground, but underground the thunder is associated with the roar of machines, displayed by the portmanteau of galvanise and exothermic.

The link between the thunderous machines and the revitalising rain implies that, despite the horror Crane perceived in modern urban spaces, these spaces were still a part of his hopeful vision of the future. Rather than yearn for a kind of prelapsarian space which erases modern inventions, the beauty that Whitman saw in modernity is still present in this section of the poem. As Crane stated in his essay 'Modern Poetry': 'This process [acclimatisation with the machine] does not infer any program of lyrical pandering to the taste of those obsessed by the importance of machinery; nor does it essentially involve even the specific mention of a single mechanical contrivance. It demands, however, along with the traditional qualifications of the poet, an extraordinary capacity for surrender, at least temporarily, to the sensations of urban life'.[83] Crane neither glamourises modernity, nor demonises modernity, but instead surrenders to all its beauty and horror. Despite the potential for alienating urban spaces and fractured identities, there is also the potential for spatial wholeness, and modern community, displayed by the rain-soaked 'serenade'.

The transition from the dark conflict of the subterranean subway into the more hopeful potential future continues in the final stanzas of 'The Tunnel':

> O caught like pennies beneath soot and steam,
> Kiss of our agony thou gatherest;

[82] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 100.
[83] Crane, 'Modern Poetry' (1930), *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose*, p. 261.

Condensed, thou takest all – shrill ganglia
Impassioned with some song we fail to keep.
And yet, like Lazarus, to feel the slope,
The sod and billow breaking, - lifting ground,
-A sound of waters bending astride the sky
Unceasing with some Word that will not die …![84]

The stanza begins still very much rooted in the alienating urban space, likening the modern woes of the twentieth century urbanite to the pennies lost down street grates, building up underground creating the dystopian machine-world Crane had been describing. The use of 'ganglia' suggests a physiology within this modern machinery, much like the vitalising planes of the Wright brothers from 'Cape Hatteras'. Here the bodily element of the mechanic subway tunnels forms a kind of nervous system where the shrill screeches of the trains become the sounds of human 'agony'.

However, in the second half of the stanza, Crane returns to his redemptive emblem – the Brooklyn Bridge. Crane's reference to the Biblical figure Lazarus immediately injects the stanza with themes of rebirth, as, like the passengers, Lazarus bursts out of the ground and overcomes the death and decay of the underground. The bridge itself is evoked by 'slope', 'lifting ground' and 'bending astride the sky', all words and phrases that suggest the 'curveship' of the bridge. By linking Lazarus' reanimation with the image of the Brooklyn Bridge, Crane does not despair in the agonies of modern spaces but instead sees that there is still potential for a bright modern future. The 'sod and billow breaking' is reminiscent of 'the prairies' dreaming sod' from 'To Brooklyn Bridge', where the bridge was seen by Crane as both a literal and symbolic path between the modern, industrial city and the rest of the American land. Crane still believed in this utopian idea of a united modern America, with the bridge acting as a basic symbol of spatial connection between the island of Manhattan and the American continent. However, imbued in the bridge is also something akin to Harvey's relational perception of space, revealed in the final line of the stanza. In 'To Brooklyn Bridge' the bridge was described as an 'idiom', a word that I read as relationally connected with the idea of language and poetry, a theme that many Crane scholars have identified as a part of Crane's symbolism. The bridge is therefore not only an embodiment of the connections between what Harvey would call absolute and relatively perceived spaces, but also a feature of relational space, which connects the modern city with the metaphysical realm of art and poetic imagination. Here in 'The Tunnel' the use of 'some Word that will not die' can be read similarly, whereby the bridge

[84] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, pp. 100-101.

embodies the noncorporeal realms of language and poetry. However, the capitalisation also implies the Christian idea of the Word ('In the beginning was the Word'), stemming from the ancient Greek notion of Logos.[85] Crane returns to the idea of cosmology and the heavens, where the bridge joins the modern city with the rest of the American landmass, as well as the rest of the universe creating a universal 'whole' – an idea more fully realised in the final section of the poem, 'Atlantis'. However, this stanza does display that despite the dangers of 'the machine', Crane still saw urban space and modernity as a part of a potential utopian future. The bridge is used here as a symbol of connection between the modern city and the rest of 'the whole', but also as a feature which bridges 'The Tunnel' with 'Atlantis'.

'Atlantis' acts as a mirror image of 'To Brooklyn Bridge', again focusing on the titular bridge and spatially and thematically grounding the poem. These two sections act like the two towers of the Brooklyn Bridge itself, providing an anchor from which the poem can spatially and thematically explore the rest of 'the whole'. These themes of exploration and connection are condensed into the image of the Brooklyn Bridge, which is immediately described in the first stanza:

> Through the bound cable strands, the arching path
> Upward, veering with light, the flight of strings, -
> Taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate
> The whispered rush, telepathy of wires.
> Up the index of night, granite and steel –
> Transparent meshes – fleckless the gleaming staves –
> Sibylline voices flicker, waveringly stream
> As though a god were issue of the strings …[86]

The bridge is once again acting as a link between modernity and the divine. Having experienced the bleak alienation of 'The Tunnel', the poem now propels the reader upward, not only to the surface street level of the city, but beyond that into the skies above. Technological features of the bridge, such as the 'cable strands', and the 'granite and steel', are mixed with the 'veering' light of the heavens, and the 'shuttling moonlight' shining through the suspension cables, injecting the bridge with an elevated mythos whilst also joining the modern city with the idea of the cosmos – relationally perceiving the city, according to the language of Harvey. The bridge itself is a symbol of the spirituality that can be found within modernity, a 'telepathy of wires' whereby modern

[85] John 1:1, *The King James Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [n.d.]), p. 848.
[86] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 105.

innovation and technology can telepathically communicate with the spiritual 'whole'. Kramer notes that this stanza also positions the bridge as an Aeolian harp, or the lyre of Apollo.[87] By infusing the bridge with musicality, with the syncopation of the moonlight, the bridge's 'strings', and the crisscrossing cables becoming 'staves', we are reminded of the 'serenade' of people from 'The Tunnel' who became representative of the potential for community in the urban landscape. Here the sense of harmony and music relates to the universe, the bridge acting as a symbol for the city's interaction with the cosmos, strengthened by the 'Sibylline voices' that accompany the bridge's song. This may be another reference to Eliot: Crane appears to invert the Sibyl who begs for death in Eliot's epigraph, and instead makes the bridge his oracle, singing of a transcendent future.[88]

Crane continues to position the bridge as a physical communication between the heavens and the earth in the form of music and song in the third stanza:

> And on, obliquely up bright carrier bars
> New octaves trestle the twin monoliths
> Beyond whose frosted capes the moon bequeaths
> Two worlds of sleep (O arching strands of song!)-
> Onward and up the crystal-flooded aisle
> White tempest nets file upward, upward ring
> With silver terraces the humming spars,
> The loft of vision, palladium helm of stars.[89]

The two towers of the Brooklyn Bridge provide a framework from which new 'octaves' travel upwards towards the moon, revealing 'two worlds of sleep'. These two worlds can be read as the material, physical world of absolute and relative space, New York and the Brooklyn Bridge, and the transcendental, metaphysical world of relational space, the heavens, and the cosmos. It is through the 'arching strands of song', the bridge, that these two worlds are joined, creating Frank's sense of a universal 'whole'. The 'crystal-flooded aisle' strengthens this reading, as Kramer notes that the musical spheres in Pythagorean cosmology were made of crystal.[90] Furthermore, Crane, in writing the 'palladium helm of stars' makes this heavenly connection with the city a form of protection, an assurance that the modern future he foresaw can come to pass if this sense of the universal whole can be fully realised.

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[87] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 127.
[88] Eliot, 'The Waste Land', *The Waste Land and other poems*, p. 127.
[89] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 105.
[90] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 128.

Crane himself, in a letter to Waldo Frank in 1926, calls 'Atlantis' 'symphonic', a 'convergence of all the strands' of the poem up to this point.[91] We have already seen how the section reasserts Crane's belief in modernity's potential to bridge with the divine, creating a sense of universal perfection. However, the section also recalls Crane's use of global exploration and technological advancement to bring about a sense of global connection, particularly by returning to nautical imagery in the second stanza:

> And through the cordage, threading with its call
> One arc synoptic of all tides below –
> Their labyrinthine mouths of history
> Pouring reply as though all ships at sea
> Complighted in one vibrant breath made cry, -
> "Make thy love sure – to weave whose song we ply!"
> -From blank embankments, moveless soundings hailed,
> So seven oceans answer from their dream.[92]

The use of threading 'cordage' in the first line again can be read as the fusing of the woven wire cables of the bridge with the woven ropes that make up the rigging of sail ships, once again turning the bridge into a ship. The arc of the bridge is described as 'synoptic of all tides', making the bridge encompass the entirety of the ships encircling the globe, a callback to 'Ave Maria' and 'Cutty Sark'. The totality of this image is strengthened by the last line referencing the 'seven oceans' that make up the global expanse. Here Crane's bridge synthesises the entirety of the globe, bridging spaces to create one global whole, relative to the modern New Yorker who can see themselves joined with the rest of the world. By exclaiming "'Make thy love sure – to weave whose song we ply!'", Crane weaves together the disparate edges of the globe, like the ships crossing the ocean, joining them up into one cohesive and loving entity, a modern community facilitated by spatial relationships and technological innovation.

This union of spaces is reasserted by again joining the urban city space with its natural surroundings and the traditional American landscape, reminiscent of the proem, where the bridge was described as 'Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod'.[93] In 'Atlantis' the bridge is described as 'With white escarpments swing into light, / Sustained in tears the cities are endowed / And

[91] Ibid, p. 126.
[92] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 128.
[93] Ibid, p. 44.

justified conclament with ripe fields / Revolving through their harvest in sweet torment'.[94] Kramer explains that 'conclament' is Crane's misspelling of 'conclamant', meaning 'calling out together'.[95] These lines therefore position the bridge as uniting the urban and the pastoral landscapes, rendering them equal parts of the larger whole, fulfilling Crane's call for poetic acclimatisation to the machine. By bridging different world spaces, whether these are the four corners of the globe, or the modern urban landscape with the rural American landscape, Crane fuses disparate spaces into a cohesive whole, allowing the bridge to become a means to achieve spatial unity within the new modernity that Crane was proposing.

Through articulating both a cosmological and universal, as well as a spatial and global sense of wholeness, Crane fully realises Waldo Frank's vision of the mystic who unites the scientific realms of technology and modernisation with the religious realms of spirituality and the divine. By distilling these enormous themes within the image of the Brooklyn Bridge, a symbol of modern New York City and technological, urban innovation, Crane creates an ultimately hopeful and utopian vision of modernity, which could echo into the future creating a united modern society, one defined by both spatial and spiritual wholeness.

Using Harvey's categorisations of space has allowed greater clarity in understanding Crane's use of space in the poem. However, Harvey deploys these categories to understand space more fully as it exists under capitalism and is therefore broadly much less utopian than Crane. This is obviously in part because Crane is writing in a different period to Harvey, from a different institutional and disciplinary situation, and in a different genre. Where I have read Crane's large-scale mythic and spiritual project alongside Harvey's notion of relational space, Harvey sees it as a way of understanding how capitalist systems operate within and between modern spaces. Where Crane sees modern spaces and their interconnected dynamics as ultimately beautiful and a sign of progress, Harvey sees it as aiding capitalism and its immaterial designation of value.[96] These two viewpoints are almost diametrically opposed, but they are articulating a similar phenomenon. Whilst Harvey sees all his spatio-temporal relations as a part of capitalism's control over space, Crane sees spatial relationships as exhibiting human control over space, the difference being that Crane has a Whitmanian faith in humanity's evolution over time, whilst Harvey understands 'progress' as a facet of capitalist domination. However, Harvey certainly sees a shred of utopian potential in spatio-temporal relations, writing on class consciousness that 'only when those dreams [the workers'] are converted into an active force do these immaterial longings and desires take on objective powers. And for that to happen requires a dialectical movement across and through the

[94] Ibid, p. 107.
[95] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 132.
[96] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 149.

whole matrix of spatio-temporal relations'.[97] For Harvey any kind of utopian outcome requires the consideration of all spatio-temporal relations to work in tension with one another. For Crane, this is somewhat true as well, with the modern formation of spaces relative to one another on a global scale facilitating relational spaces that are joined to spiritual wholeness. However, where Harvey's perception of space is essentially political, Crane's is, at this point in my argument, a progressive modernist one. Despite their stark differences, the foundations of attempting to articulate modern spaces means that it is both useful and revealing to read these two texts alongside one another.

Time and Space

In 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' Whitman expresses the connection he feels with all of those who cross the East River, whether in the past, present, or future: 'It avails not, time nor place – distance avails not, / I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence, / Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt'.[98] By perceiving past, present, and future within the absolute space of the Brooklyn Ferry, Whitman is, to use Harvey's terms, perceiving space relationally. Harvey writes that '[a]n event, process, or thing cannot be understood by appeal to what exists only at some point'.[99] Instead, that event, process, or thing, contains past experiences, memories, acquired knowledge, as well as ideas of the future. As such, these considerations would need to be included when perceiving spaces, as space is fundamental to any event, process, or thing. Within this view then, space and time are inseparable, as influences throughout time inform the space itself, creating what Harvey called 'spacetime', a perception of space that fuses space and time. Harvey writes that '[m]emories and dreams are the stuff of such a fusion'.[100] This fusion of space and time confirms that when Whitman remembers those who have crossed the East River before him, and dreams of those who will in the future, he is unknowingly perceiving both the event of crossing the river, and the space onboard the ferry, relationally.[101]

The Bridge is similarly concerned with the past, the present, and the future. Crane creates a mythological version of Columbus' discovery of America, tracking a fictionalised version of American history to articulate his own contemporary moment, and to ultimately project an idea of what the future of America could entail. Crane's exploration of America throughout his own version of its history is rooted in the poem's symbolic centrepiece, the Brooklyn Bridge. Therefore, in a similar way to Whitman in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', Crane perceives the space of New York and the Brooklyn Bridge in a way that corresponds with Harvey's idea of relational spacetime. The

[97] Ibid, p. 154.
[98] Whitman, 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 116.
[99] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 137.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.

bridge's significance as a symbol related to both space and time is evident in the line 'Beading thy path – condense eternity' from 'To Brooklyn Bridge'.[102] Although I have already noted that this line signifies a bridge between the heavens and the earth, condensing the distance between modernity and the divine, the use of 'eternity' also connotes a condensing of time itself. The bridge spans spacetime, allowing its symbolic significance to be informed by experiences and ideas of the past, the present, and the future. This section of the chapter will focus on how Crane fused space and time in *The Bridge*, and how this fusion contributes to the sense of 'wholeness' he seeks to express.

The second section of *The Bridge*, 'Powhatan's Daughter', is comprised of six lyric poems of varying lengths. The first of these is 'The Harbor Dawn', which sees Crane in his present-day New York in a hypnagogic state. The poem begins with the speaker struggling to sleep alongside the sounds of the modern city, with its 'fog-insulated noises' and 'beshrouded wails' that enter their bedroom.[103] The action of the poem is rooted in the contemporary moment, strengthened by Kramer's biographical note that Crane wrote to his mother in 1925 complaining that 'I haven't had 6 hours of solid sleep for three nights, what with the bedlam of bells, grunts, whistles, screams and groans of all the river and harbor buoys, which have kept up an incessant grinding program as noisesome as the midnight passing into new year'.[104] The rest of the poem focuses on the urban surroundings, describing the 'darkling harbour, the pillowed bay', as well as the 'Cyclopean towers across Manhattan waters'.[105]

However, despite the poem's clear depiction of Crane's present day in the absolute space of Manhattan, italicised in the margins is another stanza that runs concurrently with the main body of the poem:

400 years and
more … or is
it from the
soundless shore
of sleep that time

recalls you to
your love,

[102] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 44.
[103] Ibid, p. 53.
[104] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 21.
[105] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, pp. 53-54.

there in a
waking dream
to merge
your seed

-with whom?

Who is the woman with
us in the
dawn? …
whose is the
flesh our feet have moved
upon?[106]

This marginalised stanza reveals that the urban space being described is also being perceived via one of Crane's muses, Pocahontas, the figure this section of the poem is named after. The stanza immediately transports the reader back 400 years to evoke the memory of Pocahontas, whose 'flesh' becomes one with the land. In 1927, Crane wrote to Otto Khan stating that Pocahontas was 'the mythological nature-symbol chosen to represent the physical body of the continent, or the soil'.[107] Through the 'soundless shore of sleep' in a 'waking dream' the poet conjures Pocahontas as a muse to articulate American space. As we are now in the realm of dreams and the past, this perception of America through the symbol of Pocahontas can be read as a relational interpretation of space. By running this stanza alongside the descriptions of contemporary Manhattan, the poem structurally exemplifies how Crane is interpreting the city space via dreams and the past, with the reader having to weave between descriptions of absolute space in the present day, and dream-like descriptions of the past, forming this relational perception of the city. Like the merging seeds in the stanza, Crane merges past and present in this poem, and as a result reveals that his perception of New York, and America as a whole, is reliant on more than just his singular modern moment.

The importance of the past in informing Crane's present continues in the next of the lyric poems that make up 'Powahatan's Daughter': 'Van Winkle'. The title character refers to Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle who fell asleep for twenty years in the Catskill Mountains and woke up after the American Revolution. In Crane's version of the legend, Rip sleeps for considerably longer

[106] Ibid.
[107] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 20.

and wakes up in Crane's modern metropolis, sweeping tenements '*way down on Avenue A*'.[108] As in the original Irving tale, the figure of Rip Van Winkle represents the changes that time enacts on space, and specifically America. Rather than in the original story where Rip experiences America freeing itself from British rule, in *The Bridge* Van Winkle witnesses the transition from pastoral American landscapes to the modern urban cityscape: '*And Rip was slowly made aware / that he, Van Winkle, was not here / nor there. He woke and swore he'd seen Broadway / a Catskill daisy chain in May*'.[109] Van Winkle stands outside of time, neither being 'here' – the present, or 'there' – the past. Instead, as an outsider he witnesses the way time directly impacts space and spatial dynamics, with Broadway transitioning from an idyllic, rural 'daisy chain' to the urban cultural centre we still recognise today. The ways in which perceptions of space are influenced by the passage of time is a theme which continues in the rest of the poem.

The poem begins in a familiar way, by invoking Crane's omnipresent bridge when describing the highway: 'Macadam, gun-grey as the tunny's belt, / Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate: / Listen! The miles a hurdy-gurdy grinds - / Down gold arpeggios mile on mile unwinds'.[110] The 'leaps' of the highway are reminiscent of the vaulting curve of the Brooklyn Bridge in the proem, and the expansive reach of the road from east coast to west coast recalls the sense of 'wholeness' that the bridge creates, spanning the entirety of the American nation and uniting the sea and the land via the vast open road.

This image of spatial unity then inspires a Proustian reverie in Crane, where he is suddenly transported back to his childhood:

> Times earlier, when you hurried off to school,
> -It is the same hour though a later day –
> You walked with Pizarro in a copybook,
> And Cortes rode up, reining taughtly in –
> Firmly as coffee grips the taste, - and away![111]

The figures of Pizarro and Cortes that are contained within Crane's school textbooks harken even further back in time to the sailors and explorers in the mould of Columbus from 'Ave Maria'. Their presence in Crane's childhood memory implies both that Crane's own past was informing how he saw America, but also the nation's depiction in books and the imagination, right the way

[108] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 55.
[109] Ibid, p. 56.
[110] Ibid, p. 55.
[111] Ibid.

back to the continent's European origins of colonial settlers and conquistadors. Harvey includes the influence of books and learning in his definition of relational space when listing some of the factors that shape how space is perceived: 'past experiences, memories, and dreams accumulated directly or indirectly (through reading, for example)'.[112] The spatial 'whole' expressed in the first stanza is directly informed by Crane's direct and indirect accumulative memories of America itself. The influence of the past on space is then further solidified in the marginal gloss, which reads '*Like Memory, / she is time's / truant, shall / take you by / the hand*…'.[113] Again, this marginal verse refers to the titular Pocahontas who is acting as a kind of spiritual guide to the reader. She is described as 'time's truant', something that, like memory, exists outside of time itself and is not bound by its linearity. She can materialise in the present and guide the reader through these memories, existing both in the past and the present simultaneously. However, she is also acting as a symbol for the American land. We saw this in 'The Harbor Dawn' when her 'flesh' was depicted as 'soil'. Therefore, Pocahontas's dual role as a spirit operating outside of time, and as a representative of the American continent, implies that the way Crane was perceiving space also operated outside of temporal linearity, and that the influences of the past, present, and future should all be considered when American space is dealt with in the poem.

Assigning Pocahontas to this dream-like past is central to settler-colonialist ideology, one which works to justify violence and genocide. As Margarita Aragon observes, by constructing Native peoples as existing 'outside of history', one creates an 'imagined Indian [who] animate[s] an idyllic wilderness of American prehistory, in which white men c[an] make their destiny'.[114] This racist outlook, which abstracts the Native peoples from the present and the future, will continue throughout 'Powatan's Daughter'. By literally limiting Pocahontas into the marginal gloss, Crane makes his indigenous muse a marginal figure. In giving her a ghostly, non-corporeal presence in the poem, Crane does not have to confront or address any of the immense injustices that Pocahontas and her people experienced over the last four hundred years. Instead, she can remain as an almost fictitious spiritual guide, operating outside of her own incredibly brutal history. Crane uses the 'Indian' as a representative of America's past, attempting to create a sense of totality between the past and the present (as we have seen in both 'The Harbor Dawn' and 'Van Winkle') to forge a bright American future. However, this future is distinctly a future for white, European settlers adhering to a typically modern idea of 'civilisation'.

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[112] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 137.
[113] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 55.
[114] Margarita Aragon, 'Constructions of Racial Savagery in Early Twentieth-Century US Narratives of White Civilization', *Journal of American Studies*, 58.2 (2024), pp. 193-219 (p. 16).

At the end of 'Van Winkle', the titular Rip Van Winkle rushes into the subway which serves as a way of transporting the reader from New York out into the Mid-West and into a more traditional and pastoral American space within the next lyric poem, 'The River'. However, like in Crane's city, there is a relationship here between the past and the present, although the interaction between the two is more pregnant with tension. The second part of the poem begins with the lines 'The last bear, shot drinking in the Dakotas / Loped under wires that span the mountain stream'.[115] The electric wires transporting electricity from town to town have now invaded the bucolic mountain regions, and the bear, a symbol of the ancient wilderness is killed because of modernity's mastery over nature. Kramer notes that the bear was an important spiritual symbol for the Plains Indians of the Dakotas, and so this moment can also be seen as representative of modernity's eradication of the past and the fraught relationship between past and present.[116] The link between the bear and the Plains Indians could be a hint at an idea that is explored more explicitly later in the poem, the idea of the 'Vanishing Indian'. The bear, like the Native peoples of the American Plains, is a symbol for the American wilderness, the ungovernable savagery of nature, that is then destined to become 'extinct', to die out to facilitate a natural transfer of power to the European settlers who will inherit the land. This false narrative of the 'Vanishing Indian' is described by Aragon as a way 'to sanctify white inheritance'.[117] It is important to note that the modernity that Crane sees as overtaking America and the world, creating a global whole, is a distinctly white vision of modernity.

The tension between the past and the present is explored further when Crane again falls back into personal memories, recounting the hoboes he used to see from his father's sweet factory:

> Behind
> My father's cannery works I used to see
> Rail-squatters ranged in nomad raillery,
> The ancient men – wifeless or runaway
> Hobo-trekkers that forever search
> An empire wilderness of freight and rails.
> Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch,
> Holding to childhood like some termless play.
> John, Jake, or Charley, hopping the slow freight
> - Memphis to Tallahassee-riding the rods,

[115] Ibid, p. 57.
[116] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 35.
[117] Aragon, 'Constructions of Racial Savagery', p. 25.

Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods.[118]

These 'hobo-trekkers' are described Romantically as 'ancient men', who simultaneously hold on to 'childhood' and its playful innocence. The specificity of clinging to 'childhood' suggests a personal past, but the frontier-like 'empire wilderness' evokes a distinctly American past. However, instead of the prelapsarian pastoral landscape that these men yearn for, they wander through a modern scene 'of freight and rails'. Like the bear from earlier in the poem, they are out of step with modernity and unable to adapt to its progression. Giles notes that the punning on 'ranged' and 'arranged' conveys that, despite a sense of freedom that comes from their nomadic lifestyle and their association with the frontiersmen of the past, these men cannot escape the spatial organisation that modernity enacts through the rail lines to which they are bound.[119] Similarly, the jovial 'raillery' that they engage in becomes a pun on the rails that allow them passage around the country, but also limits their freedom by dictating the exact path they must take and that gives order to what was once a Romantic wilderness.

The final line in the quotation above, which references 'humpty-dumpty clods', prefigures Crane's later inclusion of the tragic figure of Dan Midland, a renowned hobo who died whilst riding the railroads. Crane wrote 'I could not believe he joked at heaven's gate - / Dan Midland – jolted from the cold break-beam'.[120] This moment cements the 'ancient men' who cling to America's past as ultimately doomed. Their inability to fully 'acclimatise' to the modern world results in tragedy and death. Despite the past's importance in *The Bridge*, the immediacy of the present and the inevitability of the future are reinforced by the death of those unable to leave the past behind. The Mississippi River that gives the poem its title is described by Crane as representative of the constant passage of time, and one that no one can stop or alter: 'For you too, feed the River timelessly. / And few evade full measure of their fate'.[121] Like the black bodies in the next stanza that 'win no frontier from their wayward plight', so too do the hoboes fail to achieve their idealised version of the American land by clinging to the past.[122] This consideration of time and space together, as interrelated parts of how Crane perceived America in *The Bridge*, recalls Waldo Frank's idea of 'the whole'. Crane's sense of spatial unity in the poem extends now to time as well, where the past, present, and future work together, the past informing the present, but not serving as a glorified alternative to modernity. Time and space clearly inform one another in *The Bridge* and this

[118] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, pp. 58-59.
[119] Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of 'The Bridge'*, p. 52.
[120] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 60.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

relationship is overtly explored in the next lyric poem that makes up 'Powahatan's Daughter', 'The Dance'.

'The Dance' sees Crane reckon with America's past and present and attempt to reconcile them and forge a positive future for the nation. This is achieved in the poem by bridging the space between the 'Indian' culture of the past (Crane conflates various cultures into the catchall category 'Indian', but is mainly concerned with Toltec, Aztec, and Native American peoples in this instance) and Euro-centric modern culture. In doing so America would carry forward the Indian's cultural memory into the future. As previously mentioned, these reductive and racist attitudes were unfortunately common during the 1920s, and Kramer even notes that the fictional narrative that the Native American people were on the brink of extinction may have been directly influenced by Waldo Frank, who wrote in *Our America* that 'the Indian is dying and is doomed'.[123] Crane, although accepting these various falsehoods as facts, again reveals how he sees the past and present as both contributing to the formation of America and that, although the past cannot be clung to like the hobos of 'The River', it must be remembered and celebrated in order to create a bright American future. He explains these aims in a letter to Otto Khan in 1927:

> Here one is on the pure mythical and smoky soil at last! Not only do I describe the conflict between the two races in this dance – I also become identified with the Indian and his world before it is over, which is the only method of ever really possessing the Indian and his world as a cultural factor. I think I really succeed in getting under the skin of this dying animal, and in terms of expression in symbols which he, himself, would comprehend. Pocahontas (the continent) is the common basis of our meeting; she survives the extinction of the Indian who finally, after being assumed into the elements of nature (as he understood them) persists only as a kind of 'eye' in the sky, or as a star that hangs between day and night – 'the twilight's dim perpetual throne'.[124]

This letter suggests that Crane is not only using Pocahontas as the pre-established symbol for the American land but is also particularly thinking about the Aztec mythology of Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent god who would transform into the Morning Star. Kramer notes that the Morning Star legend is implied through Crane's reference to the 'eye in the sky'.[125] These mythologies dominate 'The Dance' and reveal more ways in which time and space interact in Crane's poem.

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[123] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 44.
[124] Hart Crane, *The Letters of Hart Crane 1916-1932*, ed. Brom Weber (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 307.
[125] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 44.

The poem begins by reenforcing Pocahontas' role as the American landmass by associating her with creation myths and the processes of the soil: 'The swift red flesh, a winter king - / Who squired the woman down the sky? / She ran the neighing canyons all the spring; / She spouted arms; she rose with maize – to die'.[126] Her associations with the springtime, as well as the maize crops, continues her role as a representative of the continent. Helge Nilsen observes that Crane also identified Pocahontas with an ancient Iroquois legend which 'relates how the woman Ataensic fell through a rift in the sky which separated heaven and earth and plunged into the primeval waters beneath. After giving birth to two sons, she died, but was resurrected again in the organic life of the soil'.[127] By associating her with the very creation of the earth, Crane identifies Pocahontas with America's spatial past, with the very origins of the land.

In the next stanza Crane transitions from the past to the present, speaking as the male Indian chief, who we can assume is also the 'winter king' from the first stanza. Crane writes: 'And in the autumn drouth, whose burnished hands / With mineral wariness found out the stone / Where prayers, forgotten, streamed the mesa sands? / He holds the twilight's dim, perpetual throne'.[128] Crane, in embodying this Indian chieftain, has, through cultural appropriation, fused the past with the present by fusing the white speaker with the Indian King. He is then, like Quetzalcoatl, able to sacrifice himself and become the mythic Morning Star and sit on the 'perpetual throne' in the heavens. Despite removing all agency from his Indian subjects, Crane was attempting to show that although the past (the Indian) must die, by spiritually preserving their teachings and memory in the present (shown by their non-corporeal presence in the cosmos), a sense of 'wholeness' can be carried into the future. A bridge can be constructed between Crane's Indians and white Europeans, as well as between the past and present.

Crane never registers that his idea of a cultural and temporal fusion included the genocide of indigenous peoples, as the notion of the 'dying Indian' was disturbingly seen as a natural phenomenon that signalled human progress. This pervasive ideological structure mystified the very real and horrific suffering of the indigenous people at the hands of the white American settlers. Crane tries to legitimise this typical view of the 'Vanishing Indian' by reducing them to a kind of American spirit through which white settler-colonialists could feel like an authentic part of the land. Aragon comments on this devaluation of Native peoples, stating that 'the construction of Indigenous vanishment frequently proposed a lingering ethereal presence that, rather than being corruptive, enhanced white Americans' ties to the land and claims to authentic nationhood'.[129]

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[126] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 62.
[127] Helge Normann Nilsen, 'Hart Crane's Indian Poem', *Neuphilogische Mitteilungen*, 72.1 (1971), pp. 127-139 (p. 129).
[128] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 62.
[129] Aragon, 'Constructions of Racial Savagery', p. 17.

Through using the legend of the Morning Star, Crane is able to unite past, present, and future, creating a temporal 'whole,' within which white American colonial-settler narratives of spatial inheritance could be legitimised and consolidated. Helge Nilsen also notes that the reference to the 'sands' and the 'stone' reveal that Crane was referencing the Aztec myths of the southwestern parts of the continent, and in particular one in which 'a stone was shot from the sky with each thunderclap. Thunder was followed by rain, and the stones became rain gods'.[130] This may be another subtle reference to Eliot's *The Waste Land* and the section 'What the Thunder Said'. By absorbing the mythic consciousness of the Indian, the 'autumn drouth' of modernity can be quenched by utopian rain.

As the poem then moves into the actual dance sequence which will symbolically kill the poet as the Indian chief, Maquokeeta, the image of an eagle and a snake become dominant. The poet/Maquokeeta is described as having a headdress 'Swooping in eagle feathers down your back', whilst also being described as a 'snake that lives before, / That casts his pelt, and lives beyond!'[131] There is, of course, a very literal reading of these images, one as a descriptor of Maquokeeta's feathered headdress, and the other a reference to a 'snake dance'. Nilsen writes '[t]he snake dance is a ritual practiced by many Indian tribes, and anthropologists have interpreted it variously as a fertility and immortality rite'.[132] The immortality in this context would be the transformation of Maquokeeta into the Quetzalcoatl-inspired Morning Star, with the ability to live on as a representation of America's cultural past. This reading of the snake as representative of immortality (due in part to its shedding skin) links to Crane's more specific associations with the eagle and the snake. Earlier, in 'The River', Crane explained his designs for the eagle and the serpent: 'Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark, / And space, and eaglet's wing, laid on her hair'.[133] Therefore, the snake is representative of time, through its Aztec association with Quetzalcoatl's immortality, and the eagle is a symbol of space, and specifically American space. Maquokeeta's ritualistic dance to become the Morning Star sees these two images come together within one act, the dance itself. The eagle feathered headdress, and the snake dance represent the union of time and space enacted by Maquokeeta's transfiguration, as it represents the incorporation of the Indian cultural memory and past into the present and future of America, allowing a utopian American space to be created by the end of the poem. The fusion of time and space can be read into the reference to

[130] Nilsen, 'Hart Crane's Indian Poem', p. 130.
[131] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, pp. 63-64.
[132] Nilsen, 'Hart Crane's Indian Poem', p. 135.
[133] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 59.

Quetzalcoatl, who Nilsen writes could assume 'the shapes of both bird and snake' and translates to 'serpent with feathers'.[134]

In *The Bridge*, then, Maquokeeta acts as a bridge between the past, present, and future, through his immortality amongst the stars, but also a bridge between time and space, shown by his encapsulation of both the eagle and the serpent. Maquokeeta's transformation into the Morning Star is described by Crane in terms that prefigure how he will later describe the Brooklyn Bridge in 'Atlantis':

> O, like the lizard in the furious noon,
> That drops his legs and colors in the sun,
> -And laughs, pure serpent, Time itself, and moon
> Of his own fate, I saw thy change begun!
>
> And saw thee dive to kiss that destiny
> Like one white meteor, sacrosanct and blent
> At last with that's consummate and free
> There, where the first and last gods keep thy tent.[135]

Maquokeeta is described by Crane as a 'moon of his own fate' as he becomes the immortal Morning Star. Later in 'Atlantis' when the Brooklyn Bridge is 'shuttling moonlight' through its miles of wires, the association between modernity and the cosmos can also be read as an association between the past and the present, with the bridge spanning the gap between America's ancient, natural past, represented by Maquokeeta's moonlight, and its modern present and future, represented by the expansive Brooklyn Bridge.[136] The 'dive' that Maquokeeta makes in the second stanza is reminiscent of the bridge's 'curveship', the descent from the heavens, before then ascending to 'where the gods keep thy tent'. He also becomes a 'white meteor', just as the bridge will become the 'whitest flower' in 'Atlantis', communicating a shared purity and beauty.[137] Maquokeeta's role as a bridge across time, as well as between the concepts of time and space are included within Crane's mythology of the Brooklyn Bridge, shown in these echoes of 'The Dance' in 'Atlantis'.

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[134] Nilsen, 'Hart Crane's Indian Poem', p. 137.
[135] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 64.
[136] Ibid, p. 105.
[137] Ibid, p. 107.

The starkest association between these two sections though is the final image that both sections conclude on, the serpent and the eagle. 'The Dance' ends with the lines 'Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms, / The serpent with the eagle in the boughs'.[138] 'Atlantis' ends almost identically: 'The serpent with the eagle in the leaves … ? / Whispers antiphonal in azure swing'.[139] Contained within these endings is a reconciliation between time and space, a perception of American space that includes its past, present, and future. There is an appreciation of America's past whilst establishing a new American modernity. Kramer noted that this image is also contained within the Mexican coat of arms due to the founding of the ancient Aztec city of Tenochtitlan at the site of an eagle and a serpent in a prickly pear tree.[140] The association between the eagle and the serpent, and the creation of a new nation reveals how important the union between time and space is in communicating the utopian conclusion of *The Bridge*.

By the end of *The Bridge*, time and space have become one. America's past, present, and future all factor into how Crane perceived American space, unknowingly making *The Bridge* a poem whose spatial conceptions can be explored alongside Harvey's ideas of relational spacetime. This fusion of time and space is distilled in Crane's mythic Brooklyn Bridge in 'Atlantis'. Like in Whitman's 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', the crossing over the East River from Manhattan to Brooklyn becomes representative of the relationship between the past and the present within the city space. Whitman described humanity being disintegrated into a scheme 'Like similitudes of the past and those of the future, / The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage over the river'.[141] This image of time strung out over the river is reminiscent of the street lights-cum-stars that are 'Beading thy path' in 'To Brooklyn Bridge', which is a similarity that holds more weight when considering the significance of the Aztec Morning Star from 'The Dance'.[142] By 'Atlantis', Crane explicitly links the Brooklyn Bridge with the passage of time:

> -Tomorrows into yesteryear – and link
> What cipher-script of time no traveler reads
> But who, through smoking pyres of love and death,
> Searches the timeless laugh of mythic spears.
>
> Like hails, farewells – up planet-sequined heights

[138] Ibid, p. 65
[139] Ibid, p. 108.
[140] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 52.
[141] Whitman, 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 116.
[142] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 44.

Some trillion whispering hammers glimmer Tyre:
Serenely, sharply up the long anvil cry
Of inchling aeons silence rivets Troy.[143]

The bridge reaches from 'tomorrows into yesteryear', spanning the gap across generations. It is once again described like language and poetry, a 'cipher' across history that is 'mythic' in its scope. By uniting time and space, Crane's bridge creates a sense of completion, a 'wholeness', according to the logic of Waldo Frank. In the second stanza there are references to the ancient, fallen cities of Tyre and Troy, that both seem to become redeemed by the bridge, rebuilt via the 'whispering hammers' and anvil cries that restore them to their former glory, so that they too are carried forward into the creation of a new city, a utopian, urban future that is both the mythic city of Atlantis, and modern New York.

Crane's perspective almost exists outside of time by the end of the poem, like Whitman in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', as well as Rip Van Winkle, Pocahontas, and Maquokeeta from 'Powahatan's Daughter'. This temporally flexible position allowed Crane to perceive modern spaces in a way that reached beyond his present moment, and beyond the limits of absolute, or even relative space. By 'Atlantis', the reader is left on what feels like the precipice of a new dawn, in a new city: 'Pacific here at time's end, bearing corn, - / Eyes stammer through the pangs of dust and steel'.[144] Having reached 'time's end,' the poem settles on the unifying image of the bridge. The journey has meant descending below the surface of modern existence and experiencing the ills of modern life, described as the 'pangs of dust and steel'. Those 'pangs' also suggests the pain experienced during birth, and so any pain experienced ultimately leads to the invention of a new world, a curving ascent from the underground and into the heavens where time and space become one, creating another dimension of 'wholeness' in the poem. However, the reciprocal relationship between time and space that Crane infuses within this section of the poem is also a part of a colonial ideology, which creates a national sense of wholeness at the expense of indigenous history and culture. By appropriating indigenous mythology, rehearsing a false narrative of extinction, and reducing Native peoples to convenient symbolic and metaphysical guides for white settler-colonists, Crane removes indigenous communities from his vision of the future. Through actively denying the violence and injustice enacted upon the 'Indian' who he claims to mourn, Crane's sense of wholeness throughout time and space is only utopian from a white settler's perspective. Despite

[143] Ibid, pp. 105-106.
[144] Ibid, p. 106.

Crane's own sense of Whitmanian hope for America by the end of the poem, it is important to realise that this hope is both limited and ultimately in service of a colonial project.

The Commercial City Space

Rem Koolhaas in his text *Delirious New York* called Manhattan 'a mythical island' in which 'the invention and testing of a metropolitan lifestyle' could be enacted.[145] It was, according to him, the focal point of American modernity, and as such was the commercial centre of the rapidly growing nation. The scale and rate of the changes that were occurring in New York arguably made it an embodiment of the modern process of urban industrialisation. Christoph Lindner stated that a testament to the rapid development that was happening in New York during the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was that in 1883 the tallest building in Manhattan was Trinity Church on Broadway and Wall Street. By 1900 ten new buildings exceeded the neo-Gothic spires, and within two more years roughly fifty buildings were taller than Trinity Church.[146]

Urban spaces were flourishing economically when Crane was writing *The Bridge*, and as a poet who was intent on accurately reflecting the modern world in his work, the dominance of commercialism and capitalism was something that he incorporated into his text. Crane himself admitted this in an interview with the *Akron Sunday Times* in 1919:

> the artist's creation is bound to be largely interpretive of his environment and his relation to it; and living as we do in an age of the most violent commercialism the world has ever known, the artist cannot remain aloof from the welters without losing the essential, imminent vitality of his vision.[147]

I have noted that Crane did not declaratively associate with Marxism, Communism, or any distinct political leaning, but this quotation indicates how Crane's poetics took account of New York's – and America's – commercialism. The poem does, at times, not only include the presence of capitalism as an influence over American spaces but also critiques its influence and displays the ways in which its impact may be detrimental to modern society. These critiques are not consistent, nor are they fully expanded upon. However, their inclusion is important, as, in attempting to reflect the reality of modern life, Crane does iterate that business and capital were key to the ways in which spaces were perceived in the twentieth century.

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[145] Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, p. 9.
[146] Lindner, *Imagining New York City*, p. 27.
[147] Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of 'The Bridge'*, p. 30.

Paul Giles identified the influence of capitalism and commercialism throughout *The Bridge* through consistent economic puns, beginning in 'To Brooklyn Bridge'. The second stanza of the proem reads: 'Then, with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes / As apparitional as sails that cross / Some page of figures to be filed away; / Till elevators drop us from our day'.[148] The 'inviolate curve' of the Brooklyn Bridge becomes a sales graph that is then explicitly referenced in the third line as being filed away. The sails of boats under the Brooklyn Bridge become 'sales' that keep New York City economically afloat, whilst cash registers, or 'tills', regulate our 'oday' (a slang term for money).[149] This succession of puns enforces the idea that capitalism was the lifeblood of the city. It is present in the boats on the East River, the passage of day into night, and even the mythic Brooklyn Bridge itself.

The next stanza is then the first instance in which modern alienation is suggested in the poem, and it is one that is specifically related to commercialism and money:

> I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights
> With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene
> Never disclosed, but hastened to again,
> Foretold to other eyes on the same screen;[150]

This stanza sees modern consumers gawping at 'some flashing scene' in a cinema. The era in which Crane was writing would become known as the 'golden era of Hollywood' (with the invention of sound film in 1927), when America capitalised on the lucrative art of filmmaking, which provided a large part of the economic base of the city of Los Angeles and still does today. In this stanza the crowds on the other side of the continent are entranced by these testaments to American commercialism, unable to escape from its clutches, which permeate even the leisure time of the American workers. This stanza could be another reference to one of Crane's chief influences, Waldo Frank, who described New Yorkers as 'automata' on cinema screens, 'fathered by steel and broken by it'.[151]

Although Crane may not have been directly influence by Marx's texts, this moment in the poem also recalls the Marxist idea of 'commodity fetishism', the notion that under capitalism people were becoming obsessed by products and possessions, evidenced by the alienated mass in the cinema blindly consuming. Marx wrote in 1844 that '[t]he devaluation of the world of men is in direct

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[148] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 43.
[149] Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of 'The Bridge',* p. 33.
[150] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 43.
[151] Frank, *Our America*, p. 191.

proportion to the increasing value of the world of things'.[152] In this stanza from *The Bridge* the people in the cinema are reduced to nameless 'multitudes', reduced to constituent parts as 'other eyes on the same screen'. The intangible projected images are given more power than the hypnotised audience, giving the 'world of things' more status than the 'world of men' in the scene. This was the age of the consumer, where products were marketed as necessities. As Stuart Chase observed: '[t]he relations of supply and demand have become inverted. Under the regime of hand production, the problem was to supply consumers with commodities. The problem now is to supply commodities with consumers.'.[153] This is not a consistent criticism throughout the poem, as we see in later passages that the global trading of commodities is a part of the spatial unity that Crane identified as a great asset to modern society in the creating of an international 'whole'. However, the sheer number of consumers that now lived in urban centres made it a feeding ground for commercialism, which Crane clearly recognised. And so, despite Crane's faith in the potential of the modern society, he still identified something sinister within its current iteration, one specifically tied to the capitalist enterprise in New York City.

Crane injects further criticism of the commercialisation of the city in the sixth section of *The Bridge*: 'Quaker Hill'. Kramer notes that Quaker Hill is a hamlet about seventy miles north of New York City, and Crane even lived there briefly in 1925.[154] This poem reads like a lament to the old buildings that were being removed to make way for the influx of new builds that the growing city needed. 'Quaker Hill' was the last section of *The Bridge* to be completed in 1929. Crane would complete the poem before the market crash, but by 1929 the excess that defined the decade had reached a breaking point, including the ways in which absolute space in and around the city was being repurposed for the needs of the growing economy and population. Ann Douglas wrote in her 1996 text *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* that '[b]y 1929, America boasted 377 urban buildings that had more than twenty stories, fifteen of which were more than 500 feet high; 188 of them were in New York'.[155] This seemingly impossible expansion of the city's skyline meant that numerous historic buildings were demolished to make way for towering modern skyscrapers (most famously the original Waldorf Astoria building was demolished in favour of the Empire State building in 1929). Crane, in this section of the poem, is clearly mourning the loss of these older buildings, with Clive Fisher calling 'Quaker Hill' an 'elegy […] for the lost homes'.[156]

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[152] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. by Martin Milligan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf> [accessed 16 December, 2023].
[153] Gary Dean Best, *The Dollar Decade* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), p. xiv.
[154] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 103.
[155] Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s*, p. 436.
[156] Fisher, *Hart Crane: A Life*, p. 258.

By focusing on property Crane was unknowingly interacting with Harvey's first categorisation of space: absolute space. Harvey's description of absolute space is that it is 'fixed and immovable', that it is 'understood as a preexisting, immovable, continuous, and unchanging framework'.[157] It is the way in which space is commonly perceived, a clearly demarcated physical point that one could plot on a map. Harvey explicitly links absolute space with commercialism and capitalism, calling it 'the exclusionary space of private property in land and other bounded entities (such as states, administrative units, city plans, and urban grids)'.[158] These 'bounded entities' that Harvey listed were all key features of early twentieth century modernity, and particularly in New York City, as evidenced in 'Quaker Hill'.

The third stanza of the section reads:

> Above them old Mizzentop, palatial white
> Hostelry – floor by floor to cinquefoil dormer
> Portholes the ceilings stack their stoic height.
> Long tiers of windows staring out toward former
> Faces – loose panes crown the hill and gleam
> At sunset with a silent, cobwebbed patience …
> See them, like eyes that still uphold some dream
> Through mapled vistas, cancelled reservations![159]

Kramer tells us that the Mizzentop was a palatial hotel from 1880 to 1933 and so was still standing when Crane was writing this section of *The Bridge*.[160] However, it is clear from his description of the building that its best years are in the past. The windows stare out to 'former faces', implying that the guests are now nothing but ghostly memories, consolidated by the dilapidated state of the building, which is filled with 'loose panes' of glass. It is no longer a profitable business, shown by the final exclamation of 'cancelled reservations!'. Giles also identifies another series of economic puns in this stanza, and these fiscal references suggest that Crane was commenting on how economic potential dictated the value of the hotel. The gleaming 'crowns' can be read as a slang term for coins, which in turn become 'eyes'. The land is therefore perceived almost literally through money and economic gain. The association between coins and eyes could also refer to the Ancient Greek and Roman tradition of Charon's obol, accentuating the morbid

[157] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 134.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 92.
[160] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 104.

atmosphere of the hotel, but also implying that this capitalist perception of space is killing the properties in question. 'Some dream' also becomes 'sum dream' exemplifying how integral money is in dictating spatial relationships within the modern world. Crane assumes the role of the entrepreneur assessing the value of the property and ends the stanza on the word 'reservations'. This could refer to the cancelled bookings of the failing hotel, but Giles suggested that 'the entrepreneur is far more interested in the hotel's owners cancelling their reservations or title-deeds to the land'.[161] The validity of these economic concerns is explicitly confirmed by Crane two stanzas later, where he refers to the Mizzentop as 'the Promised Land' to 'the persuasive suburban land agent'.[162] In this section Crane was certainly conscious of how inherent capitalism was to the perception of space in the twentieth century, and there is a sense of mourning, as shown by further puns that Kramer points out on 'panes' and 'tiers' with 'pains' and 'tears'.[163] The historic grandeur and Romanticism of the hotel is ultimately sacrificed in the face of monetary gain and urban expansion, revealing that when space is perceived purely as potential profit something more emotional, or spiritual, is lost.

This reading of the stanza can be further explored within the line 'At sunset with a silent, cobwebbed patience …'. Kramer observed that this line may be another reference to the poetry of Walt Whitman, and in particular the poem 'A Noiseless Patient Spider'. The second stanza of Whitman's poem describes a spider's attempts at meaningful connection:

> And you O my soul where you stand,
> Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
> Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them,
> Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold,
> Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.[164]

The spider acts as a stand-in for the soul, desperately wanting to engage with the 'oceans of space' around it but is waiting for a bridge to form between the soul and 'the spheres'. This is reminiscent of my earlier reading of *The Bridge* as one in which Crane was seeking spatial and spiritual connection which would then create a utopian future space in America. However, in this poem that moment of connection seems to be at an impasse, and it is not yet possible. The empty stare of the Mizzentop could then represent that the perception of the hotel as private property, or

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[161] Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of 'The Bridge'*, p. 39.
[162] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 93.
[163] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 104.
[164] Whitman, 'A Noiseless Patient Spider', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 314.

absolute space, which allows it to be singularly demarcated land which can be packaged for profit creates this impasse and blocks Crane's hopes for connections between spaces and souls. Private property literally creates boundaries and fractures space, whereas the relative and relational spaces from other sections in the poem created a sense of completion, of a 'whole'. Later in 'Quaker Hill' Crane wrote 'Who holds the lease on time and on disgrace?', implying that the more abstract realms of time and emotion are not bound by these capitalistic concerns that defined the Mizzentop.[165] According to the verbiage of Harvey, relational and relative perceptions of space hold the potential for connection and 'wholeness' where absolute perception does not.

At other points in the poem relative spaces also become contaminated by the modern incentive of capitalist accumulation as well. In 'Cape Hatteras' we saw the transformative potential of the aeroplane, allowing new perspectives and perceptions of space from the skies. The excitement over the Wright brothers' discovery is palpable in the text, with Crane writing triumphantly 'On fleeing balconies as thou dost glide, / - Hast splintered space!'.[166] The relative perception of space that a birds-eye perspective allows is even revolutionary according to Marx's theories on modern city spaces, as this spatial perception emphasised the grouping of many individuals and perspectives into one, cohesive mass. Seeing the city in relative terms shows the scope of the city as a revolutionary site, one that is full of multiple perspectives, but perspectives that can technically occupy the same space-time. As Harvey says: 'I can be in exactly the same place as many other people relative to someone else'.[167]

However, Giles once again deciphers a series of financial puns in 'Cape Hatteras' that suggest that this new realm of space with revolutionary potential is also soon to be bound by the laws of the market. Having marvelled at the wonders of the bird's-eye view from the cockpit of the Wright brother's planes, Crane then violently transitions into the destructive potential of these machines through references to the combat of the First World War. 'But first, here at this height receive / The benediction of the shell's deep, sure reprieve!'.[168] The 'height' Crane references, referring to the military aircrafts introduced during 'The Great War', keeps the reader in the realm of relative space. But, Giles notes that the 'benediction of the shell's deep, sure reprieve' implies (through a pun on shell, meaning 'coin') that 'death in war is to be welcomed because it helps to safeguard the interest of the financial shells'.[169] Giles goes on to state that the 'implication of 'Cape Hatteras' is that the First World War was at bottom a capitalist enterprise which became justified and sanctified

[165] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 93.
[166] Ibid, 80.
[167] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 135.
[168] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 81.
[169] Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of 'The Bridge'*, pp. 36-37.

by the layers of sentimentality superimposed upon it'.[170] The revolutionary potential of modern invention and the discovery of relative space is shot down by the interests of the economy. Despite Crane being continuously described as indifferent to Leftist politics and thought by both Paul Mariani and Paul Giles, he was still mixing in progressive social circles, such as attending the salons of the radical poet Lola Ridge, and his publishing associations with Marianne Moore.[171] Giles notes that the 'standard criticism of the First World War made by American radicals was that its chief motivation was trade markets and commercial profits'.[172] Therefore, although the Marxist readings I am placing alongside Crane were perhaps not direct influences, their indirect impact can be identified in *The Bridge*.

These concerns are again true in the next section of the poem, 'The Tunnel', the moment in Crane's poem that serves as the main conflict of the text. Crane immediately situates the reader in one of the commercial hubs of the city, Times Square, and associates this space with modern buildings and advertisements. The first stanza reads:

> Performances, assortments, résumés-
> Up Times Square to Columbus Circle lights
> Channel the congresses, nightly sessions,
> Refractions of the thousand theatres, faces-
> Mysterious kitchens … You shall search them all.[173]

The poem begins listing the stream of advertisements projected by neon lights along Broadway, a performative expression of the commercialism that dominated Time Square. The use of the word 'résumés', according to Kramer, refers directly to the news headlines projected on the side of *The New York Times* building (which gave the Square its name).[174] However, the obvious connotation of résumé also implies employment and the business world, which clearly influence said commercialism. The line 'Refractions of the thousand theatres, faces-' recalls the multitude of eyes staring at the cinema screen in 'To Brooklyn Bridge', and Crane's prioritisation of the theatres before the faces betrays another moment where the 'world of things' is given precedence over 'the world of men'. The commercial city space is even felt when the speaker descends underground, as Crane described the passengers riding the subway 'on and on / Below the toothpaste and dandruff

[170] Ibid, pp. 35-36.
[171] Terese Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You: A Portrait of Lola Ridge, Radical Poet* (Tucson, AZ: Schaffner Press, 2018), p. 130.
[172] Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of 'The Bridge'*, p. 37.
[173] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 97.
[174] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 113.

ads', and that their anguish was 'caught like pennies beneath the soot and steam'.[175] Money's omnipresence is used by Crane to reduce the humanity of his subjects in 'The Tunnel', who are framed in relation to the dominant force of advertising, with the adverts themselves literally existing on top of the urbanites as they ride underground. The pain and alienation of the city's inhabitants takes the form of 'pennies', reenforcing that it is specifically capitalism's influence over the city space that helps form the fear and trauma that exudes from this section. 'The Tunnel' represents the moment in the poem where the bridge between humanity and spiritual and spatial 'wholeness' seems almost lost, and the presence of unchecked capitalism throughout the city helps to create this sense of hopelessness.

However, as I have mentioned, Crane was not staunchly against capitalist ideology, despite clearly identifying its shortcomings in twentieth century New York. Giles pointed out that in 'Cape Hatteras' Crane admired Whitman's ability to embrace the Stock Exchange, Wall Street, and other spaces that became symbols of capitalism in the city, whilst also being conscious of rural spaces and spaces imbued with spirituality and myth.[176]

> Wherein your eyes, like the Great Navigator's without ship,
> Gleam from the great stones of each prison crypt
> Of canyoned traffic … Confronting the Exchange,
> Surviving in a world of stocks – they also range
> Across the hills where second timber strays
> Back over Connecticut farms, abandoned pastures-
> Sea eyes and tidal, undenying, bright with myth![177]

Whitman, in Crane's mind, contains a sense of 'wholeness' in his perspective because he can hold both the material reality of the city's modern commercialism, and the 'bright' myth and spirituality of the rural American land. It is the combination of the two that give Whitman a panoptic viewpoint, making him the 'Great Navigator' of America. The 'Great Navigator' could also be a reference to Columbus, who we have already seen embodies an almost heroic role in the poem, as one who formed bridges between the East and the West, helping to create a global sense of spatial unity in the modern world. In 'Ave Maria' it was Columbus's intention to bring back 'Cathay' for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain: 'I bring you back Cathay!'.[178] Kramer

[175] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, pp. 99-100.
[176] Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of 'The Bridge'*, p. 37.
[177] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 78.
[178] Ibid, p. 47.

states that 'Cathay' was a medieval name for China and was associated with wealth and power.[179] In the poem Cathay becomes associated with treasure and prosperity more generally. This means that, according to Crane's version of history, the very discovery of America was rooted in the search for riches. This association between America and wealth is not seen as inherently negative by Crane, and earlier in this chapter we saw that the trade routes of the Cutty Sark, and the proliferation of products such as Certain-teed contributed to the spatial wholeness that Crane sought to convey throughout *The Bridge*. Crane was not diametrically against the world of money and accumulation, but certainly was able to identify its evils, as evidenced by the sections 'Cape Hatteras', 'Quaker Hill', and 'The Tunnel'. Giles states that 'Crane saw capitalism as the most vital force in contemporary America', hence its inclusion in a poem that is supposed to accurately reflect the many facets of the modern American moment.[180] I would adjust this slightly and say that Crane saw capitalism as *one of* the most vital forces in America, as Crane biographers and critics are keen to reenforce that Crane was not a man who concerned himself primarily with political or economic thought. But, as this section of the chapter has displayed, Crane did identify societal evils tied to commercialism and its influence over America, and New York in particular. Capitalism did require redirecting for his new utopia to be formed in 'Atlantis'.

By 'Atlantis' the ills of 'The Tunnel' have been overcome, and through the redemptive symbol of the Brooklyn Bridge space and time have created a sense of spatial and spiritual unity, allowing the formation of a new modern world. In 'Atlantis' Crane calls the symphonic Brooklyn Bridge 'Psalm of Cathay!'.[181] By elevating Cathay to a 'psalm' the Brooklyn Bridge brings about spiritual, sacred abundance, as opposed to just secular, material wealth. In fact Kramer notifies his readers that in a letter to Otto Khan in 1926 Crane stated that Cathay 'is ultimately transmuted into a symbol of consciousness, knowledge, spiritual unity'.[182] Crane's signifier for affluence is still present in the utopian city space at the end of the poem, but rather than being something that dominates absolute spaces, funds wars, or gathers collective trauma, it is contributing to spiritual wholeness. This is admittedly a very vague resolution of something so complex and specific as the workings of a modern capitalist society, but Crane was not necessarily intending on drilling down into the details of curing capitalism's ills. Rather, in *The Bridge* Crane identified the important role capitalism and commercialism played in the modern city, and the problems this can create amongst its inhabitants. Rather than eradicating it, Crane saw it as a part of America, but only in a way that contributed to the spiritual fulfilment of its people, as opposed to their degradation. However,

[179] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 9.
[180] Giles, *Hart Crane: The Contexts of 'The Bridge'*, p. 42.
[181] Crane, 'The Bridge', *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 106.
[182] Ibid.

Crane does not specify how this could be achieved, making it an unsatisfying conclusion from a Marxist perspective.

In the last stanza of *The Bridge* Crane wrote '-One song, one Bridge of Fire! Is it Cathay'.[183] This moment is almost an answer to Columbus' earlier claim that he would find Cathay in the new world. Cathay to Columbus was gold and material wealth associated with far off, exotic lands. By the end of 'Atlantis' the Brooklyn Bridge itself has become 'Cathay', it has, as Crane stated, become transmuted into a symbol of spiritual unity. By reorienting this symbol, Crane suggests that commercialism and the need to accumulate wealth would need to be balanced with the need to accumulate spiritual wealth, with knowledge and consciousness. This sense of balance would contribute to the 'wholeness' that Crane felt was necessary to create a new city space, and a better world.

This chapter asked how Crane perceived 'space' within his poem *The Bridge*. In answering this question this chapter has also assessed how Crane sought to manifest an optimistic future for both New York City, America, and the world. This, he felt, could be achieved by adhering to Waldo Frank's idea of 'the Whole', and modelling his ideas on Frank's 'mystics' who could perceive themselves as a part of a global community. According to the logic found in *The Bridge*, this sense of wholeness was taking shape in the modern world through the interplay of both spatial and spiritual bridges, or connections. Technological advancements meant that the world felt smaller, with the relative distances between spaces shrinking, but also the differences between those spaces being lessened through improved trade and communication. Crane was experiencing the beginning of what we now call globalisation. He equated these spatial connections with spiritual ones and saw the unity between spaces as a way of forming a unity between modernity and the divine.

Crane made *The Bridge* a truly expansive piece of work by not only perceiving spaces in the moment in which he was writing but tracking the spatial and spiritual bridges he could identify in 1920s New York across a mytho-historical timeline, perceiving space, and time as interrelated and therefore inseparable. These ambitious and complex designs for *The Bridge* can be articulated more fully by employing the spatial categories theorised by David Harvey, who provided a framework and a vocabulary with which I have analysed the various ways Crane perceived space in the poem.

A big part of Crane's outlook on both poetry and the modern world was his idea of 'acclimatization', to 'absorb the machine'. Crane specifically meant the need for modern poets to incorporate the modern world into their work, making them poetic subjects as worthy as more traditional tropes such as the natural world or the human condition. This was because he felt the

[183] Ibid, p. 108.

poet must authentically reflect their environment, and so modern poetry required an appreciation of the modern world, hence the importance of spatial perception in Crane's work. However, this was not a Futurist worship of the machine-age, and so Crane does reveal some darker aspects of modern life, such as technological warfare, urban alienation, and the dominance of modern capitalism. These influences over American spaces meant that, like the ships and planes in 'Cape Hatteras', society could become a hollowed-out wreck.

But Crane's mystical outlook, in a 'Frankian' sense, would redirect this terrible descent, and allow instead an ascent into spiritual and spatial wholeness, a sense of completion that Crane synthesised into his central symbol, the Brooklyn Bridge. In 'Atlantis' Crane described the bridge as 'Within whose lariat sweep encinctured sing / In single chrysalis the many twain'.[184] In these lines we can identify how the bridge functions as a symbol in the poem, how Crane sees himself as one of Frank's 'mystics', and the way in which spaces are perceived in the poem. Firstly, the way the bridge works in the poem is that it contains within it (the 'single chrysalis') a way of unifying oppositions or fractures ('the many twain'). As this chapter has explored, these conflicts include modernity and the divine, poetry and 'the machine', space and time, the past, present and future, construction and destruction, economic and spiritual wealth, as well as separated spaces. By containing all these aspects of existence within one 'chrysalis', a precursor for transformation and change, the bridge allows Crane to fulfil Frank's idea of the mystic in seeing everything as connected in one expansive community, which, if adhered to, would usher in a new version of the modern world, one that is a 'whole'. This sense of 'the Whole', not only applies to people, society, and newly interrelated concepts, but also spaces. The ways in which Crane perceives spaces throughout *The Bridge* at various points comply with some or all of David Harvey's spatial categories. From recognising the absolute spaces being manipulated by capitalist enterprise, or the absolute spaces joined by the Brooklyn Bridge, to the relative spatial perceptions that modern technologies or innovations allowed, to the relational perceptions of space that equated space with spirituality, history, myth, and ideas of the future, *The Bridge* also contains a spatial 'wholeness'.

What these conclusions indicate is that *The Bridge* is a poem that existed when Crane felt he, and the world, were on the brink of something new, at a 'junction' as he called it. Their relationship with art and poetry, modern society, as well as the world around them, was changing rapidly. To try and process these changes, Crane condensed all these evolving concepts into the Brooklyn Bridge, his symbol for connection, combination, and inclusion. But at its core, the Brooklyn Bridge was a way of uniting Manhattan and Brooklyn, a way of rethinking how spaces could be perceived in the twentieth century, and it is from this base that all of Crane's other associations contained

[184] Ibid, 106.

within the 'single chrysalis' stem from, making it the most important consideration when reading Crane's poem.

CHAPTER 2: Spatial Potential in Lola Ridge's 'The Ghetto'

> For a woman to be remembered by history, she had to really have been something.
>
> - Molly Crabapple, 'Introduction' to *Anything That Burns You*

Lola Ridge's volume of poetry, *The Ghetto and Other Poems* (1918), was reviewed by Hart Crane in 1919. Ridge's stark documentation of New York in the early twentieth century had a profound impact on the young poet, who wrote '[w]hen work is so widely and minutely reflective of its time, then, certainly, other than questions of pure *aesthetique* must be considered'.[1] Although he was particularly impressed by Ridge's dramatic awareness of the disenchanting effects of modernity, there is also a certain ambivalence in his review. He states that there is a theatricality to the work which he suspects 'has been used for itself alone' and detracts from the journalistic realism that so aptly reflected the modern world.[2] In his review he ruminates on how '[s]cience, grown uncontrollable, has assumed a grin that has more than threatened the supposed civilization that fed it; science has brought light, - but it threatens to destroy the idea of reverence, the source of all light'.[3] This outlook was discussed in the previous chapter on Crane's *The Bridge*, as Crane was both optimistic about the future of America, whilst simultaneously being aware of the darkness that came with a commercial modern society. These tensions are also central to Ridge's 'The Ghetto', the titular poem in her 1918 collection, and the focus of this chapter.

Inherent in Crane's criticism of Ridge's work is the idea that her poetry is so vivid in its depiction of the Lower East Side, that it in fact does not make full use of poetry as a form: it lacks '*aesthetique*'. He writes that 'I hope only, that if her course swerves still further that way, she will utilize the novel, or some form, other than poetry'.[4] The political and almost documentary-like aspects of Ridge's poetry have often been seen to be at odds with the modernist scene that she was so closely associated with, something Nathanial Cadle writes about in his chapter 'Lola Ridge, Modernism, and the Poetics of Radical Sentimentalism' (2019). Cadle identifies that 'Ridge's surviving contemporaries and even some more recent critics have had difficulty reconciling the two worlds she inhabited and have occasionally downplayed her facility at moving from one to the

[1] Hart Crane, 'Review of *The Ghetto and Other Poems*', *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane*, p. 202.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid, p. 201.
[4] Ibid, p. 202.

other'.[5] These two worlds, according to Cadle, are radical politics and formal radicalism, two aspects of literary modernism that he argues Ridge reconciles in her work. Whilst Cadle does not choose to focus on 'The Ghetto', this chapter, like Cadle's, challenges the binary between these two forms of radicalism, and argues that 'The Ghetto' serves as a powerful example of the interconnectedness of political and poetic innovation.

'The Ghetto', like Crane's *The Bridge*, uses the geographical and spatial features of New York City as poetic signifiers for something beyond their physicality. Whilst Crane's central image, the Brooklyn Bridge, is expressed by Crane as a physical marvel, it also becomes representative throughout the poem of technology and modern invention, the spatial relationship between New York and the rest of America and the world, the interplay between time and space, a bridge between heaven and earth, and the poetic sublime. Although Ridge's connections are broadly less Romantic, she does share some of these ways of expressing space in relative and relational terms, particularly perceiving the Lower East Side as symbolic of modern America's relationship with other countries and cultures, and the tension between the past, present, and future. She also observes, within the ghetto, the evolving role of Jewish women within this urban microcosm and suggests that these changes could and should burst forth from the tenements and inform the ways in which women, as well as the working classes, existed within the macrocosm of modern America. Whilst these associations are not metaphysical and mystical in the same way as Crane's, the relationship Ridge forges between poetry and politics is still aesthetically ambitious and even experimental in its form, as well as its content. Lawrence Kramer, who edited annotated versions of both Crane's *The Bridge*, and Ridge's *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, summarises the poetic similarities between the two modernists in his introduction to the latter:

> 'The Ghetto' does not hide its symbolic underpinnings, but neither does it advertise them. The poem seems to suggest that any empathetic observer of life on New York's Lower East Side is already immersed in a universe of signs. The material reality of the place is saturated with import, as the Brooklyn Bridge would be in Crane's *The Bridge* (1930).[6]

Kramer goes on to discuss how Crane's *The Bridge* is in fact in dialogue with various poems from *The Ghetto and Other Poems* including both Crane and Ridge symbolically employing a river to communicate 'the flow of life' and the passing of time (something which will be discussed more

[5] Nathaniel Cadle, 'Lola Ridge, Modernism, and the Poetics of Radical Sentimentalism', *Modernist Women Writers and American Social Engagement* (London: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2019), p. 155.
[6] Lawrence Kramer, 'Introduction', *The Ghetto and Other Poems: An Annotated Edition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2023), p. xiii.

fully later in this chapter).[7] There is also a claim that Ridge's poem 'Brooklyn Bridge' might have influenced Hart Crane when formulating *The Bridge*.

Terese Svoboda in her biography of Ridge entitled *Anything That Burns You: A Portrait of Lola Ridge, Radical Poet* (2018) writes that '[h]is [Crane's] copy of *The Ghetto and Other Poems* naturally falls open to her [Ridge's] "Brooklyn Bridge," where it is stained at the seam'.[8] The short poem reads:

> Pythoness body – arching
> Over the night like an ecstasy –
> I feel your coils tightening …
> And the world's lessening breath.[9]

Kramer is quick to point out that '[t]he coils of Ridge's Brooklyn Bridge, arching over the night, return in the lines that frame "Atlantis," Crane's concluding nocturne: "Through the bound cable strands, the arching path / Upwards" and "One arc synoptic of all tides below"'.[10] Aside from the clear shared imagery, some of the symbolic implications that Crane uses appear in Ridge's poem. The bridge being labelled an 'ecstasy' does give it the mystical sense of transcendence, a quasi-religious symbolism which Crane would use as his central motif in *The Bridge*. Furthermore, the snake-like imagery of the bridge's coils tightening around the globe is also reminiscent of the global trade routes that Crane references in 'Ave Maria' and 'Cutty Sark' that turn the bridge into a symbol of global 'wholeness'. The 'world's lessening breath' implies a global constriction, the bringing together of disparate nations making the world seem smaller. Like Crane in *The Bridge*, Ridge may be articulating the phenomenon we now know as globalisation via the modern symbol of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Despite Crane's favourable review of *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, his inference that Ridge's work was better suited to another form feels odd when we can see that the urban symbolism within 'The Ghetto', and 'Brooklyn Bridge', may have had such an influence over the symbolism in *The Bridge*. It should also be noted that Ridge was responsible for the publishing of the second part of Crane's poem 'For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen' (1926), at the time entitled 'The Spring of Guilty Song', in her 1923 issue of the literary magazine *Others*, of which she was the editor at the time.[11] It is clear that Ridge was very important influence on Crane, and one who was also a central figure in

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[7] Ibid, p. xiv.
[8] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 133.
[9] Lola Ridge, 'Brooklyn Bridge', *To the Many*, ed. Daniel Tobin (Manchester: Little Island Press, 2020), p. 120.
[10] Kramer, 'Introduction', *The Ghetto and Other Poems: An Annotated Edition*, p. xiv.
[11] Joshua Logan Wall, *Situating Poetry: Covenant and Genre in American Modernism* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022), p. 114.

the modernist literary scene of early twentieth-century New York. However, as Crane himself has demonstrated, she seems to have been misrepresented, and as a result, until recently, largely forgotten.

Ridge occupies a position outside of the American modernist canon, despite some more recent efforts to preserve her legacy. Ridge scholarship began to gain some momentum with Nancy Berke publishing articles such as 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"' (1999) and later the book *Women Poets on the Left: Lola Ridge, Genevieve Taggard, Margaret Walker* (2001). In 2007 Bonnie Kim Scott included 'The Ghetto' in her *Gender in Modernism* anthology, and in the same year Daniel Tobin published a collection of Ridge's work, before fully expanding this to a full collected early works entitled *To the Many* (2018). Caroline Maun included Ridge in her study of female companionship in modernist literary circles, *Mosaic of Fire: The Work of Lola Ridge, Evelyn Scott, Charlotte Wilder, and Kay Boyle* (2012). Arguably the most comprehensive text on Lola Ridge is Terese Svoboda's 2016 biography, in which Svoboda enthusiastically recovers Ridge's contributions to literature and radical politics in the early twentieth century. She has also had chapters dedicated to her in larger studies, such as Nathaniel Cadle's 'Lola Ridge, Modernism, and the Poetics of Radical Sentimentalism' (2019), and Joshua Logan Wall's *Situating Poetry: Covenant and Genre in American Modernism* (2022). More recently there has also been Lucy Collins' 2023 article 'Poet, Editor, Anarchist: Lola Ridge's New York Networks' (2023), and Lawrence Kramer's *The Ghetto and Other Poems: An Annotated Edition* (2023).

Maun, Wall, and Collins' texts largely focus on emphasising Ridge's importance to the early modernist scene in New York, especially focusing on her influence on other writers, her editorial roles for important literary magazines such as *Mother Earth*, *Broom*, and *Others*, as well as her weekly salons. Meanwhile Berke and Cadle look towards Ridge's politics, particularly her involvement in the radical Ferrer Center, and most famously her contributions to the protests over the murders of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927. Although 'The Ghetto' is broadly seen as Ridge's defining work, Ridge scholarship is such a small field that there are still many stones left unturned, especially with the critical focus being so split between Ridge's literary influence and her political radicalism.

The aim of this chapter is to focus on 'The Ghetto' and the ways in which the poem expresses Ridge's outlook on America through her perception of New York's ghetto space on the Lower East Side. As a large part of Ridge's outlook is political, I will be using Harvey's spatial categorisations and terminology to articulate Ridge's approach to space, particularly those which she shares with Crane. However, I will be expanding on this and including Harvey's second 'dimension' which he derives from the work of Henri Lefebvre. It is also important to recognise that some aspects of my argument will use the concept of the dialectic, particularly when

referencing Marxist terminology when engaging with work, alienation and revolutionary consciousness. The dialectic is a complex and historically weighty term within philosophical and literary thought, and as it is not the focus of my argument or this chapter, I will not be examining it in detail. Whilst there are many theories on the dialectic, the two I wish to briefly foreground here are Georg Hegel's and Karl Marx's. Hegel's tripartite structure of 'thesis/antithesis/synthesis' succinctly demonstrates that oppositions are relationally connected, and that binary tensions are able to interpenetrate and shape one another.[12] Karl Marx criticised and adapted Hegel's understanding of the dialectic to include 'the material world reflected by the human mind'.[13] In other words, Marx felt that theoretical oppositions were only solvable by reorganising material reality as opposed to the synthesis of mere ideas. The dialectic then 'cannot in any sense be completed by philosophy but only by praxis' according to Marx.[14] It is this interpretation of the dialectic that is important to my argument, as Ridge engages with both the importance of theories and ideas, as well as political action, and holds both in dialectical tension with one another.

This chapter is split into four sections to avoid thematic confusion when excerpts of the poem are repeated within my analyses. These sections are 'Liminal, Lived Space', 'The Global Ghetto', 'Generation American', and 'The Woman Renaissance'. The Ridge scholarship I have referenced will be paramount in constructing my own argument, but by concentrating on Ridge's articulation of space I am adding a new perspective to the growing critical conversations around this overlooked urban modernist. Whilst it is broadly accepted that Ridge's move to New York was a defining factor in shaping her life and work, this chapter goes a step further and examines the ways that Ridge characterises modern city spaces. This, I argue, is crucial when reading Ridge, as she uses the urban environment as an anchor to speak about the larger social and political themes she has become so closely associated with. Her documentary-like focus on the immigrants of the Lower East Side in fact manifests as a focus on the urban space itself, as throughout the poem Ridge reveals that the space and its inhabitants are constantly shaping and informing one another. Like Crane, the spatial specificity of her work allows her to express something vast, making attention to space a vital part of reading Ridge's poetry.

[12] Frederic Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2009), p. 19.
[13] Karl Marx, 'Afterword to the Second German Edition (1873)', *Capital Volume I*, ed. Frederick Engels, proofed by Dave Allinson (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 2015), p. 14.
[14] Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, p. 11.

Liminal, Lived Space

The Lower East Side, in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, accounted for the area of Manhattan from East 14th Street in the north, down the East River to Brooklyn Bridge and across to Fourth Avenue and Lafayette Street in the West. According to Mario Maffi this area covered roughly 400 acres, with about 450 city blocks.[15]

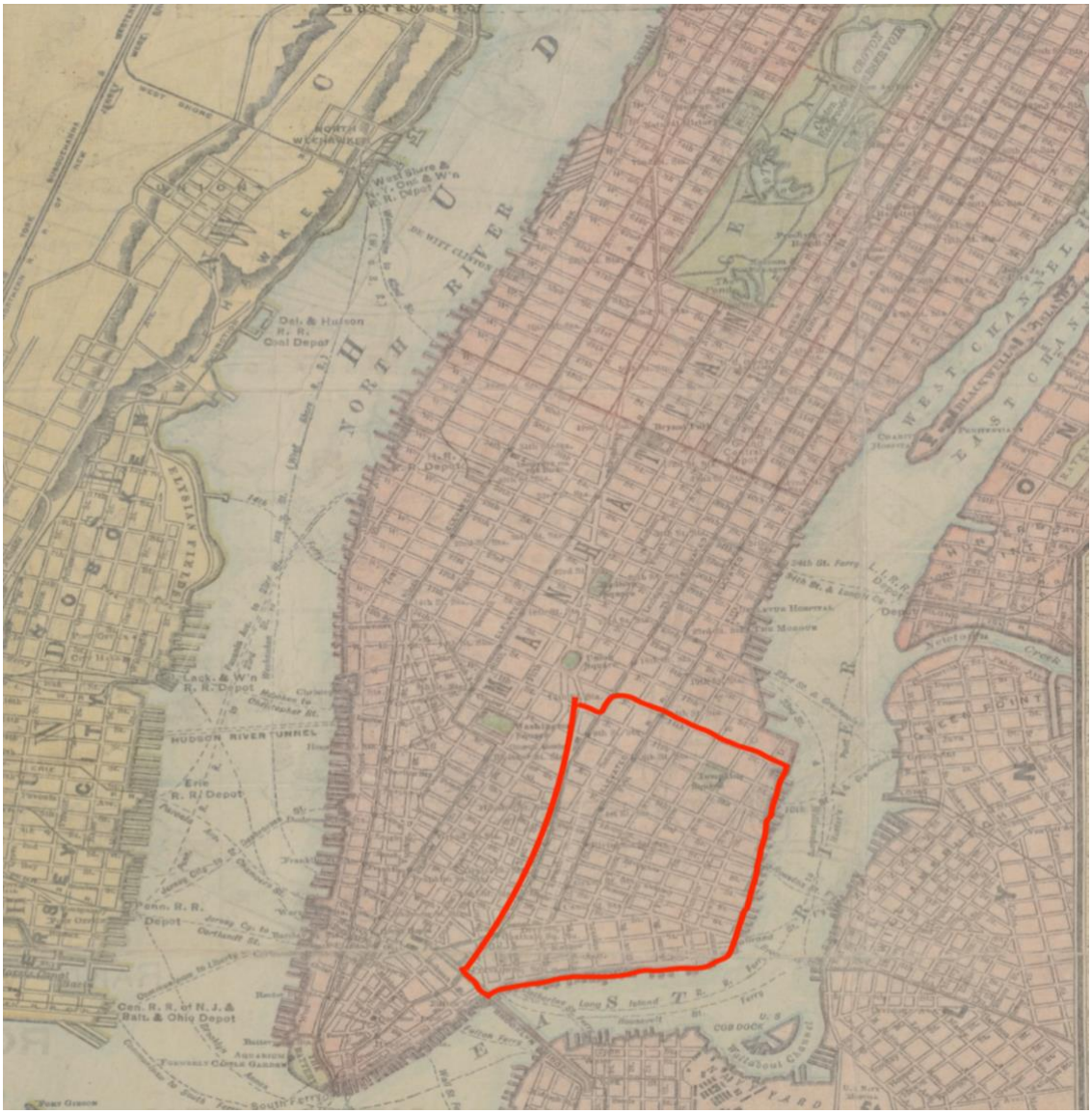

Figure 3: Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, 'Map of New York City', The New York Public Library (New York Public Library Digital Collections, 1901) <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/7b234020-c5aa-012f-4025-58d385a7bc34> [accessed 31 October, 2024].

This part of Manhattan was the home of the immigrants who would pour into New York City throughout these decades, and in fact Maffi notes that it was 'more than eight and a half [million]

[15] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land: Ethnic Cultures on New York's Lower East Side*, p. 65.

from 1901 to 1910'.[16] Different ethnic groups resided in the Lower East Side over the years, including the Irish, African Americans, Germans, Chinese and Italians. However, as these groups settled into life in the new world, they would typically move uptown to more prosperous residential areas, making room for new swathes of immigrants to move into what was quickly becoming the commercial and manufacturing centre of the city. When Ridge came to the city in 1908 as one of these millions of immigrants the Lower East Side was dominated by the Eastern European Jewish population, and it is this population which would be Ridge's focus in her poem 'The Ghetto'.

Like her subjects, Ridge existed in a liminal space as both an insider and an outsider within America. Ridge was Irish born, emigrated to New Zealand as a child, studied art in Australia, and briefly returned to New Zealand before permanently emigrating to America for the rest of her life. Arriving in San Francisco in 1907 at the age of 34, to many she would not have been considered remotely 'American'. However, her actual nationality, like her age and name, was changed by Ridge, as on the ship manifest she identified herself as Australian. Her outsider position was visible not only in an American context, but also in every other national context she had had up to that point – she either did not feel she belonged, or did not claim to belong, to any of her previous home countries. But America is where she would remain for almost the entirety of the rest of her life, relying upon her long-term partner and husband David Lawson for security. As she lived in the United States for most of her life, it could be said that she was, for all intents and purposes, 'American'. However, she never legally became an American citizen and instead relied on Lawson, as well as on falsifying her identity on government forms and documents, to remain in the country. According to Svoboda she in fact claimed to be a U.S. citizen upon arriving on Ellis Island in 1908.[17] Joshua Logan Wall writes that despite Ridge's liminal status in the United States, her multicultural background 'did not prevent her from writing what she conceived of as a decidedly American literature'.[18] The way Ridge achieves this distinctly American poetry, despite both the author and her subject's being arguable outsiders to American life, is by associating America and American space with the people who actually live within it.

The first section of the poem appears to be a bleak and oppressive representation of life on the Lower East Side:

> The heat in Hester Street.
> Heaped like a dray
> With the garbage of the world.

[16] Ibid, p. 67.
[17] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 59.
[18] Wall, *Situating Poetry: Covenant and Genre in American Modernism*, p. 100.

Bodies dangle from the fire escapes
Or sprawl over the stoops …
Upturned faces glimmer pallidly –
Herring-yellow faces, spotted as with mold,
And moist faces of girls
Like dank white lilies,
And infants' faces with open parched mouths that suck at the air as at empty teats.[19]

Immediately the boundaries between the space of Hester Street and the people who fill it are blurred. These immigrants are the 'garbage of the world', cast from their homes and littered now on Hester Street along with the literal garbage that would have covered the streets and sidewalks. The bodies dangling 'from' the fire escapes or sprawl 'over' the stoops are described like features of the street, the space is not a backdrop of these people's lives, but they are a part of the environment. The faces being 'spotted as with mold' implies stasis and decay, perhaps mirroring the mould that no doubt filled the tenement blocks these people lived in. Their faces are a set part of the city street, so much so that they have begun to grow mould and fuse with the environment itself. Even the air on Hester Street is compared to 'empty teats' that the children suckle, literally combining the bodies of the immigrant population with the environment, and turning the space itself into a kind of body. From the very beginning of Ridge's poem, the ghetto space is characterised by those existing within it.

The connection between people and space is even evident in the naming of the areas of the Lower East Side, with parts known as The Jewish Quarter, Chinatown and Little Italy (many of these labels are still used today) which signposts how much the people and their ethnicities shaped the parts of the city they inhabited. The ways in which the people living within a space help characterise it is articulated by Harvey in what he calls the 'second dimension' of his own spatial categorisations. This dimension is based on the work of Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre claims that urban spaces are 'lived directly' by their inhabitants, which allows spaces to transition from *conceived* spaces to *perceived* spaces.[20] Harvey unpacks this further, writing that '[m]aterial space is, for us humans, the world of our sense perceptions […] [w]e touch things and processes, we feel them, see them, smell them, hear them, and infer the nature of space from those experiences. How we represent this world of experienced sense is, however, an entirely different matter. We use abstract

[19] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 41.
[20] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 42.

representations (words, graphs, maps, diagrams, pictures, geometry, and other mathematical formulations) to represent space as we perceive it'.[21] Here Harvey quite plainly sets out the differences between space that is *conceived*, or represented, and space that is *perceived*, or lived. These two categories are not unlike Harvey's perceptions of absolute and relative space from his 'first dimension'. Represented, conceived space broadly involves describing or mathematically representing the absolute space that exists either on a map, or on blueprints etc., whereas lived, perceived space, like relative space, is dependent on the inhabitants' points of view. Harvey goes on to say that Lefebvre and other Marxist spatial theorists insist 'that we also have imaginations, fears, emotions, psychologies, fantasies, and dreams' and that these intangible considerations also influence the way a space is perceived and lived in. And so, Lefebvre's idea of lived space includes both the material, tangible aspects of perceiving space, but also the immaterial considerations of spatial perception that are comparable to Harvey's idea of relational space.

As always, these are not rigid categories, and the boundaries between them are blurry, hence the need for them to be constantly held in dialectical tension with one another. However, for my own analyses of Ridge's poetry it is important to recognise that, as well as the three categories of spatial perception outlined by Harvey in his first dimension, the inhabitants that live within a space are what help characterise that space and provide the basis for how we as readers interpret spaces. Although the first stanzas of the poem detail the ways that the Lower East Side and its inhabitants are merged through their representation as impoverished and sick, this association evolves as the poem goes on, and the driving force behind these changes are the developments enacted by the people, living in, and actively shaping their surroundings.

In the second section of 'The Ghetto' the reader is introduced to the Jewish family that the speaker is living with in the tenements on Hester Street. The poem focuses on the eldest daughter, Sadie, who we learn works in one of the many garment factories on the Lower East Side.

> Sadie dresses in black.
> She has black-wet hair full of cold lights
> And a fine-drawn face, too white.
> All the day the power machines
> Drone in her ears …
> All day the fine dust flies
> Till throats are parched and itch
> And the heat – like a kept corpse –

[21] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 142.

Fouls to the last corner.[22]

We are drawn into Sadie's sensory world of working in a local sweatshop with the sewing machines which '[d]rone in her ears' as 'fine dust flies' until 'throats are parched and itch'. The environment feels hostile and invasive, and Sadie's experience within the space of the factory is exhausting and painful. The grim realities of sweatshop labour were common throughout the early parts of the twentieth century as New York had become the centre of the garment trade, which was also mostly a woman's trade.[23] By focusing on Sadie's workday, Ridge faithfully recreates the nightmare-like atmosphere that working in a sweatshop entailed. Ridge herself may have known these pains first-hand as an interview in 1919 reveals that Ridge herself had lived "'in a five by seven room in an East Side tenement'' when she first came to New York City' and that she worked as an artists' model and factory worker.[24]

Ridge continues, writing that 'Each dawn finds her a little whiter, / Though up and keyed to the long day'.[25] Despite Sadie's pallid constitution signalling ill health, she is forced there each day to continue with her destructive labour routine. Sadie's entrapment to the harsh realities of industrial labour is reminiscent of Marx's chapter on the working day, which states: '[t]he time during which the worker works is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has bought from him. If the worker consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist'.[26] The long workday is draining Sadie physically but is forced upon the workers as, from the perspective of the capitalist, any free time is an act of theft. It is telling that Ridge never even mentions what it is that Sadie is producing. For Ridge it is inconsequential: Sadie is alienated from the commodity and thus from her labour. It is the sale of her labour and her implicit surrender to the principles of industrial capitalism that matter. Ridge does not shy away from how dehumanising and unhealthy this environment is for the women working on the Lower East Side. Sadie's pale features evoke the image of the mould-spotted ghetto children from the opening stanzas, strengthening our sense that the ghetto space is characterised as diseased and sick, resulting from the dominating influence of industrial capitalism and the poverty of the workers.

Although the ghetto space is certainly being perceived by the immigrant inhabitants as one that is harsh, impoverished, and ruled by capitalist principles of labour and productivity, the space itself

[22] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 44.
[23] Andrew Dolkart, 'The Fabric of New York City's Garment District: Architecture and Development in an Urban Cultural Landscape', *Buildings and Landscapes: A Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, 18.1 (2011), pp. 14-42 (p. 16).
[24] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 101.
[25] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 45.
[26] Karl Marx, 'The Working Day', *Capital: Volume 1* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 342.

is also affecting those who live within it. Harvey articulates the reciprocal relationship between a space and those living in it: '[t]he spaces and times of representation that envelop and surround us as we go about our daily lives likewise affect both our direct sensory experiences and the way we interpret and understand representations. We may not even notice the material qualities of spatial orderings incorporated into daily life because we adhere to unexamined routines'.[27] The way spaces are ordered and represented has a direct impact on the lived experiences of those spaces, and so Harvey lays out a dialectical interrelationship between the two where they inform one another. Sadie's grim acceptance of, and adherence to, factory life is because, according to Harvey's logic, these realities are fundamental to the way life in New York is both conceived and perceived at this time. Sadie is being forced to exist within the confines of American capitalism, and the way this system 'conceives' the city space as one of labour and profit.

Thanks to these capitalist conceptions of the city, the mass of immigrants who were pouring into the Lower East Side during the early nineteen-hundreds had seen America represented as a new land of opportunity and employment. Many of these immigrants had escaped tragic circumstances stretching back to the mid-1800s, such as the 1868 cholera epidemic, various famines that ravaged Russia and Eastern Europe, and anti-Semitic pogroms in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[28] They were, as Ridge said, the 'garbage of the world', people cast out from their homelands and who came to America with hopes of a new life. These people are both outside and inside America, liminal figures as their cultural and national identity was undergoing a kind of transformation via a process known as 'Americanisation'. Maria Lauret describes Americanisation as the 'impulse of voluntary organizations to help immigrants adapt to America's overcrowded industrial centres' but which rendered them as 'inbetween peoples'.[29] Lauret attributes this liminality to the internalised racial hierarchies that Americanisation taught to both the immigrants entering America, and the established American citizens who already populated the towns and cities. Despite being European, their Jewishness or even just their status as supposedly undesirable Europeans meant they were perceived as being from inferior racial stock. Jacob Riis lays this racial distinction between the Northern/Western Europeans, and the Southern/Eastern Europeans in his text *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), stating that 'the once unwelcome Irishman has been followed in his turn by the Italian, the Russian Jew, and the Chinaman'.[30] This racial othering of the Jewish population meant they were both insiders and outsiders, American, but a subset of

[27] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 143
[28] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land*, p. 117.
[29] Maria Lauret, 'Americanization Now and Then: The "Nation of Immigrants" in the Early Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries', *Journal of American Studies*, 50.2 (2016), pp. 419-447 (pp. 432 and 434).
[30] Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), p. 16.

American. Alicia Kent elaborates on this, writing that '[a]s immigration increased significantly […] divisions began to be made within the white race: those of Anglo-Saxon or Western European origin were seen as superior to those of non-Anglo-Saxon background coming from Eastern and Southern Europe'. According to Kent this manifested in political cartoons and drawings where Jewish immigrants were portrayed as having 'both white and black features […] reinforcing the idea that Jews were not quite white and not quite black'.[31] Lauret identifies that the process of Americanisation then could be seen as a gradual process of emancipation over the generations – a move towards whiteness and Americanism.[32] A large part of the process of Americanisation was introducing these liminal Americans to the capitalist workforce and making the working day a feature of American life. The capitalist principles that we see Sadie engaging with in the garment factory were a part of life in America, and Lauret notes that the process of Americanisation served as the 'ideological justification for the combined centralizing force of industrial capitalism'.[33] The punishing schedule of the working day and the need for productivity in a constantly growing urban industry was normalised under the banner of Americanism and therefore became a part of the lived immigrant experience.

However, Ridge does not simply define the ghetto space as one of destructive labour and ill health. Ridge also imbues her subjects with an agency which transforms the ghetto space they live in. This sense of action and rebellion against circumstance begins with Sadie herself.

> Sped by some power within,
> Sadie quivers like a rod …
> A thin black piston flying,
> One with her machine.
>
> She – who stabs the piece-work with her bitter eye
> And bids the girls: 'Slow down –
> You'll have him cutting us again!'
> She – fiery static atom,
> Held in place by the fierce pressure about all about –
> Speeds up the driven wheels
> And biting steel – that twice

[31] Alicia A. Kent, *African, Native, and Jewish American Literature and the Reshaping of Modernism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 120.
[32] Lauret, 'Americanization Now and Then', pp. 434-435
[33] Ibid, p. 436.

Has nipped her to the bone.

Night, she reads
Those books that have most unset thought,
New-poured and malleable,
To which her thought
Leaps fusing at white heat,
Or spits her fire out in some dim manger of a hall,
Or at a protest meeting on the Square,
Her lit eyes kindling the mob …
Or dances madly at a festival.[34]

Ridge describes Sadie as 'quiver[ing] like a rod … / A thin black piston flying, / One with her machine'. The blurred distinction between human and machine calls to mind Hart Crane's call to 'acclimatize' to the machine, which suggested a literature that invokes new technologies.[35] Ridge, over ten years before Crane ever formally articulated the need for literature to accept the machine-age, poetically describes Sadie through mechanical terminology, and in doing so anticipates Crane's call for a distinctly modern American poetry. Her machine-like qualities show that despite her dehumanised status, Sadie is still as productive as the machines she is manning, not just in her rate of capitalist production, but also in her role as a leader and symbol of resistance within the workforce.

She is described as a 'fiery static atom' who tells the other girls to '[s]low down - / You'll have him cutting us again'. On the one hand, the 'him' could refer to the now animate sewing machine, who has been given agency as the one who cuts the girls physically if they are not careful. But this pronoun could also be referring to the owner of the sweatshop, who, Maffi states, was known as the 'sweater' or 'cockroach boss', who might 'cut' the girls' hours (and thus their livelihoods) if their work is not up to standard.[36] Slowing down then keeps the girls and their jobs safe. This moment can be read as an example of resistance and community within the sweatshop environment, where Sadie is productively helping to keep the working girls as a united front against their two bosses, the machine and the sweater. Ridge's use of machine imagery when describing Sadie imbues her with productivity and meaning according to the language of capitalism. If the tools themselves are active and as, if not more, alive than those who operate them, then Sadie's

[34] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, pp. 44-45.
[35] Crane, 'Modern Poetry' (1930), *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose*, p. 261.
[36] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land*, p. 81.

mechanical 'power within' makes her a dynamic and defiant force within the brutal capitalist system.

These machine qualities are then carried over into Ridge's descriptions of Sadie's limited free time at night, where, despite her exhaustion, she reads books 'that have most unset thought / New-poured and malleable, / To which her thought / Leaps fusing to white heat'. The literature she engages with is shaping her thoughts like molten metals that are moulded and shaped. In some ways she is continuing the industrial process into her free time by consuming literature and bringing together the 'unset thought' contained in the texts and 'fusing' it with her own. Ridge implies that the texts themselves are political, as these unset thoughts are also spat out by Sadie 'in some dim manger of a hall, / Or at a protest meeting on the Square, / Her lit eyes kindling the mob …'. If the theories and ideas that she reads are suitable for protests and meeting halls, we can assume that these are texts of a socialist or anarchist nature.

In these moments with Sadie, we can see a dialectical tension between political theory and practice (or praxis to borrow Marx's terminology), and between perception and representation of space. Sadie engages with political texts, reading books that ignite her imagination. She then speaks at meeting halls, where she can put these theories into action, becoming a political organiser, a role she clearly holds within the factory she works in as well. Mental and physical labour interpenetrate one another, shaping and informing both Sadie's working day, and her political reading and rallying at night. It is important to recognise that Ridge is representing the ghetto space as one of degradation, poverty and worker alienation, but also as a space of political resistance, organisation and one with revolutionary potential. This dialectical representation of the ghetto is one that was also lived by Ridge herself, and is lived, or perceived, by the poem's characters. Therefore, the poem itself is an implicit part of the dialectic between theory and practice. The poem represents the Lower East Side as a space pregnant with political potential, whilst also attempting to show the lived perceptions of its inhabitants and how they are engaging with this political landscape. Simultaneously the poem is imparting a political message, engaging with political theories in the same way Sadie's reading materials are, whilst also representing the Jewish ghetto as a site of political action and praxis. Harvey notes that 'the labour process is lived as alienation. Alienated subjects are likely to be, the argument goes, revolutionary subjects'.[37] This typical Marxist notion of class consciousness and the power of the proletariat is one that would have been at the forefront of Ridge's political anarchism and was also a prominent part of the culture of the Lower East Side. It existed in both theory and practice.

[37] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 152.

Ridge herself had been involved with the workers movements in the Lower East Side almost as soon as she arrived in New York. She was a comrade of the famous anarchist leader Emma Goldman within seven months of her arriving in the city and it is even implied by Svoboda that she worked directly for the anarchist cause by 1911, with Goldman writing to her whilst away for meetings in Mexico and, asking '[w]hat is being done about the Unions?' and '[a]re the boys working on the Union Square meeting?'[38] But Ridge is not simply using Sadie as a conduit for her own political affiliations.

Paul Avrich writes that the second decade of the twentieth century in New York City was 'a period of extraordinary intellectual brilliance, in which many of the seminal ideas of twentieth-century politics and art were being developed. Anarchism, socialism, syndicalism, revolution, birth control, free love, Cubism, Futurism, Freudianism, feminism, the New Woman, the New Theater, direct action, the general strike – all were intensely discussed'.[39]

Ridge was a part of the anarchist, bohemian political zeitgeist that was prevalent in both Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side, evident in her work with the radical Ferrer Center between 1909 and 1912, an experimental anarchist school, which Lucy Collins describes as 'radiating' with 'anarchist circles'.[40] The Center would often organise public lectures and debates, spreading the progressive politics of New York's intellectual elite to the working-class immigrants in the Lower East Side. Svoboda comments that 'the Center welcomed Eastern European Jews, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Spanish, English, Irish, Russians, Romanians and others' and even suggests that this was where Ridge observed a lot of political immigrant activity.[41]

Settlement workers in the ghetto are also described by Christine Stansell as 'political and intellectual', since they participated in cross-cultural exchanges with the immigrant workers they were in contact with, inspiring 'political coalitions between socialists, trade unionists, and middle-class sympathizers'.[42] The radical politics of the intellectual elite were spreading into the factories and sweatshops of the Lower East Side. As Maffi writes 'the sweatshop became a place for talking, reading and studying, for gossip and informations, for politics and trade unionism'.[43] Therefore, when Sadie is imbued with these mechanical qualities both at home and in the workplace, Ridge

[38] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 71.
[39] Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 111.
[40] Lucy Collins, 'Poet, Editor, Anarchist: Lola Ridge's New York Networks', *English Studies*, 104.6 (2023), pp. 1118-1138 (p. 1119).
[41] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 75.
[42] Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), pp. 63-64.
[43] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land*, p. 83.

shifts the machine's relentless activity away from capitalist production and instead directs it, via Sadie, towards education and resistance.

Even in these first two verses of 'The Ghetto' Ridge is defining the space of the Lower East Side as one inherently connected to those who live within it. It is, according to Lefebvre's terminology, a 'lived space'. There is a tension between representations of America as a space of opportunity and wealth, the stereotypical 'American Dream', and the lived realities of American capitalism and worker alienation. However, there is also a tension between the conceived capitalist daily routines, and the politically active culture of those living and working in the tenement blocks and factories on the Lower East Side. Ridge, although creating a representation of American space in 'The Ghetto', by focusing on the lived realities of her characters, blends the documentary-like depiction of the city that Crane identified with, and the political radicalism that has come to define her reputation within more recent scholarship.

Immediately the ghetto space on Hester Street becomes synonymous with the poverty-stricken immigrants who litter the sidewalks, and the sickness that emanates from Sadie's working conditions due to the domineering presence of American capitalism. However, the Lower East Side, through Sadie and her fellow workers, is also associated with resistance, political organising, and anarchist education. Ridge sees these liminal people as active participants in an unfair and unethical system, but also a thriving and productive political culture. As Svoboda summarises: 'Ridge found the possibility for renewal in their difficult lives'.[44] She imbues the immigrant population and the ghetto space with political potential by showing how people and space constantly shape one another.

Despite the environment working against these people with a liminal American status, they are still able to help reconfigure the spaces they occupy, fusing American space and, arguably, 'non-American' people. In doing this one's definition of Americans and American space is called into question, which is only strengthened later in the fourth verse of the poem when Ridge takes the reader out into the busy streets of the Lower East Side.

The Global Ghetto

The fourth verse of 'The Ghetto' begins with a kaleidoscopic view of the thronging masses filling the streets of the Lower East Side:

> Calicoes and furs,
> Pocket-books and scarfs,

[44] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 100.

Razor strops and knives
(Patterns in check …)

Olive hands and russet head,
Pickles red and coppery.
Green pickles, brown pickles,
(Patterns in tapestry …)

Coral beads, blue beads,
Beads of pearl and amber,
Gewgaws, beauty pins –
Bijoutry for chits –
Darting rays of violet,
Amethyst and jade …
All the colors out to play,
Jumbled iridescently …
(Patterns in stained glass
Shivered into bits!).[45]

The parenthesised final lines of each stanza repeat 'patterns' which suggests something beautiful or harmonious, a kind of order within the contrasts conveyed by the images of tapestries and stained glass which combines different elements to create a unified aesthetic. The other immediately identifiable theme of these stanzas is colour, and in particular the variety of colours that exist within the city streets. There are different coloured clothes, scarves, and most notably '[o]live hands and russet head'. All these pieces of the pattern that make up Hester Street are features of the people themselves: clothing, jewellery, skin tones and hair colours. Although the above quotation largely consists of a list of commodities and colours, they are all used by Ridge to signify the crowd of people that fill Hester Street. The people's differences and contrasts come to represent and shape the space within the poem. Through detailing all the visual juxtapositions that characterise the space, and the people within that space, Ridge is highlighting how multi-ethnic the Lower East Side was. It is also apparent that Ridge sees this diversity positively, with the colours being described as 'out to play', giving a bustling, joviality to the scene. Ridge goes on to describe Grand Street as '[b]ulging like a crazy quilt' and 'an ancient tapestry of motley weave / Upon the

[45] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, pp. 49-50.

open wall of this new land'.[46] Again, 'quilt' and 'tapestry' both require someone to sew together different materials and threads to create a singular useful and artistic object. These textile similes and metaphors may also be a reference to the garment industry of the Lower East Side. Thus, like the quilts and tapestries Ridge is evoking, the Lower East Side is a space that brings together different peoples to create a unified identity that is both defined by difference and yet whole and beautiful due to these inherent contrasts. As Ridge herself writes: 'This litter of the East / Takes on a garbled majesty'.[47]

With such a large immigrant population, the Lower East Side had become a world unto itself. Maffi describes it as a 'self-contained world […] a world apart, a multi-layered social and cultural microcosm', separating it from the rest of the city. He goes on: '[s]ide by side on the same street, or just around the corner, different communities had settled decade after decade, with their distinct folkways and traditions, language and religion […] a cosmopolitan microcosm in which it was enough to cross the street in order to enter a different world'.[48] Both Ridge's depictions of the Lower East Side as a patchwork, and Maffi's historical accounts of worlds within streets, focus on how the people within the busy ghetto environment inform how the space is perceived. This space is 'lived' in the Lefebvrian sense, it is recognisable through those who are perceiving it. This perspective on space also has a lot in common with Harvey's definition of relative space, where the observer is key in defining that space.

Ridge peppers the next stanza with a series of contrasting characters: 'a tawny-headed girl […] a bronzed merchant […] an old gray scholar'.[49] Each of these characters each have a unique and differing perspective of the bustling city street they are all on. Firstly, we are shown the tawny-headed girl's perspective, who sees 'Lemons in a greenish broth / And a huge earthen bowl by a bronzed merchant / With a tall black lamb's wool cap upon his head …'. The readers' perspective is then transposed across to the merchant, who 'has no glance for her [the tawny-headed girl]', but instead 'His thrifty eyes / Bend – glittering, intent / Their hoarded looks / Upon his merchandise, / As though it were some splendid cloth / Or sumptuous raiment / Stitched in gold and red …'.[50] It may seem trivial to highlight the difference between the girl's focus on the exotic green broth and the tanned merchant, and the merchant's studious gaze over his own wares. However, the differing focal points, as well as the modernist literary technique of adopting multiple perspectives in a third-person, stream-of-consciousness-like fashion (reminiscent of John Dos Passos's stylistic

[46] Ibid, pp. 50-51.
[47] Ibid, p. 51.
[48] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land*, pp. 65 and 67.
[49] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, pp. 51-52.
[50] Ibid, p. 51.

techniques in *Manhattan Transfer*) consolidates the ways in which Ridge is depicting the American city space as something that is being affected by those within it. The Lower East Side, New York City, or even American space more generally cannot be characterised singularly or definitively but is instead ever-changing based on the perspectives of those now living within that space.

The Lower East Side was also a palimpsest of inherited social and cultural practices and mentalities which, to continue with Harvey's spatial rendering, also makes the Lower East Side an intensely relational space as it can be lived through collective memories in urban processes. The 'old gray scholar' is described by Ridge as one who perceives the city through the lens of the past: 'His brooding eyes - / That hold long vistas without end / Of caravans and trees and roads, / And cities dwindling in remembrance - / Bend mostly on his tapes and thread.'.[51] His way of contextualising the modern metropolis he now exists within is to remember roads and cities from other countries from his past, from before he found himself 'thrust / From off the curbstones of the world …' which then brought him to America.[52]

As was the case in *The Bridge*, where links to both the past and other parts of the globe brought a sense of 'wholeness' within the poem, in 'The Ghetto' what Harvey calls relative and relational perceptions of space allows the Lower East Side to feel global, like all four corners of the world exist within it, and this even extends into the past, as it did in Crane's poem. Because of the role immigration plays in the construction of the Lower East Side the space is not just a conceived, absolute space, but one that is perceived both relatively and relationally as an urban environment that is bonded with a myriad of other spaces that feel like they have been brought closer to the Lower East Side itself – sewn together through the lived experiences of its occupants. Materially, and in absolute terms, the Lower East Side's borders were and are dominated by bridges, with the southern end of Hester Street leading almost directly onto the Manhattan Bridge, and just a few blocks over the Brooklyn Bridge joins the Bowery with Brooklyn Heights.[53] Therefore, the notion that the Lower East Side was both conceptually and materially a space in dialogue with, and in relationships with, other external spaces is important in characterising what made the ghetto feel so vital and why Ridge saw it as such an engaging 'pattern'.

Ridge, in the mould of Whitman, is redefining American space by presenting the Lower East Side as an environment which contains multitudes of peoples, perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds. However, Ridge goes a step further by focalising more extensively on the individuals

[51] Ibid, p. 52.
[52] Ibid, p. 53.
[53] Even now with huge number of skyrise buildings that populate Manhattan and the Lower East Side, blocking much of the larger cityscape, Manhattan Bridge still has a huge physical presence along Hester Street and what is currently Chinatown along the East River.

that make up the multitudes. The American city space therefore becomes characterised by difference. However, as was touched upon earlier when looking at processes of Americanisation, the poem does also suggest a kind of synthesis occurring within the ghetto communities. In the seventh verse of 'The Ghetto', Ridge musically represents the way American spaces were also creating a new type of American. When describing a scene in a political meeting in one of the Lower East Side's meeting halls, Ridge writes:

> Hearing world-voices
> Chanting grand arias …
> Majors resonant,
> Stunning with sound …
> Baffling minors
> Half-heard like rain on pools …
> Majestic discordances
> Greater than harmonies …
> - Gleaning out of it all
> Passion, bewilderment, pain …[54]

The stanza has a cacophonous, dissonant quality to it, with multiple images, voices and emotions being conveyed in quick succession in short bursts of language.[55] However, the repeated ellipses throughout have a strange effect in forcing the reader to pause before starting the next line.[56] If Ridge was truly trying to convey a cacophonous crowd, then pausing, almost reflectively, is surely counterintuitive. The first example of the ellipsis is after the line 'Chanting grand arias …'. This line is intriguing, as 'chanting' implies a unity of voices all repeating the same thing, whereas an aria is a piece of music written for one voice. Ridge is therefore suggesting that a series of singular voices are chanting individual arias all at once, creating a seemingly discordant noise in

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[54] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 59.

[55] This is reminiscent of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and particularly the poem 'I Hear America Sing' in its use of individual songs by different American workers being heard in quick succession. The cacophony Whitman creates acts as a counter to the homogeneity crowd and displays that the urban mass contains 'multitudes' of individuals. Ridge seems to be invoking Whitman's technique here as she too attempts to create a distinctly American poetic (something she would also prioritise when selecting poets for publication in *Broom* and *Others*) by defining Americanism as that which contains said multitudes.

[56] Possibly influenced by Emily Dickinson's dashes, which Edith Wylder suggested spoke to 'the ear of the imagination'. See Edith Wylder, 'Emily Dickinson's Punctuation: The Controversy Revisited', *American Literary Realism*, 36.3 (2004), pp. 206-224 (p. 207). Lola Ridge's earlier poem 'Debris' has also been compared to Dickinson by critics according to Terese Svoboda. See Terese Svoboda, 'Carrying Flame: A Look2 Essay on Lola Ridge', *Ploughshares*, 43.1 (2017), pp. 176-185 (p. 178).

the meeting hall. The ellipsis follows straight after, allowing the reader to pause before being launched into the particulars of said noise. She first describes the 'stunning' major notes, before using another ellipsis and detailing the 'baffling' minors. These ellipses have created more than just pauses; they have also linked juxtapositions within the sounds she is describing.

Firstly, she tells us that there are series of arias, the first ellipsis then focuses our attention on the major notes that, despite the singularity of each aria, somehow join to create a 'resonant' sound. The second ellipsis then carries our ear over to the minors, which are also plural, which suggests that the voices are interacting in moments of unison. However, not only are major voices joining with other major voices, or minor notes with other minors, but the two apparently contrasting tones are also linked via Ridge's ellipses, creating 'majestic discordances' that are 'greater than harmonies'. By musically representing the meeting hall crowd, Ridge conveys the tension between the united mass of ghetto dwellers, and their 'discordances', their differing backgrounds, cultures, and circumstances.

This dissonant choir is reminiscent of the fourth verse of the poem, where the Lower East Side inhabitants' 'discordant' identities are described like a patchwork quilt. Like the clashing series of arias, this image of a quilt creates one united identity (the quilt) out of many contrasting identities (the different patches all sewn together). Ridge continues the garment industry similes when she writes '(White beards, black beards / Like knots in the weave …)'.[57] However, unlike the sewing together of a quilt, weaving is a process of combining, of creating a new colour from two (or more) distinct colours. Those differences are no longer distinct after being woven together, and instead something new is created – a combination which births an entirely unique entity. Ridges writes:

> The herded stalls
> In dissolute array …
> The glitter and the jumbled finery
> And strangely juxtaposed
> Cans, paper, rags
> And colors decomposing,
> Faded like old hair,
> With flashes of barbaric hues
> And eyes of mystery …
> Flung
> Like an ancient tapestry of motley weave

[57] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 50.

Upon the open wall of this new land.[58]

Firstly, Ridge returns to the 'garbage of the world' simile, with the immigrants described as 'strangely juxtaposed / Cans, paper, rags'. The line between the inhabitants and their environment remains blurred, and their diversity is again highlighted. However, like the hairy 'knots in the weave' from earlier in the verse, the people of the ghetto are described as decomposing colours '[f]aded like old hair'. The intermingling of all the juxtaposed colours allows them to, over time, fade and eventually become one colour. If, as I previously mentioned, the diverse groups of people in the Lower East Side are represented by the kaleidoscope of colours Ridge initially described, then it seems that there is also a process at work in which the 'stained glass' that characterised the ghetto is slowly becoming more monochrome, like a standard pane of glass. We can read this as Ridge perhaps articulating Americanisation, in which the outsiders (immigrants) were transformed into insiders (Americans).

The ways in which Americanisation attempted to integrate certain immigrant communities (the ones that could eventually become white) was split along the lines of liberals and right-wingers, or 'minimalists and maximalists': those who wanted complete assimilation into American life, with no attachments remaining to past nationalities or cultures with respect given to the dominant capitalist system, and those who wanted basic assimilation of language and ethics, but allowed 'for immigrant contributions to American culture'.[59] These more liberal Americanisers included many of the Greenwich Village literary elite, with whom Ridge was certainly affiliated through Emma Goldman, her husband David Lawson, and her early associations with the Ferrer Center and the Modern School.

Although Ridge never publicly articulated her specific thoughts on Americanisation, she clearly sees the diversity of the ghetto and its status as, what I am calling, a relative and relational space, as vital to its character, shown in previously discussed sections of the poem where the majestic colours of Grand Street were imbued with joy and celebration. Immediately after the faded hair image, Ridge writes: '[w]ith flashes of barbaric hues / And eyes of mystery … / Flung / Like an ancient tapestry of motley weave / Upon the wall of this new land'. The 'barbaric hues' and 'eyes of mystery' suggest, albeit in Orientalist terms, that some of the 'foreign-ness' of these immigrants is maintained. As Ridge's Romantic primitivist terminology shows, even the liberal version of Americanisation is problematic in its exceptionalism as it posits American values as preeminent and naturalises an imperialist stance toward other cultures. Possibly the most famous treatise on

[58] Ibid, p. 51.
[59] Lauret, 'Americanization Now and Then', p. 433.

liberal Americanisation from this period is Randolph Bourne's 'Trans-National America' (1916), in which he writes that the immigrant 'is raw material to be educated, not into a New Englander, but into a socialized American'; he continues, '[l]et us speak, not of inferior races, but of inferior civilizations'.[60] These words clearly reveal that Americanisation, even in its most generous form, remains a way for America to remove the elements of other cultures that appear unsavoury to a Western perspective and only keep those which are exciting or benefit the Anglo-American liberal.

Ridge's own sensationalist vocabulary when describing the 'barbaric' colours of the Lower East Side perhaps reveals her own biases, despite her status as an immigrant in America. However, as discussed earlier in the chapter, immigrants were categorised based on a perceived racial hierarchy. Ridge, as a descendent of the Anglo European nationalities would not have been categorised as an inferior form of immigrant and therefore cannot be considered a racial outsider in the same way her subjects were. If her Irish heritage had been known then she would have perhaps held a similar position on the racial hierarchy as the Jewish population, but Ridge's identity was largely known as Australian whilst in America, and this may have been to protect herself from racial discrimination.

Before returning to my analysis of the tensions between immigrant heterogeneity and a unified national identity, I will briefly explore Ridge's own place as a writer conceiving the experiences of immigrants that she is culturally separate from. As Crane demonstrates in *The Bridge*, creating a poem which invokes global 'wholeness' by taking on perspectives of people and cultures that the author does not belong to is almost always characterised by contradictions and authorial blind spots. I have already noted that Ridge's language can drift into othering her subjects, as many of her contemporaries were also guilty of doing.

Taking the Eastern European Jews as a sociological subject was certainly not novel at the time, as publications such as Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) and Hutchins Hapgood's *The Spirit of the Ghetto* (1902) (Hapgood was also a regular fixture of the Ferrer Center) were popular texts which focused in on the immigrants who lived and worked in the Lower East Side.[61] Carrie Bramen states that these texts were a part of what she calls the 'Urban Picturesque', a literature which made 'inequality and immigrant diversity expected elements of modernity' by presenting middle-class readers with cross-cultural encounters that they would not have otherwise been able to experience.[62] Although they may have seemingly noble intentions (particularly Riis' text and

[60] Randolph Bourne, 'Trans-National America', *The Atlantic*, July 1916 <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1916/07/trans-national-america/304838/> [accessed 18 February, 2024].
[61] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 81.
[62] Carrie Bramen, *The Uses of Variety: Modern Americanism and the Quest for National Distinctiveness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 157.

accompanying photography) they work to make 'the other' into a spectacle for the reader, a kind of slum tourism which both shocked and comforted the reader in the objectification and often constructed perversity of its subjects. If we take Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* as an example, we can see that his prose can come across as distanced and sensationalised, stating that 'in the tenements all the influences make for evil' and even claiming that New York was a 'Christian city'.[63] Despite Riis's own past as a vagrant on the streets of New York when he first came to the city, his writing reveals that he has perhaps become culturally or socially distanced from some of the realities of life in the ghetto. His writing can veer into what we would now call cultural essentialism and, at times, he succumbs to racist and antisemitic vernacular: 'Thrift is the watchword of Jewtown, as of its people the world over […] Money is their God'.[64] Modernist writers who were not even necessarily primarily engaging in the 'urban picturesque' were still guilty of sensationalised and racist language when characterising Jewish people. Svoboda mentions Henry James's descriptions of New York Jews as 'snarling a weird Yiddish', or Eliot's depictions of 'the Jew squatting on the windowsill […] or beneath the rats'.[65] Both accounts are dehumanising depictions of Jewish people and construct them as subhuman anomalies. These depictions, although more extreme in their antisemitism, share the inherent separation between author and subject found in Riis's work.

Ridge could be seen an antidote to this kind of Anglo-Saxon, white modernism. Svoboda details an anecdote from later in her career when Ridge was recovering from an illness at a sanatorium, she performed a reading from 'The Ghetto' to a group of girls who had lived and grown up in the Lower East Side, who were described as 'hurt and had tears behind their eyes because they were reminded of something they wished above all to forget […] [s]he had captured something true'.[66] The implication is that despite Ridge's different cultural background from her subjects, there was something in 'The Ghetto' which spoke to their experience. Perhaps her possible presence as a boarder and worker in the Lower East Side, and her active participation in union meetings as a factory worker in the garment trade and an immigrant, makes her a companion to her subjects, despite her racial and cultural separation from them. This is corroborated by Joshua Logan Wall, who writes that despite some biographical confusion as to whether she did live amongst the Jewish immigrants when she first came to New York, 'Jewish immigration seized her imagination as an embodiment of American life, culture, and ideals'. Wall states that this was such a defining factor in her early career when writing 'The Ghetto' that, although there is no evidence she ever pretended

[63] Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, p. 6.
[64] Ibid, p. 64.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 100.

or claimed to be Jewish, 'Ridge was at times taken not for an Irish Catholic by way of the Pacific but as a Jewish immigrant'.[67] Whether by Jewish immigrants possibly exposed to Ridge's work, or by the literary public's imagination, it is clear that Ridge had an insight into the lives of her subjects. When compared to her modernist contemporaries such as Eliot, Pound, or the pre-modernist writings of Henry James, this insight was both rare and important in forming an authentically American literature as the definition of what it was to be an American was in the process of evolving.

However, despite any links with her subjects which lessen the outright separation that other contemporary writers exacerbated in their writing on the Jewish immigrants, Ridge's work is not without instances of clearly othering her subjects. There is another moment of what Kramer calls 'reflexive antisemitism' in the poem where Ridge refers to the '[s]leight-of-mind' of a Jewish trader who looks to Wall Street as a religious emblem 'Circumscribed in stone- / Some fifty stories to the skies'.[68] Jonathan Freedman in his text *The Temple of Culture: Assimilation and Anti-Semitism in Literary Anglo-America* (2000) comments on how embedded anti-Semitism was in Anglo-American 'high culture', writing 'the 1910s and 1920s, the period when anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant sentiment boomed in England and America, climaxing politically in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924'.[69] Ridge's characterisation of the trader as one who worships stocks and accumulation is reminiscent of the earlier quotation I cited from Riis where he defines the Jewish population of the Lower East Side as enslaved to gold. Even if we ascribe this moment in the poem to a kind of philosemitism from Ridge, it is still leaning on antisemitic stereotyping and exposes that she perhaps has more in common with the sensationalist rhetoric of both the urban picturesque and the minimalist liberal Americanisation movement than one might think.[70]

There is a clear tension within Ridge's poem between the individuality of the immigrant communities that existed within the ghetto space, and the transformation of those communities into becoming Americanised. Ridge does not provide a definitive 'opinion' or answer to this tension, but in offering it as a major part of 'The Ghetto' she displays that defining American spaces as 'American' is, in fact, a complex and evolving conundrum. Lawrence Kramer writes in his introduction to the annotated edition of *The Ghetto and Other Poems* that 'The Ghetto is not in conflict with America; America is in conflict with itself within the Ghetto. For Ridge, becoming American means becoming Americanized […] It [the Ghetto] is a riven heterogeneity, exactly like

[67] Wall, *Situating Poetry: Convenant and Genre in American Modernism*, p. 103.
[68] Kramer, *The Ghetto and Other Poems: An Annotated Edition*, p. 19.
[69] Jonathan Freedman, *The Temple Culture: Assimilation and Anti-Semitism in Literary Anglo-America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 117.
[70] Kramer, *The Ghetto and Other Poems: An Annotated Edition*, p. 19.

the city and the nation that houses it'.[71] American space, and by extension, America itself, not only has its identity reshaped by those living within it, but also by difference, which in turn creates a new American identity, and this is a change in national identity that Ridge observes in the microcosm of the ghettos of the Lower East Side.

Ridge does suggest that this new American identity is in part due to the Americanisation process. She writes in the seventh verse: 'Majestic discordances / Greater than harmonies … […] Striving with infinite effort, / Frustrate yet ever pursuing / The great white Liberty' and 'waving their dreams like flags - / Multi-colored dreams, / Winged and glorious …'.[72] Both quotations display diversity via 'discordances' and 'multi-colored dreams', yet both are found under the banner of a unified image. The 'discordances' are pursuing 'Liberty', the capitalisation perhaps suggesting Lady Liberty, the statue that greets the immigrants arriving in the city and promises to give homes to the 'homeless […] huddled masses'.[73] However, more overtly Ridge is referencing the figure of Liberty from Eugene Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830). In the painting the defiant figure of Liberty leads a diverse mix of people under the billowing French flag, displaying a kind of national unity under which these rag-tag identities can coalesce. Ridge transplants this image of French nationalism into an American context and describes her as '[t]railing her dissolving glory over each hard-won barricade'.[74] This quote not only imbues Ridge's redefinition of America and American space with an overtly political dimension, but also with her glory 'dissolving' Ridge shows that the national image of America is changing and evolving, '[o]nly to fade anew'.[75]

The 'multi-colored dreams' of the ghetto populous are 'winged', which could refer to the American bald eagle, an animal which had symbolised North America since 1782.[76] The unique and diverse qualities of the immigrants exist under the dominance of national symbols and values. The people of the ghetto are culturally bridging together all these global spaces to the Lower East Side, whilst, as Bourne articulates, becoming 'outwardly and satisfactorily American'.[77] The weaving metaphor that Ridge uses to articulate this new Americanised identity takes on a more direct historical significance when we think of the garment industry sweatshops, which served as a space in which, through the principles of labour and capitalism, immigrant identities could become 'American'. Maffi writes that '[i]n the closed space of the sweatshop, the New-World

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[71] Ibid, pp. xviii-xix.
[72] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, pp. 59-60
[73] Emma Lazarus, 'The New Colossus', *Poetry Foundation* <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46550/the-new-colossus> [accessed 26 October, 2021].
[74] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 59.
[75] Ibid.
[76] 'American Eagle: A Visual History of Our National Emblem', *American Eagle Collection*, (2019) <https://www.americaneaglecollection.com/book> [accessed 26 October, 2021].
[77] Bourne, 'Trans-National America'.

culture filtered and mingled with that brought over from Europe or Asia, and a mass culture developed out of the encounter with mass production - the peculiar process by which immigrants became Americans by creating a new America'.[78] In working and living in such proximity the people of the Lower East Side were able to contribute to modern American industry and culture, and in doing so, they themselves could become Americans.

In 'The Ghetto' Ridge manages to depict a 'global ghetto', making the Lower East Side a microcosm for the world at large. The global scale of Ridge's poem is reminiscent of Waldo Frank's concept of 'wholeness' that was discussed when analysing Crane's *The Bridge*. This link may be more than purely coincidental as Frank is noted as occasionally attending Ridge's weekly salons in Manhattan.[79] The American city space is recognised as diverse, multi-cultural, and pregnant with juxtaposition via the people living within that space. However, this diversity is also in tension with a distinct idea of Americanism shown by the process of Americanisation and the unified voice of the immigrant ghetto that Ridge signals via the 'majestic discordances' of its occupants. As Kramer summarises, '[t]he life of the Ghetto is a polyphony and a cacophony at once'.[80] Despite the national exceptionalism and homogeneity that Americanisation creates, Ridge does still hold the values of diversity and immigration as central to the lifeforce of the Lower East Side. Even if some of the vibrant colours of the quilt are, over time, bleeding into each other and becoming a more singular colour, that colour is something new that is born from difference.

Whatever Ridge's specific opinions were on her Jewish subjects and the processes by which they could become 'satisfactorily American', she clearly felt that American people and American spaces needed to be reconsidered because of the role immigration played in the early decades of the twentieth century. Wall concurs with this reading, stating that '[b]y placing the act and experience of immigration at the center of her poetry, it counters the claims of established American elites to control of American culture: the immigrant response to the place of the Americas *is* the defining feature of an American literature in which there are only outsiders'.[81] Wall goes on to point out that despite the now well-accepted idea of a 'nation of immigrants' as a facet of the American identity, this did not exist in the wider public consciousness when Ridge was writing 'The Ghetto'. It is worth pointing out that this redefinition of American identity and space due to mass immigration is specifically tied to these early decades of the twentieth century, as the National Origins Act of 1924, according to Lauret, reduced the rate of immigration into the United

[78] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land*, p. 84.
[79] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 130.
[80] Kramer, 'Introduction', *The Ghetto and Other Poems: an Annotated Edition*, p. xxix.
[81] Wall, *Situating Poetry*, p. 101.

States to a steady trickle.[82] Therefore it was only at this point in American history that the precarious identities of American immigrants could create a new culture on this scale.

Ridge's implicit call for a reappraisal of what constitutes an American, and an American space, in 'The Ghetto' extended beyond the poem itself. As an editor for the literary magazine *Broom* from 1922 to 1923 she pushed against fellow editor Harold Loeb for a distinctly American literature to be included over the precedent of European expatriate modernism that was the preference of Loeb and other literary establishment figures (she most famously detested the work of Gertrude Stein, calling it 'mostly blah! Blah!', and her inclusion in Ridge's American edition of the magazine resulted in Ridge's resignation).[83] Ridge championed distinctly American voices in *Broom*, most notably Kay Boyle, Jean Toomer, and Hart Crane, and advocated strongly for the boundaries of American modernism to be expanded beyond already established voices.[84] Wall relates this directly to the principles of 'The Ghetto', commenting that 'she articulated a distinctively American vision of modernist aesthetics – one that, like 'The Ghetto', insists that the ideas of America and American literature emerge through the circulation of people and the immigrant encounter with place'.[85] Ridge was actively challenging the old guard in literary circles, and supporting what she saw as the new era of American literature, a new generation of voices that would redefine what it meant to be an American. This leads me to another important facet of Ridge's redefinition of America and the American city, as displayed within the ghetto. The new generation of immigrants who, in 'The Ghetto', create a unique American identity separate from their status as the children of immigrants.

Generation American

As well as the intermingling of different colours and nationalities in the Lower East Side, Ridge also comments on the relationship between different generations in the ghetto space. The relationship between the generations of immigrants in the ghetto is an important part of the way Ridge characterises the Lower East Side. In the eighth verse of the poem Ridge writes: 'Life in the cramped ova / Tearing and rending asunder its living cells … / Wars, arts, discoveries, rebellions, travails, immolations, / cataclysms, hates … / Pent in the shut flesh'.[86] The space itself is presented here as a mother to its inhabitants, and this is something I will return to later in the chapter. However, what this quotation shows is that the themes of reproduction and generational

[82] Lauret, 'Americanization Now and Then', p. 429.
[83] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 198.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Wall, *Situating Poetry*, p. 112.
[86] Ibid, p. 61.

inheritance are present in both the space itself and the people within it. In a line I previously quoted from the fourth verse of 'The Ghetto', Ridge writes '(White beards, black beards / Like knots in the weave …)'.[87] Through this line Ridge signposts that, like the global kaleidoscope of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, these two inferred generations, the old and the young, are woven together, but simultaneously stark in their differences. This is also evident from the beginning of the poem, as in the second verse Ridge introduces us to Sadie's family who live in the tenements.

> I room at Sodos' – in the little green room that was Bennie's –
> With Sadie
> And her old father and her mother,
> Who is not so old and wears her own hair.
> Old Sodos no longer makes saddles.
> He has forgotten how.
> He has forgotten most things –
> even Bennie who stays away and sends wine of holidays –
> And he does not like Sadie's mother
> Who hides God's candles,
> Nor Sadie
> Whose young pagan breath puts out the light –
> That should burn always,
> Like Aaron's before the Lord.[88]

The absolute space of the tenement is immediately made to feel claustrophobic with the quick succession of names that live or had lived in the building. The speaker and Sadie clearly live in very close proximity to Sadie's parents, and yet, if we consider the energised descriptions of Sadie that appear later in this verse, we can already see that the descriptions of Sadie's father are markedly different. Ridge tells us that 'Old Sodos no longer makes saddles' as he 'has forgotten how'. This might simply be a side-effect of Sodos's advanced age, but there is also the implication that saddle making was Sodos's craft before coming to America, and that the transition from the 'old world' to the 'new world' has rendered him useless in this new context. The old world/new world aspect of Sodos's character is strengthened when Ridge states he 'does not like Sadie's mother / Who hides God's candles'. In hiding the Shabbat candles, the lighting of which traditionally fell under

[87] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 50.
[88] Ibid, p. 43.

rabbinically mandated law, she displays a move away from old world traditions and instead engages with the process of Americanisation, or at least, new world, secular thinking.

A possible generational divide is also enforced here, as Ridge makes a point of telling us that Sadie's mother is 'not so old' and defies orthodox tradition by 'wear[ing] her own hair'. Despite her assumed status as a first-generation immigrant in contrast to Sadie, we can still identify that she is breaking many of her old-world customs and acclimatising to an Americanised life in the new world. Sodos also dislikes Sadie, whose 'young pagan breath puts out the light - / That should burn always'. Sadie, a representative of the younger generation, is not simply hiding the candles, but actively putting them out, extinguishing her religious heritage and therefore becoming 'pagan' in her father's eyes. His fealty to religious tradition is reenforced later in the verse when the speaker hears him, steadfast in his convictions, praying '[l]ike a broken whinnying / Before the Lord's shut gate'.[89] His 'broken whinnying' hints not only at a repetitive and pointless gesture but also anthropomorphises him into an old horse who has been put out to pasture. The fact that his God's gate is 'shut' strengthens the futility of his prayers, either suggesting that his religious traditions are not compatible with his new American life, or perhaps the line betrays Ridge's own feelings towards religious tradition. Either way, we are presented with an image of the older generation who are mostly useless. They appear out of step with their new American context and unable to engage with what gave them vitality and meaning in the old world.

This trend is continued in the sixth verse of the poem, where Ridge describes a café scene, in which 'old men sit muffled' and '[p]ass around old thoughts, dry as snuff'.[90] The fact they are 'muffled' displays an isolation and alienation inherent to being unable to communicate. An inability to speak or express oneself is a common modernist trope, employed by Eliot in *The Waste Land* when one of the anonymous voices says 'I could not / Speak, and my eyes failed', creating a sense of spiritual deprivation.[91] Once again, the old seem spiritually and intellectually impotent, their ideas dry and their voices obscured. The images of the old men are then starkly contrasted with the young people who suddenly invade the café space: 'Leaping in flexible arteries - / The insolent, young, enthusiastic, undiscriminating / committee'.[92] Even Ridge's cadence changes to display the energy that the young people bring to the scene, a list of one-word adjectives punctuated with commas forcing the reader to speed up their reading. Most of these words are full of plosive sounding consonants such as 'n', 't' or 'c' which makes each word punchy and direct. The use of 'arteries' also recalls vitality and motion, as arteries are essential to deliver large amounts of blood

[89] Ibid, p. 44.
[90] Ibid, p. 56.
[91] Eliot, 'The Waste Land', *The Waste Land and other poems*, p. 24.
[92] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, pp. 56-57.

around the body, just as these youths are delivering 'leaflets even in graves'.[93] They are scattering information and literature to these old, undead bodies in the café. Such is their enthusiasm and purpose that they are determined to spread ideas, even to those who 'curse' them.[94]

The juxtaposition of the old and the young that Ridge highlights within 'The Ghetto' reveals the transformative process of modernisation. The dualism of old and young, or ancient and modern, reveals a generational evolution that occurred, in part, because of their emigration to New York. The old appear to be clinging to their past, unable to let go of old-world thoughts and traditions, such as Sodos's candles, or the dry ideas of the men in the café. In contrast, the young are seen as extinguishing those ideas and traditions, instead organising and spreading new thoughts and ideas as a unified 'committee'. There is a clear political angle to Ridge's choices here, as the leafleting and organisation that Ridge refers to certainly implies the political fervour that was present in New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. Lucy Collins writes that 'Ridge is prescient in her awareness of the intergenerational tensions […] as respect for the authority of elders began to dwindle', and that '[t]hese changes were manifest in both political and literary spheres: younger generations brought new energies of protest as well as artistic experimentation which gave New Yorkers unique access to the avant-garde'.[95] We have witnessed both of these spheres of politics and literature in Ridge's work and life, with the depiction of the ghetto youths in the poem aligning with Ridge's political activism in New York, but also in Ridge's role as a supporter, editor and publisher for younger poets within New York's literary scene.

These political and artistic influences that were present within New York's bohemian, anarchist circles were, according to Christine Stansell, 'proximate and permeable to the Jewish Lower East Side', and became a part of the youth culture in the area.[96] However, Collins does illustrate that although some of the anarchism that was present within the ghetto youths of the Lower East Side was due to intellectual cross-pollination with the artistic elites of Greenwich Village and other bohemian enclaves in Manhattan, that there was also something specific about the city space itself which created this political radicalisation, and informed the generational divide.

> Twenty years earlier, this area had been home to German socialists and anarchists, confirming the overlapping experiences of distinct immigrant communities, and the extent to which socialist schools and organisations – such as Webster Hall and the Ferrer Center – as well as neighbourhood cafés and grocery stores, offered spaces for radicals of

[93] Ibid, p. 57.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Collins, 'Poet, Editor, Anarchist: Lola Ridge's New York Networks', p. 1123.
[96] Stansell, *American Moderns*, p. 6.

> all kinds to congregate and to hold talks and performances. Despite the maintenance of close ethnic and national ties with radical communities, it was clear that anarchism was not imported into America but emerged because of the specific conditions that immigrants found there.[97]

Collins makes an important claim here, and one which I am inclined to agree with. The city space, and the ways it was organised to make immigrant life difficult and, in many ways, brutal (via capitalist production, the integration of the immigrant population into channels of Americanisation via the workforce, and the racial hierarchies that were upheld), is a large part of what created the political radicalism which swept the Lower East Side at this point in history. However, simultaneously, the fact that previous generations of immigrants had found the reality of the American dream similarly disappointing also meant it was a space that could house and nurture anarchist communities as they grew within the city. Ridge, as we saw in the second verse of the poem when she describes Sadie's working day, includes both sides of the equation when characterising the city space, it is one of immense hardship and brutality, but also vitality and organisation. The political communities of the young ghetto workers are shaped by the space itself, their circumstances are created by the ways governing systems, to use Lefebvre's term, 'conceive' the urban environment.

But then why is it only the younger generations that Ridge imbues with this political context? The older generations exist within this space as well, why are they not similarly radicalised within Ridge's poem? I do not believe Ridge gives us a particularly satisfying answer, and this is in part because there is not a simple one. If we return to the old scholar I mentioned earlier from the fourth verse of the poem, who remembers the city streets from his youth, we are presented with an older character who could be characterised as not fully present within his current space. He is too busy indulging in representations of the past:

> Here an old gray scholar stands.
> His brooding eyes –
> That hold long vistas without end
> Of caravans and trees and roads,
> And cities dwindling in remembrance –
> Bend mostly on his tapes and thread.

[97] Collins, 'Poet, Editor, Anarchist: Lola Ridge's New York Networks', p. 1122.

What if they tweak his beard –
These raw young seeds of Israel
Who have no backward vision in their eyes –
And mock him as he sways
Above the sunken arches of his feet –
They find no peg to hang their taunts upon.
His soul is like a rock
That bears a front worn smooth
By the coarse friction of the sea,
And unperturbed, he keeps his bitter peace.[98]

The first stanza here gives the impression of infinite daydreaming, with the scholar's eyes holding 'vistas without end' as he stares at his tapes and thread. Despite being physically anchored by objects, his mind is not there, but instead walking past caravans and trees, on roads and in cities 'dwindling in remembrance'. His absence is continued in the next stanza, where, despite having his beard tweaked and being taunted by the younger generations, he his 'like a rock', completely still and lifeless. The arches of his feet are 'sunken', almost implying emaciation and complete stasis. Unlike the 'raw young seeds of Israel' who 'have no backward vision', his vision is only backward, and he is therefore unable to exist in the present, and in the modern city space. Despite maintaining a certain serenity, that Ridge calls a 'bitter peace', this scholar cannot become politically or socially engaged like the youths that mock him, because he is not present; he is mentally chained to the old-world, and to the past.

An interesting comparison can be made here with Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, where Crane's invocation of the past, and his marrying of the past, present, and future, made his version of New York a relational space which was able to then create a sense of 'wholeness'. In contrast, the scholar's past reveries do not bridge the past and the present, but instead remove the scholar from the present altogether, and turn him into a ghost who is unable to interact with the present. Earlier I used this excerpt as an example of Ridge engaging with what Harvey calls relational spacetime, as memory and the past are used to help characterise the city space. In some ways this is still true, as the old scholar is perceiving New York via memory and reverie. However, this also isolates him from his present and causes political and intellectual stagnation, rather than exultant 'wholeness'. At the end of the next stanza Ridge returns to gently mocking steadfast religious traditions, writing that the scholar has '[t]he wisdom of the Talmud stored away / In his mind's lavender', implying

[98] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, pp. 52-53.

that his mind needs to be fortified against becoming moth-eaten.[99] This is reminiscent of Sodos from the second verse, whose religious prayers were compared to 'broken whinnying' towards a shut gate. Like Sodos, the scholar's religious traditionalism is painted as a characteristic that is useless, and out of touch with the modern world.

Although Ridge does, through this scholarly figure, give some answer as to why she separates the generations so starkly in their engagement with the politics and culture of the Lower East Side, it is certainly a reductive characterisation of the older population of immigrants, and one that was markedly untrue. Leading political activist and friend of Ridge, Emma Goldman, was nearly fifty years old when Ridge published *The Ghetto and Other Poems* in 1919, and Ridge herself was forty-five. It would be hard to argue that neither of these women were politically engaged, or aware of the ways in which New York City and the Lower East Side impacted on its inhabitants. In fact, the very existence of 'The Ghetto' disproves that point.

However, Ridge does not leave the older generations within this wholly negative depiction. In this same verse Ridge writes 'All gutters are as one / To that old race that has been thrust / From off the curbstones of the world …'[100] These lines seem to say, all roads lead back to the first generation of immigrants who came to America and in a sense, created the Lower East Side as it was. This interpretation of Ridge's attitude towards the older generation of immigrants harkens back to the quotation from the poem which positions the ghetto as a mother to those within it. The space itself is characterised by these older inhabitants, just as it is also now being characterised by the younger generations who Ridge sees as changing the character of the Lower East Side. The process of change and the redefinition of what it was to be an American and what American space is could only take place because of the older generation's contributions. Ridge, despite letting go of certain aspects of the past, is also saying that it is important to remember and hold other aspects close, as it is a vital part of what comes next. There is then perhaps a flicker of cross-generational 'wholeness' within the poem, harkening back to the kinds of relational spatial perceptions I identified in Crane's *The Bridge*. It is not as simple as labelling the older generation useless, and the younger immigrant population as vital and engaged, and this is why elements of Ridge's characterisation of this binary are not completely satisfying. Ridge clearly identifies a tension between these generational gaps within the city space, and attempts to bridge that gap, whilst simultaneously exacerbating the distance between the two.

The tensions between past and present, young and old, extended to the language of the Lower East Side. This was something that I touched upon earlier when comparing the 'muffled' old men

[99] Ibid, p. 53.
[100] Ibid.

to the spiritually bereft characters in Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Language and communication were key themes in modernism, but also within the immigrant communities of New York. As the younger generations interacted with a broad array of cultures, religions, and nationalities, there evolved a kind of common language that was shared by a variety of different peoples. Maffi writes that, as Yiddish was the most dominant language in large areas of the Lower East Side, this 'lingua franca' was also colloquially known as 'Yinglish'.[101] The combination of American English with Italian phrases and, most prominently, Yiddish phrases, aptly displays the need for using parts of the older traditions, whilst simultaneously adapting them to create something new. Despite this process being described by Maffi as a 'dialectical process, tending, in due course, to reshape both sides' (the 'sides' being the older conservatives and the young radicals), it did also mark the widening generation gap, as the older generations would stick to their mother tongue, whilst the American-born young people would conform to the newer jargon being developed in the city. Despite this 'gap', Maffi does add that these differences contributed to a thick cultural texture.[102] Therefore, as was the case with the different cultures and nationalities that characterised the Lower East Side, the differences between the older and younger generations also exist within a tension of separation and union.

The widening generational gap was a staple of immigrant literatures throughout the twentieth century. Texts such as Anzia Yezierska's *Salome of the Tenements* (1922) dramatised the trials and tribulations that the new world bestowed upon the younger generations and in doing so displayed how quickly things were changing for immigrant communities who encountered modern America. Alicia Kent writes that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century '[n]o longer feeling confined to autobiographical writings, essays, or poetry as a form of expression, immigrant novelists tended to extol the benefits of assimilation, in part to demonstrate that Jewish immigrants *could* assimilate'.[103] The similarities between themes of 'The Ghetto' and this form of immigrant uplift narrative displays another way that Ridge's poem deals with both the past and the present.

'The Ghetto' is a longform poem in free verse, implying that it fits alongside T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Hart Crane's *The Bridge* and William Carlos Williams' *Paterson* as an American modernist epic. However, the narrative of 'The Ghetto' can be read as a longform uplift narrative, comparable to the previously mentioned *Salome of the Tenements*.[104] As Kent notes, these sorts of narratives were

[101] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land*, p. 188.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Kent, *African, Native, and Jewish American Literature and the Reshaping of Modernism*, p. 129.
[104] Yezierska's next novel, *Bread Givers* (1925), would challenge this narrative of assimilation, and the break between the 'old world', and the 'new world'. However, the benefits of assimilation portrayed in *Salome of the Tenements* are inferred by Ridge in 'The Ghetto', as well as in the trajectory of her own life. See ibid, p. 145.

a common form of immigrant literature in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries and conformed to a more Victorian method of realist novel writing.

We can theorise that this uplift narrative present in the poem reflects Ridge's own experiences in the Lower East Side. Although allegedly working for a time in the garment industry on the Lower East Side and rooming in a tenement, Ridge would eventually leave the ghetto and live with her educated, Anglo-American husband and travel the country with him.[105] Her connections to bohemian culture and politics lifted her out of the confines of the Lower East Side and gave her mobility and agency in the new world. Although she would have arrived in New York as one of the many thousands of immigrants entering the country, she did have the privilege of a prestigious artistic education, having studied at The Sydney Art School in 1903, which Svoboda tells us was 'considered the best in Australia'.[106]

Her entry into the New York City ghettos then, may have signalled some initial downward social mobility for Ridge, perhaps accounting for her sense of identification with Jewish working class women. However, this unfortunately can only be broadly speculative, as the biographical specifics of her living situation in her early days in New York are vague at best. Svoboda recounts that not long after moving to New York Ridge worked for the anarchist Emma Goldman, was an artists' model, contributed to literary publications, and wrote advertising copy (as Hart Crane would also do to earn his keep).[107] Whether these odd jobs, or her early literary contributions, paid well is unclear, but the connections she forged early on would certainly set her up for success amongst New York's political and artistic networks, culminating in editorial positions at the *Others* and *Broom*, as well as her early involvement in the Ferrer Center.

Her relationship with culture provided her with the means to not only survive in the city, but to eventually become a relatively central figure in the city's cultural and literary scene. Like Yezierska's Sonya, Ridge rose out of poverty and into a modern, bohemian existence through her relationship with contemporary American culture. Despite Ridge never explicitly showing immigrants leave the Lower East Side in 'The Ghetto', she does suggest that if we followed these characters beyond the poem, that this would be their trajectory. The younger characters in 'The Ghetto' who are engaging with their American circumstances directly are portrayed as evolving beyond their circumstances.

In the seventh verse of the poem, Ridge describes youths who attend a secret political meeting as having egos that are '[e]xpanding in the mean egg', implying that they are growing beyond their environment and are breaking free from the constraints of the ghetto, their bodies 'vibrant' and

[105] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 84.
[106] Ibid, p. 33.
[107] Ibid, pp. 67-68.

'yearning' for change.[108] The context of the meeting hall and the impassioned and defiant language used to describe them suggests that these people were 'expanding' due to their political associations, '[s]triving with infinite effort' for freedom and mobility within society. Bohemian affiliations and radical politics were seen as viable routes to traverse outside of the ghetto space. Stansell describes Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side as 'permeable' to one another, with radicals such as Ridge and Emma Goldman transitioning from immigrants of the ghetto into bohemian cultural figures. As Stansell summarises: '[b]ohemia turned outsiders into insiders'.[109] Indeed, at the end of the poem Ridge describes life in the ghetto as 'overflowing', which could simply be referring to the crowded conditions within the Lower East Side, but also seems to imply that the immigrant lives there are imminently about to burst out and join the rest of the city – that there is a palpable energy amongst the immigrant population of the Lower East Side which means it is inevitable that they will move beyond their current limitations.[110]

If we read 'The Ghetto' in this way, then Ridge was adhering to a conventional subject matter like the popular realist immigrant novel, whilst simultaneously expressing it through the modernist epic poem. Even in form, there is a tension between past and present. Ridge combines or synthesises elements of the past and present, in much the same way she suggests the occupants of the Lower East Side do, to create a unique literary voice. Although a synthesis of past and present was broadly common in modernist literature, it was rare to find modernist texts using what would have been considered traditional forms of storytelling, modernist experimentation and immigrant subjects. Nancy Berke confirms this claim, stating Ridge had 'very few peers who employ both the current experimental trends in modern poetry and a concern for the burgeoning social communities that would come to redefine the American landscape and languagescape'.[111]

By recognising the importance of the relationship between the past and the present within the Lower East Side, Ridge creates a temporally complex poem in both form and content which presents the Lower East Side as a space filled with contradictions and tensions which ultimately make it productive and unique. By highlighting the energy and community of the young and political immigrants, whilst acknowledging the cultural and ethnic histories of the ghetto and packaging these tensions in varying poetic forms and modes of expression, Ridge reveals that the relationship between the past and the present is important in bringing about change. Just as Ridge is ploughing new poetic inroads and separating herself from her peers, so is the Lower East Side

[108] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 58.
[109] Stansell, *American Moderns*, p. 38.
[110] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 65.
[111] Nancy Berke, 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"', *Legacy*, 16.1 (1999), pp. 70-81 (p. 72).

generating new ideas about what it means to be an American in the twentieth century and how immigrant identities can continue to exist and thrive in their new American context.

The Woman Renaissance

As with Crane, the ways Ridge constructs New York City spaces can be explained by using David Harvey's definitions of space. Harvey, when speaking on the differences between absolute, relative, and relational space, writes that he recommends 'keep[ing] the three concepts in dialectical tension with each other and to constantly think through the interplay among them'.[112] Ridge seems to suggest in 'The Ghetto' that absolute space, the perception of space as 'fixed and immovable' is not an adequate way of perceiving the Lower East Side, as she described the space as a sewn together pattern, implying juxtaposition and external influences, that is in a kind of constant flux and therefore unfixed and movable. However, the claustrophobic and cramped living conditions of this absolute space, and the poverty that results from this concentration of immigrants in an industrial centre are fundamental to Ridge's perception of the Lower East Side as well. I have mentioned how Harvey's definition of relative space can apply to the ghetto, as it becomes a space which contains multiple 'worlds' dependent on perspective, whether that's the old world and the new world, or the confluence of different cultures.

However, relational space, which Harvey tentatively suggests is the most generous way of perceiving urban space ('relational space can embrace the relative and the absolute') feels most appropriate when thinking about the Jewish ghetto, as the sewn together juxtapositions and multiplicity of worlds which are contained within the Lower East Side metaphysically bridge the ghetto with a network of other spaces.[113] Whether that's the memories of the spaces from which the immigrant population arrived from, previous iterations of New York which have changed and adapted with the arrival of immigrants to the city, or other parts of the city, either in a physical way across the Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges which border the Lower East Side, or in a more metaphysical way such as Greenwich Village, through the sharing of bohemian ideas and radical politics. The city space, according to Ridge, is not simply a city slum, but it is also a source of newness, vibrancy and creative will. Rather than the inhabitants of the ghetto being simply a downtrodden mass, they were capable of and were taking part in social, political and cultural change.

Part of this change that was present in the early twentieth century was the call for the liberation of women, which was a very public part of the bohemian movement in New York City and across

[112] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 141.
[113] Ibid.

the nation. Stansell writes that *Masses*, in 1913, called the awakening of women 'an issue for all humanity'.[114] She goes on to note that a significant part of this revolution within dominant gender dynamics was the idea of forging a third conceptual space in which women could feel equal to their male counterparts and would act as an alternative to the binary of female domestic space and male 'world' space: '[a] third space of reciprocity would nourish transcendent friendships unimaginable to earlier generations'.[115] Kent corroborates the notion that American space operated along a gendered binary: 'Jewish immigrants found sharp demarcations between the public and private spheres in America, with the gendering of the public sphere as male and the domestic, private sphere as female'.[116] In 'The Ghetto' Ridge links this conceptual space to the material reality of New York, by suggesting that the ghettos of the Lower East Side had the potential to become this space of equality between the sexes, or at least, was on the way to becoming linked with female emancipation from patriarchal traditions. The link Ridge creates between the material realities of the Lower East Side and this conceptual space of possibility can be articulated through Harvey's spatial categories, as Ridge connects aspiration possibilities of gender equality with the lived realities of the Jewish ghetto, and therefore unites absolute and relational perceptions of space. We saw earlier how the character of Sadie represented many of these political changes through her role as a social organiser within the sweatshop, and it is no coincidence that Ridge chose a female character to represent this evolution within the Lower East Side.

Like the poor 'bodies' that crowded Hester Street, Ridge describes women as 'a conquered people' in her 1919 lecture 'Woman and the Creative Will'.[117] Their 'acquired inferiority', she argues, is what has held women in their 'subordinate position' throughout human history.[118] Woman was not a natural inferior to man, but a product of restrictive circumstances. The position that Ridge sees women occupying was one she saw as 'squarely linked' to the position of the proletariat: the poor, working classes, many of whom in New York were made up of the immigrants filling the sweatshops and factories in the Lower East Side.[119]

Ridge called for a revolution that would see the working-classes and women rise to reorder society for the better. This revolution would ideally resolve various tensions, in this instance, material ones because they concern the economic realities of intersecting social categories. These tensions include the proletariat and the bourgeoise, as well as the female and the male, and Ridge felt that they needed to synthesise to create a new, just society in America. The resolution of these

[114] Stansell, *American Moderns*, p. 225.
[115] Ibid, p. 226.
[116] Kent, *American, Native, and Jewish American Literature and the Reshaping of Modernism*, p. 128.
[117] Ridge, 'Woman and the Creative Will', *To the Many*, p. 150.
[118] Ibid, p. 151.
[119] Ibid, p. 155.

tensions comes through what Marx called praxis, which would take the form of direct political action and protest. Ridge claimed she saw 'a great future for women in creative art', but these changes relied upon American society changing and evolving.[120] Throughout 'The Ghetto', Ridge returns to the image of the female body to represent the ghetto space as one that is in a subordinate and oppressed position, but also one that is full of potential and genius.

I will begin by looking at Ridge's 1919 lecture, in which she details her conception of the 'dual sexuality of genius'.[121] In 'Woman and the Creative Will', Ridge asserts that genius relies upon what have become typically male and female attributes: the male organisation of thought and the female gift of intuition. Through uniting the two, along with the creative urge, one has the makings of genius. However, she goes on to argue that feminine intuition is 'inherent in some degree in the great majority of women', whilst masculine organisation is only masculine because for 'centuries men have had the organizing of the world'.[122] Therefore, women in fact possess 'more of the basic quality of creative art' and are only really held back by their material circumstances.[123] Ridge's recognition of this material fact about women's relative helplessness in the male-dominated sphere of 'the world' supports the bohemian desire for an alternative space of equality. Genius would then be a more achievable state for women if the material organisation of the world was given over more to them, which would then create an alternative, androgynous space.

Although Ridge is using 'genius' in the specific context of the artistic sphere, she sees female artistic expression as related to and in dialogue with labour, religion, domesticity and a host of other factors. Therefore, to accommodate this far-reaching interpretation of female genius, throughout this section I will use the term 'genius' to indicate how Ridge sees the women of the Lower East Side as redefining what a woman could do in American society more broadly. 'Genius' can therefore signify how women in the early parts of the twentieth century were challenging misogynistic traditions and engaging with areas of society that had previously been forcibly closed to them. In 'The Ghetto' Ridge is attempting to show that the 'new woman' of the Jewish quarter is in the process of seizing some control of her material circumstances and therefore bringing forth the future of American feminism.

Returning to the second verse of the poem, female agency is immediately highlighted. The reader is introduced to the 'I' of the poem, who 'room[s] at Sodos' – in the little green room that was / Bennie's - / With Sadie / And her old father and mother'.[124] The speaker is clearly not

[120] Ibid, p. 156.
[121] Ibid, p. 143.
[122] Ibid, p. 147.
[123] Ibid, p. 144.
[124] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 43.

biologically a part of the family, and yet lives with them in this intimate setting. This position is reminiscent of the boarder, who Maffi writes was a universal presence on the Lower East Side who was often a single woman renting a room from a family in a tenement house.[125] The speaker seems to be one of these boarders who were often a requirement in the tenements for the family to be able to afford their own rent. The figure of the boarder is a liminal figure, someone on the one hand within the family unit whilst simultaneously separate from it and outside of it. The interplay between 'boarder' and 'border' is important to consider when characterising the speaker, as we as readers are immediately made aware of the fact that the perspective is voyeuristic, an onlooker to tenement life who does engage directly, but is still somewhat removed – living on the border between inside and outside – and so bridging the reader to the poem's subjects. An easy assumption to make here is that the speaker refers to Lola Ridge herself, which could have some credibility. Svoboda writes that in an interview in 1919 Ridge revealed that she had lived "'in a five by seven room in an East Side tenement" when she first came to New York City', explaining her 'intimate knowledge of life on Hester Street'.[126] As this period of her life was early in Ridge's tenure in the city it is reasonable to assume that Ridge was renting in the tenements out of necessity, signalling an economic transaction that is predominantly female.

Nancy Berke tells us that a 1911 Immigration Commission observed that 'fifty-six percent of all Russian-Jewish households in New York added to their monthly earnings by taking in boarders'.[127] However, she also adds that many of these tenants were 'single immigrant women' who, in taking a room were assuming a certain kind of modern independence away from the traditionally patriarchal system of living under control of one's father until being given to a suitable husband.[128] For example, in Anzia Yezierska's 1922 novel *Salome of the Tenements*, a Jewish girl from the Lower East Side, Sonya, asserts herself by fixing up her room in the tenement block.[129] Although this plan is to appeal to a wealthy suitor, this moment also displays the relative control that women could have over their own surroundings. Arguably, Yezierska also incorporates both of Ridge's elements of genius into Sonya at this point: she has the intuition to improve her living conditions to benefit her social standing, but also the organisation of thought and action to materialise her intuition. The relative economic control asserted by the boarder is certainly a step along the process that Ridge envisioned for the future of women.

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[125] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land*, p. 79.
[126] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 101.
[127] Berke, 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"', p. 74.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Anzia Yezierska, *Salome of the Tenements* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

The boarder was also likely to be dealing with the mother of the family they were staying with, as Berke writes that the 'majority of Jewish women had large economic roles' in the household as this allowed the men time to study the Torah.[130] The boarder's presence, then, is one that signifies an economic system controlled almost solely by women. Berke also acknowledges that the boarder/border dynamic that I referred to earlier is also present in this economic aspect, as the transaction 'can be placed within both an 'old' and new' world practice in which Jewish women, though limited by their role as keepers of the domestic sphere, still managed to exercise economic control'.[131]

When Harvey is thinking through his idea of relational space, he quotes Margaret Kohn, who writes '[a] particular place is a way to locate stories, memories and dreams. It connects the past with the present and projects it into the future'.[132] We can observe that the women of the ghetto are a large part of what allows us to perceive the Lower East Side as a relational space, as traditional domestic gender roles and modern economic mobility are both present in the lives of these new immigrant women, creating a link between the past and the present, forming a relationship between space and time. The link between the past and the present was something I observed as key to the vivacity that existed in the ghetto as it displayed the process of evolution in what it meant to be an American. The female presence of the boarder in the Lower East Side, and the female-driven economic transaction it signifies shows us that this process of evolution in the ghetto was a process that included a redefinition of the American woman as more independent and financially powerful.

However, female agency is also evident outside of the home in 'The Ghetto'. As previously mentioned, Sadie demonstrates how women were entering the American workplace. The machine-like imagery attributed to her gives her a sense of motion and productivity. An ironic byproduct of Ridge's mechanical language is that Sadie appears more alive and creative via the automated language of industrial capitalism. Berke, however, labels the descriptions of Sadie as 'phallic metaphors',[133] metaphors such as 'Sadie quivers like a rod' and '[a] thin black piston flying'.[134] Berke's conclusion is that 'Ridge represents the oppressive world of work as masculine'.[135] Whilst I agree, I also think Ridge is doing a little more here. Ridge appropriates the language of capitalism to imbue Sadie with productivity that extends beyond her alienated work: she is also an organiser, a scholar and a union member. Similarly, Ridge uses masculine, phallic language to imbue Sadie

[130] Berke, 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"', p. 74.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 158.
[133] Ibid, p. 76.
[134] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 44.
[135] Berke, 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"', p. 76.

with the kind of androgyny that Ridge thought was vital to 'genius'. Whilst historically women had worked in factories throughout the nineteenth century, Ridge positions Sadie, and the women she works with, as making inroads into phallocentric spaces, not only the workplace which is ruled by the exploitative male sweater, but they are also taking control in sectors of society that were traditionally male, and therefore gaining more control in the 'organisation of the world' that Ridge felt would aid women in breaking from their inherited restrictions.

I should clarify that Ridge was not suggesting that women being in the industrial workplace was necessarily a straight-forwardly positive development. In 'Woman and the Creative Will' Ridge writes 'I think the inclusion of women as an industrial unit will have the same effect on them as it has had for centuries upon the workers. It will check rather than stimulate their creative expression'.[136] Ridge is not trying to say that including women in the workplace brings about equality. Rather, she is stating that women being brought into the workplace had shaken traditional gender roles and meant the 'mental and spiritual strait jacket' was beginning to become undone.[137] What she felt women workers must do is join with their male counterparts and disrupt the capitalist model, writing: 'for the aspirations of women and the aims of labor are two things that can no longer be dictated by governments'.[138]

By describing Sadie with both mechanical and phallic imagery, Ridge is linking the tensions between capitalist and worker, and male and female, to show that she sees them not as binaries, but as interconnected and must therefore be considered in tandem. Sadie is not simply a woman in the workplace, but she is also a woman embodying the traditionally male role as an organiser of workers with the intuition of class consciousness and leadership. Once again Ridge is displaying that the new American women of the Lower East Side are staking a claim for independence and therefore becoming geniuses, but they are also seeing their own struggles as ones that are connected to the working classes and broad socio-political concerns.

The 'new woman' of the Lower East Side that Ridge presents through the figures of the boarder and Sadie reflected the real-world developments happening in New York City throughout the early parts of the twentieth century. Women were becoming increasingly prominent in challenging systems of oppression and power within the city and making their voices heard in public settings. There are numerous historical examples where tenement women led, supported and inspired political and social movements, helping to shape and evolve American culture.[139] I will now briefly

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[136] Ridge, 'Woman and the Creative Will', *To the Many*, p. 155.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid, p. 156.
[139] 'Tenement Women: Agents of Change', *The Tenement Museum* [n.d.] <https://www.tenement.org/tenement-women-agents-of-change/> [accessed 17 November, 2021].

look at two key examples that mirror both the domestic and the workplace settings that Ridge used in 'The Ghetto'. The first of these is the Orchard Street Riots of 1902 over the rise in Kosher meat prices. Due to women's economic role within the home, the fifty percent rise from twelve to eighteen cents a pound of Kosher meat outraged many of the tenement women. Sara Edelson, an owner of a small Jewish eatery rallied the Jewish women of the Lower East Side to fight back against this hardship:

> Dear Sisters! As we hold fast in our bitter struggle against the Beef Trust and against the Jewish butchers who are attacking us from all sides, we request that you, in the name of humanity, help us in our battle so that we can win. We began this great struggle out of need, our sorrows drove us, despite the fact that we Jewish women are in principle, calm and quiet.[140]

Consequently, over one hundred arrests were made as Orchard Street became a battle ground for these angry and desperate women. Of the one hundred arrests that were made, seventy-five of them were women. However, through protest these women eventually managed to push the price of Kosher meat down to fourteen cents. Women in the domestic setting were beginning to assert control over the systems that governed them, even if it was in a small way. This development was only possible because of the economic role that women now held, as Ridge displayed through the role of the boarder. This revolt conflates something that Ridge certainly saw in the tenement women – an appreciation that they were not isolated in their struggle, as these boycotting women looked for inspiration in both the Jewish tradition and the American labour movement, using tactics, methods and vocabulary from labour organising.[141] Much like the economic control that the boarder represents in 'The Ghetto', the economic power these women had over their homes meant that they had the organisational skills to protest and assert themselves upon the forces that sought to limit them. They were pushing beyond the restrictions of domesticity.

Another historical example of women's leading role in the politics of the tenements is 'The Uprising of 20,000' in 1909. This uprising came because of a gathering of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) at the Cooper Union Hall. This union had been formed in 1900 and signalled the shift in organised labour amongst the women of the Lower East Side. By 1914 the whole industry had been unionised under the banner of the ILGWU and it became the third largest union in America.[142] However, due to a series of grievances over working conditions

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[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land*, p. 159.

and pay, the gathering at the Cooper Union came to a head when twenty-three-year-old Cara Lemlich took to the podium to deliver an impassioned speech in Yiddish. She convinced 20,000 garment workers to stage a walk out the following day, and as the Yiddish and American press ran with the story of the uprising, more and more female and male workers joined in striking.[143] With other unions striking in solidarity with the mostly female garment workers, we are presented with an apt example of the kind communal resistance Ridge was seeking in 1919. There is a network of workers and unions all striving for a common goal, and so the struggle of working women, as Ridge stated, was intimately connected to the fate of the working classes. It was clear that Jewish women had a pivotal role in challenging the conditions of the worker in New York City.

When Ridge describes Sadie as spitting fire 'at a protest meeting on the Square, / Her lit eyes kindling the mob …' she distils the experiences of many of the Jewish immigrant women who found themselves spearheading a movement that saw gender, labour and social traditions being torn up and rewritten within the tenements of New York City in the early twentieth century.[144] In her 1919 lecture, Ridge identified that men 'were more spiritually articulate than we' due to their stranglehold over the organisation of society.[145] However, within 'The Ghetto' she reveals how the female immigrant presence within New York is challenging that organisation and through joining with other labour and social movements present within America, Jewish women were becoming more 'spiritually articulate'. The ghetto therefore becomes this 'third space' of gender equality, or at least contains the potential to transform into it, as women's roles in both the domestic and world spaces are beginning to combine, as they assert themselves more fully in both. This reordering of space can be conceptualised through Marx's idea of praxis, where political theory translates into material action. Ridge makes the Lower East Side symbolic of female power, and this abstract (relational) quality is then actualised in the economic and political infrastructure of the ghetto.

In 'The Ghetto' Ridge presents the reader with depictions of modern American women. Whether it is the economic role they played in the home, the pivotal role of Sadie and others like her that were found within the workplace, womanhood was being transformed. The redefinition of femininity in the context of the new world relied upon the synthesis of ideas and political action and by using the language of Harvey we can see how this redefinition is portrayed by Ridge as spatially specific to the Lower East Side. According to Ridge, it is within the spatial context of the ghetto that women were exposed to extreme economic circumstances and therefore forced to step into more traditionally masculine roles such as handling the family earnings or participating in and organising politically radical acts. Whilst these developments were not unique to the Lower East

[143] 'Tenement Women: Agents of Change', *The Tenement Museum*.
[144] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 45.
[145] Ridge, 'Woman and the Creative Will', *To the Many*, p. 147.

Side, or New York, as shown by the previously mentioned quotation from Stansell, who asserted that the female revolution was an issue for 'all humanity', in 'The Ghetto' Ridge frames the tenements as a spatial microcosm, a concentrated example of gender roles evolving and changing.

However, there is one facet of womanhood that is particularly prevalent in Ridge's work and is perhaps one of the defining elements of Ridge's own life: motherhood. This chapter has already explored the ways in which the relationships between immigrant parents and their children is vital to Ridge's characterisation of the ghetto space. By referencing the lines: 'Life in the cramped ova / Tearing and rending asunder its living cells … / Wars, arts, discoveries, rebellions, travails, immolations, / cataclysms, hates … / Pent in the shut flesh', we can see that the ghetto space itself becomes characterised as a mother by Ridge.[146] It is the specific role of women as mothers that I will now focus on to further show how women are central to Ridge's depiction of the Lower East Side.

Whilst still in New Zealand with her first husband, Peter Webster, Ridge first experienced maternity when she gave birth to her first son, Paul, in 1896. Paul died two weeks later due to bronchitis. In 1900 she gave birth to another son, Keith, who survived and would go with Ridge to America, aged seven. The next year, two weeks after his eighth birthday, Ridge deposited Keith at the Boys and Girls Aid Society in Los Angeles and left for New York to start her new life as a poet. Svoboda speculates that perhaps Ridge was hoping to return to Los Angeles later and collect him 'as children were not regularly adopted in orphanages then but taken home after the family crisis was over'. Or, more simply perhaps 'after erasing ten years of her life, she wanted the freedom to truly pursue that life'.[147] In any case, Keith would not regularly see his mother again and remained in public care until he was fourteen. Although there was a very brief period of reconciliation, for the most part Ridge very rarely mentioned Keith for the rest of her life, and even then, only very privately. Nevertheless, maternity clearly had a deep psychological effect on Ridge, as her poetry would focus on the themes of motherhood and mothers consistently.

Throughout 'The Ghetto' Ridge returns to the image of mothers to emphasise the importance and strength of women. In the first verse of the poem, she uses the image of 'ancient mothers' to acknowledge the Jewish histories that she is engaging with by using the Jewish population of the Lower East Side as her subjects.

> Flesh of this abiding
> Brood of those ancient mothers who saw the dawn break over Egypt …

[146] Ibid, 61.
[147] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, pp. 58-59.

And turned their cakes upon the dry hot stones
And went on
Till the gold of the Egyptians fell down off their arms …
Fasting and athirst …
And yet on …

Did they vision – with those eyes darkly clear,
That looked the sun in the face and were not blinded –
Across the centuries
The march of the enduring flesh?
Did they hear –
Under the molten silence
Of the desert like the stopped wheel –
(And the scorpions tick-ticking on the sand …)
The infinite procession of those feet?[148]

Ridge evokes the labour of these Jewish mothers, who 'turned their cakes upon dry hot stones' to feed the 'infinite procession' of people as they marched out of the land that had enslaved them. Ridge connects 'the enduring flesh' of women to the emancipation of the Jewish people, and so not only acknowledges the history of Jewish immigration but also connects that history with the central role of women and specifically mothers. Berke writes that '[n]ot only does Ridge emphasize the importance of reading ghetto Jewry through its biblical experience in slavery, but she also specifies that the gradual arrival of the people among whom she lives must be recognized through the singular accomplishments of its "enslaved" women'.[149] Even in dire circumstances, these women are performing motherly labour, attempting to feed the Jewish slaves fleeing Egypt. Despite their efforts, they are starving, so much so that the Egyptian gold falls from their arms, which Kramer identifies as a reference to Exodus 3:22, which states: '[b]ut every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that so-journeth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians'.[150] Throughout their hardship, these women have worked to set their people free, following the word of God and claiming the riches of Egypt as their own, escaping their oppressors and relentlessly working to continue their plight ('And yet on …'). Although the gold falls from

[148] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, pp. 42-43.
[149] Berke, 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"', p. 73.
[150] Exodus 3:22, *The King James Bible*, p. 55.

their starving bodies, we can also read this as their shackles falling from their wrists. Despite the hardship, the unwavering labour of these women is helping to free these ancient ancestors of the Lower East Side. Once again it is women who are central to Ridge's conception of accomplishment, or genius.

One can see that motherhood is used as way of navigating two different relationships that I have positioned as vital to the poem. Firstly, Ridge is engaging with the boarder/border dynamic. She herself is not Jewish, and so her contextualisation of Jewish struggle and history can be read as an act of reverence and respect as an outsider. However, she is a woman and a mother (whether she acknowledged her own status as mother or not), and so, once again, we are presented with a tension between insider and outsider. Ridge is both disconnected and connected to the motherly history she is narrating. Like these mothers she is an immigrant and a mother who worked to create a new life for herself. However, her context is very different, and her status as a mother is complicated to say the least, and so we can identify a series of tensions that structure her relationship to her subjects and their histories. The very next section of the poem is the introduction of the boarder who rooms at Sodos', and so we can surmise that the dynamic that the boarder creates precedes her formal introduction. Ridge is clearly aware of her outsider status whilst simultaneously identifying with the history of female strength and motherhood she sees as paramount to the Jewish people she lives among.

These 'ancient mothers' also speak to the relationship between the past and the present found within 'The Ghetto'. By tracing the female influence on Jewish life '[a]cross the centuries' Ridge tracks women's contributions to Jewish culture and history. Like when she acknowledged the importance of previous generations in their decision to move to America and create the vibrant immigrant culture of the Lower East Side, she is now also acknowledging the specific importance of labouring Jewish mothers who were responsible for every subsequent generation that has led to their presence in New York City. Although in Ridge's present Sadie's mother 'hides God's candles' and turns away from these ancient traditions, in doing so she in fact forms new traditions and practices and thereby influences Sadie into becoming a modern American woman in the Jewish ghetto. The presence of these ancient motherly figures in the poem displays the evolution of Jewish femininity across the centuries, but it also highlights the constant and consistent centrality of women and mothers within Judaism, and now, modern America, by linking the historically significant spaces from Jewish history with the ghettoes of the Lower East Side. These histories are shaping how Ridge characterises the ghetto space, and so, like in Crane's *The Bridge*, the past is paramount in shaping the modern city space in Ridge's poem.

It is important to consider that, as a non-Jewish observer, Ridge is perhaps succumbing again to simplistic progressivist logic, seeing Jewish traditions as something to evolve beyond, a primitive state from which one can adapt. Her secular perspective here is reminiscent of the liberal form of Americanism that I linked Ridge to earlier in the chapter, where Americanisation was used to cherry-pick desirable aspects from foreign cultures and dispose of the rest through the process of integration.

In the fifth verse of the poem another motherly figure is introduced. The boarder describes looking out from her room and seeing '[a]n old stooped mother […] With that uneven droopiness that women know / Who have suckled many young …'.[151] There is a focus on the ailing body of motherhood here, the physical toll that motherly labour takes upon a woman's body and the sacrifice mothers must make in order to raise children. Ridge perhaps feels a kinship with this woman, as although her time as a mother was relatively short, for her whole life Ridge complained of ill health and was famous for her physical frailty, with the *Syracuse Herald* claiming she had 'been an invalid most of her life and wrote much of her material propped up in bed'.[152] Although this is an exaggeration, she was a very slight physical presence, was often taken ill and did, in fact, write whilst bedridden on some occasions. However, despite that old, stooped mother's 'curved' and 'ruined back', and her 'flesh empurpled like old meat', she still 'conspires' every day to 'feed those guttering fires'.[153] She toils every day despite her physical decline, as Ridge did when writing whilst suffering from various maladies. Once again Ridge is asserting that mothers and women are essential and cannot be discounted in the struggle for progress.

There is a political angle to this line of thinking, as whilst the boarder is watching the old mother, a parrot in another room is insistently screeching '*Vorwarts … Vorwarts …*'.[154] *Vorwarts*, or *The Jewish Daily Forward*, was the most famous of the socialist papers in the Jewish quarter, noted for its mix of American and Yiddish languages and for its radical political discourse amongst the immigrants of the Lower East Side.[155] The parrot's calls of '*Vorwarts'*, especially in italics, signals a direct reference to socialist political thought, and links motherly labour with political progression.

The work of these embattled mothers is clearly paramount to revolutionary changes in both women's political standing, and that of the wider immigrant community. Community is a key aspect of the political potential of this figure of the mother, as she is described as lighting candles, which 'signal / Infinite fine rays / To other windows, / Coupling other lights, / Linking the

[151] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 55.
[152] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 228.
[153] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', p. 55.
[154] Ibid, p. 54.
[155] Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land*, p. 126.

tenements / Like an endless prayer'.[156] In lighting what we assume are the Shabbat candles she creates a sense of community with the other Jewish households. The tenements themselves are imbued by Ridge with religious and spiritual connection. Like Crane, Ridge injects the physical infrastructure of the city with immaterial, abstract qualities, making it a relational space, according to the language of Harvey. The candle-lit buildings become symbolic of a religious and political community. Despite having appeared dismissive of religious traditions earlier in the poem, Ridge is suggesting that these abstract, spiritual concerns are as important to political change as political action. Whilst the parrot may repeat the word '*Vorwarts*', the old mother 'seems less lonely than the bird'.[157] Political action can only get one so far but creating a community creates solidarity and change – only through working together and appreciating those immaterial connections can political praxis occur.

Despite this ancient mother's physical frailty, she is an intrinsic part of political and social change. This has strong parallels with Ridge's own position as a physically weak presence who was seeking to enact political strength. The most famous and striking example of this was her participation in the protests for the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in Boston in 1927.[158] When the protesters were met by armed and mounted police, the crowd pulled back – 'but not Lola Ridge'.[159] Jeanette Marks, who was at the protests and published her account in *Thirteen Days* (1929), describes Ridge's confrontation with the police:

> Lola Ridge slipped under the ropes and started straight for the cordon of mounted police and the prison doors. A young mounted guard, a boy, rode down upon her. As he reined in his horse fairly over her, she heard him whispering in a frightened voice, 'What do you want?'[160]

This striking image became famous in the press, as such a small woman stood up to the might of the mounted guard in the name of political protest. Like the labouring mother, Ridge was willing to sacrifice her body in the name of progress, opting to 'feed those guttering fires' of the community. It is evident that in both her work and her life, Ridge was committed to showing the importance of women and mothers in the formation of political development and the creation of community, which is intrinsic to socialist politics. The work of mothers in 'The Ghetto' involves

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[156] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 55.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Another notable person arrested at that protest was John Dos Passos.
[159] Svoboda, *Anything That Burns You*, p. 242.
[160] Jeanette Marks, *Thirteen Days* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1929), p. 36.

creating community and relationships, and Ridge ties these qualities to the tenements themselves, linking the Lower East Side with motherhood.

Ridge's focus on female bodies extends to the very environment itself, as at certain points in the poem the ghetto space itself becomes coded as female. Not only do those who populate the space rely on the strength and labour of motherhood, but the ghetto itself acts as a mother to her inhabitants. In the very first verse she describes the infants on Hester Street that 'suck at the air / as at empty teats'.[161] Immediately the ghetto is characterised as a mother. Despite the fact she in unable to nourish her children she is their provider, albeit an impoverished one.

Later in the poem Ridge returns to this image of the ghetto as a mother: 'Life in the cramped ova / Tearing and rending asunder its living cells … / Wars, arts, discoveries, rebellions, travails, immolations, / cataclysms, hates … / Pent in the shut flesh'.[162] Berke writes '[t]he ghetto walls are oppressive in their enclosure […] but they also act as a nurturer, for the ghetto is the site of Jewish life and culture'.[163] The tension between enclosure and nurture is the experience of mothers who are required to sustain their offspring before being abstracted by them as they grow into maturity. Ridge is perhaps suggesting that the inhabitants of the ghetto are on the cusp of adulthood, a change which could only come about because of the Lower East Side's vibrancy and culture, but now the 'sturdy Ghetto children' are ready to progress and move beyond the limitations that this kind of space entails.[164]

The ghetto space is described in terms of pregnancy, as her role is to sustain her 'children', whilst simultaneously being under enormous bodily strain as the space is described as 'tearing' and 'rending', adjectives that can be associated with the process of giving birth. Like the women who populate it, the gendered space is also sacrificed in order that the people as a collective can survive and develop. The metaphor of ghetto as mother is strengthened by Ridge who structured the poem in nine sections, which Berke describes as mirroring 'the stages of maternal gestation'.[165] Not only is the physical space of the ghetto a maternal metaphor, but the physical structure of the poem is as well.

In the final verse of 'The Ghetto' Ridge returns to Hester Street, who is '[l]ike a forlorn woman over-born / By many babies at her teats' who then '[t]urns on her trampled bed to meet the day'.[166] Although she is 'forlorn' and 'over-born', she still meets each day in order to be quite literally 'trampled' once again by the children she is sustaining. Womanhood is so vital to the many

[161] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 41.
[162] Ibid, p. 61.
[163] Berke, 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"', p. 78.
[164] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 47.
[165] Berke, 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"', p. 72.
[166] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 63.

processes that define the ghetto, that the ghetto itself is female. She is also the labouring mother, who serves as a bridge to the past, a symbol of progress, and an embodiment of the link between the material realities of the ghetto space and the abstract connections that bind its inhabitants together. She raises her many children by sacrificing her own body, and, like both the 'ancient mothers' of the poem, and Ridge herself, surrenders to what Berke calls the 'communal body'.[167] This 'communal body' can be read as the population of the ghetto, as well as all the relationships, histories and spaces that form the culture of the Lower East Side.

Ridge calls this mass of people and relationships that make up the communal body 'LIFE!'[168] As a mother, the ghetto gives life to the communal body, which Ridge signals by capitalising and exclaiming 'LIFE' after describing the ghetto mother's own physical degradation. She describes this 'life' as '[a]rticulate, shrill', 'stirring / Feeble contortions in old faiths / Passing before the new', 'Seething as in a great vat'.[169] It is '[p]erpetually changing' shown by the constant activity and motion that is described within the space.[170] Berke also notes that the stanzas are written in the present continuous tense, enhancing the idea that Jewish life in the ghetto is 'a work in progress, a community in continual formation, perpetually making and remaking itself'.[171] The vitality that is attributed to the communal body differs greatly from the trampled and forlorn motherly body of the Lower East Side ghetto, exemplifying that the space has passed on all her strength to her children, the immigrants who populate her tenements. This sacrifice is made in order to bring about the 'great future' that Ridge saw for the Jewish immigrants of the Lower East Side in 'The Ghetto'.[172] This is the same future she saw for women in 'Woman and the Creative Will', as the people of the ghetto and the women of the world are bridged by Ridge through the feminisation of the ghetto space.

I observed that the ghetto could be seen as a microcosmic space, one where a multitude of global cultures and nationalities existed together, which I explained using Harvey's categories of relative and relational space. I have also observed that women and particularly mothers were not only vital in the processes that made up the ghetto, but that Ridge humanises the space by making it an embodiment of motherhood. Therefore, when we look at the macrocosm of the ghetto, that being the entire globe, we can see why Ridge saw such a future for women, as she saw them as similarly intrinsic to social, economic and political progress on a global scale.

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[167] Berke, 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"', p. 79.
[168] Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 63.
[169] Ibid, pp. 64-65.
[170] Ibid, p. 64.
[171] Berke, 'Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Lola Ridge's "The Ghetto"', p. 72.
[172] Ridge, 'Woman and the Creative Will', *To the Many*, p. 156.

As mentioned by Kramer, in the ninth and final verse of 'The Ghetto' Ridge compares the flow of life that she observes in the Lower East Side to a river: 'Or like the Jordan somberly / Swirling in tumultuous unchartered tides, / Surface-calm.'.[173] Through this metaphor, the ghetto space may appear 'surface-calm' as it is integrated into the American status-quo, shown by the processes of Americanisation that occur within this space, or the prevalence of industrial capitalism that dominates those inner city communities. But the ghetto is in fact in flux, shown by the swirling tumult of the waters of the River Jordan. Like Crane's use of the river of time in *The Bridge*, Ridge's 'river of life' feels inevitable and unstoppable, a powerful force which is set to flow out of the Lower East Side and spread across the nation. By calling this mystifying energy that she identifies in the Lower East 'Life' she not only implies an animate and vital presence but giving it such an expansive name that is '[p]ent and overflowing' out of the spatial boundaries of the ghetto suggests that the Lower East Side is microcosmic for 'life' in a more general sense.[174]

The 'great future' she sees the potential for in the ghetto space is one that could also eventually occur on a much larger scale. These kinds of utopian aspirations tie Ridge's poetry to the bohemian moment that was happening in New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the relationships that Ridge perceived between different spatial, economic, cultural and political spheres adds a quality to Ridge's work which I also observed in Crane's *The Bridge*. Whether it's the relationship between Ridge and her Jewish subjects, the older and younger generations, or the male and female working classes, my reading of Ridge's poetry reveals that these relationships are all connected and form this 'LIFE!', an everchanging and constantly renewing organism which Ridge hoped would enable this 'great future' for the Lower East Side, New York City, America and perhaps even the world.[175]

Like Waldo Frank's mystics who were able to see themselves as a part of a larger interconnected society, or 'Whole', so too does Ridge, who sees herself, but more importantly her subjects, as a part of this vast structure she names 'Life'. Crane uses the spatially specific signifier of the Brooklyn Bridge to express the connections between people, society, concepts, and most notably spaces, and Ridge does something very similar with the Lower East Side in 'The Ghetto'. She connects the ghetto space to rest of the globe through the stories of immigration that she weaves into her poetic narrative. I was also able to identify Harvey's idea of relative space in the poem, where Ridge writes about the cacophony of perspectives that were crammed into these city blocks in the early twentieth century, making the Lower East Side a uniquely multicultural environment, with many arias singing in unison. And like in *The Bridge*, we can also identify Harvey's final spatial category

[173] Lola Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 64.
[174] Ibid, p. 65.
[175] Lola Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 63.

of relational space within 'The Ghetto'. Like Crane, Ridge engages in connecting time and space by relating the spatially specific circumstances of the ghetto with the past, contrasting the culture of the ghetto, as it was in 1919, with the cultural histories of those Jewish immigrants who now are, according to Ridge, on the brink of a new American identity.

The relational aspects of the ghetto space also manifest themselves in the poem through the interrelation of ideas, which primarily take on a political bent in 'The Ghetto'. However, throughout the poem this abstract realm of ideas is tied to material action, making the Lower East Side a site of 'praxis'. Throughout the poem Ridge engages with the anarchist and socialist political fervour which she participated in throughout her time in New York, and this political side to Ridge's career is well documented within criticism of Ridge's work. For example, Cadle makes a point of highlighting that in Ridge's obituary equal reverence was given to her roles as editor for both *Broom* and *Others*, as well as her involvement with the demonstrations over the murders of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.[176] Although Ridge's politics and her political associations have been dominant in the criticism of Ridge's work in more recent years, this is clearly not without reason as it does permeate almost all of her work.

In 'The Ghetto' Ridge's immigrant characters are engaging in political activity throughout the poem, whether it is Sadie radicalising her colleagues in the factory, or the young Jewish kids leafleting in cafés throughout the Lower East Side. The younger generations that Ridge depicts are forming and contributing to the radical leftist politics that was alive in New York. Within the world of Ridge's poem, this political culture is spatially specific, with the penultimate verse of the poem specifying that a part of this 'Life' that Ridge identifies in the Lower East Side is political in nature:

> Bartering, changing, extorting,
> Dreaming, debating, aspiring,
> Astounding, indestructible
> Life in the Ghetto…[177]

The first line in this stanza places us in the realm of exchange and economics, 'bartering' and 'extorting' putting the reader in mind of twentieth century industrial capitalism, but also the volatile environment out on Hester Street which we were exposed to earlier in the poem. However, the second line contrasts this volatility with debate and aspirational dreams of change. In this stanza it seems that Ridge considers the ghetto as not only a microcosm of America, but also as a

[176] Nathaniel Cadle, 'Lola Ridge, Modernism, and the Poetics of Radical Sentimentalism', *Modernist Women Writers and American Social Engagement*, p. 155.
[177] Lola Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 65.

microcosm of the potential of American political discourse. When the lifeforce she describes eventually explodes out of the ghetto, it will bring with it the political radicalism that Ridge sees as a major part of the culture of the Lower East Side. Not only do these political ideas bring people together in the poem, but Ridge is implying that it also has the potential to bring spaces together, that through the ghetto's 'Life' spilling out into its surroundings, it could unite spaces as well as disrupt the political status quo.

These broad themes are familiar, as although some of the specifics differ, Ridge's utopian conception of the future was very similar to Crane's vision for America. The main difference between them is how this vision manifests within the two poems. Whilst Crane creates a mytho-historical timeline which includes the European colonisation of the Americas, global trade routes, and Indo-American theology, Ridge focuses on the people that exist with her in the city. To harken back to the beginning of this chapter, it is the lived experiences of Ridge's subjects which inform her poetic narrative, and her vision for the future. The people who live and exist within the Lower East Side are what imbue the space with meaning, allowing both a relative and relational perception of the Lower East Side by bringing with them other spaces, ideas, and dreams. And ultimately it is the people that eventually leave the ghetto and spread out into the rest of the city, the nation, and the world, that will bring with them this indefinable 'Life' to other spaces, carrying the spirit of the ghetto with them as they move through the world. This focus on human experience is present in every verse of the poem, but is most explicitly referred to in the seventh verse, where Ridge writes:

> Here in this room, bare like a barn,
> Egos gesture one to the other –
> Naked, unformed, unwinged
> Egos out of the shell,
> Examining, searching, devouring –
> Avid alike for the flower or the dung …
> (Having no dainty antennae for the touch and withdrawal –
> Only the open maw …)
>
> Egos cawing,
> Expanding in the mean egg …
> Little squat tailors with unkempt faces,
> Pale as lard,
> Fur-makers, factory-hands, shop-workers,

News-boys with battling eyes
And bodies yet vibrant with the momentum of long runs,
Here and there a woman …[178]

The focus on 'egos' focuses on the individual, or even a collective of individuals, who are characterised as curious and ravenous children, 'unwinged' and 'devouring'. Their curiosity and lust for all of life (from flower to dung) is causing them to expand beyond their environment, the ghetto being characterised as a 'mean egg' encapsulating these ideas of birth and nurture but ultimately being unable to contain the energy that is bursting from the people within the space. The second stanza ends with a list of those who are defining the space via their experiences of being factory workers, news-boys, and Ridge is also sure to specifically include women within that definition.

Ridge's focus on people and individuals within the urban space ground some of the lofty, utopian ambitions found in *The Bridge*, giving them a relatable focus and a more overt political edge. Ridge admits that she is not adequately able to define exactly what shape these observations will take, observing that what she calls 'Life' 'squirms under my touch, / And baffles me when I try to examine it, / Or hurls me back without apology'.[179] However, by the end of the poem the reader is left with the idea that Ridge is bearing witness to a shift in American culture. As a result of what was occurring amongst the Jewish immigrants within the specific space of the Lower East Side, the trajectory of America was about to change.

Although the First World War chastened people's perception of an American bohemian utopia, and the Russian Revolution of 1917 set in motion the Red Scare politics that would plague American foreign and domestic policy for decades to come, the optimism found in both 'The Ghetto', *The Bridge*, and the broader New York literary scene in the early parts of the twentieth century is not necessarily a foolish or misplaced one. As Stansell states it is 'more than a product of naivete', she goes on to write that '[t]he bohemians believed they stood at the beginning of an arc through American time. Searching for the place that arc touches down, we can spy a modernity still desirable and absorbing'.[180] Despite that arc remaining unfinished, as Stansell observes, the aspirations of Lola Ridge, Hart Crane and their bohemian contemporaries contain ideas and attitudes that can be applied to the contemporary moment. Ridge is asking what it means to exist in modern spaces, and in doing so reveals that spaces and those living within them interact through various means and in doing so influence the cultural and political landscape. Ridge felt that what

[178] Lola Ridge, 'The Ghetto', *To the Many*, p. 58.
[179] Ibid, p. 63.
[180] Stansell, *American Moderns*, p. 338.

she perceived within the space of the Lower East Side in 'The Ghetto' could influence the whole of America and bring about her vision of a 'bright future'. An analysis of the ways in which Ridge imbued the infrastructure of the Lower East Side with symbolism and importance, like in Crane's *The Bridge*, is vital to further understanding Ridge's poem.

CHAPTER 3: *Manhattan Transfer* and Apocalyptic Space

> Man is pictured as enthroned on a girder-constructed pinnacle, calling the four winds to his service, enslaving the sea, annihilating time and space with the telegraph ticker.
>
> - John Dos Passos, 'A Humble Protest'

So far, this thesis has focused on broadly leftist writers in the first half of the twentieth century and explored how, despite some of the darker realities of life in the metropolis, they imbued the New York city space with a sense of dynamic optimism. Despite the various criticisms of commercialism and capitalism found in both *The Bridge* and 'The Ghetto', both texts saw New York, and by extension America, as a space that could potentially be moulded into a form of modern utopia. John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* does not harbour the same utopian sentiments, and in fact suggests that this outlook is both naïve and impossible. I have identified Walt Whitman's work as a blueprint for the type of American writing that both Crane and Ridge were attempting to create, one that champions the importance of a distinctly American community in harmony with American spaces. *Manhattan Transfer* contains many of these same ideas, chiefly the intrinsic relationship between people and spaces, but with an antagonism and pessimism more in keeping with Henry James in his chapter 'New York Revisited' from *The American Scene* (1907). James sees New York as a symbol of American excess and industrial inhumanity, calling it a 'monstrous organism'.[1] This more critical vision of the city that Dos Passos complies with could simply be a difference in his character when compared to the Romantic sensibilities of Crane, or Ridge's empowering political organising. However, it may also be due to differences in Dos Passos' thematic influences as a novelist.

The novel's form is distinctly modernist, with a kaleidoscope of free indirect discourse which jumps from character to character throughout the city. This literary technique is married with a primitive version of Dos Passos' 'newsreel' sections that splice into the narrative excerpts from billboards, newspapers, and radio broadcasts, all to create an alienating and disorientating sensory overload which matches the pace of the modern city.

However, many of Dos Passos' influences were clearly rooted in American naturalism, particularly the works of Theodore Dreiser, whose novel *Sister Carrie* (1900) paints the modern city as the site of an emotionally hollow American dream at best and a space of downward mobility and destitution at worst. James R. Giles comments that 'his [Dos Passos's] underlying vision is

[1] James, *The American Scene*, p. 75

essentially naturalistic, and quite similar to Dreiser's, in its emphasis upon the city as a force that controls the lives of those within it'.[2] This is key to my own interpretation of the novel, as many of the complex structural ills of society are condensed by Dos Passos into this idea of the malevolent city enacting violence upon its inhabitants.

The city itself is imbued with antagonistic characteristics; it is represented as if it has a will or consciousness which removes agency from the characters in the novel. It is the space that controls the narrative. Although this does not accurately represent the ways in which cities and citizens interact and relate to one another, by adopting this literary representation of New York Dos Passos is able to make the modern city feel more threatening and destructive whilst making the characters appear small and powerless. The omniscience of the reader highlights the relative helplessness of the characters, as the social or urban totality is unreachable to them, their perspectives are limited. Although this omniscience is another feature of naturalist literature, Dos Passos innovates and strengthens the limits placed on his characters by further distorting them through the fractured modernist use of free indirect discourse.

The fatalism driven by the environment itself is a key feature of many novels within the naturalist canon, which Gina Rossetti observes has a 'preoccupation with a culture in retrograde'.[3] Therefore, these more pessimistic themes I associate with *Manhattan Transfer* were ubiquitous in urban literature of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century, and were particularly typical of naturalism, with prominent novelists such as Edith Wharton and Stephen Crane depicting similar societal ills and the inescapability of one's environment. Despite the poetic shadow of Whitman inspiring generations of urban writers to see the city as a space of utopian potential, Dos Passos can be read as a continuation of a different literary tradition. In this chapter I will argue that Dos Passos characterises New York City as something spiritually empty and monstrous, an apocalyptic space which signals an ending, rather than the kinds of beginnings that Crane and Ridge were hopeful for.

Despite Dos Passos' very different outlook on the modern world and the potential in city spaces, there are concrete links between *Manhattan Transfer* and the poetry of Crane and Ridge. In *The Bridge* Crane invokes 'the heavens' to communicate a spiritual unity brought about by the modern technologies of New York City, such as Brooklyn Bridge's star-crested 'curveship' to the Greek spheres found in the proem. In doing so, Crane imbues the iconic bridge with a semi-religious quality, whereby modern invention could be used to join heaven and earth, creating an

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[2] James R. Giles, 'The Grotesque City, the City of Excess, and the City of Exile', *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Keith Newlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 335.
[3] Gina Rossetti, 'Things Fall Apart: Degeneration and Atavism in American Literary Naturalism', *The Oxford Handbook of American Naturalism*, p. 172.

ecstatic 'whole'. Dos Passos also unites New York City with Biblical spaces, except his are far less heavenly. Throughout *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos relates the city to a hellscape, in which buildings are burning, people are dying, and sinful desires permeate almost every character. Like Crane, Dos Passos makes these associations spatially specific to New York. For example, in the first section of the novel, the character Bud Korpenning, a farm boy who has come to the city looking for work and prosperity, is repeatedly exposed to the harsh reality of life in the metropolis. After one such disappointment, he stares out across the river:

> The light of the sunset flamed in the windows of factories on the Long Island side, flashed in the portholes of tugs, lay in swaths of curling yellow and orange over the swift browngreen water, glowed on the curled sails of a schooner that was slowly bucking the tide up into Hell Gate.[4]

This description of the sunset reads like an inverted version of some of Crane's later associations in *The Bridge*. Firstly, the celestial body in this section is the sun, which, instead of marking a pathway between heaven and earth, projects fire and flames onto the city, which even extends onto the very waters of the East River. The sun's rays burn up not only the modern signifiers of New York, but even the river itself, a natural feature of the land on which the city is built. Dos Passos notes that the tugboats and the sails of the schooner are also engulfed in orange curls. Tugboats and schooners are used in *The Bridge* to represent spatial wholeness between nations via modern trade routes. Here those technologies are associated with destruction and violence through the fiery imagery. Finally, Dos Passos anchors these associations with the specific space of New York City, referencing Hell Gate, a small section of the East River between Queens and Manhattan. However, after the infernal description of the burning city, Hell Gate conjoins the city with hell itself, making the city feel demonic and punishing, particularly in the context of Bud's destitution. The religious associations continue throughout the novel, as Dos Passos identifies *Manhattan Transfer* with Biblical apocalypse through allusions to the fallen cities of Babylon and Niveneh, as well as imagery associated with 'the Great Tribulation' from Revelations, in stark contrast to the ways in which Crane evokes religiosity and spirituality in *The Bridge* to convey community and enlightenment.

Manhattan Transfer also has a direct connection with Ridge's 'The Ghetto' through its political messaging. Like Ridge, Dos Passos, at least in the earlier parts of his career, was associated with more progressive political attitudes, particularly in relation to economics and class. John H. Wrenn,

[4] John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p. 68.

in his 1961 biography simply titled *John Dos Passos*, writes that 'throughout this five-year period (1929-1934) his [Dos Passos'] writing almost without exception was on behalf of the laboring class'.[5] Although Dos Passos never fully committed to communism and would heavily criticise the direction of communist party politics later in his career, *Manhattan Transfer* certainly contains direct political messaging. Keith Newlin suggests this might be another facet of Dos Passos' naturalist influences, as he describes naturalist authors as 'writers with an agenda' who used their work to voice outrage at the modern world, and wished to inspire their readers to feel sympathetic to their disenfranchised characters, or in some cases to even take action and address what they saw as egregious social imbalances. [6] However, this was certainly not true of all naturalist fiction, and in fact the principles of social or biological determinism often overruled any political sympathies or affiliations.

Dos Passos' blend of political messaging and naturalist determinism is part of what forms the oppressive, apocalyptic atmosphere of the novel. As discussed in the previous chapter, the political climate was a big part of the cultural make-up of New York at the time in which Ridge and Dos Passos were writing both 'The Ghetto' and *Manhattan Transfer*. Whether it was the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1905 in Chicago (Dos Passos's birthplace), or the publication of *The Masses* magazine in New York from 1911 (which would later be succeeded by *The New Masses*, to which Dos Passos was a regular contributor), American cities were becoming focal points for social and intellectual movements that harboured leftist political affiliations. Like Ridge, Dos Passos was a part of the radical arts scene associated with areas in Manhattan such as Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side, professing to his friend Rumsey Marvin: 'I've decided that the only nice and human parts of New York are the East Side and Greenwich Village'.[7] As well as contributing to leftist literary publications and even joining Ridge during the protests against the executions of the anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in 1927 (Dos Passos interviewed the pair whilst they were in custody in Massachusetts), *Manhattan Transfer* is full of whispers of workers revolution and union upheaval.[8]

In 'The Ghetto', Ridge used the character Sadie, an organiser who empowers her fellow workers, to embody a sense of solidarity across the working classes with the potential to bring about real constructive change. In contrast, Dos Passos presents his readers with a labour movement that is constantly hemmed in and compromised by capitalist interests and therefore

[5] John H. Wrenn, *John Dos Passos* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1961), p. 60.
[6] Keith Newlin, 'Introduction: The naturalistic imagination and the aesthetics of excess', *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, p. 6.
[7] John Dos Passos, *Travel Books and Other Writings 1916-1941* (New York: The Library of America, 2003), p. 661.
[8] Mark Whalan, 'The Public and its Problems: Sacco and Vanzetti, Dewey, Dos Passos, and Activist Literary Publics in the 1920s', *ELH*, 92.1 (2025), pp. 235-262 (p. 250).

appears almost hopeless. An example of this is when the disenfranchised Joe Harland, an ex-Wall Street banker who has since become a homeless alcoholic, first meets the young dock worker Joe O'Keefe after he starts work as a nightwatchman:

> 'You the night watchman round here?' Harland nodded. 'Glad to meet yez … Have a cigar. I jus wanted to have a little talk wid ye, see? … I'm organizer for Local 47, see? Let's see your card.'
> 'I'm not a union man.'
> 'Well ye're goin to be aint ye … Us guys of the buildin trades have got to stick together. We're tryin to get every bloke from night watchmen to inspectors lined up to make a solid front against this here lockout sitooation.'
> Harland lit his cigar. 'Look here, bo, you're wasting your breath on me. They'll always need a watchman, strike or no strike … I'm an old man and I haven't got much fight in me. This is the first decent job I've had in five years and they'll have to shoot me to get it away from me … All that stuff's for kids like you. I'm out of it. You sure are wasting your breath if you're going around trying to organize night watchmen.'[9]

The threat of unemployment and an inability to exist in a space that demands accumulation and wealth just to survive infringes on Joe Harland's ability to support his union, which is striking to improve his own working conditions. Harland is forced to accept the poor conditions he is offered, as the alternative is likely further destitution and death. This grim picture of the city's labour movements is made worse when we learn that Joe O'Keefe is working as a labour informant for the corrupt and money-hungry Tammany politician Gus McNiel who conspires against the labour movements he professes to have sympathies for. In a scene later in the novel at an indulgent dinner party just on the eve of the First World War, Gus selfishly sees the war as not only a way to make more money, but also a distraction from the building workers strikes that he is up against:

> Opportunity knocks but once at a young man's door … You listen to me when there's a big failure of one o them brokerage firms honest men can bless themselves … But you're not putting everythin I'm tellin ye in the paper, are you? There's a good guy … Most of you fellers go around puttin words in a man's mouth. Cant trust one of you. I'll tell you

[9] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 176.

> one thing though the lockout is a wonderful thing for the contractors. Wont be no housebuildin with a war on anyway.[10]

Despite Gus' own working-class roots as a milkman, the capitalist city's corrupting influence has made him prioritise selfish gains and status over his fellow man. These corrupting influences have even spread to those within the labour movements themselves, like O'Keefe who enjoys the benefits of being in league with a powerful man like Gus. Unlike Ridge's version of the city which, despite the prevalence of poverty, is a space where political organisation and workers' unions create a sense of hopeful potential, in Dos Passos' New York political activism is compromised, adding to the oppressive doom that characterises the space.

Later in the novel there is an even more stark comparison that can be made between Ridge's views on the labour movements of the early twentieth century and Dos Passos'. Towards the end of *Manhattan Transfer* we are introduced to Anna Cohen, a Jewish garment worker from the Lower East Side who works for Madame Soubrine's sweatshop. Whilst Sadie's involvement in the garment workers' labour movements is presented as an example of women and workers claiming some agency over their work and the public spaces they occupy in the city, in Dos Passos' novel any optimism that could be gleaned from any political statement is once again weakened by the conditions of living in New York. In one scene, Anna's mother berates her for her participation in union protests:

> She sways from the hips as she scolds in an endless querulous stream of Yiddish at Anna sitting bleary-eyed with sleep over a cup of coffee: 'If you had been blasted in the cradle it would have been better, if you had been born dead … Oy what for have I raised four children that they should all of them be no good, agitators and streetwalkers and bums …? Benny in jail twice, and Sol God knows where making trouble, and Sarah accursed given up to sin kicking up her legs at Minski's, and now you, may you wither in your chair, picketing for the garment workers, walking along the street shameless with a sign on your back.'[11]

In the context of the novel and Dos Passos' own sympathies at this point in his life, he is certainly supportive of the kinds of labour movements that Anna is contributing to. However, Mrs Cohen's misreading of Anna's protests as delinquency reveals a pessimistic outlook on whether

[10] Ibid, p. 206.
[11] Ibid, p. 319.

these forms of protest could affect real change within the city. Anna's siblings falling foul of the law or working in industries that their mother finds offensive paints the modern city as a corrupting space, but even efforts to improve the city and its exploitative labour systems are also moralised as evil and debasing. How then can change be meaningfully enacted when those who are at the mercy of the capitalists try to quash efforts to improve their standing? Although this is a small episode in the novel, it is representative of the utter hopelessness that Dos Passos associates with the New York City space and is an opposition to the kinds of optimistic potential that Ridge identifies within the immigrants of the Lower East Side in 'The Ghetto'.

Dos Passos is a writer whose popularity in literary criticism and academic teaching has fluctuated over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Although certainly more a part of the canon than Ridge, and even Crane, his popularity has slipped in more recent years. However, he remains a figure widely written upon both by his contemporaries and literary critics in the decades since. Paul Elmer More, one of Dos Passos' contemporaries, famously likened *Manhattan Transfer* to an 'explosion in a cesspool', and that 'his work is too knowing to be called crude intellectually or, perhaps, even artistically, but as a reflection of life it is about the lowest we have yet produced'.[12] His criticisms are mostly caught up in the apparent baseness of Dos Passos' subject matter and the griminess of his view of the city. Despite damning reviews from the more conservative literary critics, Dos Passos was hailed by many of his contemporary authors as something of a trailblazer, with D. H. Lawrence calling it 'the best modern book on New York that I have read'.[13] Meanwhile Sinclair Lewis gushed that it was 'a novel of the very first importance'.[14] Lewis, rather interestingly, claims that Dos Passos had an almost Romantic love for the city, defending the author from the kinds of base criticisms that More had. Despite agreeing with Lewis' recognition of the novel's brilliance in its innovative literary techniques and modern pace, the Romanticism that Lewis imbues into Dos Passos' work is not at all how I interpret *Manhattan Transfer*. Instead, my own reading aligns with More's. Rather than identifying a conservative sensitivity to the text's burrowing into the underbelly of New York, I see Dos Passos's approach to the city as an intentional attempt to throw a grenade into the 'cesspool' to expose all its ugliness to his readers.

Dos Passos' work is certainly seen as less polarising in more recent criticism, although there are still gaps in the scholarship. Jay McInerney in his introduction to the novel, written in 1986, writes that *Manhattan Transfer* is treated 'as a warm-up, technically and thematically, for the *U.S.A.* trilogy',

[12] Paul Elmer More, 'The Modern Current in American Literature', *Vassar Quarterly*, 1st February, 1916, Article 1 <https://newspaperarchives.vassar.edu/> [accessed 9 June, 2024].
[13] D. H. Lawrence, *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Edward D. McDonald (London: William Heineman, 1936), p. 363.
[14] Sinclair Lewis, 'Manhattan at Last!', *Saturday Review of Literature*, 1925 <https://www.unz.com/Pub/SaturdayRev-1925dec05-00361> [accessed 9 June, 2024].

and that Dos Passos is 'more talked about than read'.[15] Despite the fact that this criticism was written nearly forty years ago, it remains largely true. Dos Passos' technical innovations, his famous 'camera-eye' technique in which the action of the text simulates a film camera's ability to move between characters and spaces, and his sections of 'newspeak', are appreciated and written on relatively widely (particularly in relation to the *U.S.A.* trilogy (1937)). However, his status in the American literary canon remains elusive, and as McInerney writes, he is 'seldom talked about in the same breath as his contemporaries Hemingway and Fitzgerald'.[16] Dos Passos continues to be a figure on the fringes of the American modernist canon, but one that endures. Barry Maine in his introduction to *John Dos Passos: The Critical Heritage* (1988) writes that, despite his dwindling reputation in the latter part of his career, partially due to his shift to American Republicanism and conservatism, his work was reviewed in all of the most prominent periodicals in America right through into the mid-twentieth century.[17] His work has been published by high profile companies such as the Library of America series, where his texts were published from 1996 to 2003, and in 2000 *Manhattan Transfer* was published by Penguin Classics.

Despite McInerney's claim that Dos Passos was a maligned figure in literary criticism, there were still notable texts written on his work throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century, such as Linda Wagner's *Dos Passos: Artist as American* (1979), Robert Rosen's *John Dos Passos: Politics and the Writer* (1981), and Janet Casey's *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine* (1998). Although these texts do not primarily focus on *Manhattan Transfer* as their subject, all of them look at Dos Passos more broadly within his cultural and political contexts, a common thread within Dos Passos criticism due to his well-documented and drastic shift in outlook by the end of the 1930s. Some smaller articles by the likes of Philip Arrington, William Brevda, and Paula Geyh look more closely at *Manhattan Transfer* specifically, and even discuss how Dos Passos characterises and depicts New York City in the novel. Arrington, in fact, also considers the pessimism imbued in Dos Passos' New York that I have discussed. However, despite the prevalence of space in some of the Dos Passos criticism I have referenced, this chapter aims to build upon these criticisms and add more specificity to these discussions. This chapter will explore space in the novel and position it as central to the message of the text, which I position in opposition to the bohemian proto-modernist optimism that we have so-far seen as a feature of New York literature in the early twentieth century.

To examine Dos Passos' spatial characterisation and the ways in which space impacts the novel, I will continue to use Harvey's spatial categorisations to give a consistent framework to my

[15] Jay McInerney, 'Introduction', *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 10.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Barry Maine, 'Introduction', *John Dos Passos: The Critical Heritage*, 2005 <https://archive.org/stream/JohnDosPassos/__John_Dos_Passos_djvu.txt> [accessed 8 January, 2025].

analyses of the city, as it appears in *Manhattan Transfer*. However, I will also be building upon my use of Lefebvre from the previous chapter, referring to the idea of 'lived space', but also Lefebvre's concept of 'rhythmanalysis', particularly in the first section of the chapter. This chapter will be split into three thematic sections: 'The City and the Body', 'Centres and Peripheries', and 'The Beginning of the End'. The scholarship I have referenced is paramount in constructing my own argument, but I will once again be adding spatial specificity to ongoing critical conversations on Dos Passos, particularly as a counterpoint to the works discussed in previous chapters. Although the important role space plays is evident in the very titles of Dos Passos' most famous works, and is therefore reflected in much of the critical writing on these texts, the aim of this chapter is to explore Dos Passos' portrayal of the New York city space in *Manhattan Transfer* in detail, adding my own voice to this important discussion, and in doing so situate Dos Passos' outlook on space within the context of the other urban modernist writers discussed so far.

In his 1916 essay 'A Humble Protest', John Dos Passos asks the formidable question 'what is the end of human life?'.[18] Defining 'end' as closure, this question pervades Dos Passos's work, from the war torn *Three Soldiers* (1921) to the paranoid *Midcentury* (1961). Dos Passos interrogates the limits of modernity with a constant awareness that human life is finite, which often manifests as an urgency within his prose. This sensitivity places the characters and their contexts in a distinctly modern state of flux. Enlightenment scientific thinking had contributed to the decline of religious conviction, making mortality even more imposing, and the advent of global warfare in 1914 had made unnatural and sudden death much more a part of the public consciousness. These modern trends highlight the fragility of the moment in which Dos Passos situates his texts, drawing parallels with Crane's *The Bridge* and particularly the war-torn 'Cape Hatteras' section.

I am defining 'modern' or 'modernity' here as both a chronological and cultural moment in America, a moment born from the industrial revolution that occurred after the Civil War ended in 1865 and continued into the twentieth century when what became typically modern imperatives of geographical development and economic profit accelerated via industrialisation. As mentioned, the progressive belief in America's potential as a modern, utopian nation is not present in this novel; instead, a more destructive and morbid atmosphere is created. The question 'what is the end of human life?' will form the basis of my own reading of *Manhattan Transfer*, and in particular the ways in which Dos Passos characterises the space of New York City in relation to this question.

[18] John Dos Passos, 'A Humble Protest', *An Interview with John Dos Passos*, ed. Frank Gado, (Schenectady, N. Y.: [n.pub.], 1969), p. 28.

The City and the Body

I identified Ridge's characterisation of the Lower East Side in 'The Ghetto' as a mother, an impoverished, yet nurturing body which was on the brink of expelling her children into the world, signalling an ultimately hopeful future whereby New York and America would change and transform into a utopian modern urban space. In *Manhattan Transfer* Dos Passos presents the reader with an urban space that is actively brutalising the human bodies within it. Each chapter begins with a small passage that introduces a theme or establishes the space in which the chapter unfolds. In the very first chapter Dos Passos employs an ominous metaphor when describing the inhabitants of New York, as the mass of people entering the city from the ferryboat are 'men and women press[ed] through the manuresmelling wooden tunnel of the ferry-house, crushed and jostling like apples fed down a chute into a press'.[19] Humanity has been reduced to a mass of bodies; every individual is just a part of the throng. New York City then, is being positioned as 'a press' - enacting a mechanical process that crushes and squeezes all vitality out of the 'apples', or bodies, that it consumes. Rather than an overburdened mother, the city is a machine, violently reshaping and draining its inhabitants. The juxtaposition between the helpless bodies of the New Yorkers and the relentless mechanical process of the city immediately creates a tension, a hostile urban environment which, through the apple press metaphor, reduces human life to produce that exists to be sacrificed to the city machine. Violence is enacted upon human bodies by the very space they exist within.

Dos Passos immediately establishes the city as one that is unnatural, and machine-like. This notion of the city as something outside of, or against, nature is suggested from very early on and I have identified three sections in the second chapter, 'Metropolis', where the seeds of this disparity are sewn. In this first section a real estate agent pleads with a wealthy investor to provide capital for a series of building projects:

> 'Now that we are a part of New York, the second city in the world, sir, don't forget that … Why the time will come, and I firmly believe that you and I will see it, when bridge after bridge spanning the East River have made Long Island and Manhattan one, when the Borough of Queens will be as much the heart and throbbing center of the great metropolis as is Astor Place today […] We are caught up Mr Perry on a great wave whether we will or no, a great wave of expansion and progress. A great deal is going to happen in the next few years. All these mechanical inventions – telephones, electricity, steel bridges, horseless vehicles – they are all leading somewhere. It's up to us to be on

[19] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 15.

> the inside, in the forefront of progress … My God! I cant begin to tell you what it will mean …' Poking amid the dry grass and the burdock leaves Mr Perry had moved something with his stick. He stooped and picked up a triangular skull with a pair of spiralfluted horns. 'By gad!' he said. 'That must have been a fine ram.'[20]

The real estate agent, in predicting some of the great building projects of developers such as Robert Moses in the thirties and forties, connects the essence of the city itself with 'mechanical inventions' signifying modernity and progress. Although he uses the bodily metaphor of the 'heart' to communicate how the city can become a centralised entity, the ever-expanding image of the city that is constantly consuming its surroundings and making them a part of the whole or bringing them into the centre is reminiscent of Henry James' hyper-mechanical image of New York from *The American Scene*. The endless image of bridges spanning the East River in the real estate agent's prophecy echoes James observing that: 'immeasurable bridges are but as the horizontal sheaths of pistons working at high pressure, day and night, and subject, one apprehends with perhaps inconsistent gloom, to certain, to fantastic, to merciless multiplication'.[21] The city, both here and in *The American Scene*, is mechanical and constant, a mindless machine eating into its surroundings. This excerpt can be interpreted via the dialectical interconnectedness of Harvey's absolute and relative space, as the buying and selling of land as absolute space changes the relationship between city spaces relative to one another. As the city expands through a series of economic transactions that packages space as private property to be developed and made a part of this mechanical monstrosity, the city's role as a centre of modernity and capitalist interest grows and areas that were once peripheral become relative urban centres. Although I will be discussing the idea of the city as a 'centre' later in the chapter, it is important to note here that this urban growth is tied to both the city's mechanical characterisation, and the relationship between space and capitalism that Dos Passos suggests. To further emphasise the unnaturalness of the city, Dos Passos concludes the episode with a macabre and ominous image of the classically natural world: a ram's skull hidden in the grass, which serves as a chilling omen that the mechanics of the city portend death to the bodies that exist within and around it.

Later in the chapter, the modern city is presented as an inhospitable environment. It is again characterised as a specifically mechanical space, which clashes with the natural human bodies of the New Yorkers. Firstly, there is a small moment observed by Bud Korpenning, a newcomer to

[20] Ibid, pp. 25-26.
[21] James, *The American Scene*, p. 75.

the city from the countryside who is desperately looking for any work he can get. He sees a crowd gathered around a policeman who is trying to supervise a car wreck:

> A woman with her hair done up tight in a bunch on top of her head was screaming, shaking her fist at the man in the car, 'Officer he near run me down he did, he near run me down.' Bud edged up next to a young man in a butcher's apron who had a baseball cap on backwards. 'Wassa matter?' 'Hell I dunno … One o them automoebile riots I guess. Aint you read the paper? I don't blame em do you? What right have those godblamed automoebiles got racin round the city knocking down wimen and children?'[22]

Suddenly one of the mechanical inventions that the real estate agent revered and saw as representative of the new modern city is seen in action on the city streets, killing women and children and inciting riots. The specificity of 'wimen and children' emphasises both the innocence of the city's victims, but also their status as strictly biological, nurturing and natural in opposition to the mechanised vehicles. An interesting correlative here would by the death of Myrtle Wilson in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) whose body is brutalised in a motor car accident: 'but when they had torn open her shirtwaist, still damp with perspiration, they saw that her left breast was swinging loose like a flap, and there was no need to listen for the heart beneath'.[23] Like the victims of the car accident in *Manhattan Transfer* there is a focus on the victim as a natural body, specifically referencing her torn breast and 'the tremendous vitality she had stored so long'.[24] These biological descriptions contrast with what Fitzgerald names the 'death car'.[25] Like the 'automoebiles' that are knocking down women and children in Dos Passos' New York, initial agency is given to the vehicle itself in killing Myrtle. Both Fitzgerald's modernist novel and *Manhattan Transfer* were published in the same year, and so a shared concern for the inhumanity of modern culture was clearly in the zeitgeist as these volatile and dangerous machines became more of a dominant fact of everyday urban life.

The theme of mechanical city versus the natural body is then repeated. Gus McNiel, after a few drinks, is driving his milk wagon home to his new wife and Dos Passos describes the bleak early morning streets: 'Eleventh Avenue is full of icy dust, of grinding rattle of wheels and scrape of hoofs on the cobblestones. Down the railroad tracks comes the clang of a locomotive bell and the

[22] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, pp. 33-34.
[23] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p. 131.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

clatter of shunting freightcars'.[26] The city is audibly defined by its rattling, scraping, clanging and clattering, evoking the metallic machinery of the industrial city. The passage continues with Gus daydreaming about speaking to his wife Nellie:

> I've filed application for free farmin land in the state of North Dakota, black soil land where we can make a pile o money in wheat; some fellers git rich in foive good crops … Healthier for the kids anyway … 'Hello Moike!' There's poor old Moike still on his beat. Cold work bein a cop. Better be a wheatfarmer an have a big farmhouse an barns an pigs an horses an cow an chickens … Pretty curlyheaded Nellie feedin the chickens at the kitchen door …[27]

Gus' pastoral reverie serves as a direct opposition to the cold, gloomy, and mechanical city streets from the previous lines, and Mike's miserable hours patrolling the streets when compared with Gus' imagined life as a wheat farmer display the tension between the human body and the urban environment. The rhythms of the city are tiring and draining, whilst Gus' image of farming out amongst nature is invigorating and idyllic. However, before we can fully consider Gus' imagined version of the countryside, the reality of the city is forced upon both Gus and us as readers, interrupting the daydream and reminding us that the mechanical processes of the city do not stop for anyone:

> 'Hay dere for crissake …' a man is yelling at Gus from the curb. 'Look out for de cars!' A yelling mouth under a visored cap, a green flag waving. 'Godamighty I'm on the tracks.' He yanks the horse's head round. A crash rips the wagon behind him. Cars, the gelding, a green flag, red houses whirl and crumble into blackness.[28]

The streetcar crashing into Gus' horsedrawn wagon serves as an encapsulation of how Dos Passos sees the modern urban environment – one that spells violent destruction for those within it who are unable to keep up with the rapid mechanics of New York. Both Gus' natural fantasies, and his old-fashioned horse and cart are destroyed by the machines that now define the city space. Like the apple-press from the first chapter, Dos Passos establishes a tension between man and machine, the human body and the city, which results in New Yorkers being savaged by their surroundings.

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[26] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 53
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

These examples of Dos Passos' notion of the city versus humanity, or the natural, is in complete opposition to the principles that Hart Crane espoused in his essay 'Modern Poetry', where he called for an 'acclimatization' with the machine, that poetry, culture, and therefore by extension, people, must absorb 'the machine' as a part of what it is to exist in the modern world.[29] Similarly, Mark Seltzer in his study of nineteenth century naturalist literature, *Bodies and Machines* (1992), sees the relationship between natural bodies and the modern mechanical world as linked, even in instances when they are at odds with one another. Although *Manhattan Transfer* is not a straightforward naturalist novel, as I mentioned earlier, it does in some ways follow in the tradition of turn-of-the-century writers like Dreiser and Wharton. Seltzer argues that nineteenth-century naturalist novels reveal a 'radical and intimate *coupling* of bodies and machines'.[30] Through several literary examples, he shows how there is a dialectical synthesis between bodies and machines, an insistence on persons' material physicality, but also an abstraction of the body in mechanical terms.[31] Like Crane, Seltzer identifies that the two contain one another with a fluid boundary between them. Tim Armstrong in his study of bodies and technology in Modernism, speaks on how perceptions of the body were transformed over the course of the nineteenth century, from a 'a machine in which the self lived' to 'a complex of different biomechanical systems' as new technologies and discoveries revealed the limits of the body and made it more of a machine which required regulation and even modification.[32] Here we see this 'abstraction of the body in mechanical terms' that Seltzer sees as evidence of the interrelation of body and machine.

In his student essay 'A Humble Protest', Dos Passos mourns the dominance of machines in opposition to human bodies, writing: 'the universe is but as we see it: all is relative to the sense perceptions of the body. In this consuming interest in science, in knowledge of the exterior, in the tabulation of fact, haven't we forgotten the *Know thyself* of the Greeks?'[33] Dos Passos sees the interrelation between machines and humans in terms of domination. Modern industrialism has shifted our communal focus from ourselves to the material and machine world that surrounds us. Therefore, the body is now subject to the unnatural modern environment. In *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos presents the machine as a real danger to the people, and one that is unnatural and separate, enacting harm upon them. Urban developments are associated with morbid symbols, cars are killing women and children, and mechanical clangs of the city are a precursor to violence.

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[29] Crane, 'Modern Poetry' (1930), *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose*, pp. 261-262.
[30] Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 13.
[31] Ibid, pp. 13-14.
[32] Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, technology, and the body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 2.
[33] Dos Passos, 'A Humble Protest', p. 31.

Dos Passos also associates the city specifically with capitalism. It is a machine that exists to accumulate economic wealth, often at the expense of the people who contribute to that very system. Although this focus on 'money-making' pre-dates capitalism itself, Dos Passos combines the two through their association with the New York city space, the emblem of American capitalism in the twentieth century. This association was already suggested in the section with the real estate agent from 'Metropolis' but is reenforced repeatedly throughout the novel. This association is laid out plainly by Uncle Jeff, the man who takes in young Jimmy Herf after his mother falls ill. After her death when Jimmy is a teenager, Uncle Jeff lays out his vision for Jimmy's future, and in doing so encapsulates the modern American attitude to New York as a centre of commercial capitalism.

> Now what I wanted to say was this … I have not noticed that you felt sufficient enthusiasm about moneymatters … er … sufficient enthusiasm about earning your living, making good in a man's world. Look around you … Thrift and enthusiasm has made these men what they are. It's made me, put me in the position to offer you the comfortable home, the cultured surroundings that I do offer you […] Now's the time to take a brace and lay the foundations of your future career … What I advise is that you follow James's example and work your way up through the firm … From now on you are both sons of mine … It will mean hard work but it'll eventually offer a very substantial opening. And don't forget this, if a man's a success in New York, he's a success![34]

In Uncle Jeff's eyes, a career in business will afford Jimmy meaning in the world, and specifically what he calls 'a man's world'. In this world gainful employment resulting in wealth and comfort is championed above all else, and the shining examples that Jimmy should emulate are the rich men who populate Uncle Jeff's exclusive gentleman's club. The final sentence consolidates New York City as *the* emblem of this world, the modern space which all others are measured against. If one can achieve what capitalism defines as success in the city, then it is true everywhere. Dos Passos' New York City is not only a machine at odds with nature and the body, but it a specifically capitalist one.

Dos Passos makes it known that the city's capitalist foundations are a part of what puts the space at odds with the body. Just after Jimmy has left his uncle's club he watches in dismay as people march in and out the revolving doors of a nearby office building: 'criss-cross glances, sauntering hips, red jowls masticating cigars, sallow concave faces, flat bodies of young men and

[34] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 114.

women, paunched bodies of elderly men, all elbowing, shoving, shuffling, fed in two endless tapes through the revolving doors out into Broadway, in off Broadway'.[35] These human bodies are reduced into constituent parts, dissected so that they no longer appear whole or fully animate. This image is reminiscent of the apple-press from the opening of the novel, an image of the modern city as a mechanised system that dehumanises the people within it. He continues: 'Jimmy fed in a tape in and out the revolving doors, noon and night and morning, the revolving doors grinding out his years like sausage meat. All of a sudden his muscles stiffen. Uncle Jeff and his office can go to plumb hell'.[36] This quotation aptly conveys the brutal effect that urban capitalist spaces can have on the people within them. The use of 'grinding' and 'sausage meat' suggest force and re-shaping of the body, whilst the ever-revolving door brings back the idea of a mechanical violence. In 'The Working Day', Marx writes that the worker population is in excess of the needs of creating capital, but that 'this excess if made up of generations of human beings stunted, short-lived, swiftly replacing each other, plucked, so to say, before maturity'.[37] The use of 'stunted' implies the physical manipulation that Jimmy observes in the ceaseless revolving door metaphor, and the futility of joining this 'excess' suddenly strikes Jimmy. He is a part of the surplus population, ostensibly making his contributions to the capitalist enterprise even more meaningless. He realises that joining the capitalist workforce like his uncle would only brutalise his humanity.

In contrast to the idea of Lefebvre's 'lived space' that I identified as analogous to the way in which Ridge characterised the New York city space in 'The Ghetto', here the city does not appear to be in conversation with the people within it; there is no dialectical relationship between the two creating a correspondence between space and inhabitants. Instead, Dos Passos suggests that the city space enforces a mechanical process onto the people to uphold capitalist interests. There is a disconnect between the space and those within it. This idea can be given a vocabulary through another Lefebvrian idea: rhythmanalysis. Rhythmanalysis is the study of the relationships between various rhythms that occur within our daily existence. Lefebvre explains that these 'rhythms' are 'found in the workings of our towns and cities, in urban life and movement through space. Equally, they are found in the collision of natural biological and social timescales, the rhythms of our bodies and society'.[38] Lefebvre broadly splits these rhythms into two kinds: cyclical and linear. The cyclical, he claims, 'originates in the cosmic', whilst the linear 'from social practice'.[39] We can think of cyclical rhythms as traditionally natural and bodily: respiration, heart beats, hunger, day and night

[35] Ibid, p. 115.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Karl Marx, 'The Working Day', *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, p. 512.
[38] Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 2.
[39] Ibid, p. 18.

etcetera, whereas linear rhythms are structural and imposed. Lefebvre makes plain that when 'rational' rhythms are superimposed on 'the lived, the carnal, the body' that 'sometimes gives rise to compromises, sometimes to disturbances'.[40] However, rather than stating that it is the specific kinds of rhythm that create inconsistencies between the city and the body, I propose that in *Manhattan Transfer* it is the timescales over which these rhythms take place that causes a disconnect.

Manhattan's history can, on the one hand, be seen as an example of a mass of linear rhythms. The city began as a Dutch trading post and continuous development over time led to it becoming the most populous city in the world by 1925, the year of *Manhattan Transfer*'s publication. The city conforms to a linear trajectory in terms of growth and expansion. I do not mean to claim that the city grows at a constant rate, rather that the acceleration and deceleration of New York's urban growth can be seen as a part of a *longue durée*. Fernand Braudel wrote in 1958 that 'economic and social history had made cyclical shifts central to its analysis [which] divides the past into large slices of 10, 20, or 50 years'. However, he invites us to think about scale and 'the history of long, even very long, duration (*longue durée*)'.[41] Figuring the history and trajectory of New York on an over-arching linear narrative over a long period of time is what I will call the city's 'rhythmic scale'. What I mean by this is that the story of New York City, like many US cities, is figured on a large scale; it is a long-term narrative, framed by Christoph Lindner as stretching 'from seventeenth-century colonial settlement to twenty-first-century global city'.[42] New York's period of modernisation is thought of by Lindner as taking place 'between 1890 and 1940', but that is just a part of the city's history.[43] Therefore, not only is the city operating through linear rhythms (economic growth, increasing population, centralised manufacturing), but these rhythms exist on a large scale, covering the time line of New York's growth. For example, capitalism's rhythms prioritise its consistent domination of its subjects, rather than what Lefebvre calls 'the body, the time of living'.[44] This need for a kind of overarching consistency suggests linearity, as well as scale. Those in control of production are thinking far ahead, per annum, and even longer when one considers the need for the reproduction of workers. The immediate circumstances of those workers are not prioritised other than to ensure their continued contributions.

However, one could also argue that capitalism is cyclical in its rhythms due to its reliance on boom-and-bust economics, production, and reproduction, producing and destroying.[45] These

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Fernand Braudel, 'History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée', *Review (Fernand Braudel Center*), 32.2 (2009), pp. 171-203 (p. 174).
[42] Lindner, *Imagining New York City*, p. 7.
[43] Ibid, p. 5.
[44] Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, p. 62.
The 'body' being referenced here is the individual human body, rather than the 'city body'.
[45] Ibid, p. 65.

cyclical rhythms can be found in Dos Passos's description of corporations that were developing the city space: 'He's got a great sayin about some Roman emperor who found Rome of brick and left it of marble. Well he says he's found New York of brick an that he's goin to leave it of steel'.[46] The allusion to Rome suggests the Dos Passos is also thinking of New York in terms of empire's rise and fall, a large-scale cyclical rhythm. Dos Passos' construction of urban modernity exists within the tension between what Lefebvre calls cyclical and linear rhythms. However, whilst human, bodily rhythms are more focused on the everyday, in smaller scales, the city's rhythms are expansive and longform. The cyclical and the linear create inconsistencies, the capitalist city demands linear stability whilst also succumbing to changeable cyclical rhythms. These rhythms look beyond the limits of everyday rhythms that human bodies naturally adhere to, and also the lifespan of the human body itself. These contradictions and extensive timescales create a disruptive and contentious space if, like Dos Passos, we assume New York to be a site of capitalist concentration.

One example of these expansive rhythms is the journey of Bud Korpenning, a character who makes the move from the country to the city looking for work. The move not only contributes to a growing industrial workforce but also feeds the linear development and growth of the city. New York, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was seen as a haven for economic prosperity and job security. This brought in an unprecedented number of people from both overseas and from the surrounding 'country' into the city. A poster from 1906 boasts about the number of immigrants coming into the city from Ellis Island, claiming that there were '12 New Americans a Minute', displaying the unprecedented influx of people the city was having to cater for.[47]

However, ironically the sheer number of people migrating into New York also made the myth of employment less and less realistic. A report of the mayor's committee on unemployment in New York in 1916 tells us that the number of families needing state care due to unemployment was rising by nearly three thousand a year.[48] Therefore, the cycle of supply and demand, when applied to workers, also fuels the destruction of Bud. Bud is exposed to the cruelty of this reality as he is abused and exploited by the capitalist system that he was hoping would protect him. Whilst unable to find regular employment, he engages in some manual labour to earn enough for a meal, however, even this economic exchange proves exploitative:

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[46] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 76.
[47] Nicholson Baker and Margaret Brentano, *The World on Sunday: Graphic Art in Joseph Pulitzer's Newspaper (1898–1911)* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), p. 85.
[48] Mayor's Committee on Unemployment, 'Report of the Mayor's Committee on Unemployment, New York City', *Monthly Review of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, 2.5 (1916), pp. 16-26 (p. 17).

'But ma'am you said you'd give me a dollar.'
'I never said any such thing. The idea… I'll call my husband if you don't get out of here immediately. In fact I've a great mind to notify the police as it is…'
Without a word Bud pocketed the quarter and shuffled out.[49]

All this comes just after the woman stated, 'It's terrible what's going to become of this country if all the fine strong young men leave the farms and come into the cities'.[50] She is aware of the exploitative urban narrative of the exodus from the country to the city and yet propagates it. This leads to disillusionment and eventually death for Bud. Bud's small-scale rhythmical subsistence needs a meal, somewhere to sleep and these are not prioritised within the city. Instead, amassing workers, feeding ever-expanding industries, and accumulating money, all over the course of the twentieth century, is what the capitalist city prioritises. It is the linear and cyclic scales over an extensive timeframe that governs the workings of New York in *Manhattan Transfer*, to the detriment of its inhabitants.

The disconnect between the space and the body is exemplified again by the character of Ed Thatcher, who is similarly a victim of capitalism's exploitation of the workers bodily rhythms. Ed Thatcher works a generic urban, white collar office job throughout his life. Due to the construction of the towering office block in the early twentieth century, and even before with the growth of the mercantile professions in the mid nineteenth century, New York City was a key site where the first mass of white-collar jobs became available in the United States.[51] When Thatcher is being asked to invest in stocks by a friend he states, 'honest I don't see how I can risk it'.[52] Stock trading was still a relatively new activity for the white-collar worker at this time, with speculation having flourished in the United States during wartime, and so Thatcher's refusal to partake illustrates a distrust of the unknown.[53] Despite stock trading just being a new means of accumulating, Thatcher is reliant on systems he knows. He is a slave to the capitalist system he is familiar with, unable to do anything beyond what is safe, as the threat of unemployment and poverty are constantly cracking the whip on the worker. This is, again, reminiscent of Marx's chapter from *Capital* on 'The Working Day': '[t]he time during which the worker works is the time during which the

[49] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 68.
[50] Ibid.
[51] In a lecture to the New York Mercantile Library in 1849, Horace Mann described the 'thousands and tens of thousands who get their living in one way or another by penmanship'. See Michael Zakim, 'The Business Clerk as Social Revolutionary; or, a Labor History of the Nonproducing Classes', *Journal of the Early Republic*, 26. 4 (2006), pp. 563-603 (p. 567).
[52] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 105.
[53] Cedric B. Cowing, *Populists, Plungers, and Progressives: A Social History of Stock and Commodity Speculation, 1868-1932* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 75.

capitalist consumes the labour-power he has bought from him. If the worker consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist'.[54] In other words, if Thatcher puts his energies into bettering his own social and economic position, he is depriving his employer of those energies, which he is paid to use to better the capitalist's social and economic position. Rather than being free to choose where his labour power is directed, Thatcher is bound to the capitalist model that has employed him.

His companion, Viler, proceeds to try and convince him, imploring him to break free. He exclaims: 'Hell man you don't want to be in this damned office all your life do you? Think of your little girl', to which Ed replies, 'I am, that's the trouble'.[55] Thatcher is condemned to what Engels called 'a life of unremitting toil'.[56] Despite the harm it is doing him both physically and mentally, he is compelled to work within, to quote Engels, the 'brutalizing effects of forced labour'.[57] Although both Marx and Engels were specifically concerned with the blue-collar factory work of the nineteenth century, the system is ostensibly the same. The work is no longer manual, but the brutalisation and the toil are both still present. Engels clarifies this position: 'Does he work from any natural impulse, or because he enjoys the task that he performs? Of course not. He works for money. He works for something which has nothing to do with the tasks he has performed. He works because he must.'.[58] The negative effects of this existence exhibit themselves immediately within the novel, as both his physical and mental wellbeing are presented as threatened:

> 'A bunch of goddam crooks,' growled Thatcher out loud. 'Not an item on the whole thing that aint faked. I don't believe they've got branches in Hongkong or anywhere…'
> He leaned back in his chair and stared out the window. The buildings were going dark. He could just make out a star in the patch of sky. Ought to go an eat, bum for the digestion to eat irregularly like I do.[59]

His anger at his employers shows an awareness his own exploitation, and yet he is helpless. Furthermore, we see that he is unable to eat regularly and is therefore putting his physical health at risk too. This theme is developed later in the novel when the reader discovers that Ed Thatcher has lumbago, a back problem often associated with excessive desk work. Indeed, even in this

[54] Marx, 'The Working Day', *Capital: Volume 1*, p. 342.
[55] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 106.
[56] Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, trans. David McLellan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), p. 133.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 107.

precarious condition Ed Thatcher is still forced to sell his labour, telling Mrs Culveteer that he likes to 'lay round the house Sundays', to which she replies, '[o]f course Mr Thatcher it's the only day you have. My husband was just like that …'[60] The ellipsis at the end of Mrs Culveteer's response suggests a wistful pause, remembering her husband who was clearly in a similarly destructive working environment to Ed Thatcher and is now deceased.

Engels emphatically calls this kind of exploitation of blue collar workers a form of social murder in which '[e]veryone is responsible and yet no one is responsible' due to the multiplicitous anonymity of structural evil and the illusion of natural causes.[61] Essentials such as a healthy diet and safe working conditions are absent — these conditions are what link the blue-collar work Engels describes to the white-collar work that Thatcher undertakes: 'Murder has been committed if thousands of workers have been deprived of the necessities of life or if they have been forced into a situation in which it is impossible for them to survive'.[62] This social historicist reading of the novel lends itself to Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis. The expansive linear capitalist narrative of a stable career that dedicates most of one's time and energy to the company is arrhythmically chiming with the smaller cyclical rhythms of human biology, whereby regular meals, and adequate free time, in adherence to the needs of the human body, are required for survival. The small-scale biological rhythms of Thatcher are being coerced to change to satisfy the larger scale capitalist linearity which demands profit and consistent growth. This urban linear narrative is prioritised, which leaves the working classes, such as Ed Thatcher, in dire straits.

Dos Passos's presentation of New York's degradation is not limited to working-class immobility but includes widespread social diseases too. Numerous characters in the novel are shown to be ravaged by alcoholism and other destructive vices.[63] By not limiting this affliction to one character, Dos Passos is showing that substance abuse is an environmental and economic problem, as the city is often presented as the common denominator. The two most extreme examples are the characters of Joe Harland and Stan Emery.

Joe Harland is introduced in the novel as a drunken embarrassment at the Merivale household, and yet, later in the novel, whilst he is drinking at a bar because he had been 'laying off it too much, that's what's the matter', he explains '[y]ou wouldn't think to look at me now, would you friend, but they used to call me the Wizard of Wall Street which is only another illustration of the peculiar predominance of luck in human affairs'.[64] This is a man who committed to urban capitalism, being

[60] Ibid, p. 183.
[61] Engels, *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, pp. 108-109.
[62] Ibid, p. 108.
[63] Although alcoholism is a physical disease in many ways, Dos Passos uses it as an example of corrupt morals and a broken social order.
[64] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 138.

named after the emblem of New York capital itself. Yet, the system still chewed him up and spat him back out, reducing him to a life of poverty and decline once he lost it all in stock trading. We can see that he blames his problems on a lack of booze, or 'luck', revealing that Joe is unable to identify the specific forces of his own oppression. As Engels writes, life in the city for those without capital results in people 'deprived of all pleasures except sexual indulgence and intoxicating liquors', and so rather than direct productive energy at the forces of his oppression, Joe Harland takes refuge in the 'earthly delights' that the city affords him.[65] To again refer to the apple press/revolving door metaphor: the mechanical brutality of the city does not account for the human bodies within it.

The city's rhythms, whether linear or cyclical (and most likely both) clash with the biological rhythms of the people, which, in Harland's case, results in degradation. His wellbeing was the cost of the whims of the market, which are measured linearly but also a large-scale rise and fall, like the empires referenced earlier. The body's rhythms are once again cast aside.

This arrhythmic relationship is evident from Joe's introduction in the text, where he drunkenly bursts into the Merivale family's dinner. Firstly, the structured rhythms that capitalism has forced upon its contributors as 'work for his own maintenance' (i.e. set mealtimes etc.) do not apply to Harland.[66] He has fallen outside of this structure, and so has to preface his entrance with '[m]ind if I butt in?'[67] He then goes on to tell Jimmy Herf that 'these things aren't always a man's fault … circumstances … er … circumstances'.[68] He blames his environment, the system he is attempting to survive and 'prosper' within, for his downfall, and he is correct. It is indeed his circumstances that have made him an outcast within his own family. He no longer conforms to the mould that the capitalist city casts its citizens in. He is acting instinctually rather than obediently, and as such is only allowed to become desperate and destitute. Harland is an example of downward class mobility, something which appears more regularly in the novel than any upward mobility: of the many characters that come in and out of the novel's narrative, only Congo Jake and Ellen Thatcher manage the latter. Dos Passos is suggesting that these dominant urban rhythms, for most people, result in a downward slope.

This downward trajectory is echoed by Stan Emery. Stan is the eldest son of the lucrative Emery & Emery firm and so enjoys a privileged life amongst the rewards of capitalist accumulation. Yet, the city itself, paired with these capitalist urban rhythms, manages to infect Stan's psyche. He feels the toll the city is taking on him, as he expresses to Jimmy: 'Do you realize I've lived all my life in

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[65] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, p. 111.
[66] Marx, 'The Working Day', *Capital: Volume 1*, p. 341.
[67] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 102.
[68] Ibid.

this goddam town except four years when I was little and that I'm likely to die here? … I've a great mind to join the navy and see the world'.[69] His woes are directly connected to New York and its urban rhythms, shown by his desire to join the military during a globally volatile moment in history, just to escape the city. The linear rhythms that Lefebvre associates with the non-biological (the capitalist city) are questioned by Stan, who asks '[w]hy the hell does everybody want to succeed? I'd like to meet somebody who wanted to fail. That's the only sublime thing'.[70] He goes on to demonstrate the incompatibility between these rhythms, and more natural bodily ones: 'But what can one do with success when you get it? You cant eat it or drink it'.[71] He has perceived the friction between the city and the human body that capitalism creates and is therefore completely disillusioned. As a result of this disillusionment, Stan surrenders entirely to his desires and, like Joe Harland, becomes a slave to whatever pleasures he can indulge in, infected by the city space whilst simultaneously contributing to its/his sickness.

This sickness is starkly apparent when Stan turns up at Jimmy's apartment 'tight as a drum'.[72] Jimmy laments that '[a]ll anybody ever does is to get drunk and tell smutty stories. I think it's disgusting…', to which Stan says he will quit drinking whilst commenting '[w]hy the hell do people live in cities?'[73] This interaction displays all the connections Dos Passos is making neatly and succinctly. Stan uses the phrase 'tight', meaning drunk, to describe his state, but the word also implies a certain tension, as if he could snap at any moment. His inebriation has come about because he needs escapism. Jimmy then highlights the moral, social, and physical degradation of their environment which is symbolised by the drunken Stan Emery, who then explicitly links these hellish circumstances to the city itself. Stan and Jimmy are linking their own sickness to the diseased city that Dos Passos consistently links to the capitalist processes that dominate the space. Therefore, although the degeneracy of New York is presented by Dos Passos as a problem along class lines, he extends it, making it a citywide problem that is directly linked to both capitalism, and the city space.

The only character who does seem to have a direct affinity with her surroundings is the character of Ellen Thatcher, who, along with Jimmy Herf, could be called the main character of the novel. From birth, Ellen's very existence is tied to the destructive institutions that surround her. The overriding senses Dos Passos associates with her first moments are 'the smell of drugs' and the sound of 'a strangled shriek'.[74] The hospital administration's inability to distinguish her

[69] Ibid, p. 162.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid, p. 163.
[72] Ibid, p. 178.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid, p. 17.

from the other babies in the ward causes her mother to join in with their pained shrieks and reject her as someone else's. Rather than belonging to her parents, Ellen almost seems to be a part of city itself. Later on, as a young girl she tears her father's newspaper whilst dancing, prompting her father to reprimand her, saying '[w]e need con-struction rather than de-struction in this world'.[75] Phillip Arrington observes that Ellen's destructive nature 'repeats itself in each major decision she makes: in her opportunistic marriage to the Oglethorpe name, her misplaced passion for the suicidal Stan Emery, her calculated manipulations of Baldwin, Goldweiser, and Herf, and, finally, her almost perfunctory abortion of Stan's child'.[76] This rather ungenerous reading of her character mirrors the kinds of destruction the city enacts upon its inhabitants in the novel, killing the weak, and pressing the naïve for profit.

Dos Passos imbues Ellen with an almost machine-like, or object-specific, quality to emphasise her association with the city, describing her as 'cold white out of reach like a lighthouse', equating her with architectural structures, positioning her as a symbol for the city. He goes on to talk about her 'deep pit blackness inside' where 'something clangs like a fire engine'.[77] This is then repeated later in the novel when 'the clanging of the fireengines wont seem to fade away inside her'.[78] Fire engines are used throughout the text to remind the reader that the city is almost permanently on fire, a hell-scape that also exists within Ellen herself. Her internal landscapes mirror the external landscape that Dos Passos constructs. These associations between Ellen and the city would suggest something akin to Seltzer's linking of the body and the machine, a dialectical permeability between the two. This reading of Ellen's character is relatively common amongst Dos Passos scholarship, as Ellen is not always a particularly sympathetic character, and so her association with the cruel and cold cityscape of *Manhattan Transfer* is an easy one to make.

However, Ellen is as much of a victim of the city's mechanical inhumanity as the other characters I have mentioned. Rather than simply an embodiment of the city, she is another character that is pressed and formed by the unnatural machinations of New York. If she can be associated with the city, it is because she has been made to embody certain qualities to survive in the brutality of the modern urban environment. There is no intimate coupling between the machine-like city and Ellen's body, but instead an attempt to re-shape the body, but one that is ultimately doomed.

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[75] Ibid, p. 28.
[76] Phillip Arrington, 'The Sense of Ending in *Manhattan Transfer*', *American Literature*, 54. 3 (1982), pp. 438-443 (p. 440).
[77] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 169.
[78] Ibid, p. 356.

Early in the novel, when Ellen is still a child, she is afraid of the dark and struggles to sleep before her father returns from work: '[a] clock ticked somewhere in the silent room; outside the apartment, outside the house, wheels and gallumping of hoofs, trailing voices; the roar grew'.[79] As Dos Passos cinematically zooms out from Ellen's bedroom to the city streets there is an overwhelming sense of dread that is aurally described as a 'roar'. The space appears to be pressing down on Ellen, intimidating her into submission. She is too afraid to stretch out her legs, as if she is being watched by the city itself.[80] At this point, like the other characters I have mentioned, Ellen does not feel in harmony with her environment. Instead, the city space is overwhelming her and making her feel terrifyingly observed. Janet Casey in *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine* (1998) analyses Ellen's role as spectacle in the novel, and how this characterisation dovetails with issues of both gender and class. Casey's text informs my own reading of Ellen in the novel, as her role as a spectacle is how she is manipulated by the city space and becomes helplessly caught within its power structures.

By the time Ellen is an adult later in the novel, we learn that she has become a successful actress, a literal spectacle amongst the thriving theatre scene of Broadway, a scene Dos Passos took a keen interest in and even became directly involved in not long after the publication of *Manhattan Transfer*.[81] Due to her success on the stage, Ellen becomes a '"nine days" wonder' and suddenly interesting to men who realise they can profit from her, such as producer Harry Goldweiser, whose 'small brown eyes measure her face like antennae as he talks to her'.[82] Here we see the male gaze working to reduce her to an object, a commodity. She is often described as metallic: 'Ellen put the last bronze pin in the copper coil of her hair', or 'she was an intricate machine of sawtooth steel whitebright bluebright copperbright in his arms'.[83] Rather than simply being a symbol of the modern city, Dos Passos' descriptions of her in mechanical terms consolidate the idea of Ellen as a sign, a product. Dos Passos is suggesting that this is how Ellen has learnt to adapt to the pressures placed upon women within the city space. In the same way that Jimmy was pressured by his uncle to re-shape himself into a productive worker, Ellen has been pressured into making herself an appealing product. Casey observes that the novel's multiple perspectives allow Dos Passos to show the objectification of Ellen via numerous male characters rather than simply relating how modern American culture saw women as commodities.[84] The multitude of perspectives, as well as the geographical specificity that Dos Passos suggests, implies that this exploitative culture is produced

[79] Ibid, p. 50.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Wrenn, *John Dos Passos*, p. 132.
[82] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 50.
[83] Ibid, pp. 195 and 209.
[84] Janet Casey, *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 118.

by the city itself, and is therefore a part of the apocalyptic characterisation that Dos Passos gives the space. Although we as omniscient readers know it is not limited to New York, it is at least concentrated within the city due to its position in the text as a distillation of modern American society.

There are many examples of men reducing Ellen to an objectified doll throughout the novel. Stan, despite being the love of Ellen's life in many ways, is too self-destructive and mentally fractured to treat her with the respect and love that she shows him, shown by his blasé announcement to her that whilst drunk in Niagara Falls with a girl he had met partying they had 'found we were married', which he describes as a 'joke'.[85] Ellen is cast aside by Stan when he finds someone more entertaining. She is a toy that Stan no longer has any use for. George Baldwin, a lawyer obsessed by women other than his wife, describes Ellen as 'such a brave little girl making your way all alone the way you do. By gad you are so full of love and mystery and glitter…'[86] He first infantilises her by calling her a 'brave little girl', reducing her autonomy as an adult to that of a headstrong child. Despite Ellen having a perfectly normal, if not stilted, conversation with George about their dinner, he uses Ellen as an empty vessel onto which to project 'mystery'. She serves as the embodiment of his fantasies and nothing more. The city is a space in which Ellen is forced to perform to survive, she relies on the patronage of various men to earn her living and keep her social standing, and even when she is truly in love she is still used and abandoned.

'Commodity' is an important term to use when describing Ellen, as Dos Passos shows how the sexualisation of Ellen as a spectacle of the male gaze directly relates to her value in economic terms. Her beauty almost becomes her mystical character which goes beyond her use-value as an actress but allows her to become truly fetishised by a host of male characters. A conversation between Goldweiser and Mr Snow, who debate Ellen's value as an actress in front of her displays her role as both an object of the male gaze, as well as a product to be bought and sold within the machinations of the capitalist city culture:

> 'There's no great acting any more: Booth, Jefferson, Mansfield … all gone. Nowadays it's all advertising; actors and actresses are put on the market like patent medicines. Isn't it the truth Elaine? … Advertising, advertising.'
> 'But that isn't what makes success … If you could do it with advertising every producer in New York'd be a millionaire,' burst in Goldweiser. 'It's the mysterious occult force that

[85] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 223.
[86] Ibid, p. 202.

> grips the crowds on the street and makes them turn in at a particular theater that makes the receipts go up at a particular boxoffice, do you understand me?'[87]

Mr Snow acknowledges that Ellen is a tool of capitalism, a glamourous advert to drive up ticket sales. Goldweiser however, signposts her role as a fetishised commodity, articulating that 'mysterious occult force' that gives Ellen, as an object, value beyond her role as an advertisement. She therefore illustrates how commodity fetishism works when a person, and specifically a woman, is commodified. Casey writes that 'the visual grammar of audience-stage relations merely reproduces the male-female gaze dynamic of the culture at large', which is, of course, a capitalist culture.[88] The importance of visual icons within the cultural space of New York, and America more broadly, highlights how it is both a gendered and a labour economy. Goldweiser conflates economic success and sexual dominance directly, telling Ellen 'I'm glad I did it, that I shoved ahead and made big money, because now I can offer it all to you. Understand what I mean?'.[89] He feels he has dedicated the first portion of his life to accumulating money and wealth, to then spend that money on what he sees as his prize possession, as well as his cultural cash-cow: Ellen.

As Casey succinctly puts it 'it is Ellen's sociocultural status, rather than Ellen herself, that the text critiques'.[90] Despite her association with the hellish, mechanical city that Dos Passos frames as the main antagonist of the novel, those associations are not an active choice by Ellen, or representative of her true nature. Rather they are either necessities of being a woman in this environment, or they are perceptions informed by the pervasive male gaze.

Ellen's character is shaped by the city and its culture, a notion discussed by Paula Geyh in her article 'From Cities of Things to Cities of Signs' (2006). Geyh sees *Manhattan Transfer* as a novel that embodies the transition from a city dominated by 'things' such as consumer goods and products, to a city of 'signs' such as advertisements and newspaper headlines – things that Dos Passos directly weaves into passages of the text. Geyh posits that Ellen's identity is influenced by the signs she is exposed to in the city, making her character in a constant state of flux, as shown by her frequent name changes from Ellie to Ellen, to Elaine, to Helena.[91] Her sense of self is based on the ways she is perceived, making her a kind of sign, an advertisement, and she therefore shapes herself based on the kinds of urban signs to which she is exposed. An example of this is when she is gawked at by two sailors having just walked past an advert for anti-dandruff shampoo featuring

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[87] Ibid, p. 221.
[88] Casey, *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*, p. 115.
[89] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 187.
[90] Casey, *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*, p. 119.
[91] Paula Geyh, 'From Cities to Signs: Urban Spaces and Urban Subjects in "Sister Carrie" and "Manhattan Transfer"', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 52.4 (2006), pp. 413-442 (p. 428).

the 'Danderine Lady': 'Two sailors were sprawling on a bench in the sun; one of them popped his lips as she passed, she could feel their seagreedy eyes clinging stickily to her neck, her thighs, her ankles'.[92] Public spaces are not safe for women, and the same fear of being watched that Ellen had has a small girl in her bedroom is now a reality within the city's streets. Geyh writes that Ellen calls to mind the Danderine Lady advertisement as a kind of 'mental manoeuvre' to counter the objectifying gaze of the sailors: '[a]ll in green on a white stallion rode the lady of the Lost Battalion … Green, green, danderine … Godiva in the haughty mantle of her hair …'.[93] Despite the voyeurism of the sailors, the Danderine Lady advertisement, which is then transformed by Ellen into the unwatchable image of Lady Godiva, gives Ellen a sense of strength despite the presence of the persistent male gaze. As Geyh writes:

> For Ellen, the Danderine Lady functions as a floating signifier, completely detached from its referent (dandruff shampoo) and acquiring a new set of meanings (signifieds) as it shifts along a signifying chain of associations. Ellen's identity and, to a great extent, her relations to the people and the city around her are, in turn, constructed within and along this same chain.[94]

Ellen's identity and relationships with her surroundings are, according to Geyh, reliant on the signs that the city throws at her. However, as Ellen tranforms the Danderine Lady into Lady Godiva as a kind of shield against the watchful sailors, Dos Passos also imbues in this image a kind of hopelessness, as even Lady Godiva was the victim of the Peeping Tom's voyeurism. Therefore, she is being shaped both directly and indirectly by the unblinking eye of the masculine gaze, as well as the capitalist city structures that create this city of signs. This malleability of character that affords Ellen's continual upward trajectory within the logic of modern New York makes it easy to see her as a representative of the city itself. However, like the other characters I have discussed in this chapter, the city is enacting a kind of violence upon Ellen, only she has found a way to survive within its exploitative structures.

If we compare Ellen with other women in the novel, due to her status as male gaze object and profitable commodity, she certainly does have more cultural and economic power than most. However, the final section of the novel in which Ellen appears also reveals her as a possible representative of women's struggles in the modern world which extends beyond class. As Anna Cohen is burnt and disfigured by the fire at Madame Soubrine's sweatshop, an event highly

[92] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 129.
[93] Ibid, p. 130.
[94] Geyh, 'From Cities to Signs', pp. 429-430.

reminiscent of the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911, Ellen finds herself unable to fully suppress the horror of Anna's fate. After briefly witnessing the horrific injuries that Anna sustains, she does, in a strangely cold fashion, do as Madame Soubrine asks, and inform the other customers that there is nothing the matter. Ellen's well learnt role as someone who is aware of and a slave to the audience, the paying customers, is what she prioritises to begin with.

However, she cannot simply move on from this trauma. She asks the policeman if Anna was horribly burnt, to which he replies 'She wont die … but it's tough on a girl'.[95] This response betrays the importance placed upon women as visual spectacles, and this is not reserved for women of a certain class or cultural cachet like Ellen, but also women like Anna, who are struggling to make ends meet in the ghettos of the Lower East Side. Furthermore, Ellen keeps relating herself to Anna, she feels a kinship with her 'as if some part of her were going to be wrapped in bandages, carried away on a stretcher', and asks herself '[s]uppose I'd been horribly burned, like that girl, disfigured for life'.[96] Despite never having spoken with Anna, or even knowing her at all, Ellen feels an intangible connection to the girl via their shared experiences as women. As Casey observes, they mirror one another in that they are the objects of men's affections, are considering unfulfilling marriages, and reject the idea of motherhood.[97] It is in this moment that, despite Ellen's framing as someone exceptional, a celebrity and the object of both sexual and capitalist greed, she is, in fact, one of many. She is, as the confusion over her parenthood in the hospital signalled, indistinguishable from all the other babies born in New York, and as such she can be read as emblematic of all women who exist within the modern city structure.

However, she is not an emblem with a happy ending, and like Anna is burnt up by the apocalyptic city, albeit not literally. Despite finding a shred of stability by agreeing to marry the wealthy, obsessed, and volatile George Baldwin, she is ultimately dissatisfied and miserable - as is the case throughout the novel whenever we are given a brief glimpse into Ellen's psyche. These small moments of Ellen letting her guard down and revealing her true feelings suggest that she, of course, does not contain the machine-like qualities of the city; it is a façade. Ellen eventually succumbs to George Baldwin's advances as it becomes a sensible way of stabilising her life within the city. She will be economically taken care of with George's new political career taking off, and her value as a spectacle consolidated by being the trophy wife of such an important urban figure. However, there is no joy in this union, and it in fact works to consolidate Ellen's fate as an unwilling object.

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[95] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 356.
[96] Ibid, pp. 355 and 356.
[97] Casey, *Dos Passos and Ideology of the Feminine*, p. 113.

> Through dinner she felt a gradual icy coldness stealing through her like novocaine. She had made up her mind. It seemed as if she had set the photograph of herself in her own place, forever frozen into a single gesture. An invisible sink band of bitterness was tightening round her throat, strangling. […] Ellen felt herself sitting with her ankles crossed, rigid as a porcelain figure under her clothes, everything about her seemed to be growing hard and enameled, the air bluestreaked with cigarettesmoke, was turning to glass. His wooden face of a marionette waggled senselessly in front of her. She shuddered and hunched up her shoulders.[98]

The images of her becoming frozen, enamelled, and set into a single pose evokes the idea of her as both object and spectacle, a mannequin whose role is to be fixed in one position for the rest of her life. The 'silk band of bitterness' continues the notion that Ellen is doll-like and stereotypically feminine with silk evoking ideas of traditionally 'womanly' soft fabrics of opulence and luxury. However, the band is strangling Ellen; she is being overwhelmed and symbolically killed due to her prescribed feminised role within the volatile city space. This is an act of necessity for Ellen, as up to this point her life has been a cycle of disappointment and tragedy, which she alludes to when she states: 'we've got to be sensible. God knows we've messed things up enough in the past both of us'.[99] The creeping dread and sense of helplessness all emanates from her making the decision to submit to George, who is described as a senseless marionette, made of wood. This characterisation is interesting, because it similarly positions George as an object, a pawn within the power structures of the city, and he is, perhaps indirectly, enforcing this fate upon Ellen as well.

The final image of Ellen, then, is incredibly apt. After the horror of witnessing Anna's burns at Madame Soubrine's, she leaves the taxi and enters the hotel where she has arranged to meet George:

> As she goes through the shining soundless revolving doors, that spin before her gloved hand touches the glass, there shoots through her a sudden pang of something forgotten. Gloves, purse, vanity case, handkerchief, I have them all. Didn't have an umbrella. What did I forget in the taxicab? But already she is advancing smiling towards two gray men in black with white shirtfronts getting to their feet, smiling, holding out their hands.[100]

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[98] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 335.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid, p. 357.

The horror of her experiences at Madame Soubrine's are already becoming distant, fading into the seats of the taxicab. Her role as object of the male gaze supersedes her affinity with Anna, as although she had felt real empathy for Anna and identified a kinship between them, despite the gulf between them in social class, the male audience of the two men in uniform are beckoning her into performing for them, hands outstretched. She is forced to don the smiling mask of the perfect woman once more. As Casey points out, although she is shielded from the material suffering of Anna, shown by her ability to almost instantly forget, her social status emboldens her as a fetishised object.[101] Regardless of class, women are unable to escape a fate of subordination and suffering, they just take on different forms within the modern culture of class and gender paradigms.

Casey goes on to observe that we leave Ellen in a position befitting her role: 'encased in glass and forced into a circular motion, she is destined to be seen, shown off, exhibited'.[102] Ellen is trapped in the very structure that Jimmy rejected earlier in the novel – she is literally shown to be spinning within revolving doors. The city will grind out her years like sausage-meat, altering her mind and body to suit the seemingly inescapable power structures it enforces upon its inhabitants. The circular motion of the doors I related to Lefebvre's cyclical rhythms: in Jimmy's case it was the brutality of the capitalist working day, an endless cyclical rhythm ruling the lives of the workers. In Ellen's case, it is the cyclical nature of the gaze. Throughout the novel Ellen's life has been a series of episodes whereby she is reduced to a spectacle, whether it is the daily show schedule of her theatre run, or the cycle of failed relationships with men who end up objectifying and fetishising her. Her only chance for survival is to become numb, strike an endless pose, and freeze within the city's revolving doors.

One can conclude that through an examination of Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis and Marxist critique, that both populace and city space in *Manhattan Transfer* are unable to work cooperatively. This is because human rhythms are being forced to adhere to the dominant and expansive rhythms of capitalism. The arrhythmic quality of these competing rhythms presents itself within the novel via the desperate plight of the worker, the degraded population, as well as the dysfunctional development of Manhattan during the early twentieth century. These factors culminate to produce a dysfunctional city populated by sick and diseased human bodies - a result that Dos Passos seems to tie exclusively to capitalist exploitation, but also to the specific space of New York City. Even the one character who is commonly associated with Dos Passos' cold and callous city space, Ellen, is in fact another of its victims. Her body is manipulated and sexualised by the pervasive male gaze that makes her a spectacle for both cultural and capitalist ends. By becoming a kind of synecdoche

[101] Casey, *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*, p. 127.
[102] Ibid.

for how women exist within the modern city space, her misery and ultimately doomed future consolidate my reading of Dos Passos' city as an antagonist to the bodies that dwell within it. In doing so he is constructing New York as a modern apocalyptic site, a space in which characters are compelled to escape, even if, ultimately, they cannot.

Centres and Peripheries

The specificity of Dos Passos's apocalypse to New York City itself is evident in the overriding desire of many of his characters to 'get out of this town'.[103] The urban nightmare Dos Passos constructs is a place from which to escape. Numerous characters attempt to create bridges between the city and an 'outside' or exterior, positioning the city as a centre. This way of conceptualising the city space can be thought through in Harvey's terms of absolute and relative space. By viewing the city in absolute terms, characters can see spaces outside of the city as completely disconnected from Manhattan and New York and imbue them with wonder and optimism. Because the amorphous surroundings are a space literally outside of the absolute borders of the city, they can have a fantasy projected upon them – they can be made to represent an opposition to the oppressive city.

We saw this fantasy of the periphery already in Gus McNiel's agrarian reverie before he is hit by the train car, imagining a kind of prelapsarian life in the countryside. Similarly, Jimmy Herf is obsessed with the notion of travel and movement, imagining seeing the world outside of New York and freeing himself from what he sees as his urban imprisonment. As a boy he dreams of transforming into an animal so that he can explore the wilds of Africa, or 'swim around in the sea whenever [he] wanted to' and 'travel thousands of miles without stopping'.[104] He has a fascination with trains, adding to this idea that he truly desires mobility and the opportunity to exist outside of the city. As an adult, he ruminates on the utopian fantasy he has created within external spaces: 'Europe was a green park in his mind full of music and red flags and mobs marching'.[105] Despite the fact that at this point in novel, Europe is politically volatile and on the brink of war, Jimmy associates it with nature, harmony and his own socialist sympathies. On the one hand this is another example of conceiving the city space in absolute terms: Europe's separation from America and New York provides the kind of geographic distance Jimmy yearns for. It is also an example of seeing New York and Europe as relative spaces, with Europe, relative to New York, appearing exotic, progressive and idyllic in contrast with New York's nightmarish modernity. Dos Passos

[103] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 164.
[104] Ibid, p. 82.
[105] Ibid, p. 178.

even makes this contrast very clear by describing Jimmy's attempts to sleep after he confesses to Stan: 'Why do I go on dragging out a miserable existence in this crazy epileptic town … that's what I wanna know'.[106]

> He lay on his back on top of the sheet. There came on the air through the window a sourness of garbage, a smell of burnt gasoline and traffic and dusty pavements, a huddled stuffiness of pigeonhole rooms where men and women's bodies writhed alone tortured by the night and the young summer. He lay with seared eyeballs staring at the ceiling, his body glowed in a brittle shivering agony like redhot metal.[107]

The sensory overload that characterises the city space is dominated by filth, fire, and a populace that are being 'tortured'. Jimmy's eyeballs being described as 'seared' whilst his body is like 'redhot metal' continue these images of mechanical torture and pain, as well as classic images of hell and eternal fire. Everything is 'burnt', claustrophobic and the smell of gasoline emphasises that it is the city machine that has entrapped its inhabitants in this hellscape.

Jimmy does of course leave the city during the First World War and then returns to New York with Ellen and their son once the war is over. Even in the horrific context of the First World War, Jimmy sees Europe as a direct contrast to the oppressive image he has of New York City. He reminisces about the two of them on a train in France: 'Deedledeump, going south. Gasp of nightingales along the track among the silverdripping poplars. The insane cloudy night of moonlight smells of gardens garlic rivers freshdunged field roses. Gasp of nightingales'.[108] When compared with the sensory description Jimmy is bombarded by in his city apartment, the contrast could not be starker. Instead of burnt gasoline and garbage, Jimmy smells wild garlic, rose fields and hears the songs of nightingales along the side of the track. Rather than being burned up in almost paralysing stasis, he is on a train, his childhood obsession, perpetually moving through the world with a sense of momentum and purpose. Once he snapped out of this memory he bemoans 'Why did we come back to this rotten town anyway?', cementing the comparison between these two spaces.[109] Jimmy sees the absolute space of New York as a centre which contains a kind of sick depravity that seemingly dissipates at the city's limits. In war-torn Europe he was free, but upon returning to New York he is once again a prisoner.

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[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid, p. 179.
[108] Ibid, p. 273.
[109] Ibid.

Jimmy's sympathetic ear early in the novel whilst he is trapped within the clutches of the city is Stan Emery, who is another character who considers New York as a completely hellish space, and one from which he yearns to escape. Stan is the son of a powerful city lawyer, and as such has grown up within the very machinations of modern New York, which Dos Passos has linked so intrinsically to the capitalist enterprise. As such, the city is all he knows, and like Jimmy he yearns for a kind of idealised version of what lies beyond the city limits. Like Jimmy's idyllic vision of war-torn Europe, Stan similarly sees military service as a means of removing himself from the absolute city space: 'Do you realize that I've lived all my life in this goddam town except four years when I was little and that I was born here and that I'm likely to die here? … I've a great mind to join the navy and see the world'.[110] By again referring to this scene where Jimmy and Stan are cursing their helpless lives within the wretched city, we see that the promise of combat and warfare is again preferable to the kinds of violence enacted by the city space.

Using Dos Passos' logic that the city's sickness is a symptom of capitalism, then not only is the city all he knows, but due to his affluent upbringing he is also a beneficiary of the very forces that are oppressing him, hence his flippant remark '[w]hy money's the easiest thing in the world to get'.[111] He is unable to even take the first step towards removing himself from his urban context, professing that a sense of direction is 'the last thing that's of any importance'.[112] Dos Passos, through the explicit links he makes between the New York space and capital, especially when adopting the perspective of Jimmy, suggests that the first step in separating one's self from the city is a refusal to rely on the workings of capitalism for direction and purpose. Because capital is freely available to Stan, and it is simultaneously framed by the dominant system as the impetus for existing, Stan feels helpless, directionless, and stuck.

Stan's violent hatred of the city manifests itself in his obsession with fire - a mindless destructiveness reminiscent of the fires of Hell. This theme is woven throughout the text, with numerous images of fire engines and 'the firebug[s]' that are burning buildings seemingly at random.[113] These destructive environmental factors ultimately cause Stan Emery's downfall. As previously mentioned, he becomes a slave to his own warped impulses, succumbing to alcoholism, which fuels his pyromania – drunkenly asking Ellen if they can 'go to the fire' after she finds him drunk on the street – which eventually causes him to commit suicide.[114] However, 'suicide' might

[110] Ibid, p. 162.
[111] Ibid, p. 164.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid, p. 110.
[114] Ibid, p. 198.

be the wrong term, as Stan's death is intimately connected to the city itself, as if it is an agent in his destruction:

> The street stood up on end. A hookladder and a fire engine were climbing it licketyspit trailing a droning sirenshriek. *Fire fire, pour on water, Scotland's burning.* A thousand dollar fire, a hundredthousand dollar fire, a million dollar fire. Skyscrapers go up like flames, in flames, flames. He spun back into the room. The table turned a somersault. The chinacloset jumped on the table. Oak chairs climbed on top to the gas jet. *Pour on water, Scotland's burning.* Don't like the smell in this place in the City of New York, County of New York, State of New York.[115]

The agency of his environment is immediately apparent, with the table completing a 'somersault', the china closet 'jumping' and the chairs 'climbing' – his environment is acting against him, aiding the burning of his apartment. The city itself is present too, with the street 'standing' whilst the skyscrapers go up in flames. Dos Passos's symbolic connection between New York and the evils of capitalism are presented here, as the fire increases in monetary value as it gets bigger and bigger, destroying all it encounters. The hellscape that is Dos Passos's New York is figured as an all-consuming space plagued by modernity, capitalism, and apocalypse. The inescapability of Stan's context is shown by Dos Passos expanding outwards from city to county, to state, all of which are dominated by the same proper noun: New York. Stan is unable to comprehend or escape to anything outside of New York because he cannot perceive anything that isn't the city. In this sense, the city is being perceived relative to Stan and therefore has become a synecdoche for the world. The city is the centre of his existence, it is all he knows and so acts as an expanding centre that becomes totalising and inescapable. Stan's inability to find an alternative to the city, with its arrhythmic clashes, capitalist imperatives, diseased population, and its actively volatile condition shown by the constant presence of fire, builds to destruction and death. The apocalyptic city burns him up and destroys him through its ever-increasing brutality.

However, this doomed outcome is not reserved for those who were formed within the boundaries of the city. Bud Korpenning, rather than wishing to escape the city, has come to New York from the peripheral countryside to seek gainful employment and a better life for himself. Throughout the first section of the novel he is traversing the city, seeking 'the center of things'.[116] Early on in his wanderings, he is told that he can find this centre by walking 'east a block and turn

[115] Ibid, p. 230.
[116] Ibid, p. 16.

down Broadway and you'll find the center of things if you walk far enough'.[117] Linda Wagner in *Dos Passos: Artist as American* (1979) terms Bud's perception of the centre 'ironic', as we as readers can identify that this is an imaginary centre. The centre is falsely figured as an absolute space, and this 'center of things' is the centre of Manhattan, Broadway.[118] However, even a symbolic centre feels out of reach for Bud. As Bud embarks on this impossible quest to find a centre, he is exposed to more and more urban depravity. He witnesses scenes of extreme violence, such as a man shooting himself in the mouth in public and is dragged from bars to strip clubs by the drunken sailor Laplander Matty. Bud gets further and further from his Romantic idea of a centre, and instead, like Stan, loses all sense of purpose as he is unable to fit into the capitalist model of labour and accumulation.

William Brevda ruminates on the different kinds of centres found in *Manhattan Transfer* in his Derridean reading of the novel. He observes that the centre Bud seeks in Broadway and Times Square is, both in absolute spatial and symbolic terms, illusory. He writes that by 1925 there were roughly 12,228 electric advertising signs in New York, with many of them concentrated in Times Square, which Brevda notes contributed to the perception of Times Square as the centre of the city, the country, and even the world as modern capitalism began to prioritise entertainment and advertising more and more.[119] He notes that New York was revolutionary in its spatial ordering, in that it started a precedent for the modern city by locating its entertainment district at the centre rather than at the periphery.[120] What this does is create an intangible centre, one dominated by empty advertising slogans and glaring signs leading nowhere. As Brevda observes, anywhere which champions Times Square and Broadway as a spatially ordering centre 'is a society where nothing is sacred, where people are as hollow as the signs they worship'.[121] Dos Passos is not directly criticising the theatre industry here: Dos Passos was in fact a major proponent of it. Nor is he taking a puritanical stance on stereotypically bawdy or subversive forms of so-called 'lowbrow' entertainment: it has been noted both John Dos Passos and Hart Crane frequented Minsky's burlesque club on the Lower East Side throughout the 1920s.[122] Instead, as Brevda highlights, it is the 'pursuit of golden success, not liberty and happiness' that Dos Passos sees as the vacuum at the city's centre. It is once again the capitalist principles of cultural and economic power that make the city spiritually vacant.

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Linda Wagner, *Dos Passos: Artist as American* (London: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 58.
[119] William Brevda, 'How Do I Get to Broadway? Reading Dos Passos's Manhattan Transfer Sign', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 38.1 (1996), pp. 79-114 (p. 80).
[120] Ibid, p. 82.
[121] Ibid, p. 83.
[122] Kramer, *Hart Crane's The Bridge*, p. 93.

The city is centreless then, as the space of Times Square provides nothing but garish advertising and signposting to either elsewhere or nowhere. There is nothing of substance to be found. Taking this reading of the emptiness of signs further, the novel's title references a sign that Ellen sees on her way to her honeymoon in Atlantic City with her first husband, John Ogelthorpe: 'They had to change at Manhattan Transfer'.[123] Extending Brevda's reading of the signs of Broadway to the sign of 'Manhattan Transfer', we can see the novel itself as a sign of a sign, signalling the inherent emptiness that can be found at the centre of the city space, and the action and characters of the novel. Bud cannot find any substance within the spatial and spiritual centre of the city, and as such, feels that he is centreless, without hope or purpose. Unlike Ellen who can bend her own character to the signs of the city in an attempt to make herself as steely and empty as the advertisements themselves, Bud is searching for a nurturing spiritual centre. This life within the centre of the city is imaginary, and as such he is unable to find meaning within the bright lights of New York.

Whilst sleeping in a flophouse the true reason for Bud's desperate need for a new life is revealed when he confides his history to a fellow bum in the cot next to his. By this point in the novel, Bud, like both Jimmy and Stan, is desperate to escape the city space. It has not provided him with the freedom and peace he longed for and instead has proven to be destructive and terrifying. Bud's daily bodily rhythms are disrupted, as he is starving and unable to sleep, even praying 'Our father who art in Heaven I want to go to sleep'.[124] This desperate religious evocation is important to note, as the novel contains some very clear references to Bible passages. Phillip Arrington highlights that within the third section of the novel, both the opening and closing chapter titles, 'Rejoicing City That Dwelt Carelessly' and 'The Burthen of Niveneh', are quotations from Old Testament prophets who are singing of 'cities corrupted by their own wealth and success'.[125] My reading of *Manhattan Transfer* as a novel that presents a burning and diseased city positions Dos Passos's New York as an allusion to the cities of Judah, Niveneh and Babylon that were destroyed through a saturation of sin and depravity. Bud's prayers fall on deaf ears, as New York is godless and condemned to damnation, as told by these Biblical allusions to cursed cities.

As Bud reveals that he first came to the city to escape the law after brutally murdering his abusive stepfather, the city could even be seen as a literal representation of Hell, a place where Bud is being punished for his sins. Arrington equates the personal hells of these characters to this depiction of the city: 'Instead of God's supernatural fires, New York burns from within. Apocalypse is writ small […] in short, in the destruction of individuals rather than the City, or the

[123] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 111.
[124] Ibid, p. 116.
[125] Arrington, 'The Sense of Ending in *Manhattan Transfer*', p. 438.

whole world'.[126] However, I do not believe this is the case. It is the space itself which causes the destruction of the characters, as I have already argued, through arrhythmic clashes, capitalist dominance and modern degradation which is all written as spatially specific within the novel and from the perspectives of its characters. Moreover, the city is subject to seemingly supernatural fires, with buildings and people burning throughout the action of the novel. The individual's annihilation and the city's apocalypse cannot exist without one another, as was seen in the agency given to the space in Stan's death. It is not just one character that is facing hell, but all those within Manhattan in the novel, it is an apocalyptic space that spares no one.

The space is framed as the antagonist of the novel once again when Bud, unable to exist as he'd hoped in New York City, and without the discovery of his perceived centre, walks out into the centre of Brooklyn Bridge. Rather than the dualistic symbol of unity that this landmark possesses within Crane's poem, here the Brooklyn Bridge takes on the role of a failed bridge to the 'outside', an escape from the city space. Like Stan Emery, Bud is unable to see anything beyond the city limits, as his obsession with a centre has clouded his vision. Bud is only seeing the city as an absolute space, a definitive physical manifestation of space – what Harvey calls an 'unchanging framework'.[127] Harvey's definition of absolute space can be effectively applied to *Manhattan Transfer*, as he says it is 'empty of matter', which is exactly what Bud finds out: there is no substance in this absolute centre, only a purely logical ordering of space. Harvey also connects absolute space to capitalism, referring to it as the 'exclusionary space of private property', including another of Dos Passos's associations, that conceptualising the city space in absolute terms only fuels capitalism's influence on the city structure.[128]

By seeking and falsely identifying an absolute centre, Bud, like Stan, cannot see the city as part of a larger environmental structure (a space embedded within a larger space, a space with surroundings or peripheries). It is instead a totality, an inescapable nightmare. Just before Bud drops from the Brooklyn Bridge, Dos Passos writes '[t]he windows of Manhattan have caught fire'.[129] This image of the sun's rays reflected in the windows of the buildings is reminiscent of the role fire played in Stan's death – the city is again figured as apocalyptic, and it plays a key role in the moment of Bud's death. Immediately after this, Dos Passos writes '[h]e jerks himself forward, slips, dangles by a hand with the sun in his eyes. The yell strangles in his throat as he drops'.[130] Once again, the agency is taken from the individual and given to the cityscape. It is ambiguous

[126] Ibid, p. 442.
[127] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 134.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 119.
[130] Ibid.

whether Bud kills himself intentionally, or whether the hellish, burning urban landscape literally causes Bud's death by blinding him and leading him to slip. This is not apocalypse 'writ small', but apocalyptic space either driving its inhabitants to inescapable despair or actively killing its populace.

In all the examples I have used where characters experience New York as a totalising centre, an apocalyptic space from which to escape, the city can be characterised using Harvey's terminology as a mixture of absolute and relative space. The city is absolute in its spatial specificity, and outside spaces are imbued with optimism and relief relative to the hellish city space. Furthermore, the horror of modern New York appears to end at the city's boundaries. This is shown in Gus' pastoral fantasy of the out-of-town farm, or Jimmy's memories of Europe. According to most characters within the novel, the defined space of the city is where the modern world's evil lives. This perception of the city creates a sense of spatial isolation, whereby the city is markedly different to its surroundings or peripheries, and therefore separate and difficult to leave. This isolation is manifest within the absolute space of Manhattan's status as an island, something that is drawn attention to by Dos Passos early in the novel when Jimmy and his mother are coming into the harbour:

> 'Please sir what's that?'
> 'That's New York … You see New York is on Manhattan Island.'
> 'Is it really on an island?'
> 'Well what do you think of a boy who dont know that his own
> home town is on an island?'
> The tweedy gentleman's gold teeth glitter as he laughs with his
> mouth wide open. Jimmy walks on round the deck, kicking his heels, all foamy inside; New York's on an island.[131]

New York immediately feels disconnected from the spaces that surround it. Rather than the connections to other spaces via boats or bridges that are emphasised so emphatically in Crane's *The Bridge*, Dos Passos directs the readers' attention to Manhattan's borders and boundaries, consolidating an idea that many characters hold on to: that New York's absolute space is exceptional in its containment of modern hell.

There are also examples of what Harvey calls relative spatial perception in the instances I have discussed from the novel. Stan's perception of New York City as a space that is all consuming is figured relatively when he is in his burning apartment, shown in its expansive status as city, county,

[131] Ibid, p. 70.

and state. As the city is the only place Stan has ever lived, the city is everything to him. He is unable to see beyond the absolute boundaries of the city, because he has never crossed them. Similarly, Bud's experiences of the city can be read alongside Harvey's idea of relative space. At the beginning of the novel Bud describes himself as '[n]o more'n a needle in a haystack'.[132] He is a part of a mass of people migrating into the city, relative to someone else, he is just a small part of a large urban collective. Although I have previously mentioned that this way of perceiving space contains some Marxist potential in its recognition of the collective, in Dos Passos' text the emphasis is on how small the individual is relative to the rest of the city. Before Bud describes himself as a needle in a haystack, he is reading a newspaper. Dos Passos feeds us snippets of headlines such as 'ADMITS KILLING CRIPPLED MOTHER', 'MOB STONES …' and 'Mrs Rix Loses Husband's Ashes'.[133] We get the sense that within the enormous city space, Bud is surrounded by death and tragedy, which starts to overwhelm him as he is quickly forced into folding up the paper and leaving the barbershop. It is then that he acknowledges how small he feels in the city. He is just a needle in a haystack, and relatively speaking, what can he do to affect change in both his own fortunes, but also in a space so vast and unforgiving?

Both absolute and relative readings of the text do not offer any optimism or the kinds of utopian potential that I see as a major part of both Crane's *The Bridge* and Ridge's 'The Ghetto'. However, when analysing both of those texts I also incorporated Harvey's third category of spatial perception: relational space. This has so far been lacking in my reading of *Manhattan Transfer*, and this is because Dos Passos' version of New York does not feel connected to any other spaces, whether material or abstract. The only possibly 'abstract' association that Dos Passos associates with New York are the principles of capitalism, and these in fact translate into material destruction in the novel. There is not a concrete relationship established between the city as a centre, and spaces outside of it - its peripheries (beyond an oppositional idealisation of those outside spaces). However, the ending of the novel is perhaps where some optimism might exist.

Jimmy Herf, having become completely disillusioned by the city, finally attempts to escape the apocalyptic space that is New York City. Dos Passos does imbue this moment with some potential optimism by showing Jimmy avoiding the pitfalls that we have seen other characters fall into and seemingly cleanly breaking from the systems that dominate the city. The most prevalent of these systems is capitalism. Throughout the novel, Dos Passos has been framing New York City as a space ruled by the workings of capital almost exclusively, displayed by such characters as Ed Thatcher and his reliance on wages, or his daughter Ellen and her reliance on economic success

[132] Ibid, p. 28.
[133] Ibid, p. 27.

for agency. Thus, when Jimmy Herf rejects the universal equivalent of capital, money, by quitting his job and starting afresh with nothing, he is, according to the framing of capitalism's dominance within the absolute space of the city, able to break those economic ties to the city: '[t]hat leaves him three cents for good luck, or bad for that matter'.[134] John Wrenn, in his biography of Dos Passos, supports this optimistic reading of Jimmy's exit from the city, stating that by casting economic security aside, Jimmy becomes 'a success […] because he works and lives outside of the conventional social patterns' allowing for 'a grim satire of the American success myth'.[135]

As a result of the rupture in Jimmy, brought on by his exodus from Manhattan, he is now operating on wholly biological rhythms, cyclical and short-term rhythms that remove the rhythmic clash that caused social disease within the city. Dos Passos signals this by concentrating on Jimmy's harmonious bodily reaction, 'taking pleasure in breathing, in the beat of his blood, in the tread of his feet on the pavement'.[136] Jimmy's body is no longer 'diseased', and even the processes he focuses on, the pumping of the blood, breathing and walking, are all repeated, small-scale cycles. He is no longer operating within the mechanical rhythms of the city, but finally in tune with his own biological ones. There is a sense of natural balance to Jimmy Herf at this point in the novel.

In *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos perceives New York as a space that is symbolic of capitalism and its processes, and therefore when Jimmy rejects these processes, he is not just physically leaving the city, but also signalling that a rupture or shift against capitalism is required in order to extricate from the grips of the hellish city space – reminiscent of the gestures made in the 'Atlantis' section in Crane's *The Bridge*, or the revolutionary rallying cries from Ridge's 'The Ghetto' (although in both of these texts the city was not a space to escape, but a space that needed to change). As Robert Rosen observes in his 1981 article on Dos Passos, 'his departure implies an alternative, albeit unspecified, to the city's values'.[137]

However, the 'unspecified' nature of this alternative is telling, and although an optimistic or cathartic reading of the novel's conclusion is common amongst some critics, reading the novel alongside Harvey's spatial categorisations reveals a more sobering ending to *Manhattan Transfer*. Seeing Jimmy's exit from the city as a victory requires us to perceive New York in absolute terms, like many of Dos Passos' characters in the novel. To see Jimmy's exit as hopeful and triumphant precludes a perception of the city space as relative or relational, as we must accept that by leaving New York, all the evils present in the city are left behind with it, that there is no relationship between the systems that govern the city, and those that exist within its surroundings. Harvey

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[134] Ibid, p. 360.
[135] Wrenn, *John Dos Passos*, p. 129.
[136] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 360.
[137] Robert Rosen, *John Dos Passos: Politics and the Writer* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), p. 46.

states that '[p]arcels of land also capture benefits because they contain relationships with other parcels', meaning that a space's profitability and 'success', even within capitalist terms, requires relationships with its surroundings.[138] It would be impossible to argue that New York is and was not a space in dialogue with its surroundings, one that relied on the migration of workers from the country to the city, like Bud, or trade routes from New York harbour, as Joe Harland saw from his work at the docks. As was the case in Crane's vision of New York, a kind of 'wholeness' is implied in both relative and relational space, as the city contains its environment, and vice versa: there is a dialectical relationship between spaces, one which Dos Passos clearly recognised.

Although the characters of *Manhattan Transfer* are, for the most part, trapped in an absolute view of the city space, Dos Passos is not, which becomes even more apparent within his magnum opus: the *U.S.A.* trilogy, starting with *The 42nd Parallel*. These texts are an expansive collection of narratives charting the effect twentieth-century modernisation had on the entirety of the United States, displaying the ways in which spaces and characters interact with each other and the systems that govern them. To borrow Harvey's terminology, these novels contain a both a relative and a relational way of perceiving space. Jimmy's final moments in the novel can then be read as naïve and ultimately pessimistic. Rather than escaping the apocalyptic city, Jimmy simply moves into other spaces inflicted by the same capitalist, exploitative systems that made New York an untenable environment. By failing to recognise the relationship that the city has with its surroundings, he is blind in his belief that he has managed to escape the city's clutches. Like Bud, he has failed by making New York an assumed centre and therefore deluding himself into believing that the city's peripheries are systemically, as well as geographically, distant from the processes of urban modernity. Despite the novel's final moment in which Jimmy vaguely admits that he does not know where he is going, only that it is '[p]retty far', when holding Harvey's spatial concepts in our minds, we know that it cannot be far enough.[139]

Jimmy and Ellen are often positioned by critics as two sides of the same coin, and this is an even more bleak reading when we see Jimmy's final act of crossing the river out of the city as an ultimately naïve and superfluous act. Casey comments:

> Jimmy's decision to leave suggests that there are other places to go, places that presumably offer social and ideological alternatives to New York – specifically, he seeks a proletarian-oriented antidote to the city's selfishness and greed […] For Ellen, the notion of departure, like the notion of autonomy, is simply inapplicable, for she *is* the city, at least

[138] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, pp. 140-141.
[139] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 360.

> insofar as New York functions as a kind of specular center, an exhibitionist extravaganza, for the (masculinist) society around it.[140]

Although Casey acknowledges the possibility that Jimmy's exit is naïve in its reliance on geographic specificity and is identifying an important distinction in that Ellen's fate is ultimately the one without, at least the illusion of, autonomy, the real tragedy is that both characters by the end of the novel are doomed to similar fates. Whilst Ellen is explicitly caught within the hyper-masculine urban capitalist society of spectacle, signs, and profit, Jimmy is destined to find the same dominant greed and depravity wherever he goes, as it is impossible to outpace the workings of a societal network that spans the nation, not just the city.

And so, the novel ends with the acknowledgement that there is no escape from the apocalyptic city space, as although the city is certainly characterised as a concentration of apocalyptic modernity, its influence casts a shadow over a myriad of other spaces creating a hellish modern environment spanning the nation, if not the globe. This is certainly not apocalypse 'writ small', limited to the character's personal experiences or internal landscapes, but it is an apocalypse that extends throughout the city, and far beyond it. Despite the role the city plays in the novel as a brutal antagonist to its own inhabitants, and a space symbolic of a modern hell, Dos Passos leaves us with the notion that this hell is everywhere, and that all the characters in the novel are fated to burn within the fires of industrial capitalism, wherever they may be. The danger of assuming that spaces can be categorised as centres and peripheries, or as Harvey writes, 'regional', which assumes a 'relative inferiority in relation to an assumed centre', is that then there is the false hope of escape.[141]

The last paragraph of the novel forces the reader to recognise this brutal conclusion, as he comes to the edges of the city Jimmy is walking between 'smoking rubbishpiles' which is reminiscent of the garbage smells that kept him awake in his city apartment. The sun is shining 'redly' like the fiery reflections that blinded Bud as he fell to his death. The sensory symbols of urban decay are still present outside of its absolute boundaries. And as if to literally broadcast a signal to both Jimmy and the readers, Dos Passos draws attention to 'a cross-road where the warning light still winks and winks'.[142] Jimmy finds himself at a crossroads, about to take a path he believes will offer him a viable alternative to the perils of the city, but he does not heed the warning light, and anyway, both paths lead to the same destination.

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[140] Casey, *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*, p. 128.
[141] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 173.
[142] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 360.

The Beginning of the End

Dos Passos' question 'what is the end of human life?', from his article 'A Humble Protest' written in 1916 in a college literary magazine, informs my analysis of *Manhattan Transfer*. I defined 'end' as closure, the ending of life on earth for humanity and have considered how the novel situates a kind of apocalypse within the space of New York City. However, in the original article Dos Passos defines 'end' as something more akin to 'goal' or 'aspiration' and decides that thought and art are the true objectives of human life, writing that '[o]ne is the desire to create; the other the desire to fathom'.[143] From here the young Doss Passos ruminates on whether either of these aspects of the human experience have improved in the modern world, a world he characterises as dominated by the worship of science and 'its attendant spirits, Industrialism, and Mechanical Civilization'.[144] These are the new gods of the modern world, and this 'steel-girded goddess, with her halo of factory smoke and her buzzing chariot wheels of industry' need to be questioned as vigorously as the leading principles of human thought were previously.[145]

After considering typically Marxist principles of the inadequacy of a life of labour he decides that our lot has not improved, but we are merely slaves to a different kind of master in the modern age, those of economic labour, and civilisation. He asks another pertinent and chilling question towards the end of his essay: 'How long will the squirrel contentedly turn his wheel and imagine he is progressing?'.[146] This question infers a complete lack of agency in individuals, these modern industrial processes are being done to people, and as a result they are locked into futile servitude to those processes. This quote from Dos Passos is mirrored in a line from *Manhattan Transfer* which ties this idea of helplessness to the space of New York: 'The terrible thing about having New York go stale on you is that there's nowhere else. It's the top of the world. All we can do is go round and round in a squirrel cage'.[147]

In *Manhattan Transfer* Dos Passos dramatises this lack of agency within his characters. As discussed, Bud is caught within the city's machinations looking for meaning where there ultimately isn't any, Ellen is forced into fulfilling the role of female spectacle and cannot escape the masculine society that guarantees her social and economic security, and Jimmy, who, despite his eventual gestures beyond the city limits, naïvely assumes that the mechanised horrors of New York are contained within its borders. These characters' actions do not in any way influence the world around them. Rather, it is the spaces and the processes that operate within those spaces that

[143] Dos Passos, 'A Humble Protest', p. 28.
[144] Ibid, p. 29.
[145] Ibid, p. 28.
[146] Ibid, p. 32.
[147] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 202.

antagonise and brutalise the city's inhabitants. In 'A Humble Protest' Dos Passos calls this operation the 'ponderous suicide machine'.[148] The lack of individual agency and the dominance of the industrial 'suicide machine' creates a sense of morbid determinism in the novel, meaning that, in Dos Passos' view, the 'end' of human life (conclusion) is inevitable now that the 'end' of human life (aspiration) has been subsumed by the principles of the machine.

This kind of grim and apocalyptic determinism is a stark contrast to the 'lived space' that I identified in Ridge's 'The Ghetto', where the people within a space actively characterised it, which allowed the Lower East Side to become a symbol of evolution, radicalism, feminism, and resistance in the face of capitalist and industrial structures and processes. However, as was demonstrated by my use of rhythmanalysis, which encourages us to consider scale, in *Manhattan Transfer* the capitalist and industrial processes and rhythms are prioritised over the lived experiences of the people, so much so that living and adhering to biological rhythms becomes almost impossible. The space can only be defined by large scale societal interests, and so the actions of the individual become almost meaningless, a sentiment that Jimmy articulates towards the end of the novel: 'Just round the block … one of two unalienable alternatives: go away in a dirty soft shirt or stay in a clean Arrow collar. But what's the use of spending your whole life fleeing the City of Destruction?'.[149] Any efforts to enact change are seen as futile as the rhythms of the city extend beyond the scale of human life, and so the only options Jimmy sees are to attempt to adhere to the city's unnatural rhythms, or to try and escape, and even this act of extrication seems impossible.

Similarly, the Romantic optimism inherent in Walt Whitman's idea of the individual containing multitudes: the relationship between the crowd and the people within the crowd, that Crane used as a guiding principle in *The Bridge* is absent in Dos Passos' novel. Rather than humanity and spaces having reciprocal relationships with each other creating a sense of 'wholeness', people and spaces are perceived as separate and alienated, whilst the very things that create said alienation dominate 'the whole', creating a miserable contradiction. Joe Harland is unable to join with the union collective due to the risk of unemployment, Ellen is unable to relate to her castmate Cassie's prioritisation of spiritual love, Bud cannot find a centre to cling to, and Jimmy by the end of the novel is so robbed of individuality that the mere suggestion of a man wearing a straw hat out of season seems to him a radical act worthy of sainthood.[150]

Manhattan is depicted as an isolated space, a focal point for modern industrialism and capitalism, where bridges to an exterior are a site of death, characters like Stan are unable to fathom a space that is not called 'New York', and even minor characters pepper the narrative with tales of

[148] Dos Passos, 'A Humble Protest', p. 32.
[149] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 327.
[150] Ibid, p. 357.

people dying in the surrounding waters (such as the toothless woman who tells Joe Harland 'I lost my husband on the *General Slocum* might ha been yesterday'),[151] making the island feel like Alcatraz.[152] Despite the feeling of spatial isolation the novel creates around New York, and the assumption that many characters make that getting out of the city (as impossible as it seems) would allow them to start a new life outside the constraints they have been burdened by in the city, these systems extend beyond the absolute geography of New York. Therefore, the only sense of spatial 'wholeness' that Dos Passos imbues America with is that the whole is as much a part of the doomed 'suicide machine' as the city. As Rem Koohaas stated, the city may be figured as the most potent example of modernity, however, it is simply a concentrated pinnacle of what was a national, or even global, movement towards modern industrial capitalism. There is therefore no escape. Dos Passos signposts this bleak conclusion through the depressed and drunken character Martin Schiff, who pontificates: 'You are all bored, bored flies buzzing on the windowpane. You think the windowpane is the room. You dont know what there is deep black inside …'.[153] Having suggested that the misery these characters are suffering extends beyond the spatial boundaries of the window (the city), Martin runs off claiming he intends to throw himself into the East River. We as reader's do not find out if this happens, but it is certainly another example of the impossibility of escape and the relentless 'suicide machine' in action.

Despite the severe differences between Dos Passos's novel and the poetry of Crane and Ridge, something they do all share is that they all see the need for a societal shift away from the exploitative machinations of modern capitalism. Whilst Crane and Ridge see the twentieth century as the beginning of these changes coming to pass, a shift tied intrinsically to the potential found within urban spaces, Dos Passos feels less sure of the likelihood that this is possible, or even what the alternative could or should be. The pessimism inherent within the novel's characterisation of individual or even collective agency, as well as Jimmy's vague act of fruitless rebellion at the end of the novel leaves very little constructive thought for the reader to take away.

In an interview conducted in 1969, the year before his death, Dos Passos compares the leftist protests of his youth to those of the current generation, stating that 'our ideas were really more constructive than those of the current generation. Naturally we were reacting against the same thing, but now the reaction is one on a larger scale and more virulent. What we are witnessing now

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[151] The General Slocum was a passenger steamboat that was used as an excursion boat around the island of Manhattan. It was often the subject of many mishaps, culminating in the General Slocum Disaster of 1904 when the PS Slocum caught fire and then sank into the East River, killing over one thousand people. See Valerie Wingfield, 'The General Slocum Disaster of June 15, 1904', *New York Public Library*, 13 June, 2011 <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2011/06/13/great-slocum-disaster-june-15-1904> [accessed 6 March, 2025].
[152] Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, p. 168.
[153] Ibid, p. 324.

is a tantrum of spoiled children who really have had too much done for them'.[154] Disregarding the reductive conservatism inherent in this response to the college protests over institutional racism and the war in Vietnam, when considering *Manhattan Transfer* this does feel like a rose-tinted view of his own youthful sense of rebellion. The novel, whilst articulating the oppressive evils of modern urbanism, does not provide a meaningful alternative, and even suggests that there may not be one. Does Dos Passos' latter-day conservativism and arguable submission to the very forces he was warning his readers of in *Manhattan Transfer* suggest he was correct and that there is no hopeful alternative to the apocalyptic machine-age? Perhaps the young Dos Passos' joyless pessimism was a clue pointing towards the conservative Republicanism of his later years. What we can deduce is that considering the ways in which Dos Passos perceived New York City, and the meanings he attaches to the city's infrastructure enrich our reading of the text, and allow generative and stark comparisons between Dos Passos' novel, and the poetry of Crane and Ridge.

Looking to James Baldwin's novel *Another Country*, the subject of the next chapter of this thesis, we see a writer looking back on the earlier decades of the twentieth century hoping to articulate or suggest an alternative way of existing within and perceiving American spaces, but not without acknowledging the scale of the suffering and exploitation which must be remedied in order to counter the apocalyptic conclusion that Dos Passos finds in *Manhattan Transfer*.

[154] Dos Passos, *An Interview with John Dos Passos*, p. 5.

CHAPTER 4: The Spatial Nightmare and Racial Dream in James Baldwin's *Another Country*

> I can't be a pessimist because I am alive. To be a pessimist means that you have agreed that human life is an academic matter. So, I am forced to be an optimist. I am forced to believe that we can survive, whatever we must survive.
>
> - James Baldwin, 'The Negro and the American Promise'

So far, this thesis has examined the urban literature of three modernist writers from the early decades of the twentieth century and explored the ways in which they reacted to the rapid infrastructural, economic, cultural, and demographic growth of New York City. Both Hart Crane's *The Bridge* and Lola Ridge's 'The Ghetto' shared a sense of optimistic potential, seeing the city space as one that would house a new version of America. Crane saw New York as a space that was symbolic of a global community, fostering a sense of wholeness encapsulated within his Romantic image of the titular Brooklyn Bridge. Ridge, despite incorporating a more overt radical politics into her poetry, also saw New York, and particularly the Jewish ghettoes of the Lower East Side, as a site of great potential from which a new nation that championed equality and multiculturalism could be born. I have linked these two poems to the literary traditions of modernism, but also the distinctly American tradition of Romanticism that begins with Walt Whitman, whose outlook on America was distinctly optimistic.

In *Democratic Vistas* Whitman writes '[t]oday, ahead, though dimly lit yet, we see, in vistas, a copious sane, gigantic offspring. For our New World I consider far less important for what it has done, or what it is, than for results to come'. He concludes the text with: 'but truly having which, she [America] will understand herself, live nobly, nobly contribute, emanate, and, swinging, poised safely on herself, illumin'd and illuming, become a fully form'd world […] the bodily, the concrete, the democratic, the popular, on which the superstructures of the future are to permanently rest'.[1] Whitman's belief in looking to the future and his hope for a 'fully form'd world' with America at the forefront was something that both Crane and Ridge saw as a possibility within their own works and sought to inspire in their readers.

Something that both Whitman, and Ridge in particular, share is a belief that space is defined by the people that exist within it, and that the individual as a part of a crowd can exert influence over the spaces that they occupy. These ideas were then juxtaposed with my analysis of John Dos

[1] Whitman, 'Democratic Vistas', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, pp. 455 and 501.

Passos' 1925 novel *Manhattan Transfer*, in which the individual characters are at the mercy of a cruel and apocalyptic city space that symbolically works as an antagonist within the action in the novel. Here the city held no rejuvenating potential, and the downfall of both the space and the people within it felt inevitable, without the option of any meaningful escape. Rather than the influence of American Romanticism, I traced Dos Passos' literary inheritance to the pessimistic fatalism often associated with literary naturalism, whilst also marrying these themes with modernist alienation and formal experimentation.

This present chapter jumps forward to the mid-twentieth century and examines James Baldwin's 1962 novel *Another Country*. This novel bridges the intellectual gap between the hopeful potential of Crane and Ridge, and the deterministic doom of Dos Passos. In 'American Experience and the Novel', an unpublished essay from The James Baldwin Papers archive, Baldwin writes '[t]he discovery of America is only now beginning. And this discovery demands the creation of our past. This creation cannot be done by textbooks, but only by the imagination'.[2] Like Whitman in *Democratic Vistas*, Baldwin is suggesting a hope that America's future can be shaped by how we in the present react to and engage with our past. A nation does not have to be defined by what it has done but can instead be moulded into something else based on what it will do. However, Baldwin's depiction of New York certainly contains some of the naturalistic influence that contributed to Dos Passos' own fatalistic narrative.

One of Baldwin's chief literary mentors was Richard Wright, whose novel *Native Son* (1940) gave him both fame and notoriety, as David Leeming comments, a young Baldwin saw him as 'the premier African-American writer of his time'.[3] Devin William Daniels observes that *Native Son* contains the naturalist trope where the agency of the narrative is given to the societal and biological pressures of the environment. Despite debates amongst scholars over the intention behind this fatalism, Daniels writes that 'all seem to agree that it is deterministic'.[4] Baldwin's novel does contain this morbid sense of inevitability, particularly in relation to the character of Rufus and his experiences with total alienation and racism within the modern city.

Despite this influence, Baldwin's approach to both life and art did differ from Wright's, which would eventually drive a wedge into their relationship and this rift became a preoccupation of many of Baldwin's critics. In his essay 'Everybody's Protest Novel' from *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) Baldwin writes that '[b]elow the surface of this novel [*Native Son*] there lies, as it seems to me, a

[2] New York, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, The James Baldwin Papers, 'American Experience and the Novel', Box 42b, Folder 6.
[3] David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (London: The Penguin Group, 1994), p. 50.
[4] Devin William Daniels, 'Everybody's Statistical Record: Richard Wright and the Determinations of Late Naturalism', *Representations*, 164.1 (2023), pp. 115-136 (p. 118).

continuation, a complement of that monstrous legend it was written to destroy'.[5] Here Baldwin is claiming that Wright's protest novel, despite trying to destroy the 'monstrous legend' of racism, in fact reproduces the conditions that allow racism to flourish. This criticism of Wright stems from his insistence on maintaining an inherent difference between white and black, rather than seeing those apparent racial binaries as connected through their shared humanity, an acceptance of a kind of 'wholeness', to use Waldo Frank's terminology. Bigger Thomas represents one side of a never-ending battle between black and white, and Baldwin states these two are only able to 'thrust and counter-thrust'.[6]

Although acknowledging the environmental and societal pressures on African-Americans, Baldwin saw space and its inhabitants as having more of a dialectical relationship, or at least he saw the potential for this relationship to grow and for people to change oppressive social conditions: '[t]he failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, and its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended'.[7] Despite the desperate situation that Baldwin recognised as the reality of African-Americans living in a racist society, at this point he still maintained a faith in humanity to effect societal change. Even though this cautious optimism for the future of American race relations was not consistent throughout his career, it was certainly his outlook when writing *Another Country* and this perspective shares some values with both Crane and Ridge.

Baldwin's belief in forming connections between people and spaces is reminiscent of Waldo Frank's concept of 'wholeness', which Crane would adopt in *The Bridge* to show the potential in a world connected rather than splintered. Baldwin's particular focus on how individuals, or groups of individuals, could influence the societies and cultures that they were a part of can be thought of alongside Ridge's belief in the Jewish immigrants of the Lower East Side in 'The Ghetto', and how, as Lefebvre expressed, it is the people who live within a space that come to shape it. However, for Baldwin any belief in humanity overcoming the racial nightmare that was and is a consistent part of human history is only possible through a recognition of what is wrong with the world we live in, and our desire to change it to prevent the kind of inescapable apocalypse that Dos Passos articulates in *Manhattan Transfer*.

Like Crane's *The Bridge*, Ridge's 'The Ghetto', and Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, *Another Country* is a quintessential 'urban' text, in that New York City as a space is figured as a key contributor to the progression of the narrative, as well as the actions of the characters themselves. However, unlike Dos Passos' all-powerful version of the New York City space, in the novel

[5] James Baldwin, 'Everybody's Protest Novel', *Notes of a Native Son* (London: Penguin Classics, 2017), p. 22.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid, p. 23.

Baldwin maintains the hope that the city, and by extension the nation, can be altered by the actions of the characters living within it. This is a relationship that is constantly being tested throughout the text. Therefore, to analyse the novel's approach to space it is vital to look at how the city and its inhabitants interact.

Due to the racism and homophobia that disenfranchises Baldwin's characters and creates an inherently hostile environment, Baldwin does not engage with the same utopian narratives that were present in *The Bridge*, and 'The Ghetto', but neither does he fully submit to the fatalism that Dos Passos does in *Manhattan Transfer*. Rather than looking for a utopian endpoint, *Another Country* is much more concerned with the process that would enable a better world. This process is one based upon relationships. Baldwin's optimistic vision for the future of New York, and America at large, comes from both interspatial and interpersonal relationships.

Interspatial relationships relate to how space is perceived and to articulate this I use the framework that has been consistent throughout this thesis that uses David Harvey's three spatial categories, absolute, relative and relational, as well as the Lefebvre's concept of 'lived' space. As was the case in my previous chapters, a focus on the potential of spatial relationships is key to my reading of *Another Country*, as harmonious relationships within and between spaces negate the destructive presence of the modern city. Therefore, relative and relational space will be particularly important to my analysis of *Another Country*.

However, Baldwin perceives New York's city spaces as hopeless and apocalyptic, like Dos Passos, but specifically due to the inherent racism that defines them. Therefore, Baldwin infers that spatial relationships need to be transformed through interpersonal relationships and a change in individual beliefs and attitudes. This outlook can be explored through an analysis of Baldwin's complex relationship with liberalism. As Edmund Fawcett points out, liberalism is an ideology with no real canon or stable definition, '[n]o one philosophy spoke for its ideals'.[8] Therefore, before claiming that Baldwin does adopt a liberal stance in the late nineteen fifties and early nineteen sixties when he is writing *Another Country*, I do want to acknowledge that not only is liberalism an inherently unstable ideology in its definition, but so is Baldwin's own relationship to it. I will therefore briefly summarise Baldwin's relationship with liberalism and articulate how I link Baldwin's liberalism with American city space.

Will Norman states in his text *Complicity in American Literature after 1945: Liberalism, Race, and Colonialism* (2025):

[8] Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 4.

> Baldwin identified American liberals principally with a specious idea of progress in racial relations. Progress for Baldwin's liberals is quantifiable and achieved through the appliance of technocratic solutions in the social sphere, such as the building of new infrastructure, the provision of state aid and subsidies, and legal reforms. Implicitly, they are Democrats allied to the Kennedy administration or to Johnson's Great Society program. Liberals, for Baldwin, are nearly always from the North, and, unless he states otherwise, white.[9]

In this passage Norman articulates that, for Baldwin, liberals are unable to recognise racism as anything other than a problem that is external to them, and therefore it requires these 'quantifiable' solutions that seeks to solve some material inequalities but fails to acknowledge the inherent presence of racism within the American psyche. However, as Norman goes on to say, although Baldwin derides 'liberals' as a group, he does identify with various liberal ideologies and moral outlooks, and I argue that these ideologies can be seen as analogous with how Baldwin perceives space.

Arthur Schlesinger defined liberalism as an aspiration 'toward compromise, persuasion and consent in politics, towards tolerance and diversity in society'.[10] Words such as 'compromise' and 'tolerance' display that the outlook being described is based on relationships, in that it relies upon union and cooperation between people(s) – it is a politics of forming collaborative partnerships. According to Baldwin, the separatist ideology associated with a certain branch of the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties, and specifically Elijah Muhammad and his followers within the Nation of Islam, was subtly maintaining the systems of hierarchical difference which creates an oppressive American society and causes what Schlesinger names 'a social system which represents organised frustration instead of organised fulfilment'.[11] Baldwin ruminates on this famously in the essay 'Down At the Cross: Letter from a Region in my Mind' (1963) and says to Elijah Muhammad: 'I love a few people and they love me and some of them are white, and isn't love more important than color?'.[12]. Instead of maintaining difference, Schlesinger writes, the focus needs to come from desegregated space and creating a non-alienated individual who lives cooperatively with others: 'we survive only as we remain members of one another'.[13] By refusing the conditions of separation and difference, and instead attempting to challenge the very concept of difference by looking for

[9] Will Norman, *Complicity in American Literature after 1945: Liberalism, Race, and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), pp. 132-133.
[10] Arthur Schlesinger, *The Vital Center* (London: Deutsch, 1970), p. 245.
[11] Ibid, p. 244.
[12] James Baldwin, 'Down at the Cross', *The Fire Next Time* (London: Penguin Classics, 2017), p. 64.
[13] Schlesinger, *The Vital Center*, p. 248.

common ground, removing the strictly material from the equation and looking to the metaphysical, there is the potential for meaningful disruption. This form of liberalism articulated by Schlesinger transfers liberalism's focus from those quantifiable aspects and into the psychological examination of people, and critically the self.

However, Schlesinger's *The Vital Center* barely discusses race, suggesting he does not believe racism to be a key problem for America in the 1940s. Furthermore, Schlesinger's own relationship with the Kennedy administration (being made a 'special assistant' to the President in 1961) as well as someone who Emile Lester defined as having 'conservative restraint' corroborates the idea that liberalism can be easily associated with that external and 'quantifiable' approach to the issues of racial inequality, and that a liberal attitude is one that champions state stability over necessary change.[14] However, Schlesinger's focus on liberalism as a mindset, a way of thinking rather than simply a way of acting, is important and an aspect of liberalism that is evident in Baldwin's early non-fiction, as well as *Another Country*.

The personal implications of liberalism, especially within the context of race, are articulated by Gunnar Myrdal in *An American Dilemma* (1944). This landmark study is one of the most significant texts on race of the mid-twentieth century, even being directly quoted in the 1954 Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* and was reviewed by Ralph Ellison upon its publication. Central to its argument is the idea of 'the American Creed', the view America had of itself as a bastion of liberal and democratic ideals. However, the existence and subjugation of black Americans 'disturbs' and 'unsettles' the moral stance that most Americans saw themselves as holding. This means that the very existence of both black and white bodies in the same location was 'an anomaly in the very structure of American society'.[15] Myrdal's idea of the American Creed, and the fact that this ideal forces racism to sit uneasily within the American consciousness, fosters self-examination: as Myrdal puts it '[t]he moral struggle goes on within people and not only between them'.[16] Although this self-examination is primarily aimed at white Americans, it is also something that Baldwin does throughout his non-fiction and imbues within the characters of *Another Country*. Myrdal states that in fact every American needs to assess their own values, writing that it is not only white America that sees the existence of black bodies as anomalous, even the black population 'share in this community of valuations' having also 'imbibed the American Creed'.[17] Therefore, black Americans

[14] Emile Lester, 'British Conservatism and American Liberalism in Mid-Twentieth Century: Burkean Themes in Niebuhr and Schlesinger', *Polity*, 46.2 (2014), pp. 182-210 (p. 183).
[15] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), p. xiv.
[16] Ibid, p. xlviii.
[17] Ibid.

must also self-examine if they are to combat their own sense of alienation and difference within a dominant white society.

Baldwin's own response to this kind of liberal thought in the works of his early career was to encourage his readers to contemplate their personal relationship with race and the horror of racism that is a part of the American social structure and national mindset, and then seek ways to combat that mindset. In his essay 'Down at the Cross' Baldwin advocates that the very concept of colour and difference as it is in America needs to change. Rather than assuming America is a white nation and submitting to 'sterility and decay', he calls on Americans to 'accept ourselves *as we are*' and recognise difference while not being defined by it or reducing historic struggle.[18] Instead, society must change. This renewal comes from white Americans recognising themselves as related to black Americans, under the umbrella of 'America' as a whole. Baldwin writes that this recognition turns the white assumption that 'they are in possession of some intrinsic value that black people need, or want' on its head, and suggests that '[t]he only way they can be released from the Negro's tyrannical power over him is to consent, in effect, to become black himself, to become a part of that suffering and dancing country'.[19] This is where Baldwin's perspective departs from Myrdal's, as Myrdal concludes that black Americans adopting the values of the dominant white culture is the answer to what he calls the 'Negro problem'. Ellison, in his review of *An American Dilemma*, summarises this shortcoming, writing that Myrdal 'assumes that Negroes should desire nothing better than what whites consider highest'.[20] He finishes the review by instead suggesting: '[w]hat is needed in our country is not an exchange of pathologies, but a change in the basis of society. This is a job which both Negroes and whites must perform together'.[21]

Baldwin shares Ellison's view and recognises that racism damages America as a whole and that the white western ideal is not an ideal at all. This is a philosophy based on love, love from white people to find kinship and identity that includes all races, and love from black people in accepting this move. Baldwin summarises this outlook when he writes: 'To create one nation has proved to be a hideously difficult task; there is certainly no need now to create two, one black and one white'.[22] For this radical systemic and philosophical renewal to occur, Baldwin is suggesting that individuals' attitudes will inform the reframing of the racial divide in America more broadly and systemically.

[18] Baldwin, 'Down at the Cross', *The Fire Next Time*, p. 80.
[19] Ibid, p. 82.
[20] Ralph Ellison, 'An American Dilemma: A Review', *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 316.
[21] Ibid, p. 317.
[22] Baldwin, 'Down at the Cross', *The Fire Next Time*, p. 83.

What I am calling Baldwin's liberal outlook based on love and connection is often referred to by critics as Baldwin's philosophy or theology of love. It is a spiritual or emotional way of working through issues that are social or political. Michael Lynch, in exploring Baldwin's relationship with Christianity, criticises Baldwin scholarship for too often separating Baldwin's political and spiritual concerns. He writes: '[t]he work of James Baldwin has suffered from much critical misunderstanding due largely to critics' dualistic approach, which sets political concerns against spiritual ones, emphasizes only the former in Baldwin's work, and misses his complex examination of individual experience and responsibility'.[23] Although Lynch himself frames Baldwin's philosophy via religion, I assert that framing it as a liberal political stance does combine the spiritual and the political in the way that Lynch is calling for.

The kind of liberalism that I identify in Baldwin allows personal attitudes of acceptance, kindness, and love to translate into something larger, a political position which connects people and spaces, effectively bridging the political and the spiritual, or emotional concerns of individuals. Although some of his liberal attitudes and opinions would change and adapt over his career, the connection Baldwin makes between the individual, and the wider world remains relatively consistent. In his collection of essays *No Name in the Street* (1972) he writes: 'failure of the private life has always had the most devastating effect on American public conduct, and on black-white relations. If Americans were not so terrified of their private selves, they would never have needed to invent and could never have become so dependent on what they still call "the Negro problem"'.[24] Although by this point in his life some aspects of his liberalism had fallen away, the connection between the individual and the society they are a part of is still a central principle in Baldwin's thinking.

Having explored Balwin's complex relationship with liberalism, and laying out how he uses liberal thought to optimistically suggest that there might be a future where Myrdal's American Creed could be a reality and the anomalous position that racism occupies in the American psyche could be processed and moved past, I will now show how this liberalism relates to Baldwin's depictions of the city space in *Another Country*.

If we refer to the quotation from Will Norman that summarises Baldwin's problem with those he termed as 'liberals', Norman goes on to use the example of the Riverton building, Harlem's first housing project, and the study of Baldwin's *Esquire* article 'Fifth Avenue Uptown' (1960). In this article Baldwin decries the quantitative attempt to solve the problems of the Harlem ghetto with this ineffective building project. He states that the problems that black Harlem residents face

[23] Michael F. Lynch, 'Just Above My Head: James Baldwin's Quest for Belief', *Literature & Theology*, 11.3 (1997), pp. 284-298 (p. 284).
[24] James Baldwin, 'take me to the water', *No Name in the Street* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), p. 37.

cannot be solved with new housing, as the problem is not purely material, or absolute. It is, in fact, what Baldwin, in 'Fifth Avenue Uptown', calls 'the white world' that ghettoises Harlem.[25] The 'white world' refers to America itself as America is a 'world' built to benefit white people. In this *Esquire* article Baldwin postulates that the black workers from Harlem are forced to work in a 'white world' all day and then return to 'this fetid block' where they are unmotivated and unable to invest in their surroundings.[26] As Myrdal explains in *An American Dilemma*, the problem emanates from the inner workings of American people and society. Therefore, if we apply this liberal self-examination to Harlem, the degradation of the neighbourhood is not something inherent to the space itself, but the result of a deep-rooted issue in the American cultural psyche. Without this changing, the American city space cannot be a hospitable or survivable environment within which black urbanites can live.

However, if, as Baldwin hopes, this mentality can be shifted, and the traumas of American racism and inequality can be productively worked through via the kinds of liberal thought that Baldwin identifies with, then perhaps this can translate into transforming American spaces as well. Harvey's idea of relative and relational space accounts for the ways in which both individual perspectives and intangible factors can influence how a space is perceived, and this idea can be read alongside Lefebvre's idea of lived space, where those within a space influence how it operates. Therefore, if the intangible attitudes, racist biases, and the ways that people and groups of people relate to one another can be altered, then according to the logic of Harvey and Lefebvre, the spaces those people exist within will follow suit. Rather than blindly trying to change the inequality and racism inherent within American spaces, like the initiatives that led to the Riverton building in Harlem, I argue that in *Another Country* Baldwin suggests that by examining the self and changing the inequality and racism inherent to the individual, this change will translate spatially, and another country may be possible.

Baldwin's liberal attitudes are specifically related to the spatial politics of New York City; Baldwin's liberalism and his spatial concerns are mutually interdependent and self-constituting. Reading Baldwin alongside Harvey and Lefebvre, as I have done with Crane, Ridge, and Dos Passos, provides a vocabulary for expressing the ways in which liberalism and spatial perception are linked in Baldwin's work and therefore will be used as a way of framing the connection between the interpersonal and interspatial in *Another Country*.

Although the two entities of space and character are distinct, in *Another Country* Baldwin reads one into the other. Baldwin's construction of space and character in *Another Country* rely heavily

[25] James Baldwin, 'Fifth Avenue Uptown', *Esquire*, 1960 <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a3638/fifth-avenue-uptown/> [accessed June 2, 2021].
[26] Ibid.

on each other, as space becomes defined by the people that move through it, or associate themselves with districts, boroughs, and streets within New York City and beyond, as well as the lived histories of those spaces. Therefore, to analyse the novel this chapter will be split into two sections: 'The Spatial Nightmare' where I will explore how the novel presents New York City as a space in which black people seem deterministically doomed and appear to be mere victims of a modern society that does everything in its power to limit and control them. The second section, 'The Racial Dream' turns to the characters that Baldwin populates the city space with, and how through their interpersonal relationships and a liberal understanding of self-revelation there is the potential by the end of the novel to alter the machinations of the city, and therefore the country, in order to bring about meaningful change and halt America's progress along a destructive path.

As well as my own critical framework I will also be engaging with specific Baldwin scholarship to situate my own reading of *Another Country*. Baldwin has now become a canonised figure who is written on widely, and I will be adding to this ongoing conversation by situating Baldwin alongside Crane, Ridge, and Dos Passos – four writers who have not been brought together in other scholarship. *Another Country*, despite being a bestseller which made Baldwin into a household name and a celebrity of his day, was seen as a critical disappointment upon release, and even to this day is sometimes still seen as not reaching the heights of narrative fiction that *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) did. Many of Baldwin's contemporaries were preoccupied by Baldwin's position within the Civil Rights Movement, particularly as a counterpoint to the angry protest literature of figures like Richard Wright. These critics ranged from outright hyper-masculine and homophobic, such as Eldridge Cleaver's essay from 1968's *Soul on Ice*, to the, at best, back-handedly complimentary essay 'Black Boys and Native Sons' (1963) by Irving Howe, both of which question Baldwin's commitment to 'authentic' African American literature. These texts have been intrinsic to Baldwin scholarship since their publications, and I will be using them to articulate how I read Baldwin's complicated relationship with politics, civil rights, and liberalism, and how his position compares with the other writers within this thesis.

Trends in later Baldwin scholarship since his death have tended to embrace a more intersectional approach to his work. The interconnected ideas around race, gender, sex and identity have been key themes of scholarship by Shelton Waldrep and Marlon Ross, and Baldwin's use and rejection of religion has become a focus in articles by Michael F. Lynch and Douglas Field. These arguments are integral to my own reading of Baldwin's approach to interpersonal relationships, and how this impacts his construction of space and nationhood. My own reading of *Another Country* as a distinctly urban text that is articulating people's relationship with the city and space means

that this chapter is also in conversation with other contemporary studies that look at Baldwin's relationship with urban space by Emma Cleary and Amy Reddinger.

The Spatial Nightmare

Another Country is a novel that centres around characters processing trauma, a trauma that is encapsulated within the character of Rufus Scott but extends to many aspects of twentieth century American life. As in *Manhattan Transfer*, by the end of the first chapter of *Another Country* we find ourselves following a character we assume will be the novel's protagonist (Rufus) to a bridge that connects Manhattan to another of the New York City boroughs. I read Bud's suicide in *Manhattan Transfer* as resulting from the city's apocalyptic power over the people within it. Bud felt permanently trapped within the totalising city space whilst he could not find the non-existent 'center'. The city was a depraved space that caused Bud to unravel and eventually despair. Rufus embodies a similar frustration and entrapment within *Another Country*, and strangely in an earlier draft of *Another Country* Baldwin named Rufus 'Bud', perhaps acknowledging the connection between *Another Country* and Dos Passos's 1925 novel.[27] Like Bud's urban experiences, Rufus' urban travels are filled with references to his alienation from his surroundings, and it is here that we can identify the kinds of deterministic fatalism I identified within *Manhattan Transfer*, and how the city space itself comes to represent the societal pressures of the environment, making the space itself feel like an antagonist.

The similarities between Dos Passos' apocalyptic space and Baldwin's own are evident from the opening of *Another Country*. In the first sentence Baldwin immediately homes in on the space: 'He was facing Seventh Avenue, at Times Square'.[28] We as readers are thrown into the very centre of the metropolis, the same centre that Bud was eaten up by. As in *Manhattan Transfer*, the environment is hostile. We are told that Rufus was molested in the cinema he was sleeping in. Upon leaving a passing policeman gives him an ominous look, making him feel both fear and shame as a spectacle, but also a potential victim of racial profiling. The city feels inherently uncomfortable, and dangerous, and Rufus then gives us a dark and surreal description of the city space:

> At corners, under the lights, near drugstores, small knots of white, bright, chattering people showed teeth to each other, pawed each other, whistled for taxis, were whirled away in them, vanished through the doors of drugstores or into the blackness of side

[27] The James Baldwin Papers, '*Another Country* Draft', Box 18, Folder 1.
[28] James Baldwin, *Another Country* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), p. 13.

> streets. Newsstands, like small black blocks on a board, held down corners of the pavements and policemen and taxi drivers and others, harder to place, stomped their feet before them and exchanged such words as they both knew with the muffled vendor within. A sign advertised the chewing gum which would help one to relax and keep smiling […] The great buildings, unlit, blunt like the phallus or sharp like the spear, guarded the city which never slept.
>
> Beneath them Rufus walked, one of the fallen – for the weight of this city was murderous – one of those who had been crushed on the day, these towers fell. Entirely alone, and dying of it, he was part of an unprecedented multitude.[29]

The scene is described as if by an alien. The people are animalistically showing their teeth to one another, or pawing at each other, mysteriously vanishing or whirling away, stomping feet, or exchanging unknown words to obscured figures. The distance between Rufus and his surroundings is clear; he feels separate from everyone and everything around him, the other people populating the streets seem like a different species, and the urban space itself is dark and unknowable. There is a clear focus on the opposition of black and white, with the black newsstands and side streets contrasting with the white knots of people baring their white teeth. The emphasis on the binaries black and white reveals why the first-person narration feels so alien. Rufus is unable to see the world without noticing these colour distinctions: he is therefore hyperaware of what separates and others him from everyone else he can see. These colour contrasts continue throughout the text, accentuating that race and difference are omnipresent in the city. The omnipresence of race is the spectre that haunts the novel and is the key difference between Dos Passos' destructive city and Baldwin's.

Rufus' position as an alienated, almost ghostly figure in the scene due to his distanced voyeurism is an example of the contradiction that Myrdal identifies between the American Creed, and the reality of life in America. Rufus can only see the world through the lens of the black and white binary, because he perceives himself as an uncomfortable anomaly within the dominant white space of America. This vision of life in the city suggests that New York is actively killing its black population, the space acting as a representative for the inherent racism found in the American cultural consciousness. Baldwin anchors this kaleidoscope of anxiety, alienation and difference to the city itself, which he describes it as murderous, crushing its population and killing this amorphous multitude who are separate from one another, despite their proximity. The similarities between this horrific vision of the city and the one I identified in *Manhattan Transfer* is

[29] Ibid, p. 14.

compelling. Baldwin's New York similarly reads like a site of spiritual and physical apocalypse from which there appears to be no escape. The evils of modern society are given agency through Baldwin's characterisation of the urban landscape, which takes the shape of the aggressively masculine phallus, married with the violence of the spear. These themes of urban apocalypse, alienation, and racial difference are brought to a terrible head at the end of the chapter, when we follow Rufus through the city towards the George Washington Bridge.

Rufus's final journey through the city is filled with references to his alienation from his surroundings. He describes the crowds on the subway as 'swimmers' whilst he is 'nothing but an upright pole in the water'.[30] The agency within the metaphor is given solely to the 'swimmers', whilst Rufus, prophetically, is inanimate, surrounded by water. Water repeats as a metaphor for destruction within Rufus's thinking, as he imagines the train tunnels filling with water, 'not rising like a flood but breaking like a wave over the heads of these people, filling their crying mouths, filling their eyes, their hair, tearing away their clothes and discovering their secrecy which only the water, by now, could use'.[31] The mix of water and subway crowds is reminiscent of 'The Tunnel' in Crane's *The Bridge*, whereby ascending from the subway to be met by the restorative rainwater acts as an Eliotic utopian symbol of replenishment and fertility. However, Baldwin inverts that trope, making water violent and horrific. This moment is biblically apocalyptic in scope, reminding us of Noah's flood that was supposed to rid the corrupted earth of its sin.

Despite the horrific images of the drowning subway passengers, the water does seem to offer a moment of relief from the implied mass-alienation and therefore providing some of that brutal cleanliness. It is only by drowning that the subway crowds fleetingly escape their isolation, their secrets discovered as they are stripped bare - finally able to expose themselves and become vulnerable in death. This is a destructive solution to the isolated individuality of the modern city, a form of alienation that Arthur Schlesinger called 'a subtler slavery', inferring that the machinations of the industrial city robs the individual of their freedom through means more veiled than literal enslavement, turning us all into a 'lemming migration'.[32] The reference here to slavery as an analogous experience to urban living, when written by a white liberal, is certainly objectionable. However, not only is Schlesinger's description of urban living reminiscent of the naturalist determinism discussed in relation to Dos Passos and *Manhattan Transfer*, but in Rufus's case the jarring reference to slavery is more applicable, as, in fact, the experience of living as an alienated figure in the modern city is imbued with the histories of slavery and racism for the black urbanites, evident in Rufus's journey on the subway.

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[30] Ibid, p. 90.
[31] Ibid, p. 91.
[32] Schlesinger, *The Vital Center*, pp. 243 and 244.

Baldwin describes the white and black bodies occupying the A-train as 'chained together in time and in space, and by history, and all of them in a hurry. In a hurry to get away from each other, he thought, but we ain't never going to make it'.[33] The chain metaphor immediately implies a reference to slavery and emphasises modern alienation as this 'subtler' form yet simultaneously reveals that for Rufus this 'subtle' slavery is made conspicuous by his skin colour. The train itself protests 'the proximity of white buttock to black knee' whilst the fact that the white and black bodies are chained 'by history' insinuates that Rufus' race is the direct cause of his alienation.[34] The train itself being given the agency to protest the closeness of white and black bodies acknowledges the inherent nature of this tension within modern America - racism is being spatialised literally. Like in *Manhattan Transfer* the space being rendered as an animate and antagonistic force betrays some of Baldwin's naturalist influences, in that the city is being used as physical symbol for the society that oppresses Rufus.

The uncomfortable atmosphere created in the train carriage is another example of the anomalous position that the existence of black bodies does to disturb Myrdal's 'American Creed'. Marlon Ross makes a similar observation, writing how Baldwin consolidates Myrdal's observation that the American cultural mindset is inherently a racist one: 'Baldwin's contribution to African American culture lies in his ability to imbalance the cultural conception of normalcy and in his linking of normalcy to racist ideology. The concept of normalcy, according to Baldwin, is the legacy of a European American system of racism'.[35] The alienation this sense of anomaly or abnormality creates is only strengthened as the A-train travels further north towards the then-all-white neighbourhood of Washington Heights and the George Washington Bridge.

As the train becomes full of white passengers who 'looked at him oddly', Rufus ruminates '*You took the best. So why not take the rest?*'[36] At this point, whatever separation Rufus felt from the subway crowds has been exaggerated now that those crowds are wholly white. The accusatory 'you' suggests an antagonistic othering; he feels that his black body is being compared to the supposed 'standard'. The fact that Rufus feels like an anomaly in a space which professes to be representative of freedom and liberalism is what Myrdal called 'the problem in the heart of the American'.[37] Yet, instead, Rufus is made to feel 'chained' to histories of racism and estranged from his countrymen. Rufus's blackness is being othered through comparisons to normative whiteness, and Myrdal states that this idea of whiteness as equalling a standard within American society means that '[i]t is the

[33] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 92.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Marlon B. Ross, 'White Fantasies of Desire: Baldwin and the Racial Identities of Sexuality', *James Baldwin Now*, ed. Dwight A. McBride (London: New York University Press, 1999), p. 44.
[36] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 92.
[37] Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, p. xlvii.

white majority group that naturally determines the Negro's "place"'.[38] Rufus's anomalous presence in the train carriage is forcing the other passengers to confront the racialisation of American space, something that Myrdal tells us that 'most people, most of the time, suppress'.[39] Therefore, they define Rufus's blackness to simply mean 'not white' and therefore his 'place' is separate and distanced from them.

Not only does the racial tension emanate from the proximity of black and white bodies, but the *de facto* segregation of the city space is informing how these bodies interact. As the train approaches the white suburbs, the material layered histories of the city space become more apparent as different parts of the city can clearly be demarcated as 'white' or 'black' spaces. Amy Reddinger highlights that Rufus, at this point in the novel, is traversing both racial and spatial frontiers as he hurtles through the different areas of Manhattan: 'Rufus's journey on the A-train dramatises the limitations of race, space, and the effects of segregation within city limits'.[40]

I'm thinking of 'frontiers' in the way that Michel De Certeau does in his text *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), in which frontiers within stories involve an interaction between 'a (legitimate) space and its (alien) exteriority'.[41] De Certeau's definition of the frontier is useful when considering Rufus' movement through different New York City neighbourhoods as he provides a clear framework for thinking about what I am calling New York's *de facto* segregation of space.[42] The A-train passes through Harlem, Rufus's 'legitimate' space, and continues north into Rufus's 'alien exteriority', marked by the white passengers. We can think about De Certeau's idea of the frontier alongside David Harvey's idea of relative space. On the one hand, De Certeau's frontier is a point of interaction, whereby two spaces meet. It has 'a mediating role', a point of contact that is defined by 'what crosses it'.[43] The two spaces are linked, relative to one another, in a way that seems like the connected spaces in *The Bridge* that brought about a sense of 'wholeness'. It may be easy to think of the frontier in terms of a bridge, but De Certeau suggests this would be an unsatisfactory symbol. He describes the frontier as 'a sort of void', in that it is an 'in-between' that creates 'closure (Zaum)'.[44] This sense of closure can be thought of as a reduction, much like the passengers on the A-train reduce Rufus from an individual to a symbol of otherness. Whilst the frontier can be

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[38] Ibid, p. li.
[39] Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, p. xlv.
[40] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 92.
[41] Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Oakland: University of California Press, 1988), p. 126.
[42] De Certeau is often compared to Henri Lefebvre, as they were not only contemporaries, but also both prominent theorists on space and the everyday, adding relevance to De Certeau's work, and this thesis' theoretical framework for thinking through the implications of space. See Jill Ebrey, 'The mundane and insignificant, the ordinary and the extraordinary: Understanding Everyday Participation and theories of everyday life', *Cultural Trends*, 25.3 (2016), pp. 158-168 (p. 161).
[43] Ibid, p. 127.
[44] Ibid.

crossed, the two spaces that are interacting are alien to each other, marked by difference, and thought of in terms of interiors and exteriors, rather than something more akin to Frank's notion of 'wholeness'. De Certeau adds that a bridge, by contrast 'welds together' and turns a frontier 'into a crossing', allowing spaces to become a part of larger whole.[45] Therefore, although Rufus is feeling the burden of unequal interpersonal relationships on the A-train, he is also moving through spaces that are fragmented from one another and defined by difference, therefore othering him further.

However, Rufus's disconnect is not only felt between himself and the 'exteriority' he is now inhabiting. There is also a wholly interior tension at work, as even though he has spatially moved into 'alien' territory, it is he who is treated like an alien by the white onlookers. One can think of this internal dissonance in terms of Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis. Earlier in the novel, when gazing out over the city, Rufus states that 'the city and the lights below seemed to be calling to him', almost as if they were engaging in the 'call and response' song style, common in Jazz and Blues.[46] His own bodily rhythms appear to have synchronised with the rhythm of the city, displayed when he 'beg[ins] whistling a tune and his foot move[s] to find the pedal of his drum'.[47] He is rhythmically connected to the city space, in a way that blends Lefebvfre's rhythms with what De Certeau tells us about being elevated above street level, which allows one to 'read it, to be a solar Eye'.[48] However, on the A-train he has sunk below street level and there is no rhythmic syncopation. By this point in the novel, Rufus is wholly out of time with his surroundings. The sounds of the A-train are 'tearing', 'groan[ing]' and 'scrap[ing]' implying jarring dissonance.[49] All these external dangers and signals have been internalised by Rufus, shown when he describes the city as 'pressing down on him', contrasting from earlier when it was calling to him.[50] Rufus' internalisation of racialised spaces builds to an arhythmic crescendo as he leaves the subway and heads to the George Washington Bridge.

As Rufus exits the subway, he notes the station as 'named for the bridge built to honor the father of his country', immediately evoking the colonial histories that dominate American spaces and therefore dominate their inhabitants.[51] Emma Cleary comments on this sentence, stating that '[r]ather than making space legible and aiding navigation, monuments "make visible and mirror

[45] Ibid, p. 128.
[46] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 29.
[47] Ibid.
[48] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 92.
[49] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 92.
[50] Ibid, p. 93.
[51] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 92.

back to the walker in the street their place in the world", reproducing repressive spaces'.[52] To further solidify the symbolic significance of the structure, she notes that 'the George Washington Bridge houses the largest free-flying American flag' (which it still does to this day).[53] The bridge itself is intrinsically connected to American ideologies which suppress black experiences from its history. As on the A-train, the toxic histories layered into the city's infrastructure work upon Rufus's psyche, the bridge is described as 'over his head, intolerably high', implying both a physical and mental dwarfing.[54]

As he reaches the most elevated point at the centre of the bridge, the alienation and repression he is feeling are signalled through blindness on his part, as he looks at the car lights below 'writing an endless message […] in a fine, unreadable script'.[55] One recalls the blinding light which knocked Bud Korpenning to his death in *Manhattan Transfer*, except in this instance the lights represent an illegibility. This moment hints at the exclusionary nature of the city space: Emma Cleary points out that Baldwin 'challenges a binary vision of the gendered and racialized city streets by refusing to conceive of light solely as clarity' through the metaphor of the light as script.[56] The city (a representation of society) is a racialised space, appearing actively to oppress and alienate Rufus, excluding him and therefore making the space inaccessible. Simultaneously the internalised idea of difference between white and black within Rufus which relies on binary thinking consolidates the city as a hostile and racist environment and makes the city incomprehensible and alien to him. Rufus can no longer 'read' the city as the alienation and oppression he experiences within the city space has shaped and forced him into thinking in terms of binaries. The racial and spatial histories exclude and estrange Rufus by treating him as an anomaly. However, Baldwin uses light here to show obscurity, and therefore blurs the distinction between light and dark, or black and white, subtly disturbing the very binaries that disenfranchise Rufus.

Instead of being De Certeau's 'solar eye', Rufus 'raised his eyes to heaven', pleading '[a]in't I your baby too?'[57] Like safely moving through the city space, reading the space is a privilege not afforded to Rufus. Rufus notes that from the bridge New York 'seemed to be on fire'.[58] In a comparable way to the way the city is presented in *Manhattan Transfer*, New York is characterised by destruction and flame, a hellscape from which Rufus can only see one escape, the 'cold' and

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[52] Emma Cleary, "'Here Be Dragons:" The Tyranny of the Cityscape in James Baldwin's Intimate Cartographies', *James Baldwin Review*, 1 (2015), pp. 91-111 (p. 102).
[53] Ibid.
The flag was first flown in 1948 and since then it has at various times been called the largest free flying American flag.
[54] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 93.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Cleary, "'Here Be Dragons:" The Tyranny of the Cityscape in James Baldwin's Intimate Cartographies', p. 103.
[57] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 93.
[58] Ibid.

'black' waters of the river. The oppositional imagery of fire and water again calls to mind binaries, and the mutual destruction that either side of the line entails. These two symbols are connected by Baldwin to the colour binaries that Rufus felt on the A-train: 'He was black and the water was black'.[59] As a black man in New York, Rufus is forced into adopting a limited identity defined by binaries which filters into the very formation of the city space. Therefore, he realises, '[h]e could never go down into the city again' if he were to ever escape the 'closed' space of New York City.[60]

Baldwin ties the absolute despair that Rufus is feeling to the city itself, giving the environment the agency over Rufus's death in the same way Dos Passos does with Bud in *Manhattan Transfer*. Baldwin, rather than describing Rufus as jumping from the George Washington Bridge, instead writes 'the wind took him'.[61] In an earlier draft of the novel, he makes Rufus' helplessness even more explicit, writing '[h]e dropped his head as though someone had struck him'.[62] Rufus has no power over his fate: the layered histories of the city space have forced his every action at this point in the novel, to the extent that it is his surroundings that 'take him', implying that his one form of escape was not an escape at all, but a surrender. This is a prime example of what I mean by *Another Country* being an 'urban text': the city does not simply serve as a background for the action of the novel, but, as we see here, it is actively contributing to it in a way that bears comparison to *Manhattan Transfer*.

The similarities between this scene and the end of the first section of *Manhattan Transfer* are potent. I identified Bud's suicide as the result of seeing the city as a totalising entity, an absolute space that contrasts with the potentially more generative view of the relative or relational city space. However, Rufus's doom involves slightly different spatial perceptions. Although Rufus is certainly unable to escape from New York, and the city does have a totalising effect on him, this is not necessarily because Rufus is unable to recognise anything beyond the city. As we saw when Rufus was riding the A-train, ease of movement through the city space and comfortably crossing 'frontiers' is a privilege not afforded to black urbanites. It stands to reason that movement outside of the city is a similarly white privilege. Just before his fatal fall from the bridge, Rufus spies 'muted lights on the Jersey shore'.[63] Although I have established that light does not necessarily mean clarity, it is curious that Rufus looks at the city and then looks outwards towards the suburbs.

Reddinger states that in postwar America the flourishing suburbs that were populated by the middle classes were 'symbolic of the generalised economic success' that America enjoyed in the

[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] The James Baldwin Papers, '*Another Country* Typescript Draft', Box 18, Folder 5.
[63] Ibid.

wake of the Second World War.[64] This economic success resulted in a period of 'white flight' from the city where middle-class white families moved from the inner city out into the suburbs, making these suburbs distinctly white spaces. Like the George Washington Bridge, the suburbs that catch Rufus' eye are bound up with a distinctly American 'racial and political ideology of the postwar era' - an ideology of what Reddinger calls 'postwar hegemony' and conservative standards of what it was to be a modern American.[65] She continues that the suburbs occupy an intriguing space as they are 'a symbol of escape from the city as well as a reminder of its limits'.[66] Therefore, there is something contradictory at work here, as by recognising the suburbs and looking to or beyond the city limits, Rufus is, to use the language of Harvey, perceiving New York as a relative space, one that is reliant on a network of other spaces which counteracts the city's status as an inescapable presence. But one could also argue that the suburbs are not external, but in fact peripheral, which would imply that like Bud, Rufus is only able to see 'outside' spaces in the context of the centralised city space.

However, unlike Bud, Rufus is not seeking a spatial centre. He is excluded from the city space almost entirely and so is forced to look outward. Even if Rufus does recognise the city's relationship with other spaces, it ultimately does not matter. The suburbs, like the city itself, exclude Rufus. From the 1940s onwards, whites moved to affluent suburban neighbourhoods, whilst the black urban population grew. This formed what Henry Louise Taylor called a 'Great Wall' between city and suburb.[67] If the suburbs signify cultural norms, then for a racial 'anomaly' like Rufus, the suburbs are not an escape, but a symbol for the impossibility of escape; a related, outside space that is technically connected to the city, but is perpetually out of reach for black people. It is not enough to recognise the relationships between spaces for Rufus. Like Jimmy Herf at the end of *Manhattan Transfer* he has severed his ties to the city and is leaving Manhattan. However, unlike Jimmy, Rufus is black. Recognition that spaces can be perceived as relative to one another cannot change the fact that certain characters do not have the privilege of free and easy movement around and outside of the city, and they are almost exclusively black characters. There is no spatial 'wholeness' in this relative perception of the city space, it remains fractured due to the racist ideologies that govern these spaces.

Rufus does not have the same naivete that Jimmy has at the end of *Manhattan Transfer*, he is acutely aware that the systems that oppress him within the boundaries of New York City are at

[64] Amy Reddinger, "'Just Enough for the City": Limitations of Space in Baldwin's *Another Country*', *African American Review*, 43.1 (2009), pp. 117-130 (p. 126).
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Henry Louise Taylor Jr, 'The Hidden Face of Racism', *American Quarterly*, 47.3 (1995), pp. 395-408 (p. 401).

work throughout the nation, if not the world. His hopelessness therefore appears justified, he seems to have nowhere to turn. Earlier in the novel when Vivaldo suggests moving to the coast, Rufus replies 'They're on their arse out there, too. It's no different from New York'.[68] Currently, there is no space that can provide any relief for Rufus. Therefore, the suburbs can only function as another alien exterior. This exclusion implies that, for black people at least, Baldwin is saying this frontier is yet to become a crossing, the two spaces cannot be bridged in the abstract sense. Instead, there exists a 'Great Wall'. The irony, then, of Rufus standing on a material bridge is ultimately tragic. On the George Washington Bridge, Rufus is caught between the city and the suburbs, literally bridging two supposedly connected spaces. But alas, both of those spaces offer no salvation, and the 'unreadable script' of the car lights signifying white mobility are the last things he sees before he is 'taken'.[69]

Baldwin himself did enjoy both national and international mobility throughout his life and career, most notably in Paris. This was a lifestyle afforded him by his prominence in the literary scene after the success of his early novels and non-fiction works, including, of course, *Another Country*. However, Baldwin is clearly aware that this is not a luxury afforded to most, especially within the communities that he grew up in. He writes, almost guiltily, about his own escape from the spatial clutches of the city in *No Name in the Street*, and how upon his return he realised how he, his social circles, and his status had changed:

> I began to be profoundly uncomfortable. It was a strange kind of discomfort, a terrified apprehension that I had lost my bearings. I did not altogether understand what I was hearing. I did not trust what I heard myself saying. In very little that I heard did I hear anything that reflected anything which *I* knew, or had endured, of life. My mother and my father, my brothers and my sisters were not present at the tables at which I sat down, and no one in the company had ever heard of them. My own beginnings, or instincts, began to shift as nervously as the cigarette smoke that wavered around my head. I was not trying to hold on to my wretchedness. On the contrary, if my poverty was coming, at last, to an end, so much the better, and it wasn't happening a moment too soon—and yet, I felt an increasing chill, as though the rest of my life would have to be lived in silence'.[70]

Spatial mobility certainly means a certain kind of freedom and economic status for Baldwin. As shown here, he is appreciative of this new lifestyle, and welcomes it, and yet when briefly returning

[68] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 57.
[69] Ibid, p. 93.
[70] Baldwin, 'take me to the water', *No Name in the Street*, pp. 25-26.

to New York in 1952, he was acutely aware of those he has left behind. His 'brothers and sisters' who are not only unable to access these rooms and these meetings, but unable to even move with ease or security through the city itself, haunt Baldwin and mean that he cannot fully enjoy his new affluence and mobility in New York, so much so that he once again flees to Paris. There is an overwhelming sense that Baldwin knows how rare a position he is in, and as such, experiences a similar sense of alienation to Rufus and other black people existing in white spaces: within the spatial confines of a city controlled by white powers, he is still an anomaly.

The seemingly impossible spatial mobility of black urbanites is also explicitly exemplified through the character of Ida Scott, Rufus's younger sister, and her relationship with Rufus's best friend, and white liberal, Vivaldo. Perhaps more than her brother, Ida is a character who is consistently associated with a specific city space, that being Seventh Avenue and Harlem more broadly. Baldwin establishes the kinds of histories and associations that Harlem carries via Vivaldo, who recollects that 'he felt more alive in Harlem, for he had moved in a blaze of rage and self-congratulation and sexual excitement'.[71] For white men like Vivaldo, Harlem is a space of titillation and danger, a site where he 'merely dropped his load and marked the spot with silver'.[72] Within white society, black female exploitation had become inextricably linked to the streets of Harlem, a layered spatial history that informs the character's relationships with space. Maria Balshaw comments that white folks constructed Harlem 'as exotic and erotic spectacle', a 'great Harlem event' which reimagines Harlem as a performative space where white desire can be perversely enacted.[73] As a result of these histories, Ida makes a conscious effort to escape the fate she sees herself destined for if she stays in Harlem: 'I couldn't stay there, I knew I couldn't stay there, I'd grow old like they were, suddenly, and I'd end up like all the other abandoned girls who can't find anyone to protect them'.[74]

Ida therefore reverses the journey her brother took uptown at the end of his life and takes the A-train out of Harlem to the white neighbourhoods of downtown Manhattan. At first, the move appears to be a kind of victory for Ida. She has crossed a spatial frontier and removed herself from what she saw as a geographically specific form of oppression. There is a definite acknowledgement by Ida that her blackness and her body are a commodity, one which is more valuable downtown amongst white men than it would be in Harlem amongst black men: 'I'm too dark for them, they see girls like me on Seventh Avenue every day'.[75] Controlling her oppression and benefitting from

[71] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 135.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Maria Balshaw, *Looking for Harlem* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 37.
[74] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 406.
[75] Ibid, pp. 408-409.

it directly is the only choice she can make in order to escape what she saw enacted upon Rufus and which she sees as a fate that is stamped upon the streets of Harlem itself. To explore this depiction of Harlem as a space of supposed inherent oppression, I will briefly discuss Harlem's history and how it gained these typically negative associations.

Harlem, in the early twentieth century, was somewhat of a mecca for many African Americans escaping Southern racism, with its central location in the city and the lavish design of the residential buildings (such as those in what is now known as Striver's Row) by the renowned architect Stanford White. Dan Matlin tells us that by 1920 its population was '90 percent […] African Americans', and the culture boom that would become known as the Harlem Renaissance allowed the neighbourhood's reputation to be one of 'expectant arrival' for those flooding into the city.[76] These aspects make it impossible not to connect Harlem with black urbanites in the early twentieth century, but it is also, at this point, a mostly positive reputation.

But, Matlin continues, stating that when Harlem was ravaged by the Depression, and the riots of 1935 and 1943, the positive symbolism Harlem had enjoyed was 'recast' and it then became a 'byword for tarnished illusions'.[77] This shift is captured in the often harrowing photography of Gordon Parks, who documented Harlem's streets in collaboration with Ralph Ellison in a series known as *Harlem Is Nowhere* in 1948. Baldwin also directly references the degradation of Harlem in *Another Country* when Vivaldo and Cass Silenski are travelling through Harlem to Rufus' funeral:

> They had come out on Lenox Avenue, though their destination was on Seventh; and nothing they passed was unfamiliar because everything they passed was wretched. It was not hard to imagine that horse carriages had once paraded proudly up this wide avenue and ladies and gentlemen, ribboned, beflowered, brocaded, plumed, had stepped down from their carriages to enter these houses which time and folly had so blasted and darkened. [...] The windows had not always been blind. The doors had not always brought to mind the distrust and secrecy of a city long besieged […] it had had once been home, whereas now it was a prison.[78]

Even though within the cultural imagination the 'illusions' that were now synonymous with the Harlem ghetto carried over to the African American people who continued to populate the neighbourhood, Baldwin's use of 'besieged' suggests the presence of something outside the space

[76] Dan Matlin, *On The Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 19-20.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Baldwin, *Another Country*, pp. 117-118.

of Harlem that is working to oppress its inhabitants and diminish the space itself. Although it is certainly true that there is a connection between Harlem and the black oppression represented within much of Baldwin's work, Baldwin does in fact challenge the idea that this oppression exists only within the absolute boundaries of Harlem.

In 'Down At The Cross' Baldwin observes that those on the Avenue were 'lost, and unable to say what it was that oppressed them, except that they knew it was "the man" - the white man'.[79] There is a recognition that oppression within Harlem was coming from a kind of exterior system or source ('the white man'). Referring again to 'Fifth Avenue Uptown' (1960), Baldwin displays that the oppression found in Harlem is not only something that exists and originates from beyond Harlem's borders, but that the white working-class are also victimised by it. He states that 'an itemised account of the American failure does not console me and it should not console anyone else'.[80] It is an 'American failure', not a black failure, or a failure inherent to Harlem - the ghetto is a product of the capitalistic American society, and to ignorantly place the responsibility of ghettos onto black people is simply a racist solution to a systemic issue. Kwame Ture (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton expressed the failure of white America in the black ghettoes in *Black Power* (1967), where they stated that white systems were 'draining skills and energies from the black ghetto into white neighborhoods', externally oppressing those black communities.[81] This was also the argument of the black radical writer James Boggs, who, in 1966, wrote:

> [E]very administrative and law-enforcing agency in this country is a white power. It is white power the decides […] who goes to what schools and who does not go; who has transportation and who doesn't; who has garbage collection and who doesn't; what streets are lighted and have good sidewalks and what streets have neither lights nor sidewalks; what neighborhoods are torn down for urban renewal and who and what are to go back into these neighborhoods.[82]

Recognising who or what has power over the urban space is key in understanding why Harlem is ghettoised in the public consciousness. The fact that in 'Fifth Avenue Uptown' Baldwin states the inhabitants are unable to recognise what exactly is keeping them down allows for misplaced

[79] Baldwin, 'Down at the Cross', *The Fire Next Time*, p. 25.
[80] Baldwin, 'Fifth Avenue Uptown', *Esquire*.
[81] Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in* America (New York: Random House, 1992), p. 55.
[82] James Boggs and Grace Lee Boggs, 'The City is the Black Man's Land', *Monthly Review*, 17.11 (1966), pp. 35-46 (p. 42).

frustrations or blame which then tarnishes the space rather than the (white) systems responsible. Here again we can detect Myrdal's observation of the American tendency to suppress the realities of racism, where the 'white world' does not recognise, or chooses not to recognise, the racism inherent in American society which oppresses and alienates black spaces. The misplacement of anger and frustrations are themes which Baldwin addresses directly in *Another Country* through Ida once she feels she has supposedly 'escaped' Harlem and the fate that befell Rufus and any black New Yorkers trapped within that space.

Ida, upon entering the 'white domain' of downtown is looking to capitalise on what the white world can offer her, and this certainly has a financial dimension. Her decision to leave Harlem, I have mentioned, was partly due to seeing her body as capital and recognising where it would be most valuable. Her aspirations for a lucrative singing career meant that the kind of society she must ingratiate herself within is distinctly white, and distinctly middle- and upper class. The elevation of her status that this new lifestyle affords her is clear when she takes Cass Silenski out on the town and enters a club where neither of them are dressed in appropriately formal attire. Ida shrugs it off, stating '[i]t doesn't matter' before staring 'imperiously' at the crowd.[83] She has risen above her origin and can now access exclusive, white spaces which contrast drastically with the ghetto.

She is participating in a system which Frantz Fanon details,[84] whereby '[o]ne is white above a certain financial level'.[85] Ida is clearly associating wealth and prosperity with downtown, and poverty with Harlem, which then creates a distinctly financial divide between black and white. As Fanon writes, becoming rich was 'a form of salvation that consists of magically turning white'.[86] It is not that Ida wishes to become white, but rather, whiteness is her only option for salvation in America. As we saw with Rufus on the A-train, one is either alienated from one's surroundings and one's own body, or one assimilates and adapts along these racial and financial binaries. Ida herself calls this reluctant assimilation 'replac[ing] a dream with reality'.[87] If Ida successfully lived the rest of her life 'passing' as white (not literally, but in a Fanonian sense that whiteness is financial) throughout the city due to her newly elevated status, then Baldwin's novel would almost certainly be equating racist oppression with Harlem itself. However, this is not the case in *Another*

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[83] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 345.
[84] Frantz Fanon was a Martinican academic, and although his work is not central to this chapter, his writing on interracial dynamics in one of his seminal texts, *Black Skin, White Masks*, is useful when discussing characters like Ida and Vivaldo in *Another Country*. Because the chapter I am quoting from refers directly to interracial relationships from the perspective of black women, I think it is important to briefly use Fanon to expand upon the specifics of Ida's foray into 'the white world'.
[85] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. 30.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 350.

Country, as detailed by Sirpa Salenius who states that Baldwin shows the reader how 'the interplay of two opposing spaces and realities within the cityscape creates social and racial tensions that expand outside the marginalised Harlem into the white neighbourhoods of New York'.[88] Directly before her inclusion in the exclusive space of the club, Cass questions Ida over her relationship with white people, to which Ida replies 'wouldn't you hate all white people if they kept you in prison here?'.[89] It is clear that Harlem was not exclusively a site of oppression for Ida, and that New York, and even America itself fulfils the role of 'prison'.

The lived histories of racism that permeate the American space was something that led Baldwin himself to become an expatriate and move to Paris in 1948, which is where he drafted his collection of essays *Notes of a Native Son* (1955). In the essay 'Stranger in the Village' he reflects on his feeling of entrapment, writing '[p]eople are trapped in history and history is trapped in them'.[90] Racism is inescapable, and something Baldwin couldn't run from, even outside America. Ida's sense of incarceration is immediately evident upon entering the club, where her status is awarded to her because she is with 'Mr Ellis's party'. Baldwin's description of her view as she approaches him succinctly exemplifies his role as prison guard who allowed her status because of his own wealth, masculinity and racial privilege: 'The place was crowded, but at a large table which gave the impression, somehow, of taking up more than its share of space, sat Steve Ellis'.[91] Ellis, through his own racial privilege, spatially dominates the scene, exuding power over Ida, even forcing her to perform for his pleasure, against her will: "'I'd much rather not." "We'll *see*. Okay?" "All right," said Ida, and took her hand away, "we'll see."'.[92] Ellis is directly controlling Ida here, both in her acceptance into the space, but also her role in that space. Ida was correct in that her body does hold more value outside of Harlem, but the value placed upon it still creates a power dynamic which oppresses her.

Even when a direct business transaction is not present, white domination follows Ida outside of Harlem through her relationship with Vivaldo. When the two of them are first physically intimate she insists upon repeatedly asking Vivaldo whether he'd slept with 'girls like me […] colored girls' before.[93] Upon finding out that he had slept with black prostitutes, she is described as letting out 'a long, shuddering sigh' before closing her eyes.[94] The very transactional and oppressive relationship she was looking to escape from has found her outside of Harlem. Ida is

[88] Sirpa Salenius, 'Marginalised Identities and Spaces: James Baldwin's Harlem, New York', *Journal of Black Studies*, 47.8 (2016), pp. 883-902 (p. 884).
[89] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 343.
[90] James Baldwin, 'Stranger in the Village', *Notes of a Native Son* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), p. 163.
[91] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 346.
[92] Ibid, p. 347.
[93] Ibid, p. 176.
[94] Ibid.

aware not only of Vivaldo's fetishisation of black bodies, but also that that dynamic is not space specific. For black women, it is inescapable. Like the ghetto itself, the exploitation of black women is an American problem, not one that is limited to Harlem. The dynamic that Vivaldo creates within their relationship in this moment forces Ida to assume the very role she thought she had escaped by leaving Harlem.

There is also a binary at work here, a binary that white society forced black female sexuality to conform to. Either a black woman was, as Hazel Carby describes, 'rampant and uncontrolled', or 'a figure of virginal purity'.[95] Ida is forced to surrender to his will, to become a 'pure' figure to differentiate herself from the black women he has paid for previously and so that Vivaldo's promiscuity is justified by her innocence - he is the experienced conqueror and she is the virginal maiden. This stereotyping is the only way that Ida can ensure that she has value to Vivaldo. Like her subservient role to Ellis, Ida once again must assume a performative role for white men. Vivaldo even says as much, describing Ida looking at him 'as though she were, indeed, a virgin, promised at her birth to him'.[96]

Through covert signalling, Vivaldo is violently forcing Ida into a very particular identity, that of the black, chaste woman. In projecting his colourful fantasy onto Ida, Vivaldo forces her to submit and conform to a white, male perspective of otherness. The same violence which coerced Rufus into seeing himself as an 'other' is also working on Ida, through Vivaldo. Ida can only see herself as something wholly separate from him, a tool for Vivaldo's pleasure, shown by the repeated references to Vivaldo 'possessing' her. Her black skin mixed with her femininity makes her othered, not only from him, but from herself as well. At the end of the chapter, Baldwin quotes a song that Ida is singing as she makes Vivaldo coffee: 'Just want to feed / This hungry man of mine'.[97] This domestic feminine servitude lyrically references Ida's subjugated role in feeding Vivaldo's fantasies, whilst simultaneously relating Ida's experience in the kitchen to something particular to the black experience through the blues.

The oppression Ida suffers outside of Harlem indicates that her status is not specific to the ghetto, as Ellis and Vivaldo both see her as a form of physical property – outside Harlem her body is still being considered in terms of use and exchange value. But with Vivaldo Ida is perhaps more spatially limited as Baldwin combines the private and the public, the outside and the inside, to show how Ida cannot escape her gender and her race, no matter where she tries to find shelter in the city. The clashing of different spatial imaginaries occurs starkly in the scene where Ida and

[95] Hazel Carby, 'Policing the Black Woman's Body in an Urban Context', *Critical Inquiry*, 18.4 (1992), pp. 738-755 (pp. 745 and 747).
[96] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 176.
[97] Ibid, p. 179.

Vivaldo are having sex for the first time. When Vivaldo tells her that he used to visit Harlem to sleep with prostitutes, symbols that, to Ida, are associated with the space of Harlem and Seventh Avenue, not only does uptown enter downtown, but simultaneously an exterior or outside space invades the domestic space of Vivaldo's room. If we consider Harvey's concept of relational space here, then Ida's imagination during this moment with Vivaldo changes the dynamics of Vivaldo's room and of private space. Ida's sigh of resignation as she imagines the women Vivaldo had propositioned on Seventh Avenue, with the italicised repetition of '*I paid them*' echoing around her psyche, blurs the limits of the room via her imaginative rendering of an outside space.

Baldwin heightens the blend of spatial imaginaries through Vivaldo, whose imagination brings into the room imagined foreign spaces with a colonial fantasy of exploration and conquering. He begins by focusing on Ida's colour – just as the A-train passengers focused on Rufus' blackness, as Ida, like Rufus, is being recognised as an exotic anomaly: 'I love your colors. You're so many different crazy colors'.[98] Whilst Ida sees Vivaldo's contrasting colour as something potentially dangerous and threatening, Vivaldo sees Ida's blackness as 'crazy', a fetishised otherness reminiscent of Edward Said's description of 'the Orient': Ida's body becomes a 'place of Romance, exotic[ism] […] remarkable experiences', much like Vivaldo's characterisation of Harlem itself.[99]

Vivaldo even begins to see himself in this exotic light when attempting to gain Ida's perspective, 'for the first time, his body presented itself to her as a mystery and that, immediately, therefore, he, Vivaldo became totally mysterious in her eyes'.[100] This all seems to be a part of the fantasy, with Vivaldo enacting a kind of colonial role-play, which Baldwin describes explicitly: 'he felt that he was travelling up a savage, jungle river, looking for the source which remained hidden just beyond the black, dangerous, dripping foliage'.[101] Here, the colonial metaphor enhances the idea of difference and power. However, it also blends the domestic space with an imagined 'jungle', and so not only does Ida endure the associations she has with the space of Harlem infiltrating the private and domestic space, but also the colonial and overtly racist imaginings of Vivaldo who colonises her body and in doing so allows his warped idea of 'the jungle' to enter the domestic space as well. These two imagined spaces are even combined, as Vivaldo and Ida refer to Harlem directly as 'down there in the jungle' later in the novel.[102] Ida's inability to escape these associations is indicative of how racist disenfranchisement is present throughout the city.

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[98] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 177.
[99] Edward Said, 'Orientalism', *The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism: Second Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), p. 1866.
[100] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 176.
[101] Ibid, p. 177.
[102] Ibid, p. 404.

The presence of outside or exterior spaces within the domestic sphere of Vivaldo's rooms suggests a lack of private space for black urbanites in America. Ida is unable to escape the various implications of her race and gender when trying to establish a home in the city and likewise Rufus, when attempting the same goals with Leona, is unable to escape the ingrained values of American racism which position him as 'other', no matter how private the space is that he is occupying. The notion of the 'home' in the city is thus impossible for the black characters in the novel. When Rufus and Leona spend their first night together, Vivaldo catches them the next morning enacting a version of traditional American domesticity, with Leona in the kitchen displaying herself as 'a splendid specimen of Southern womanhood', whilst Rufus is in bed, enjoying the 'slow shock' that such a scene is inspiring in Vivaldo: '[l]et the liberal white bastard squirm, he thought'.[103] Amy Reddinger identifies this scene as 'a parody of domestic bliss that highlights the inversion of the logic of the racial order' - in other words, this interracial domesticity is a deliberate inversion of traditional American values.[104] However, Reddinger goes on to identify that Vivaldo's reaction demonstrates that despite this moment being a kind of claiming of the home space, it is also 'rendering perverse the possibility of a black / white home within the American context'.[105] The impossibility of the domestic sphere haunts Rufus's attempts, as he and Leona are gradually exiled to 'the very edge of the island', as neighbours complain and shun them.[106]

In the first section of the novel, we see Rufus move from domestic to public spaces, neither of them offering him any solace. In the public space he is 'aware of the eyes that watched them pass, the nearly inaudible murmur that came from the benches or the trees'.[107] The agency is once again given to the environment, as it is the benches and the trees that make Rufus feel unsafe with Leona - the city itself sees them as 'anomaly', as counterintuitive to the ingrained American Creed. When outside he wants to 'get away from this place and this danger', but domesticity offers him no respite as the danger seeps into the private space as well.[108]

One evening when Vivaldo visits their Lower East Side apartment, he finds Leona battered and bruised and so attempts to take her to his place to save her from the brutalisation she is suffering at the hands of Rufus. Rufus' warped idea of patriarchy and his exclusion from these systems of privilege creates a self-hatred, and this convoluted mindset compels Rufus to beat and rape Leona. In this moment, he attempts to assert the sanctity of his right to what he sees as his property: "'This is my house," he said, "and that's my girl. You ain't got nothing to do with this. Get your

[103] Ibid, pp. 33-34.
[104] Reddinger, "'Just Enough for the City": Limitations of Space in James Baldwin's *Another Country*', p. 120.
[105] Ibid, p. 121.
[106] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 62.
[107] Ibid, p. 49.
[108] Ibid, p. 46.

arse out of here'".[109] He sees Vivaldo as threatening his private property but, as Reddinger observes, by trying to counter Vivaldo's invasion of home 'within patriarchy' he 'ultimately fails within the category of race'.[110] What Reddinger is saying is that black men, despite their gender, are still excluded from these privileges. However, this is a morally complex aspect of the novel, and this is not an assertion of conventional domesticity. Although Baldwin is clearly showing how Rufus is desperately trying to claim patriarchal power, and exercising a deranged form of that power, he is certainly not a victim in this scenario. He may be denied what he perceives as his rights to property (including Leona) as a man, but these horrific attitudes and actions are a twisted form of the kinds of rights he is barred from as a black man.

Rufus sees Vivaldo's actions as invasive and a challenge to his ownership of private property, but there is a more complex dynamic at play here shown in Vivaldo's response which displays both the severity of Rufus' actions towards Leona and the specific danger he is in as a black man. Vivaldo says '[y]ou could be killed for this […] [a]ll she has to do is yell. All *I* have to do is walk down to the corner and get a cop'.[111] Rufus' race means that he is at a much higher risk of police brutality and murder. Whilst Vivaldo's presence protects Leona, this is secondary to his protection of Rufus, with whom he shares a strange solidarity, suggesting a love between the two that does not become fully apparent until later in the novel. The patriarchal system, a core pillar of the western world, is unavailable to Rufus due to his status as a racial 'anomaly' and this causes him to seek revenge on the white world by enacting horrific acts on who he sees as a representative of that world. Although private space is not safe for Leona, Baldwin does display that despite his role as the aggressor, it is also an unsafe space for Rufus.

I have established how black characters throughout the novel are unable to peacefully exist in the city space, as the network of urban spaces are all connected by inherently racist systems and attitudes that pervade American society. Like in *Manhattan Transfer* where hopelessness and death provided a dark sense of 'wholeness', in stark contrast to the generative wholeness found in Crane's *The Bridge*, racism is consistent throughout New York's spaces in *Another Country*. This means that recognising the connections between spaces relative to one another, and perceiving spaces relationally, as was the case in the imagined spaces that entered Vivaldo's room, all offer no relief, as these spatial perceptions are all coloured by the pervasive nature of the racist society that they exist within. Although both Rufus and Ida in various ways attempt to escape their oppression spatially, they both discover that spatial mobility is either impossible, or affords them no respite.

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[109] Ibid, p. 62.
[110] Reddinger, '"Just Enough for the City": Limitations of Space in James Baldwin's *Another Country*', p. 121.
[111] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 62.

This immobility does, however, somewhat contrast with Baldwin's own exceptionally mobile life. Having grown up in Harlem in relative poverty, in 1943, at the age of nineteen, Baldwin made 'the necessary break' and moved to Greenwich Village under the guidance of the artist Beauford Delaney, who biographer David Leeming describes as a figure who proved to Baldwin 'that a black man could live and work outside of the ghetto'.[112] However, Greenwich Village was not the site of salvation he had hoped. He lost the great love of his time in the Village, Eugene Worth, to suicide in 1946 (Worth jumped from the George Washington Bridge and served as the inspiration for the character Rufus). Leeming tells us that two years later, having grown weary of what he saw as a distinctly American brand of racism, Baldwin relocated to Paris, feeling that 'he needed distance from the racial realities at home so that he could become the writer he wanted to be'.[113]

Like Ida in *Another Country*, Baldwin feared his fate would be the same as Eugene Worth/Rufus Scott, and chose to counter this through spatial change. However, like Ida when she travels to the white enclaves of downtown Manhattan, Baldwin realised that 'Europe did nothing to change his heritage. He was as much a black man in Paris as he had been in New York'.[114] Crossing spatial frontiers does not alter the effects of racism, and so related spaces can only become constructive for black people if the nature of the spaces themselves change. This is something Baldwin wrestled with for the rest of his life, being 'torn between his attachments to home and his need to be in Paris, Istanbul, Hollywood, or Saint-Paul-de-Vence'.[115] And so, despite the mobility afforded him by his literary success, Baldwin still encountered the same difficulties that he articulates through the characters of Rufus and Ida Scott. It is interesting, then, that the only character in *Another Country* that does share Baldwin's spatial mobility is white and therefore can display that interconnected spaces and the ability to move freely and safely through them can be a source of inspiration and healing.

Eric is a queer white actor who, when we meet him in the novel, is on the cusp of moving back to New York after years living as an expatriate in France. David Leeming describes him as a character who 'has discovered the peace that comes from self-acceptance and openness to the needs of others', in other words, as someone whose sources of happiness are his interpersonal relationships.[116] This sensitivity can certainly be read spatially. Throughout the novel we witness Eric crossing a variety of different frontiers: racial, sexual, and spatial. The first instance of this mobility is during a recollection from his childhood in Alabama.

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[112] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, pp. 38 and 43.
[113] Ibid, p. 56.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid, p. 57.
[116] Ibid, p. 203.

During the novel's sojourn into the Deep South, we witness Eric questioning and violating social, sexual, and spatial boundaries whilst undergoing an adolescent journey of self-discovery. He describes an 'increasing isolation and strangeness' compared to the rest of his countrymen, which he ascribes to 'the extreme unpopularity of his racial attitudes - or, rather, as far as the world in which he moved was concerned, the lack of any responsible attitudes at all'.[117] The fact that Baldwin highlights a lack of any 'responsible' attitudes is important, as it implies that he is able to operate from outside of the implications of Myrdal's 'American Creed' where the realities of the American mindset include discrimination and racism: a perspective unavailable to Rufus. Eric is therefore able to embody a privileged space that rejects the very notion of black people as 'anomaly'. This is exemplified in his interaction with LeRoy, a 'colored boy' who 'worked as a porter in the courthouse'.[118] Not only are traditional racist attitudes rejected here, but sexual ones too, as it is hinted that the two boys harbour sexual or romantic desires for each other, as with each interaction they 'wished to say more, but did not know how'.[119] They are ridiculed for their closeness by a group of white kids who 'beat out a mocking version of the wedding march on his horn' as they drive past.[120]

The reactions of those surrounding Eric highlight his transgressive nature, with even LeRoy himself stating '[y]ou *ain't* supposed to be walking around this damn country road with no nigger'.[121] Like Rufus, LeRoy is forced to adhere to the racist systems that dictate American life. These rules enforce that his blackness is an anomaly that must be spatially limited and controlled. Eric, due to his racial privilege, finds it difficult to even comprehend these limits that society places upon him for both his racial attitudes and his sexuality: 'you're not a nigger, not for me, you're LeRoy, you're my friend and I love you'.[122] Eric doesn't truly recognise the divisions he is traversing as he does not frame the world along those lines, which is why his own actions and beliefs make him feel so alien, so isolated from his surroundings. This scene establishes that Eric, although he is immaturely unable to recognise the differences in his and LeRoy's experiences, does at least refrain from reducing LeRoy to an abnormality by not comparing him to traditional Western standards of whiteness.

The racism and homophobia that Baldwin describes in this reverie are specifically spatial in nature. Alabama was a state that housed particularly strong racial tensions in the mid-twentieth century. The city of Birmingham, Alabama, for example, was the site of roughly fifty racially-

[117] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 199.
[118] Ibid, p. 200.
[119] Ibid, p. 202.
[120] Ibid, p. 203.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

motivated fire bombings between 1947 and 1965, which led to the city becoming known colloquially as 'Bombingham'.[123] Baldwin himself is described by Leeming as having an obsessive anxiety around 'the South' as a space whilst working on *Another Country*, stating that '[d]uring the summer of 1957 Baldwin talked incessantly about the South, his fear of it and his sense of his own vulnerability in relation to it'.[124] The reader can feel these tensions within Eric whilst growing up in such an oppressive environment. He is, at this point, hyper-aware of societal pressures, thinking to himself 'he knew that everything he had ever wanted or done was wrong'.[125] Despite Eric's immaturity and privilege allowing him to remain largely ignorant of the transgressive nature of his desires and actions, he still understands that he is not 'normal' - in a sense, he is an anomaly.

Eric tells the reader whilst lost in this reverie that 'many years were to pass before he could begin to accept what he, that day, in those arms, with the stream whispering in his ear, discovered; and yet that day was the beginning of his life as a man'.[126] This moment signals the beginning of Eric's struggle to understand the frontiers he can cross, whether those are spatial, sexual, or racial. Eric's ability to navigate these boundaries is a part of his privilege as a white man. Although he is subjected to homophobia and alienation, he is also able to challenge those oppressions whereas LeRoy is much more limited in the ways he can resist due to the practical restrictions placed upon black people's mobility.

Baldwin physically shows the boundaries Eric can cross, as he and LeRoy reach 'the town's dividing line' where they would usually turn off the road 'into a clump of trees'.[127] Here we as readers encounter a shift into private space, where Eric and LeRoy can more freely be together. Rather than separate at the 'dividing line', they occupy that line, physically embodying a spatial transgression. However, LeRoy is only briefly able to inhabit this space with Eric, and cuts off this transgression by leading him away, and saying 'you got to stop coming to see me'.[128] Like Rufus, LeRoy is trapped and unable to enjoy the privilege of spatial mobility. There is no escape: 'You *better* get out of this town. Declare, they going to lynch you before they get around to me'.[129] Both of them are in space-specific danger, but only Eric can act upon it.

Eric's trajectory almost inverts De Certeau's idea of the frontier, as he escapes from an alien interior (Alabama) and travels to an at least accepting, if not familiar, exterior (New York). The idea of an exterior being reliably hospitable is something afforded strictly to white characters in

[123] Glenn T. Eskew, '"Bombingham": Black Protest in Postwar Birmingham, Alabama', *The Historian*, 59.2 (1997), pp. 371-390 (p. 371).
[124] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 137.
[125] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 204.
[126] Ibid, p. 205.
[127] Ibid, p. 203.
[128] Ibid, p. 204.
[129] Ibid.

the novel. Eric can travel to the city when he becomes unbearably alienated from his home in the South and is then also able to travel to France when New York becomes a site of alienation for Eric after his relationship with Rufus. His rejection of oppressive spaces affords him mobility and freedom that characters like Rufus, and LeRoy are unable to enjoy. Eric can not only recognise the relationships between spaces, but he can also move through them in a way Baldwin is suggesting black Americans cannot. However, it is telling that travelling North does not bring Eric peace, or the ability to practice self-acceptance and in turn the acceptance of others. We learn that it was 'many years later' that Eric achieved this, and so, although recognising spatial relationships and exercising mobility is clearly important, it does not seem to give us the whole picture.

Eric can cross metaphysical frontiers and literal, geographic frontiers throughout his life, eventually moving north to New York. Baldwin was able to do this too, and in 1957 inverted Eric's journey from the South to the North, to learn more about the civil rights struggle that was mounting in the southern states. Reading Baldwin's account of this trip alongside Eric's childhood memories in Alabama it becomes obvious that the space of 'the South' is another space which must be read as relative to 'the North', something that both Baldwin and Eric exemplify in their own relationships with both spaces. By reading these spaces as relative to one another it becomes clear that although the injustices that Eric experiences are in some ways specific to the South, they are also present in the supposedly more tolerant Northern space. Therefore, Eric does not in fact find his freedom just from being spatially mobile, but by relating to and forming relationships with the people within those spaces as well.

In his essay 'A Fly in Buttermilk' (1958) Baldwin admits that '[t]he South always frightened me' due its cultural position in 'books and headlines and music' as a space of suffering for black people.[130] However, upon journeying to the South, Baldwin is reminded that not only are black folk in America 'just one generation from the South', but that many black Northern communities are but a 'tribute' to those of the Southern black population.[131] Baldwin learns, in what appears to be a humiliating surprise to him, that the only difference between the segregation in the North as compared to the South is how official it is and that his personal experiences in Harlem are not so different from those experienced by black Southerners. This phenomenon is clear upon reading Rufus's journey on the A-train. Baldwin finishes the essay admitting that 'our troubles were the same trouble', and that the relationship between the North and the South was much closer than he imagined.[132]

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[130] James Baldwin, 'A Fly in Buttermilk', *Nobody Knows My Name* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 76-77.
[131] Ibid, p. 77.
[132] Ibid, p. 86.

Interestingly, this idea of shared trouble between the North and the South was more bluntly portrayed by Baldwin in earlier drafts of *Another Country*. The original opening of the novel included the story of how Eric and Rufus originally met, which was going to be at a Southern military camp where Eric witnessed a white officer brutalise Rufus in front of the other cadets. This original passage describes Rufus's 'white uniform, on the ground, against the red, dusty clay […] he spat red blood into the red dust'.[133] We can recognise the influence on Baldwin of his journey south in 1957 in this passage, as in 'Nobody Knows My Name' (1959) he references the 'red-rust earth', as well as a story he is told by a 'Negro poet' who tells Baldwin how one of his 'brothers, in uniform, had had his front teeth kicked out by a white officer'.[134]

However, there is more than just anecdotal influence from this trip to the South. The colour associations that Baldwin employs in this early draft are found in the final version of the novel. In the draft version Rufus's red blood is connected to whiteness, implying that whiteness is synonymous with anger and violence, whilst in the finished novel Rufus's blackness is married to the black waters of the Hudson River, suggesting the inevitability of death for those caught between these destructive colour binaries. Although the colour schemes are different, both instances display the oppressive and dire circumstances of Rufus in both the North and the South. While the South might be more obviously coded as 'white', they are linked in that neither allows black people to live without oppression and pain. In Baldwin's own words '[b]oth camps are deluded'.[135]

Baldwin continues his ruminations on the shared experiences between the North and the South in the essay 'Nobody Knows My Name', admitting that 'the South is not the monolithic structure which, from the North, it appears to be, but a most varied and divided region'.[136] By acknowledging that the South is a structure of interrelated spaces Baldwin also goes on to acknowledge that one of those interrelated spaces is the North: 'the racial set-up in the South is not, for a Negro, very different from the racial set-up in the North'.[137] What Baldwin is inferring through Eric's own relationship to Northern and Southern American spaces, as well as what he discovered on his trip to the South in 1957, is that any kind of progress in defeating the racial and spatial nightmare in America is going to have to be through reading spaces as interrelated. However, there is also a need to appreciate the relationships between people in those spaces so that while differences are recognised, they do not cause division and misunderstanding.

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[133] The James Baldwin Papers, '*Another Country* Early Draft', Box 18, Folder 1.
[134] Baldwin, 'Nobody Knows My Name', p. 88.
[135] Ibid, p. 100.
[136] Ibid, p. 94.
[137] Ibid.

Baldwin, by the end of his travel writings in the South, appears to have more of an appreciation of his own position in relation to the South and the civil rights struggles that were emanating from there. He finishes 'Nobody Knows My Name' by connecting the interrelated qualities of Northern and Southern spaces with the individual, stating that recovery from such violence and oppression requires that 'everyone who loves this country [must take] a hard look at himself, for the greatest achievements must begin somewhere, and they always begin with the person'.[138] In this essay he is calling for an appreciation of the relationship between spaces and peoples to bring about a brighter future. Although the pain and struggles within the North and the South are shared, so might their salvation.

So far in this chapter I have emphasised how the city space is a site of relentless pressure and degradation for the black characters in Baldwin's *Another Country*. Whether Rufus and Ida are trying to move through the city and escape the effects of oppressive spaces, or trying to establish a private home, they are continuously at the whim of dominant racist systems and attitudes. The dehumanising alienation that haunts Rufus as he takes the A-train uptown, or that follows Ida out of Harlem display that, for black New Yorkers, every part of the city is determined by systemic racism. Racism's continual presence throughout the city does display that spaces within the city are linked. However, recognising that those spaces are in dialogue with one another does not change the fact that in all of them black bodies are rejected as an uncomfortable anomaly.

Only Eric has the racial privilege of spatial mobility, as his status as a white man allows him to transition from space to space without consequence. However, even this is not enough, and the relationships and attitudes of the individuals within those spaces is also necessary to truly bring about meaningful, redemptive change. The stasis of Baldwin's black characters implies that being black in the American cityscape is a hopeless existence, and Rufus's fate seems inevitable. But this is not a hopeless novel. Rufus's trajectory is not Baldwin's conclusive stance within *Another Country*.

As I have established, Baldwin connects space to character, using characters to symbolise spaces, whilst simultaneously reading spaces as pregnant with the lived histories of the people and characters who exist within them. In *Another Country* and his essays from the early 1960s, Baldwin was interested in presenting different ways of existing and viable alternatives for those struggling to exist in modern America. By showing the potential of loving relationships between different characters in the novel, Baldwin also gestures towards the potential for spaces to become habitable for black people. This spatially progressive outlook relies on characters being able to heal the divisions that separate them, and for this I will analyse some of Baldwin's essays before again turning to *Another Country* and particularly the character of Eric.

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[138] Ibid, p. 100.

The Racial Dream

Baldwin ruminates on how alienation is produced by the construction of blackness as anomalous in his essay 'Down At the Cross: Letter from a Region in my Mind' (1963). The essay was published the year after *Another Country*, and in it he describes meeting Elijah Muhammed, leader of the Nation of Islam, in the summer of 1962 on Chicago's South Side. Baldwin appears conflicted when faced with the views of Muhammed and his followers. He describes himself as 'extended between these poles' of black separatism and liberal integration.[139] He is caught between the two, unsure of how to reconcile the contradictions inherent in protest and meaningful action while also being mindful of the values passed on to him by his mother, who taught him to treat others as he wished to be treated, and to 'perpetually attempt to choose the better rather than the worse'.[140] In using this quotation, I do not assume that integration is inherently better than black separatism, but rather that Baldwin was taught to try and see the best in people, rather than focus on their negatives. Transplanting this attitude into the issue of separatism versus integration, it is interesting to consider that these values passed on to the young Baldwin would favour seeking a meaningful way of working with others different from himself. However, this is not as straight forward as general values.

Baldwin recognised that there 'is no reason that black men should be expected to be more patient, more forbearing, more far-seeing than whites'; in fact, the 'real reason that non-violence is considered to be a virtue in Negroes […] is that white men do not want their lives, their self-image, or their property threatened'.[141] These conclusions would suggest that violent protest and separatism were logical, with capitalistic property ownership being at the core of many racist attitudes, and so violently taking back control of private property from white institutions would seemingly solve the problem. However, when Baldwin is being driven away from Muhammed's wealthy home, he begins to question the practicalities of this new independent state, asking the driver on what 'will the economy of this separate nation be based?', before privately musing, 'in order for this to happen, your entire frame of reference will have to change, and you will be forced to surrender many things that you now scarcely know you have […] life would be very different without them, and I wondered if he had thought of this'.[142] Baldwin is distinctively non-utopian in his thinking here and is in fact concerned with a more practical standpoint which could affect change in the world he lives in, rather than creating a new one altogether. The inference here is

[139] Baldwin, 'Down at the Cross', *The Fire Next Time*, p. 56.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid, p. 55.
[142] Ibid, p. 70.

that instead of seeing the problem and removing it, or removing oneself from it, one must recognise the problem and try to fix or change it – an attitude of meliorism as opposed to complete revolution.

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, Baldwin's views at this point in his career are liberal, and although he referred to himself as between the poles of separatism and integration, his work in the late 1950s and early 1960s would suggest he had much more in common with the latter viewpoint. However, the liberal standpoint that I am suggesting Baldwin occupied was certainly a problematic part of his philosophy and writing for some involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-twentieth century. Baldwin's desire to see black people and white people unite to defeat the American racial nightmare was something that invited criticism when it came to black independence and protest. The liberal approach that Baldwin preferred is epitomised in his interaction with Elijah Muhammed and the Nation of Islam but was also vocally criticised by many of his contemporaries. The most famous example of this was Eldridge Cleaver, who, upon reading *Another Country* and *The Fire Next Time*, released a homophobic tirade against Baldwin, and claimed that he had a 'gruelling, agonising, total hatred of the blacks' and a 'shameful, fanatical, fawning, sycophantic love of the whites' in his text *Soul on Ice* (1968).[143] Daniel Matlin notes that some critics felt 'representations of black life that were intended to invoke empathy and generate public support for social reforms all too often encouraged contempt and fatalism about the black poor and fed support for a punitive politics of law and order'.[144] And critics like Irving Howe, although at points complimentary, saw Baldwin's fiction as a compromised and diluted version of the fiery protest literature of Richard Wright.[145]

These criticisms become even more stark when looking at the core readership that Baldwin cultivated in his early career. Leeming states that: '[h]is white acquaintances, in particular, were his congregation - listening to his preaching, serving as his witnesses, and directly suffering his anger', who were 'the precursors of the well-meaning, committed white liberals who were so necessary to James Baldwin's eventual success in the literary and social world'.[146] Matlin states that this makes Baldwin an 'indigenous interpreter' of 'black urban life to the white American public', which places him in an uncomfortable position in the eyes of many. Between his sociological focus and his white audience, it may appear as though Baldwin is fetishising the black experience for his readers,

[143] Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul On Ice* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), p. 124.
[144] Matlin, *On The Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis*, p. 15.
[145] Irving Howe, 'Black Boys and Native Sons', *Dissent* (1963), pp. 353-368
[146] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 47.

turning his characters into moral lessons and examples, rather than artistically portraying the lives of his subjects.[147]

But as was noted by Norman, Baldwin, despite his liberal sympathies, could also be critical of those he labelled 'liberals', and although the general liberal principles of someone like Schlesinger can be found within Baldwin's writing from this period, he is still able to distance himself from the less racially progressive strains of thought that a broad definition of liberalism can sometimes imply. In Leeming's biography, he details the way Baldwin's white congregation were limited in their 'white commitment', which resulted in Baldwin inferring '[i]f you can't go all the way […] don't bother at all'.[148] Baldwin is abundantly aware of the impossible position he is in regarding his audience and wanting to communicate to everyone to achieve something collaborative, whilst still decrying the harmful adherence to the status quo. Baldwin's nuanced position of promoting liberal integration and collaboration, whilst still fighting for progressive principles, can be thought through alongside another key civil rights leader who was similarly criticised for his liberalism: Martin Luther King Jr.

Robert Weisbrot comments on the liberal approach of Martin Luther King Jr., stating that King 'sought to stretch the liberal vision beyond endorsement of limited welfare programs', and that nonviolent protest leaders like King 'invoked liberal ideals' with the intent of creating an 'alliance between black and white liberals'.[149] Weisbrot does go on to note that this liberal idealism was ultimately limited in its efficacy, and that the persistence of prejudice and inequality called into question the commitment of white liberals, as well as the limits of liberal ideals more broadly. However, he states that the promise of liberal reform was widely accepted in the early sixties, and despite the misgivings of other factions within the Civil Rights Movement, the specific kind of liberalism I identify within this period of Baldwin's writing, and the works of Martin Luther King Jr., was a major component of the conversation around civil rights at this time.[150]

When Baldwin made his trip to the South in 1957, Leeming describes an encounter between Baldwin and the then up-and-coming civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr., outside a church in Montgomery. Baldwin is said to have overheard King explaining that bigots 'could only be saved by love', and that it was like 'hearing the message of "Notes of a Native Son"'.[151] It is not surprising that King's famously liberal approach to civil rights at this point in his career chimed with Baldwin's own, but this is a concrete example of the similarities between the two. Their shared

[147] Matlin, *On The Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis*, p. 4.
[148] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, pp. 48-49.
[149] Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Plume, 1991), p. xiii.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 145.

belief in a constructive relationship between black and white America is exemplified in King's *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* from 1967 (the year before King's murder and the point at which Baldwin's relationship with this form of liberalism would change). Interestingly, King does criticise the liberal valorisation of civic order, something Fawcett even describes as being a core principle of liberalism. King states that the white liberals who prefer 'tranquillity to equality' and think of integration in purely tokenistic 'aesthetic terms' are not helping the fight for civil rights, but merely putting a plaster over a gaping wound.[152] This is not a pandering to the white liberal mindset, and flies in the face of the kind of criticisms often levied at Baldwin, and even at King by leaders who were fighting for more separatist ideals.

Baldwin, despite appealing to many and even befriending white liberal thinkers, was also critical in white liberals' position of privilege. Leeming tells us that: 'as a man with a mission to bear truthful witness, he could not conceive of an evening out with those who, by benefit of their color, possessed power over his people, without reminding them of the real nature of the situation in which they lived'.[153] Despite both Baldwin and King being seen as pandering to the white liberal mindset, it is clear they both held liberal positions that were not a weak, compromised viewpoint extended between poles, but rather a unique liberal position that saw compromise as something both rational and necessary.

Like Baldwin, King also felt the answer to America's sickness lay in unity between people of moral standing, even quoting conservative hero Edmund Burke: 'When evil men combine, good men must unite', calling for 'world-wide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class'.[154] King writes that although it is almost 'impossible for white Americans to grasp the depths and dimensions of the Negro's dilemma', for the 'chasm of hostility, fear and distrust to be bridged, the white man must begin to walk the pathways of his black brothers'.[155] Here, King uses the metaphor of the bridge to show the collaborative gesture which can be achieved when the empathetic view of blackness as something different to whiteness, but not defined simply by difference, is undertaken. Only then can what King calls the 'world house' be healed of the sickness that is racism. This 'world house' contains 'a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace'.[156] King's invocation of 'the world house' calls to mind the spatial dynamics in *Another Country*. In recognising the family dynamics between people(s) contained within the world house, the bonds

[152] Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 88.
[153] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 48.
[154] Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, pp. 89 and 190.
[155] Ibid, p. 102.
[156] Ibid, p. 167.

between these people can also be recognised between spaces. Baldwin, through his own liberal stance, is displaying how the relationships between spaces, evident when perceiving them through Harvey's relative and relational spatial categories, are reliant on interpersonal relationships.

In *Another Country* Baldwin displays the connection between the personal and spatial and in doing so also acknowledges the complexity of his feelings towards both liberalism, and those he calls 'liberals'. Vivaldo's literary mentor or sorts, Richard Silenski, is a Greenwich Village white liberal whose literary career is beginning to flourish, despite the quality of his work having now lapsed. One can imagine that someone like Richard might be a representation of the performatively progressive members of Baldwin's white audience. Although he is outwardly supportive of Ida after her brother's disappearance and later hosts Ida and Vivaldo as a couple at his book launch and other social gatherings, he is also consistently racist throughout the text. He calls Vivaldo's relationship with Ida a result of Vivaldo having 'scraped the bottom of the white barrel', revealing his investment in the inherent value of white skin.[157]

Later, Baldwin shows how these personal attitudes mirror the spatial construction of the city when Richard and Cass's children get into a fight with some 'some coloured boys' whilst out playing in the streets. The performative progressiveness at first wins out, as when Richard's son, Paul, asks: '[i]s it because they're coloured and we're white? Is that why?', Richard replies '[t]he world is full of all kinds of people, and sometimes they do terrible things to each other, but – that's not why'.[158] However, as soon as they boys are out of earshot not only does Richard's overtly racist reading of the situation come to the fore, but also the way those attitudes are anchored to the city space itself. He says '[t]his kind of thing's been happening more and more here lately […] and, frankly, I'm willing to cry Uncle and surrender the island back to the goddam Indians. I don't think that they ever intended that we should be happy here'.[159] The negative associations that Richard has with the city space are tied to the racial histories of colonisation and racial genocide, much like the histories that Rufus was hyper-aware of when travelling on the A-train earlier in the novel. Rather than the melioristic attitude that Baldwin advocates in 'Down at the Cross', Richard sees the way that his family are personally affected by their surroundings as reason to leave and abandon the city and its inhabitants which he sees as indicative of its deterioration. In other words, he sees a parallel between the existence of black and brown bodies within his neighbourhood with its unsuitability as a liveable space for himself and his family. The attitude that saw Ida as below the bottom of the white barrel translates into how Richard perceives the city space itself.

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[157] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 158.
[158] Ibid, p. 240.
[159] Ibid.

Richard goes on to say 'Little black bastards […] they could have killed the kid. Why the hell can't they take it out on each other, for Christ's sake!'[160] Despite Richard's apparent liberalism, it is a politics of separation and difference that is at his core. Like Myrdal's idea of the American Creed, Richard may see himself as a modern, tolerant individual, a bastion of American liberal values. However, ultimately this creed is artificial, and Richard finds the existence of black people within his white world a disturbing facet of reality. He once again blames the city space as an entity for troubling his personal worldview: 'I don't know. This whole neighbourhood, this whole city's gone to hell. I keep telling Cass we ought to move – but she doesn't want to. Maybe this will help change her mind'.[161]

Whilst before when Rufus was riding the A-train, or when Rufus and Leona were moving through the city together, the environment was portrayed as actively hostile as a symbol for the systemic issues of racism and violence, here those attitudes are distilled into Richard, a man seen as reputable within urban society who in fact harbours racist assumptions that demonise black bodies and the spaces they occupy. Rather than seeing commonality with the black urbanites he perceives as invading his family's domain, he only sees anomalies and recognises their spatial proximity as a sign to leave and further enforce both the psychological and geographic separation that maintains his own racist worldview. One can see how Richard's behaviour here when faced with the prospect of coexisting with other races within New York helps create and consolidate the unofficial segregation of the city space that Rufus recognised whilst on the A-train and contributes to the ghettoisation of spaces like Harlem.

Richard is an example of the kind of white liberal that both Baldwin and King criticise as preferring tranquillity to equality and even going a step further and revealing that these personal beliefs are rooted in a deep-seated racism. By associating these large systemic issues with an individual's outlook and then tying that outlook to Richard's perception of the city at large, Baldwin demonstrates how peoples' personal experiences and beliefs mirror and influence how a space is perceived. To use the language of Harvey, this is a kind of relative spatial perception, whereby the city is characterised relative to the individual. However, it also extends into the abstract, as it is Richard's racist beliefs that are also tied to the organisation of the city.

Baldwin further demonstrates how individual perspectives influence space later in the chapter when describing the scene on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village:

[160] Ibid, p. 241.
[161] Ibid, p. 242.

> Here were the black-and-white couples, defiantly white, flamboyantly black; and the Italians watched them, hating them, hating, in fact, all the Villagers, who gave their streets a bad name. The Italians, after all, merely wished to be accepted as decent Americans and probably could not be blamed for feeling that they might have had an easier time of it if they had not been afflicted with so many Jews and junkies and drunkards and queers and spades.[162]

The overlapping perspectives of different individuals and groups in this scene determine the spatial politics of the street. The section is reminiscent of the descriptions of the Lower East Side that Ridge writes in 'The Ghetto' and like in Ridge's poem, the lived experiences of those living in the city space influence its dynamics. Although Baldwin homes in on clashing racial and cultural groups, there is still an emphasis on the relationships between them under the banner of a new America, one with interracial couples challenging separatism, and the attitudes of white racists like Richard Silenski. Even the resentful Italians in the Village are, perhaps reluctantly, coexisting with the colourful mass on MacDougal Street to integrate and try to become satisfactorily American. Their hatefulness is a direct result of the oppressive, white dominant society that makes integration so challenging and encourages division. What both Baldwin and King preach within their version of liberalism is that changing the attitudes of the individual and fostering relationships between the supposed duality of black and white can work to transform how the city, and by extension the country, is perceived and change those systems of oppression. With those changes becoming more widespread, perhaps the criteria for becoming American may no longer cause resentment between individuals and communities. Baldwin reveals that when writing *Another Country* he still held out hope that this liberal belief in the power of the individual over the systems that govern America through the notably white characters of Eric and Vivaldo.

Eric is in some ways Baldwin's idealised version of the white liberal: someone who lives authentically (a trait that attracts Cass to him as a tonic for her frustrated and unfulfilling relationship with Richard) and acts as a confidant and mediator for other characters throughout the novel. This role is never more obvious than when looking at the part he plays in helping Vivaldo rethink his relationship with both Rufus and Ida in the latter part of the novel.

The third book of *Another Country* opens with Vivaldo dreaming he is on a 'wintry bridge, looking down on death' as Rufus watches him, willing him to jump.[163] On the other side of the bridge, he sees Ida, working 'in collusion with her brother'.[164] Vivaldo and the two Scott siblings

[162] Ibid, p. 292.
[163] Ibid, p. 374.
[164] Ibid.

are separated: they are across on one side of the bridge whilst Vivaldo is caught in the middle, attempting to unite with them and yet unable to do so comfortably. Instead, the inherently relational symbol of the bridge (a symbol which also reminds us of the physical landmark of the George Washington Bridge and Rufus' death) is described as a 'cruel wall', upon which Vivaldo feels 'entirely helpless' within the antagonism between himself, Rufus and Ida.[165] The bridge is transformed into a 'wall', which implies a border, a disconnect, rather than the joining usually associated with the bridge symbol.

Baldwin's use of a bridge in this dream sequence directly links the metaphysical with the physical, like the Brooklyn Bridge did in Crane's poem, which is comparable to Harvey's idea of relational space. Vivaldo's feelings of emotional and cultural separation from Rufus and Ida are represented spatially. Like Rufus on the George Washington Bridge, Vivaldo does not feel he can cross the bridge and unite with Ida on the other side – at this point he feels completely disconnected from her, whilst he loves her and cares for her, her experiences as a black woman in the modern city and how difficult and different they are from his own are not yet fully appreciated by Vivaldo. As a result, he does not trust her and their relationship is based on deeply rooted resentments and traumas. Meanwhile, Rufus is willing Vivaldo to follow in his footsteps and jump from the bridge, reenacting his gruesome suicide to know something of his experience, helping him truly transform the cruel wall he is teetering on into a workable bridge to Ida.

Vivaldo's dream reflects the moment when Rufus is on the George Washington Bridge, a moment where Rufus' personal pain and hopelessness was mapped onto the city space itself, as the bridge suspended him between two polarities that offered him no relief. Although the bridge in question is more abstract as it is an embodiment of Vivaldo's emotional distance from Ida, and a representation of Vivaldo's need to comprehend Rufus' experiences, the fact that Baldwin uses a bridge, and by extension the city space, as a symbol of Vivaldo's personal development demonstrates the connection that Baldwin identifies between the individual and their physical environment. In these two instances the physical urban environment and the metaphysical personal journeys of the characters have a reciprocal relationship, with one influencing or representing the other. This transformation of the George Washington Bridge into a symbol of Vivaldo's emotional development is reminiscent of the role the Brooklyn Bridge played in Crane's *The Bridge*, where the architectural feature became a spiritual one.

It is only when Vivaldo pleads with Rufus for mercy, and confesses his love for him, that dream and reality begin to blur and the imagined embrace of Rufus becomes the actual embrace of Eric

[165] Ibid.

'to whom he cl[ings]'.[166] Vivaldo's dream reveals to the reader what has been plaguing Vivaldo throughout the novel - his frustration in attempting a philosophy of love, of connection, whilst still ascribing to the mindset of difference and anomaly that means that both Rufus and Ida, despite his love for them both, are always othered by him. He is standing on the bridge, reaching out towards both Rufus and Ida, and yet they appear as antagonists, as people on the other side of a divide.

What follows are seemingly instinctive sexual acts between Vivaldo and Eric, although the blurring between Eric and Rufus is consistent throughout, with Vivaldo referencing that the ecstasy felt 'like death by drowning', or that he felt as though 'he had stepped off a precipice', all of which allude to Rufus's suicide but allow Vivaldo to embody Rufus in his final act.[167] There are also the sounds of the 'drumming rain', reminiscent of Rufus's jazz drumming, giving Rufus a direct physical presence in the room. Vivaldo even explicitly asks himself '[w]hat was it like for Rufus?', recalling Eric's sexual relationship with Rufus and seeing himself in Rufus's previous situation.[168] Therefore, not only do Rufus and Eric become one, but Rufus and Vivaldo also become united via their shared sexual liaison with Eric. Through enacting a sexually open experience with Eric, Vivaldo is able to finally reach out and connect with Rufus, to put himself in Rufus's shoes, so to speak, and relate to him in a way he never had before. As David Leeming states when analysing *Another Country*, it is through this moment with Eric that Vivaldo 'is finally able to know something of Rufus's experience'.[169]

The interconnectivity of homosexual and racial relationships has been a large part of more recent Baldwin scholarship, and whilst not the focus of this chapter, is essential to consider when analysing this pivotal shift in Vivaldo's relationship with the Scott siblings via his intimacy with Eric. The dual concerns of race and sexuality have historically been seen as at odds with each other within Baldwin's work, with Douglas Field writing that Baldwin himself insisted both that 'sexuality is a private matter' and that 'race is a more important question than issues of sexuality'.[170] Furthermore, Marlon Ross writes that 'Baldwin may be seen to have a dual identity, but in this paradigm the characteristics of race and sexuality always compete for dominance'.[171] Baldwin's status as, on the one hand, a very visible gay, black writer is somewhat at odds with his own stance on sexuality as something both undefinable and private. However, similarly to how I am arguing

[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid, pp. 377-378.
[168] Ibid, p. 378.
[169] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 204.
[170] Douglas Field, 'Looking for Jimmy Baldwin: Sex, Privacy, and Black Nationalist Fervor', *Callaloo*, 27.2 (2004), pp. 457-480 (p. 459).
[171] Ross, 'White Fantasies of Desire', *James Baldwin Now*, p. 24.

that Baldwin blurs the distinctions between public and private spaces and sees private or personal attitudes or relationships influencing or being emblematic of larger social, spatial and political concerns, so too does the apparently private matter of sexuality bleed into the more public racial questions that Baldwin engages with.

Despite the physical act of sex being between Vivaldo and Eric, two white characters, the consistent blending of Vivaldo and Rufus, and Eric and Rufus, distorts the racial dynamic of the scene. The racial categories of 'white' and 'black' that have been so distinct throughout the text are suddenly difficult to distinguish as Rufus is described as having 'thrashed and throbbed' whilst Vivaldo 'thrashed and throbbed and mounted now'.[172] Later in the same paragraph Vivaldo directly conflates Rufus and Eric: 'And Rufus? Had he murmured at last, in a strange voice, as he now heard himself murmur, *Oh Eric, Eric*'.[173] Through the blending of the white and black characters in the scene, Baldwin explodes those categories and instead offers something less binary. This blurring mirrors the lack of sexual binaries exhibited by Eric, Vivaldo, and Rufus in this moment, but also their bisexuality as throughout the novel all three of them also engaged in intense relationships with women. Therefore, neither binary of heteronormative nor homosexual is fully adhered to, and Baldwin provides a consistent blurring of categories by these three men. Ross writes that once Baldwin cast aside the idea of white normalcy, he was able to 'write inside whiteness without being trapped in it or by it, and without being afraid of losing the inheritance given him by historical blackness'.[174] Ross does go on to detail how Cleaver's homophobic criticisms of Baldwin did curb the openness with which Baldwin expressed the interrelation between race and sexuality. However, within *Another Country* Baldwin can show the potential connection and interrelation of white and black, through the medium of homosexual love.

The separation of white and black, as previously stated, enforces a kind of moral standard, where white is virtuous and black is inferior or even evil. Similarly, heterosexuality and homosexuality contain a similarly distinct moral coding. By destabilizing both simultaneously, Baldwin disrupts these agents of the status quo and provides an alternative worldview which allows for connection without the shadow of arbitrary rules that police desire and union. As Ross writes: '[t]he uncloseting of desire – sexual desire – would be a necessary step if Americans hoped to unwarp their imaginations from the destructive bent of racism'.[175]

Earlier in this chapter I used a quote from Ross to articulate the fallacy within the 'American Creed' that whiteness is inherently superior. I wish to return to that section of 'White Fantasies of

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[172] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 378.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ross, 'White Fantasies of Desire', *James Baldwin Now*, p. 34.
[175] Ibid.

Desire' as it summarises the intermingling of race and sex that Baldwin is speaking to through Eric and Vivaldo's tryst: '[w]hite supremacist culture needs a norm in order to trust its illusion of black inferiority and white supremacy. More precisely, it needs a sexual norm in order to perpetuate the myth of whiteness as a racial norm'.[176] When Eric disrupts Vivaldo's sexual norms, he can expose the racial norms that Vivaldo has been unconsciously adhering to in his relationships with both Rufus and Ida and therefore helps Vivaldo begin the process of healing.

It is Eric who acts as the link between Vivaldo and Rufus: having now been with them both he serves as a conduit for their posthumous connection. He is the missing ingredient in Vivaldo's dream. Without Eric's position as a liberal mediator, in other words, Eric's desire for meaningful relationships that go beyond the limits placed upon individuals by 'normative' standards, a bridge between Vivaldo and Rufus (and Ida) is unsuccessful - as Rufus found when he was atop the George Washington Bridge. The overlapping that takes place between all three men represents Eric's ability to unite, and it carries through to the way Eric interrupts the binaries of sexuality, releasing Vivaldo from the heterosexual binary and revealing himself and his sexuality as operating on an ill-defined spectrum as opposed to one side of a clear and distinct divide. Having experienced what Vivaldo calls his 'opening up' in this passage, he then begins to apply these lessons in acceptance and empathy to his 'life with Ida', realising that it is up to him to resolve it and that 'I can't give up my battle. If I do, I'll die'.[177] Rather than hide from his responsibilities he opts to face them, to take a step out onto the bridge without the oppressive mindset of binary thought and begins the process of healing and joining with Ida on the other side.

The moment between Eric and Vivaldo leads to the scene between Vivaldo and Ida where Vivaldo finally starts to know her and her brother. He practices what he preaches to Eric, when he says '[p]erhaps if you can accept the pain that almost kills you, you can use it, you can become better'.[178] Leeming calls this process the 'essential message of the blues'.[179]

Baldwin's relationship with the blues is well documented in his story 'Sonny's Blues' (1957) and his play *Blues for Mr Charlie* (1964). For the purposes of this chapter, Baldwin's definition of the blues in *Another Country* can be thought through alongside Ralph Ellison's definition of the blues in *Shadow and Act* (1953) where he writes: '[t]he blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-

[176] Ibid, p. 44.
[177] Baldwin, *Another Country*, pp. 380 and 388.
[178] Ibid, pp. 382-383.
[179] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 204.

cosmic lyricism'.[180] Baldwin clearly resonates with this definition, as in 'Sonny's Blues' the final performance in the jazz club is described in similar terms: 'I heard what he had gone through, and would continue to go through until he came to rest in earth. He had made it his: that long line, of which we knew only Mama and Daddy. And he was giving it back, as everything must be given back, so that, passing through death, it can live forever'.[181] The blues is the artistic channelling of pain and trauma to bring about revelation.

Rufus is the corpse floating in each character's psyche, and Baldwin is implying that the process of moving past their traumas can only begin once oppressive systems of thought are cast off and a collaborative, liberal approach is accepted. Only then can pain and suffering transition into love and understanding. As Lynch writes: 'One of Baldwin's most recurrent motifs is the paradoxical idea that suffering can enrich our lives and even help us to survive', especially when people join together and share in each other's suffering.[182] This lesson, or message, that Rufus had come to represent to all the characters was also coded into the very novel itself through the consistent use of blues music throughout. Rufus's drumming, Ida's singing, and the records that are played in domestic and public spaces are constantly reminding the reader that something beautiful and valuable can come from hardship.

It is only now that Vivaldo truly seems to grasp the message of the Blues, after having such an eye-opening experience with Eric, who is the epitome of someone not chained to America's normative standards. Leeming succinctly summarises Eric's role in the novel, as revealed in this section:

> On the level of parable, then, *Another Country* has at its center the observing artist-mediator played by Eric, who preaches and practices a lesson of acceptance and love among a group of Americans who are 'victims' of the incoherence of American life, who must find their own identity before they can love and be whole. These Americans, like the nation they represent, are haunted by the spectre of Rufus and Rufus's agony. Their lives are, necessarily, a blues song of longing.[183]

It is important to note that Leeming directly states that the characters in the novel are representative of 'the nation' of America. Baldwin was criticised for focusing on the individual

[180] Ellison, 'Richard Wright's Blues', *Shadow and Act*, p. 78.
[181] James Baldwin, 'Sonny's Blues', *The Jazz Fiction Anthology*, ed. Sascha Feinstein and David Rife (Bloomington, IN: UP, 2009), p. 47.
[182] Lynch, 'Just Above My Head: James Baldwin's Quest for Belief', p. 295.
[183] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 204.

instead of addressing social themes in his fiction writing.[184] But Baldwin, adhering to traditional liberal ideas, suggests that the two are intrinsically linked and one cannot be changed without the other. According to Schlesinger, this is a vital element of the liberal mindset, as he writes: 'the reform of institutions can never be a substitute for the reform of man'.[185]

As I previously discussed, characters become synonymous with city spaces, whether it's Ida being unable to escape the shadow of Harlem's Seventh Avenue, or Rufus being shunned by the passengers on the A-train when uptown due to the black urbanite's association with Harlem, or even Vivaldo's oppressively white ties to Greenwich Village - all of the characters are directly connected to spaces. Likewise, spaces themselves are 'lived', to use Lefebvre's term, and are defined by their inhabitants and their lived histories. Thus, the two are intertwined, meaning that when I write that by the end of the novel there is the potential for characters to create meaningful connective and symbolic bridges between each other, then the same is true of space. Lynch, when articulating how Baldwin saw suffering as redemptive, states that Baldwin saw 'suffering as one's bridge to other people, for it can save both sides from isolation and potential despair', however I would add that importantly it is a shared sense of suffering that challenges despair.[186] Rufus felt alone in his suffering, and so could not connect with the world around him. Vivaldo, through Eric, is eventually able to recognise Rufus' suffering and engage in thinking free of the binaries that enabled Rufus' alienation. These individual developments are necessary to bring about national, or even global change, which Lynch also suggests: 'Baldwin depicts the suffering of people of whatever colour in order to concretize the idea of moral regeneration in the lives of a few individuals, while suggesting hope for its realization on a much larger scale'.[187]

According to Baldwin's liberal outlook, for American racism to be cast aside, American individuals and spaces must form constructive relationships with one another, as Verena Conley writes: '[b]orders have to be turned into crossings and rivers into bridges'.[188] In focusing on individuals, Baldwin is simultaneously focusing on the nation. We see this enacted directly through Eric, as not only does he allow for Vivaldo to connect with Ida and Rufus, but he physically connects Europe and America when he facilitates his young lover Yves's emigration from France to New York City. However, the biggest clue here is the title of the novel itself: *Another Country*. Baldwin is suggesting that another America is possible, one that embraces liberal potential and allows connections between spaces and people so that fascistic and bigoted ideologies are quashed.

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[184] Matlin, *On The Corner*, p. 14.
[185] Schlesinger, *The Vital Center*, p. 250.
[186] Lynch, 'Just Above My Head: James Baldwin's Quest for Belief', p. 296.
[187] Ibid, p. 297.
[188] Verena Andermatt Conley, *Spatial Ecologies: Urban Sites, State and World-Space in French Cultural Theory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p. 37.

Baldwin's ideology then, is a coming together of spaces and peoples that eliminates the idea of 'we' and 'them' whilst being mindful of inherent differences. It is not a position that is between two polarities, but a position that does not include polarities. By establishing connections, or bridges, between people and space, there is no alienated separation. As Martin Luther King Jr. tells us, 'we still have a choice today […] between chaos and community'.[189]

The final moment in the novel when Yves lands in New York where Eric is waiting for him, is a distinctly non-utopian ending to the novel, yet it remains hopeful. Baldwin describes the ending thusly: 'I spent a whole book trying to convey what this innocent European was going to get himself into', but in doing so, he has displayed to the reader how we may go about altering what Yves was 'getting himself into'.[190] Yves thinks of New York as 'that city which the people from heaven had made their home'.[191] Baldwin simultaneously describes it as a space that fills him with 'excitement which was close to panic'.[192] There is something of the Romantic sublime in Yves's version of the city, an incomprehensible awe displayed in the list-like description of the city that begins this final chapter: 'on bronze, on stone, on glass, on the grey water […] highways, stretching and snarling and turning for mile upon mile upon mile'.[193] To use terminology from Harvey's *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, Yves's panoptic view from the plane window makes the space relative, a near incomprehensible amalgamation of perspectives, movements and places, which gives off the impression of unreadability. It is almost reminiscent of the 'unreadable script' that Rufus tried to read from the George Washington Bridge - too much to take in for Yves's 'innocence'.

However, despite the holy view of New York that Yves has, we as readers know that this space also has the potential to be a living-hell. We do not share in Yves's innocence, which places us more within the perspective of Eric - through experiencing the rest of the novel, Baldwin leaves us with a passage of dramatic irony, whereby we are in Eric's shoes, and thus able to identify Yves's innocence as he enters the city. In a sense, Baldwin has rendered the reader a liberal mediator by giving the reader the context for New York that Eric has. By adopting Eric's perspective, we as readers sympathise with Eric's role as mediator, bridging ideological and emotional voids between characters. Leeming summarises this position, that, like Eric, we 'can only hope that his life with Yves will be grounded in truth rather than innocence'.[194]

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[189] Schlesinger, *The Vital Center*, p. 248.
[190] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 205.
[191] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 426.
[192] Ibid, p. 423.
[193] Ibid, p. 422.
[194] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 204.

Rather than an endpoint, the novel ends in motion, within a perpetual process. As Yves enters New York Baldwin writes that Eric will have to 'strok[e] his innocence out of him' as both Eric and Ida did for Vivaldo. The novel ends hopefully if we as readers believe in Eric, and the specific liberalism he represents. He is symbolically bridging the spaces of Europe and America by facilitating Yves's arrival, but in order for that bridge to be generative and successful, Eric must make sure Yves learns the same lessons that all of the other characters in *Another Country* had to tackle, that love and pain can work together to make people and spaces joined, without polarities, or creeds limiting and oppressing them: to be both collaborative and morally liberal. When Yves sees Eric 'all his fear left him, he was certain, now, that everything would be all right'.[195] Although we cannot be as certain, there is perhaps hope for 'another country' at the end of the novel.

Over the course of this chapter, I have shown how Baldwin displays the oppressive 'racial nightmare' that pervades New York City and America itself. The radically unequal status of black people in America evident in Myrdal's 'American Creed' is recognisable through Baldwin's characterisation of city spaces - spaces that represent the white American ideal and spaces that become a home to the black urbanites (uptown and downtown), North and South (Alabama and New York), public and private (the Avenue and Vivaldo's Village apartment), and the inescapability of these associations for black people in America in the mid-twentieth century.

Rufus tries to escape these associations through a physical bridge crossing, but also a more symbolic bridge crossing. However, he does not have the privilege of standing outside of the systems that oppress him, and so the symbolic bridge is not enough to sustain him to the other side. It is only Eric who manages to physically cross frontiers due to his affluent status as a white male. Baldwin also conflates spaces and characters or at least reads one into the other in a way that is like the French spatial theorists, such as Lefebvre and de Certeau, who would go on to rethink space as 'practiced place' in the wake of the 1968 student protests in Paris.[196] When, towards the end of the novel, Baldwin starts to show characters such as Vivaldo and Ida talking through their differences and moving past their traumas, he gestures towards a more harmonious future where characters, and therefore perhaps spaces, can meaningfully relate to one another. The process of bridging and creating bonds is achieved via liberalism, but a kind of liberalism akin to the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr., who saw the possibility of a blurring of the boundaries between oppressed and oppressor within a generative 'world house'.

[195] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 425.
[196] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 117.

Baldwin develops these moral and political attitudes within his essay 'Down at the Cross', published the year after *Another Country*. Those attitudes take shape in the novel through the character of Eric, who facilitates what at first appear to be a series of revelations in both himself and the characters around him, but is in fact an on-going process which allows the hidden trauma of the novel (Rufus) to be worked through, resulting in a series of characters who are more fully committed to processing their thoughts, emotions and actions in a way that tries to reject the damaging values of the racist society.

This both grounded yet optimistic reading is one that perhaps could only be applied to Baldwin at this point in his career, as some of his overtly liberal opinions would adapt as the Civil Rights Movement became more fraught and woven with tragedy in the latter part of the 1960s. However, even after the murders of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., despite a more pronounced sense of despair, Baldwin is unable to fully rid himself of the wild hope that individuals can affect broad societal change: 'Perhaps, however, the moral of the story (and the hope of the world) lies in what one demands, not of others, but of oneself. However, that may be, the failure and the betrayal are in the record book forever, and sum up, and condemn, forever, those descendants of a barbarous Europe who arbitrarily and arrogantly reserve the right to call themselves Americans'.[197]

Despite my cautiously optimistic reading of the ending of *Another Country*, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and the wave of urban uprisings and the brutal reactions to those in the latter sixties certainly colour our reading of the novel now and perhaps reveal a naivete in Baldwin's initial hopes and aims. Although within the novel Baldwin's stance falls somewhere between the utopian drive of Crane and Ridge, and the deterministic doom of Dos Passos, Baldwin certainly became disillusioned with the version of liberalism he demonstrates as a core part of *Another Country*. Something the novel leaves unanswered is how the characters' various traumas will manifest after the action of the story has ended. Although Baldwin suggests that the trauma of Rufus' death can have a redemptive quality, his mortal sacrifice is a heavy price to pay for the other characters in the novel to achieve forms of revelation. Kevin Ohi in fact challenges this reading of the novel and suggests instead that the novel is much more bereft of optimism.

According to Ohi the critical focus on 'transcendence' and 'revelation' allows the novel to 'disappear from critical view'.[198] Ohi argues that concentrating on characters' revelatory moments, or even reading such moments as strictly revelatory, can cause problems when sexuality and race

[197] Baldwin, 'take me to the water', *No Name in the Street*, p. 14.
[198] Kevin Ohi, "'I'm not the boy you want": Sexuality, "Race," and Thwarted Revelation in Baldwin's *Another Country*', *African American Review*, 33. 2 (1999), pp. 261-281 (p. 261).

become 'mere obstructions littering the path of a surpassing transcendence'.[199] The first instance of process over transcendence that we as readers observe in Eric is during his childhood reverie when he remembers the moment at the dividing line with LeRoy. It is perhaps easy to see the moment that Eric tenderly holds LeRoy by the river as revelatory, with Baldwin naming it 'a healing transformation'.[200] However, as Ohi notices, what is being 'healed' is never explicit and always unsaid, 'it is unclear who or what is struggling to be named'.[201] Indeed, LeRoy even says to Eric 'tell me what you want to *do*', to which Eric has no reply.[202] LeRoy also references what the other kids in town are saying about the two of them, which is again, initially unknown to Eric – '[h]e had *not* known what they were saying, or he had been unable to allow himself to know'.[203] Ohi tell us that this problematises revelation, as very little is 'revealed' due to the passage's 'negated verbs' and 'directional uncertainty'.[204] All that is really revealed is that this moment is revelatory, which veils any sort of revelation for the reader.

If we read the continuous revelations of Baldwin's characters as empty and without substance, then the ending of the novel suddenly becomes incredibly bleak, as the characters have deluded themselves, and Yves is thrown into an urban world where pain is everywhere, and nothing is ultimately gained from it. Characters, despite feeling that they are progressing and relating to one another are in fact at the whims of a cruel society that they do not have the power to influence, reminiscent of Dos Passos' perception of New York. The city is without coherence, and meaning is obscured by the constant, yet often unspoken presence of Rufus' death, and by extension, the oppression that is inherent to American spaces. This is perhaps suggested in the final chapter when Yves is suddenly struck by alienation and loneliness whilst entering the city:

> But now, on the ground, and in the light, hard and American, of sober second thought, it all seemed rather suspect. He felt helplessly French: and he had never felt French before. And he felt their movement away from him, decently but definitively, with nervous, and, as it were, backward smiles; they were making it clear that he could not appeal to them, for they did not know who he was. It flashed through him that of course he had a test to pass; he has not yet entered the country; perhaps he would not pass the test. He watched

[199] Ibid.
[200] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 205.
[201] Ohi, "'I'm not the boy you want": Sexuality, "Race," and Thwarted Revelation in Baldwin's *Another Country*', p. 274.
[202] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 204.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ohi, "'I'm not the boy you want": Sexuality, "Race," and Thwarted Revelation in Baldwin's *Another Country*', p. 274.

them fill the aisles, and he moved backward from them, into his familiar loneliness and contempt.[205]

There is again a relative perception of space, where Yves feelings of foreign-ness, and the change in the way the other passengers treat him now that they are back within American space, work to alienate and other Yves. Although the contexts are very different, it is hard not to recognise similarities between this moment and Rufus' journey on the A-train, where Yves' crossing into an alien exterior makes him alien within the American city space. This is arguably not 'another country' from the one we were exposed to at the beginning of the novel. Ohi comments on the unchanging nature of the city by the end of the novel, writing that '[i]t is not the utopia to which we can escape to freedom; it is rather, perhaps, the sustaining illusion that such an impossible utopia might be possible'.[206] If we ascribe to Ohi's reading of the text, then *Another Country* is a novel that describes the constant delusion of the American public into believing that their own personal revelations could translate into the American public consciousness and affect American society, culture, and space. But ultimately these revelations are hollow, and do not successfully process the traumas at the heart of the country, and therefore perpetuate the injustice inherent within American spaces.

Whilst this reading of the novel pushes Baldwin more into the deterministic pessimism I associate with Dos Passos, and would certainly be easier to connect with Baldwin in some of the latter periods of his career, the non-fiction essays that Baldwin was publishing in the same period as *Another Country*, as well as Ellison's, and by extension Baldwin's, definition of the blues that was such a guiding principle in Baldwin's early work, suggest instead that Baldwin was more earnest in his hopes for America, despite their idealistic naivete. My own reading of the novel perhaps gives less credit to Baldwin's power of foresight than Ohi's and instead argues that Baldwin, however idealistic, believed that there was redemptive hope for America. But the novel ends before this redemption can really begin and leaves the readers in a somewhat unsatisfied position as we are asked to trust in what could happen after the novel ends.

Referring to the unpublished 'American Experience and the Novel', where Baldwin writes '[t]he discovery of America is only now beginning. And this discovery demands the creation of our past'.[207] I noted that this is a view akin to Whitman, who was primarily concerned with how America would come to define itself in the future, and provides an optimistic trust in a hypothetical version of America. This viewpoint, whilst certainly comforting, reduces the past to an obstruction to an

[205] Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 424.
[206] Ohi, "'I'm not the boy you want": Sexuality, "Race," and Thwarted Revelation in Baldwin's *Another Country*', p. 280.
[207] The James Baldwin Papers, 'American Experience and the Novel', Box 42b, Folder 6.

imagined future. What in fact did happen within the Civil Rights Movement after the publishing of *Another Country* consolidates this tragic reality.

Another Country did become a bestseller, along with his essay collection *The Fire Next Time*, something Baldwin attributed to the fact that readers realised that 'they were more like the people in the novel than they had dared admit to themselves before'.[208] Therefore, even if it was perhaps only applicable to the exact moment in time Baldwin was writing, he did succeed in communicating to his readers that they were a part of his novel, that the trajectories of these characters and the lessons they learn are ones that America must acknowledge and enact itself.

Like the blues, Baldwin, in *Another Country*, is doing what Ali Neff calls 'enlisting en masse' to bring humanity together and overcome the inhumanity of American racism.[209] One can summarise this view by using Baldwin's own words from another of his unpublished essays entitled '(In Search Of) A Basis For Mutual Understanding and Racial Harmony': 'Human harmony – or, more accurately, social harmony – resides still in the area of the possible, remains, for the most part, a hope, is a matter of the most painful speculation'.[210] The speculative nature of *Another Country* means that, to a modern reader, it risks feeling as dated as the Romanticism of Crane, or the radical political optimism of Ridge. However, Baldwin is not naïve to the realities of American racism, and the caution he exhibits through remaining speculative is also what characterises *Another Country* as ideologically between the poles of the Whitman-esque Romanticism of Crane and Ridge on the one hand, and the naturalistic determinism of Dos Passos on the other. In reading this novel's outlook on American space within the context of Crane, Ridge, and Dos Passos, we can identify an America that is still invested in the dream of an idyllic American future, whilst becoming increasingly disillusioned with itself and the possibility of that future.

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[208] Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, p. 206.
[209] Ali Colleen Neff, *The New Encyclopaedia of Southern Culture: Volume 24: Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), p. 193.
[210] The James Baldwin Papers, '(In Search Of) A Basis For Mutual Understanding and Racial Harmony', Box 42b, Folder 16.

CONCLUSION

> As members of modern society, we are responsible for the directions in which we develop, for our goals and achievements, for their human costs.
>
> - Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*

This project engages with New York city space, chiefly exploring how four interrelated yet firmly distinct writers engage with the rapidly changing landscape of Manhattan throughout the twentieth century. As was asserted in the introductory chapter, these writers span an ideological spectrum, beginning with the optimistic idealism of Crane's *The Bridge* and Ridge's 'The Ghetto', who both took the mantel from Whitman in identifying the potential in America as a modern nation leading the world into a new age of prosperity. These utopian aspirations were not only present in the literature produced by both poets, but also in the urban spaces of New York City itself. Crane and Ridge imbue the physical infrastructure of the city with symbolism to speculate on how they imagine America would shape the modern world. This attitude is in-keeping with a particular kind of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American liberalism that saw America as a prophetic, vatic entity, an ideal that is embodied in the Whitmanian optimism found in both poems. These values still inform the American national identity, as concepts like 'the American Dream', and 'the Land of Hopes and Dreams' are still common to this day.

On the other end of this ideological spectrum is the idea of America as a kind of modern hellscape, particularly encapsulated in Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*, but also present in James Baldwin's *Another Country*. Both writers, like Crane and Ridge, also use the urban infrastructure of New York, but incorporate the influence of literary naturalism, so that the city could physically symbolise the societal ills of industrialism, capitalism, and in the case of Baldwin, systemic racism, that disenfranchised and tortured the novels' characters. Although Baldwin is still invested in some of the liberal idealism present in Crane and Ridge's work, the speculatory nature of Baldwin's hope for America, as well as the historical events that occurred after the action of the novel, leave us as readers questioning the strength of these more utopian aspirations.

Through detailed analyses of space, and particularly the ways in which New York City becomes a representative of modern America within these texts, an unstable American national identity is revealed. On the one hand, what Whitman called New York's 'profusion of teeming humanity', and its 'many-threaded wealth and industry' seemed to signal a bright new age with America leading

the world into cultural and economic prosperity.[1] On the other, Henry James' describes New York as a 'steel-souled machine-room of brandished arms and hammering fists and opening and closing jaws', depicting the city and America as a mechanical monster enacting violence on everything in its path.[2]

We might recognise this binary in the work of Myrdal from the fourth chapter of this thesis: the difference between the ideal, and the reality. Both of these polarities are present in all four texts, but their conclusive stances differ dramatically. In *The Bridge* I identified the vast utopian potential that Crane saw for both New York and America, crystallised within his mythic symbol of the Brooklyn Bridge. Whilst this prophetic view of the nation, and in fact the world, dominates Crane's poem, there still exists the recognition that elements of modernity had betrayed the Whitmanian liberal optimism that Crane identifies with. This betrayal is evident in the poem's criticisms of American commercialism in the sections 'Quaker Hill' and 'The Tunnel', and the mechanical violence that society was capable of, which informed the 'Cape Hatteras' section of the poem. Similarly, 'The Ghetto' contains a belief in America's political future, one that Ridge sees as already taking shape in the streets and tenements on the Lower East Side. The characters she focuses on within the Jewish ghettoes are shaping the urban space they inhabit, and Ridge foresees these political radicals erupting from the ghetto space and exerting their influence over other spaces and American society as a whole. However, Ridge does not shy away from the poverty and inequality that also characterises the Lower East Side, revealing that, like Crane, although her overriding stance is an optimistic one, she identifies the ways that the organisation of modern spaces would need to be reoriented in order to bring about her speculative future.

Dos Passos does not share in Crane and Ridge's optimism, and in fact demonstrates how modern society is detrimental to the lives of the people that live within it. *Manhattan Transfer* shows what Dos Passos saw as the reality of life in America, as told through the experiences of characters trying to survive in New York. The city is no longer the emblem of the nation's potential, represented by the initially idealistic Bud Korpenning, who is eventually driven to suicide by the machinations of the city. This reality fell so short of the ideal that Dos Passos could not see any hope within the American Dream, it was simply a lie. Dos Passos would perhaps be vindicated in this analysis, as four years after *Manhattan Transfer* was published, the stock market crash would plunge the United States into another economic depression, and shatter some of the illusions that writers like Crane and Ridge were under. Despite Crane writing *The Bridge* after the publication of *Manhattan Transfer*, he was still heavily invested in the myth of Whitman's America by 1930.

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[1] Whitman, 'Democratic Vistas', *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 462.
[2] James, *The American Scene*, p. 75.

Baldwin's *Another Country* is an important addition to the discussion when analysing how space impacts America's national identity, as this novel was written and published at the height of the Civil Rights Movement in America, and a time of real conflict within the national character of the United States. *Another Country* does not fall on one side of this binary between the dream and the reality as definitively as the other three texts, which is why I characterise it as acting as an ideological bridge between those two polarities. Baldwin is hyperaware of the distance between American ideals and the reality, as shown by his representation of the organisation of New York space as exerting a murderous and violent force upon its black population, and the impossibility for freedom and justice within the city, and beyond. But despite this he has not, at this point in his career at least, completely detached himself from some of the ideals found within Crane and Ridge's work. He desperately clings to the hope that there is another version of America that exists within the realms of possibility, that the values that America purports to represent are still buried deep within the nation's collective psyche. These conclusions suggest that these texts complicate a strict binary between American utopia and dystopia, as despite the overarching viewpoints they sometimes adopt, they also position America as a nation caught between these two extremes, swinging back and forth between the dream being established, and then shattered, unable to fully reconcile these two sides of its character.

Thinking about American space and its implications in 2025, one can recognise these same patterns. The shift from Obama's terms as president, and the promise of a 'post-racial America' (however misguided those claims may have been), to the Trump presidencies, and the breaking of those utopian aspirations to reveal a nation still deeply divided, is certainly reminiscent of the unstable national character found within my analyses of these four twentieth-century texts. In a poll conducted by *ABC News* and Ipsos in January 2024, it was reported that, when compared with the number in September 2010, only about half of Americans believe that the American Dream still holds true.[3] This article speaks to the continued fluctuations in America's self-image.

If we focus on what role the organisation of space, and particularly the space of New York City, plays in this contemporary example, it is still an emblem of both sides of this American binary. New York is undoubtedly the centre of President Trump's capitalist empire, the space in which he and his family made their fortunes and concentrated their extreme wealth, particularly benefitting from the aggressive financial reforms of the 1970s aimed at fixing the city's debt crises. As such the city is caught up in everything else Trump now represents on a national and global scale. Like the bridges and urban spaces in all four texts discussed in this thesis, Trump Tower is an

[3] Jared Sousa, 'American dream far from reality for most people: POLL', *ABC News*, January 15, 2024 <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/american-dream-reality-people-poll/story?id=106339566> [accessed 2 October, 2025].

infrastructural symbol of not only capitalism, but also the violence inherent in his fascist and racist principles, which are also now a part of what the city, and the country, represent.

However, New York also remains a space with a Democratic and traditionally liberal reputation, which is why Trump simultaneously despises what New York symbolises politically. This can be exemplified in President Trump's announcement on 1st October 2025 that he will be cutting government funding to cities that did not support his presidential bid in 2024, and *NBC News* and *AP News*, to name but a few, are reporting that he intends to cut $18 billion to New York's infrastructural funding.[4] Although at the time of writing these cuts have not yet come to pass, it is easy to imagine how this will drastically affect the city's infrastructure, but also what these changes will come to symbolise. The changing New York infrastructure will be imbued with the liberal values that have caused Trump to economically retaliate, and these are values that are directly linked to those found in Whitman's *Democratic Vistas* and his nationalist verses. The city space of New York therefore still contains the same two polarities within the MAGA imaginary that this thesis identified in the literature of twentieth-century America. Although the concerns of this thesis are historically framed by the period in which the primary texts were written, the discoveries and insights they provide can be helpfully projected onto the contemporary moment. As such, New York's physical spaces still contain great import, and through analysing these urban spaces, meanings beyond their materiality are constantly being revealed.

What my readings of *The Bridge*, 'The Ghetto', *Manhattan Transfer*, and *Another Country*, and the conflicted reputation New York has within the contemporary moment demonstrate is that New York is a space that can simultaneously act as a symbol for the utopian and the dystopian future of America. By exploring and breaking down this binary, this thesis can help us recognise what infrastructural and symbolic elements of the city contribute to these two ways of perceiving New York. Through my theoretical framework informed by concepts by Harvey and Lefebvre, we can better understand these American modernist texts through identifying the ways these four writers use the spatial infrastructure of New York City to gesture beyond the strictly material and include all the socio-political concerns that were a part of the American experience in the twentieth century, such as modernity, politics, gender, race, and class. However, what is also evident is that how New York is perceived tells us a great deal about how America is perceived. The tension

[4] Adam Edelman and Peter Alexander, 'White House Freezes $18 billion in New York City Infrastructure Funding', *NBC News*, October 1, 2025 <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/white-house-freezes-18-billion-new-york-city-infrastructure-funding-rcna234928> [accessed 2 October, 2025]. And Josh Boak, 'Trump administration puts on hold $18 billion in funding for New York City infrastructure projects', *AP News*, October 1, 2025 <https://apnews.com/article/shutdown-new-york-rail-projects-money-withheld-ada494e08ae9ae5269c6ce554ecdbd43> [accessed 2 October, 2025].

between idealism and reality characterises these texts, their depictions of New York City, and the unstable identity of the nation, in a way that is still prescient to this day.

This thesis contributes to ongoing discussions within modernist studies and the infrastructural humanities, particularly on the relationship between the material implications of infrastructure and environment and the symbolic forms or abstract concepts that are contained within those infrastructures. This is an important conversation within these fields, as identifying the relationships between the ordering of spaces and its impact on society, and humanity more broadly, figures heavily in contemporary questions of ecology and ecosystems, racialised infrastructures, and urban planning.

Sarah Wasserman's 2020 text *The Death of Things: Ephemera and the American Novel* contains a chapter on urban infrastructure in the works of Chester Himes and Ralph Ellison, which also seeks to show the relationship between the material infrastructure of the city, and the social relations which they represent. Likewise, Steven Nardi's chapter 'Skyscraper Primitives: Futurity and Primordial Time in New York City, 1904-1932' from *Time, the City, and the Literary Imagination* (2020) traces how the concepts of space and time were revolutionised by New York avant-garde writers through their perceptions of the city's architecture. Alan Gravano's chapter 'New York City: Reassessing the Topography of New York City in Don DeLillo's Fiction' from *Don DeLillo in Context* (2022) is also concerned with the interrelation between New York City's physical presence through architecture and infrastructure, and the lives of DeLillo's characters. This thesis' analyses of how New York was perceived within twentieth-century poetry and fiction similarly highlights that the infrastructural building blocks of urban space were a vital component in how the modern city directly shaped the lives of the people within it, but also how these spaces were considered and understood. The writers that the thesis engages with saw New York as a representative modern American space, because of its concentration of modern processes and its position as a cultural and economic centre. This idea of New York as a distillation of modern America allows these writers to project their perceptions of the city onto the entire nation as well.

As such, this thesis also drives forward conversations within American studies, especially at a time when America's global reputation feels particularly precarious and unstable. What this thesis reveals is that this unstable reputation is also recognisable within the literature that grapples with America's national identity from the previous century. The polarities of dream and reality, and utopia and dystopia, and the way they shape and relate to one another are clearly present within our contemporary moment, displayed by the tension in New York's reputation within Trump's America. Their presence within the literature that this thesis considers highlights that the current

crises within American identity is in direct conversation with those corresponding crises from the early-twentieth century.

The methodological approach this thesis adopts opens up avenues for future research in how space is perceived in urban and literary studies. For example, this thesis' theoretical framework could be used to reconsider Saul Steinberg's *View of the World From 9th Avenue*, which I used in the introduction to this thesis to exemplify Harvey's concept of relative space. Steinberg's *New York Times* cover from 1976 invites us to think about New York's relationship with other spaces, and perhaps suggests that, relative to a New Yorker, or Steinberg himself, New York, and specifically Manhattan is the centre of the world, and that the spaces beyond the Hudson River become irrelevant as they get further from the vitality and infrastructural detail of New York. However, rather than the rest of America being seen as less important necessarily, we can perhaps read the American spaces depicted beyond the Hudson as existing in relation to New York, in both material and abstract terms. New York's importance to the onlooker is in fact defined by those spaces beyond the avenues of Manhattan, and as such they are contained within the symbolic meaning of the city, they cannot easily be considered as separate from one another. The spatial compression that Steinberg uses to contain the entirety of America and the world into the image's frame implies a kind of abstract ordering of space, and a use of the onlooker's imagination. This brings us into the realm of Harvey's relational space, and as such we can then read the imagined spaces beyond the city as being conjured by the onlooker's relationship with the infrastructure of Manhattan that dominates the foreground of the image. The American and world spaces that constitute Steinberg's horizon are anchored by the physical, or absolute, presence of New York. Therefore the notion that New York is separate from, and more significant than, elsewhere is complicated, as its physical infrastructure contains multitudes.

By considering New York's infrastructure through the theoretical framework this thesis employs, the city's physical presence can help us understand and analyse the relationship between spaces in existence and essence, as well as the literature and art that contends with spaces and their meanings.

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