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# From House to Case of Fiction: A Study of Modernist Literary Luggage

Emily Ridge

This thesis presents the first full-length study of modernist literary luggage. It explores all facets of imaginative engagement with luggage, both material and metaphorical, in modernism, as this builds upon and develops a long-standing and overlooked symbolic and analogic tradition. The study approaches luggage in two ways; as thematic motif and as model for modernist form. Drawing on an extensive range of primary sources spanning from the mid-nineteenth through to the mid-twentieth century, it identifies the proliferating appeal of luggage imagery over the course of this period as defined against the diminishing appeal of governing sedentary paradigms for apprehending and framing experience, exemplified in the symbolic form of the house. It contends that the 'case' overtakes the 'house of fiction' in the early-twentieth-century literary imagination as *the* central structural model for modern fiction in line with the emergence of what E.M. Forster disparagingly refers to as the 'civilisation of luggage' in *Howards End* in 1910. As Forster's disparagement suggests, the very idea of a civilisation of luggage provoked conflicting responses and contentious readings. Correspondingly, the case of fiction model was characterised by its very paradoxical nature; most conspicuously, it enacted a break from old forms while also demonstrating an inability to entirely leave the past behind. Yet it was precisely because, and not in spite of, this paradoxical quality, this semantic instability, this capacity to inspire divergent responses, that modernist literary luggage became such an appropriate means of encapsulating the experience of modernity in all its complexity.

A central focus is the special significance of luggage for women. The thesis will consider the recurrent use of the woman's bag as a pivotal motif and sticking point in portrayals of shifting gender relations around the turn of the twentieth century in order to demonstrate that the woman's struggle for a bag *of her own* was a necessary precursor to the struggle surrounding the room, feeding into a wider modernist preoccupation with the nature of the relationship between freedom and property. Following this preoccupation more generally into the interwar period, the thesis charts the impact of the politicization of forms of mobility in late modernist work as this is manifested in the problematization of an earlier modernist luggage paradigm. Taking account of luggage conceptions of refugee and evacuee writers caught in the political crossfire on mainland Europe - that other civilization of luggage compelled by force, rather than by choice, to travel light - the study will conclude with a detailed discussion of the widespread reappraisal of the case of fiction model in the late 1930s in light of complicating political factors. Overall, the thesis contends that luggage - signalling obstruction as much as mobility, adventure as much as dispossession, the exhilaration of travel as much as the terror of flight, the material attachment to a familiar past as much as the immaterial projection forward into an unfamiliar future - proposes an innovative re-description of modernist fiction which offers illuminating new perspectives on the contradictory forces, interests and imperatives of modernism with wide-reaching implications.

**From House to Case of Fiction:  
A Study of Modernist Literary Luggage**

**Emily Ridge**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of English Studies  
Durham University**

**2012**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

<b>List of Illustrations</b> .....	5
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	7
<b>Introduction: Setting the Rhetorical Scene</b> .....	9
<b>Chapter One:</b>	
<b>Competing Conceptions of Form:</b>	
<b>Literary Architecture and Literary Luggage</b> .....	29
<i>Introduction: The Very Things We Use When We Run Away</i> .....	30
1.1: All House and No Case: The Overshadowed Luggage Analogue.....	34
1.2: <i>Bleak House</i> as Victorian 'Case' Study.....	48
1.3: Henry James and the 'House of Fiction'.....	57
1.4: Max Beerbohm's Hat-box and E.M. Forster's 'Civilisation of Luggage'.....	73
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	
<b>The Issue of the Woman's Bag from the New Woman to Modernism</b> .....	86
<i>Introduction: Mrs Brown's Bag</i> .....	87
2.1: The New Woman Adventuress and the Emancipatory Bag.....	92
2.2: The Rise of the 'Newest Chivalry': The Woman's Bag as an Object of Social and Textual Disruption.....	102
2.3: Uncommon Baggage: Elsie Lindtner and Miriam Henderson.....	113
2.4: Unwanted Baggage: The Uncertain Case of Edith Wharton.....	126
2.5: The Persistence of the Old Chivalry: The Woman's Bag as an Object of Modernist Contention.....	146
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	
<b>Luggage Between the Wars</b> .....	162
<i>Introduction: Freedom by Necessity</i> .....	163
3.1: Hasty Packing and Travelling Light.....	169
3.2: Elizabeth Bowen, <i>Howards End</i> and the Luggage in the Hall Between Two Journeys.....	188
3.3: 'Have You Anything to Declare?': From Cases of Intrigue to Cases of Suspicion.....	203

3.4: The Closing Case of Henry Green.....	231
<b>Conclusion:</b> Mid-Century Legacies of Luggage.....	243
<b>Appendix:</b> Some Luggage Models and Materials.....	251
<b>Works Consulted</b> .....	255

## List of Illustrations:

Figure 1: 'The Vanity Bag' .....	15
Figure 2: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 'The Tower of Babel' .....	66
Figure 3: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 'The "Little" Tower of Babel' .....	66
Figure 4: Alain Manesson Mallet, 'The Tower of Babel' .....	66
Figure 5: Gustave Doré, 'The Confusion of Tongues' .....	67
Figure 6: 'The Lady Guide and the Tory Tourist' .....	105
Figure 7: 'Le Yellow Book' .....	106
Figure 8: 'What It Will Soon Come To' .....	106
Figure 9: 'The Spread of Tango. Arrest of a Militant Suffragette' .....	153
Figure 10: 'All Quiet on Every Frontier' .....	221
Figure 11: 'All Above Board' .....	221
Figure 12: 'Carrying a Suit-Case in an Unsuspicious Manner' .....	222
Figure 13: 'St. George For Merrie Europe; Or, Chivalry Begins Abroad' .....	222
Figure 14: 'A Present From Berlin' .....	223
Figure 15: 'Diplomatic Exchanges (Unofficial)' .....	223
Figure 16: René Magritte, 'The Key of Dreams' .....	225
Figure 17: Vogue Cover, 1924.....	248

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## Acknowledgements:

I am indebted to the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Department of English Studies here at Durham University for the generous scholarships which allowed me to proceed with this research, as well as for granting several travel awards to fund various archival visits.

Dr John Nash has followed and supervised the project from its inception as a scribbled word - 'the suitcase' - on a list of potential modernist objects for study during my undergraduate dissertation in Trinity College, Dublin. This thesis has been long in the making and he has encouraged it from the first. John, I am truly grateful to you for your insightful and indispensable guidance throughout the process as well as your unfaltering support. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with you.

Both Professor Patricia Waugh and Dr Pamela Knights read and commented upon sections of my thesis at various stages and their observations and suggestions have been invaluable. Many other people - from acquaintances to randomly encountered strangers - offered useful tips as to literary luggage references and I gratefully acknowledge their collective contribution to this project.

Friends - near, far and too many to mention - have been a hugely important source of motivation and inspiration during the years I have spent on this study. I gained immeasurably from my MA (MFun) group at UCL and the numerous and stimulating conversations on all manner of literary/miscellaneous topics during that year, in large part, gave me the incentive to further pursue a scholarly course. Durham provided a warm environment in which to live, socialise and work and the lively English academic community here, past and current, has greatly enhanced my overall PhD experience. I am grateful to you all! I would like to take this opportunity to thank, in particular, my wonderful housemates throughout my time at Durham - Roberta Bassi, Jahnavi Misra, Clara Dawson, Velda Airawn, Matt Hayward, Sveta Sorkina and Andrea Consolati - who saw me through all the inevitable ups and downs at close range! A very special thank you to Ann-Marie Einhaus, a most excellent friend (especially in this last and most demanding year); also to Maebh Long and to Lisa Mulvihill, for all the positive energy from Ireland.

Finally and most importantly, thank you to my family. Barry, for your scientific challenges to my literary uncertainties and, Sarah, for your honesty, patience and kindness! Above all, I wish to express my immense gratitude to my parents, Deirdre and Martin. Your love, generosity, wisdom and good humour has been unstinting and I certainly could not have written this without your unfailing support. I dedicate this thesis to you *le grá agus le meas mór*.



'But literature is the most exceptional and untidy affair that it has ever entered the heart of man to create. You have never done with it. It is always popping out when you think you have boxed it, and the more confident your generalities, the more certain you may be that the exceptions are dancing in beauty upon a thousand hills.'

E.M. Forster, *The Feminine Note in Literature*  
(1910)

## Introduction: Setting the Rhetorical Scene

...in every age, different and even mutually conflicting symbolic forms coexist, each one endowed with a different diffusion and historical duration. The history of literature must aim to represent its own object as a kind of magnetic field whose overall equilibrium or disequilibrium is only the resultant of the individual forces acting within it.

[...]

If the history of literature ever transforms itself into a history of rhetorical forms, the latter will in turn have to start from the realization that a form becomes more comprehensible and more interesting the more one grasps the conflict, or at least the difference, connecting it to the forms around it.

Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken For Wonders*<sup>1</sup>

This thesis is about luggage, material and metaphorical, as it is invoked in literature from the mid- to late nineteenth century up to the Second World War. Luggage has always been a necessary accessory to movement, whether in the form of a small bag for short trips beyond, if not far from, the home or a vast collection of trunks for the more distant, extended voyage. The word indicates an age-old element of human experience - the required carriage of personal possessions in transit - but one subject to continual evolution too. The word likewise indicates an age-old 'metaphor we live by' of the 'conduit' genre, to refer to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's well-known linguistic study.<sup>2</sup> As they point out, the tendency to conceive of language as the putting of 'ideas (objects) into words (containers) and send[ing] them (along a conduit) to a hearer who takes the idea/objects out of the word/containers' is so innate to our understanding of communication that we are not even always attuned to the fact that we are applying metaphorical terms at all.<sup>3</sup> Materially and conceptually, then, luggage has been around, often unnoticed and, in large part, un-researched, for a very long time. Yet there is something romantic, even nostalgic about the luggage in use from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century particularly, according to twenty-first-century perceptions, a nostalgia evident in the popular employment of vintage pieces from this period as

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<sup>1</sup> Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken For Wonders*, trans. Susan Fischer, David Forgacs, David Miller (London: Verso, 1983) 16, 26.

<sup>2</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> Lakoff and Johnson 10.

objects of display in shops or as decorative pieces in the home. The appeal of such objects has everything to do with their connection to the dawn of a new era of travel, the expanding possibilities of which stimulated increasingly sophisticated and creative approaches to luggage design. This is a kind of sophistication which cannot be found to the same degree today, as leading vintage luggage dealers document.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, if this was a time of highly skilled luggage craftsmanship, it was also a time of great luggage variability and this material variability enters into the fiction of the period on an imaginative level in countless ways. It is the wide-ranging fascination generated by luggage, in all its material variability, which I would like to investigate here. More especially, I would like to investigate luggage as a symbolic form in and in relation to modernism.

The magnetic field of rhetorical forces, outlined by Franco Moretti above, is a good place to begin the synchronic study of one symbolic form and its application during a set period in literary history. My thesis establishes luggage as an overlooked yet fundamental genre of literary metaphor within the history of rhetorical forms; it further shows that this luggage metaphor resonates with particular fulsomeness and significance within modernism. Drawing on an extensive range of primary sources spanning from the mid-nineteenth through to the mid-twentieth century, the thesis identifies the proliferating appeal of luggage imagery over the course of this period as defined against the diminishing appeal of governing sedentary models for apprehending and framing experience, exemplified in the symbolic form of the house. It interprets this rhetorical development as an outcome of an emerging social, cultural, epistemological and ontological emphasis on a new mobility associated with modernity. In very broad terms, I approach the shift in rhetorical emphasis from architecture to luggage from three angles as organised into three long chapters. In the first chapter, that conflict between symbolic forms of house and case comes under direct scrutiny in relation to modernism's emergence. The second chapter concentrates on the special pertinence of luggage for women around the turn of the twentieth century as index to a subaltern form of anti-establishment resistance to domestic, sexual and narrative constraints, a symbolic identification that does not go unchallenged. The third chapter deals with the problematization of the very concept of mobility, and by extension modernist luggage as symbolic form, as set against a backdrop of escalating political tensions over the course of the interwar period. In all of these chapters, I will look at luggage imagery in two different ways: as a thematic motif and as a metaphor for form. The thesis purports

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Helenka Gulshan, *Vintage Luggage* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 1998) 26-28.

overall to understand and to contextualise the use of luggage as a means of imaginatively encapsulating the experience of modernity and, more exactly, as an analogue for modernist fiction. With the latter analogic aspect in mind, I propose an innovative re-description of fictional form which offers illuminating new perspectives on the contradictory forces, interests and imperatives of modernism with wide-reaching implications. I examine some of these implications in depth here. Others I can only touch upon but I present this study, from the outset, as a generative rather than a self-contained project which I hope will prompt further research. In this, I see it as an addition to the formation of what Moretti calls a 'rhetorical' historiography' or, alternatively, a 'sociology of symbolic forms.'<sup>5</sup> The project presupposes the constructiveness and value of this approach in enhancing our knowledge not only of literary history but of social history too, based on the simple assumption that rhetorical formulations are fundamental to the manner in which we, as humans, conceive of our experience of being in and knowing the world. What makes luggage exceptionally interesting as a rhetorical form is that, as a paragon of spatial and temporal intermediacy, it is evoked, time and again, in the literature of modernity to mark a moment when the experience of being in and knowing the world is poised in a state of transition.

The title of my thesis provides, as it should, an effective jumping-off point for addressing the interests of the thesis as a whole. It includes, to begin with, two distinct allusions which I will explain here in turn; '**literary luggage**' and '**case of fiction.**' For the purposes of this thesis, '**literary luggage**' is used as an all-embracing term to denote the general employment of luggage imagery in literature - whether as a signifying detail in descriptive terms, as a material object with a pointed symbolic function, as an abstract metaphor without a direct material referent or as a metaphor for fiction. My formulation and exploration of 'literary luggage' takes its cue from and draws upon one of the first and most influential studies of the architectural approach to literature, Ellen Eve Frank's *Literary Architecture*, published in 1979.<sup>6</sup> Frank, in introducing this study, notes that the tendency to associate literature with architecture 'constitutes a tradition' and it is this tradition to which she gives the name 'literary architecture.'<sup>7</sup> I seek, in response, to identify a counter-tradition - one antagonistic to the architectural mode in some respects, complementary in others, yet always defined in

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<sup>5</sup> Moretti, *Signs* 17, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen Eve Frank, *Literary Architecture: Essays Toward a Tradition – Walter Pater, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Marcel Proust, Henry James* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979). Frank herself takes the phrase 'literary architecture' from Walter Pater's essay 'Style.' See *Appreciations: With an Essay On Style* (1889; London: Macmillan, 1907) 23.

<sup>7</sup> Frank, *Literary Architecture* 4.

relation to it - and to shed some light on an alternative and no less longstanding conceptual and symbolic mode obscured to date by the critical bias towards the analysis of fictional houses. While Frank's literary architectural focus is confined to analogic models, I extend the scope of literary luggage here to incorporate any manifestation of luggage in literature, from the minor textual detail, easily overlooked, to the overarching textual paradigm, difficult to escape. The term 'literary luggage' refers then to a wide-ranging symbolic capacity while loosely gesturing to a long symbolic lineage. This is a lineage of which *modernist* literary luggage forms a part though, as this thesis will show, also reinvigorates. Indeed, I maintain throughout that literary luggage is at its most vital, complex and dynamic in modernism. The study of modernist literary luggage is a study of all facets of imaginative engagement with luggage, in modernist writing as well as in writing about and relating to modernism, as this builds upon and develops an older tradition of invoking luggage in literature.

The term '**case of fiction**' communicates that more specific invocation of luggage as an analogical framework, model or paradigm where fictional form is concerned and this type of invocation will be central to my study of modernist literary luggage as a whole. By 'case of fiction,' I mean the description of the structure of a work of fiction, novel or short story (though I will mostly be considering novels here), in terms of luggage, through metaphor, simile, analogy or by implication. This will recur as a generic term throughout the thesis, whether a work is compared to an actual case (suit, brief, attaché, dispatch etc.) or to other types of luggage (for example, hold-all, bag or trunk). Though I will be employing other terms to a similar structural or analogical effect - most frequently, 'luggage paradigm' - my title term is doubly relevant because in making a case for a 'case of fiction,' I am making a case alongside and against the 'house of fiction.' The 'house of fiction' derives from Henry James's 1908 Preface to the New York edition of *The Portrait of a Lady* and it is a model I will interrogate in some detail in Section 1.3 of my first chapter.<sup>8</sup> This is an expression in common critical currency as a way of referring to fictional form as a built structure, implying something solid and hermetic (often synecdochically representative of a larger social whole), though tracing the term back to its root source in James's Preface serves to complicate this understanding, as we will see later on. The term 'house of fiction' will likewise recur throughout this thesis and I would alert the reader here to the fact that, for the most part, I will be employing the term in its popular sense to signify a foursquare, architectural approach to fictional form rather than as a direct reference to James's

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<sup>8</sup> Henry James, 'Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*,' *The Critical Muse: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Roger Gard (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) 485.

more problematic model. (I will place any direct references to James's model in inverted commas to make a clear distinction.) In fact, the very popularity of this phrase is important. A central question to be addressed early on in this thesis is why critical appraisals of architectural analogues for form have become so widespread when luggage analogues are so little treated by comparison even though the 'conduit' metaphorical mode is arguably more intrinsically embedded in day-to-day language than the architectural metaphorical mode.<sup>9</sup>

This is the first full-length study of literary luggage of its kind. Though luggage in literature has been written about from time to time, overall very little exists on the subject in literary criticism. Some literary critics have reflected on the use of luggage imagery in relation to certain writers or as minor parenthetical interludes within larger thematic studies. It is also a subject which has come to the fore in the social sciences of late and certain literary critics, like Paul Fussell, have even taken a sociological/historical approach themselves.<sup>10</sup> I will draw attention to such commentary as the thesis progresses. In developing this new scholarly ground, I have looked first to literary architectural studies in order to situate my own argument, particularly where case of fiction models are concerned. While Frank, like other critics after her, hones in on concepts of 'building' and 'dwelling' as literary architectural keynotes, I will be probing the implications of acts of packing, moving and dwelling in motion. 'Constructing a building is *bringing into being*,' Frank delineates, 'constructing a dwelling is bringing of being *into seeable form*.'<sup>11</sup> One immediate and fundamental difference between architecture and luggage in this sense is that the case forms a readymade framework. The creativity lies in what you put into it and what you do with it. Furthermore, packing not only means *bringing into being* but bringing into being again and again and not always *into seeable form*. Luggage flaunts an inherent transience to architecture's implied permanence while not always flaunting its interchangeable contents in an entirely elucidatory manner. This opposition is, of course, far from being as clear-cut as it would first appear. Building can express forward-looking innovatory renewal just as packing can express an adherence to or a carriage forward of the past,

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<sup>9</sup> Michael J. Reddy has estimated that 'of the entire metalingual apparatus of the English language, at least seventy per cent is directly, visibly, and graphically based on the conduit metaphor.' Michael J. Reddy, 'The Conduit Metaphor,' *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (1979; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 177.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: Paul Basu and Simon Coleman, 'Introduction: Migrant Worlds, Material Cultures,' *Mobilities* 3 (2008): 313-30; David Bissell, 'Conceptualising Differently-Mobile Passengers: Geographies of Everyday Encumbrance in the Railway Station,' *Social and Cultural Geography* 10 (2009): 173-95; Paul Fussell, 'Bourgeois Travel: Techniques and Artifacts,' *Bon Voyage: Designs For Travel*, ed. Nancy Aakre (New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum and The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Design, 1986) 55-94.

<sup>11</sup> Frank, *Literary Architecture* 12. Emphasis in original.

for instance, and one of the most striking aspects to have emerged from this research is the slippages and interactions between these two symbolic forms.

Having dwelt upon the two distinct allusions in my title, the word '**modernist**' alike requires further explanation and I will spend much of the rest of the introduction elaborating on this aspect. Why a decidedly modernist literary luggage? Modernism coincides and engages, in the first place, with one of the more interesting periods in luggage design, as I have already suggested, a period marking a radical shift from the production of heavy travelling goods to an assortment of lightweight models. This shift can be interpreted as a response to technological innovations leading to new modes of transportation, from the motorcar to the airplane. Portability in transit was now generally demanded as a result. It can equally be interpreted as a response to what Fussell calls the 'revolution in dress' that took place in the early part of the twentieth century, reducing the need for an extensive collection of appropriate attire on the move and contributing to the standardization of luggage later in the century.<sup>12</sup> In his words, '[i]f the emblem of the traveler used to be the trunk, or at least the valise, the Gladstone, the tin box, and the hat box, it is now the backpack.'<sup>13</sup> This line alone is telling. By the early twentieth century, luggage had reached a highpoint of nuanced and multifaceted signification only to be reduced very quickly to the utterly homogenous forms of backpack or suitcase. To read a novel written in the early twentieth century is to find references not only to the trunk, the valise, the Gladstone, the tin box and the hat-box but also to the dressing-case, the dress-basket, the hold-all, the carpet-bag, the blouse-case, the wardrobe trunk, the Saratoga, the Jenny Lind, the attaché case, the brief bag, the kit bag, the cabin bag, the dispatch case, the portmanteau, the Revelation expanding suitcase, the trunk designed for the motorcar, the case designed for air travel, and so on. We find specified materials ranging from leather to faux leather, from crocodile or alligator skin to vellum, from wicker to canvas, from compressed cane to compressed fibre. Hotels, ships and railway lines produced labels so that an itinerary, narrative or trumped-up personal statement might be recorded or even fabricated on a bag's surface, as the following 1926 *Punch* cartoon illustrates:

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<sup>12</sup> Fussell, 'Bourgeois Travel' 69.

<sup>13</sup> Fussell, 'Bourgeois Travel' 76.





Figure 1: Bert Thomas, 'The Vanity Bag' *Punch* 171 (1926): 179.

Each of these specifications - of type, material or surface inscription - can be seen to intimate very different things in context and allow, moreover, for all manner of interchangeable combination. From a single item of luggage, a person's class, gender, wealth, past and future trajectories, temporary or permanent lodgings, mode of transportation, age, profession, even personality might be reasonably deduced. Indeed, in 1911, a certain Alphonse Ledoux of the Hotel des Américains exposed to an American magazine the existence of a prevalently employed and universally understood system of coded marks strategically placed, by porters and hotel baggage handlers, on items of luggage in order to covertly communicate a guest's general predisposition and the extent of his/her generosity when it came to tipping.<sup>14</sup> The point I would like to make here is that luggage had reached an advanced state of signification in the early twentieth century that is somewhat bewildering to the uninitiated. I have compiled an explanatory list of types of travelling goods with information on luggage models and materials, attached as an appendix to the end of this thesis, to aid the reader in navigating this terrain. In part, this thesis has involved deciphering a language, once widely understood and now all but defunct.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Léonforte, '100 Legendary Trunks,' *Louis Vuitton: 100 Legendary Trunks*, by Pierre Léonforte, Éric Pujalet-Plaà with the collaboration of Florence Lesché and Marie Wurry, trans. Bruce Waille (New York: Abrams, 2010) 157-65.

Luggage was serviceable indeed to the modernist writer because it was akin to a complexly encoded material and visual language just on the verge of being scaled down (as, paradoxically, possibilities for travel were beginning to be more roundly embraced) but this accounts for only a small part of its pertinence as a subject for modernist scholarship. My initial plan, in embarking on this project, was to survey modernist literary luggage from the point of view of the modernist 'exile and émigré,' to apply Terry Eagleton's well-known designation; the mythologised figure of the alienated and denationalised avant-garde artist who had rejected a rooted place in his/her 'domestic' society.<sup>15</sup> I wanted to know how far cases rather than houses of fiction underpinned the artistic visions of these itinerant and conspicuously homeless figures. Luggage, in nodding forward to a future projected destination and backward to a past point of departure at one and the same time, seemed to me to embody the contradictory imperatives expressed in classic accounts of modernism, what Marshall Berman characterises as the 'desire to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past,' on the one hand and the 'insatiable desire for growth – not merely for economic growth but for growth in experience, in pleasure, in knowledge, in sensibility – growth that destroys both the physical and social landscapes of our past, and our emotional links with those lost worlds,' on the other.<sup>16</sup> I further saw the case of fiction model as figuratively enacting a break from the structural forms of nineteenth-century realism. Put crudely, the symbolic value of the house, that abiding model for fictional form throughout the nineteenth century, was put to the test by those outsider modernist artists. The figurative house-case tension I have described could be viewed, as such, as index to a tension, broadly speaking, between nineteenth-century realist and early-twentieth-century modernist approaches to form and character. With its outward prerogative of mobility and adventurousness as well as implied detachment from a single stable landmark, luggage stood for exploratory and independent initiative as well as the quest for a new paradigm. In this, it could be viewed as a peculiarly fitting symbolic form for modernism which, in the words of Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, can be characterised as 'less a style than a search for a style in a highly individualistic sense...'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The Eagleton phrase comes from the title of his *Exiles and Émigrés* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970).

<sup>16</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982) 35.

<sup>17</sup> Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, 'The Name and Nature of Modernism,' *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (1976; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991) 29.

Some of these initial ideas and associations surrounding the possibilities of a modernist literary luggage - contradictory expressiveness, ambiguous realist/modernist tensions, exploratory initiative rather than achieved consummation - have remained at the forefront of my discussion. Yet, as the project progressed, I began to think about luggage less from the classic point of view of the typical avant-garde escapee (though this is a point of view which does not entirely disappear) and increasingly in the light of current revisionary work in modernist studies, work which draws attention to the limitations of earlier accounts while opening up the parameters of the subject and diversifying its interests. We might start with Eagleton's phrase 'exiles and émigrés' above because, in collating a list of key figures of modernist exile (Conrad, James, Eliot, Pound, Yeats and Joyce), he entirely omits women writers and gender issues from his analysis.<sup>18</sup> These are issues which have become more prominent in modernist studies since his book was written and will form an important focal point of my own discussion. I expand upon, or rather sharpen, his usage of the phrase here to emphasize accounts of women exiles from the domestic paradigm and work from the assumption that this form of exile has as significant a role to play in the shaping of modernism as Eagleton's account.<sup>19</sup> If the domestic paradigm was abandoned at this time (or, if not quite always abandoned, then challenged as a model), the New Woman - both New Woman writer and fictional New Woman character - was at the front line of such revisionary and often iconoclastic literary endeavours. The Women's Movement had a considerable impact on literary developments from the late nineteenth century and thus on the rhetorical conflict between house and case to be explored here. This is not to propose a gendered division between architectural and luggage models (although the implications of such a proposal will be examined in relation to the work of Dorothy Richardson and, tangentially, Edith Wharton later on) but to acknowledge that the rise of feminist activism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a crucial factor in debates about democracy, property rights and the freedom of the individual. As Rachel Potter observes in her study of modernism and democracy, '[f]emale characters were often the vehicles for ideas of democratic progress and emancipation in modernist

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<sup>18</sup> Eagleton does consider Woolf in passing but only to draw attention to the character of Peter Walsh in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) as illustrative of the figure of the 'rootless expatriate in a wilderness of London drawing-rooms.' Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés* 34.

<sup>19</sup> In fact, the exclusion of women writers from the modernist canon has itself been viewed as a form of exile. See *Women's Writing in Exile*, ed. Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1989). Essays of particular interest in this collection are Shari Benstock's 'Expatriate Modernism: Writing on the Cultural Rim,' 19-40, and Celeste M. Schenck's 'Exiled by Genre: Modernism, Canonicity, and the Politics of Exclusion,' 225-50.

novels.<sup>20</sup> The use of luggage imagery in modernist fiction is inextricably linked to wider political debates surrounding the freedom of the individual – luggage, after all, exposes the restrictive attachment as much as the liberating detachment of subject to property – and it is for this reason that women’s luggage particularly will take centre stage for a significant portion of this thesis.

The further point to be made from the outset is that the critical focus on cultural and aesthetic alienation and exile as a keystone of modernist writing is, by now, both a truism *and* a point of contention. Modernist criticism has traditionally paid homage to the figure of the disconnected artist, as noted. ‘Much Modernist art,’ Bradbury writes, ‘has taken its stance from, gained its perspectives out of, a certain kind of distance, an exiled posture – a distance from local origins, class allegiances, the specific obligations and duties of those with an assigned role in a cohesive culture.’<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Fussell, in his *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*, upholds what he refers to as the ‘British Literary Diaspora’ as ‘one of the signals of literary modernism, as we can infer from virtually no modern writer’s remaining where he’s “supposed” to be except perhaps Proust –’<sup>22</sup> In these quintessential accounts of modernism in terms of the formation of an ‘exiled posture’ or diasporic perspective, we find a vindication of a nomadic/detached over and above a static/attached outlook as conducive to artistry. Recently, critics have disputed these claims of nomadic precedence and aesthetic detachment. Caren Kaplan, for example, offers an engaging critique of the mythology which has developed around the figure of the exiled modernist writer and argues that the ‘modernist trope of exile works to remove itself from any political or historically specific instances in order to generate aesthetic categories and ahistorical values.’<sup>23</sup> In a similar vein, a number of studies have emerged in recent years in the ‘conservative modernity’ line, espoused by critics like Alison Light, to reappraise the domestic sphere

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<sup>20</sup> Rachel Potter, *Modernism and Democracy: Literature and Culture 1900-1930* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006) 8.

<sup>21</sup> Malcolm Bradbury, ‘The Cities of Modernism,’ *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930* 100.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (New York: Oxford UP, 1980) 11. For further examples in this line, see Harry Levin’s ‘Literature and Exile,’ *Refractions: Essays in Comparative Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1966) 62-81; Malcolm Cowley, *Exile’s Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (1934; New York: Viking, 1956).

<sup>23</sup> Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996) 28. Seminal works on the theme of modernist displacement from Eagleton’s *Exiles and Émigrés* and Fussell’s *Abroad* to Harry Levin’s ‘Literature and Exile’ essay, among others, are subject to some justifiably astringent words in this account. Eagleton’s version of exile is implied as élitist (4) as is Fussell’s, whose work is also criticized for its blatant ‘imperialist nostalgia’ (53). Harry Levin is used to provide an ‘instructive example of modernist critical promotion of exile as aesthetic gain’ (37), a promotional exercise which serves to obscure historical distinctions between different kinds of exile, for a start, but which must equally be seen to perpetuate an ideological construction of the modernist writer rather than to describe a historical reality.

as an equally experimental locus for modernist writing as well as to assert that the struggle to move away from traditional narrative form is 'as much characterised by continuities as by dislocation.'<sup>24</sup> This thesis negotiates between these divergent interpretations of modernism and the modernist trope of exile because, as will become clear, luggage invites interpretative plasticity through simultaneously resisting and aspiring towards a stable reference point, on one level, but on another level, through reflecting a mobile engagement with rather than an absolute detachment from the world.

This critical divergence from ideas of exile and isolated aesthetics has brought instead the integrative quality of modernism to the fore of late. As acknowledged in the introduction to the recent *Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* (2010), '[r]esearch in modernist studies since the late 1980s has moved away from an earlier emphasis on the aesthetic and towards a more culturally 'thick' sense of modernism's multiple connections to a wide variety of non-aesthetic practices.'<sup>25</sup> One seemingly non-aesthetic practice I will return to intermittently in this thesis relates to modernism's interaction with the marketplace and processes of mass production and packaging, traditionally kept at arm's length from an imagined ivory tower of singular aesthetic production. The adoption of a case of fiction suitable for a posture of aesthetic and political detachment on the part of the modernist artist must be coupled in these opening statements, with the projection of the case as a circulating packaged product in a rising modern consumer culture in the early twentieth century, in line with what David Trotter has described as the 'shift in emphasis [...] from the satisfaction of stable needs to the creation of new desires.'<sup>26</sup> Certain critics have gone so far as to argue that modernism, in its innovatory and tradition-eschewing attitude, arises directly from a capitalist ethos.<sup>27</sup> Inharmonious as this coupling of avant-garde and capitalist concerns might appear here, the disjunctive associations of luggage will form a major part of the discussion to follow just as modernism itself must be seen to be 'constructed through its own contradictions,' to

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<sup>24</sup> Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991) 10; Lynne Hapgood, 'Transforming the Victorian' in *Outside Modernism: In Pursuit of the English Novel 1900-1930*, ed. Lynne Hapgood and Nancy L. Paxton (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000) 22. See also Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, *Domestic Modernism, the Interwar Novel and E.H. Young* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Victoria Rosner, *Modernism and the Architecture of the Private Life* (New York: Columbia UP, 2005). An earlier ground-breaking study in this line, to which I will return, is Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (1987; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989)

<sup>25</sup> Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gąsiorek, Deborah Longworth and Andrew Thacker, introduction, *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gąsiorek, Deborah Longworth and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010) 2.

<sup>26</sup> David Trotter, *The English Novel in History 1895-1920* (1993; London: Routledge, 1998) 11.

<sup>27</sup> For an argument in this vein, see John Xiros Cooper, *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

quote Morag Shiach.<sup>28</sup> (The confrontation of disjunctive associations surfaces in *late* modernist luggage particularly, as my third chapter, concerning the equivocal and problematic significations of literary luggage over the interwar period, will reveal.) Thus the elevation of a luggage paradigm in line with a formal endeavour to 'make it new,' in Ezra Pound's phrase, as well as a modern impulse towards restlessness, can be seen to owe just as much to the fervour generated by a newly-vitalised 'packaging' industry as it does to the modernist exilic compulsion. Rachel Bowlby identifies the package as an 'object of intense imaginative interest between the wars' in her aptly-named study of modern consumer habits, *Carried Away*.<sup>29</sup> This package-preoccupation, as outlined by Bowlby, certainly feeds into the more specialised luggage-preoccupation and, for this reason, demands some attention. She devotes an entire chapter to the package in this study, outlining both the changing approach to the containment of products in the early twentieth century and the psychology behind such a change. Package design became a bright new concept for the bright young things of the moment. The modern package still retained a functional objective yet a newly-generated interplay between a visible and tangible exterior and a partially viewed interior, which might be handled but never directly touched, meant that function was often superseded by fancy. The new approach thus brought aesthetics to the forefront and, as such, the modern package was liable to deceive:

In the first glitter and rustle of transpaper excitement, it is the pleasure of the package as a surface and outer envelope, enhancing the enjoyment of what it covers, that are the uppermost. The package establishes an identity for a product that is pure display, pure surface; it may resemble what is inside, but it also may not, or its resemblance may partially shift the way that the contents themselves are then seen or experienced. But insofar as it is the outward sign of an identity, the package also treats that identity as changeable.<sup>30</sup>

Fancy, in this way, enlarges interpretative possibility and Bowlby goes on to note that the rise of transpaper packaging coincided with a literary and artistic interest in the idea of 'multiple selves.'<sup>31</sup> An inherent mobility, reflecting consumer restlessness, marks the modern package as a label of modernity and, as such, a highly suggestible literary motif. The consumer who buys artfully packaged goods is encouraged to package his/her

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<sup>28</sup> Morag Shiach, 'Periodizing Modernism,' *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* 17.

<sup>29</sup> Rachel Bowlby, *Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping* (London: Faber, 2000) 83.

<sup>30</sup> Bowlby, *Carried Away* 108.

<sup>31</sup> Bowlby, *Carried Away* 108-9.

mobile identity in an artful yet adaptable form in day-to-day life. For many writers, luggage would become the equivalent of the package for the modern individual in escapist transit, allowing for the cultivation of a 'changeable' identity, whilst keeping the taint of the marketplace, not always successfully, at an important ideological remove.

Whether invoked in relation to artistic detachment, a form of feminine freedom or a fast-paced mass-market packaging culture, modernist literary luggage highlights domestic departure. Yet, in thinking about the figurative tension between architectural and luggage imagery insofar as this might correspond to a tension between realist and modernist conceptualizations of form, we must, as I have remarked, avoid the easy assumption of a decisive split, not least because realism and modernism are from being categorical opposites. The value of the house of fiction is not completely diminished in modernist literature nor does the case of fiction always fulfill everything it appears to promise as an alternative fictional paradigm. In his consideration of the form of the novel in modernist literature in relation to the exile motif, Michael Levenson observes that the most noticeable feature of the 'aspiration to exile is how frequently it leads not to an escape from the community, but to a withdrawal to its interstices.'<sup>32</sup> In this, he echoes social commentators from the period itself. In 1908, for example, Georg Simmel wrote of the figure of the stranger as an 'element of the group itself.'<sup>33</sup> Correspondingly, what is most noticeable about literary luggage is how frequently it exists in the shadow of literary architecture. The figurative tension between luggage and architecture should be seen then as informing modernist writing throughout rather than as symptomatic of a conflict out of which modernism emerges, phoenix-like and unburdened, from the ashes of the Victorian fictional house. Indeed, one of the key points to be made in this thesis is the enduring influence of the domestic paradigm and luggage must be seen to dramatize the inability of achieving escape as often as it dramatizes the act of escape itself. One peculiarity of Moretti's statement on the rhetorical field of forces – an effect, perhaps, of the translation - gives pause for thought in this regard. He proposes that 'difference' or 'conflict' serves to *connect* rather than to irredeemably divide disparate forms. Ideas of connection through or despite difference, of attraction coinciding with repulsion within the magnetic field of rhetorical forces, will form an important underlying thread within my larger argument. By this I mean that the use of luggage as a formal paradigm becomes 'more comprehensible and more interesting,' to use Moretti's phrase, the more we grasp the points at which it connects with the formal paradigm of

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality: Character and Novelistic Form From Conrad to Woolf* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2004) xii.

<sup>33</sup> Georg Simmel, 'The Stranger,' *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt M. Wolff (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950) 402.

house as much as those points of disconnection. I acknowledge here those aforementioned critical works which make a claim for the persistence and prevailing import of the image of the house throughout the modernist period as set against the commonplace assertion of modernism as a 'vocabulary of anti-home.'<sup>34</sup> Far from opposing such a critical line, I will show that in the work of certain writers, the persistent appeal of the house is nowhere more forcefully conveyed than in the conception of the case as a temporary, mobile dwelling place, as a home in transit, as the fortress of the modern nomad.

On a more general level, I would like to suggest then that we look at luggage during this period less as representative modernist symbolic paradigm (though, as I will show, it was certainly used for this purpose by a number of writers) and more as a means of representing the negotiation of modernity, through forms of continuity *or* discontinuity, mobility *or* stasis, realist *or* modernist techniques, or, indeed (as is most often the case), facets of all of these. Raymond Williams's discussion of the interplay of 'dominant,' 'residual' and 'emergent' elements in relation to cultural change provides one effective way of thinking about the rhetorical tension I am considering here.<sup>35</sup> If we imagine the house as the 'dominant' conceptual paradigm throughout the nineteenth century, I would posit luggage as a modernist amalgam of the 'residual' and 'emergent.' In other words, the application of luggage imagery, both as model for fiction and for the experience of modernity, incorporates residual and emergent elements. In terms of the residual, luggage can be seen to nod backwards beyond the nineteenth-century dominance of the domestic paradigm to the roots of the novel form in picaresque, romance and puritan traditions. Patrick Parrinder has, among others, attempted to dig back beyond the conventional account of the rise of the novel from the eighteenth century and he finds earlier prose writing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to revolve around 'cavaliers,' 'puritans' and 'rogues,' all figures of demonstrable mobility.<sup>36</sup> We must remember that one of the earliest English classics of prose fiction, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) has luggage rather than a house at its symbolic centre and those contrasting rebellious types of cavalier and rogue would equally have presented houseless narratives. Parrinder further notes: 'What gradually overshadowed the prominence of individual eccentricity in the novel was not, however, an awareness of war and political revolutions but rather the growing consciousness of society as a

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<sup>34</sup> Briganti and Mezei, *Domestic Modernism* 33.

<sup>35</sup> Raymond Williams, 'Dominant, Residual and Emergent,' *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977) 121-27.

<sup>36</sup> Patrick Parrinder, *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006) 35-62. Margaret Anne Doody digs even further back to antiquity in *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1996).



monolithic institution or organization containing and dwarfing the individual.'<sup>37</sup> We might see the growing eminence of the symbolic value of the house over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in relation to this growing consciousness of monolithic social organization. By the same token, modernist literary luggage can be seen to wistfully hark back to an eccentricity embedded in the history of English prose fiction before that established symbolic eminence. Backward-looking, forward-looking and epitomizing present experience of change, modernist cases of fiction enact, in effect, rhetorical form in transition, caught between the dominant and the residual, on the one hand, and the emergent unknown, the not yet fully realised, on the other. Expanding beyond individual form to the larger rhetorical field, literary luggage can be seen to capture modernism in motion, in experimental progress. But it also, just as importantly, captures modernism in obstruction and in continued relation, whether willfully or not, to previous forms and to the fictional house.



'How to begin to map the intersecting itineraries of mobility and materiality?' opens a recent article by Paul Basu and Simon Coleman on migrant worlds and material culture in the journal *Mobilities*, a social sciences journal leading the field in the study of what it means to move.<sup>38</sup> This question might be rephrased as follows for my purposes here: How to begin to map the intersecting itineraries of mobility and materiality in literature of the modern period? Structurally (or cartographically), the thesis is divided into three lengthy chapters, each subdivided into several shorter sections. The three chapters have their own individual and comprehensive introductions. For this reason, I will simply sketch the broader outline of the thesis here without going into extensive detail with regard to the content of each chapter. The first chapter concerns, as mentioned, that house-case conflict. It will take stock of the literary architectural field of criticism as well as the recent turn towards the idea of *mobilities* both in modernist studies and in the social sciences and will attempt to locate a suitable place for literary luggage relative to these distinctive academic fields. Through a reading of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, I will show that the potential of the case to usurp the house of fiction is discernible much earlier but it is with the advent of the twentieth century that the case's potential as a formal model over and above the house is really touted (and Max Beerbohm's tribute to his hat-box in his 1909 essay 'Ichabod' will be identified as an illustrative piece of

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<sup>37</sup> Parrinder, *Nation and Novel* 27.

<sup>38</sup> Basu and Coleman, 'Migrant Worlds' 313.

anticipatory enthusiasm towards the end of the chapter.) By the time Henry James conceives of his 'house of fiction' in 1908 and E.M. Forster publishes *Howards End* in 1910, the fallibility of the architectural model is evident in contrast to the rising power of what Forster was damningly to tag the 'civilisation of luggage.'<sup>39</sup> The chapter will contend overall that modernism sees the symbolic primacy of architecture fall to the extent that the symbolic primacy of luggage rises and nowhere is this more palpable than in representations of Edwardian houses in particular. The key writers to be considered here are Dickens, James, Forster and Beerbohm, with peripheral support from John Galsworthy, Vita Sackville-West and George Dangerfield, among others.

My second chapter will spotlight women's bags and luggage in order to illuminate one notable strand underlying and affecting this state of relatively sudden rhetorical disequilibrium, to again return to Moretti's terms. Part of the symbolic appeal of a case of fiction lay in its exemplification of the disruptive capacity of the episodic or miniature as set against the totalizing authority of a metanarrative whole modelled on the house and the sanctity of the house of fiction at the turn of the twentieth century was challenged first and foremost by those figures of dispossession which the English novel had succeeded in containing for a significant part of its history. As Parrinder comments: 'The outcast, in English mythology and English fiction, is only temporarily dispossessed. In the end his society will recognize him and save him from destitution.'<sup>40</sup> One thing effected in modernism more broadly is the transformation of the condition of dispossession from its former status as a narrative problem to be resolved into a source of aspirational creative empowerment, disturbing then-established narrative trajectories and casting back to the novel's *undomesticated* heritage. We witness this kind of transformation in fictional characterisations of the modern woman around the turn of the twentieth century and her bag becomes a pivotal part of the transformational act. It is a transformational act which begins, in fact, not in fiction but in the theatre, almost as if a dramatic turn is necessary to provoke a state of symbolic reconfiguration. From Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) onwards, there is a gradual recognition of the disruptive symbolic force of the bag as miniature or episodic element. It is a force figuratively channelled through the gesture of a woman's carrying her own bag out of and away from the house, a gesture pointedly underlined with no small frequency after Ibsen and one serving to destabilize the literary status quo in a variety of ways, as we will see. The portability of the woman's bag spoke of her new independence as a 1910 luggage trade article discerns: 'Woman has made yet another step towards complete

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<sup>39</sup> E.M. Forster, *Howards End* (1910; New York: Signet-Penguin, 1992) 119.

<sup>40</sup> Parrinder, *Nation and Novel* 30.

emancipation for she has divorced herself from the big trunk. The result is that she no longer needs an escort when travelling.<sup>41</sup> The pertinence of the gesture had everything to do with women's long association with transportable as opposed to fixed property, the traditional conception of women *as* baggage, as dependent and, often impedimental, bodies or as bodies to be escorted, protected, owned. The chapter will trace the steps taken to rejuvenate the image of the woman's bag, from the emergence of the New Women, as an emblem of proprietorial emancipation and self-sufficiency rather than proprietorial dispossession and dependence and will attend moreover to its elevation in certain works as an alternative feminine model for fictional form. It will deal, at the same time, with the more troubling and negative connotations of the woman's bag, or hesitancy as to how it should be rendered, in certain other works. Writers under scrutiny here will include George Egerton, Oscar Wilde, George Gissing, Dorothy Richardson, Karin Michaëlis and Edith Wharton. I will eventually reflect on portrayals of some of the problems faced by women beyond the domestic paradigm and will discuss a number of depicted struggles surrounding the woman's bag as an object of modernist conflict in texts by Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence, struggles which reveal the fine line between the bag's symbolic projection of emancipatory power and its projection of vulnerable powerlessness.

My third and final chapter turns more specifically to the interwar period and is concerned with the progressive complication of the meaning of movement from modernism to late modernism as this is related through literary luggage. If those bag-carrying modern women to be described in Chapter Two represent the disruptive initiative as well as the vulnerability of the dispossessed marginal few against a larger social entity aligned with the house of fiction paradigm, then wider political developments force everyone into the same kind of marginal position between the wars. This chapter deals with the pervasive intensification of the issues addressed in relation to women's bags. The trials, tribulations and restrictions of the First World War prompt an urgent compulsion to escape, evident in 1920s fiction, but the very idea of escape becomes inevitably compromised with the mounting private and political anxieties of the 1930s, engendering a nostalgic imaginative reconsideration of the house of fiction at a time when houses no longer offer any kind of sanctuary from the intrusions of palpably sinister forms of public authority. The chapter will interweave two general thematic sections with two author-specific case studies on Elizabeth Bowen and Henry Green respectively. The first of the more general sections will concentrate upon the

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<sup>41</sup> 'Travelling Made Easier,' *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review* 4.84 (1910): 16.

progressive reduction of earlier literary fantasies of hasty packing and travelling light to nightmarish visions of enforced exodus in 1930s fiction, drawing upon the work of refugee and evacuee writers caught in the political crossfire on mainland Europe at this time, that other civilisation of luggage bound by force, rather than by choice, to travel light. I will assess here the status of the case of fiction model when the very idea of luggage comes to signify crisis rather than innovatory adventure. Moving from questions of form to questions of character, the second thematic section will treat the related figurative transmutation of the case of the modernist stranger from its status as an object of fascination to its status as an object of suspicion from the 1920s to the 1930s, taking account of the persistent fictional spectre of the customs official in a posture of case-judgement. Overall, the chapter will chart the impact of the politicization of forms of mobility in late modernist work towards the end of the interwar period as this is manifested in the re-writing of an earlier modernist luggage paradigm.

Following this structural overview, it seems right to mention a couple of roads not taken in this thesis yet of interest nonetheless. Though I have focused on women and gender relations in my central chapter, I might well have chosen other angles. Approaches to this topic from the points of view of class and colonialism would alike have proven constructive. Questions of class will figure intermittently in my argument, colonialism less so. Where the latter is concerned, I would point out here that the decline of the British Empire in the early twentieth century must have played a large part in the declining relevance of the architectural model in English fiction and there are several lines of enquiry that might be taken with this in mind. Novels like Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and E.M. Forster's *Howards End*, to cite a couple of examples, hint that the continuing stability, influence and dominance of the fictional house in each case partly relies upon foreign exploits and this requires a venturing out, an impulse towards conquest which might be said to be inscribed in the luggage paradigm. Indeed, certain luggage designs evolved through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to cater for this impulse. We find, for example, popular types of trunk labelled the 'Imperial' and the 'Globe Trotter,' the former a general style of trunk and the latter produced and patented by A. Garstin and Co. As Kaplan has pointed out, 'the emergence of terms of travel and displacement (as well as their oppositional counterparts, home and location) in contemporary criticism must be linked to the histories of the production of colonial discourses.'<sup>42</sup> If the importance of modernist literary luggage can be linked to the subversive power of new forms of female mobility, we might also look to the subversive implications of migratory movements of colonised subjects to the imperial domestic

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<sup>42</sup> Kaplan, *Questions of Travel* 2.

hearth, whether this is viewed as destructive or regenerative. I have not taken this line here though I recognise its bearing on the subject of the present discussion. My intention is to establish the luggage paradigm as a vital device for representing modernist concerns, contradictions and initiatives. Yet modernism is, of course, an incredibly complex phenomenon and if my attentiveness to certain aspects of this phenomenon has been to the exclusion of others, this is an inevitable outcome of addressing a topic which provides material for research well beyond the parameters of a single thesis.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, even within set limits, work on the general application of a symbolic form at a particular period in literary history demands a broad approach and this presents certain challenges of its own. From the outset, I made the decision to map literary luggage through a wide range of texts from the late nineteenth through to the early twentieth century. This is a case that can only be made through demonstrating a kind of epidemiological diffusion. Yet it also demands careful - qualitative, if you like - analysis and I will be pausing periodically to pay close attention to certain more pertinent examples of the use of the metaphor in the works of key writers (e.g. Forster, Richardson, Wharton, Bowen, Green, etc.). That the texts I look at are not always decisively modernist either is part of the point. We learn as much about this kind of symbol from its invocation in more conventional narratives as in the most experimental and this thesis is as much about reflections on the experience of modernity at this time as it is about modernism per se. Though my overarching emphasis is on prose fiction, I dwell, briefly and occasionally at some length, on luggage figurations in works of drama, poetry, art and advertising in order to support, exemplify, colour or add scope to certain points. Relatedly, though I have inclined towards the study of English fiction, I offer regular examples of works originating elsewhere - whether other European countries or, most prominently, America - and often in other languages. In some instances, these works have been included in order to cast facets of English works in a new light. In other instances, I have treated them as significant in and of themselves. Recent modernist scholarship has encouraged a more global, pluralistic and transnational perspective and this thesis incorporates that ethos. As Andrew Thacker has remarked, 'modernist writing can be located only within the movements between and across multiple sorts of

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<sup>43</sup> For discussions of the ambivalent relation of modernism to imperialism as well as literary responses to the end of the British empire, see Peter Childs, *Modernism and the Post-Colonial: Literature and Empire 1885-1930* (London: Continuum, 2007); Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2004).

space.'<sup>44</sup> Likewise, the transgressive implications of a modernist literary luggage - the case as a model, unlike the house, allows for a sense of movement between and across multiple sorts of space - would be lost if a confined cultural approach were taken. Of course, one must always be sensitive to contextual difference not to mention the differently signifying varieties of travelling goods in circulation at this time and the conflation of distinctive uses of this symbolic form is something I have taken pains to avoid. Following the metaphor itself between and across multiple sorts of spaces and cultures while taking account of spatial and cultural specificities has meant treading a delicate line between the general and the particular. But the negotiation of the general and the particular is in itself part and parcel of the development of a symbolic form - that is to say, the bespoke adaptation of a prototype to serve a defined purpose - and it is the development of a symbolic form that I seek, above all, to understand. If the history of literature might be understood as a history of rhetorical forms, as Moretti envisages, then this thesis is proffered as one important contribution to that undertaking.

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<sup>44</sup> Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2003) 8.

**Chapter 1:**  
**Competing Conceptions of Form: Literary Architecture and**  
**Literary Luggage**

### ***Introduction: The Very Things We Use When We Run Away***

In some of the outlying boulevards recently we have seen trunks piled up in grim heaps like the walls of a fortress (which they were intended to imitate) with here and there an opera-glass case projecting or a tightly-rolled hold-all, to resemble a cannon. The idea is ingenious and martial – but not successful. The window is too much transformed. You forget what you are looking at. You only see the backs of the trunks. And as a witty German said the other day, “Trunks and portmanteaus ought not to be piled up in the shape of a fortress of defence. For they are the very things we use when we run away.”

'Continental Notes: Contrasts with the English Trade by Our  
Special Correspondent' (1909)<sup>1</sup>

The means by which luggage was advertised in the early 1900s can tell us a great deal not only about the transitional state of the luggage trade in and of itself at the time but, equally and relatedly, about changing social mores and fashions more broadly. The above passage, describing a display of luggage in a German shop window, comes from a 1909 edition of *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review*, a trade journal targeted at businesses affiliated to the leather and travelling goods industries with a focus, as the title acknowledges, on the luggage trade. Trade journals exist to provide specialised information and news for the benefit of specified industries in a very practical vein but they also aim to keep stakeholders on top of any current social or cultural trends which might well impact upon consumer habits. The particular article from which the passage is drawn was written by a continental correspondent, tasked with surveying the luggage scene in other parts of Europe - Germany, in this case - in order to feed back to interested parties in Britain. According to the same journal, Germany was the innovative centre of the leather goods industry during this period and so this was a scene to be scouted with some attention. The correspondent is directly concerned here with the solutions devised by trunk-makers for the problem of how to reduce the monotony of the usual and obvious trunk-pile window display. As Bowlby has outlined, the shop window was becoming a vital aspect of a 'new commercial aesthetic' which foregrounded the persuasive power of the visual.<sup>2</sup> We can see the formation of such an aesthetic in this passage in the question of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Continental Notes: Contrasts with the English Trade by Our Special Correspondent,' *The Bag*

<sup>2</sup> Bowlby, *Carried Away* 47.



how best to use a window but we can also see the formation of a twentieth-century luggage aesthetic in the question of how best to present travelling goods to the public.

The writer astutely picks up on what would now be called the 'unique selling point' of luggage, its suggestion of an alternative ontological experience to that encapsulated by an architectural frame of reference. To promote luggage along domestic lines is to miss the point of the nature of the experience associated with and made available by trunks and portmanteaus. They are offensive in initiative rather than defensive in stance, as Max Beerbohm discerns in an essay, also published in 1909, which celebrates luggage and the nomadic mode: '...I have never crossed a frontier without feeling some of the pride of conquest.'<sup>3</sup> We will examine the nomadic experience evoked by luggage, as Beerbohm projects it, more closely in Section 1.4 of this chapter. But conquest and all the negative connotations that go with it aside, luggage most notably promises escape. 'For they are the very things we use when we run away.' And what do we run away from but the constraints of the fortress or, more mundanely, the house. The special correspondent intuits here the devaluation of the domestic as a selling point in line with a new drive towards facility of motion in all aspects of modern life. Luggage must then be shown to make it easier for the runaway to run away and luggage advertisers were beginning to learn to engage with a growing desire for ease of movement, for 'travelling light,' a catchphrase which will be scrutinised from various angles over the course of this thesis. The following year, we come across the following cautionary note in the same journal from the pen of a columnist, known rather fittingly as 'Peripatetus:'

...Reference to the travelling goods trade recalls a somewhat unorthodox and undesirable method of advertising the various lines which are so much in demand just now. We refer especially to the phrase "Latest Impedimenta," which is employed by some tradesmen, in advertising their travelling goods. Although literally correct, the word has a double meaning, which is likely to attract the attention of buyers of a hypercritical turn of mind, as the term may be construed into a sense which is scarcely complimentary to the goods exhibited. The trade vocabulary is extensive, and tradesmen would do well to avoid the use of phrases which suggest that the goods offered are a hindrance and obstruction to the traveller.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Max Beerbohm, 'Ichabod,' *Yet Again* (1909; London: Heinemann, 1928) 123.

<sup>4</sup> Peripatetus, 'London Letter,' *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader: Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review* 4.89 (1910): 8.

Clearly, this 'double meaning' has only recently come to assume an importance for advertisers. The impediments inherent in the act of travel, taken for granted of old, have no place in the commercially constructed fantasy of modern escape. In this dawning era of high speed, mobility cannot now seem to be obstructed. Property, of course, must be seen to be the biggest impediment of all and architectural constructs could certainly have no place in the promotion of travelling goods except as the suggestion of what has been left behind.

This first chapter is about the often antagonistic, always differential, relationship between luggage and architecture on the level of literary symbolism and as reflected in representations of literary form in order to understand how and why the traditional balance of this relationship was turned on its head around the turn of the twentieth century, as evident in these marketing developments in the travelling goods trade. The figure of the house will feature on the periphery throughout this thesis as the model against which luggage is offset and defined. In this chapter, however, that defining relationship will be my primary focus and the house will be at the forefront of proceedings. Section 1.1 will initially ask why literary architecture has received such pronounced critical attention in recent years and where literary luggage might be critically situated in this field of research. I will then draw on current work on the subject of mobilities in the social sciences to show that, just as a nomadic perspective has long existed alongside though secondary to a sedentary perspective, luggage has, correspondingly, stalked architecture in the literary imagination, and that modernism witnesses the usurpation of house by case in conceptions of fictional form and the modern experience. In Section 1.2, I will turn to a quintessential mid-Victorian fictional abode, Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-3), to illustrate the covert presence of luggage as a formal alternative and to expose the germs of modernist unrest at the heart of Victorian domesticity. The final two sections of the chapter will hone in on the Edwardian period, during which time the figure of the house began to visibly lose its lustre and sense of importance. Section 1.3 will trace the genesis of that now-prolific phrase 'house of fiction' to Henry James's belated 1908 Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) and will argue that, contrary to popular usage, the 'house of fiction' originally referred to a structure on the point of abandonment, a structure in the process of being knocked off a secure pedestal of superiority. The discussion will incorporate both contemporary and retrospective depictions of the decline of the house in the Edwardian imagination and will set this decline in the context of the Liberal Party crisis, as this turned on the question of property, as well as in relation to anxieties surrounding the

domestic departure of the woman at this time. Finally, the last section of the chapter, Section 1.4, will look at two different Edwardian responses to the rise of a culture of mobility in envisaging the future shape of fiction. Beerbohm, in his short 1909 essay 'Ichabod' features a prototype case of fiction fit for the modern nomad. E.M. Forster, by contrast, attempts to renovate the fictional house as a preventative measure against the dreaded ascendancy of a nomadic and cosmopolitan culture. One aspect to be touched upon in this last section is the parallel emergence, in line with the modern 'civilisation of luggage,' of a modern consumer culture. As Bowlby records of the latter development, shopping became a 'parody of mobility as perpetual, happy, directionless to and fro.'<sup>5</sup> Window-shopping for luggage, as portrayed above, serves to intertwine parody with fantasy and this passage should alert us to the suitcase as the first cousin of the package in the early-twentieth-century imagination. The overall aim of this chapter is to interrogate, not quite yet the very things we use when we run away, but the reasons for their urgent and marketable appeal as set against the waning charm of the comfortable home at a particular moment in literary history.

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<sup>5</sup> Bowlby, *Carried Away* 25.

### 1.1 All House and No Case: The Overshadowed Luggage Analogue

‘If there is on earth a house with many mansions, it is the house of words.’

E.M. Forster, *Two Cheers For Democracy* (1951)<sup>6</sup>

‘When [...] did fiction become a house?’ Charlotte Grant asks in the introductory essay of a special issue of *Home Cultures* in 2005, examining the domestic interior in British literature.<sup>7</sup> More to the point here is the question of when critics became interested in the question of when fiction becomes a house and why, by contrast, little or no critical attention has been given to literary luggage. The authorial tendency to conceptualise fictional form in terms of bricks and mortar as well as the representation of domestic space in the novel has been an area of increasing critical engagement from the latter part of the twentieth century. The special *Home Cultures* issue came out of a conference on the subject of literature and the domestic interior, part of a wider project conducted by the AHRC Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior from 2001 to 2006. Grant herself attempts a general overview, cataloguing the application of the metaphor of the house, both for mind and text, from the early eighteenth century through to the twentieth century in works by writers ranging from Jonathan Swift to Willa Cather. But hers is a late addition to a discussion which was initiated in literary critical studies as far back as the 1970s. Frank’s 1979 book-length study, referred to earlier, gives a more expansive account, tracing the tendency to liken rhetorical formulations to built structures all the way back to the classical period, using works from Cicero, Dionysus of Halicarnassus and Quintilian as early examples, but concentrating more fully on Walter Pater, Gerald Manley Hopkins, Marcel Proust and Henry James as authors who ‘push the analogue to its perceptual limits.’<sup>8</sup> Philippa Tristram adds to the discussion in her 1989 *Living Space in Fact and Fiction*, providing a survey of the architectural foundations of the novel from its origins, through the nineteenth century, and up to World War 1.<sup>9</sup> ‘From the beginning the house and novel are interconnected,’ she establishes at the outset.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, amidst these general overviews of literary architecture, a plethora of more narrowly focused accounts have appeared. The architectural/domestic paradigm has been a popular topic in author-specific studies and the works of most of

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<sup>6</sup> E.M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951; London: Edward Arnold, 1951) 90.

<sup>7</sup> Charlotte Grant, ‘Reading the House of Fiction: From Object to Interior 1720-1920,’ *Home Cultures* 3 (2005): 235.

<sup>8</sup> Frank, *Literary Architecture* 249-52; 13.

<sup>9</sup> Philippa Tristram, *Living Space in Fact and Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Tristram, *Living Space* 2.

the key writers considered in this thesis have been looked at from this angle in full-blown monographs as well as shorter articles.<sup>11</sup> This is not to mention the analysis of literary architecture in relation to particular periods, genres and themes.<sup>12</sup> All of these literary studies form the tip of an academic iceberg with a wide interdisciplinary reach and it would be fair to say that the rise of literary architecture as a topic of interest partly took its cue from earlier explorations in philosophy, history and the social sciences, as well as more specific geographical and anthropological delineations of space, place and domesticity. A significant number of critical texts on houses in fiction and houses of fiction nod, for example, to Martin Heidegger, Gaston Bachelard and the historian John Lukacs. Heidegger, in his influential essay, 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (first delivered as a lecture in 1951 and published in English as part of *Poetry, Language, Thought* in 1971), raises two key philosophical questions: 'What is it to dwell?' and 'How does building belong to dwelling?'<sup>13</sup> He brings these words into etymological relation, through the root word 'bauen' (building in modern German, dwelling in original Old English/High German) and calls for a renewed understanding of building as dwelling, as being on the earth. Bachelard attempts to outline a 'topography of our intimate being,' in *The Poetics of Space* (1958), through an evocative phenomenological exploration of the domestic space of the house while historian Lukacs makes a case for a bourgeois age in which a new form of interiority, self-consciousness and privacy was developed in line with an emerging interest in the constitution of the interior space of the home in his essay 'The Bourgeois Interior' (1970).<sup>14</sup> In his own words: '[t]he interior furniture of houses appeared together with the interior furniture of minds.'<sup>15</sup>

Within this architecturally-inclined field of research, however, the dominance of the architectural paradigm has not gone unchallenged, either in literary studies or in other disciplines. To begin with, a number of the aforementioned studies also highlight

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<sup>11</sup> It would be impossible and, indeed, inappropriate to present a comprehensive survey here but I will be referring to several such studies, where relevant, as the thesis advances, particularly in relation to Henry James, E.M. Forster and Edith Wharton.

<sup>12</sup> The domestic paradigm in Victorian fiction is the focus of Jeff Nunokawa's *The Afterlife of Property: Domestic Security and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1994). Both Briganti and Mezei's *Domestic Modernism, the Interwar Novel and E.H. Young* and Rosner's *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* attempt to bring focus back round to a usually critically neglected domestic sphere in modernism. For a discussion of gender politics and the 'house of fiction,' see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* and Briganti and Mezei, 'Reading the House: A literary Perspective,' *Signs* 27 (2002) 837-46. For a postcolonial take, see Homi Bhabha, 'The World and the Home,' *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 141-53.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking,' *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (1971; New York: Perennial-Harper, 2001) 143-59 (143).

<sup>14</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 1958, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Orion, 1964) xxxii; John Lukacs, 'The Bourgeois Interior,' *American Scholar* 39 (1970): 616-630.

<sup>15</sup> Lukacs, 'The Bourgeois Interior' 623.

the underlying fragility of the model. In thinking about the 'ensemble of relations between economics and the house of fiction' during the Victorian period, Jeff Nunokawa argues, for example, that the 'novel's celebration of domesticity as a sanctuary from the vicissitudes of the cash nexus is everywhere spoiled; everywhere the shades of the countinghouse fall upon the home.'<sup>16</sup> In other words, even at the height of its importance in the nineteenth century, the apparent stability of the house is revealed as illusory. Others have raised questions about its limitations as a paradigm. 'Must the novel be a house?' Homi Bhabha asks in his postcolonial interrogation of the house of fiction model in 1992.<sup>17</sup> The manifest discomfort Bhabha experiences in trying to 'place' V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*, a discomfort he describes as the 'deep stirring of the unhomely' and not necessarily confined (he is careful to note) to the postcolonial experience, is directly correlated with a sense of the inadequacy of the architectural analogue for certain purposes: 'The image of the house has always been used to talk about the expansive, mimetic nature of the novel; but in *Biswas* you have a form of realism that is unable to contain the anguish of displacement and diasporic movement.'<sup>18</sup> Bhabha's emphasis on the insufficiency of the architectural analogue to represent the experience of displacement chimes rather interestingly with emerging work in the social sciences on what is generally referred to as the 'new mobilities paradigm,' a paradigm aiming to move away from dominant sedentary notions of the experience of place towards more dynamic and complex understandings of subjectivity, where the interaction between mobility and immobility is taken into account. According to Mimi Sheller and John Urry, two sociologists who have spearheaded work in this area, this new paradigm 'delineates the context in which both sedentary and nomadic accounts of the social world operate, and it questions how that context is itself mobilised, or performed, through ongoing sociotechnical practices, of intermittently mobile material worlds...'<sup>19</sup> Tim Cresswell, another key proponent of the paradigm, formulates such differing accounts in terms of an opposition between a 'sedentarist metaphysics' (a phrase he takes from anthropologist Liisa Malkki) and a 'nomadic metaphysics' and looks at the differing world views associated with each.<sup>20</sup> In the case of the former, rootedness and tradition

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<sup>16</sup> Nunokawa, *The Afterlife of Property* 14, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Bhabha, 'The World and the Home' 142.

<sup>18</sup> Bhabha, 'The World and the Home' 141, 142.

<sup>19</sup> Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm,' *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 211. In 2006, Sheller and Urry, along with Kevin Hannam, launched a new journal, entitled 'Mobilities,' in 2006, devoted to further exploring the 'mobility turn' noticeably 'spreading into and transforming the social sciences'. See Hannam, Sheller and Urry, 'Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings' *Mobilities* 1 (2006): 1.

<sup>20</sup> Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 1-56. See also Liisa Malkki, 'National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the

is venerated and mobility and mobile subjects regarded with distrust. The latter posits mobility as a positive attribute, denoting 'progress,' 'freedom' and 'change.'<sup>21</sup> In both cases, Cresswell asserts, the 'moral geographies of place and mobility interact to inform ontology, epistemology, and politics as well as practice and material culture.'<sup>22</sup> Giving an instructive historical overview of the concept of mobility, as well as conflicting perceptions of mobile subjects, from feudal and early modern periods to contemporary culture, he demonstrates the prevalence of the 'sedentary' point of view in modern thought but also charts the rise to prominence, in line with the evolution of western modernity, of nomadic ways of thinking, ways of thinking associated with subaltern forms of power and with the process of 'becoming' as opposed to a fully-consummated form of 'being.'<sup>23</sup>

These evolving social-scientific ideas have potentially very constructive implications for our understanding of conceptualisations of literary form during the modern period and similar ways of thinking have lately been gaining currency in the field of literature. If it has been established that a sedentary metaphysics has largely shaped social-scientific models of thought, the same has been seen to be true for literary studies. The influence of a long-prevailing sedentary perspective is exemplified, for example, in the popularity of literary architecture as a means of conceiving of structures of fiction. The idea of a new mobilities paradigm, though not explicitly named as such, has come to shape the direction of modernist studies in recent years, if in a somewhat less coordinated manner. Andrew Thacker's *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism*, published in 2003, argues that '[i]n the new *topoi* of the early twentieth century, transportation emphasised a sense of movement that came to be a crucial figure for the experience of modernity itself.'<sup>24</sup> Though the metropolis has always been central to interpretations of modernism, we have recently moved away from a

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Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees,' *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1992): 24-44.

<sup>21</sup> Cresswell, *On the Move* 43.

<sup>22</sup> Cresswell, *On the Move* 26.

<sup>23</sup> See Cresswell, *On the Move* 12-20. In brief, Cresswell shows that mobility was a marginal activity in feudal times, reserved for '[w]andering minstrels, troubadours, crusaders, pilgrims, and some peripatetic monks' (11). The freedom of movement of vagabonds within this pre-modern order was perceived as unpredictable and dangerous. By the sixteenth century, possibilities for mobility in Europe had greatly increased along with the rise of mercantile capitalism and the decline of the feudal system and mobility was newly associated with liberty and freedom. At the same time, associations of threat endured and new forms of social surveillance evolved to control the greater facility for circulation. For Cresswell, the word *modern* 'suggests a way of thinking in terms of mobility - a metaphysics of mobility that is distinct from what came before it' (15-16) though he is equally sensitive to the fact that this advocacy of mobility exists in ambiguous tension with a 'spatialized ordering principle seen by many to be central to modernity' (16).

<sup>24</sup> Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity* 8.

static sense of urban space populated by mobile artistic figures towards more dynamic conceptions of the relationship between modernist art and the city, as Scott McCracken highlights: 'Modernist aesthetics might be understood as an attempt to represent the modern city on the move...'<sup>25</sup> Modernist aesthetics might also be understood in relation to complex city-to-city networks of artists in dynamic interaction and modernist criticism since the end of the twentieth century has been encouraging a more international as well as a more pluralised understanding of modernism, suggested by the title of one forthcoming modernist anthology to be published by Oxford University Press later this year: *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*.<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that modernism's internationalism and diversity has not been flagged up before.<sup>27</sup> However, what is most conspicuous about present interpretations of modernism is how deliberately unstable the term is acknowledged to have become, as conveyed by the editors of the similarly-titled *Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*:

Put simply, modernism has been (and continues to be) reconfigured in an ongoing process of redefinition that takes its cue from analyses of a modernity that is increasingly seen in globalizing and thus transnational terms. [...] Modernism is then to be seen in terms of overlapping, criss-crossing, and labile networks. This model complicates our understandings of causality and diachrony because it insists that the history of modernity (and thus of modernism) should be seen as geographically and temporally 'uneven': modernity is not 'singular' but 'multiple', its development is intermittent, not smoothly progressive, and it takes its diverse forms depending on time and place, and on different agents' specific interventions, in particular sociocultural circumstances.<sup>28</sup>

We might infer that modernism is now another word for mobility; that is to say, it is subject to an unstable process of continual redefinition and any efforts to crystallise understandings of the concept in sedentary terms must be seen to be misguided. Although modernism has never quite conformed to a 'sedentarist' vision on the levels of theme and technique, it is becoming increasingly clear that it cannot be contained

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<sup>25</sup> Scott McCracken, 'Imagining the Modernist City,' *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* 638.

<sup>26</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* is edited by Mark Wollaeger and the expected date of publication is June 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Bradbury and McFarlane note that the 'essence of modernism is its international character...' while Berman mentions the 'internationalization of everyday life' as one key consequence of modernity. See Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism* 31; Berman, *All That is Solid* 35.

<sup>28</sup> Brooker et al., introduction, *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* 3-4.



sedentarily as an abstract concept either. The possibilities opened up by the contending conceptual framework of the mobilities paradigm are only now being fully explored and with a greater sensitivity to the interplay between fixity and flux from the angles of history, geography, anthropology, philosophy and science as much as the arts.

Building on these developments in modernist studies and in the social sciences, I would propose the luggage analogue as a product of a nomadic metaphysics, along Cresswell's lines, as applied to a form of fiction which aspires to render not just the anguish of displacement and diasporic movement, to re-invoke Bhabha's words, but, in equal measure, the excitement experienced through forms of mobility and dynamic relations.<sup>29</sup> Just as Cresswell demonstrates that this nomadic metaphysics has always attended and conflicted with a 'sedentarist' metaphysics, so I would also propose that, to a great extent, the opposition between architectural and luggage paradigms is a long-standing and prevailing one even if the balance of paradigmatic power and influence can be seen to shift. In thinking about the tradition of storytelling, Walter Benjamin asks us to imagine two types; the narrator who has travelled and can recount adventures from far-flung shores and the narrator who has stayed at home, with a store of local tales. 'And the figure of the storyteller,' he adds 'gets its full corporeality only for the one who can picture them both.'<sup>30</sup> It stands to reason that if the stationary storyteller has a counterpart, so too does the corresponding architectural analogue. It also stands to reason, as such, that the analysis of rhetorical conceptualizations of structures of fiction over time can only gain full corporeality through envisioning literary luggage alongside literary architecture. Where there is a house, there has always been a case. Where there is a surefooted host with a stationary perspective to oversee that house, there has always been a light-footed guest with a nomadic perspective and with luggage in tow. In thinking about literary architecture in relation to literary luggage we must think about literary hosts and guests and thus, more broadly, literary hospitality, the conceptual framework within which they interact. Figures of host and guest, in their multifarious guises, will be seen to be in intermittent dialogue in the chapters that follow. The point to be made in these chapters is the strain such a dialogue undergoes during the period in question and, furthermore, the challenge to the perspectival dominance of the host-figure. The point to be made at this stage is the fact of the dialogue itself as well as its longevity.

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<sup>29</sup> Luggage has, as previously noted, indeed been highlighted within this social scientific exploration of the new mobilities paradigm. See Bissell 173-95; Basu and Coleman 313-30.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller – Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov,' *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zorn, ed. Hannah Arendt (1968; London: Pimlico, 1999) 84.

The luggage analogue did not simply appear as a contending model at the end of the nineteenth century and this thesis is far from making such a claim. As I stated in my introduction, luggage, of some variety, has been around for as long as people have moved and has, as such, served as a useful and evocative literary motif and metaphor. As Paul Fussell notes, ‘...both travellers and watchers have always been sensitive to its semiotic powers.’<sup>31</sup> When Raoul Duquette, in Katherine Mansfield’s 1918 story ‘Je ne parle pas français’ (a story which will form a sort of recurring refrain in this thesis) aligns people in the modern age with restless portmanteaus in a passage I will look at in more detail shortly, he is swift to acknowledge that it is not a ‘frightfully original digression.’<sup>32</sup> It can be observed that the appeal of the luggage analogue to the literary imagination takes two divergent lines. In the first place, we have the fardel imagery of the pilgrimage or puritan narrative tradition where luggage is a burden of sin or anxiety to be carried as indicator of an unwanted and enforced alienation from an established structure, social and/or religious. The narrative aim is to reach a point where the burden can be shed and a re-assimilation achieved. John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* of 1678, the archetype in this line, makes the burden of the central protagonist, Christian, carried for much of his narrative journey, of paramount allegorical importance. (Twentieth-century writers like Dorothy Richardson and Edith Wharton will play upon this fardel tradition of luggage imagery much later on, as we will see, and, as Alexandra Peat has recently established, the pilgrimage trope informs many modernist acts of travel.)<sup>33</sup> Luggage is, however, an equally visible accessory in the adventure narrative line (linked, as previously suggested, to picaresque and romance traditions) where alienation takes the form of a self-willed escape from and reaction to the fixed order of an established social structure. Here, luggage signals a liberating mobility as opposed to an encumbering obstruction and this usage, again, has a long history. One example is provided in tracing the origins of Duquette’s not ‘frightfully original digression’ in ‘Je ne parle pas français.’ His passing remark on the unoriginality of his comparison of people with portmanteaus becomes more interesting in light of a note Mansfield made in her journal in January 1918, the same month the story was written. She quotes from a letter John Keats wrote to Fanny Brawne in August 1819:

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<sup>31</sup> Fussell, ‘Bourgeois Travel’ 65.

<sup>32</sup> Katherine Mansfield, ‘Je ne parle pas français,’ *Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, (1945; London: Constable, 1980) 61. Further references to any of Katherine Mansfield’s stories will come from this edition.

<sup>33</sup> Peat’s study looks at the ‘complex ethical relationship between journeying and spirituality in modernist literature and explores the contradiction and ambivalence central to the treatment of the sacred journey in modernism.’ See Alexandra Peat, *Travel and Modernist Literature: Sacred and Ethical Journeys* (New York: Routledge, 2011) 3.

'Better be imprudent moveables than prudent fixtures.'<sup>34</sup> And we find an even fuller evocation of the opposition between nomadic and 'sedentarist' perspectives in terms of an architectural/luggage opposition by appending the preceding line in Keats's original letter to Mansfield's selected quotation: '...god forbid we should what people call, *settle* – turn into a pond, a stagnant Lethe – a vile crescent, row or buildings. Better be imprudent moveables than prudent fixtures.'<sup>35</sup> Keats's line offers a good example of the use of luggage imagery to convey the desire to escape and the reaction against an established system of values. More generally, we can characterise these two divergent uses of luggage imagery in terms of obstruction, on the one hand, and facilitation, on the other. Tim Armstrong's ideas about 'negative' and 'positive' prosthesis in *Modernism, Technology and the Body* can be productively applied to these distinct symbolic practices.<sup>36</sup> Armstrong defines positive prosthesis in terms of bodily empowerment through organ extension, 'a more utopian version of technology, in which human capacities are extrapolated,' whereas negative prosthesis 'involves the replacing of a bodily part, covering a lack.'<sup>37</sup> Thus, in the adventure tradition, luggage can be seen as a positive prosthetic because, as home in transit and key instrument of displacement, it empowers the individual in the act of escape while, in the fardel tradition, it is a negative prosthetic, not only because it is an encumbrance but, more importantly, because it points to the loss of the home left behind.

Armstrong explores these ideas in the context of what he refers to as a 'Prosthetic Modernism' - that is to say, the impact of technological advancement on perceptions of the human body in modernist writing - and I would uphold the object of the portable bag as an example of prosthetic modernism in line with his account. It is worth returning at this juncture to the question of why I am positing luggage as an analogue more specifically for modernist fiction here if it has always existed as a prosthetic bone, so to speak, of architectural contention. The point is that until the modernist period, literary luggage did not pose a threat to the dominance of the architectural paradigm (just as the nomadic outlook was long subservient to the 'sedentarist' outlook, as Cresswell delineates in charting the historical evolution of

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<sup>34</sup> January 1918 entry, *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. John Middleton Murry (1927; London: Constable, 1954) 127.

<sup>35</sup> Letter (no 180) from John Keats to Fanny Brawne, 5-6 August 1819 in *The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1958) 138. Emphasis in original.

<sup>36</sup> Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 77-105. David Bissell uses Armstrong's ideas to draw attention to the alternating associations of facility and obstruction in looking at 'geographies of everyday encumbrance' in the modern-day railway station. My invocation of Armstrong's discussion of prosthetic modernism in relation to literary luggage is prompted by his article. See Bissell 178.

<sup>37</sup> Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body* 78.

mobility as a concept). On the contrary, literary luggage served as an important means of maintaining the architectural status quo. Miriam Henderson comes to a sudden astute realisation of this circumstance in *The Trap*, the eighth chapter of Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, in 1925: 'By Jove, yes. One of the reasons why household people like the odd, homeless sort is that they make them realize their own snugness, by revelling in it.'<sup>38</sup> As Miriam perceives, the household perspective allows for the homeless perspective – we might recall here that Simmel's singular stranger, 'by nature no owner of soil,' is shown to have a 'full-fledged' and integral position in relation to the group, as mentioned in my introduction – but only to maintain a particular power dynamic which gives ultimate prominence to a 'sedentarist' metaphysics.<sup>39</sup> The obvious fictional exemplar here is Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) in which the rather more attractive figures of metropolitan mobility, Mary and Henry Crawford, are permitted a certain amount of space to parade their more worldly mores and values before being expunged both from house and house of fiction at one and the same time.<sup>40</sup> In the same way, the architectural analogue overshadows the luggage analogue for much of the novel's history but this is not to say that the luggage analogue is not illicitly touted as a disturbing alternative, something I will consider in more detail in relation to Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* in the following section. Throughout the nineteenth century, the dominance of the architectural analogue is shaken by new forms of mobility. John Ruskin, credited by Ellen Eve Frank with 'illuminating the imaginative literature' of the literary architects she examines, cannot help expressing a certain fear of 'locomotion' and this fear finds expression in his well-known treatise on architectural design, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, first published in 1849:<sup>41</sup>

The whole system of railroad travelling is addressed to people who, being in a hurry, are therefore for the time being miserable. No one would travel in that manner who could help it [...]. The railroad is in all its relations a matter of earnest business to be got through as soon as possible. It transmutes a man from a traveller into a living parcel. For the time, he has parted with the nobler characteristics of his humanity for the sake of a planetary power of locomotion.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage*, vol. 3 (London: Dent and Cresset, 1938) 439.

<sup>39</sup> Simmel, 'The Stranger' 402.

<sup>40</sup> For an engaging discussion of the not altogether straightforward opposition between the 'dangers of thoughtless restlessness' and the 'values of thoughtful rest' in this novel, see Tony Tanner, introduction, *Mansfield Park*, by Jane Austen (1814; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 7-36 (34).

<sup>41</sup> Frank, *Literary Architecture* 11.

<sup>42</sup> John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849; London: George Allen, 1903) 159.

The impact of the growing railway network will likewise re-surface in my discussion of *Bleak House* in the next section of this chapter. What I would like to highlight here is the sense of the dehumanization of the individual in transit between stable architectural reference points. Nicholas Daly, in making a case for a 'modernity that obsessively replays the meeting' of people and things/machines, with a particular emphasis on the railway and the cinema, cites this passage from Ruskin as an example of the 'more hostile early accounts of the railway that saw it as transforming people into so many packages, shuttled around the country...'<sup>43</sup> Technology is represented as a hostile force in its transformative effect on humanity and this threat is aggravated by its mobile aspect. Furthermore, if technology transforms people into packages, then they are packages without any agency themselves; the locomotion is not in their control.

We find evidence once again, in Ruskin's alignment of person with 'parcel,' of the unoriginality of Duquette's alignment between people and portmanteaus in Mansfield's 'Je ne parle pas français.' However, I would suggest one important difference between Duquette's comment and that of Ruskin (as well as Keats) and a closer look at the people/portmanteaus analogy in Mansfield's story will bring this difference to light. It will also help us to understand the suitability of luggage as a framework for modernist form and the experience of modernity:

I don't believe in the human soul. I never have. I believe that people are like portmanteaux – packed with certain things, started going, thrown about, tossed away, dumped down, lost and found, half emptied suddenly or squeezed fatter than ever, until finally the Ultimate Porter swings them on to the Ultimate Train and away they rattle....<sup>44</sup>

In doing away altogether with the idea of a soul, Duquette presents us instead with a perception of the arbitrariness and negligibility of individual subjective forms in a state of modern agitation. We might say that the portmanteaus convey, so to speak, a sense that the 'ultimate basis of artistic creation has become homeless,' as expressed by Georg Lukács not long before 'Je ne parle pas français' was published, and Mansfield's use of the short story form makes the fragmented nature of formal dislocation more acute.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Nicholas Daly, *Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1860-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 2, 54.

<sup>44</sup> Mansfield, 'Je ne parle pas français' 60.

<sup>45</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historical-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, 1916, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Merlin, 2006) 41. The essay was written

Yet we also find a final destination projected above. One way of reading this passage (I will be proposing other readings later in the thesis) is as a wry commentary on the relationship between character and form in modernist fiction; the sense of deliberate self-alienation from larger controlling structures and yet the enduring belief in the totalising and stabilizing force of an 'Ultimate' design. It can be read as an expression of the simultaneous desire for and repugnance at the idea of formlessness and instability. Where Duquette's use of the person/package analogy differs, both from Ruskin and Keats, is that it assumes a nomadic metaphysics as the dominant metaphysics and there is only a wistful suggestion of a sedentary point of view. For Ruskin, it is only '[f]or the time' that the man 'has parted with the nobler characteristics of his humanity for the sake of a planetary power of locomotion.'<sup>46</sup> In Duquette's vision, the prevailing modern condition is characterised, first and foremost, by locomotion and, to loosely apply Lukács's well-known idiom, a kind of 'transcendental homelessness.'<sup>47</sup> The stirrings of a mobile modernity are certainly in evidence in Ruskin and Keats. As recognised by Bradbury and McFarlane, among other modernist critics, the 'potential of Modernism was long present in the development of literature...'<sup>48</sup> But for those earlier writers, though alert to these stirrings, the sedentary point of view, for better or worse, still reigns supreme.

Modernism brings the nomadic point of view to the fore and establishes it as the literary status quo. It is in modernist writing, this thesis argues, that literary luggage begins to gain precedence over literary architecture and this is reflected, to no small degree, in the state of architectural art in comparison to the luggage trade from the end of the nineteenth century. A number of *fin de siècle* art magazines identify a failing confidence within the field of architecture which is seen to have far-reaching implications. Take the following excerpt from an editorial for *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* in 1889: 'Now the present condition of the Art of this country is largely the result of the deplorable state of our architecture, and of the manner in which our Painting, Sculpture, and the Decorative arts are carried on without reference to this fundamental

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between 1914 and 1915 and first published in 1920. According to Mary Burgan, the composition of Mansfield's story was itself characterised by a sense of homelessness; she wrote it 'on a variety of sheets of paper, on the trains, in the hotel, in a flurry of frantic creativity.' Mary Burgan, *Illness, Gender and Writing: The Case of Katherine Mansfield* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1994) 122.

<sup>46</sup> Ruskin, *Seven Lamps* 159.

<sup>47</sup> Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* 41.

<sup>48</sup> Bradbury and McFarlane, 'The Name and Nature of Modernism' 30. For Berman too, the feeling of modernity is far from new and he traces the 'rich history' of modernity right back to the sixteenth century even if what he calls the 'maelstrom' comes to a head in the twentieth century. Berman, *All That is Solid* 16.

art, which bears the same relation to them as does the frame to the picture.'<sup>49</sup> It is perhaps this 'frame to the picture' mentality which is the root of the problem here and, by the end of the nineteenth century, it seems that architecture has been left behind as set against advancements in other art forms, as an 1898 editorial in the *fin de siècle* periodical *The Dome*, a magazine with an active interest in the field of architecture, makes clear. The writer of this editorial bemoans the state of an art which 'more sorely than any other needs a fresh inspiration; for it is Architecture alone who seems to believe her last great word spoken, and the evolution of a new and yet dignified style impossible.'<sup>50</sup> In the twentieth century, this fresh inspiration might be said to have arrived through an attempted embrace of forms of modern mobility. Cresswell points to the development of a 'nomadic architecture' in the late-twentieth century, epitomised in the work of Bernard Tschumi, but this trend is visible much earlier.<sup>51</sup> *Bricks and Mortar* by Helen Ashton, a novel published in 1932, concerns the life of an architect by the name of Martin Lovell from the 1890s to the 1930s and, through his eyes, we witness the changing world of architecture during the modernist period. What is fascinating, in the context of this discussion, is the repeated descriptions of modern buildings in the novel, often the designs of Lovell's young protégé Oliver Barford, in terms of packing-cases. These modern buildings have 'packing-case outlines,' or look like a 'cross between a packing-case and gasometer' or, in more sizable examples, 'like heaps of packing cases.'<sup>52</sup> Such structures are viewed with distaste by Lovell (who takes a rather more traditional stance on structural design) but he is eventually forced to cede to the inevitable succession of a younger generation of architects with a more modern sense of the need to somehow incorporate the concept of movement within architectural form.

By contrast, the period from the 1880s to the 1920s witnessed the enormous transformation and enlargement of the travelling goods industry, particularly the luggage trade. Set in motion by the industrial revolution and the resulting expansion both of railway and shipping networks in Europe and the United States from the early- to mid-nineteenth century, and gaining momentum from the 1880s with the appearance of the motor-car and increasingly fervent attempts to develop the aeroplane (that symbol of man's determination to 'get outside his body, beyond his house,' as Virginia Woolf puts it in the later *Mrs Dalloway*), such a transformation was prompted by the necessity to respond to the greater accessibility of travel for a larger segment of the

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<sup>49</sup> 'A Preface,' editorial, *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* 3.13 (1889): 5.

<sup>50</sup> 'Under the Dome,' *The Dome: An Illustrated Magazine and Review of Literature, Music, Architecture and the Graphic Arts*, Dec. 1898: 94.

<sup>51</sup> Cresswell, *On the Move* 51-2.

<sup>52</sup> Helen Ashton, *Bricks and Mortar* (1932; London: Persephone, 2004) 226, 276, 295.

population, not to mention new modes of transportation.<sup>53</sup> Manufacturers began to experiment with luggage design and with new materials, such as vulcanised fibre and compressed cane, to meet the demand for lighter and more durable goods that might be easily conveyed and compactly stowed away en route. Apart from developments in transportation, this necessity for lighter luggage arose from the declining availability of staff, professionally appointed by institutions or in personal service, to aid in luggage carriage. On the level of design alone, the transformation might be broadly represented in the rise to prominence of the suitcase, suggestive of the short trip, to stand alongside the trunk, suggestive of the prolonged and far-flung voyage.<sup>54</sup> Advances were being made in both lines throughout this period. From 1860 to 1880 alone, the total value of trunks produced on an annual basis in the United States had near tripled and the number of workers active in that line had more than doubled.<sup>55</sup> This is no less true of Europe. 'The phenomenal growth of the Travelling Requisites, Fancy Leather Goods and Sports Trades during the past ten years' is cited as the primary reason for the launch of aforementioned *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader* in 1907, a journal which was transformed, due to its 'phenomenal success,' from a monthly to a weekly publication in April 1909 and was produced consistently thereafter until 1921.<sup>56</sup> The rapid growth of this industry was indicative of the needs of an increasingly mobile but also increasingly moneyed middle class, hungry to consume new products and experiences. The modern traveller, it is worth once more stressing, was also a modern consumer; mobility and desire were integral to both activities. If old money was static and invested in property then new money was moving and, more often than not, invested in movables, whether disposable products or portable goods, a shift pointedly expressed in the very expansion of the luggage trade at this time. This is one important change overlooked in the 'series of sweeping changes in technology and culture from the 1880s to World War 1' charted by Stephen Kern in his *The Culture of Time and Space* but it is a change that is at the heart of the 'cultural revolution' in perceptions of and

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<sup>53</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925; London: Vintage-Random, 2004) 23.

<sup>54</sup> There were, of course, other models of bag befitting the shorter journey before this and at the same time (carpet bags, kit bags, Gladstone bags, etc.) But the development of various models of suitcase at this time, designed to compactly fit in travel compartments (either on a luggage rack or under a railway seat), speaks of the need to meet the growing demands for portability on the increasingly popular short trip.

<sup>55</sup> These statistics are taken from Linda Edelstein and Pat Morse, *Antique Trunks: Identification and Price Guide* (Iola: Krause, 2003) 6. For a general overview of the evolution of luggage design at this time, see also Gulshan's *Vintage Luggage* and Ralph Caplan's 'Design for Travel(ers)' in *Bon Voyage: Designs For Travel* 95-127.

<sup>56</sup> 'By Way of Introduction,' editorial, *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review*, 1.1 (1907): 3; 'Editorial,' *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review* 2.24 (1909): 3.



approaches to time and space he sets out to describe, a change announcing the ascendancy of what E.M. Forster refers to as the 'nomadic civilisation which is altering human nature so profoundly' in *Howards End*, a novel we will shortly turn to.<sup>57</sup>

This section has given an overview of critical approaches to literary architecture while contending that literary luggage is an almost entirely neglected area of literary criticism even though houses and cases have always co-existed in the literary imagination. Drawing on current work in the social sciences as well as the turn towards mobilities in literary studies in recent years, I have suggested a paradigmatic imbalance between literary architecture and literary luggage before the twentieth century but that literary architectural supremacy is challenged during the modernist period by the growing influence of a nomadic over and above a sedentary metaphysics, demanding a case rather than a house of fiction. By 1951, Forster's image of a 'house of words,' referred to at the beginning of this section, certainly strikes an anachronistic note but my next section, which identifies a suppressed house-case tension at the centre of one definitive Victorian literary architectural edifice, Dickens's *Bleak House*, questions whether or not it ever truly had its moment.

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<sup>57</sup> Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (1983; Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003) 1-2, 6; Forster, *Howards End* 206.

## 1.2 *Bleak House* as a Victorian 'Case' Study

If there is in words a house with many mansions, it is the house of Dickens. From his edited magazine, *Household Words* (1850-59) to that seminal Victorian monument of fiction, *Bleak House* (1852-53), domestic architecture looms as an unavoidable structuring principle in his writing.<sup>58</sup> In order to illustrate then this paradigmatic imbalance between house and luggage models before the twentieth century, I will turn now briefly to that latter monumental work as a house/case in point. As Kevin McLaughlin notes, much of the 'critical debate about novels like *Bleak House* can be seen in terms of this conflict between the domestic analogy that organizes the novel and the various figures of displacement that continue to guide important novel criticism.'<sup>59</sup> Given the centrality of such a conflict, both in *Bleak House* (as representative novel) and as a subject for wider discussion, it seems odd that critics have overlooked a further potential analogy for form which permeates the text as the house's structural and thematic antithesis and which hangs in the balance within the conflict itself. I refer, of course, to the essential accessory of those figures of displacement, that is to say their baggage. An awareness alone of the prevalence of baggage in this text adds another dimension to that recurring critical debate; namely, it suggests that though the domestic analogy may be the dominant analogy here (as the title well establishes), it may not be the only model entertained within the body of the text.

'*Bleak House* is a document about the interpretation of documents.'<sup>60</sup> So J. Hillis Miller announces his hermeneutic discussion of Dickens's novel. This is not in dispute but we would do well to remember that, more often than not, documents are shown to be bagged or encased rather than housed in *Bleak House* itself and this must have implications for our interpretation of the overarching document as set within its domestic frame. The most conspicuous and important instance of packed documentation is the retention of the love letters between Captain Hawdon and Lady

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<sup>58</sup> The title *Household Words* underlines the powerful appeal of the domestic and architectural analogue for Dickens. The magazine's lofty aim, not simply of representing, but of cultivating a collective household is boldly outlined in the 'Preliminary Word' of the very first number: 'We aspire to live in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers. [...] We know the great responsibility of such a privilege; its vast reward; the pictures that it conjures up, in hours of solitary labour, of a multitude moved by one sympathy;' Charles Dickens, 'A Preliminary Word,' *Household Words* 1:1 (1850): 1.

<sup>59</sup> Kevin McLaughlin, 'Losing One's Place: Displacement and Domesticity in Dickens's *Bleak House*,' *MLN* 108 (1993): 875.

<sup>60</sup> J. Hillis Miller, 'Interpretation in *Bleak House*,' *Bleak House: Charles Dickens*, ed. Jeremy Tambling (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) 29.

Dedlock in the former's 'ragged old portmanteau.'<sup>61</sup> But this is not an isolated instance. There are the 'two black leathern cases' belonging to Grandfather Smallweed (*BH* 296) in which he keeps his financial papers. There are Miss Flite's 'documents,' carried, throughout the novel, in her 'reticule' (*BH* 3, 54, 56, 495-6, 638, 818-9). There are Richard's legal contributions to 'Jarndyce and Jarndyce' in 'several blue bags hastily stuffed out of all regularity of form, as the larger sort of serpents are in their first gorged state' (*BH* 549).<sup>62</sup> These are contributions which feed, of course, into the larger bureaucratic digestive tract of the Chancery suit itself which takes shape in a 'battery of blue bags [...] loaded with heavy charges of papers' (*BH* 7), later evolving into 'great heaps, and piles, and bags and bags full of papers' (*BH* 345). When this suit – 'concerning (as people say) a large amount of property,' in Mr. Skimpole's words (*BH* 75) - is finally dismissed, it is tantamount to eviction on a grand scale. The case is literally kicked out, bag and baggage, onto the street, a scene witnessed by Esther Summerson and Allan Woodcourt (themselves newly housed by contrast):

We stood aside, watching for any countenance we knew, and presently great bundles of paper began to be carried out—bundles in bags, bundles too large to be got into any bags, immense masses of papers of all shapes and no shapes, which the bearers staggered under, and threw down for the time being, anyhow, on the Hall pavement, while they went back to bring out more. (*BH* 865)

This is a vision of textual chaos. It is also a vision of grand dispossession and the dread of textual formlessness or lack of structural discipline perceptible throughout *Bleak House* must be seen to correlate with a dread of dispossession, a correlation the above passage brings to the fore. Hillis Miller isolates the same passage as an example of the novel's recurrent shift in register towards the 'dreamlike and grotesque', a move 'beyond "realism" in the usual sense.'<sup>63</sup> I would refine and press this point further to propose that it forms a discordant nightmare vision of culminating textual displacement which accompanies and undercuts the closing dreamlike achievement of textual place which sees the establishment of Esther as 'mistress' (*BH* 877) in the reconfigured Bleak House and simultaneously marks the domestic enclosure of her own written document.

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<sup>61</sup> Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1952-53; London: Vintage-Random, 2008) 136. Hereafter abbreviated '*BH*' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>62</sup> Blue brief-bags were traditionally used by barristers for their papers and a 'blue bag' also became a term to indicate 'one carrying such a bag,' according to the *OED*. See 'brief-bag,' C2 in 'brief, n.1,' *OED Online*, March 2012, Oxford University Press, 7 June 2012 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/23262?redirectedFrom=brief%20bag>>.

<sup>63</sup> Hillis Miller, 'Interpretation in *Bleak House*' 35.

But if Esther's narrative is rounded off in a house, it is important to note that it begins in the unfixed boxes carried with her by coach at the very beginning (*BH* 22, 24, 28, 35) and is, crucially, interpreted through the contents of a portmanteau. It would appear that hers is also a document which owes more, on the whole, to luggage than to architecture as a structuring principle.

I will come back to Esther presently but I would like first to take a moment to probe in more depth the aforementioned correlation between dispossession and disorder, as evinced in that vision of Chancery eviction. Baggage is, for obvious reasons, foregrounded as a hallmark of dispossession in *Bleak House* but it is, for less obvious reasons, equally associated with disorder throughout. We might surmise, as such, that the fragmented, and often formless, storage of documents in cases and bags is intended to cumulatively evoke a kind of symbolic anti-text, against which Dickens sets his own unified and domesticated textual whole. From the outset, the ownership of fixed property is shown to demand responsibility and maturity in contrast to the ownership of movables. Those who embrace proprietary responsibility are favoured within the text and those who shun proprietary responsibility - Mr. Skimpole and Mrs. Jellyby, for example - are given short shrift. "Possession is nothing to me..." (*BH* 70) Skimpole remarks early on, a viewpoint calculated to damn a character unequivocally in Dickens's fictional world. Skimpole's inconstancy as a character is indeed figured, in the novel, in terms of a proprietary inconstancy, as his comment following a visit from the bailiff makes clear: 'How pleasant, then, to be bound to no particular chairs and tables, but to sport like a butterfly among all the furniture on hire....' (*BH* 243) It is but a short sporting step from furniture-flitting to house-flitting and dispossession, whether of house or furniture, is shown to provoke a restlessness that the novel seems intent upon denouncing, even to the point of eliminating. Compare the respective hired rooms (and, by extension, narrative fates) of the late Captain Hawdon (also known as Nemo or No One) and the fast declining Richard Carstone, stationed temporarily at a barracks in Kent:

In the corner by the chimney, stand a deal table and a broken desk; a wilderness marked with a rain of ink. In another corner, a ragged old portmanteau on one of the two chairs, serves for cabinet or wardrobe; no longer one is needed, for it collapses like the cheeks of a starved man. (*BH* 136)

He was writing at a table, with a great confusion of clothes, tin cases, books, boots, brushes, and portmanteaus strewn all about the floor. He was only half

dressed—in plain clothes, I observed, not in uniform—and his hair was unbrushed, and he looked as wild as his room. (*BH* 619)

Such descriptive doubling-up sounds an ominous note for Richard. This is a world in which identification with a portmanteau is akin to having a death wish. In fact, the portmanteau, in casting forward to an end-point, can be seen to work metaphorically as a death wish. It conveys the transience and brevity of existence, in direct opposition to the illusion of stability and permanence projected by the image of the house. Dickens even goes so far as to pointedly align coffin with portmanteau in Hawdon's room: '...all that night, the coffin stands ready by the old portmanteau; and the lonely figure on the bed, whose path in life has lain through five-and-forty years, lies there, with no more track behind him, that any one can trace, than a deserted infant.' (*BH* 145) Not only is the still-standing portmanteau shown to spell the end here but it also obscures the beginning by not giving a ready account of those five-and-forty years. It is with this taint of anonymity, in equal measure, that issue is taken. Correspondingly, the obfuscation of documentable origins is the defining feature of the 'large loose baggy' monster (to invoke Henry James's description of the long-winded nineteenth-century novel) that is the Chancery suit.<sup>64</sup>

Yet it would be too easy to dismiss bag and baggage in *Bleak House* as simply the yardstick for textual, social and legal illegitimacy and disorder which must either be brought in under the narrative roof (as in the case of Esther) or eliminated, reluctantly or otherwise (as in the cases of Hawdon, Richard and the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit). This would be to overlook its synecdochic function in relation to the figure of the house at various stages of the novel as well as the illicit fascination it is shown to inspire on its own terms. To begin with, baggage replicates the house on many levels, not least by suggesting narrative and historical continuity on a small scale. Hawdon's portmanteau is worth considering further in this regard. The narrator's tacit association of anonymity with portmanteau-framed destitution, in relation to the 'lonely figure' on the bed, is a little short of the mark. The portmanteau does in fact include documentary evidence of Hawdon's history, the 'track behind him,' in the form of his love letters (before these are stolen, on the spot, by Krook). Moreover, it appears to have undergone a process of

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<sup>64</sup> Henry James, 'Preface to the Tragic Muse,' *The Critical Muse* 515. Although James applies this turn of phrase specifically to the works of Tolstoy, Thackeray and Dumas as prototypes, it is not unlikely that he also had Dickens in mind. The phrase is used in the context of a discussion of the difficulties of bringing two seemingly unrelated stories seamlessly together to make one 'organic form'. That James thought *Bleak House* a failure in this regard is made clear in an 1865 review of *Our Mutual Friend* in which he referred to the earlier novel, in passing, as 'forced.' See 'Our Mutual Friend, by Charles Dickens (1865),' *The Critical Muse* 49.

domestication in serving as ‘cabinet and wardrobe,’ however defunct this function has become. Conjuring the transience and brevity of existence on one level, on another level this portmanteau offers some semblance of the permanence of a home. Instances of correlation, over and above difference, extend to the means by which architecture and baggage are characterised. In the same passage, house and portmanteau are alike anthropomorphised. The portmanteau is shown to collapse ‘like the cheeks of a starved man’ (*BH* 136) while it is looked upon by the ‘two gaunt holes’ or the ‘great eyes’ of the shutter in Krook’s room (*BH* 138, 145). We can perceive an affinity rather than an antagonism in this kind of correspondence. But further to this, I would read such a correspondence between the small-scale framework of the portmanteau and the large-scale framework of the house as an expression of the relation of the episodic part to the totalising narrative whole in Dickens’s novel. If this relation is habitually shown to be more fraught than harmonious, this tautness is part of the novel’s overall effect, as W. J. Harvey observes: ‘...one of the reasons for its greatness is the extreme tension set up between the centrifugal vigour of its parts and the centripetal demands of the whole. It is a tension between the impulse to intensify each local detail or particular episode and the impulse to subordinate, arrange and discipline.’<sup>65</sup> In other words, the interest of the episodic part threatens, at all times, to breach the synecdochic bond, to expand beyond its assigned dimensions, to disconnect from the overarching structure – a lack of formal discipline evoked, more broadly, through the imagery of bag and baggage, as earlier discussed.

The mutinous potential of the episodic part to overstep its structural boundaries can be measured through the subversive interest, as much as disapprobation, baggage is shown to generate as a repository for unsanctioned and private documents which find no place in the narrative house. It is precisely because such documents are un-housed that they are liable to disappear, circulate and cause trouble, representing a disturbance to conventional narrative continuity. That Dickens imaginatively assigned to baggage the quality of the episodic is evident in his later collaborative project, *Somebody’s Luggage*, published as the Christmas special edition of *All the Year Round* in 1862. For this project, he recruited Charles Allston Collins, Arthur Locker, John Oxenford and Julia Cecilia Stretton as co-authors. The story recounts a waiter’s discovery of a heap of abandoned luggage in one of the rooms of the hotel at which he is newly employed. Upon further investigation, he finds that the accumulated luggage is veritably bursting with words:

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<sup>65</sup> W. J. Harvey, ‘*Bleak House: The Double Narrative*,’ *Dickens: Bleak House – A Casebook*, ed. A.E. Dyson (1969; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977) 225.

What I still look at most, in connection with that Luggage, is the extraordinary quantity of writing paper, and all written on! [...] And he had crumpled up this writing of his, everywhere, in every part and parcel of his luggage. There was writing in his dressing case, writing in his boots, writing among his shaving tackle, writing in his hat box, writing folded away down among the very whalebones of his umbrella.<sup>66</sup>

It transpires that these pieces of writing are short stories, which the waiter then brings to publication, each one named after the 'articles of luggage to which they were found attached' (eg. 'His Black Bag,' 'His Dressing Case,' 'His Hat Box' etc.).<sup>67</sup> *Somebody's Luggage*, as a composite piece, comprises the set of stories, collaboratively written by the aforementioned contributing authors and Dickens himself, who also composed the framing narrative of the waiter. It is through the waiter that the fascination of this luggage is articulated, implying a like fascination on Dickens's part: 'I don't know why – when DO we know why? – but this luggage laid heavy on my mind. I fell a wondering about Somebody, and what he had got and been up to.'<sup>68</sup> In this collaborative work, luggage overtakes architecture as an analogue for fictional form but it is important to emphasise the disjointed and episodic quality of this form. That is to say, the individual stories, named after the individual articles of luggage, are discontinuous. This is not the case, of course, in the earlier *Bleak House* in which all parts ostensibly connect together to construct the larger house. However, the fascination provoked by the anonymous writer's luggage, as articulated by the waiter above, is rehearsed in the earlier novel. 'He may have found the papers in something he bought, where papers were not supposed to be,' Mr Guppy speculates on Krook's possession of Hawdon's letters, known by the reader to have been opportunistically pinched from the portmanteau (*BH* 138), 'and may have got it into his shrewd head, from the manner and place of their concealment, that they are worth something' (*BH* 453). Mr Tulkinghorn, who finds Hawdon's dead body, is similarly shown to lurk around the old portmanteau for the duration of his time in the deceased's room, attuned, as always, to the whereabouts of the loose textual indiscretion (*BH* 136-43). If he is 'in the confidence of the very bricks and mortar' (*BH* 662), he is equally willing to court the moveable case and his dual interest here gives us

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<sup>66</sup> Charles Dickens, 'His Leaving It Till Called For,' in Charles Allston Collins, Charles Dickens, Arthur Locker, John Oxenford, Julia Cecilia Stretton, *Somebody's Luggage*, ed. Melissa Valiska Gregory and Melisa Klimaszewski (1862; London: Hesperus, 2006) 14.

<sup>67</sup> Dickens, *Somebody's Luggage* 16.

<sup>68</sup> Dickens, *Somebody's Luggage* 11.

some insight into Dickens's own dual interest in the alluring claims of the episodic part as set against the structural exigencies of the novel as a whole, a manifestation of what John Carey has explored, in some detail, as the 'violent, anarchic' strain in his work at odds with his professed passion for 'neatness, order and security.'<sup>69</sup>

Thus, while the house remains the predominant symbol in this novel, the narrative roof is far from secure. Its stability and order as a formal model is vulnerable not only to the 'centrifugal vigour of its parts,' as Harvey so nicely puts it, but to the disruptive contingencies of historical change. Rhetorical forms must move with the times, to re-invoke Moretti's point here, and Dickens's awareness of the fast-altering rhetorical field is inscribed in the text through the changing symbolic status of the house. While Sir Leicester Dedlock considers time 'as much the property of every Dedlock – while he lasted – as the house and lands' and opposes 'his repose and that of Chesney Wold to the restless flights of ironmasters' (*BH* 394), we are not permitted to forget that he reposes a little too easily and innocently on his inherited (and, seemingly, timeless) laurels:

Railroads shall soon traverse all this country, and with a rattle and a glare the engine and train shall shoot like a meteor over the wide night-landscape, turning the moon paler; but, as yet, such things are non-existent in these parts, though not wholly unexpected. Preparations are afoot, measurements are made, ground is staked out. Bridges are begun, and their not yet united piers desolately look at one another over roads and streams, like brick and mortar couples with an obstacle to their union. (*BH* 745)

A nomadic metaphysics is on the rise in *Bleak House* and it is all too clear that it is the ironmasters, as forgers of the railroad system, and not the landed gentry, who will soon become the new temporal gatekeepers, or, to be more precise, gate-openers.<sup>70</sup> The phrase 'brick and mortar' does not now immediately register the stability of a house but a growing transportation network.<sup>71</sup> Fleeting references, moreover, to falling houses

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<sup>69</sup> John Carey, *The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination* (London: Faber, 1973) 34, 53.

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Kern gives an illuminating account of the impact of the development of the railways and other transportation routes on conceptions of time and space, not least the role of railway companies in introducing world time. See *The Culture of Time and Space* 12, 213-4.

<sup>71</sup> It is also telling that brickmakers, key facilitators (like the ironmasters) of this growing state of flux, are themselves pointedly on the move, as Woodcourt notes during an encounter with Jenny, in a precursive act of Holmesian deduction: 'And so your husband is a brickmaker?' 'How do you know that, sir?' asked the woman, astonished. 'Why, I suppose so, from the colour of the clay upon your bag and on your dress. And I know brickmakers go about working at piecework in different places' (*BH* 629).



(*BH* 220) and the tower of Babel (*BH* 275) work in tandem to undercut the foundations of the overarching domestic analogy. Simon J. James has persuasively argued that the 'panoramic' perspective of the mid-Victorian novel was, in large part, enabled by 'historical distance,' a detached temporal viewpoint the 'comparative nearness of modern life,' in all its immediacy and flux, made impossible to sustain later in the century.<sup>72</sup> In *Bleak House*, we witness such a sense of historical distance and panoramic perspective beginning to give way.

But most importantly, Esther's progression, from a beginning in boxes to a culminating assimilation as 'mistress' (*BH* 877) into the reconfigured Bleak House, serves to complicate rather than to restore complete structural order. She herself is the documentable result of an amorous *episode*, cut short and suppressed. Her document is the unsanctioned document of all documents in *Bleak House*. In the words of A.E. Dyson:

Esther's subversive role in the novel is that of simply existing, and the whole structure of *Bleak House* turns on this. What would the novel be like if she did not exist in it as a central character, but simply as Lady Dedlock's tragic mistake?<sup>73</sup>

Esther's narrative represents the subversive ascension of the episodic part, which has overstepped its structural boundaries to dominate the structural whole. It is for this reason that her father's portmanteau is such a vital symbol. It frames the written account of Esther's episodic origins. It forms the structural source of her expansive organic development. It stands both as death wish and as life wish; the portmanteau-coffin of the deceased Nemo or No One but also *Somebody's* Luggage, somebody's legacy.<sup>74</sup> That *somebody* is Esther.

The domestic analogy still just about works in *Bleak House* and this is, in large part, due to the centripetal emphasis of Esther's narrative but I hope to have shown that the prevalence and importance of baggage in the novel bears witness to a centrifugal impulse that will come markedly to shape later conceptions of the novel form, as we will

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<sup>72</sup> Simon J. James, 'Realism and the Fiction of Modern Life: From Meredith to Forster,' *The Reinvention of the British and Irish Novel 1880-1940*, ed. Patrick Parrinder and Andrzej Gąsiorek (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011) 87.

<sup>73</sup> A. E. Dyson, '*Bleak House*: Esther Better Not Born?' *Dickens: Bleak House – A Casebook* 271.

<sup>74</sup> The proprietorial and titular reversal in the fortunes of Hawdon and his daughter (from Captain to No One, on one side, and from No One to Mistress, on the other) is cunningly inscribed in the beginning of Esther's narrative, as is their family connection: 'Imperfect as my understanding of my sorrow was, I knew that I had brought no joy, at any time, to anybody's heart, and that I was to *no one* upon earth what Dolly was to me.' (*BH* 18, emphasis added). Esther's imperfect understanding conceals part of the crux of her own narrative puzzle. She is, in fact, to No One what Dolly is to her.

explore later in the thesis. My next section will examine the fate of literary architecture in the early twentieth century (with a backward glance at James's *The Portrait of a Lady* of 1881) when the illusion of its supremacy can no longer be sustained. The sense of the growing incongruity of a bricks and mortar metaphorical construct in a modern age of flux, hinted at in Dickens's novel, is glaringly evident in depictions of Edwardian houses, even as these houses continue to be nominally and structurally foregrounded. This is true even of Henry James's landmark 'house of fiction' model, around which the discussion to follow will turn.

### 1.3 Henry James and the 'House of Fiction'

Henry James was far from being the first author to explicitly conceive of writing as building or of the novel as a bricks and mortar construction but he *is* credited with coining that now-habitual phrase 'house of fiction.'<sup>75</sup> As already acknowledged, it appeared in his 1908 Preface to the New York Edition of *The Portrait of a Lady*, a novel published in 1881. I would like, in this section, to read the image as it appears in his Preface in several different though interrelated ways: on its own terms; in relation to the novel to which the Preface was retrospectively attached; in the light of other contemporary and retrospective Edwardian fictional houses as conceived by John Galsworthy and Vita Sackville-West; as expressive of a foursquare and hermetic nineteenth-century structure which aspires towards the expansive mobility of modernism; and, most importantly, as an intriguing reflection upon the uncertain imaginative status of property and proprietorial culture, as this was bound up with the crisis of Liberalism as well as 'The Woman Question,' in Edwardian England. With regard to the latter point, to read the work of an American writer in an Edwardian context is justified given James's expatriated position at the time of the composition both of the novel and the later Preface, which was published not long before he adopted British citizenship. *The Portrait of a Lady* was written between Florence and Venice but, as he himself notes, the 'few preceding years' ('P-PL' 494) had been spent in London. In Nicola Bradbury's words, it is the novel 'where James makes the most articulate use of Englishness, in culture, ideology, but first and most memorably, in place.'<sup>76</sup> The Preface itself 'places' *The Portrait of a Lady* in an English literary context, paying tribute to *Romeo and Juliet*, *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* as providing antecedents for the creation of his heroine, Isabel Archer ('P-PL' 487). Correspondingly, it must be assumed that James's 'house of fiction' owes its significance as an image to the great English literary houses above all - Sandra K. Fischer, for one, emphasises the 'monumental effect of the English country house on James and his narrative imagination' in her phenomenological reading of the novel - and, as I will argue, James's structural model can be read, in part, as a comment upon prevailing

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<sup>75</sup> Henry James, 'Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*,' *The Critical Muse* 485. Hereafter abbreviated 'P-PL' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>76</sup> Nicola Bradbury, 'Henry James and Britain,' *A Companion to Henry James*, ed. Greg W. Zacharias (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) 408.

concerns surrounding the question of property in Britain in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>77</sup>

We might begin then with *The Portrait of a Lady*, the novel that instigates this well-known architectural figure. Beginning with afternoon tea at the English country house of Gardencourt ('the most characteristic object in the peculiarly English picture I have attempted to sketch,' the narrator adds), it is a novel indeed replete with architectural figures of its own and these textual structures - whether metaphorical or actual, defensive or inaccessible, domestic abodes or psychic retreats, viewed from the inside or the outside - have been thoroughly documented by critics from a variety of angles.<sup>78</sup> Perceiving the metaphor of the house to be as important to the novel as to the Preface, Elizabeth Jane Sabiston characterises it ultimately as an 'ambiguous symbol,' signalling both creative possibility and inhibiting containment for the heroine, a conflict also identified by Elizabeth Boyle Machlan though her own overarching focus is on the distinctive generic expectations associated with each of the built structures in the novel.<sup>79</sup> Fischer, in her above-mentioned phenomenological exploration, highlights the recurrent metaphors of enclosed space and considers the protective strategies adopted by characters to mitigate external intrusion upon the private.<sup>80</sup> For R.W. Stallman, houses point beyond themselves to the 'accumulated refinement and corruption of civilisation, our tragic history echoing throughout the House of Experience.'<sup>81</sup> Whatever angle taken, the supremacy of the architectural paradigm is assumed and foregrounded by all of the critics referred to here and their studies represent just a sample. In Machlan Boyle's illustrative words, '[a]rchitectural metaphors underlie all elements in the text, from plot to character.'<sup>82</sup> Far from providing one more account of literary architecture in James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, I mean to argue instead that it is, in fact, the question of the very relevance of a literary architectural framing mechanism which is centrally at

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<sup>77</sup> Sandra K. Fischer, 'Isabel Archer and the Enclosed Chamber: A Phenomenological Reading,' *The Henry James Review* 7.2-3 (1986): 48. Jill M. Kress demonstrates the influence of American literary predecessors (specifically Nathaniel Hawthorne and Ralph Waldo Emerson) on James in his application of the architectural metaphor. However, it is his engagement with English literary architecture - which, I would contend, leaves the most pronounced stamp upon *The Portrait of a Lady* and his 'house of fiction' image - that interests me here. See Jill M. Kress, *The Figure of Consciousness: William James, Henry James and Edith Wharton* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 72-3.

<sup>78</sup> Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881; London: Penguin, 1997) 6. This is the 1881 edition of the novel. Hereafter abbreviated 'PL' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Jane Sabiston, 'Isabel Archer: The Architect of Consciousness,' *The Prison of Womanhood: Four Provincial Heroines in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987) 129; Elizabeth Boyle Machlan, "'There Are Plenty of Houses:' Architecture and Genre in *The Portrait of a Lady*,' *Studies in the Novel* 37 (2005): 394-411.

<sup>80</sup> Fischer 48-58.

<sup>81</sup> R.W. Stallman, 'The Houses that James Built - *The Portrait of a Lady*,' *The Texas Quarterly* (1958): 189.

<sup>82</sup> Boyle Machlan, 'There Are Plenty of Houses' 402.

issue from the outset, particularly when read through the backward-looking lens of his 1908 Preface. 'I don't care anything about his house...' the still largely uninitiated Isabel Archer remarks disparagingly of the proprietorial grounds of the conventional Victorian marriage during a conversation with Mme Merle on the subject of a possible suitor. Mme Merle replies to this assertion with the following oft-quoted piece of advice:

“...When you have lived as long as I, you will see that every human being has his shell and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There is no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we are each of us made up of a cluster of appurtenances. What do you call one's self? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us – and then it flows back again. I know that a large part of myself is in the dresses I choose to wear. I have a great respect for *things!* One's self – for other people – is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's clothes, the books one reads, the company one keeps – these things are all expressive.”  
(*PL* 186-7)

How far should the shell - and the house must be seen as the paradigmatic nineteenth-century shell of all shells - be taken into account? Mme Merle takes a stance on this question which, in its emphasis on the defining importance of the individual's 'cluster' of personal 'appurtenances,' is typical of her time (though no doubt also incited by her own conspicuous want of the security of a domestic shell.)<sup>83</sup> Isabel, in turn, objects to Mme Merle's conception of self and her oppositional response must be seen as exceptional for the period: "I don't agree with you. [...] Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; on the contrary, it's a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one..." (*PL* 187). It is a response which registers an undercurrent of resistance to the very idea of the inextricability of self and surrounding shell at the end of the nineteenth century, a line of resistance which becomes a key current of modernist writing with the advent of the twentieth century. Isabel asserts here the material irreducibility of character; the irreducibility of Isabel Archer to a lady in a portrait or, indeed, a lady in a house.

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<sup>83</sup> The nineteenth-century fascination with personal appurtenances is generally seen as an outcome of the industrial revolution and the increasing affluence and influence of a middle class that was beginning to look to objects in order to assert distinction and individuality. For a discussion of the phenomenon of the 'Victorian preoccupation with possessions' from a specifically British point of view but one which certainly also sheds some light on the remarks of American expatriate, Mme Merle, see Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006) xi.

Isabel's stance might be exceptional, but it is posited as the stance of an exceptional person and thus only singularly applicable. It is Isabel alone whose measure cannot quite be taken in the novel. "...It polishes me up a little to talk with you," subsequent suitor Gilbert Osmond flashes an early glint of a sinister charm not yet fully unleashed, "- not that I venture to pretend I can turn that very complicated lock I suspect your intellect of being!..." (PL 239.) Osmond does, however, later presume to attempt Isabel's lock but gets her measure wrong and this erroneous calculation is cited as the chief cause of their later marital strife. Isabel's lock is never successfully turned. Her cousin Ralph Touchett intuits this ultimate failure early on and in the same metaphorical terms:

...it was not exactly true that Ralph Touchett had had a key put into his hand. His cousin was a very brilliant girl, who would take, as he said, a good deal of knowing; but she needed the knowing, and his attitude with regard to her, though it was contemplative and critical was not judicial. He surveyed the edifice from the outside, and admired it greatly; he looked in at the windows, and received an impression of proportions equally fair. But he felt that he saw it only by glimpses, and that he had not yet stood under its roof. The door was fastened, and though he had keys in his pocket he had a conviction that none of them would fit. (PL 59)

If Isabel cares nothing for the house of her early suitor, she herself is posited as a house which forms the centre of chivalrous attention but into which access is denied. Isabel is never quite unlocked as a character yet she is herself eventually subsumed within the 'house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation' that is Osmond's own 'beautiful mind' (PL 395, 396). Though she initially challenges the materiality of self, she cannot later escape the very material dimensions of the ultimate prison of that selfhood and her realisation of this echoes and inverts her own original response to Mme Merle: 'She could live it over again, the incredulous terror with which she had taken the *measure* of her dwelling. Between those four walls she had lived ever since; they were to surround her for the rest of her life' (PL 395, emphasis added). This is the dwelling she is compelled, whether by force or her own perverse will, through Osmond, to occupy. Isabel is caught, however, in more than Osmond's house. Levenson, in his study of modernist character argues that 'the struggle between character and form often takes the aspect of a conflict between tradition and modernity and that one way to understand this moment of transition in the history of the novel is in terms of

nineteenth-century characters seeking to find a place in twentieth-century forms.<sup>84</sup> I quote Levenson here because, to my mind, the reverse is equally true. In the case of many a late nineteenth-century novel, and none more so than *The Portrait of a Lady*, the struggle is between certain enduring traits in narrative structure and certain innovations in literary character. Isabel Archer is a character who arrives too early to be released from a situation of architectural containment. In retrospect, she might be read as a modernist character caught in a nineteenth-century house of fiction, one that by the 1908 Preface is just beginning to make known the *measure* of its own vulnerability.

Critical debate on the politics of property was coming to a head in Britain around the time of James's Preface and, before turning to the Preface itself, that debate and its effect on imaginative conceptions of the house should be taken into account. The question of whether individual freedom is enabled or constrained by private property had become a troubling sticking point for an increasingly fractured Liberal Party around the turn of the century. As Jordanna Bailkin records, '...the 1870-1914 period marked a watershed of ideas about the relationship between property and citizenship in Britain.'<sup>85</sup> Tensions were arising between classical liberal advocates of a free market economy with a concomitant emphasis on the liberating right to private property cordoned off from state intrusion and proponents of a new form of liberalism who called for systematic governmental intervention in favour of a more egalitarian distribution of wealth (a conviction culminating in David Lloyd George's controversial 'People's Budget' in 1909 which imposed, among other things, severe taxes on the landed gentry in order to fund welfare reform). Caught between these two opposing lines of thought, the status both of house and householder was set for drastic reappraisal from a political point of view. As Bailkin goes on to note: 'The driving question of property – how it was defined, owned, and exchanged – was linked to competing notions of the British government as an individualist or collectivist endeavour.'<sup>86</sup> This 'driving question of property' was at the forefront of public thought. If the novel titles of works by E.M. Forster and John Galsworthy alone during this period are anything to go by, it was at the very forefront of the literary imagination as well.<sup>87</sup> David Medalie comments upon this trend in the context of a discussion of the destabilizing effects of the liberal crisis as manifested in the work of Forster: 'It is [...] far from coincidental that the country house features so

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<sup>84</sup> Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality* xii.

<sup>85</sup> Jordanna Bailkin, *The Culture of Property: The Crisis of Liberalism in Modern Britain* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004) 11.

<sup>86</sup> Bailkin, *The Culture of Property* 11.

<sup>87</sup> Consider, for example, Forster's *A Room With A View* (1908) and *Howards End* (1910) as well as Galsworthy's *The Man of Property* (1906) and *The Country House* (1907), each of which novels I will touch upon at various points in this thesis, to greater or lesser degrees.

prominently in much Edwardian literature: it is a retreat in both senses of the word – a place of sanctuary and of withdrawal, of dismay in the face of change.<sup>88</sup> But the country house was also, crucially, positioned at the fulcrum of political, social and cultural change itself. It would be no overstatement of the case to claim that the fate of the house as an imaginative construct was on the line during this period. That quintessential Victorian shell was, indeed, even threatened with the prospect of redundancy in aesthetic terms. 'In this house of his there was writing on every wall,' Soames Forsyte acknowledges in Galsworthy's 1906 novel *The Man of Property*, set in the mid-1880s and turning around the possibility of and potential repercussions resulting from the escape of Soames's beautiful wife Irene from his acquisitive grasp.<sup>89</sup> The writing, it seems, is on the patriarchal wall in this case and, by extension on the wall of the fictional house. Galsworthy himself registers an oblique concern as to the effect of this proprietorial crisis on the very form of the novel. In the following passage, the Forsyte 'habitat' is likened to the novel as conventionally conceived:

All Forsytes, as is generally admitted, have shells, like that extremely useful little animal which is made into Turkish delight; in other words, they are never seen, or if seen would not be recognised, without habitats, composed of circumstance, property, acquaintances, and wives, which seem to move along with them in their passage through a world composed of thousands of other Forsytes with their habitats. Without a habitat a Forsyte is inconceivable - he would be like a novel without a plot, which is well-known to be an anomaly.<sup>90</sup>

It is striking how close the sentiments expressed in this passage are to the sentiments expressed by Mme Merle in *The Portrait of a Lady*, quoted earlier, except that 'every human being' has been reduced tellingly to 'all Forsytes.' If Isabel Archer is an exceptional element in 1881, she is not quite so by 1906 just as the 'novel without a plot' or habitat would soon become something less of a complete anomaly. Vita Sackville-West opens her retrospective novel *The Edwardians*, first published in 1930, by

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<sup>88</sup> David Medalie, *E.M. Forster's Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002) 11.

<sup>89</sup> John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property* (1906; London: Heinemann, 1953) 70. This is a Biblical reference to the *Old Testament* 'Book of Daniel'. The writing on the wall of King Belshazzar's palace forecasts the fall of the Babylonian empire. 'The Book of Daniel,' 5: 1-31, *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, ed. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (1611; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 975-77.

<sup>90</sup> Galsworthy, *The Man of Property* 94.



indicating the 'arbitrariness' of the choice of the moment at which to begin any novel.<sup>91</sup> This must be seen as tongue in cheek for her own choice of opening scene is far from arbitrary, despite her claims to the contrary: the main character, Sebastian, is found escaping from his hosting duties 'upon the roof' (*TE* 8) of his stately family home, Chevron. This is an estate which he is set to inherit and from which he is eventually tempted away, on the very last page, on an expedition with the explorer Leonard Anquetil, who sees Chevron as a 'dead thing, an anachronism, an exquisite survival' (*TE* 60). It is subsequently imagined as 'an old skeleton that has been laid to rest out of sight and whose presence everyone has conspired to ignore' (*TE* 70). Sackville-West picks up on a conspiracy to ignore the change in the status of the architectural paradigm as well as the disparity between a manifest solidity and an implicit fragility, which is a characteristic feature of the image of the house in Edwardian fiction.

When it comes to James's 'house of fiction' image, however, the conspiracy to ignore is a function not of the image itself, as such, but of later readings and adaptations. In his conception, as we will see, the 'old skeleton' is distinctly on display. Further to this, the pointed amorphous character of his 'house of fiction' is markedly at odds with later interpretations and usages of the phrase in criticism (my own casual usages included) where it is, more often than not, employed to describe a solid, hermetic and self-contained structure ostensibly in the tradition of nineteenth-century realism, a structure which implies an established fictional heritage and, often, a synecdochic meaning beyond itself. If Nunokawa, to isolate one instance, in looking at the 'ensemble of relations between economics and the house of fiction' in Victorian literature, envisages a threatened and ultimately insecure structure, it is one which, it is implied, has at least a semblance of foursquare solidity.<sup>92</sup> The deceptively conventional façade is part of his point, a point which is even more applicable to Edwardian fiction, as this discussion makes clear. And yet there is nothing conventional about the façade of James's 'house of fiction,' something not stressed often enough. Ellen Eve Frank is one critic who has remarked upon its eccentricity: 'The house James raises curiously suggests no building we have ever seen; and if we were to see it, it would be "ugly" by even Victorian standards.'<sup>93</sup> Offhand uses of the phrase 'house of fiction' take little account of its origins and the image that has largely been subsumed into literary discourse is a much simplified, even antithetical, version of James's original model. A close reading of his model reveals a disfigured structure in the throes of transition:

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<sup>91</sup> Vita Sackville-West, *The Edwardians* (1930; Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1931) 8. Hereafter abbreviated '*TE*' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>92</sup> Nunokawa, *The Afterlife of Property* 14.

<sup>93</sup> Frank, *Literary Architecture* 182.

The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million – a number of possible windows not to be reckoned, rather; every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will. These apertures, of dissimilar shape and size, hang so, all together, over the human scene that we might have expected of them a greater sameness of report than we find. They are but windows at the best, mere holes in a dead wall, disconnected, perched aloft; they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life. But they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. He and his neighbours are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing coarse where the other sees fine. And so on, and so on; there is fortunately no saying on what, for the particular pair of eyes, the window may *not* open; ‘fortunately’ by reason, precisely, of this incalculability of range. The spreading field, the human scene, is the ‘choice of subject’; the pierced aperture, either broad or balconied or slit-like and low-browed, is the ‘literary form’; but they are, singly or together, as nothing without the posted presence of the watcher – without, in other words, the consciousness of the artist. ('P-PL' 485)

James's rather peculiar vision has a marked post-impressionist, even incipiently cubist, dimension and gestures, to my mind, to the more fragmented, reflexive modes of early-twentieth-century modernism whilst, simultaneously, retaining the general outline of the domestic forms of nineteenth-century and Edwardian realism. The impetus to omnisciently survey and control a subject within set and precise boundaries is evident here in the very idea of representing fiction as a concrete structure of containment. As a structure, however, with ‘not one window, but a million’, each dissimilar in shape and size, not to mention a multitude of watchers, with their multitudinous perspectives to match, resulting in an ‘incalculability of range,’ James's ‘house of fiction’ might be said to correspond less to a Victorian house than a sort of modernist Tower of Babel, where perspective and, correspondingly, interpretation, rather than language itself, is pluralised.

The Tower of Babel certainly bares an affinity to the 'house of fiction,' as James presents it, and this is a strand worth pursuing a little further. The Babelian myth is derived from the Old Testament, where the elaborate construction stands for a potent and threatening order ultimately fractured by a force more powerful:

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.<sup>94</sup>

If we take James's 'house of fiction' to be a transitional structure, suggesting the perspectival fracturing of a Victorian literary architectural mode, then an evocation of the above narrative is certainly both pertinent and compelling, in surface as much as in substance. Even a cursory overview of artistic conceptions of the Biblical narrative, from the work of Peiter Brueghel and Alain Manesson Mallet in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through to Gustave Doré in the nineteenth century, confirms a many-windowed façade as a standard pictorial element and, more often than not, the apertures are shown to be of 'dissimilar shape and size', as in James's image.

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<sup>94</sup> 'Genesis,' 11:1-9, *The Bible* 11-12. Emphasis in original.

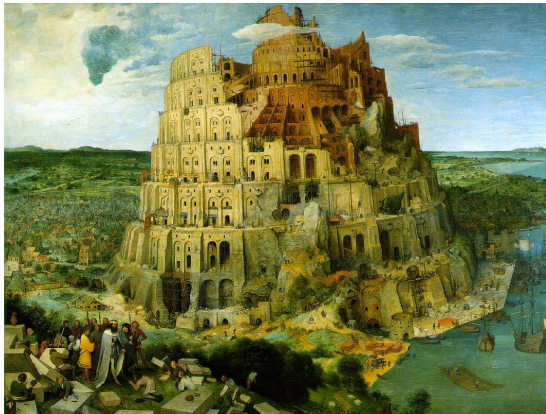


Figure 2: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 'The Tower of Babel,' 1563, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Taken from WebMuseum, 7 June 2012  
<<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/bruegel/babel.jpg>>

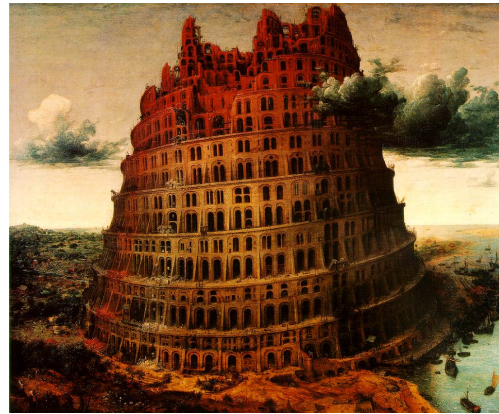


Figure 3: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 'The "Little" Tower of Babel,' 1563, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Taken from WebMuseum, 7 June 2012  
<<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/bruegel/littlebabel.jpg>>



Figure 4: Alain Manesson Mallet, 'The Tower of Babel,' *Déscription de l'Univers*, 1683. Taken from Columbia U., 7 June 2012  
<<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/mallet/turkey/babel1683.jpg>>



Figure 5: Gustave Doré, 'The Confusion of Tongues,' 1865. Taken from *Art and the Bible*, 7 June 2012 <[http://static.artbible.info/large/dore\\_toren\\_babel.jpg](http://static.artbible.info/large/dore_toren_babel.jpg)>

More specifically, James's expression 'mere holes in a dead wall' might justly be said to describe the tiny slit-like holes in the imposing spiralling conical structure envisioned by Doré in his 'The Confusion of Tongues' (1865), engraved not long before the former began work on *The Portrait of a Lady*.<sup>95</sup> Yet the superimposition of tower upon house is suggestive in ways over and above, or indeed under and below, simple appearance and implies an eventual desertion and fragmentation not superficially apparent. If the Tower of Babel is about the confusion of tongues then the 'house of fiction' is about a perspectival confusion of views and the act of interpretation is pointedly splintered in the image. At the same time, the house itself yet remains, a memorial to a proprietorial and literary architectural approach to fiction on the part of the author, an approach that is with difficulty sustained in the new century. It is as if James is intuitively aware that his oddly-crafted house, which, in its very name, is posited as the legacy of a nineteenth-

<sup>95</sup> The two, in fact, were acquainted as evidenced by a letter James wrote to his father in April 1876. Henry James, *The Letters of Henry James*, ed. Leon Edel, vol. 2 (1974; Cambridge, MA: Belknap-Harvard UP, 1975) 37.

century realist literary tradition, will ultimately be abandoned, a distorted 'old skeleton' of its former glorified self. His image appositely captures the false and conceited sense of Edwardian security and its later critical appropriation as a paragon of solidity also mimics the later nostalgic sense of that period as a sort of 'social Eden before the Fall, a time of order and harmony, the golden evening of Empire and the Pax Britannica,' in the words of Alistair M. Duckworth.<sup>96</sup> Early in *The Edwardians*, Sebastian is shown to overlook Chevron: 'All was warmth and security, leisure and continuity. An order of things which appeared unchangeable to the mind of nineteen hundred and five' (*TE* 44). It is his sister, Viola, who reveals this chimera for what it really is: "'I regard our love for Chevron as a weakness'" (*TE* 213). By implication, the very monument of Chevron itself, and the tradition for which it stands, literary as well as socio-political, must equally be seen to be structurally weak.

That it is a woman who challenges the Edwardian sense of domestic security in Sackville-West's novel is of no small significance. Viola is shown to depart Chevron - and in that all-too-pivotal year of 1910, as somewhat teasingly ringed by Virginia Woolf - in favour of an independent life at the conclusion of the novel and this is much to the chagrin of her mother who appeals to 'all the standards within her range' (*TE* 271) to stop her.<sup>97</sup> Viola's reaction is important: "'Oh, darling mother!" she had said, "all that rubbish!" To [her mother] it was not rubbish; it was the very bricks of life' (*TE* 271). This is an exchange which articulates the waning symbolic value of the 'bricks' of domestic ideology. Nancy Armstrong and Nunokawa, among others, have charted the creation of a domestic ideal from the late eighteenth century at the centre of which was the woman without whose presence the 'entire domestic framework would collapse.'<sup>98</sup> The domestic woman, viewed as 'safe estate' (secure from the unpredictable oscillations of the market), was the stabilising element in the structural whole.<sup>99</sup> In charting the 'strange death of liberal England,' George Dangerfield acknowledged the 'Women's Rebellion' as one of the crucial factors (along with the workers' rebellion and the controversy surrounding Irish Home Rule) in the fall of the Liberal Party and its contribution had everything to do, in his eyes, with a rejection of security. 'Had [the Victorian woman] not rather sacrificed herself to her own security?' he asks, going on to note that one of the favoured suffragette strategies for rattling the Liberal government

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<sup>96</sup> Alistair M. Duckworth, *Howards End: E.M. Forster's House of Fiction* (New York: Twayne, 1992) 3.

<sup>97</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown,' *A Woman's Essays*, ed. Rachel Bowlby (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) 70.

<sup>98</sup> Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* 82-3. See also Nunokawa, *The Afterlife of Property* 6-7, 10, 12-3, 83.

<sup>99</sup> Nunokawa, *The Afterlife of Property* 10.

around this time was to target property through arson or other such destructive mechanisms.<sup>100</sup> But even before Dangerfield discusses the role of the Women's Movement, the terms in which he represents the decline of Liberalism in Britain imply that that decline was also the decline of a fictional domesticity overseen by the woman:

But somehow or other, as the century turned, the burden of Liberalism grew more and more irksome; it began to give out a dismal, rattling sound; it was just as if some unfortunate miracle had been performed upon its contents, turning them into nothing more than bits of old iron, fragments of intimate crockery and other relics of a domestic past.<sup>101</sup>

Again the skeletal motif recurs here, as in *The Edwardians*, in the use of the word 'rattling' and we find another illustration of that transformation of the meaningful into devalued rubbish. What is most interesting, however, is the demonstrably feminine aspect of the 'burden of Liberalism' as characterised in terms of the intimacy of a 'domestic past.' Further to this, there is a recognition here of the representational nature of that 'domestic past,' of that feminine aspect. Once the symbolic dimension is removed, what is left besides unwieldy and meaningless 'bits,' 'fragments,' and 'relics'? According to Armstrong, the 'domestic past,' to which Dangerfield refers here, was an ideal created through the written word, more specifically through the novel. She states: '...the domestic novel antedated – was necessarily antecedent to – the way of life it represented.'<sup>102</sup> Domestic space was, as such, both authored and authorized. It was a world of ideologically-charged and written 'relics' and the most precious written relic of them all was the woman herself: '[w]hat we actually uncover when we open up the woman is that she is only words, signifiers.'<sup>103</sup> A similar act of exposure occurs through the 'unfortunate miracle' enacting the sudden redundancy of the domesticated liberal ideal above. We might infer that the demise of Liberal England corresponded to the negation of a form of symbolism which also gave Victorian domesticity its meaning and that this liberal demise paradoxically paved the way for the *liberation* of the woman from the ideological stranglehold of the fictional house.

Galsworthy's *The Man of Property* is of interest here as a study of the loosening of that ideological stranglehold, on one level, but as a novel also caught up in it, on

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<sup>100</sup> George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (1935; New York: Capricorn, 1961) 146, 170-1, 180-84. First published in 1935.

<sup>101</sup> Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* 7-8.

<sup>102</sup> Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* 9.

<sup>103</sup> Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* 248.

another. The exercise of absolute control over the figure of Irene is described in that novel as 'the greatest - the supreme act of property' and the potential loss of this defining feature of the Forsyte 'habitat,' around which the novel turns, must be seen as tantamount to a literary disruption of great proportions. By the same token, it is suggested that greater freedom for women would mean greater freedom for the novel and that these two matters are intimately related to the idea of property, connections we will explore in more detail in thinking about women's luggage in Chapter Two. Galsworthy might implicitly criticise rigid novelistic conventions in his satirical treatment of the Forsyte habitat throughout but he is also bound by such conventions, in the shape of the novel *with* a plot, just as James's 'house of fiction' is celebrated and undermined as a monument at one and the same time. 'The figure of Irene,' Galsworthy comments in his 1922 Preface, 'never, as the reader may possibly have noticed, present except through the senses of other characters, is a concretion of disturbing Beauty impinging on a possessive world.'<sup>104</sup> An aesthetic 'concretion', Irene is an 'acquisition' of the author's as much as an acquisition of Soames Forsyte. Her subjectivity remains unaccounted for even if Galsworthy manifests sympathy to the point of envisioning her ultimate departure from her husband. While, thematically-speaking, he can understand and approve of the rupture caused to the established social order by the departure of the domestic woman, formally-speaking, Galsworthy is himself an authorial 'man of property.' That is to say, while he is conscious of the imposed ideological aspect of domesticity in the novel, he does not have the capacity to see beyond the associated framework of the house.

James, too, presents a proprietorial struggle in his Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, a novel which, we must remember, questions literary architectural presupposition. Like Galsworthy's *The Man of Property*, his 'house of fiction' anticipates abandonment not, as in the Tower of Babel, through the interference of a force more powerful, an external god-like entity (Edwardian writing might be said to be god-less), but because the subject is palpably clamouring to break away.<sup>105</sup> Those figures with their field glasses may well be looking into the 'house of fiction' but the subject is emphatically and earnestly gazing out and the subject, as far as the Preface itself goes, is, of course, Isabel Archer. The 'house of fiction' was, first and foremost, the house of Isabel, as James saw it. Just after the delineation of the model of his 'large building'

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<sup>104</sup> Galsworthy, *The Man of Property* vi.

<sup>105</sup> Richard Ellmann has drawn attention to the secularist bent of Edwardian writers even if the appeal of religious imagery was still strong: 'Almost to a man, Edwardian writers rejected Christianity, and having done so, they felt free to *use* it, for while they did not need religion they did need religious metaphors.' Richard Ellmann, 'Two Faces of Edward,' *A Long the Riverrun: Selected Essays* (1988; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989) 152. Emphasis in original.



around the 'conception of a certain young woman affronting her destiny' ('P-PL' 486), he remarks: 'It came to be a square and spacious house – or has at least seemed so to me in this going over it again: but, such as it is, it had to be put up around my young woman while she stood there in perfect isolation' ('P-PL' 486). James continually speaks of his subject in proprietorial terms, to a much greater degree than Galsworthy. He recalls, for instance, taking 'complete possession' of his 'single character' as an 'acquisition' ('P-PL' 485). As such, whether consciously or unconsciously, James aligns himself with the character of Gilbert Osmond within the novel itself, a disconcerting affiliation identified by more than one critic.<sup>106</sup> 'Her mind was to be (Osmond's),' Isabel is shown to reflect in an attempt to come to terms with, or at least to better understand, her situation of containment, '[...] It would be a pretty piece of property for a proprietor already far-reaching' (PL 398). She is thus doubly contained, as character and subject, thematically and textually, in Osmond's 'house of darkness' and James's 'house of fiction'.

James, however, unlike Galsworthy, does gesture at an alternative in his Preface and that alternative takes a mobile shape. In examining structural figurations of consciousness in James's novel, Jill M. Kress draws attention to the range of conflicting metaphors at work in his 1908 Preface; metaphors of enclosure as set against metaphors of expansion, elusive against concrete, the natural world of the garden against the civilised world of the interior, and so on.<sup>107</sup> She sees these tensions as evocative of the 'contest between the personal and the social world,' battled out through his exploratory conceptualisations of the mind.<sup>108</sup> One conflict she overlooks, however, in this otherwise comprehensive and illuminating account of the 'constant exchange of metaphors' in novel and Preface is that of the contradictory representations of form in mobile and immobile terms.<sup>109</sup> Throughout James's Preface, the architectural metaphor is sustained and elaborated upon. His original aspiration is to construct a 'literary monument' ('P-PL' 489) and he goes into this process of construction in some detail: 'The bricks, for the whole counting-over – putting for bricks little touches and inventions and enhancements by the way – affect me in truth as well-nigh innumerable and as ever so scrupulously fitted together and packed-in' ('P-PL' 492). Yet within this sustained and detailed visualization, we come across a striking metaphorical lapse, or, at least, an inconsistency. In outlining the function of his secondary cast of characters in *The Portrait of a Lady* as well as in his other novels, he makes the following comment:

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<sup>106</sup> See Boyle Machlan, 'There Are Plenty of Houses' 404; Kress, *The Figure of Consciousness* 82.

<sup>107</sup> Kress, *The Figure of Consciousness* 61-86.

<sup>108</sup> Kress, *The Figure of Consciousness* 62.

<sup>109</sup> Kress, *The Figure of Consciousness* 76.

Each of these persons is but wheels to the coach; neither belongs to the body of that vehicle or is for a moment accommodated with a seat inside. There the subject alone is ensconced, in the form of the 'hero and heroine', and of the privileged high officials, say, who ride with the king and queen. [...] Maria Gostrey and Miss Stackpole then are cases, each, of the light *ficelle*, not of the true agent; they may run beside the coach 'for all they are worth', they may cling to it till they are out of breath (as poor Miss Stackpole all so visibly does), but neither, all the while, so much as gets her foot on the step, neither ceases for a moment to tread the dusty road. ('P-PL' 492)

Earlier in the Preface, the same 'subject' is neatly and comfortably 'ensconced' in the 'house of fiction', in the 'posted presence of the watcher [...], the consciousness of the artist' ('P-PL' 485), a consciousness overriding in importance that of the subject inside. However, in the above passage, as eccentric in its way as the 'house of fiction' passage, we might say that the watcher is left behind at his post as the subject is shown to speed away alone in an absconding coach. If James aligns himself, intentionally or unintentionally, with Gilbert Osmond in his acquisitive approach to Isabel, we might equally say that he aligns himself, intentionally or unintentionally, with Miss Stackpole in his unsuccessful attempt to keep pace with a bolting vehicle. This subversive centrifugal impulse, suggesting a conflict between mobile and immobile understandings of fiction, just apparent in James's Preface, further undercuts the overarching importance of the 'house of fiction' and, by extension, enunciates the inadequacy of literary architectural approaches to form in the early twentieth century.

I have traced here the development of this sense of literary architectural inadequacy during the Edwardian period as this is anticipated in James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, aggravated by political re-evaluations of the status of property in the 1900s and 1910, exposed by the dissatisfaction of the domestic woman and, most importantly, as inscribed even in James's original 'house of fiction' model. Underlying all of these factors, we can perceive a shift towards a nomadic metaphysics, inevitable in retrospect. The next and final section of this first chapter shifts attention away from the fall from imaginative prominence of the house towards the rise of the case as a metaphor for the flux and fluctuating significations of modernity and as a framework for a new kind of fiction, reading Max Beerbohm's 'Ichabod' and E.M. Forster's *Howards End* together as presenting two contrasting appraisals of the seductive power of a mobilities paradigm.

#### 1.4 Max Beerbohm's Hat-Box and E.M. Forster's 'Civilisation of Luggage'

'So I have sat down to write, in the shadow of a tower which stands bleak, bare, prosaic, all the ivy of its years stripped from it,' Max Beerbohm writes in his essay 'Ichabod' in 1909, the year after the publication of James's Preface, and you would be forgiven for thinking his subject was yet another declining Edwardian house.<sup>110</sup> On the contrary, 'it is merely a hat-box' ('I' 115), though a treasured hat-box, to which he refers. His essay presents a homage to the fascination of the luggage label, prompted by the accidental obliteration of his carefully assembled hat-box collection, each label of which lost collection singularly marked an achieved destination. The obliteration of his labels is attributed to the trunk-makers who took it upon themselves to clean the box in addition to their assigned commission to fix a broken lock. Having outlined the impetus behind the creation of his 'private autobiography' ('I' 131) through these labels, the pleasure derived from it and the pain caused by its loss, Beerbohm then ends the essay with an expression of positive renewal: 'I will begin all over again. There stands my hat-box! Its glory is departed, but I vow that a greater glory awaits it. Bleak, bare and prosaic it is now, but - ten years hence!' ('I' 134) E.M. Forster's *Howards End*, published the following year in 1910, also concludes on a note of renewal of sorts, as the Schlegel sisters find themselves ensconced in Howards End with the physically disempowered Henry Wilcox and the legally enfranchised though illegitimate son of Helen Schlegel and Leonard Bast, intended heir to the house after Margaret Schlegel: 'They were building up a new life, obscure, yet gilded with tranquillity.'<sup>111</sup> It is an image of re-building at odds, however, with a pervading hostility throughout the novel to the *un*-tranquil idea of 'bricks and mortar rising and falling with the restlessness of the water in a fountain' (*HE* 38), a restlessness epitomised by what Forster calls, with an inflection of disdain mixed with trepidation, the 'civilisation of luggage' (*HE* 119). It is fair to say that the 'ten years hence!' mark on Forster's envisioned horizon does not rouse the same kind of excitement in spite of this reconstructive outlook. And yet he manifests an awareness that his fictional house must *move* with the times or become redundant. Drawing on Beerbohm's conception of his hat-box as a paragon of self-creation and prospective self-renewal, my aim in this section is to think about the implications of the emergence of the 'civilisation of luggage' on the architectural model in Forster's text. Does Howards End represent a final doomed retreat from the inevitability of modern cosmopolitanism or is

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<sup>110</sup> Max Beerbohm, 'Ichabod,' 116. All further references will come from the Heinemann edition cited earlier, hereafter abbreviated 'I' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>111</sup> E.M. Forster, *Howards End* 266. All further references will come from the Signet-Penguin edition cited earlier, hereafter abbreviated '*HE*' in parenthesis within the text.

it shown to borrow from a rising nomadic spirit of mobile regeneration in order to retain a synecdochic legitimacy at the end of the novel? Is the novel about the strange death of the liberal house or the creation of a new model for a fictional house of 'the future as well as the past' (*HE* 268), to adopt Margaret Schlegel's own words?

I would read Beerbohm's hat-box as a sketch of the possibility of a modernist literary luggage in embryo and thus not quite sure of its ground or, it would be more accurate to say, *groundlessness*. What is noticeable even upon a cursory reading of his essay is how often he identifies the hat-box with architectural constructions. Quite apart from its 'tower'-like attributes, we are told that it 'has had many tenants' ('I' 115) and that his lost collection of labels had the personal significance of a 'monument' ('I' 123). On the surface, it seems as if such designations are unwittingly used to supply a necessary air of prestige for what is 'merely' a hat-box. '[I]t needs, I am well aware,' he is compelled to justify early on, 'some sort of explanation to enable my reader to mourn with me' ('I' 115). Even his concluding aspiration towards renewal is prompted by literary architecture: 'Like Carlyle, when the MS. of his masterpiece was burned by the housemaid of John Stuart Mill, he might have begun all over again and builded a still nobler monument on the tragic ashes' ('I' 134). In certain ways, the hat-box replicates the function of the house in providing a framework for individual narrative continuity through the careful accumulation of the 'autobiographic symbols' ('I' 125) that are the labels. Yet in a number of key ways, it departs from the architectural paradigm. In marking his 'every darling escape' ('I' 125) as opposed to his permanent establishment, it is evidently no house of fiction, in the popular sense of James's phrase. To begin with, we are alerted to the potential narrative discontinuities facilitated by the hat-box in that its symbolic meaning is rendered open to interpretation, if often implicitly guided interpretation. He owns to using the hat-box as an instrument of 'bluffing' and 'pretence' ('I' 128, 129) a facet of literary luggage we will explore in greater detail in relation to Beerbohm and others in Chapter Three, Section 3.3. Furthermore, its synecdochic scope is narrowed to the autobiographical level of the individual subject rather than the generally more expansive gesture of the house to the state of society at large, a subjective synecdochic scope Beerbohm himself suggests: 'It was part and parcel of my life' ('I' 117). In broader social terms, it must be seen as a fragmented rather than a representative unit and one that is geared towards manipulative effect. This is not to say that the house does not likewise provide an opportunity for the manipulation of self-image. We might recall Mme Merle's typically Victorian stance on the expressive nature of the shell from the previous section. The difference here is that Beerbohm's hat-box allows for *recurrent* self-transformation and a much more unstable form of

suggestibility, something denied to all but the most affluent of house-owners, as Deborah Cohen has acknowledged of domestic spaces around the turn of the twentieth century: 'Only the truly wealthy could harmonize their interiors with a restless personality. For everyone else, purchases proved rather more durable than the frame of mind that had spawned them.'<sup>112</sup> Though Beerbohm couches the representation of his hat-box in architectural terms - a stripped monument to be reconstructed or refurbished, so to speak - and upholds it from the first as an object which requires justification as a cause for commemoration - '[i]t is not cast from any obvious mould of sentiment' ('I' 115) runs the opening line - it becomes apparent that the architectural analogue is misplaced in the essay, a token indication perhaps of the lingering power of a sedentary point of view which has already given way.

Indeed, despite his continuous reversion to an architectural frame of reference as well as his opening justificatory statement, Beerbohm goes to great lengths to convince us of the importance and relevance of his *mere* hat-box in and of itself and as a prospective vision of the shape a new kind of fiction might metaphorically take. If he conceives of his hat-box as a kind of text then this process of conceptualization is also speculatively inverted. In the essay, we find Homer's *The Odyssey* re-imagined in the form of a modern, label-smothered hat-box, some time before its ground-breaking modernist reincarnation at the hands of James Joyce with *Ulysses* in 1922:

Romance, exhilaration, self-importance these are what my labels symbolised and recalled to me. That lost collection was a running record of all my happiest hours; a focus, a monument, a diary. It was my humble Odyssey, wrought in coloured paper on pig-skin, and the one work I never, never was weary of. If the distinguished Ithacan had travelled with a hat-box, how finely and minutely Homer would have described it - its depth and girth, its cunningly fashioned lock and fair lining withal! And in how interminable a torrent of hexameters would he have catalogued all the labels on it, including those attractive views of the Hôtel Circe, the Hôtel Calypso, and other high-class resorts. Yet no! Had such a hat-box existed and had it been preserved in his day, Homer would have seen in it a sufficient record, a better record than even he could make, of Odysseus' wanderings. We should have had nothing from him but the Iliad. ('I' 123-4)

Beerbohm proffers a mobile alternative fit for modernity's instinctual nomad, a 'monument' on the move, a case of fiction which records and narrates the 'humble'

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<sup>112</sup> Cohen, *Household Gods* 141.

odyssey of the unfixed modern subject, and he imbues, in so doing, the ordinary with an epic quality, as many modernist writers would go on to do. Though the narration of a journey is an age-old literary device, neither the hat-box nor the luggage label can have 'existed' in Homer's time. The analogy Beerbohm puts forward here is a deliberately current one. Extended passages in the essay describe the response to a new machinery of fast-paced movement, technological advancements allowing for the possibility of dispelling 'as if by sudden magic, the old environment,' ('I' 118) and cultivating a widespread nomadic imperative. Recent critical work on the subject of modernist mobility has stressed the specificity of the modernist journey in this way. Thacker notes that the 'movement through new material spaces and by means of the new machines of modernity [...] grounds a more abstract sense of flux and change that many modernist writers attempted to articulate in their texts.'<sup>113</sup> Similarly, Peat, though concerned more particularly with the invocation of the pilgrimage narrative as mentioned, lays a comparable stress on contextual grounding: 'The reconfiguration of the sacred journey in modernism reflects technological, political and social changes, as well as shifts in ethical and spiritual beliefs; it responds to a world that was, in all senses of the phrase, on the move.'<sup>114</sup> Peat, in positing the modernist journey as a form of movement responding to movement, reminds us here that modernism registers the rise to prominence of a nomadic metaphysics as the prevailing outlook and 'Ichabod' bears witness to this rise. By 1920 ('ten years hence!' to reiterate Beerbohm's own words), the first Ministry for Transport had been established in Britain with the aim of concentrating on what the new Minister for Transport, Sir Eric Geddes, called the 'science of movement,' an area which he claimed, in a speech delivered at the London School of Economics in October 1919, had been overlooked up to that point and demanded further attention, a necessity precipitated by the war.<sup>115</sup> Only a decade before this institutionalised attention to mobility and almost concurrent with James's 'house of fiction,' Beerbohm's account of his hat-box reflects a shift towards more dynamic understandings of form. That such a formal model is wanting in 1909 is implied by his sense that literature has not yet caught up with the developing science of twentieth-century motion: 'I await that poet who shall worthily celebrate the iron road. [...] I look

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<sup>113</sup> Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity* 8.

<sup>114</sup> Peat, *Travel and Modernist Literature* 9.

<sup>115</sup> These views are recorded in an editorial of the *Transport and Travel Monthly* in 1920. This particular speech as well as the establishment of the new Ministry for Transport are cited as causes for the change in journal title from *The Railway and Travel Monthly* to *Transport and Travel Monthly*, a change made with 'a view to the widening of the scope, which will assuredly be welcomed by all interested in the development of transport in all its phases.' See 'Editorial,' *Transport and Travel Monthly (Formerly The Railway and Travel Monthly)* 20 (1920): 215.

for another, who shall show us the heart of the passenger, the exhilaration of travelling by day, the exhilaration and romance and self-importance of travelling by night' ('I' 118). Note the repetition of the terms applied to his hat-box labels above. By implication, a case of fiction model is anticipated as the framing device for the 'wanderings' of the modern Odysseus as set against the backdrop of a progressively mobile world. The concluding expression of renewal might well be derived from an architectural example but it owes more to the regenerative appeal of a luggage paradigm which permits the modern individual to dispel 'as if by sudden magic,' the old personality.

The project of dispelling the old, whether personality or environment, as this corresponds to a modernist initiative to 'make it new,' is nowhere on Forster's literary agenda in *Howards End* though he is arguably as attuned to 'new' possibilities in this novel as any of his Edwardian or up-and-coming modernist contemporaries. He may not quite 'celebrate' the 'iron road' or the 'heart of the passenger' but he is, nonetheless, almost obsessively preoccupied with these facets of modernity and thus merits close attention as a 'poet' of twentieth-century modernisation. As Thacker puts it, if Forster cannot comfortably be categorised with other modernists on a stylistic or formal level, he is certainly 'engaged in producing an *attitude* towards modernity' as valid and as noteworthy as other forms of engagement.<sup>116</sup> The question of his affiliation to modernism is contentious, to say the least, and often forms the focal point of discussion around the writer. Some critics swing to extremes in defining his work in this light. According to Randall Stevenson, in an essay in the *Cambridge Companion* dedicated to the writer, though Forster should be considered 'alongside modernist writing,' he is himself 'scarcely a modernist' and he goes so far as to suggest that the use of modernism as a criterion of assessment might even be reductive.<sup>117</sup> Jane Goldman, on the other hand, in thinking about his treatment of female characters in the same volume, contends that an 'acknowledg[ment] that Forster is a modernist writer' makes for a better understanding of his work.<sup>118</sup> Most, however, like Thacker, converge somewhere in an uncertain middle (and this is not least because it has become less viable to think of modernism itself in terms of set and secure categories.) Alistair M. Duckworth and David Medalie employ the words 'awkward' and 'reluctant' respectively to account for his relationship to modernism while Levenson claims that he 'belongs neither with the

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<sup>116</sup> Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity* 48. Emphasis in original.

<sup>117</sup> Randall Stevenson, 'Forster and Modernism,' *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, ed. David Bradshaw (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007) 221, 209.

<sup>118</sup> Jane Goldman, 'Forster and Women,' *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster* 129.

stout Edwardians [...] nor with the lean modernists...'<sup>119</sup> These extreme positions and centralised tensions can be mapped onto *Howards End* itself through Forster's figuration of the confrontation and interaction between sedentary and nomadic points of view as respectively typified by symbols of house and case.

It is a novel at once very sensitive to change as a function of a mobile 'make it new' mentality and resistant to it at the same time. The seeds of such a resistant sensitivity are noticeable in a diary entry written in reaction to an aeroplane flight in January 1908:

It's coming quickly and if I live to be old I shall see the sky as pestilential as the roads. It really *is* a new civilisation. I have been born at the end of the age of peace and can't expect to feel anything but despair [...] The little houses that I am used to will be swept away and the fields will reek of petrol, and the airships will shatter the stars. [...] [S]uch a soul as mine will be crushed out.<sup>120</sup>

This passage conveys nothing of the 'romance' and 'exhilaration' of a mobile modernity so ardently proclaimed in Beerbohm's essay. Forster's outright and emotional rejection of the aeroplane and the motor car, those modernist set pieces, anticipates his problematic approach to modernity and modernisation in *Howards End* a couple of years later. Here, the 'new civilisation', obliquely mentioned in the diary entry, is construed more specifically as the 'civilisation of luggage,' a specification crystallising that earlier unformed perception of flux into a recognisable shape to be reckoned with and implicating the little house - luggage's age-old opposite - as the primary emblem of resistance:

The feudal ownership of land did bring dignity, whereas the modern ownership of movables is reducing us again to a nomadic horde. We are reverting to the civilization of luggage, and historians of the future will note how the middle classes accreted possessions without taking root in the earth, and may find in this the secret of their imaginative poverty. (*HE* 119)

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<sup>119</sup> Duckworth, *E. M. Forster's House of Fiction* 137; Medalie, *E. M. Forster's Modernism* 1; Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality* 78.

<sup>120</sup> Quoted in Duckworth, *E. M. Forster's House of Fiction* 131. Emphasis in original.



Forster equates 'imaginative poverty' with an atavistic rootlessness (a rootlessness, contrary to his presentiments, in fact celebrated as an empowering factor in modernism by *literary* historians of the future.) At the same time, this later novel also exhibits a more resigned acceptance of technological advancements in favour of mobility as well as an interest in bringing such advanced technologies into play in realising his ambition of unifying disparate elements, as set out in his epigraph 'Only Connect.' Thacker, for example, in exploring the representation of the motorcar in the novel, finds it to be an ambivalent symbol on the whole and not entirely a harbinger of petrol-fuelled pestilence, as his 1908 diary entry would have it; it certainly signifies the condition of nomadic uprootedness he so loathed but it can simultaneously be said to promote the model of connectivity he so desired.<sup>121</sup> Forster is not blind to the fact that connection requires movement. The challenge he takes upon himself in *Howards End* is to retain the stable reference points of the 'little houses' whilst encouraging positive and meaningful rather than primitive, purposeless movement between them. On a structural level, this objective might be described as the formal assimilation of a now inevitable modern mobility without the loss of the 'sanctity' (*HE* 175) and sanctifying influence of an underlying architectural principle.<sup>122</sup>

This is made difficult by Forster's own unwillingness to think outside the house as a formal model for fiction not to mention an evident fear of a flux which cannot quite be made to conform to his conception. It becomes progressively clear that he intends, not to externally connect with the 'civilisation of luggage,' but to make this new civilisation connect with his house, to invite it in. Yet, the very idea of hospitality is shown to come under palpable strain in the novel. (We must remember that the trouble begins with a crisis of hospitable relations arising from Helen's brief engagement to Paul Wilcox on a visit to *Howards End* itself.) Virginia Woolf perceived Forster to have a 'four-square attitude which walks up to life as if it were a house with a front door, puts its hat on the table in the hall, and proceeds to visit all the rooms in an orderly manner.'<sup>123</sup> She goes on to demonstrate the way in which his literary works reflect this mind-set in the sense that he pervades his early works, *Howards End* above all, as a 'careful hostess.'<sup>124</sup> Woolf's astute description of Forster as a 'careful hostess' goes some

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<sup>121</sup> Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity* 46-79.

<sup>122</sup> Again, a secular adoption of religious terminology is notable here, as with James and Galsworthy, as if the house is the last bastion of the spiritual and the sacred if the space of the church is no longer viable in a secular society.

<sup>123</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'The Novels of E. M. Forster,' *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie, vol. IV (1986; London: Hogarth, 1994) 499-500. This essay was first published in *T.P.'s Weekly* in 1927.

<sup>124</sup> Woolf, 'The Novels of E.M. Forster' 500.

way to account for what has been perceived as his discomfiture when it comes to modernist literary innovation. Modernity is portrayed as a hostile and intrusive spectre at the door of the fictional house, on the one hand, and what Thacker calls the 'flux that always seems to burst through the containing strategies of literary form,' on the other.<sup>125</sup> The unspoken rules of fictional hospitality are at stake in Forster's work, not least the 'sovereignty' of the host, to use a term advanced by Jacques Derrida in a discussion of host-guest relations: 'Anyone who encroaches on my 'at home', on my ipseity, on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner and virtually as an enemy.'<sup>126</sup> For Forster, the dreaded prospect of a cosmopolitan culture signals the displacement of host by guest as sovereign force leading ultimately to the dissolution of that very relationship (in the erasure of difference and spatial belonging implied by cosmopolitanism, the words 'host' and 'guest' must lose their meaning) and thus also risking the 'sanctity' of the house as sovereign framework.<sup>127</sup> Further to this, the sovereignty of his own position as author is far from assured in this novel. Why, we might ask, does Woolf rather pointedly use the feminine designation 'hostess' as opposed to 'host'? This must firstly, of course, be seen as a reference to his sexual orientation. As Elizabeth Langland has documented, Forster experienced a period of particular 'sexual confusion' during the composition of *Howards End*, resulting, she argues, in a defensive misogyny (a misogyny Woolf also felt in her relations with the writer) but equally a subversion of binary understandings of gender.<sup>128</sup> Yet the word additionally emphasises, I believe, the ambiguity of Forster's status in a literary architectural sense. The sovereignty that is not a real sovereignty of

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<sup>125</sup> Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity* 73.

<sup>126</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000) 53, 55.

<sup>127</sup> For a close analysis of Forster's running critique of cosmopolitanism in *Howards End* which argues that one of his chief objections is to the idea of sameness or obliterated difference, see Mary Ellis Gibson, 'Illegitimate Order: Cosmopolitanism and Liberalism in Forster's *Howards End*,' *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 28 (1985): 106-23.

<sup>128</sup> Setting this apparent misogyny to one side, Langland makes a case, on the contrary, for a radical sexual politics in Forster's novel through his persistent undoing of hierarchical constructions. As for Woolf, we learn from an April 1919 diary entry that she perceived a certain reticence on Forster's part when it came to intellectual women: 'I was beckoned by Forster from the Library as I approached. We shook hands very cordially; and yet I always feel him shrinking sensitively from me, as a woman, a clever woman, an up to date woman.' Yet, as Langland suggests, to take this seeming misogyny at face value would be short-sighted. The comment might even be said to be more illustrative of Woolf's own uncertainty with regard to Forster. The two had a complex relationship and, as Hermione Lee records, they 'circled warily around each other all their lives.' Indeed, Forster was, throughout, more generous in his appraisals of Woolf's writings than the other way around. Elizabeth Langland, 'Gesturing Towards an Open Space: Gender, Form and Language in *Howards End*,' *E.M. Forster*, ed. Jeremy Tambling (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 1995) 81-99; Saturday 12 April 1919 entry in *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell, vol. 1 (London: Hogarth, 1977) 263; Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (1996; London: Vintage-Random, 1997) 273.

the classic Victorian and Edwardian figure of the 'hostess', who cannot claim actual 'ownership' and thus any genuine authority over the house upon which her hospitality prevails, mirrors his own status as an author with a 'four-square' supervisory attitude to his text, on the one hand, while intuiting, on the other, the free textual play at work beyond his control and despite his 'careful' arrangements, epitomised in this idea of an unruly 'civilisation of luggage,' a horde of unruly guests, we might say. By the time *A Passage to India* is written in 1924, this is a hostess, as Woolf adds, 'in some disillusionment both with his guests and with his house.'<sup>129</sup>

Yet, in 1910, the house is still Forster's bedrock against disillusionment and if he sets out to assimilate modern mobility within the architectural paradigm on a formal level, he works through this on a thematic level in his treatment of the figures of Margaret and Helen Schlegel. Their provisional homelessness and how to settle it forms the problematic core of the narrative, addressed directly by Margaret midway through: "...It's really getting rather serious. We let chance after chance slip, and the end of it is we shall be bundled out bag and baggage into the street. We don't know what we *want*, that's the mischief with us -" (*HE* 125, emphasis in original). As in James's Preface, we note an awakening doubt about the woman's domestic place here and we will be examining in detail the relationship between women and 'bag and baggage' from a literary and historical perspective in Chapter Two. For now I would simply highlight the importance of the question of what Helen and Margaret '*want*,' a word Forster himself pointedly italicises. If the Schlegel sisters don't know what they 'want', this is also because they don't know what they 'lack' and we should be alert to this play on the dual meaning of 'want' in the above quotation. Want is fuelled by want and this Schlegel 'mischief' might be better understood in the context of a new society of consumerism, where the creation of a lack had become the motive force and in which 'desire began to replace property,' to quote Trotter, as a means of self-identification.<sup>130</sup> Forster's 'civilisation of luggage' must also be regarded as a new civilisation of consumer desire, something I have suggested before, shaped more specifically around the desires of the female consumer, as Bowlby outlines in *Just Looking*: 'It was above all to women that the new commerce made its appeal...'<sup>131</sup> Hostile as the Schlegels outwardly are to an ethos of consumer capitalism as it intrudes upon the unseen world of inner spirituality they mean to cultivate, their own nascent sense of discontent correlates somewhat jarringly with more commercial-led forms of mobility and changeability. It is for this reason that

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<sup>129</sup> Woolf, 'The Novels of E. M. Forster,' *Essays* (Vol. IV) 500.

<sup>130</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History* 13.

<sup>131</sup> Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (New York: Methuen, 1985) 11.

the question of what Margaret and Helen want has larger implications, a point accentuated by Margaret herself a few lines later: "We cannot settle even this little thing; what will it be like when we have to settle a big one?" (*HE* 125) The 'big' question, as far as this discussion goes, is how far this Schlegel hesitancy about committing to a settlement, as implicitly linked to a wider form of commercial unrest, on the one hand, and female unrest, on the other, will be permitted to impact upon the architectural form of the novel. Modern consumerism, according to Bowlby, turned merchandise into a 'spectacle' and this is a word Forster himself chooses to convey a life '[u]nder cosmopolitanism, if it comes...' (*HE* 206)<sup>132</sup> It is implied that the rewards of sustained engagement will be denied to the 'nomadic horde' (*HE* 119) in line with the formation of a superficial capitalist society of surfaces and surface values. When Margaret remarks upon the Schlegel 'mischief' of uncertain desire, Helen responds as follows: "No, we have no real ties" (*HE* 125). Forster makes a concerted effort to prove for the remainder of the text, that the modern ownership of movables is a poor substitute for ties of a more enduring sort and the novel works to bring the Schlegels, as much as the reader, around to this conclusion and back to the fictional house, albeit on new terms.

That he succeeds comes as something of a surprise. "I didn't know myself it would turn into a permanent home" (*HE* 268), Margaret remarks at the end of the novel, upon finding herself 'still stopped at Howards End' (*HE* 265), over a year after the death of Leonard Bast. It is important to reiterate that if the Schlegels (and their Schlegel-Bast progeny) are shown to finally oversee Howards End, this is a role which sits uncomfortably with a certain free-spiritedness, on the part of the two sisters, though particularly Helen, which surfaces throughout. Preparing for the move from Wickham Place, for example, causes Margaret much anxiety but it is plain that this has less to do with the loss of the home she shares with her siblings than with a realisation of the obstructive bulk of their belongings:

Chairs, tables, pictures, books, that had rumbled to them through the generations, must rumble forward again like a slide of rubbish to which she longed to give the final push and send toppling into the sea. [...] Round every knob and cushion in the house sentiment gathered, a sentiment that was at times personal, but more often a faint piety to the dead, a prolongation of rites that might have ended in the grave. (*HE* 118)

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<sup>132</sup> Bowlby, *Just Looking* 6.

This free indirect discourse of Margaret's seems to rise up as a resistant strain against the dominating narrative voice, a voice pointedly disapproving of 'that shallow makeshift note that is so often heard in the modern dwelling-place' (*HE* 39). Margaret's momentary longing to be rid of the responsibility attached to belongings, as well as her suspicion of the falsity of the 'sentiment' gathered around these objects, echoes Isabel Archer's sense that belongings are an arbitrary barrier rather than an accurate measure of the self and effects a subversive appeal to 'only disconnect' which undercuts Forster's well-known epigraph as well as the dominant narrative voice. "'Are you aware that Helen and I have walked alone over the Apennines, with our luggage on our backs'" (*HE* 141) Margaret asks Henry during a conversation about possible honeymoon destinations. This image of Helen and Margaret making their solitary way with their luggage on their backs is somehow more powerfully evocative of the wider mischievous leanings of women at large at this time than Forster's later projection of Margaret sitting in the garden of Howards End and lamenting the current 'craze for motion' (*HE* 268).

Margaret and Helen are ultimately recovered *from* the 'civilisation of luggage' for the house. Yet it should be emphasised here that Forster would have seen this as a progressive step with the status of women more broadly in mind. In a paper delivered to the Working Men's College Old Students' Club in 1906, he remarks upon the fact that the early Victorian woman was 'regarded as a bundle of goods' and that the 'woman of today' is 'by no means a bundle of goods,' marriage no longer being the aspirational mark on her horizon.<sup>133</sup> These are representative definitions we will take up in a more interrogatory fashion shortly, but the point to make here is that, when it came to writing *Howards End*, Forster was no doubt intent on proving that his Schlegels were women 'of today' in this manner, by no means bundles of goods, in other words. It should also be emphasised that their very establishment in Howards End is in the interests of domestic reform, an attempt to contain the current craze for commercial/cosmopolitan spectacle and motion through channelling its energy. We must not forget that the disruptive guest at the house at the beginning of the novel becomes, in effect, the mother of the future host at the end. This is a radical coup pointing to a complete overhaul of the house and, significantly, a *mobilisation* of household and hospitable relations, on the level of the woman's place as well as class (two of the bugbears of the troubled Liberal Party at this time, we might add) without affecting the legitimacy of the underlying architectural

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<sup>133</sup> E.M. Forster, 'Pessimism in Literature,' *Albergo Empedocle and Other Writings by E.M. Forster*, ed. George H. Thomson (New York: Liveright, 1971) 135.

order.<sup>134</sup> Levenson argues that Forster's work affords an insight into 'what the development of the novel might have been if at the turn of our century it had endured an evolutionary, rather than a revolutionary, change.'<sup>135</sup> I agree with Levenson to the extent that Forster works within and maintains a fidelity to an old form even if he purports to develop it, but we ought not to lose sight of the revolutionary aspect of these developments from the inside. Far from representing one more attempt to ignore an old skeleton, *Howards End* represents, on the contrary, an attempt to update the house of fiction in order to establish its continued relevance in a new era of perpetual motion. The problem is that the house has already become out-dated as a model and Forster's efforts smack of resuscitation rather than renewal or refurbishment. Though we discover something of internal mobility within *Howards End*, the house itself remains static and so it does not work as a formal model for a new age. Its sticking point is that it is stuck. Forster effects to build a 'new life' (*HE* 266) for the 'nomadic horde' in a reformed but still-standing monument. This does present a solution if a short-term and somewhat contrived one. Consequently, in spite of the moving and shaking of a mobile modernity, *Howards End* - both house of brick and 'house of words' - remains standing though it is unable to hide the strain of its resistance to the pressures of modern flux encapsulated by the idea of a 'civilisation of luggage.' Beerbohm, on the other hand, intuits that luggage gives form to flux. He endows his hat-box with the semblance of a monument but this does not detract from its motive force and thus its pertinence as a modern framing device, even if this is yet a fleeting daydream.

On the whole, this chapter has taken stock of the conditions which led to a certain disequilibrium in the field of rhetorical forces around the turn of twentieth century. Beginning with an overview of the literary architectural field of research and acknowledging the recent interest in a 'new mobilities paradigm' both in the social sciences and in modernist studies, I gave an account of the long-standing relationship between symbolic forms of house and case as these symbolic forms correspond to sedentary and nomadic points of view respectively. The following sections charted the waning influence of the house as dominant symbolic form - through Dickens, James and Galsworthy, among others - in line with the compelling emergence of a case of fiction as this is incipiently projected, in positive and negative terms, by Beerbohm and Forster.

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<sup>134</sup> This reading accords with Langland's review of the radical sexual politics in *Howards End*. Though traditional gender relations are subversively overturned in the text, Langland acknowledges that a patriarchal ideology raises its head once again at the end of the novel in Margaret's 'conquest' of Henry in the 'masculine mode.' I would add that this paradoxical state of affairs is substantiated by the endurance of the domestic framework. See Langland, 'Gesturing Towards an Open Space' 91.

<sup>135</sup> Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality* 78.

The next two chapters will attempt a survey of attempted realisations of this incipient projection of a modernist case of fiction model as well as the growing appeal of literary luggage more generally - firstly in works by and about women from the late nineteenth century and, then, in works by an extensive range of writers after the First World War - and, as will become clear, the case of fiction is far from being a model without problems of its own.

**Chapter 2:****The Issue of the Woman's Bag from the New Woman to  
Modernism**



### ***Introduction: Mrs Brown's Bag***

And then Mrs Brown faced the dreadful revelation. She took her heroic decision. Early, before dawn, she packed her bag and carried it herself to the station. She would not let Smith touch it. She was wounded in her pride, unmoored from her anchorage; she came of gentlefolks who kept servants – but details could wait. The important thing was to realize her character, to steep oneself in her atmosphere. I had no time to explain why I felt it somewhat tragic, heroic, yet with a dash of the flighty, and fantastic, before the train stopped, and I watched her disappear, carrying her bag, into the vast blazing station. She looked very small, very tenacious; at once very frail and very heroic. And I have never seen her again, and I shall never know what became of her.

Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (1923)<sup>1</sup>

'Details could wait,' Virginia Woolf interjects in the culminating image of her version of the Mrs Brown story in her well-known 1923 essay on the subject of character in fiction, and she immediately adds that 'the story ends without any point to it' ('MBMB' 74). However, she does pointedly draw attention to one particular detail: that is the fact that Mrs Brown carries her own bag and it is a fact she states twice in quick succession, though it is a detail tellingly overlooked by her imagined Edwardian literary counterparts, in the versions of Mrs Brown respectively allotted to each. Why is this detail worth repeating while others can wait? Why does Woolf stress Mrs Brown's adamant refusal to let Mr Smith touch her bag and what does this gesture imply? Why is it something only she purports to notice? And since this is, to all intents and purposes, a discussion of the changing approach to fictional character, and thus to fiction itself, in the early twentieth century, what does this particular detail add to that particular discussion?

This chapter sets out to contend that the woman's bag became a central symbolic point of focus and literary motif – on a par with the oft-cited bicycle or latchkey – in portrayals of shifting gender relations, dating from the emergence of literature by and about 'New Women' in the late nineteenth century through to early-twentieth-century modernist literature. The previous chapter showed that the 'Woman Question' as well as the thorny issue of women's desires noticeably and persistently surface as key contributing factors in the declining relevance of the model of the house

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown,' *A Woman's Essays* 74. The essay was first

in the early-twentieth-century literary imagination. If the figure of the domestic woman formed the ideological heart of the house then her departure put the structure itself in jeopardy. This is most conspicuously felt in relation to James's 'house of fiction' and most conspicuously resisted in Forster's *Howards End*. We must also remember that it is Esther Summerson's final establishment in a reconfigured Bleak House which works to maintain the supremacy of the architectural model in Dickens's much earlier text. Even James himself acknowledged as early as 1899, long before he wrote his Preface, that the future of the novel lay, in part, in the domestic desertion of the woman: 'we may very well yet see the female elbow itself, kept in increasing activity by the play of the pen, smash with final resonance the window all this time kept most superstitiously closed.'<sup>2</sup> It follows that women's luggage must have had a particular resonance in imaginative attempts to conceive of a form beyond the house of fiction and it is this resonating impact which the current chapter intends to investigate. In marking the significance of women's luggage more specifically here, I am indebted to the many re-evaluative efforts to bring matters of gender as well as the centrality of women's writing and experience to the forefront of studies of modernism in defiance of traditionally male-dominated modernist canons.<sup>3</sup> As Marianne Dekoven appositely begins an essay on the subject, '[m]odernism is an ideal literary territory for the feminist critic to rechart' and a range of critics have initiated this reappraisal by *charting*, in effect, the represented movements of women themselves through classic modernist terrains.<sup>4</sup> An understanding of women's mobility, as distinguishable from the mobility of men, from the *fin de siècle* onwards, makes for an alternative understanding of modernism and modernity, as critics like Griselda Pollock, Bowlby and, more recently, Wendy Parkins, among many others, have established.<sup>5</sup> In Bowlby's words: 'The woman in the street is

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<sup>2</sup> Henry James, 'The Future of the Novel,' *The Critical Muse* 344.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview, see Marianne DeKoven, 'Modernism and Gender,' *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson (1998; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 174-93; Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995). I will be referring to other relevant texts in this field as the chapter progresses.

<sup>4</sup> Marianne DeKoven, 'Gendered Doubleness and the "Origins" of Modernist Form,' *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 8 (1989): 19.

<sup>5</sup> 'The *flâneur* is an exclusively male type,' Pollock writes of that modernist icon, offsetting this characterisation against the woman's experience of movement in the late-nineteenth century as this is delineated, for example, in the journal of artist Marie Bashkirtself. See Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988) 67. Bowlby gives a more developed account of the implications of female mobility through street-walking/haunting - she defines the street walker against the figures of *flâneur* and *passante* - as positively evinced in writings by Woolf and more poignantly envisioned in the work of Jean Rhys. See Bowlby, *Still Crazy After All These Years: Women, Writing and Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992). Parkins extends the discussion to the possibilities opened up by new technologies, asserting that '[w]omen's mobility is an important means through which the reconfigurations of the modern female subject are textually represented.' See Wendy Parkins,

not the equivalent of the man in the street, that figure of normal representativeness; and her sexually dubious associations give to her stepping out a quality of automatic transgressiveness that is also the chance of her going somewhere different.<sup>6</sup> The image of the woman's bag points, as I will show, to a markedly feminine version of modernism's emergence from an architectural paradigm. Yet, like Rita Felski, I also believe it is important to avoid the temptation of 'constructing a counter-myth of emblematic femininity' in favour of an approach which 'aims to unravel the complexities of modernity's relationship to femininity through an analysis of its varied and competing representations.'<sup>7</sup> It is exactly these various and competing representations of modernity's relationship to femininity which a close survey of the motif of the woman's bag illuminates.

My concern, in Section 2.1 of this chapter, is with the pride of place - or, to be more precise, pride of placelessness - assumed by the figure of the New Woman within the new 'civilisation of luggage' and the corresponding imaginative emphasis on her bag as indicative of her autonomous existence as opposed to her dependence and insubstantiality, in works from Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) and Nellie Bly's *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* (1890) to George Egerton's 'Virgin Soil' (1894). I will look, in the section that follows, Section 2.2, at simultaneous *fin de siècle* projections of the disturbance caused by the New Woman to the traditional chivalric dynamic and, correspondingly, to the idea of 'masculine' textual authority and will ask why the object of the bag was often so pivotal in renderings of this disturbance. Works under scrutiny here will include Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), George Gissing's 'The Poet's Portmanteau' (1895) and some satirical cartoons. Section 2.3 will consider the representation of the woman's bag as an alternative conceptual framework for literary form, set against established 'masculine' conceptions of old, as this is exemplified in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (1915-38) and Karin Michaëlis's *The Dangerous Age* (1910). Section 2.4 will take a different tack in focusing on an example of the rejection of the emancipatory potential of the bag through the figure of Lily Bart in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905), glancing back to Lily's literary antecedent Carrie Meeber in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) and forward to her literary descendent Susy Lancing in Wharton's later *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) in order to frame the analysis. Section 2.5 will deal with instances of the collision of positive and negative perceptions in some other early-twentieth-century modernist texts, namely

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'Moving Dangerously: Mobility and the Modern Woman,' *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 20 (2001): 90.

<sup>6</sup> Bowlby, *Still Crazy After All These Years* viii.

<sup>7</sup> Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995) 7.

Katherine Mansfield's 'The Little Governess' (1915) Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922) and D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920). I will examine more problematic figurations of the woman's bag as an object of contention and of contentious readings in these texts, bearing in mind continued debates about the nature of chivalry in the 1900s and 1910s. These are figurations which raise more fundamental questions about the viability of the alternative model proposed by writers like Richardson and, more broadly, the very possibility of achieving autonomy within a social system founded on proprietorial relations.

As a whole, the chapter will make a case for the woman's bag as a byword for modernist instability, indeterminacy and contradiction. A paragon of portability, the object of the bag is inherently unstable in terms both of its spatial positioning and its internal constitution. To a great extent, the same can be said of the New Woman, a figuration which was largely 'a product of discourse,' to use Sally Ledger's phrase, and which thus inevitably formed a locus of semantic contention.<sup>8</sup> As the starting-point for our exploration of the idea of modern womanhood as this developed into the twentieth century, this is a figuration worth dwelling upon momentarily. Most critical accounts of this *fin de siècle* phenomenon begin, indeed, by drawing attention to the impossibility of defining the New Woman as a single entity. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis remind us that the 'New Woman was not one figure but several' and Ann Ardis underlines the nominal irony of this inherent plurality: 'Given that the New Woman was so many things to so many people at the turn of the century, the name we remember her by is oddly singular.'<sup>9</sup> It is a name which carried interchangeable - more often than not, disputed - meanings, signalling a lack of fixity above all. That paragon of portability, the bag, was perfectly poised to be set in metonymical relation to this form of restless modern woman and, as such, can be differentiated from other common accessories in

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<sup>8</sup> Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin De Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997) 3. The term itself was coined in an exchange between writers Sarah Grand and Ouida in the pages of the *North American Review* in 1894, amidst an on-going debate in a range of contemporary journals on the subject of the 'Woman Question,' and was, thereafter, loosely applied to any fictional female protagonist of the period who was noticeably cast against the traditional grain. These counter-traditional characterisations were far from consistent one with the other, however, and, to add to this, the term 'New Woman,' was equally adopted as a satirical catchword by opponents to the feminist cause. Both Grand's 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' (March, 1894) and Ouida's 'The New Woman' (May, 1894), amongst a range of other contemporary articles on the subject, are re-published in *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, Drama of the 1890s*, ed. Carolyn Christensen Nelson (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2001) 141-6, 153-60.

<sup>9</sup> Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, introduction, *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, ed. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Basingstoke: Palgrave in association with Institute for English Studies, 2001) 13; Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990) 10.

stock sketches of the character. While both the bicycle and the latchkey, for example, equally capture the keynote of restlessness as well as the gender ambiguity associated with the figure, neither quite conjures that sense of semantic variability and contestation, so aptly conveyed in the image of the bag, as we will see. Further to this, the bag was a material mediator in traditional enactments of chivalry, unlike the bicycle and latchkey, and it was thus an object around which the attempted interrogation of chivalry might be dramatized. Most importantly, it was unique in working as a framing device for character as well as an analogy for literary form. Mapping the use of this motif across a range of texts, it is my intention then to show that the woman's bag stands in metonymical relation not just to the New Woman, in all her variability, as well as her twentieth-century successors, at this time but, through these versions of the modern woman, to modernity and modernist form in transition.

For the sake of consistency, I will be using the general term 'bag' in an overarching capacity throughout this chapter. To start with, this is a term which encompasses a range of moveable containers, from hand-bags to more weighty items, but it additionally intimates portability, more pronouncedly than certain alternatives, which is where my own stress in this analysis falls for the most part. This is not at all to suggest that the various specifications of moveable container, in the texts to be considered, are indistinguishable. On the contrary, precise designations must be seen to bear very particular connotations in context and the distinctions, both obvious and subtle, between bag types call for close consideration. Correspondingly, I am far from proposing an all-inclusive class and category of womanhood in attending to the significance of this motif. To be sensitive to the 'semiotic powers' of luggage, to reiterate Fussell's words, is to be sensitive to the social standing of the luggage-owner. The New Woman was, in the main, a middle-class phenomenon and it is mostly bourgeois women I will be considering here since it was a rejection of bourgeois domestic ideology that the bag, more often than not, flaunted. However, the bag, in certain other cases, signalled an enforced social marginality and several of these bag-carrying women will be shown to hold manifestly uncertain positions in relation to class. It is through the unsettled status of the woman's bag – which can be interpreted, by turn, as residual bourgeois baggage and as a symbol of class-based proprietorial emancipation - that uncertainties of social standing as well as wider feminist tensions are, indeed, frequently brought to light.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>A number of commentators point to the perceptible tensions between a middle-class form of 'equal rights' feminism, in the liberal tradition, and a more radical form of feminism with a greater emphasis on the positions of working-class women at the end of the nineteenth century.

## 2.1 The New Woman Adventuress and the Emancipatory Bag

From the emergence of the figure of the New Woman, women's bags, in all shapes and sizes, became a singular area of semiotic attention, evocative of a previously unrealised and potentially unrealisable female interiority to be newly explored. The disclosure of what was perceived to be a withheld female essence (or, indeed, a paradoxical plethora of conflicting female essences) was assumed, in many quarters, to be critical to future literary developments, particularly in the novel form and much scholarly work has since been done to establish that the 'emancipation of women and the emancipation of the English novel,' from the end of the nineteenth century, went hand in hand.<sup>11</sup> This concurrent and connected development is directly inscribed in portraits of emancipated women, during this period, through the image of the woman's bag, representing a break away both from the model of the house and the house of fiction at one and the same time. As set against the house, the bag, in its miniature and, therefore, mobile form, offered a framework for the reinvention of the female self and, more specifically, for the reinvention of narrative. The opposition generated between bag and house in the texts to be analysed here might be fruitfully compared to the differentiation drawn up between the 'miniature' and the 'gigantic' by Susan Stewart in her book, *On Longing*, in which the miniature is conceived as a 'metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois subject' while the gigantic is conceived as a 'metaphor for the abstract authority of the state and the collective, public life.'<sup>12</sup> Stewart's terms, which I will reiterate in passing throughout the chapter, are useful here because, as she describes, there is, firstly, a degree of exaggeration and abstraction involved in perceptions of the miniature and the gigantic, distortions of scale which will enter into this account in various ways, and, secondly, they point to the relation of self with world through the negotiation of ideas of interiority and exteriority.<sup>13</sup> I am suggesting that the bag operated as a metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois female subject as set against the 'abstract,' external authority of an established public order

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For discussions of the relationship between class and gender in New Woman writing as well as the misleading projection, by critics, of an affinity between New Women and socialists at this time, see Ardis, *New Women, New Novels* 17-19, 118-26; Ledger, *The New Woman* 35-61.

<sup>11</sup> Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1978) 3. For further accounts of the centrality of the re-appraisal of gender relations, perpetuated in New Woman fiction and Edwardian women's writing, in the development of early modernism, see Ardis's *New Women, New Novels*; Gerd Bjorhovde, *Rebellious Structures: Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel 1880-1900* (Oslo: Norwegian UP, 1987) and Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel* (London: Virago, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (1984; Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1993) xii.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart, *On Longing* 101-3.

encapsulated in the image of the house as representative of a larger social structure. In generating this metaphorical opposition, certain women writers, working in what Cicely Hamilton was later to call the 'experimental stage,' cast their conceptions of the house - that is to say, the house left behind - not as a private interior space monitored by the woman but as the framework for a publicly sanctioned form of privacy and 'feminine' interiority, collectively monitored and imposed.<sup>14</sup> The bag, by contrast, in its miniature and, therefore, mobile form, offered a framework for self-reinvention, one that could be carried and controlled, though not always without hindrance, as will presently become apparent. My intention, in this section, is to go back to the experimental beginnings; to look at early representations of the woman's bag as a symbol of female emancipation from a domestic enclosure in a selection of late-nineteenth-century texts by Henrik Ibsen, Nellie Bly and George Egerton, writers who helped to pave the way for later more innovative modernist reinventions of narrative form at an ideological remove from the fictional house.

The 'woman who did' then was also a woman with a bag and this was a bag that she emphatically carried herself.<sup>15</sup> This gesture signalled, first and foremost, a dynamic domestic abandonment but, moreover, an assertion of autonomous self-control and desire for adventure. As early as 1853, pioneering American women's rights campaigner, Susan B. Anthony, known by her red alligator-skin hand-bag in which she carried her speeches, added a note in her journal which, with fascinating prescience, anticipates the title of Woolf's famous feminist manifesto of 1929:

Woman must have a *purse* of her own, & how can this be, so long as the wife is denied the right to her individual and joint earnings. Reflections like these caused me to see and really feel that there was no true freedom for woman without the possession of all her property rights.<sup>16</sup>

Anthony's statement is integral to an understanding of the pertinence of the woman's bag as a political expression for the right of a woman to financial independence and I will probe her points more fully as we progress. But political significations momentarily

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<sup>14</sup> 'To no man alive,' Hamilton stated, 'can the world be quite as wonderful as it is to the woman now alive who has fought free. [...] The world to her is in the experimental stage.' Cicely Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade* (1909; Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1971) 30.

<sup>15</sup> Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895), concerning a woman who enters into a 'free union' with a man of her 'free choice' culminating in the birth of child out of wedlock, is arguably the most famous and notorious New Woman novel of the 1890s. Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did* (1895; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 60-1.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Judith E. Harper, *Susan B. Anthony: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1998) 146.

aside, I would like here to contend that the expressive potency of the woman's bag for the *fin de siècle* artistic imagination must be seen to derive, in large part, from Henrik Ibsen, whose 'subversive female character roles,' in Ledger's words, 'were [...] immensely influential in the formation of the identity of the New Woman in 1890s London.'<sup>17</sup> Nora in *A Doll's House* (1879) is the most obvious case for consideration here though the progressive Hilda Wengal, first identified with a rucksack on her back, in *The Master Builder* (1892) should be factored in peripherally too. The 'small travelling bag' Nora carries away from the family home at the end of *A Doll's House* forms the material manifestation of her 'duty' to herself over and above her domestic duty as a wife and mother.<sup>18</sup> This travelling bag was *the* pivotal symbol in Ibsen's play and its significance can be gleaned from the fact that in his alternative conciliatory ending to *A Doll's House*, written to appease a disgruntled German theatre in 1880, Nora 'lets her travelling bag fall' at the moment she reverses her decision to leave her husband.<sup>19</sup>

In order to understand why Nora's single small travelling bag might have assumed such a reverberating importance for late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century writers in English, we need to think about the complex significations and codes of conduct surrounding women's baggage – and underpinning, by extension, the relationship of women to property – from a historic as well as a linguistic point of view. To start with, Nora's gesture most vividly highlighted the changing status of married women in relation to property in the late nineteenth century. Traditionally, a woman (in Norway as in Britain and the United States) resigned her own property to her husband upon marriage, under the legal doctrine of 'coverture,' as it was known in English-speaking countries.<sup>20</sup> However, the rights of married women to own and control their own property were significantly extended through a range of Married Women's Property Acts, passed in a number of European countries and in America from the mid-

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<sup>17</sup> Sally Ledger, 'Ibsen, the New Woman and the Actress,' *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact* 81. This was also true of the United States. *A Doll's House* premiered both on Broadway and in London in 1889 (although a much watered-down American version of the original was produced much earlier, in 1883.)

<sup>18</sup> Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, 1879, in *Four Major Plays: A Doll's House, Ghosts, Hedda Gabler, The Master Builder*, trans. James McFarlane and Jens Arup (1981; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 85, 82. Emphasis in original.

<sup>19</sup> Ibsen, 'The Alternative "German" Ending,' *Four Major Plays* 88. Emphasis in original.

<sup>20</sup> For interpretations of the development of the courtship plot and romance genre, in part, as a compensatory response to the legal disinheritance and economic disempowerment of daughter-figures, see Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 38-76; Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 19.



nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> These Acts reduced the financial hold of a husband over his wife and thus made it easier for her to leave him if she so wished. In determinedly taking only what belongs to her, Nora is, in effect, anticipating the possibilities opened up by such legislative reform while, simultaneously, illuminating the proprietorial and political disenfranchisement of most married women during the nineteenth century. In other words, Nora might escape the house but she escapes with little or nothing of her own. That the act of carrying her own bag out of the family home is essentially a symbolic gesture is made clear by the fact that Nora is shown to arrange for her friend, Kristine, to collect the remainder of her few belongings the following morning. This allowed Ibsen to make the small travelling bag a closing object of visual focus and what I would like to suggest here is that its symbolic centrality in *A Doll's House*, as well as in later re-conceptualisations of gender relations in English fiction, was due to the fact that the woman's bag had, in effect, long been imaginatively central to her proprietorial suppression.

An elucidatory detour in the way of English rhetorical tradition is useful in this context, tangentially so where Ibsen is concerned but directly relevant when it comes to writers in English to follow. That very word 'baggage' had, since the seventeenth century, been derogatively deployed in relation to loose women of questionable morals and social standing and the application of this expression goes some way, on its own, to explain the sensitivity relating to the question of women's luggage.<sup>22</sup> The fact that the tag was originally applied to men as well as women of disrepute but that the male-specific usage quickly slipped out of currency corroborates Jordanna Bailkin's assertion that women have 'traditionally been identified with mobile property, highlighting a perceived division between masculine worth and feminine insubstantiality.'<sup>23</sup> According to the range of early examples offered by the *OED*, it was an expression used as much to refer to a woman bound as an impediment to a man as a woman too free in her ways. As such, the most salient point about the idea of the 'baggage' is the proprietorial

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<sup>21</sup> Acts in this line were passed in New York, in 1848 and 1860 (extending from there to other American states), and in the United Kingdom in 1870 and 1882. Legislative reform with the aim of increasing women's participation in society was set in motion in Ibsen's Norway before the mid-nineteenth century but, interestingly, a corresponding form of Married Women's Property Act was not introduced until 1888, almost ten years after the first staging of *A Doll's House*. See Karin Bruzelius Heffermehl, 'The Status of Women in Norway,' *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 20 (1972): 630-46.

<sup>22</sup> According to definition A.6 s.v. 'baggage, n. and adj.' in the *OED*: 'A worthless, good-for nothing woman; a woman of disreputable or immoral life, a strumpet.' See 'baggage, n. and adj,' *OED Online*, March 2012, Oxford University Press, 7 June 2012  
<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/14622?redirectedFrom=baggage>>.

<sup>23</sup> Bailkin, *The Culture of Property* 25. See *OED* definition A.5 s.v. 'baggage': 'A worthless or vile fellow. *Obs.*' The last example given by the *OED* is dated 1601.

assumption in the word; it automatically raises the question of *whose baggage?* The idiomatic label must be seen to describe the relationship of a particular woman to a man or to society rather than to describe the woman in her own right and its application points to a perception of that woman as a social and/or sexual liability, as unwanted property or, what is more likely, as *any* man's property for the taking (and - naturally - for the leaving too.) It is equally worth noting that, though most often used as a derogatory word for a certain kind of woman, 'baggage' was employed concurrently as a playful term of endearment for *any* woman.<sup>24</sup> Respectable or not, all women were 'identified with mobile property,' to reiterate Bailkin's words, from the worthless 'common baggage' to the aristocratic bride with her opulent trousseau.

This is exactly the point that Nora makes in walking out with her single travelling bag. In other words, stripped of the accoutrements of class, no respectably married woman was, in legal terms, much better off than the common baggage. Her gesture foregrounds an unsettling correlation between women of all classes on this level, illustrating the dual playful/derogatory connotations of the word 'baggage' in the English language. Middle to upper-class women were, however, afforded the means of concealing the accompanying perception of 'feminine insubstantiality' to greater or lesser degrees. A respectable lady, in Europe as much as in America, would never have travelled with a single hand-held bag. A lady of good social standing, on the contrary, travelled with a lot of baggage, signalling a financial means to travel but, equally, access to the help required to carry all those possessions in transit, in the form of protector, maid or chaperone. Only a woman without means or protection and of a lower social standing would have been seen to carry her own bag, and then usually for short distances and rarely for leisure.<sup>25</sup> The beginning of Ibsen's later *Hedda Gabler* (1890) forms a very deliberate counterpoint to the ending of *A Doll's House* in drawing the audience's attention to Hedda's 'great many cases' on her return from her honeymoon even before she herself takes to the stage.<sup>26</sup> This abundance of luggage is underlined in order to communicate Hedda's newly-attained status as a married woman of the

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<sup>24</sup> See *OED* definition A.7 s.v. 'baggage': 'Used familiarly or playfully of any young woman, especially in collocation with *artful, cunning, sly, pert, saucy, silly, etc.*'

<sup>25</sup> It is no accident that George Moore later pointedly connects servant-figure Esther Waters with the carriage of her luggage at the beginning and end of *Esther Waters* in 1894. In Moore's novel, the opening description of the self-sufficient Esther with her 'oblong box painted reddish brown' in tow, is repeated almost word for word at the close of the novel, creating a narrative loop. As Trotter observes, 'the older Esther is the sum of the experiences which have shaped her appearance' and I would add that her box is the defining element of identification, as index to the weight of those 'experiences,' but also to Esther's circular return to a life in service and a declined social situation at the end of the novel. Trotter, *The English Novel in History* 120. George Moore, *Esther Waters* (1894; London: William Heinemann, 1932) 1, 364-5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*, *Four Major Plays* 170.

bourgeois classes under the protection and patronage of her husband and Hedda is herself figured as part of this baggage as newly-acquired wife. In contrast, Nora's act of carrying her own bag asserts self-ownership and, through this, a repudiation of class-based distinctions where the question of a woman's proprietary status in society is concerned. In assuming control of herself outside of a proprietorial relationship, Nora must become a woman without means and without bourgeois patriarchal protection. Most vitally, the elevation of the woman's bag as the focal point of this gesture stands for a reclamation of power through the invocation of that old figurative expression of a woman's dependence. If baggage formed the metaphorical locus of a woman's subjugation, it must be transformed into the subversive locus of her emancipation.

At the crux of these proprietorial questions was the troubling issue of female mobility. The most public female figure to command a travelling bag in order to assert her mobility during the 1890s was unquestionably American journalist, Nellie Bly, and her written account of her travel experiences sheds light on some of the luggage-related issues which would come into play in English fiction after Ibsen. In response to a claim made by Phileas Fogg in Jules Verne's *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* (*Around the World in Eighty Days*) in 1873, that 'an Englishman like him could make a round-the-world tour with just one bag to hand' but 'a woman couldn't undertake a similar voyage under these conditions,' she proceeded to break his record by travelling around the world in just seventy-two days and without her own 'Passepartout,' producing a book with a corresponding title in 1890.<sup>27</sup> The trip was sponsored by the *New York World*. One aspect of Bly's act of daring and defiance which captivated the public was her solitary hand-held bag – a nod, perhaps, to that hand-held alligator-skin bag of fellow American, Anthony - which became an integral feature of her popular image. Her disregard for convention on this score is marked and an early conversation with her business manager, in which she broaches the idea of the trip, gives us an insight into the issues at stake:

“It is impossible for you to do it,” was the terrible verdict. “In the first place you are a woman and would need a protector and even if it were possible for you to travel alone you would need to carry so much baggage that it would detain you

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<sup>27</sup> Jules Verne, *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* (1873; Paris: Bookings International, 1994) 142. My translation. Bly does have casual chaperones and guides in passing - she makes some interesting observations on this subject, one of which I will refer to in the discussion of George Egerton to come - but she makes the round trip in its entirety on her own and her adventure was publicised as such.

in making rapid changes. Besides you speak nothing but English, so there is no use talking about it; no one but a man can do this.”

“Very well,” I said angrily, “Start the man, and I’ll start the same day for some other newspaper and beat him.”<sup>28</sup>

The terms in which the 'terrible verdict' of her business manager is couched, echoing Fogg's dictum, indicate a social over and above an individual indictment and disclose the deep-seated ideological implications of Bly's rejection of baggage for the purpose of greater speed. Up until the late nineteenth century, 'adventure' was seen to be the prerogative of men, something evoked in the lack of an equivalent term to match the designation of 'adventurer,' as Alexandra Lapierre makes clear: 'Whereas the term adventurer suggests a passion for new frontiers, the term adventuress suggests neither departure, nor travel, nor great distance; rather, it connotes ambitiousness, intrigue, mercenary sex.<sup>29</sup> The idea of a woman's travelling light was translated thus from a literal sense of physical mobility to a metaphorical sense of moral questionability and, building on Lapierre's point, I would add that it was also, paradoxically, through figuring women in terms of mobile property that a more mobile form of female adventurousness was strictly controlled; baggage, after all, requires external agency to enable movement and the man had always acted as that agent. Bly, in line with Nora, proved that the figure of the adventuress could be reinvented, as independently mobile rather than sexually licentious, but only if she was shown to stand alone and outside of any kind of relationship of proprietorial protection. Prompted by Ibsen and Bly, the solitary hand-bag or travelling bag in various forms was incorporated as the symbol for the New Woman as New Adventuress by writers at the *fin de siècle*. But the larger question was how to move beyond the symbol towards a more radical reconceptualization of form, narrative as much as social. Neither legal acts nor defiant gestures could alone overhaul a structure imbued throughout with the ideology of proprietorial patriarchy and this is an obstacle that many New Woman writers of the 1890s found difficult to overcome.

George Egerton's 1894 short story, 'Virgin Soil,' first published in her *Discords* collection, makes for an interesting case study, with the question of how to move beyond the symbolic gesture in mind. The story opens with the image of a distressed young woman, later identified as Florence, looking ahead to her marriage night in fearful ignorance of what is before her, a circumstance the title enunciates. She is given

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<sup>28</sup> [Nellie] Bly, *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* (1890; Rockville, Maryland: Wildside, 2009) 5-6. This Wildside edition inaccurately spells Bly's first name as 'Nelly.'

<sup>29</sup> Alexandra Lapierre, foreword, *Women Travelers: A Century of Trailblazing Adventures*, by Christel Mouchard, trans. Deke Dusinberre (Paris: Flammarion, 2007) 4.

inadequate comfort by her 'scarcely less disturbed' mother before her impatient new husband hastily conducts her away to the train station and into the sinisterly secluded confines of an 'engaged carriage.'<sup>30</sup> Five years later, she returns to her mother, prematurely aged and disillusioned, bearing a 'dressing-bag in her hand' ('VS' 148) along with the shocking news that she has walked out on her husband. She additionally bears a grudge against her mother for 'delivering' ('VS' 157) her into the entrapment of a loveless marriage to an unfaithful man. This entrapment is foreshadowed in the image of the locked first-class train carriage and one telling observation made by Bly as she travels through England, relating to the distinction between enclosed English carriages and open-plan American trains, is illuminating here:

[T]he English railway carriage make[s] me understand why English girls need chaperones. It would make any American woman shudder with all her boasted self-reliance, to think of sending her daughter alone on a trip, even of a few hours' duration, where there was every possibility that during those hours she would be locked in a compartment with a stranger.<sup>31</sup>

In Egerton's story, the mother does send her daughter on a trip but her protector, her chaperone, *is* the sinister stranger within the 'engaged carriage,' and he is aided in claiming this woman as property – it is with a 'curious amused proprietary air' ('VS' 148) that he hands her into the carriage - by all around him. Early on, there is an implied collusion between husband, station-master and porter in securing the private train carriage. More disconcertingly still, it is a collusion to which her mother is party. She has, according to her daughter, materially gained from the arrangement: "'You sold me for a home, for clothes, for food'" ('VS' 157). Egerton's story, like Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, is all about the exposure of the proprietary structure of marriage as the 'structure that maintains the Structure, or system' in Tony Tanner's words.<sup>32</sup> However, unlike Ibsen in his dramatic work, Egerton takes the reader beyond the domestic framework to disclose explicitly the manner in which the underlying order of the private space is replicated in the underlying order of the public space, a space which can itself be privatised with an authoritative nod in the right direction. Trajectories of structural escape are here revealed as trajectories of structural enclosure. The train carriage also recalls Hedda

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<sup>30</sup> George Egerton, *Virgin Soil, Keynotes; Discords* (1893-94; London: Virago, 1983) 145, 148. Hereafter abbreviated 'VS' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>31</sup> Bly, *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* 24-5.

<sup>32</sup> Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins UP, 1979) 15.

Gabler's perception of marriage as a long train journey in Ibsen's earlier play.<sup>33</sup> But if Florence begins as Hedda in setting out on a claustrophobic marital train, then, she ends as Nora with a dressing-bag of departure.

The dressing-bag must be seen as a vital subversive element in the all-enclosing ideological apparatus which the story exposes. Florence cuts a defiant (if also cynical and disillusioned) figure. She echoes Nora's declaration of her duty to herself in emphasising the "'demands of her individual soul'" ('VS' 155) and that her "'life must be her own'" ('VS' 154) and, again, this idea of autonomy is manifested through the dressing-bag which accompanies her as she returns to the train station to take 'the train in the opposite direction' ('VS' 162) in embarking on her 'long journey' ('VS' 150) at the very end of the story. Before she leaves, Florence's mother, the woman who is accused of having 'sold' her daughter for a 'home' ('VS' 157) is shown to covertly slip a 'little roll of notes into the dressing-bag' ('VS' 161) while Florence sleeps. Ledger reads this as a sort of awakening 'insight,' on the mother's part, to the plight of her daughter which cannot be expressed in words.<sup>34</sup> It might also be seen as an expression of her realisation of the importance of a woman's financial independence, in line with the reflections of Anthony, and as a symbolic re-investment of her ill-gotten gains both in an alternative future and in the search for an alternative framework, as her state of mind just prior to her act attests:

She feels as if scales have dropped from her eyes, as if the instincts and conventions of her life are toppling over, as if all the needs of protesting women of whom she has read with a vague displeasure have come home to her ('VS' 161).

This alternative framework can only yet be imagined and Egerton's story is primarily concerned with 'toppling' the supremacy of former 'conventions.' Ledger goes on to suggest that the promising 'open-endedness,' exhibited at the close of this story – which nods beyond the emphatically slammed door at the end of *A Doll's House* - is one characteristic of Egerton's work that 'pre-empt[s] the modernist aesthetic which was to reach its high watermark in the early years of the twentieth century.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler, Four Major Plays* 203-4. Egerton, in fact, lived in Norway for a period and was strongly influenced by Ibsen. 'Virgin Soil' must be seen as a very conscious engagement with his work.

<sup>34</sup> Ledger, *The New Woman* 191.

<sup>35</sup> Ledger, *The New Woman* 192.

I will look at a couple of key examples of early-twentieth-century modernist fulfilments of this aesthetic promise, as this is conveyed through literary luggage, in Section 2.3 of this chapter. The section to follow, however, remains in and around the *fin de siècle*. If I have explored the emancipatory connotations of the image of the woman's bag from Ibsen through Bly to Egerton here as this corresponds to a subversive re-encoding of a prevailing symbol for female disenfranchisement, the next section takes account of somewhat less affirmative renditions of that same re-written symbol, during the same period; renditions which figure the woman's bag as a troublesome and intrusive element, both in satirical and serious terms.

## 2.2 The Rise of the 'Newest Chivalry': The Woman's Bag as an Object of Social and Textual Disruption

The woman who carried her own bag was figured as a woman who revelled in not knowing her place and, in this way, disrupted preconceived notions of what that place might be. Her disruptive impact is emphatically demonstrated in the response of one Norwegian pastor to the furore caused by Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in the 1880s: 'The emancipated woman has taken her place at the door, always ready to depart, with her suitcase in her hand. The suitcase – and not as before, the ring of fidelity – will be the symbol of her role in marriage.'<sup>36</sup> The suitcase stands, in this formulation, for an infidelity to place - in terms of class, geography and gender - as much as to the husband-figure and, on all counts, the image of the woman who carried her own bag served to unsettle as often as it served to inspire. It was the bag's inherent instability, as an unfixed object not easily controlled or monitored, which proved to be the unsettling factor, reflecting the growing restlessness of the woman who was beginning visibly to resist the fixed social contours within which she was positioned. *Fin-de-siècle* narratives charting the temporary loss of a bag - either the projected loss from public view of a woman's bag or, alternatively though no less relevantly, the appropriation of the man's bag by a woman, also conceived in terms of a loss – form allegorical attempts to conceive of the implications of the Women's Movement, in the sense of increased physical mobility as much as social activism. This section turns to figurations of the bag as an object of disturbance, socio-political and textual, in a range of cartoons and literary works. The disturbing aspect of these figurations is frequently the effect of a distortion of traditional chivalric codes and all works to be considered here are, as it happens, conceived by male artists. This is not to suggest that only men took issue with the New Woman at this time. There were, of course, prominent and outspoken female critics of the figure, most obviously Ouida, as well as a body of male supporters of the push for equal rights. However, it would appear that *fin-de-siècle* renderings of the bag as a disruptive or parodic element, whether sympathetic to the feminist cause or not, largely issued from male writers and this is perhaps because it is, most often, a threatened masculine perspective (over and above a threatening feminine perspective) which is foregrounded in these works.

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<sup>36</sup> M.J. Færdon's address to his congregation in 1884. Quoted in Gail Finney's 'Ibsen and Feminism,' *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, ed. James McFarlane (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 91.



The threat to a dominant masculine perspective was perceived by many, at the *fin de siècle*, as a threat to class-based privilege and Oscar Wilde's 1895 comedy, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, a play in which a 'somewhat old, capacious hand-bag' is given a pivotal role, places the convergence of gender and class issues in the popular imagination at the very butt of the main joke.<sup>37</sup> While Nicholas Daly takes the luggage imagery in this play as pointing backwards to the modernization of an earlier Victorian railway culture, I think contemporary feminist debates are equally germane to our appreciation of the symbolic resonance of this 'old, capacious hand-bag.'<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that it is distinctly gendered, unlike Nora's gender-neutral travelling bag, which might be said to convey a more profound interest, on Ibsen's part, in human (and not just women's) rights, as he later acknowledged.<sup>39</sup> What is clear is that by the mid-1890s, the woman's bag had become synonymous with the Women's Movement and this association must be factored into a reading of Wilde's play. In the play, the hand-bag is implicitly placed in metonymical relation to that movement, which, in part, sought to challenge the conventional domestic-oriented form of female self-definition. The elevation of an ideal domestic sphere under the woman's supervision served as a screen for a more deep-rooted perception of women as baggage and, as I outline in the first section of this chapter, it was the reclamation of that very symbol which offered a line of retaliation. The hand-bag is shown to provide a basis for female self-definition in Wilde's play and it is important to situate this within the context we have been exploring. Upon restoration to its original owner, Miss Prism, it is examined and seen physically to document (and parody) aspects of her personal history and private whims:

Miss Prism (*calmly*): It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine (*IBE* 592-3).

Miss Prism's identity is markedly intertwined with her ownership of this bag and it is rendered in terms of a written text to which an authorial monogram is added. We must

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<sup>37</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895, in *Collected Works of Oscar Wilde* (1997; Ware: Wordsworth, 1998) 592. Hereafter abbreviated '*IBE*' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>38</sup> Daly, *Literature, Technology and Modernity* 53-4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibsen made this assertion this during an address to the Norwegian Women's Rights League in 1898. See Finney, 'Ibsen and Feminism' 90.

also remember that it contains a 'manuscript of a work of fiction' (*IBE* 592) before it holds that famously misplaced baby, making the alignment between bag and text even more explicit. It matters little that Wilde is being facetious in the above passage or that Miss Prism is herself hardly upheld as a prismatic example of the independent woman or, indeed, that her work of fiction is charged with 'more than usually revolting sentimentality' (*IBE* 592; Lady Bracknell's words).<sup>40</sup> Of greater interest is Wilde's spotlighting of the hand-bag as the disruptive dramatic element in his comedy as well as its implicit metonymical function.

In the confusion of baby and manuscript, around which the play turns, the bag's usurpation of the house as an ideological structure, on a literary as well as a socio-political level, is raised as a mock-horrific possibility, bringing the class-gender convergence to light. 'To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not,' Lady Bracknell states in reaction to the news of her daughter's suitor's purported beginnings, 'seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution' (*IBE* 559). The particular reference to the French Revolution plays upon the repeated association of the New Woman with radical activism in the *fin-de-siècle* press. Although Miss Prism has yet to be revealed as the bag's owner at this stage in the play, her liminal social status as a working governess serves to accentuate the threat the bag poses to the established social order, when that ownership is later revealed. If the Victoria Station cloakroom, the 'particular locality in which the hand-bag was found,' can 'hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognised position in good society' (*IBE* 559), then neither can Miss Prism be regarded as the right sort of mother. The notion of being born in the hand-bag of a governess, rather than the house of a gentleman, displays thus a 'contempt' for hierarchies of class as much as gender. Yet all mock-horrific possibilities are contained in *The Importance of Being Earnest* by presenting the owner of the hand-bag as an independent woman without any gumption – indeed, Gwendolyn exhibits qualities closer to the New Woman than Miss Prism – and by ensuring, finally, that she is not, in fact, the mother of the baby in question. The origins of the baby (now grown man) are revealed as suitably patrician in the end and Miss Prism relinquishes her paltry independence in favour of the 'ordinary decencies of family life' in her eventual union with Canon Chasuble. Although any posed risk is elegantly defused, Wilde's comedy is a telling indicator of a more prevailing and uneasy association of the woman's

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<sup>40</sup> The 'independent' woman should not be seen as synonymous with the New Woman and Miss Prism provides a good example of the kind of self-sufficient woman who does not radically challenge prevailing Victorian ideology along gender and class lines. For a more detailed distinction, see Ardis, *New Women, New Novels* 16-7.

bag with potential anti-establishment action as well as with the writing process during this period.

Most critical studies of the New Woman acknowledge the role played by the periodical press, particularly *Punch*, in promulgating various comic stereotypes of the figure, caricatures which worked to level such anti-establishment threats through forms of parody. What has not yet been documented, however, is the recurrent appearance of the woman's bag in these cartoons, often serving as the focal point of comic disturbance, in a similar manner to the hand-bag in Wilde's play. In an 1889 cartoon entitled 'The Lady Guide and the Tory Tourist' in the comic Victorian magazine, *Fun*, we find, for example, a woman in gender-ambiguous dress (a skirt/trouser amalgamation with a military-style jacket on top) holding forth on the issue of suffrage. She has a cigarette in one hand and strapped around her is a bag with the words 'Vote Woman Suffrage' boldly emblazoned on the front:



Figure 6: 'The Lady Guide and the Tory Tourist,' *Fun* 49 (1889): 167.

Her bag – besides the skirt, the only unmistakably feminine element in the costume as a whole – carries her feminist message here. Even more interestingly, in 1895, we find a mock front cover of that most notorious of decadent *fin-de-siècle* journals, *The Yellow Book*, which features a stooped and sinister-looking woman with flowing hair, drawn in the style of Aubrey Beardsley, clutching a hand-bag inscribed 'Destination Inconnue?':



Figure 7: Edward Tennyson Reed, 'Le "Yellow Book,"' *Punch* 108 (1895): 178.

In this example, the sense of mobility and unpredictability associated with the New Woman is invoked through the object of her bag with its unknown destination loudly proclaimed. Whatever the destination, a sexually transgressive route is implied and I will return to the contentious question of female sexuality in relation to the image of the bag in both Sections 2.3 and 2.5.

Yet, in thinking about *fin-de-siècle* anxiety concerning the balance of power between the sexes, a cartoon entitled 'What It Will Soon Come To' from the previous year, 1894, which depicts a lady in the act of offering to carry the bag of a man, is particularly noteworthy:



Figure 8: 'What It Will Soon Come To,' *Punch* 106 (1894): 90.

Miss Sampson: "Pray let me carry your bag, Mr. Smithereen!"

For a woman to carry her own bag was one thing. For her to carry the bag of a man - and a 'smithereen' of a man at that - was another. It stood for a complete inversion of the relations between the sexes, an inversion likely to turn the rational order on its head towards a more 'feminine' state of capriciousness, as a verse entitled 'Donna Quixote' (which accompanied one of the now most widely recognised caricatures of the New Woman published in the same satirical journal a couple of months later) implies: 'The newest Chivalry brings the newest Craze.'<sup>41</sup> As Leigh Wilson indicates, chivalry was frequently used as a framework through which to view the 'shifting debates around sexual politics during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries' and I would like to take a moment here to glance at such debates in order to understand this *Punch* cartoon in context.<sup>42</sup> The interrogation of chivalry as a system can be traced back to one of the earlier fictional portrayals of a New Woman character in Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883). Early on in this novel, the central female protagonist, Lyndall, explicitly exposes, through an anecdote concerning a mistreated elderly woman, the superficiality of 'men's chivalrous attention' as well as its inadequacy as a compensation for sexual inequity.<sup>43</sup> It is an issue which, thereafter, re-emerges in writing by and about New Women but not always with the same deconstructive impulse. While Schreiner challenges the core values of the chivalric ideology, Sarah Grand, in her well-known 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question,' for example, accuses the modern man, on the contrary, of a want of chivalry in his 'effeminate' cultivation of a double standard of morality and in his general hostility to the feminist cause: 'But where are our men? Where is the chivalry, the truth, and affection, the earnest purpose, the plain living, high thinking, and noble self-sacrifice that make a man?'<sup>44</sup> Such divergent approaches to the question of chivalry, amongst feminists themselves as well as between men and women, were carried forward into the twentieth century and the conflict between 'newest' and old forms of chivalry in modernist fiction set at the height of militant suffragette action in the 1910s will inform my discussion in the fifth section of this chapter. What I would like to show here is that the above *Punch* cartoon

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<sup>41</sup> The New Woman in question was namely George Egerton, whose controversial *Keynotes* collection had appeared the previous year. The bespectacled woman is depicted with an open book in one hand and a raised latchkey in the other. 'Donna Quixote,' *Punch* 106 (1894): 195.

<sup>42</sup> Leigh Wilson, "She in Her "Armour" and He in his Coat of Nerves: May Sinclair and the Rewriting of Chivalry,' *Feminist Forerunners: New Womanism and Feminism in the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Ann Heilmann (London: Pandora, 2003) 179. Wilson centres her discussion on the work of May Sinclair and her particular response, both critically and artistically, to these wider debates.

<sup>43</sup> Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, 1883, ed. Patricia O'Neill (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2003) 187.

<sup>44</sup> Grand, 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' 145.

provocatively captures a representative moment of fraught negotiation in an on-going debate, a debate in which the woman's bag recurrently featured as a metonymic object.

The 'What It Will Soon Come To' future scenario of this cartoon title was all to play for during the 1890s and the man was seen to stand to lose as often as the woman was seen to stand to win. Just as the woman's gain was displaced upon the object of her bag, it followed that the man's projected loss was displaced upon the object of *his* bag and this was also conceived as a *textual* bag. For the remainder of this section, I would like to draw attention to the pointed extension of this 1890s premonition of the ascension of the 'newest chivalry' to the domain of authorship and textual authority, with a focus on George Gissing's 1895 short story, 'The Poet's Portmanteau,' written not long after his better-known novel *The Odd Women* (1893). Here, the vision of chivalric distortion, conveyed in the *Punch* cartoon, is pressed disquietingly further; the man's bag is not only carried, it is carried *away*. Gissing's story describes the theft of the portmanteau of a male poet, containing a cherished manuscript, by a mysterious figure with all the popularly ascribed traits of the New Woman ("She was a girl who did what is supposed to be the privilege of men – sowed wild oats") thus envisaging a threat to, if not complete seizure of, the authorial power of the man.<sup>45</sup> This threat is reflected in the poet's patent sense of uncertainty as to how the woman should be appraised. He cannot make up his mind as to her character and is repeatedly shown to question and revise his original perceptions. In an analysis of the woman's persistent use of pseudonyms throughout this story, Robert L. Selig traces her first alias, 'Miss Rowe,' to the 'common pseudonym for unknown legal defendants,' a pseudonym applied in British law 'only to defendants in real estate dispossession cases.'<sup>46</sup> In light of this, we might say that the theft of the portmanteau is an act of repossession, on the part of this woman, taken a step beyond those gestures of symbolic reclamation considered in the previous section. But the theft of this poet's portmanteau is also shown to correspond to the theft of his artistic authority, through the sudden redundancy of inherited convictions where the nature of female character as written construct is concerned. It is shown moreover to lead to the subdual of his own impulse to authorial adventurousness; when the stolen manuscript is finally returned to him eight years later by a 'tall lady' (the same woman, we assume, though that heavily hinted inference is never finally confirmed), he is a

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<sup>45</sup> George Gissing, 'The Poet's Portmanteau,' *Human Odds and Ends: Stories and Sketches* (1898; New York and London: Garland, 1977) 88. Hereafter abbreviated 'PP' in parenthesis within the text. The story itself was first published in *The English Illustrated Magazine* in February 1895.

<sup>46</sup> Robert L. Selig, "'The Poet's Portmanteau': A Flirtation that Dares not Speak its Name,' *The Gissing Journal* 36.1 (2000): 30

successful writer, but one firmly instated within the literary establishment, 'his name familiar "at all the libraries"' ('PP' 85, 82).

It is the 'tall lady' who assumes the role of adventurous author in his place: "'Of course, you want to know how those papers came into my hands. I'll tell you, and make a short story of it"' ('PP' 88). This particular short story, recounted by the 'tall lady,' has the 'portmanteau' effect of splitting Gissing's own short story in two, establishing a conflicting account of the events already related from the narrator's perspective. These conflicting accounts together represent opposing approaches to the figure of the New Woman, bearing in mind those questions of the relation between women and property we have been probing up to now. Whereas the narrator's story is about a theft, an unlawful assumption of proprietary and authorial power (however complicated this perspective is by the poet's evident attraction to the woman), hers concerns a desperate escape from confined straits: "'No staying in the house now. She put on her hat and jacket, stuffed into her pockets the few things still left to her, caught up the portmanteau – and *away!*"' ('PP' 90, emphasis added). The latter story is shown to supersede the former, however, as the narrator is himself drawn to follow her turn of the events. "'A man of your imagination ought to understand,'" she interposes, midway through her account, and he replies: "'I do – perfectly"' ('PP' 90). Despite this apparent reconciliation, Gissing's story culminates in another loss; this time, it is the loss of the woman herself, who, now purportedly married to a "'very rich man"' ('PP' 91) for whom she does not really care, departs despite the poet's protestations, thus abruptly excluding the narrator (and Gissing himself, at a remove) from her on-going 'story.' The very last line formulates the narrator's own domestic entrapment in a repetition of the terms of her previous departure, as quoted above, with emphasis and perspective inverted: 'The door closed, and he heard the cab rumble *away!*' ('PP' 91, emphasis added). If the first 'away!' signals escape, the second signals abandonment and it is clear that this is a narrative abandonment with wider implications. Selig reads the ending of this story, by contrast, as establishing the woman's own entrapment in a 'sexually cold marriage,' controlled as a dependent wife by 'late-Victorian social conventions.'<sup>47</sup> This reading only holds if we take the woman at her word and I would argue that Gissing gives us no reason to do so. Quite on the contrary, she deceives the poet from the first, stands aloof behind several pseudonymous identities and is, as I have already noted, explicit in her desire to take imaginative license in relating the history in question as 'a short story.' The marital conclusion of this story appears hastily tacked on and, as soon as she has finished, she rises with a 'careless gesture' ('PP' 91), a gesture which belies personal investment. But

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<sup>47</sup> Selig, 'The Poet's Portmanteau' 32.

whether or not we can take her story at face value - whether or not she is a failed New Woman, in other words - is beside the point. The point is that the woman is shown to be impossible *for the poet* to pin down from beginning to end and, in this, Gissing's story corresponds to other short stories by New Woman writers of the period, which feature the intrusion upon and then abandonment of a male writer/artist figure by an unconventional woman; Sarah Grand's 'The Undefinable' (1894) and Ella D'Arcy's 'The Pleasure-Pilgrim' (1895), for example.<sup>48</sup> The further point, for the purposes of this discussion, is that the woman's 'short story' overtakes that of the man's and that the loss of the portmanteau enacts the loss of an old idea of woman in line with the unsettling emergence of a New Woman beyond conventional authorial control, as the poet's dream immediately following the theft reveals: '[he] dreamt that he was chasing that mysterious girl up hill and down dale amid the Devon moorland; she, always far in advance, held his fated manuscript above her head, and laughed maliciously' ('PP' 82). By the time this manuscript is restored, it is a document void of any value, revealing that this dream is rather more about the loss of control of the mysterious girl herself than the loss of his great poetic work, and through the girl, the loss of authorial certainty and command. This story might, as a whole, be read as a disclosure of what Simon J. James calls Gissing's 'instinctively conservative' approach to sexual politics, as formulated in the poet's concluding stasis, despite a contradictory measure of attraction and 'sympathy' towards late-Victorian women who sought another kind of experience.<sup>49</sup>

In the Edwardian period, we find numerous depictions of the temporary unharnessing of the disruptive force of a woman with a bag only for that force ultimately to be quelled in line with a sense of the symbolic inconsequentiality of the bag itself. Galsworthy's *The Country House* (1907) and H.G. Wells's *Ann Veronica* (1909) are two compelling examples of this, though spatial limitations prevent me from giving more than a cursory analysis of these texts by way of conclusion to this section. In the former, written a year after *The Man of Property* and reiterating many of the same themes, the country house creed of the Pendyce family - 'I believe in my father, and his father, and his father's father, the makers and keepers of my estate; and I believe in myself and my son and my son's son [...] and I believe in my social equals and the country house and in things as they are, for ever and ever' - is initially cast into doubt by a woman described

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<sup>48</sup> Sarah Grand, 'The Undefinable,' *A New Woman Reader* 35-51. This story was first published in *Cosmopolitan* in October, 1894. Ella D'Arcy, 'The Pleasure-Pilgrim,' *The Yellow Book* 5 (1895): 34-67.

<sup>49</sup> Simon J. James, *Unsettled Accounts: Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing* (London: Anthem, 2003) 124, 122.



by the local rector as 'no better than a common baggage.'<sup>50</sup> Another beauty like Irene Forsythe, this Helen Bellew announces her intention to divorce her own husband in order to marry George Pendyce, son and heir to the estate, thus threatening the established order. However, Helen is no more than a troubling catalyst in this novel. The real trouble arises when the matriarch, Mrs Pendyce, unexpectedly packs her bags and quietly revolts against the assumption of her marginal significance within the house, wider society, and the narrative: 'Mrs Pendyce spent the early part of the morning in the usual way. Half an hour after the Squire went out she ordered the carriage round, had two *small* trunks, which she had packed herself, brought down, and leisurely, with her *little* green bag, got in.'<sup>51</sup> Her 'small,' her 'little' rebellion proves to be short-lived, however, and she eventually returns to house and husband. If the Victorian woman had, to repeat Dangerfield's remark, 'rather sacrificed herself to her own security,' this is a sacrifice shown still to have precedence over the sacrifice to insecurity urged by suffragette activists during the period.<sup>52</sup> The embrace of insecurity must be reserved for a younger generation, Galsworthy implies. And yet even the revolt of a younger generation is denied credibility by certain Edwardian writers, as Wells's *Ann Veronica*, a novel with an outward investment in the struggle for women's rights, pointedly illustrates. The first of the two flights of the spirited young heroine from what she calls a 'wrapped' life of domestic suffocation under her father's domineering influence begins with an admission of her juvenile resources in the escapist luggage line: "'I've got nothing in the world to pack with except a toy size portmanteau.'" <sup>53</sup> Though she soon borrows something more adequate to her escapade, this early effort is correspondingly rendered in terms of a childish game not to be taken seriously, preparing us for a conclusion which enacts the full-circle return of Ann Veronica, married, pregnant and reconciled with her estranged father, to the morality of wrapped marital domesticity, '...hedged about with discretions – and all this furniture – and successes!'<sup>54</sup>

The decidedly miniature form of the woman's bag is aligned with the miniature scale of the woman's rebellion in each of these cases, having scant impact on the gigantic symbolic influence of the house. This is in line with an earlier sense of contained threat in Wilde's play, of ridiculed threat in the discussed *fin-de-siècle* cartoons and of departed or excluded threat in Gissing's story (though there is certainly more of a sense, in the latter work, of the disconcerting power and allure of the miniature). Yet, as I

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<sup>50</sup> John Galsworthy, *The Country House* (1907; London: Penguin, 1943) 124, 83.

<sup>51</sup> Galsworthy, *The Country House* 151-2. Emphasis added.

<sup>52</sup> Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* 146.

<sup>53</sup> H.G. Wells, *Ann Veronica* (1909; London: Dent, 1993) 32, 68.

<sup>54</sup> Wells, *Ann Veronica* 257.

demonstrated in my first chapter, by the Edwardian period, the symbolic influence of the house was already well on the wane and the endings of *The Country House* and *Ann Veronica*, like the conclusion to *Howards End*, smack of knowing contrivance. The next section will turn to literary initiatives seeking to redress the imbalances of power depicted in these works through asserting the gigantic potential of the miniature by way of an alternative luggage paradigm, in portraits of two *uncommon* baggages, of an older and younger generation respectively; Elsie Lindnter in Karin Michaëlis's *The Dangerous Age* and Miriam Henderson in Dorothy Richardson's extended novel sequence *Pilgrimage*.

### 2.3 Uncommon Baggage: Elsie Lindtner and Miriam Henderson

Short story and dramatic forms were well suited for representing the act of the woman's breaking away from a toppling structure, whether in positive or negative terms, but what Egerton refers to prospectively as the 'long journey' required a different mode. The bag, like the journey, can only be glimpsed in that forward-looking short-story 'Virgin Soil,' as in *A Doll's House*, but for certain experimental women writers to follow, it was elevated as a metaphorical framework for the re-envisagement of the figure of the 'adventuress' or 'common baggage' in line with a re-envisagement of narrative form. I will concentrate on a couple of works in particular in this section: Karin Michaëlis's *The Dangerous Age*, originally published in Denmark in 1910, and Dorothy Richardson's lengthy novel sequence *Pilgrimage*, published from 1915 to 1938 (though an additional unfinished chapter was added to the series in 1967). Though I will make reference to other chapters in the sequence, my main focus, in the latter case, will be on the first instalment, *Pointed Roofs*, published in 1915 but notably set in the 1890s. Karin Michaëlis, though largely unknown to readers of English fiction today, was a writer of international stature, widely translated and of no small notoriety and influence. The English translation of *The Dangerous Age* appeared in 1912 and its impact on English-language writers can be measured on the level of intertextual reference alone. Rose Macaulay refers directly to Michaëlis's novel in the title of her own *Dangerous Ages* in 1921 and Elizabeth Bowen later gave one of her key protagonists the anglicised name of 'Karen Michaelis' in *The House in Paris* (1935), both of which novels I will return to discuss in Chapter Three, the latter at some length.<sup>55</sup> The reception both of *The Dangerous Age* and *Pilgrimage* was mixed from the outset.<sup>56</sup> The two works innovatively portray women who strike out alone. This is through divorce, in the case of middle-aged and menopausal Elsie Lindtner, who leaves her married home for the seclusion of an island retreat in *The Dangerous Age*. It is through paid employment abroad in the case of the younger Miriam Henderson in *Pointed Roofs*. Born just over a year apart (20 March

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<sup>55</sup> Leslie Hankins has also made a persuasive case for *The Dangerous Age* as a formative model for Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Leslie Hankins, "To Kindle and Illuminate: Woolf's Hot Flashes Against Ageism – Challenges For Cinema," *Virginia Woolf and her Influences: Selected Papers from the Seventh Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Laura Davis and Jeannette McVicker (New York: Pace UP, 1998) 26-30.

<sup>56</sup> For an overview of the reception of *Pilgrimage* and a discussion of its marginal relation to the modernist canon, see Elizabeth Podnieks, "The Ultimate Astonisher: Dorothy Richardson's 'Pilgrimage'," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 14.3 (1994): 67-94. For an outline of the scandal caused by the publication of *The Dangerous Age* both in Europe and America, see Annemone Ligensa, "A Cinematograph of Feminine Thought': *The Dangerous Age*, Cinema and Modern Women," *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture*, ed. Annemone Ligensa and Klaus Kreimeier (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2009) 225-232.

1872 and 17 May 1873 respectively), Michaëlis and Richardson each enterprisingly left home themselves for a period in adolescence, the former to act as tutor in the family of a Danish consul and the latter to work as a teacher at a finishing school in Germany.<sup>57</sup> It proved a formative experience on both counts – becoming, of course, the subject of *Pointed Roofs* – and this early biographical parallel anticipates a number of shared authorial concerns, as will become clear. Bags, predominantly of the luggage variety, feature centrally in these works as indicators of transition, thematically and stylistically, as well as a determination to write 'beyond the ending,' to apply Rachel Blau DuPlessis's well-known phrase.<sup>58</sup> The luggage of these protagonists is equally set in metaphorical relation to a newly conceived form of female interiority as set against the publicly sanctioned, domestic version. Neither Miriam nor Elsie are, strictly speaking, bag-carrying women in the manner outlined up to this point, in that they do not travel with single hand-held bags but with weightier forms of trunk - Miriam is even shown to require help to move her own on occasion through the sequence - but both *Pilgrimage* and *The Dangerous Age* are essential inclusions here in representing the progression beyond the symbolic gesture towards a process of lived experience, evolving (especially in Richardson's case) into a formal principle.

These respective experimental works of portraiture were indeed perceived to pioneer 'in a completely new direction' and to exemplify, in textual terms, a peculiarly 'female quest' or adventure, in which the 'writer has not troubled to think from a man's point of view.'<sup>59</sup> The former comments are from John Cowper Powys's laudatory extended essay on Richardson in 1931. The latter line appeared in Marcel Prévost's Introduction to the French edition of *The Dangerous Age*, translated and included in the English edition in 1912. Richardson, it should be mentioned, saw her own work in similar terms. In her foreword to the Dent and Cresset four-volume edition of *Pilgrimage*, issued in 1938, she describes herself as having embarked on a 'fresh pathway, an adventure' (P:1 9-10), as she took up her pen to begin *Pointed Roofs* in 1913 in an effort to 'produce a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism,' a

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<sup>57</sup> See John Rosenberg, *Dorothy Richardson: The Genius They Forgot* (London: Duckworth, 1973) 12-14; Phyllis Lassner, 'Karin Michaëlis,' *Twentieth-Century Danish Writers*, ed. Marianne Stecher-Hansen (Detroit: Gale, 1999) 284.

<sup>58</sup> DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending* 4.

<sup>59</sup> John Cowper Powys, *Dorothy Richardson* (1931; London: Villiers, 1974) 8, 6. Emphasis in original. Marcel Prévost, introduction, *The Dangerous Age: Letters and Fragments from a Woman's Diary*, by Karin Michaëlis, 1910, trans. Marcel Prévost (London: John Lane, 1912) 19. All further references both to Prévost's Introduction and Michaëlis's novel will come from this edition, hereafter abbreviated 'DA' in parenthesis within the body of the text.

description which could readily be invoked in relation to Michaëlis's novel too.<sup>60</sup> The sense of a metaphorical departure from the house of fiction towards a more erratically mobile conception of form was evident even at the time. Prévost, for example, pointed to the 'construction' of Michaëlis's novel as 'solid' but that 'no man would have built it up in that way' and went on to highlight its 'variable' style and capricious 'flights of thought' (DA 19, 20, 21). Similarly, Powys, considering Richardson's oeuvre on the whole, remarked that she, in contrast to James, Conrad, Hardy and Proust, offered no 'mounting up to an architectural dénouement.'<sup>61</sup> These are sentiments echoed in the texts themselves. Miriam, for example, is suddenly struck in the seventh chapter, *Revolving Lights*, by the thought that men 'hovered about the doors of freedom returning sooner or later to the hearth' (P:III 278), implying her own difference in this respect. Although she herself is acutely sensitive to what she later calls the 'shadow of incompatibility' (P:III 453) between those desires for security and freedom, it is a feminine form of freedom beyond the hearth to which *Pilgrimage* aspires. For Michaëlis, it is an aspiration towards the recording of a peculiarly feminine kind of solitary motion: 'Each woman dwells in her own planet formed of centrifugal fires enveloped in a thin crust of earth. And as each star runs its eternal course through space, isolated amid countless myriads of other stars, so each woman goes her solitary way through life' (DA 63). What is most striking about both kinds of portraiture is the emphasis on portability as opposed to hereditary property, mobility as opposed to the architectural fixity of previous conceptions. The sense of motion is initially less obvious in *The Dangerous Age* in that Elsie walks out on husband and home, not in order to enhance her experience of the world (she is much older than Richardson's protagonist), but in order to retreat to the solitude and 'splendid inhospitality' of a 'fortress-like' (DA 31) villa on an island, a place apart from the order of society. It is Elsie's internal mental state which is, however, conveyed as restless through the agitated narrative voice and fragmented form of the book while her occupation of the villa is, in the end, revealed as only temporary. In both works, movement is key, whether internally or externally or both. Miriam is shown to reflect, in embarking on her extended quest in the opening section of *Pointed Roofs*: 'The train had made her sway with its movements. How still Sarah seemed to sit, fixed in the old life' (P:I 26). The inference is clear; movement is integral to change and movement was to be the vital and vitalising element in this 'experimental stage' of women's writing.

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<sup>60</sup> Richardson, *Pilgrimage*, vol. 1 (London: Dent and Cresset, 1938) 10, 9. Each of the four volumes of *Pilgrimage* has the same publication details. All further references will come from this four-volume edition, abbreviated 'P:I,' 'P:II,' 'P:III' and 'P:IV' respectively within the text.

<sup>61</sup> Powys, *Dorothy Richardson* 36.

In *Pointed Roofs*, Miriam's Saratoga trunk provides the initial focus, as index to the imminence of the uncertain stages of movement that her pilgrimage will entail and indefinitely prolong: 'Her new Saratoga trunk stood solid and gleaming in the firelight. To-morrow it would be taken away and she would be gone' (*P:I* 15).<sup>62</sup> Yet, Miriam's 'new' Saratoga is also shown to register the old; that is, Miriam's past as well as the textual history of *Pilgrimage* itself. Gloria Glikin recounts the fact that, following the return of the manuscript of *Pointed Roofs* by a publisher who did not grasp its meaning in 1914, Richardson put it 'away in a trunk' and occupied herself with other kinds of writing temporarily, something later corroborated by John Rosenberg in his biography.<sup>63</sup> Such an act of self-conscious stowing away is replicated in *Pointed Roofs* itself. Shortly after her arrival in Germany, Miriam puts a sheaf of old songs from home, of which she is ashamed, 'away at the bottom of her Saratoga trunk' (*P:I* 58) Whether or not this scene was added on final publication of the novel in 1915 is not so important as the fact of Richardson's vivid association of the trunk with past retention as well as future possibility, the personal (even painful) souvenir but also the arbitrary object: '[Miriam] had packed some [of her books]. She could not remember which and why' (*P:I* 23) The use of the 'trunk as a store' (*P:I* 266) for the personal and the random, recurs throughout the sequence and reflects her broader textual approach to memory, as evoked by Powys: 'One can only surmise that what she does is to cast a deep-sea net [...] into her memory and then make a blind, almost prophetic, use of all she finds in that occult scoop.'<sup>64</sup> In a way, Miriam's trunk represents the materialisation of memory as an indiscriminate load, on the one hand, yet also as a continual archival work in progress with, I would argue, a more refined ordering principle than Powys's image would suggest, a point to which I will presently return.

Michaëlis similarly employs the image of the trunk to reflect her own attitude to and use of memory. Stephen Kern has charted the 'shift in attention from the historical past to the personal past' around this time, a shift most visibly demonstrated in the

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<sup>62</sup> The Saratoga accompanies Miriam for most of *Pilgrimage* and is used interchangeably with other forms of travelling kit, for example a more lightweight Gladstone bag. The Saratoga is replaced in one of the very late chapters, *Clear Horizon*, by a cabin trunk. Jean Radford reads this opening in the context of an allegorical pilgrimage fiction in line with Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (which Miriam repeatedly invokes), her trunk thus becoming the 'symbolic burden' Miriam must bear with her until 'she finds her salvation.' However, as Radford acknowledges, Richardson, in confronting those tricky ideas of ending and destination, is compelled to deviate from the concluding point assumed in this allegorical structure, a narrative deviation this section will go on to discuss more fully shortly. Jean Radford, *Dorothy Richardson* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) 27.

<sup>63</sup> Gloria Glikin, 'Dorothy M. Richardson: The Personal "Pilgrimage,"' *PMLA* 78 (1963): 593; Rosenberg, *Dorothy Richardson* 55.

<sup>64</sup> Powys, *Dorothy Richardson* 35.

evolving practice of psychoanalysis, but he takes no account of the palpably gendered implications of such a shift.<sup>65</sup> To emphasise the personal at the expense of the historical past was to emphasise what was traditionally perceived as a 'feminine' rather than a 'masculine' preserve. Michaëlis makes clear that her foregrounding of memory should be upheld as the striking aspect which serves to set apart and to free this work from 'masculine' traditions of writing: 'Women like to wade in their memories as one wades through dry leaves in Autumn' (*DA* 131). But to complicate matters, memory is found to inhibit freedom of thought to the same degree that it cultivates it and Elsie's trunk enacts this paradox:

I start unpacking my trunk, take out a few things and stop – begin again and stop again, horrified at the quantity of clothes I've brought. It would have been more sensible to send them to one of our beloved 'charity sales.' They are of no use or pleasure to me now. Black merino and a white woollen shawl – what more do I want here?

God knows how I wish at the present moment I were back in the Old Market Place, even if I only had Richard's society to bore me. (*DA* 46)

The trunk is packed with the tangible knowledge of a former life and society from which she recoils while simultaneously acknowledging her visceral nostalgic attachment. In Phyllis Lassner's view, 'Michaëlis urges a new form of expression to replace the metaphors of domestic space.'<sup>66</sup> Elsie's trunk is proposed as one sort of substitutive metaphor but, in encapsulating, like Miriam's trunk, a sense of the past in tension with present and future, it equally mirrors the problematic textual predicament of the woman writer seeking, with difficulty, to break with precedent in order to tread new literary ground.

Interestingly, luggage-imagery was repeatedly used, by male and female writers alike, to disparage Richardson's work. Edith Wharton criticised what she felt to be the 'over-packed' nature of such 'new' works in the stream-of-consciousness vein, undoubtedly with *Pilgrimage* in mind: 'The mid-nineteenth century group selected; the new novelists profess to pour everything out of their bag.'<sup>67</sup> She later added that what

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<sup>65</sup> Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space* 63.

<sup>66</sup> Phyllis Lassner, 'Women's Midlife and the Crisis of Writing: Karin Michaëlis's *The Dangerous Age* and Rose Macaulay's *Dangerous Ages*,' *Atlantis* 14.2 (1989): 29.

<sup>67</sup> Edith Wharton, 'Tendencies in Modern Fiction,' *The Uncollected Critical Writings*, ed. Frederick Wegener (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1996) 172.

critics were branding a 'new form of novel' was 'really only a literary hold-all.'<sup>68</sup> These are viewpoints we will return to when we consider her own oeuvre more directly. Graham Greene, in a 1951 essay on Richardson's work entitled 'The Saratoga Trunk,' referred to the 'stream of consciousness' as an 'embarrassing cargo' and asserted that Miriam's 'saratoga trunk [was becoming] progressively more worn and labelled' in line with what he felt to be the 'weariness' of *Pilgrimage* itself as an ongoing project.<sup>69</sup> Leon Edel's pronouncement of the 'need to become the author so as to bring some order into the great grab-bag of feminine experience offered us' in *Pilgrimage*, supplies one more illustration of such censure.<sup>70</sup> All of these writers objected to a lack of formal craftsmanship on Richardson's part, accentuated by an ostensibly indiscriminate approach to content. This was, of course, partly the intention. Stewart remarks that far from reflecting day-to-day life, realistic genres reflect its 'hierarchization of information,' a system of selective classification Trotter has referred to as a generic 'criterion of relevance.'<sup>71</sup> Disturbing the ideological interests of the prevailing hierarchical system of relevance was intrinsic to Richardson's work, a motive force in the production of that 'feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism' (*P:I* 9), envisaged in her 1938 preface. The prolonged development of this 'feminine equivalent' proved a large part of the overarching problem. Her critics further balk at a certain 'embarrassing' stylistic indiscretion surrounding the articulation of 'feminine experience.' This was likewise the crux of the controversy provoked by *The Dangerous Age*, upon publication of which Michaëlis was chastised by more established Danish writers for 'her lack of taste' and for 'being hysterical,' a term exposing the gendered edge of such criticism.<sup>72</sup> But Richardson's 'bag' of feminine experience belies accusations of indiscriminate exposure upon further scrutiny. Of her aforementioned critics, only Greene pays any tribute to the specific type of bag largely conveyed by Miriam: a Saratoga trunk. This kind of trunk (significantly, a trunk predominantly employed by women) is characterised by intricate compartmentalisation, an arrangement suggesting an internal coherence and refinement at odds with the implied disorder of the 'holdall' or 'grab-bag.'<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Wharton, 'Permanent Values in Fiction,' *The Uncollected Critical Writings* 176.

<sup>69</sup> Graham Greene, 'The Saratoga Trunk,' *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1951) 84, 85.

<sup>70</sup> Leon Edel, 'Dorothy Richardson, 1882-1957,' *Modern Fiction Studies*, 4 (1958): 168.

<sup>71</sup> Stewart, *On Longing* 26; Trotter, *The English Novel in History* 80.

<sup>72</sup> These writers were Georg Brandes and Jørgen Bukhdal. See Merete Von Eyben, *Karin Michaëlis: Incest as Metaphor and the Illusion of Romantic Love* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003) 5.

<sup>73</sup> Edelstein and Morse, *Antique Trunks* 10-11.



Indeed, the use of luggage imagery in the service of a criticism of stylistic indiscretion and authorial self-indulgence jars uncomfortably with the more complex application of such imagery in the service of a modernist re-envisagement of the female subject in *Pointed Roofs* itself, as well as in *The Dangerous Age*. Both texts deliberately tread the line between discretion and indiscretion, flaunting an air of unforeseen disclosure – tasteless, 'embarrassing,' perhaps, but purposely so – while, at the same time, rigorously documenting and exploring an obsession with the undisclosed. Bags and trunks are employed in these texts not only to intimate a *getting inside* of the female subject in unprecedented ways, but also to investigate perceptions of female subjectivity from the outside. For example, Miriam and Elsie each register an admiration, in similar terms, for an elusive female figure, explicitly associated with trunks. This is the aloof and 'different' (*P:I* 74) Ulrica Hesse with her 'three large leather trunks' (*P:I* 34), for Miriam. For Elsie, it is Margarethe Ernst, with her 'array of trunks' (*DA* 123), a woman who 'without appearing to do so, manages to efface all her tracks as she goes' (*DA* 122). The trunks, in the two instances, stand for all that is unknown, and captivating in consequence, about these women. Contrary to those critical charges of indiscriminate revelation, these texts are *as* concerned – and self-reflexively so – with the intrigue surrounding a secreted interiority, with the closed luggage container as much as with the open. By publicly lifting their own lids, Michaëlis and Richardson might breach the 'freemasonry that exists among their own sex' (*DA* 16), to use Prévost's words, but that freemasonry is, in itself, the subject of each book, breached in order to be understood.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, neither writer is insensitive to the cost of, or difficulties involved in public exhibition. For all Miriam's determination to lay herself bare, she concedes, to her chagrin, that it is sometimes 'better to pretend' (*P:I* 74). In *The Dangerous Age*, Elsie admits that openness is tantamount to prescribing oneself as socially unfit, pre-empting certain reactions to the novel itself: 'If a woman took infinite pains to reveal herself to a husband or lover just as she really is, he would think she was suffering from some incurable mental disease' (*DA* 60).

The nature of female desire is evidently at issue here (as it is in Forster's rendering of the 'civilisation of luggage' in *Howards End*, a novel co-incidental with *The*

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<sup>74</sup> The call to breach such 'freemasonry' was being sounded in more than one literary quarter at this time. To give one pointed example, Ford Madox Ford (or Hueffer, as he was then known) condemned what he referred to as the 'woman of the novelists' in an open letter to womankind in 1911. He saw this idealised conception of womanhood in fiction as a gross distortion and a 'crime against the Arts,' the propagation of which women as much as men were culpable. He concluded his letter by laying down the literary gauntlet: '[y]ou have the matter a great deal in your own hands, for to such an extent is the writer of imaginative literature dependent on your suffrages...' Ford Madox Hueffer, 'The Woman of the Novelists,' *The Critical Attitude* (London: Duckworth, 1911) 168.

*Dangerous Age*). In *The Dangerous Age*, the 'incurable mental disease' in question – clinically construed as 'hysteria' – is shorthand for an active female sexuality, at odds with the socially prescribed version and therefore to be hidden away.<sup>75</sup> Bachelard has observed, in contemplating hiding places, that an 'anthology devoted to small boxes [...] would constitute an important chapter in psychology.'<sup>76</sup> The intense preoccupation with female sexuality within the field of psychology during this period, as imaginatively figured through the image of the small *mobile* box, would constitute an important section of this chapter. Within this section, an anecdotal aside in *The Dangerous Age*, concerning the object of a jewel-case, would offer one pertinent example. The anecdote describes the discovery at a young age, by Elsie's maid Jeanne, of her mother's extra-marital affair with an officer. Unforgiving of this moral lapse throughout her mother's life, she relents after her death and resolves to keep the secret of her mother's sexual exploits from her father at all costs (again, a manifestation of Prévost's idea of women's 'freemasonry'). What is interesting is that her mother's illicit love-letters are kept in her jewel-case and that Jeanne is caught in the act of trying to retrieve them for safe-keeping by her father, who jumps to an immediate and 'bitter' (*DA* 143) accusatory conclusion: 'Are you so crazy about trinkets that you cannot wait until your poor mother is laid in her grave?' (*DA* 143) To accuse Jeanne of being 'crazy' about 'trinkets' was to tap into a contemporary fear of female sexuality at this time and the jewel-case was the emblematic Pandora's box not to be opened.<sup>77</sup> The scene suggestively recalls Dora's first dream in Sigmund Freud's *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905), a dream pointedly beginning with a burning house:

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<sup>75</sup> For an instructive outline of the long history of the 'disease paradigm' known as 'hysteria,' see the opening chapters of Rachel P. Maines's *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria", the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (1998; Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins UP, 1999) 1-48. For a discussion of the representation of 'hysteria' in *The Dangerous Age*, see Peter Madsen, 'Elsie (*The Dangerous Age*, Karin Michaëlis, 1910),' *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2006) 559-566. For an overview of the controversial discussions surrounding the question of the nature of female sexuality in literature, from medical to imaginative, through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, see Peter Gay, 'The Problematic Sex,' *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, vol. 1 (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 144-168.

<sup>76</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* 81. Emphasis in original.

<sup>77</sup> The association of jewellery with female sexuality has a long history in literature from Pamela's long-winded defence of her 'most precious of all jewels' in Samuel Richardson's eighteenth-century novel (1740) through to the erotically charged image of the ruby choker in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). The imaginative appeal of the jewel-case as indicator of a woman's intimate life is likewise a persistent one. To give one illustrative example, Isabel, in outlining her fast-growing familiarity with Mme Merle in James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, notes that 'it was as if she had given to a comparative stranger the key to her cabinet of jewels' (*PL* 174). Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740; London: Penguin, 1980) 46, 229; Angela Carter, 'The Bloody Chamber,' *The Bloody Chamber* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979) 7-41.

A house was on fire. My father was standing beside my bed and woke me up. I dressed quickly. Mother wanted to stop and save her jewel-case; but Father said: 'I refuse to let myself and my two children be burnt for the sake of your jewel-case.' We hurried downstairs, and as soon as I was outside I woke up.<sup>78</sup>

Freud earlier associated luggage interchangeably with women, sin, the female genitals, and the uterus/womb in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.<sup>79</sup> The word 'hysteria' itself derives from the Greek term 'hystera,' meaning 'uterus.'<sup>80</sup> That which proceeds from the jewel-case in fiction of the early twentieth century is worth paying heed to in this context. It was an object well-placed to stand as a metaphorical container for a not-quite-containable female sexuality and Freud drew considerable attention to it as such in his analysis: '...is it not, in short, admirably calculated both to betray and to conceal the sexual thoughts that lie behind the dream?'<sup>81</sup>

Freud's lengthy and often insightful reading of the complexity of this symbol fails, however, to recognise its representational role as disputed element in a conflict of contrary interests surrounding female sexuality. When probed on the root source of the dream object in her waking-life, Dora recounts a heated argument between her parents pertaining to a piece of jewellery: 'Mother wanted to be given a particular thing – pearl drops to wear in her ears. But Father does not like that kind of thing, and he brought her a bracelet instead of the drops. She was furious...'<sup>82</sup> Far from Freud's assumption of Dora's envious regard of her father's attention to her mother (an interpretation since vehemently disputed by critics), jewellery must first have signalled unsatisfied female desire not to mention discordant views on its appropriate expression.<sup>83</sup> It naturally follows that Dora's dream would register this sexual contention. The jewel-case, as

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<sup>78</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')*, 1905, in *Case Histories I: 'Dora' and 'Little Hans'*, trans. Alix and James Strachey, ed. James Strachey, assisted by Angela Richards and Alan Tyson (London: Penguin, 1977) 99.

<sup>79</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900, trans. James Strachey, ed. James Strachey, assisted by Alan Tyson (London: Penguin, 1991) 237,8, 275-6, 475. He refers, in part, to the work of Wilhelm Steker in making these associations and also draws attention to the German word for receptacle – 'Büchse' – which was in common use as a slang term for the female genitals. Germaine Greer has, more recently, made the same bag/womb analogy: 'Why do women always carry bags, and why are those bags so often heavy? Why is it that most women will not go out of the house without bags loaded with objects of no immediate use? Is the tote bag an exterior uterus, the outward sign of the unmentionable burden?' See Germaine Greer, *The Whole Woman* (1999; London: Transworld-Anchor, 2000) 50.

<sup>80</sup> Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1965) 1.

<sup>81</sup> Freud, 'Dora' 130.

<sup>82</sup> Freud, 'Dora' 104.

<sup>83</sup> For one insightful reappraisal of Dora's case which acknowledges the groundbreaking nature of the analysis while challenging certain aspects of it in light of twentieth-century feminist criticism, see Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* 225- 50.

object of contention, is cast, in her dream, as something of elevated value to be prized *and* as an incomprehensible and dangerous distraction for the mother figure, akin to *The Dangerous Age*.<sup>84</sup> This conflict of interests reflects oppositional stances, on the subject of female sexuality at this time. That female sexual desire actively existed was no longer in doubt in Freud's era. What was at issue were the implications of exposing and thus devaluing 'men's emotional investment in woman's problematic sexuality,' to use Peter Gay's words.<sup>85</sup> This investment is shown to be under threat in Dora's dream as it is in Jeanne's anecdote. The 'bitter' note of accusation levelled at Jeanne by her father, echoing the urgent insinuation of the father figure in Dora's dream, hints at a suspicion, on his part, of the contents of his deceased wife's jewel-case. Jeanne is thus implicitly warned against following in her mother's morally divergent footsteps by association, but moreover of tainting her mother's idealised posthumous image through bringing those contents to light. 'Admirably calculated to betray and to conceal' a woman's sexual thoughts, the jewel-case encapsulates here the challenge posed by the topical question of female desire to the seemingly straight and narrow course of nineteenth century sexuality.

Miriam's Saratoga, on the other hand, is admirably calculated to challenge the seemingly straight and narrow course of nineteenth-century narrative and, in *Pointed Roofs*, the idea of an unsatisfied and inconclusive female sexual desire becomes a structural function. As DuPlessis remarks, '[r]esistance to conventional varieties of romance and resistance to conventional narrative are exactly congruent in Richardson,' and this is visible in the final pages of *Pointed Roofs* which perform the collision of two opposing dénouements:<sup>86</sup>

Hurriedly and desolately she packed her bag. She was going home empty-handed. She had achieved nothing. Fräulein had made not the slightest effort to keep her. She was just nothing again – with her Saratoga trunk and her hand-bag. Harriet had achieved. Harriett. She was just going home with nothing to say for herself. (*P:I* 183-4)

Miriam refers here to her sister's engagement. Richardson strikingly juxtaposes her portrait of a bag-carrying, self-supporting woman with the conventional portrait of a

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<sup>84</sup> Ligensa points out that Michaëlis's detachment of female desire from motherhood was a cornerstone of the critical case against *The Dangerous Age* on publication. Ligensa, 'A Cinematograph of Feminine Thought' 226.

<sup>85</sup> Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience* (Vol. 1) 167.

<sup>86</sup> DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending* 143.

lady who has 'achieved' her household place through the imperative of the marriage plot. A number of critics have stressed the masculine pattern of 'ejaculatory' desire inscribed in traditional love plot formulas and the palpable sense of comparative anti-climax above is a very deliberate rejection of that very pattern, a 'mockery of that expectation,' in the words of Kristin Bluemel.<sup>87</sup> Though Richardson ends *Pointed Roofs* with the deflation of Miriam's own expectations ('She was just nothing again – with her Saratoga trunk and her hand-bag'), it would be no exaggeration to say that the *raison d'être* of *Pilgrimage* as a whole is to disprove this statement of failure, reflective less of Miriam's sense of self than of her sense of how others must perceive her.

Miriam, with her Saratoga trunk and her hand-bag, is, on the contrary, *everything* in *Pilgrimage*. Her long adventure, endorsing a principle of openness and circularity rather than ejaculatory culmination or redemptive linearity (in the allegorical pilgrimage line), is only beginning here, whereas her sister's adventure, according to the conventional masculine pattern, has ended. The final paragraph of *Pointed Roofs* finds her alone aboard a moving train - and in a 'compartment marked Damen-Coupé' (*P:I* 185) - shuttling towards the second section of *Pilgrimage*, and the question of an appropriate ending or climax remains deferred, as it does throughout the novel sequence. Desire, sexual and narrative, is unfulfilled in the anticipated way. 'If Rosa Nouchette Carey knew me,' she notes of the popular domestic fiction writer in the second instalment, *Backwater*, 'she'd make me one of the bad characters who are turned out of the happy homes' (*P:I* 284). Creating a 'feminine equivalent' (*P:I* 9) involved a reappraisal of narrative conventions through a resistance to the idea of domesticated closure as well as a redefinition of the female 'adventuress.' Numerous critics have interpreted Richardson's stated aspiration in terms of her emphasis on adventurous 'being' rather than climactic 'becoming.'<sup>88</sup> The image of the Saratoga fittingly lent itself to the idea of an on-going process of 'being' as set against the achievement of 'becoming,' evoked in the image of the happy home. I agree with Bryony Randall that, though Richardson acknowledges the 'pleasure' of an ending within the text itself, 'overriding this pleasure is a more profound impetus, to resist ending, which is the most

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<sup>87</sup> For a discussion of narrative in relation to masculine patterns of desire, see Joseph Allen Boone *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 72. For Richardson-specific discussions of the same, see DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending* 151-2 and Kristin Bluemel, *Experimenting on the Borders of Modernism: Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage* (Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1997) 56.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Feminine Consciousness in the Modern British Novel* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1975) 43-6; Podnieks 89; Radford, *Dorothy Richardson* 39-40. It is worth noting that Tim Cresswell also makes a link between mobility and 'becoming' in *On the Move* 47.

vital aspect both of the text, and of Richardson's life and work.<sup>89</sup> The same might be said of the acknowledged pleasure she shows in houses and domestic spaces throughout *Pilgrimage*, a pleasure which is overridden by the more profound impetus of the adventure promised by her Saratoga.<sup>90</sup> She goes so far as to attempt to combine the two paradigms in conceiving of her boarding-house bedroom walls in *Deadlock* as 'travellers' walls' (*P:III* 87) but, over and above the walls in whatever abode she inhabits, the trunk figuratively prevails in this text, as her early critics well realised. Hers is the counter-cultural emancipatory bag, par excellence.

*The Dangerous Age*, concludes, like *Pointed Roofs*, on an anti-climactic yet transitional note as Elsie makes a sudden decision to abandon her secluded villa in order to take a trip around the world with Jeanne. This ending lacks, however, the promise of Miriam's coming emancipatory pilgrimage. Elsie's trip is construed as the outcome of a compromising concession to loneliness; she makes the decision to leave only after offering herself and being rejected, in turn, by her former lover and husband. This sense of compromising loneliness is aggravated in the sequel to *The Dangerous Age*, *Elsie Lindtner* (1912), which describes a 'feign[ed] enjoyment to this perpetual unsettlement.'<sup>91</sup> In both texts, we find a difficulty in reconciling conflicting desires for the safety and society of the known world, on the one hand, and the insecure and necessarily solitary experience of independence, on the other, a conflict which recurs in modernist women's writing.<sup>92</sup> Miriam manages to negotiate these difficulties more successfully. 'To remember, whatever happened, not to be afraid of being alone' (*P:I* 321) she tells herself in *Interim*. Her literary baggage must be seen thus more as a realisation than a tentative exploration of new possibilities, as in Michaëlis's work, though this should not detract from the latter's exploratory initiative. From small to

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<sup>89</sup> Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007) 91.

<sup>90</sup> For a phenomenological reading of space and spatiality in *Pilgrimage* with a literary architectural emphasis, see Elisabeth Bronfen, *Dorothy Richardson's Art of Memory: Space, Identity, Text*, trans. Victoria Appelbe (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999).

<sup>91</sup> Karin Michaëlis, *Elsie Lindtner*, 1912, trans. Beatrice Marshall (London: John Lane, 1912) 22.

<sup>92</sup> Consider the double-edged approach to female independence in *La Vagabonde* by Colette, a writer who cited Michaëlis as a direct influence on her later work. Published in the same year as *The Dangerous Age* in 1910, the novel concerns the plight of a woman who divorces her husband to earn an independent, if precarious and lonely, living as a music-hall performer. This fraught co-existence of feelings of happy deliverance and unbearable loneliness chimes with the conflict around which Michaëlis's novel turns. We find such a paradoxical sense of autonomy as both pleasurable and isolating return in women's writing between the wars, most prominently in the work of Jean Rhys. Her *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), figures life outside the house of fiction as a form of exclusionary dispossession over and above a form of freedom: 'Walking in the night with the dark houses over you, like monsters. [...] No hospitable doors, no lit windows, just frowning darkness.' Colette, *La Vagabonde* (1910; Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1988); Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939; London: Penguin, 1969) 28.

large, from fastened to unfastened, from jewel case to trunk, women's luggage worked well as a metaphoric means of probing and/or realising the possibilities surrounding the development of a modernist female subjectivity and Michaëlis and Richardson both foreground it as such. It was equally well poised to convey the complications inherent in this experimental process. The following two sections will look more closely at these complications; firstly, through the example of a woman who fails to channel the emancipatory potential of the bag in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (Section 2.4) and, secondly, through the external obstructions faced by bag-carrying women in an attempted recasting of those long-established codes and practices of chivalry and chaperonage (Section 2.5).

## 2.4: Unwanted Baggage: The Uncertain Case of Edith Wharton

Edith Wharton makes for a thought-provoking addition to this discussion as an example of a woman writer uncertainly caught between symbolic paradigms of house and case, paradigms she herself appeared to view in gendered terms. Unlike Richardson, Wharton is far from rejecting an architectural narrative vision - indeed, her work presupposes a literary architectural precedence - but she shows a fascination with literary luggage which goes hand in hand with a recognition of the shortcomings of the house of fiction model. She might well, in 1934, have branded the widely-heralded 'new form of novel' as a 'literary hold-all,' accusing a younger generation of writers of professing to 'pour everything out of their bag,' unlike their seemingly more selective mid-nineteenth-century predecessors, but this must not be taken as her definitive word on that category of metaphor.<sup>93</sup> On the contrary, Wharton, more comprehensively than most writers of this period, examines with forensic precision the possibilities and limitations of literary luggage in formal, symbolic and thematic terms through a complex intertextual network of images, weaving in and out of fardel and escapist traditions, combining metaphorical and actual loads, the shapelessness of bundles and the intricateness of dressing-cases, tropes of common and uncommon baggage alike. She shows a sustained and intense preoccupation particularly with the relation of women, of various means and classes, to luggage, in all shapes and forms, exhibited in the large number of female characters markedly connected with their bags ranging across the full spectrum of her fiction; for instance, Lydia Tillotson in 'Souls Belated' (1899), Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth* (1905), Mattie Silver in *Ethan Frome* (1911), Sophie Viner in *The Reef* (1912), Susy Lancing in *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) and Kate Clepham in *The Mother's Recompense* (1925). This is a preoccupation which is problematically pitted against an outward critical and formal preference for a literary architecture envisioned in masculine terms: 'I conceive my subjects like a man - that is, rather more architectonically and dramatically than most women,' she remarks in a letter to Robert Grant in 1907, continuing: '-& then execute them like a woman; or rather, I sacrifice, to my desire for construction and breadth, the small incidental effects that women have always excelled in, the episodic characterisation, I mean.'<sup>94</sup> I have already paid some

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<sup>93</sup> Wharton, 'Permanent Values in Fiction,' *The Uncollected Critical Writings* 176; 'Tendencies in Modern Fiction,' *The Uncollected Critical Writings* 172.

<sup>94</sup> Letter to Robert Grant, November 19, 1907. Quoted in Katherine Joslin, 'Architectonic or Episodic? Gender and *The Fruit of the Tree*,' *A Forward Glance: New Essays on Edith Wharton*, ed. Clare Colquitt, Susan Goodman, Candace Waid (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1999) 62. Joslin provides an account of the competing forces of 'architectonic' and 'episodic' in *The Fruit of the Tree* (1907) in this essay, as well as the wider implications of this quotation in terms of



attention to the alignment of bag and baggage with the episodic impulse as set against an architectural ordering principle in relation to *Bleak House* and an entire other thesis might be written to investigate a similar alignment in Wharton's work, taking this critical construction of the 'architectonic'/'episodical' opposition in gendered terms as well as her expression of her own contradictory compulsions, as a starting point.<sup>95</sup> I begin by acknowledging this as an area which invites more prolonged analysis and I will return to some of these issues in conclusion.

Within the restricted scope of this short section and in the context of the chapter as a whole, however, my interest in Wharton principally lies in her rendering of the fall from grace of Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth* in 1905, in part, as a function of Lily's inability to manage her own bag and to see in it a form for her deliverance rather than her demise. Drawing on the portrait of Carrie Meeber in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) and with reference to Wharton's later re-writing of the character of Lily Bart through the figure of Susy Lansing in her 1922 novel *The Glimpses of the Moon*, this section will argue that the act of 'managing' a bag stands for a kind of female self-sufficiency that is often most conspicuous in its absence. Having already paid tribute to Bly and Anthony as bag-carrying female figureheads in the American line, I include a section on Wharton, and parenthetically Dreiser, here to show, in the first place, that the singular motif I am tracing in this chapter is just as discernible in American fiction around the turn of twentieth century though we must, of course, be sensitive to contextual distinctions. In the second place, the vision of a woman's failure to embrace the possibility of an emancipatory bag offers a necessary and illuminating counterpoint to the examples heretofore studied. The apprehension of Lily's luggage, by Lily herself as much as by those around her, as indicative of her failure to establish herself in marital and domestic terms rather than her emancipation is, in some ways, more starkly

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Wharton's stance on gender issues, concluding that the episodic overcomes the architectonic mode in that particular novel.

<sup>95</sup> The fascination architectural structures and architectural tradition held for Wharton is evidenced in the several non-fictional works she devoted to the subject: *The Decoration of Houses* in 1897 and *Italian Villas and their Gardens* in 1904, for instance. There are likewise many appraisals, both extended and in essay/article form, of this architectural bent in her writing. For a discussion which focuses equally on fictional and non-fictional building and addresses Wharton's paradoxical recognition of the exploitative privilege underlying the architectural aesthetic she so fervently admired, see Annette Benert, *The Architectural Imagination of Edith Wharton: Gender, Class, and Power in the Progressive Era* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2007). For a discussion which takes the relation of women to space as its principal subject, see Judith Fryer, *Felicitous Space: The Imaginative Structures of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1986). Wharton's fictional work is equally, however, replete with the homeless and the perpetually mobile and a full-length study of literary luggage, the structural correlative to this thematic tendency, in her work more widely, which would engage with and counterbalance these literary architectural accounts, would offer compelling new ground for Wharton scholarship.

revelatory of the issues at stake in contemporary feminist debates surrounding women's property rights and, relatedly, mobility within and outside of marriage than the proudly-borne bags of women like Bly and Anthony.<sup>96</sup> It also accentuates, in juxtaposition with the emancipatory and disruptive connotations we have considered in previous sections, the semantic instability of the woman's bag as symbol, a semantic instability the last section of this chapter (Section 2.5) will confront more fully.

As a preface to this discussion, I would briefly alert the reader to the class dimensions of Wharton's portraits of women on the move in general. The escapist ideal of lightweight mobility of body and mind, a recurrent one in her work, is often only manifested in real terms within very narrow class confines. Travelling light and without material ties, though frequently construed as a sort of divine and spiritual quest for those in search of the flying ship that will take them 'Beyond!' to invoke Lily Bart's grey letter seal in *The House of Mirth*, is also pointedly presented, on the purely practical level of bodily ease of movement, as a privilege only the very rich can, in practice, afford; the select few, that is to say, who never have to shift their own heavy trunks.<sup>97</sup> In such elite circles, travelling light is shown to amount to keeping up an unencumbered appearance and thus becomes a fashionable and necessary *trompe d'oeil*. Kate Clepham's budgetary justification, early on in *The Mother's Recompense* (1925), for retaining a maid over and above staying in an expensive hotel, brings this necessity to the fore:

...it looked better for a lone woman who, after having been thirty-nine for a number of years, had suddenly become forty-four, to have a respectable-looking servant in the background; to be able, for instance, when one arrived in new places, to say to supercilious hotel-clerks: "My maid is following with the luggage."<sup>98</sup>

The detachment of a female character from her luggage, the displacement of visible bulk to preserve an air of respectability but also class-conscious femininity, becomes a marker, where Wharton is concerned, of her position on a well-defined social scale just

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<sup>96</sup> For a study of the complex and multifaceted development of the American New Woman, which incorporates racial and ethnic deviations from the monolithic norm, through works by a range of writers including Wharton, see Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2005). Also useful in tracing a parallel American interest in issues of sexual inequality as this entered into fiction is the 'An Abyss of Inequality: Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Kate Chopin' chapter of Larzer Ziff's *The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation* (New York: Viking, 1966) 275-305.

<sup>97</sup> Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (1905; New York: Norton, 1990) 122. Hereafter abbreviated 'HM' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>98</sup> Edith Wharton, *The Mother's Recompense* (1925; New York: Scribner, 1996) 6.

as her progressive involvement with the composition and carriage of that luggage can be seen to correspond to a decline in social prospects. Concomitantly, the authentic act of travelling light, without maid or encumbering luggage, is shown to generate suspicion of looseness from the point of view of morality. *The Reef*, for example, turns around the question of how the young Sophie Viner, notably linked to lost luggage from her first appearance, should be judged for her part in a fleeting Parisian affair; it is in the attempt to relocate her lost trunk that the affair begins. In examining women's luggage in Wharton's work, the reader must always be attuned to the social codes and significations embedded in the practice of its manoeuvre and much of the interest in her work lies not in her attempt to subvert those codes and significations - though there is, at times, evidence of such an attempt, particularly in *The Reef* - but in revealing the *trompe l'oeil* for what it really is, in exposing the gilt-edged frame encompassing the freedom of the upper-class woman in *fin de siècle* New York through portraits of women no longer able or willing to keep up the moneyed pretence of free movement.

The idea of the *trompe l'oeil* is at the heart of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, long held to have had a formative influence on Wharton, though we find a different form of luggage-related deception enacted here. It is a work cited by Maureen Howard, as one of two key novels Wharton had at the forefront of her mind in the composition of *The House of Mirth* while J. Michael Duvall has called Carrie 'Lily's literary cousin.'<sup>99</sup> If *The House of Mirth* was informed by this earlier novel then our approach to Lily's luggage might itself be informed by a contemplation of Carrie's. The opening description of this character with all of her trappings gives a microcosmic insight into the concerns of the narrative to follow:

When Caroline Meeber boarded the afternoon train for Chicago her total outfit consisted of a small trunk, which was checked in the baggage car, a cheap imitation alligator skin satchel holding some minor details of the toilet, a small lunch in a paper box and a yellow leather snap purse, containing her ticket, a

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<sup>99</sup> Maureen Howard, 'The Bachelor and the Baby: *The House of Mirth*,' *The Cambridge Companion to Edith Wharton*, ed. Millicent Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 142. The other novel cited is Jane Austen's *Emma*. J. Michael Duvall, 'The Futile and the Dingy: Wasting and Being Wasted in *The House of Mirth*,' *Memorial Boxes and Guarded Interiors: Edith Wharton and Material Culture*, ed. Gary Totten (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2007) 161. For comparative studies of Carrie and Lily, see Alan Price, 'Lily Bart and Carrie Meeber: Cultural Sisters,' *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910* 13 (1980): 238-45; Caren J. Town, 'The House of Mirrors: Carrie, Lily and the Reflected Self,' *Modern Language Studies* 24.3 (1994): 44-54.

scrap of paper with her sister's address in Van Buren St, and 4 dollars in money. It was August, 1889.<sup>100</sup>

'Small,' 'cheap,' 'minor', scrapped together; Carrie's inconsequentiality, her negligibility, with regard to property, means and social status, is the first thing the reader is made to notice and she is emphatically associated with her luggage, literal and metaphorical, throughout.<sup>101</sup> Failing to find satisfactory paid work in Chicago and thus entering into a dependant relationship, first with travelling salesman Charles Drouet and then with married man George Hurstwood, this association initially serves to reinforce the sense of her entrapment within the prescribed role of immoral 'baggage.' Take Hurstwood's original misleading expectation of Carrie and then Carrie's own later perception of her situation after she has taken up with him:

It must be readily seen that by a roundabout process, Carrie had been brought within Hurstwood's reach. He went forth at Drouet's invitation to meet a new baggage of fine clothes and pretty features. He entered expecting to indulge in an evening of lightsome frolic and then lose track of the newcomer forever. Instead he found a woman whose youth and beauty attracted him. In the mild light of Carrie's eye was nothing of the calculation of the mistress. In the diffident manner was nothing of the art of the courtesan. (SC 122)

The fact that she was in a train and being hurried away, perforce to other situations and other scenes was the one contrast to all the Chicago misery, and that in itself was no relief. She knew that even here she was being unjustly dealt with and made baggage of. It was a shame and a disgrace, and yet what could she do? (SC 282)

At first, Carrie defies the role prescribed to her but is later fatalistically compelled to play the part, to be 'made baggage of' in a very literal way. Dreiser is careful to note that

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<sup>100</sup> Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (1900; New York: Penguin, 1986) 3. Hereafter abbreviated 'SC' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>101</sup> This is an aspect Wharton would incorporate into her construction of Sophy Viner in *The Reef*, a character also linked to luggage throughout, as mentioned, and who, as Robert Peel has remarked, is 'described in terms that emphasise her insubstantiality.' Robin Peel, *Apart From Modernism: Edith Wharton, Politics, and Fiction Before World War I* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2005) 169.

both Drouet and Hurstwood purchase trunks for her in their turn and these are details not to be overlooked. In the latter instance, attention is drawn to this particular item above all others procured following the flight of Hurstwood with Carrie to Montreal: 'Carrie's purchases, which included among other things a trunk, duly arrived and were arranged' (SC 300). The literal and metaphorical become interchangeable here. 'Made baggage of' in this objective way, Carrie is allotted the figurative role of the 'baggage' of disrepute, an inversion of the conventional allotment of the socially acceptable role of 'housewife' through the offer of the marital home.<sup>102</sup>

As it emerges, however, far from Carrie's fulfilling her prescribed part as common baggage, it is Hurstwood who ultimately makes baggage of himself. As his reputation, self-confidence and financial security collapse, he becomes increasingly dependent on Carrie, forcing her eventually to step up to bear the financial burden of the two. This situation is forecast early on in a seemingly meaningless flirtatious exchange:

"I can't live without you and that's all there is to it. Now," [Hurstwood] concluded, showing the palm of one of his white hands in a sort of at-an-end helpless expression – "what shall I do?"

This shifting of the burden to her appealed to Carrie. The semblance of the load, without the weight, touched the woman's heart. (SC 150)

With the transfiguration of Hurstwood into a 'perfect load to contemplate' (SC 398) later in the novel, the above 'semblance' becomes all too real and all too unappealing. It seems that Carrie is indeed fated to 'carry' in this novel, a fate inscribed in the opening paragraph in the accumulation of all manner of paraphernalia about her person. Yet she determines, with decisiveness if some misgiving, if not to escape, at least to modify, that fate. In her eventual abandonment of Hurstwood, she abandons the 'perfect load' he represents and, in doing so, she equally reinvents the 'baggage,' like other bag-carrying women before her, as a woman of independent means. Leaving the furniture in their shared flat, Carrie takes her very few portable belongings with her in the 'trunk he had bought for her in Montreal' (SC 436) and the absence of this trunk, 'gone from its accustomed place' (SC 439), is noted by Hurstwood in returning to the empty flat. Carrie appropriates the trunk as a symbol of newly-wrought self-sufficiency as opposed to the immoral and encumbering reliance for which it originally stood.

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<sup>102</sup> Carrie and Hurstwood do later marry but it is a sham marriage and they use false names.

Carrie finds a degree of material success while Hurstwood sinks in *Sister Carrie* because she puts the skills she has to the best use in her circumstances in learning to 'carry' herself to the best effect, a faculty integral to the theatrical career she pursues. That she pursues a theatrical career is important. The theatre had long been popularly connected with 'loose women,' a connection signalling not just immorality, but financial independence.<sup>103</sup> Howard comments that Carrie's freedom is 'won by disguise and concealment,' and further observes that she 'finds herself in being other than she is.'<sup>104</sup> I would add that Carrie's baggage becomes her business in this way, her means of conveying the materials of her art of disguise, indeed even the expression of that art.<sup>105</sup> Dreiser, in an overview of the 'mingled atmosphere of life and mummery which pervades the chambers of the children of the stage' (*SC* 176), pinpoints the 'open trunks suggestive of travel and display' in these quarters. He picks up on the element of theatrical exhibition as well as far-flung travel suggested by the object of the trunk and that idea of theatrical exhibition is also expressed in the object of Carrie's 'cheap imitation alligator skin satchel' as she first boards her train to Chicago. This artificial allusion to dangerous and exploitative river hunts in the wild conjures an updated image of economic survival in a modern and gritty urban jungle. But it also projects forward to Carrie's later mode of survival through the *trompe d'oeil*; the theatrical art of camouflage, of making a living through imitating skins, so to speak. As Bowlby notes, her

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<sup>103</sup> For other discussions of the theatre as a site for women's rights activism, see Albert Auster, *Actresses and Suffragists: Women in the American Theater, 1890-1920* (New York: Praeger Press, 1984) and Vivien Gardner and Susan Rutherford, eds., *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre, 1850-1914* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992). In England, the Actresses' Franchise League was formed in 1908 and this League was a tributary of the general suffrage movement. Actresses were seen to be particularly well-qualified and placed to actively lead the call for equal rights in the work place. See Diane F. Gillespie and Dorjane Birrer, introduction, 2003, *Diana of Dobson's: A Romantic Comedy in Four Acts*, by Cicely Hamilton, ed. Diane F. Gillespie and Doryjane Birrer (1908; Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2003) 13-60.

<sup>104</sup> Howard, 'The Bachelor and the Baby' 151.

<sup>105</sup> Bag and baggage soon indeed became established professional accessories of the actress, often compelled by her trade to be regularly on the move. According to *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader* in 1907, a Danish actress by the name of Aggerholm had 'achieved such a reputation as an expert trunk packer that a German capitalist [...] invited her to become managing directress of a school for professional packers', an offer she declined. Tourist, 'How To Pack: Making Advantageous Use of Travelling Goods,' *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review* 1.7 (1907): 44. By 1910, the actress's bag had even been given a starring dramatic role, as evidenced by an editorial from the same journal concerning the increasing popularity of voluminous bags, a trend which is taken to have an American precedent: 'Did the habit originate in America? I know a distinguished actress whose bag has become a classic. Indeed, it was given a part in a play by a well-known dramatist, a part with a "line". The line was, I think: "When you have learnt to know your mother's bag, you will know her." This remarkable bag served the purpose of a museum, a safe, a curiosity shop, a post-office. It had never been known to shut since it left its makers, and out of its large mouth protruded everything that one would have thought it was not necessary for a woman to carry about with her!' 'The Ubiquitous Bag,' editorial, *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review* 4.95 (1910): 4.

achievement is 'premised upon her own conscientious reproduction of the dress and manners of women she sees about her.'<sup>106</sup> Her theatrical star begins to rise only when she has succeeded in aptly combining the qualities of imitative display with an understanding of audience expectation, to theatrically embrace the figure indulgently anticipated by Hurstwood, earlier on, of a pretty 'new baggage' which he may do as he pleases with. We are told of her performance as a little Quakeress which wins her notice in New York: 'The portly gentlemen in the front rows began to feel that she was a delicious little morsel. It was the kind of frown they would have loved to force away with kisses. All the gentlemen yearned towards her. She was capital' (SC 447). Carrie is capital indeed but with this critical difference: she is her own 'capital.' What the gentlemen encounter is a new stage baggage with pretty features and without attachments. At the same time, this is a baggage with a deceptively thick skin, suggestive of travel and display, but also of survival in a brutish capitalist context, in which the weak, like Hurstwood, are crushed underfoot at the first sign of fallibility. In the end, her survival and success must partly be attributed to her ability to 'carry' people away in fantasy through sustaining an illusion of availability when in reality she refuses to be carried away herself and declines to carry any load but her own.

With this backward glance at Carrie's narrative turnaround in Dreiser's novel, I will turn now to the manner in which the management of the obstructive load similarly, though with some vital qualifications, enters into Wharton's *The House of Mirth* and *The Glimpses of the Moon*, posing a dilemma which is shown to have a significant bearing on narrative outcome for the female protagonist in each. With her thickly developed imitation skin, the provincial Carrie is deliberately set apart from the 'beautiful, insolent, supercilious creatures' (SC 325) she longingly perceives parading along 34<sup>th</sup> street from out of their regular 'hot-houses' on an outing with her friend, Mrs Vance, and it is in this respect that she can, in turn, be differentiated both from Lily Bart and Susy Lansing in Wharton's later works, characters who are shown to form a part - if a far from guaranteed part - of that elitist hot-housed culture. Susy, in *The Glimpses of the Moon*, was largely understood at the time to represent a return to the character of Lily, in *The House of Mirth*, and in her depiction of the relationship between the characters of Susy and Nick Lansing in the latter novel, we find a re-imagining of the 'what might have been' between Lily and Lawrence Selden in the former (in that Susy and Nick come

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<sup>106</sup> Bowlby, *Just Looking* 62.

together while Lily and Selden are doomed to remain apart).<sup>107</sup> Indeed, the parallels are deliberately evoked throughout *The Glimpses of the Moon*. Susy, in one instance, toys with the possibility, in passing a milliner's window, of earning an independent living by trimming hats, in line with the downtrodden Lily before her.<sup>108</sup> Even earlier, Susy and her long-time English admirer, Strefford, attend an exhibition of Joshua Reynolds portraits in Paris, invoking Lily's moment of glorious incarnation as 'Mrs Lloyd' (*HM* 106) in *The House of Mirth*. Given that the 'principal collections of England had yielded up their best examples of the great portrait painter's work' (*GM* 225) for the Paris exhibition in the latter novel, Susy's momentary 'glimpse' of 'Mrs Lloyd,' and thus, the image of her literary predecessor at a remove, is heavily hinted. Such intertextual crisscrossing by way of motifs of mirrors, windows and portraits offer fascinating lines of enquiry in approaching these two novels together but more important in this context is the intertextual exchange surrounding the metaphor of the 'load' or 'bundle,' as it relates to the portrayal of real luggage. This intertextual exchange persists through and between the two novels, while also calling to mind the earlier *Sister Carrie* as a necessary point of contrast. Lily and Susy are both posited as women with bags, but, unlike many of the characters already treated, they play this role with some considerable reluctance; from the outset, in Lily's case, and progressively, in Susy's. These are portraits of women cast out of the house on fixed terms and continually on the look-out for a more permanent way back in, not of women who walk out of their own accord (though this is a contending urge felt by both characters).

The metaphor of the 'load' forms one important thread in the intricately woven figurative web which attends the characterisation of Lily from early on in *The House of Mirth*.<sup>109</sup> Its use discloses a contradictory quality in her character and brings to light, by extension, some of the unresolved paradoxes in the text as a whole. The following selection of four instances of the employment of this metaphor gives a sense, in the first place, of the extensiveness of its application but also of its interpretative plasticity:

1. She returned wearily to the thought of Percy Gryce, as a wayfarer picks up a heavy load and toils on after a brief rest. (*HM* 25)

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<sup>107</sup> Wharton was, in fact, requested to write another *House of Mirth* by her publishers (Appleton), according to Claire Preston. See *Edith Wharton's Social Register* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2000) 160.

<sup>108</sup> *The Glimpses of the Moon* (New York: Appleton, 1922) 270. Hereafter abbreviated '*GM*' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>109</sup> Other figurative strands attending the characterisation of Lily turn, for instance, around collecting and collections, waste and disposal, nature and artifice, etc.



2. The certainty that she could marry Percy Gryce when she pleased had lifted a heavy load from her mind and her money troubles were too recent for their removal not to leave a sense of relief which a less discerning intelligence might have taken for happiness. (*HM* 41)
3. Again she felt the lightening of her load, and with it the release of repressed activities. (*HM* 68)
4. Her whole future might hinge on her way of answering [Mr. Rosedale]: she had to stop and consider that, in the stress of her other anxieties, as a breathless fugitive may have to pause at the cross-roads and try to decide coolly which turn to take. [...] the chill of [Selden's] delay settled heavily on her fagged spirit. (*HM* 141)

The first two images refer to the early prospect of a marriage to the rich but lamentably dull young Percy Gryce, a marital union which would solve Lily's financial troubles. The image recurs again, in the third instance, in response to the financial aid seemingly freely offered by the husband of a friend, Gus Trenor, the true cost of which is only later revealed, and finally, in the fourth, in response to an unwanted proposal of marriage from financial magnate and social parvenu, Mr Rosedale, whose visit to Lily coincides rather unsettlingly with the failure of Laurence Selden, the real object of Lily's affections, to appear as expected. As a juxtaposition of these quotations reveal, Lily's 'load' signifies financial anxiety (quotations 2 and 3), on the one hand, but is shown to imply paradoxically the burden of a stagnant financial security (quotation 1), on the other. The thought of marriage to Percy (and later on, the thought of Gus Trenor's spuriously offered aid) weighs upon but equally serves to relieve Lily. If the freedom to move is constrained by material considerations, by the sense of the necessity to marry advantageously for financial security, it is also intimated that such constraints can only be cast off by relinquishing the freedom to move altogether. Lily seemingly cannot travel light without money attained through compromising, indeed abandoning, her own moral code. The respectable alternative is a financial security which would fix her in place and to a man. As such, Lily is burdened by moral as well financial anxieties and it becomes apparent again that travelling light as a woman must necessarily imply travelling without morals, a conundrum Wharton would come back to in *The Reef*. This forms Lily's predicament at the 'cross-roads' confronted in the fourth quotation, poised as she is shown to be throughout the novel, in the words of Jerome Loving, 'between

domestic asylums that underscore the impossibility of marriage without male dominance.<sup>110</sup> Her inability to 'decide coolly' between the two turns serves ultimately to fix her in place without any financial security at all.

This paralysing conflict informs *The House of Mirth* from start to finish. Lily is shown to possess a 'streak of sylvan freedom' which cannot be reconciled with a contesting desire for establishment, continuity and security through possession as epitomised in the 'concrete image of the old house stored with visual memories' (*HM* 248).<sup>111</sup> As Linda S. Watts observes in an essay which interrogates this conflict in terms of the spatial and property rights of women of Lily's milieu, 'a good deal of [her] energy goes toward repressing both her desire for independence and her knowledge of that goal's elusiveness,' contributing to an eventual lack of agency '[w]ithout a domestic venue.'<sup>112</sup> Her attraction to and repulsion from the idea of a concrete domestic structure is shown to engender a sense of detention, localised in the image of the static trunk of the 'female sojourner' with nowhere left to go, packed with a selective store of visceral recollections and disappointed aspirations.<sup>113</sup> This image occurs at the end of *The House of Mirth*, when Lily, in her dingy boarding-house surroundings, goes over her remaining possessions:

Last of all, she drew forth from the bottom of her trunk a heap of white drapery which fell shapelessly across her arm. It was the Reynolds dress she had worn in the Bry *tableaux*. It had been impossible for her to give it away, but she had never seen it since that night, and the long flexible folds, as she shook them out, gave forth an odour of violets which came to her like a breath from the flower-edged fountain where she had stood with Laurence Selden and disowned her fate. She put back the dresses one by one, laying away with each some gleam of

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<sup>110</sup> Jerome Loving, 'The Death of Romance: *A Portrait of a Lady* in the Age of Lily Bart,' *A Forward Glance* 105.

<sup>111</sup> This image, as well as proprietorial politics in the novel more generally, has been subject to much critical attention. Wai-Chee Dimock, for example, reads Lily's fantasy of the 'old house' as an 'absent ideal,' a structure which 'stands aloof' from the 'contemporary world of commodities.' See 'Debasing Exchange: Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*,' *PMLA* 100 (1985): 790. For an alternative discussion of the conflicts surrounding the concept of ownership in the novel which takes into account contemporary debates in relation to privacy and women's rights, while also delineating Wharton's attempt to resist forms of institutional authority and knowledge through allowing Lily an independent and private subjectivity, see William E. Moddelmog, 'Disowning "Personality": Privacy and Subjectivity in *The House of Mirth*,' *American Fiction* 70 (1998): 337-63.

<sup>112</sup> Linda S. Watts, 'The Bachelor Girl and the Body Politic: The Built Environment, Self-Possession, and the Never-Married Woman in *The House of Mirth*,' *Memorial Boxes and Guarded Interiors: Edith Wharton and Material Culture* 194, 195.

<sup>113</sup> Watts, 'The Bachelor Girl and the Body Politic' 196.

light, some note of laughter, some stray waft from the rosy shores of pleasure. She was still in a state of highly-wrought impressionability, and every hint of the past sent a lingering tremor along her nerves. (*HM* 247)

Her trunk is a repository not of arbitrary memories but memories fragrant, quite literally, with the sense/scent of the possibility of an earlier time. This image recalls Elsie's trunk in *The Dangerous Age* (though the implication of lost opportunity is far greater in Lily's case) and anticipates the figurative terms of Newland Archer's sudden forced contemplation of the 'packed regrets and stifled memories of an inarticulate lifetime,' when faced with the prospect of meeting old and unforgotten flame, Countess Ellen Olenska, after a gap of twenty-six years, in *The Age of Innocence* (1920).<sup>114</sup> I would draw particular attention to the idea of a *disownment* of fate above. The verb 'to disown' might be read in a number of different ways in the context of Lily's recollection of the 'exquisite' (*HM* 109) moment in which Selden's love for her is vocalised and seen, fleetingly, to be reciprocated. To disown one's fate is to refuse to acknowledge it, to deny it, but, taking account of the recurring proprietary motif throughout the text, 'dis-own' here is also to cede possession of that fate, to raise the 'roof of the soul' (*HM* 122) momentarily from outside of the boundaries laid down by narrow walls, to open oneself up to incalculability beyond an authorised proprietorial framework.<sup>115</sup> This would accord with William Moddelmog's reading of the 'illegible element at the core of Lily's self' as a function of her ultimate and subversive elusion of the 'legal, domestic and literary parameters of "personality."' <sup>116</sup> The exquisite memory which Lily preserves in her trunk involves, appropriately enough, a form of self-dispossession as well as a momentary denial of the 'heavy load' she has carried throughout the book. Now, that very memory becomes the weightiest element of her load. What is packed up for departure in *The House of Mirth* is eventually and regretfully packed away in a still-

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<sup>114</sup> Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920; New York: Norton, 2003) 214.

<sup>115</sup> We might also bear in mind, in considering Lily's idea of disowning her fate here, James's admission of his original conception of Isabel Archer as that of a 'certain young woman *affronting her destiny*' ('P-PL' 486, italics mine) in his 1908 Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, quoted in Chapter One, Section 1.3. Jeremy Loving has made a strong case for the influence of *The House of Mirth* in the 1908 revisions James made to *Portrait*, suggesting that 'the new Isabel wakes up where Lily Bart begins in the twentieth century' and this echo is certainly interesting. However, though both verbs, 'to disown' and 'to affront', imply disunion, the proprietorial intonations in Wharton's version are evaded in James's, in line with the complicated proprietorial politics at play in the Preface as a whole, serving to bind Isabel architecturally rather than to cast her out, as in Lily's case. See Loving, 'The Death of Romance' 109.

<sup>116</sup> Moddelmog, 'Disowning "Personality"' 339, 340.

standing trunk, the visual expression of a still-born escape and, at the same time, an unending homelessness which is inscribed in her narrative from the beginning.<sup>117</sup>

Both metaphorical and actual loads are laid down and merge in the image of Lily's trunk above. But the crucial point to make here is that Lily (though metaphorically over-laden throughout) is never, in fact, shown to carry her own (actual) luggage in the novel. I touched earlier upon the class dimension of Wharton's representation of luggage and travelling light. Certainly, when we first encounter her through Selden, Lily's luggage remains concealed to the degree that her footing in the upper social echelons is more assured. In other words, Lily is far from being in a position where she is required to carry her own bag. Selden markedly sets her apart from the crowd, in this respect:

He led her through the throng of returning holiday makers, past sallow-faced girls in preposterous hats, and flat-chested women struggling with paper bundles and palm-leaf fans. Was it possible that she belonged to the same race? The dinginess, the crudity of this average section of womanhood made him feel how highly specialised she was. (*HM* 6)

If Lily is, in the beginning, distinguished from these women, both in class terms and as a sort of 'specialised' species, through not having to struggle with her own bundles, this distinction contributes, in large measure, to her later collapse. Kress has read this passage in terms of the prevalent conflict in *The House of Mirth* and in Wharton's work as a whole, between the private and specialised individual and the socially constructed self.<sup>118</sup> Claire Preston, on the other hand, usefully interprets her 'specialised' quality through an evolutionary framework, with a focus on the image of the 'hot-house,' earlier invoked in *Sister Carrie*, as Lily's necessary environment, an image which implies the development of refined and delicate features which cannot survive in the 'explicitly Darwinian ecosystem of *The House of Mirth*.'<sup>119</sup> When Lily gradually loses her social footing and is forced into relation with the 'average section of womanhood' struggling

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<sup>117</sup> While this final static trunk is a memorial repository, chief amongst her earliest memories of a chaotic and transient youth is the recollection of 'precipitate trips to Europe, and returns with gorged trunks and days of interminable unpacking' (*HM* 25) a hyperbolic vision lending a nightmarish quality to her concluding houseless fixity.

<sup>118</sup> Kress, *The Figure of Consciousness* 139. In a related vein, Amy Kaplan writes about Lily's relation to the spectre of the crowd in 'Crowded Spaces in *The House of Mirth*,' *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988) 88-103.

<sup>119</sup> Preston, *Edith Wharton's Social Register* 50. Wharton was notably well-versed in evolutionary theory herself and this is, by no means, an incidental association.

with their bundles - it is worth noting that the 'poorly-dressed' Nettie Struther, former subject of Lily's charity and a key representative of the 'average section of womanhood,' is conspicuously carrying a 'bundle under her arm' (*HM* 243) when Lily meets her by chance towards the end of the book as she is herself is on a downward slope - it is her specially cultivated delicacy which accounts for her inability to measure up to the task of carrying her own bundles in their midst.

That Lily is never visibly shown to manoeuvre her own bundles in *The House of Mirth* only reveals the fact that it is a task which is beyond her just as she aspires to be in a realm 'Beyond!' (to re-invoke her grey letter seal; *HM* 122) the need for such a task, a realm of lightweight immateriality or a 'republic of the spirit' (*HM* 55) as Selden calls it. Her lack of resilience makes her unfit to inhabit an indubitably material and competitive world, an unfitness which Preston relates to luggage in a passage worth quoting at some length:

In what is perhaps the most telling incident in the novel, Lily recklessly gives to Gerty's charity the money intended to pay for a very elaborate new dressing case, merely because a self-congratulatory eleemosynary mood is on her for delaying the order when (coincidentally) she runs into Gerty. (Lily would require lessons in domestic account-keeping if she were ever to find a place of her own). The luxurious valise with its many drawers and compartments is as complicated architecturally as a house, and Lily would virtually live out of it, her money, checkbook, library (a single volume of Omar), ornaments, and toilet articles all disposed in their appropriate places. [...] [F]or Lily the case would in some literal sense be "home." Instead it is casually converted into a *place* for working girls to keep them off the streets; Lily gives away her dwelling place *en passant*.<sup>120</sup>

The implication here is that if Lily had recognised the expediency of embracing dressing-case as dwelling-place in miniature, a process of adaptation to reduced circumstances and a movement towards proprietorial self-sufficiency, her end might well have been different. Lightweight immateriality is revealed as an impossible fantasy in the current system of possessive individualism but so is a form of independent female proprietorship equal to Selden's, as Lily remarks when she visits his flat: "'How delicious to have a place like this all to one's self! What a miserable thing it is to be a woman'" (*HM* 8). If, as Watts argues, Lily 'wishes to control her destiny but fails in this hope as

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<sup>120</sup> Preston, *Edith Wharton's Social Register* 70. Emphasis in original.

long as she fails to establish domestic control,' then the procurement of this 'dressing-case of the most complicated elegance' (*HM* 87) would have been tantamount on a symbolic level to taking ownership of her fate, to assuming self-possession on a small scale without fully submitting to the requirements of that larger proprietorial system.<sup>121</sup> The elaborate dressing-case suggests one solution detrimentally overlooked. This is not least because the elaborate dressing-case implies an elaborate dressing-up case and its loss symbolically points to the loss of the means by which Lily can practise the *trompe l'oeil* so essential to maintaining even a modicum of social success. In her inability to adjust in this way, to recognise in her luggage the possibility of taking control of her life, Wharton signals her unfitness for selective survival. This is in contrast to Carrie and Caren J. Town astutely identifies this difference in a reading of the two characters together: 'Because Carrie has the ability or inclination to become what she beholds around her, she will rise in a society obsessed with the material. Because Lily fails to recognize that there is no self without the appropriate trappings, she fails to survive in this materialistic world.'<sup>122</sup> In other words, Carrie cultivates the art of camouflage in direct proportion to Lily's forfeiture of the same art (and it is ironically the memory of her former skill at this art that she keeps in her trunk at the end through the dress she wore in her incarnation as Mrs Lloyd for the Bry *tableaux*.) If Carrie makes baggage her business, Lily makes baggage her loss.

This is something Wharton takes pains to amend, in creating another Lily-like character in the shape of Susy Lansing in *The Glimpses of the Moon*, a character likewise beleaguered by financial trouble but one who does not balk to the same degree at bending and making concessions where and when required, in order to maintain her place in high society. We are told that Susy has always lived among 'cosmopolitan people' and, in this, she is decidedly house-less from origin, deliberately set apart even from fellow cosmopolites, for example Charlie Strefford who has his home in the same world but another in the form of a 'great dull country-house' which gives him a 'firmer outline and a steadier footing than the other marionettes in the dance' (*GM* 46, 47). Without that same steady footing, Susy, if she does not quite make baggage her business like Carrie, decidedly refuses to make it, like Lily, her loss. Unlike her literary forbear, Susy marries Selden-equivalent Nick Lansing (as financially insecure as she is herself), not with the intention of resigning herself to an impecunious life of discomfort, but on the premise that the pair will parasitically take advantage of the honeymoon holiday home offers of their wealthy friends for as long as they justifiably can. This is a marriage

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<sup>121</sup> Watts, 'The Bachelor Girl and the Body Politic' 194.

<sup>122</sup> Town, 'The House of Mirrors' 45.

based rather precariously on luggage as opposed to fixed property and the care with which Susy is shown to oversee the packing of her portmanteau is taken to be deeply expressive of her adaptive (bordering on opportunistic) proficiency by her husband Nick soon after their marriage:

Upstairs, on the way to his dressing room, he found her in a cloud of finery which her skilful hands were forcibly compressing into a last portmanteau. He had never seen anyone pack as cleverly as Susy: the way she coaxed reluctant things into a trunk was a symbol of the way she fitted discordant facts into her life. "When I'm rich," she often said, "the thing I shall hate most will be to see an idiot maid at my trunks." (*GM* 29)

Her skill at packing, as disclosed here, is aligned, in the novel itself, with her skill at 'managing,' a trait which leads to the demise of her relations with Nick when he comes to realise the kinds of awkward concession the art of managing entails, not least turning a blind eye to the inappropriate conduct of certain benefactors.<sup>123</sup> The word itself retains a taboo-like quality once these relations are finally restored at the very end. Like Lily, Susy too is faced with the threat of discharge from a sheltered environment following Nick's impulsive abandonment of her. Her vulnerability is underlined as she seeks refuge in the home of yet another hostess: 'She had stood on the door-step, cowering among her bags, counting the instants till a step sounded and the door-knob turned, letting her in from the searching glare of the outer world...' (*GM* 147) The 'outer world' beyond the exclusive social hot-house to which she is accustomed is as much a threatening space to Susy as it is to Lily. She too carries a metaphorical load throughout the novel, from the 'leaden load' (*GM* 160) of expected future troubles to the 'weary load [of] accumulated hypocrisies' (*GM* 270) she has been compelled to unquestioningly bear.

However, unlike Lily, she has the capacity to acclimatise herself in reduced circumstances; this is largely through making the necessary moral compromises ('squalid compromises' [*HM* 23] Lily cannot bring herself to make in the same way), to fit the 'discordant facts' into her packed bag. Though Lily too stores certain discordant facts in her own trunk through Bertha Dorset's illicit love letters to Selden, it is only for a brief period and she eventually burns these documents for the sake of preserving both

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<sup>123</sup> This is also a word which recurs, in all its derivations, with virus-like frequency in *The House of Mirth* (*HM* 8, 18, 26, 29, 36, 38, 86, 101, 131, 136, 148, 154, 155, 160, 193, 195, 233). It is Lily's eventual inability to 'manage' her affairs which distinguishes her from Susy.

Selden's reputation and her own moral rectitude. It is in the retention of the compromising element that Susy departs from Lily. This retentive quality is brought to the fore by Wharton when Susy is shown to keep a gift bestowed upon her in exchange for facilitating an extramarital affair on the part of a hostess, Ellie Vanderlyn, while Nick, upon discovery of his own unwitting complicity in facilitating this affair, returns the same:

Susy's quick blood surged up. Nick had sent back the pin – the fatal pin! And she, Susy, had kept the bracelet – locked it up out of sight, shrunk away from the little packet whenever her hand touched it in packing or unpacking – but never thought of returning it, no, not once! Which of the two, she wondered, had been right? Was it not an indirect slight to her that Nick should fling back the gift to poor uncomprehending Ellie? Or was it not another proof of his finer moral sensitiveness?...And how could one tell, in their bewildering world? (*GM* 211)

This packed bag is thus equally a repository of memories, but these are memories which do not point to moments of exquisite immateriality and self-dispossession, as in Lily's trunk, but measure Susy's self-possessed, if self-demeaning, survival instinct in a materially-obsessed and 'bewildering' environment. The above passage raises the question of whether or not this capacity for accommodating discordant facts is to be admired or disparaged. It is a question which consistently comes between Susy and Nick, and the above passage harks back to a key moment earlier in the novel when Nick, on departure from one of the villas offered up for their honeymoon, goes to great lengths to remove several boxes of cigars from a locked suitcase, cigars packed up by Susy in a liberal extension of the rights of the guest within the unspoken framework of hospitality. The question is never fully resolved. Though Nick and Susy are eventually reconciled and her metaphorical load is transformed into a 'great load of bliss' (*GM* 360) that they bear as a couple, the discordant facts within this new load remain, even if these facts are obscured in the throes of happy reunion. This is a concealed disharmony mirrored in the 'troubled glory' of the glimpsed moon in the final lines. (*GM* 364) Whatever the case, in writing another *House of Mirth*, Wharton also wrote a new Lily, one evolved into a more robust and necessarily pliable form – Susy's maiden name is 'Branch' after all – and the survival of this literary offshoot has everything to do with her added aptitude for 'managing' her own bag.

None of the three female characters scrutinized here sit altogether comfortably with those other bag-bearing women we have encountered up to this point - Nora,



Florence, Nellie Bly, Ann Veronica, Elsie, Miriam etc. - in that the luggage emblem is largely forced upon them. It is not a correlation they actively seek out or desire. Their bags are not posited as emancipatory or even disruptive but as indices to domestic exclusion, vulnerability and burden. Moreover, in all cases, negative connotations of baggage are foregrounded; the taint of a rootless moral laxity in opposition to an upright architectural order is shown to be hard to shake off. In Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, baggage means a depraved form of female dependency; in Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, it signals self-insufficiency, dispossession (however ambiguous) and lack of social success; in *The Glimpses of the Moon*, it speaks of a questionable parasitism. Yet it is the capacity either to entirely transform or to adjust these symbolic charges which separates these protagonists on the level of raw endurance. Carrie turns her baggage into the symbolic foundation of her self-reliance and dramatic art. Susy makes it the symbol of her managerial competence in constrained circumstances even if this is hardly upheld as an admirable attribute; her luggage points to her continued status as a guest, rather than an independent woman, but this is a guest who is adept at maintaining a level of self-sufficiency within this dependent role. The ambiguous concluding reunion with her husband Nick offers no certainty as to her ultimate escape from this scenario. It is Lily alone who seems incapable of perceiving in her luggage anything other than her own misfortunate fate; it forms a repository of disappointed aspirations and stands as confirmation of her marginalisation, her failure to find a point of stability 'whether in the concrete image of the old house stored with visual memories, or in the conception of the house not built with hands, but made up of inherited passions and loyalties' (*HM* 248).

In claiming that Lily overlooks the emancipatory potential of her luggage to her own detriment, I am not proposing that Wharton touts the possibility of a case of fiction model, suited to the expression of the 'episodical,' as an alternative to an 'architectonic' model which frames, we might even say directs, Lily's demise, to re-invoke Wharton's own terms as cited at the beginning of this section. At best, Lily's sacrificed dressing-case must be seen to amount to no more than a disregarded survival kit: a framework for Lily's self-management on a thematic level but hardly a viable formal model on the level of novel design. In her public critical pronouncements luggage imagery is used more than once to characterise a modernist formlessness, purposelessness and a detachment from the past she found to be aesthetically reprehensible, a stance to which I have already alluded in my discussion of Richardson and in my introduction to this

section. 'No bag has been found big enough to hold the universe,' she chides in 1934.<sup>124</sup> And in another essay from the same year, already quoted in part: 'The novel in its most serious form is tending to become a sort of anthology of the author's ideas; and to those who object that a given book, labeled a novel by its author is really only a literary hold-all, the author, and most of the critics condescendingly reply that the book in question is, on the contrary, a new form of novel.'<sup>125</sup> Her critical writing maintains, in opposition to 'most of the critics,' that literary advancement must continue to reside in the idea of a 'four-square and deeply founded monument which the novel ought to be,' even if this is a monument which, with all its 'inherited passions and loyalties,' requires renewal from the inside in order to accommodate rather than to punish episodic deviation.<sup>126</sup> In this she resembles Forster. 'I believe the initial mistake of most of the younger novelists, especially in England and America,' she wrote, again in 1934, 'has been the decision that the old forms were incapable of producing new ones.'<sup>127</sup>

Yet, like Forster too, her response to modernism has been found to be more nuanced than these antagonistic critical expressions would imply, an ambiguity borne out alike in her shifting approach to literary architecture and literary luggage.<sup>128</sup> Overt professions of literary architectural loyalty are at odds, firstly with her own extremely unsettled and exiled existence (Wharton exhibited a kind of restlessness in her own life to rival any of the early deracinated modernists) and, secondly, with a formal frustration palpable at various points in her fiction, a frustration pointedly related to gendered constraints. 'Why must a girl pay so dearly for the least escape from routine? Why could one never do a natural thing without having to screen it behind a structure of artifice?' (*HM* 15) Lily asks early on in *The House of Mirth* after she has been caught in the spontaneous, episodic act of visiting Laurence Selden in his flat alone, an act initiating her subsequent misfortunes. Such remarks self-reflexively betray an inherent dissatisfaction with an architectonic 'structure of artifice' but Wharton is, by the same token, far from convinced by a contrasting feminine form of 'literary hold-all,' in line with the episodic 'escape from routine' in the Richardson vein.<sup>129</sup> It would be more

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<sup>124</sup> Wharton, 'Tendencies in Modern Fiction' 172.

<sup>125</sup> Wharton, 'Permanent Values in Fiction' 176.

<sup>126</sup> Edith Wharton, *The Writing of Fiction* (1925; New York: Octagon, 1966) 75.

<sup>127</sup> Wharton, 'Tendencies in Modern Fiction' 170.

<sup>128</sup> Wharton's complex response to modernism forms the subject of Frederick Wegener's 'Form, "Selection," and Ideology in Edith Wharton's Antimodernist Aesthetic,' *A Forward Glance* 116-138 and it is a subject developed at length in Peel's *Apart From Modernism*.

<sup>129</sup> Within the larger body of her work, Wharton does present female characters who successfully embody and embrace the episodic beyond an architectonic framework but these women are noticeably viewed, in most cases, from within the boundaries of that framework and thus at an aesthetic remove. *The Age of Innocence* is exemplary in this sense in figuring the ultimate departure of the eccentric Ellen Olenska for a bohemian life in Paris, while established married

accurate to say that, on the whole, the peculiarly feminine strand of literary luggage, which runs through her work, formed something of a significant sticking point. She cannot quite make up her mind as to what the woman's bag might mean and, across her fictional writing, we find contradictory representations and a certain hesitancy, at times, in finally judging her bag-carrying women for better or worse (this is particularly true of Sophy Viner in *The Reef*). Thus if Lily fails to find a way out of her predicament through an emancipatory bag, unlike Carrie Meeber before her, this might be said to reflect Wharton's own wholesale uncertainty as to its emancipatory value (an uncertainty which is no less apparent in the later figuration of Susy Lancing), on the one hand, and its appropriateness as a formal alternative, on the other.

Section 2.5, the concluding section of this chapter, returns us to a European literary context and will take such interpretative uncertainty surrounding the meaning of the woman's bag as its point of focus. In texts by Mansfield, Woolf and Lawrence, semantic conflict is performed through dramatized bag-related tussles and, as with Wharton, conflicting views as to the bag's emancipatory capacity is the keynote in these troubled exchanges.

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man, Newland Archer (Isabel's pointedly male successor), is left behind as the house of fiction detainee, in a deliberate rewriting of James's *The Portrait of a Lady* as 'The Portrait of a Gentleman.' As Pamela Knights has noted, to do Ellen's life artistic justice would require a 'different kind of novel altogether,' a novel with precedence given to the episodic above the architectonic, in other words, and one more in line with the idea of the 'literary hold-all' she outwardly so disparaged. Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* 79; Pamela Knights, 'Forms of Disembodiment: The Social Subject in *The Age of Innocence*', *The Cambridge Companion to Edith Wharton* 33.

## 2.5 The Persistence of the Old Chivalry: The Woman's Bag as an Object of Modernist Contention

'It is a perfectly true statement to make,' declares the 'Pour Les Dames' columnist at *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader* in 1911, 'that, though the very new woman hates to be loaded up with luggage, there are still many of the old-fashioned people who prefer to keep their own intimate belongings with them...'<sup>130</sup> We can surmise two things from this statement; firstly, by 1911, the New Woman was commonly taken to travel light and, secondly, that not all women followed suit. Moreover, despite those earlier wild projections of the ascendancy of the 'newest chivalry' and of the adventurous 'very new woman' absconding with the authorial bag, the old chivalry was not to be rooted out so abruptly. This section will contend that depictions of the struggle for the control of the woman's bag amid competing forces of new and old forms of chivalry became something of a set piece for modernist writers, providing a means of interrogating the ideal of 'feminine' emancipation upheld in Richardson's work, for example, and feeding into a wider modernist preoccupation with questions of freedom, property and their relation.<sup>131</sup> The woman's bag was, by its very nature, an object of contention, as the preceding four sections cumulatively reveal. It could signal obstructive hindrance as much as emancipation, disruption as much as narrative innovation, dependence or exclusion as much as pioneering autonomy. The main cause for dispute, however, arose from the suggestion of uncontrollability not to mention the implied lack of a fixed point of final settlement. Duquette, in comparing 'people' to 'portmanteaus' in Mansfield's 'Je ne parle pas français,' allowed for the possibility of a concluding point in his depiction of human restlessness: 'finally the Ultimate Porter swings them on to the Ultimate Train and away they rattle....'<sup>132</sup> Richardson, in her depiction of one restless woman, did not and this proved a source of much critical discontent, epitomised in the words of Greene: 'this novel, ignoring all signals, just ploughs on and on, the Saratoga, labelled this time for Switzerland, for Austria, shaking on the rack.'<sup>133</sup> The implication is that an ultimately point-less journey makes for an ultimately pointless narrative, concerns shared to no small degree by Wharton, as I have outlined. Related doubts shadow representations of

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<sup>130</sup> 'Pour Les Dames,' *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review* 4.126 (1911): 10.

<sup>131</sup> Rachel Potter, as earlier cited, provides an excellent account of the kinds of discussions which were taking place on the subject of democracy, liberalism and freedom at this time. She places a particular emphasis on the impact of the Women's Movement on the shape of this discussion, observing that 'modernists wrote obsessively about how the sexual relations between men and women held in embryo wider political questions.' Potter 8.

<sup>132</sup> Mansfield, 'Je ne Parle pas Français' 60.

<sup>133</sup> Greene, 'The Saratoga Trunk' 85-6.

the woman's bag in the modernist works to be analysed here and though they are, on the whole, less explicitly concerned with the idea of narrative form, conflicting conceptions of fiction must certainly be factored into representations of the handling of the woman's bag in these works. Does the bag simply promise an escape - from domesticity, from a patriarchal and proprietorial ideology, from associated pressures of narrative expectation - that is impossible in effect? This was an issue addressed by a number of modernist writers in conceiving of the woman who struck out for herself and this section will examine the issue through representations of the woman's bag as a contested object in a what is frequently construed as a 'sex war.' I will focus on examples from three writers in particular here, Mansfield, Woolf and D.H. Lawrence. While there is little sense of easy resolution in their works, there is evidently a desire to strike at the core of the controversy provoked by the figure of the woman who carried her own bag, rather than simply to register the effects of the phenomenon.

Before turning to these specific examples, I would like to take a moment here to stress the amplification of the chivalry debate as this related to questions both of the development of fiction and of women's mobility - initially raised, as earlier outlined, in direct relation to the New Woman at the *fin de siècle* - with the advent of the twentieth century. The interrogation of chivalry was at the forefront of the suffragette agenda though views on the subject were not always in harmony.<sup>134</sup> It absorbed literary writers too. Forster, for one, was acutely sensitive to the issue. In *A Room With A View* (1908), for instance, he invokes and sends up the archaism of the old chivalric code and attempts a distinction between the 'worn-out chivalry of sex' and the 'true chivalry that all the young may show to all the old.'<sup>135</sup> In his paper *The Feminine Note in Literature*, delivered both to men-only and mixed audiences in December 1910, his opening address to the latter audience included the line: 'There are [...] two things that this paper would not like to be. It would like not to be chivalrous, and it would like not to be

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<sup>134</sup> Though my emphasis in this section will predominantly be on the appropriation and adaptation of masculine chivalric codes by suffragettes or New Women in the early twentieth century, it must be clarified at the outset that this was no straightforward issue. Other feminist campaigners thought it better to toe the traditional chivalric line in pursuit of their goals, in line with Sarah Grand's approach, mentioned earlier. Angela V. John, in discussing the often problematic engagement of a number of male literary figures (including Wells and Galsworthy) in the suffrage cause, points out that '[w]omen suffragists also utilized the notion of female dependence on male protection as a strategy for gaining support.' The question of chivalry was thus a divisive one even amongst women activists themselves. See Angela V. John, 'Men Manners, and Militancy: Literary Men and Women's Suffrage,' *The Men's Share?: Masculinities, Male Support and Women's Suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920*, ed. Claire Eustance and Angela V. John (London: Routledge, 1997) 89.

<sup>135</sup> E.M. Forster, *A Room With A View* (1908; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) 221-222.

insulting.<sup>136</sup> The paper, enquiring into the relation between literary style and gender as well as the potential for rising above gender in writing, portrays traditional chivalry in stultifying terms - '[c]hivalry entails reaction' - through preventing men and women from making meaningful connections, on one level, and through inhibiting the sincerity of the woman writer, on another.<sup>137</sup> Yet, as my earlier discussion of *Howards End* underscores, Forster was himself torn by progressive and reactionary impulses on a formal level and these expressions on chivalry arise from a noticeably conflicted point of view where women are concerned. It is with no small irony that Woolf, who was present in the latter mixed audience, later opened her essay on Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* with the following line: 'That fiction is a lady, and a lady who has somehow got herself into trouble from which many gallant gentlemen are ready to rescue her without precisely knowing how, is a thought that must have struck her admirers.'<sup>138</sup> Woolf suggests that fiction and approaches to fiction are so embroiled in the traditional chivalric mode (and she directly implicates Forster here) that even those endeavors to 'rescue her' from chivalry are themselves somehow compromised. This is a running theme in *Pilgrimage*. Miriam periodically encounters the power of the 'charming, chivalrous gentleman' (*P:II* 208) in navigating her own authorial bag throughout the sequence and intimately relates traditional chivalric ideology to a sexual double standard: 'There is one thing worse than a dignified man and that is an undignified woman. Chesterton. It sounded so respectful; chivalrous' (*P:III* 428) Even when her lover Michael Shatov declares himself a feminist, his 'gentillesse' (*P:III* 218) in the matter is seen to be part of the wider problem:

He was serene and open in the presence of this central bitterness. If she could summon, in words, convincing evidence of the inferiority of man, he would cheerfully accept it and go on unmaimed. But a private reconstruction of standards in agreement with one person would not bring healing. It was history, literature, the way of stating records, reports, stories, the whole method of statement of things from the beginning that was on a false foundation. (*P:III* 218)

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<sup>136</sup> E.M. Forster, *The Feminine Note in Literature: An Hitherto Unpublished Manuscript*, ed. George Piggford (London: Cecil Woolf, 2001) 17. The two audiences were the Cambridge Apostles or Conversazione Society (men-only) and the Bloomsbury Friday Club (mixed).

<sup>137</sup> Forster, *The Feminine Note in Literature* 17.

<sup>138</sup> Woolf, 'Is Fiction An Art?' *Essays* (Vol. IV) 457.

*Pilgrimage* itself might be viewed as a 'private reconstruction of standards' and Michael's 'serene' support here is tantamount, in figurative terms, to a well-intentioned, we might even say 'gallant' offer to help carry her Saratoga trunk for the duration of her journey without thinking too deeply about what that journey or his gesture might mean. But if Miriam herself advocates a different form of chivalry in *Pilgrimage* - and there are indicative nods in this direction - it is cast as a *writing against* the whole masculine method of things rather than a gender-neutral *re-writing* of that method, thus keeping the idea of sex very much in the chivalric equation in line with her idea of creating a 'feminine equivalent' in formal and stylistic terms.<sup>139</sup> I invoke Forster and Richardson here primarily to accentuate the fact that chivalry was a sensitive and controversial issue at this time and that, moreover, fraught representations of chivalry were bound up with the question of what it meant for a woman to write and the future of a 'feminine equivalent' as such. The three examples to be imminently considered put the possibilities of separating a 'true chivalry' from a 'worn-out' or 'old' chivalry of sex, on the one hand, or further cultivating that decidedly feminine 'newest' chivalry, on the other, to the test. And these are tests carried out around the question of whether the emancipatory bag of the woman represents a false escape route corresponding to the 'false foundation' of the house, a question which surfaces increasingly in modernist writing. As Rebecca West observes in 1916: 'One will never really believe in the alleged magnificence of the Younger Generation till one reads a book about the Daughter who Stayed at Home and the father who, in consequence, started at the sound of her voice as at the crack of a whip.'<sup>140</sup>

In her 1915 story, 'The Little Governess,' Mansfield makes the struggle for the control of the woman's bag one of the key narrative concerns. The story describes the ill-fated adventures of a young girl on her way to take up the post of governess with a family in Germany, placing her in that liminal social position alike occupied by Miriam Henderson and, before both characters, Miss Prism.<sup>141</sup> On her journey, the girl is

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<sup>139</sup> To give an example, she expresses her admiration, on one occasion, for a new co-worker in terms of 'her way of gathering all spears to her own breast' (*P:III* 485), a description which invokes the iconography of Joan of Arc. Joan of Arc was a figure commonly held up by suffragette activists in the 1900s and 1910s, as the figurehead of a new chivalric mode tailored for women.

<sup>140</sup> Rebecca West, 'The Girl Who Left Home,' *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West 1911-1917*, ed. Jane Marcus (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982) 323.

<sup>141</sup> There is a long literary tradition of connecting governesses to luggage, caught as these figures are between dependence and independence. The beginning of the pivotal wedding-night chapter of *Jane Eyre* (1847), to cite one prime example, finds Jane uncomfortably confronting a row of trunks packed for her planned honeymoon. Her reluctance to affix the accompanying labels inscribed 'Mrs Rochester,' a name she cannot quite identify with, starkly exposes the nineteenth-century proprietary plight of the woman. See Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847; London: Vintage-Random, 2007) 332.

punished in turn by a porter and a waiter for her refusal to tip them, adequately or at all, for carrying her dress-basket. A dress-basket is a type of suitcase. Nominally-speaking, it intimates something more juvenile than the dressing-cases the girl spots in the hands of occupiers of the 'Ladies' Cabin' on the boat over and in which she spies certain 'mysterious rustling little packages.'<sup>142</sup> The distinction between these two kinds of case suggests a distinction between an initiated and an uninitiated sexuality and the young girl's concern for her case, coupled inharmoniously with her desire for adventure, tells a tale of a sexual confusion in a context of transition. This tale of sexual confusion is in keeping with contentious contemporary debates relating to the question of female sexuality, as previously highlighted in relation to Michaëlis's *The Dangerous Age* and Freud's 'Dora'. The girl's refusal to pay porter and waiter ('with frigid English simplicity' ['LG' 185] in the latter case) anticipates her eventual refusal sexually to gratify a seemingly harmless old man she naïvely allows to act as her chaperone for much of the journey. The punishing consequences of her withholding of payment – in the first place, the porter removes the '*Dames Seules*' ('LG' 178, emphasis in original) designation of her carriage, paving the way for the entrance of the old man, and, in the second, the waiter knowingly renders her suspect in the eyes of her prospective employers - serve to lay bare the idealistic simplicity of the image of the emancipated woman in a context where the sexual and economic roots of the existing social power structure are so gnarled and entangled.

Traditional chivalry is disturbingly cast in the light of sexual and monetary exchange in this story. The covertly discriminatory and commodified basis for the interaction between the sexes was proving a problematic sticking-point for the figure of the newly independent woman at this time, as outlined by Cicely Hamilton in her 1909 *Marriage as a Trade*: '...what is commonly known as "chivalry" is not a spontaneous virtue or impulse on the part of modern man, but the form in which he pays his debt for value received from woman.'<sup>143</sup> This state of affairs is, in fact, unsettlingly reversed in the figure of the porter in Mansfield's story, who is shown to demand reimbursement rather than to reimburse through his actions, thus brutally exposing the remunerative expectation which underlies 'what is commonly known as chivalry,' as this is subsequently illustrated in the sordid behaviour of the old man later on.<sup>144</sup> The little

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<sup>142</sup> Mansfield, 'The Little Governess' 175. Hereafter abbreviated 'LG' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>143</sup> Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade* 125.

<sup>144</sup> If imaginative portraits are anything to go by, porters had a very poor reputation at this time. They are on the list of those 'blasted' in Wyndham Lewis's Vorticist journal in 1914 and portrayed as 'brutishly preoccupied [...] figures moving in an evil dream' (*P:IV* 11) by Richardson late on in *Pilgrimage*. In a 1925 article published by the *LMS Railway Magazine*, affiliated to the



governess is warned from the outset by the 'lady at the Governess Bureau' that in order to become a '[woman] of the world' ('LG' 175), she must adopt a general attitude of distrust and she maintains this attitude, manifested in her concern for her bag, throughout her dealings with the porter. What is noticeable, however, is the degree to which she is, by contrast, taken in by the old man and this is the direct result of a class-based bias, intrinsic to the practice of chivalry at its very source. One of the reasons the little governess distrusts and is, by turn, treated with such disdain by both porter and waiter is because, as a working woman herself, she is scarcely above them on a social and economic scale. By the same token, she is deceived by the old man precisely because he appears aristocratic – "Herr Regierungsrat...." He had a title! Well, it was *bound* to be all right!' ('LG' 184, emphasis in original) – and treats her like a little lady rather than like a little governess. Her posture as an independent agent, a self-sufficient woman of the world who carries her own bag, is soon subdued under the protective agency of her 'titled' chaperone: 'He found her a porter, disposed of his own luggage in a few words, guided her through the bewildering crowd out of the station...' ('LG' 185). The ease with which the old man disposes of his own luggage in a few co-conspiratorial words, much like the husband's engagement of the carriage in the earlier 'Virgin Soil,' reveals a system designed to facilitate the desires of men, principally, but, more specifically, men of a certain class and means.

The process by which the desires of the girl are eventually and systematically superseded over the course of the story can be measured through her increasing disregard for and loss of control over her dress-basket. It is entirely forgotten in her hotel room while she enjoys the pleasures of Munich for the day under the dubious patronage of the old man and we are given a jolting reminder of the implications of this disregard when she returns in distress to the hotel room that evening only to find herself in a position of acute vulnerability at the hands of the waiter. In the final lines, she looks on as the waiter is shown to 'pounce' ('LG' 189) on the luggage of a new arrival, just as the porter earlier 'pounced' ('LG' 176) on her own:

"That's it! that's it!" he thought. "That will show her." And as he swung the new arrival's box on to his shoulders – hoop! – as though he were a giant and the box

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railway company of the same name, the writer is compelled to defend the figure of the porter against such the obvious bad press, with a particular appeal to women travellers: 'There is no one in England more ready to help the solitary female passenger than the average porter...' See Wyndham Lewis, 'Manifesto - I,' *BLAST* 1 (1914): 13; V.M. Green, 'Smiling at the Porter,' *LMS Railway Magazine* 2 (1925): 279.

a feather, he minced over again the little governess's words "*Gehen Sie. Gehen Sie sofort. Shall I! Shall I!*" he shouted to himself. ('LG' 189, emphasis in original)

This is a blatant expression of victory, not least of gigantic over miniature, and the little governess's defeat here is prefigured from the beginning through her thwarted attempt for control of her own bag in her dealings with the porter. I would suggest that this earlier bag-related struggle is intended to reflect the wider struggle to redefine the relationship between man and woman on new grounds, as evidenced in previous examples, and it is characterised as a losing battle:

"But I don't want a porter." What a horrible man! "I don't want a porter. I want to carry it myself." She had to run to keep up with him, and her anger, far stronger than she, ran before her and snatched the bag out of the wretch's hand. ('LG' 176)

The disembodied anger of the little governess is shown to have no real agency. Her failed assumption of self-*governance* through carrying her own bag, not to mention her punishment for resisting a system in which she is posited as both helplessly dependent and indebted, figures the emancipated woman as a disembodied phantom. The image of the dress-basket works on many levels in this figuration. On one level, it is an appropriate prop for the dramatization of the conflict in question and it situates that conflict socially as well as spatially. On another level, the object of the dress-basket defines the conflict as sexual and it is not inconceivable that Mansfield was directly nodding to Freud here, whose comments on luggage in *The Interpretation of Dreams* were available in English from 1913. Lastly, it is upheld as a binding rather than a liberating element, as set against more affirmative conceptions of bag-carrying women who are shown to succeed in escaping an inhibiting ideological framework replicated in the image of the patriarchal house. In Mansfield's conception, the bag - to which the woman is tied but over which she has no firm control - *is* this ideological framework writ small. Pamela Dunbar has read this story as a deliberate subversion of the fairy-tale motif, specifically 'Cinderella,' and I would add that, in that same subversive swoop, the emancipated woman of the world, the woman who carries her own bag, is simultaneously dismissed as a fairy-tale figure in an unrealistic fantasy.<sup>145</sup> Published in the same year as *Pointed Roofs*, the little governess is like a disempowered literary

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<sup>145</sup> Pamela Dunbar, *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997) 62-4.

shadow of Richardson's Miriam Henderson and hers is the 'emancipatory bag' in inverted commas. The old chivalry is shown to topple the 'newest' chivalry in Mansfield's story.<sup>146</sup>

Woolf was equally well attuned to the significance of the attempt of the woman to carry her own bag as well as the wider meaning of her failure or inability to do so. At the beginning of the third chapter of her 1922 novel, *Jacob's Room*, Jacob Flanders is externally assessed by an elderly lady, Mrs Norman, on the carriage of a train. Intuiting a threat, largely arising from her conviction 'that men are dangerous,' she discreetly reaches into her dressing-case to ensure that she has a means of defence to hand in the form of a 'scent bottle and a novel from Mudie's,' both well-set to be pitched effectively if necessary.<sup>147</sup> Woolf was here drawing on the popular knowledge of one mode of suffragette militancy in the 1900s and 1910s, where weapons of aggression were stowed in innocuously ladylike Dorothy hand-bags, or 'Dorothy bomb-bags,' as a 1908 *Punch* article dubs them.<sup>148</sup> The following 1913 *Punch* cartoon, featuring a suffragette with a hammer in her handbag, explicitly illustrates this popular association:



Figure 9: George Morrow, 'The Spread of Tango: Arrest of a Militant Suffragette,' *Punch* 145 (1913): 458.

Dangerfield too draws attention to the notoriety of the woman's bag in describing the intensification of W.S.P.U. activism in the early 1910s: 'Tall commissionaires peered out

<sup>146</sup> This is, of course, not always the case with Mansfield and we find other examples of the woman's bag denoting something far more powerfully subversive, 'Something Childish But Very Natural' (1914) and 'The Stranger' (1920), for instance. Her work, as a whole, provides rich material for the study of women's relation to luggage, from a range of angles.

<sup>147</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (1922; London: Penguin, 1992) 23. Hereafter abbreviated 'JR' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>148</sup> Anstey Guthrie, 'Bombs for Women!' *Punch* 135 (1908): 26. A Dorothy hand-bag was a fabric bag with a drawstring, which served both as closing mechanism and handle. Such a delicate and 'feminine' form of bag was, no doubt, a tactical choice on the part of the suffragettes.

into the streets, gazing, with an angry but wincing eye, upon any unaccompanied female, if she happened to carry a bag or a parcel.'<sup>149</sup> So powerful did this association become that, by 1912, *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader* reports on the demise of the 'vogue for hand-bags of the Dorothy type' and that 'ladies are now chary about carrying Dorothy bags nowadays lest they become a "suspect."<sup>150</sup> Mrs Norman is certainly not presented as a hammer-wielding militant suffragette but her agitated impulse to aggressive retaliation is deliberately set against a broader pre-war context of political dissatisfaction on the part of the woman, a context in which 'women's militancy,' in Wilson's words, 'was justified as an assertion of their own chivalry and as an exposure of the hypocrisy of the chivalry of men.'<sup>151</sup> Such a terminology was, of course, employed to counter the belief that women needed the protection that the old chivalry purported to provide. In the new feminine chivalric order, the woman's bag became the abiding symbol of self-sufficiency but, equally, of aggression, as an anonymous reporter in a 1917 article from *The Globe* suggests, with tongue firmly in cheek: 'It is obvious that there is going to be a sex war, and with devilish cunning women are preparing for it. When the ranks are locked in deadly combat, the hand-bag will be revealed in its true light – as a weapon of offence.'<sup>152</sup>

Like Mansfield, however, Woolf shows that it is also through the bag that the old chivalry is shown to assert itself and to counter any resistive impulses. Mrs Norman's assessment of Jacob's threat by the 'infallible test of appearance' (*JR* 23) is shown to be entirely misguided. Far from proving a danger to her, he comes to her assistance on arrival at the station by carrying her dressing-case onto the platform in an act of awkward chivalry, thus confounding her original perception of him as potentially dangerous. Ostensibly about the limitations of gaining any insight into character through external appearance, the same passage - more obliquely and thus subversively - tackles the subject of the appeasement of a woman's impulse towards aggressive retaliatory action through the old chivalric gesture, more specifically here the handling of the woman's bag, first projected as weapon-dispenser. Such a reading is elucidated further upon situating Mrs Norman's impulse to defensive aggression here within the larger outline of Woolf's writing. Mrs Norman's initial anxiety is prompted by a sense of spatial infringement. 'This is not a smoking carriage' (*JR* 23), she protests as Jacob enters. However, we know from Woolf's earlier novel *The Voyage Out* (1915) that this

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<sup>149</sup> Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* 171.

<sup>150</sup> 'The Shop-Wrecking Mania,' editorial, *The Bag Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review* 5.175 (1912): 4.

<sup>151</sup> Wilson, 'She in her "Armour"' 179.

<sup>152</sup> 'The Deadly Hand-bag,' quoted in *The Bag Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review* 11.453 (1917): 25.

objection, and the ensuing urge to aggression that it provokes, is also a reaction to a sexual inequality made manifest in the spatial arrangement of the train. To Terence Hewet's mind, in that novel, the allocation of train carriages exhibits a prejudicial and skewed form of sexual representation:

"[W]e're always writing about women – abusing them, or jeering at them, or worshipping them; but it's never come from women themselves. I believe we still don't know in the least how they live, or what they feel or what they do precisely [...] It's the man's view that's represented, you see. Think of a railway train: fifteen carriages for men who want to smoke. Doesn't it make your blood boil? If I were a woman, I'd blow someone's brains out."<sup>153</sup>

While the operation of traditional chivalry is explicitly revealed in a grotesque light in Mansfield's story, Woolf is more understated, though no less potent, in her criticism. If Mrs Norman gets Jacob's measure wrong in practice, she does not get it wrong in theory. In other words, his patently disinterested courtesy in carrying her bag proves he is not to be practically feared as a dangerous man but that that same courteous action must also be seen to form an insidious part of a larger ideological structure which allows 'fifteen carriages for men who want to smoke' and, correspondingly, not to forget, Jacob's conscription. Mrs Norman's aggressive impulse is quelled just as the little governess's anger is rendered ineffectual in its disembodied form; the temporary loss of control of a bag is at issue in both cases. Woolf and Mansfield suggest that the old chivalry functions, on an implicit level, to conceal an inherent inequality and to contain a 'sex war,' to re-invoke the amplificatory note of the *Globe* article, and it follows that, in this, the woman's bag becomes a contested article, a prop with which old and new forms of chivalry compete for precedence.

D.H. Lawrence likewise depicts a sexual struggle in and around the object of a woman's bag towards the end of *Women in Love* (1920) but the emphasis is alternatively placed in this instance, striking a sort of syncopated note in juxtaposition with Mansfield and Woolf. The bag belongs to the progressive Gudrun Brangwen and it plays a critical role within her protracted conflict with her lover, Gerald Crich. This time, the chivalric manipulation is shown to be all on the woman's side and it is the man who is left in a position of frustration, turning the balance of power on its head. It is a passage worth quoting at some length and begins at a point where Gudrun, sensing a waning influence in her relationship with Gerald, attempts to recover a position of dominance:

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<sup>153</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (1915; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) 200-1.

Summoning all her strength, she said, in a full resonant, nonchalant voice that was forced out with all her remaining self-control:

“Oh, would you mind looking in that bag behind there and giving me my — ”

Here her power fell inert. “My what – my what - ?” she screamed in silence to herself.

But he had started round, surprised and startled that she should ask him to look in her bag, which she always kept so *very* private to herself. She turned, now her face white, her dark eyes blazing with uncanny overwrought excitement. She saw him stooping to the bag, undoing the loosely buckled strap, inattentive.

“Your what?” he asked.

“Oh, a little enamel box – yellow – with a design of a cormorant plucking her breast - ”

She went towards him, stooping her beautiful, bare arm, and deftly turned some of her things, disclosing the box, which was exquisitely painted.

“That is it, see,” she said, taking it from under his eyes.

And he was baffled now. He was left to fasten up the bag, whilst she swiftly did up her hair for the night, and sat down to unfasten her shoes. She would not turn her back to him any more.

He was baffled, frustrated, but unconscious. She had the whip hand over him now.<sup>154</sup>

This rather perplexing exchange defies easy interpretation but this, as will become apparent, is part of the point. We might begin by asking how exactly Gudrun regains the 'whip hand' over Gerald? In the first place, she calls for his assistance in the traditional chivalric mode by setting him a task. Yet this is not a task which falls within the scope of the traditional chivalric duty of the man. It is, in fact, a task more suited to a lady's maid and designed to emasculate him, to render him socially inferior as well as to orchestrate his failure. In staging this failure, Gudrun not only distorts the terms of traditional chivalry but, in line with some of the *fin-de-siècle* examples earlier studied, she also overturns them by taking charge of the situation and accomplishing the task he cannot complete. The 'newest chivalry' ostensibly triumphs here and Gudrun succeeds in carrying the advantage of power where the little governess and Mrs Norman respectively *miscarry* in effect.

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<sup>154</sup> D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (1920; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979) 467. Emphasis in original.

This reading is complicated, however, by a simultaneous interrogation of the concept of possession, on Lawrence's part. The novel itself manifests a deep fascination with human possessiveness and, moreover, with the conflict of those irreconcilable human impulses - material and emotional - towards freedom and self-sufficiency, on the one hand, and possessive attachment, on the other. It provides no definite resolution to this conflict and the passage we have been looking at presents a microcosmic depiction of the impasse. It should be noted that Gudrun's overt denial of the terms of ownership is marked. She asks for '*that* bag' and '*a* little enamel box' (emphasis added) anticipating her later profession of a desire to get away from people who 'own things'.<sup>155</sup> When it comes to using the possessive pronoun, she falters and her 'power falls inert.' Regaining this power and thus the 'whip hand' over Gerald requires exercising that possessive pronoun and thus entering into a proprietorial relation, one in which *she* gains the balance of power but compromises, in turn, her own autonomy. It is implied that Gudrun, 'her dark eyes blazing with uncanny overwrought excitement,' is *possessed* by some kind of sinister force just as she is in the act of possessing. This is a circumstance underlined by the enamel box with a design of a cormorant plucking her breast, a re-working of the traditional Eucharistic symbol of a pelican piercing her breast to feed her young with her own blood. Through the substitution of the cormorant, a bird popularly associated with the devil and reputed to have a voracious appetite, the original image of Christian self-sacrifice becomes an image of satanic self-destruction.<sup>156</sup> For Lawrence, to own is to be owned. By confusing these figures - that of possessor and possessed - not to mention the balance of power between them, in this sinister way, he implies a disconcerting correlation. Both figures have meaning only in proprietorial relation. In other words, in assuming proprietary power over Gerald, Gudrun is herself proprietarily bound.

In presenting Gudrun as the subject of control as much as the controlling subject, Lawrence undermines her ostensible victory in this scene. How should we read this in

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<sup>155</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love* 522.

<sup>156</sup> Lawrence wrote *Women in Love* while his friend Catherine Carswell was writing her own novel *Open the Door!* (1920) about a modern woman by the name of Joanna Bannerman. The two corresponded during this process and advised on each other's work. What is intriguing about the exchange in the context of this discussion is that Lawrence playfully jokes about painting Carswell a 'phoenix on a box' as a present in 1915. Carswell then incorporates a version of this box, with a painted bird of paradise rather than a phoenix, as a key symbol in her novel, after a further exchange with Lawrence on the subject of an appropriate bird to symbolise the character of Joanna. Gudrun's enamel box with its cormorant must certainly have been a reference to Joanna's and she must be seen as a negative inversion of Carswell's modern woman in this respect. See D.H. Lawrence, *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, ed. George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981) 261; Catherine Carswell, *Open the Door!* (1920; Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996) 328-30.

the context of the other examples we have been exploring here then? As an exposure of the unnatural inclinations or destructive force of what Lawrence was to refer to, in a later essay, as the 'cocksure woman'?<sup>157</sup> Is it a subtle reassertion of male-oriented sexual politics in line with Kate Millett's radical attack on Lawrence in the 1970s?<sup>158</sup> Should we view it, on the other hand, as an illustration, through inversion, of the proprietorial submission of the man *as well as* the woman in the traditional chivalric relation? Is it a critique of the 'property instinct,' as one character in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1929) later dubs it, over and above the chivalric impulse?<sup>159</sup> Or is it an account of the unsettling relation between the two? And should we read the cormorant image less as a denunciation of the 'cocksure' form of modern woman and more a skewed vision of Christianity as set against a wartime backdrop? The point is that all of these readings have some validity. Further to this, none of these interpretations is allowed to assume complete validity, that is to say, to fully *triumph* and the woman's bag is deliberately used to convey this interpretative contention. The particular struggle surrounding the woman's bag is an interpretative struggle as much as it is a sexual struggle in Lawrence's text. In her introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to D.H. Lawrence*, Anne Fernihough, in pointing to the recent critical embrace of the disorienting elements in Lawrence's work, remarks upon the '*bafflement* and the fascination of many of Lawrence's readers and [...] the difficulty in doing critical justice to his works.'<sup>160</sup> The interpretative 'bafflement' highlighted by Fernihough is itself inscribed in this passage through the repetition of Gerald's own 'baffled' response to the illegibility of the '*very private*' self purportedly held by Gudrun's bag.<sup>161</sup> But even more importantly, the contents of that same bag are also illegible to Gudrun. Her attempted expression of the '*very private*' self within the bag falls into ellipsis - 'My what-?' - until filled by Lawrence himself with a plethora of conflicting suggestions. Rachel Potter, with a particular eye to Lawrence as well as Ford Madox Ford, has surveyed the way in which women were

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<sup>157</sup> D.H. Lawrence, 'Cocksure Women and Hensure Men,' *D.H. Lawrence: Selected Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950) 31-4. This was written in 1928 and first published in *The Forum* in January 1929. The essay, reiterating the bird-imagery of *Women in Love*, sets up an opposition between the traditional intuitive power of the 'hensure' woman and what Lawrence regarded as a counter-intuitive 'cocksure' inclinations of the modern woman.

<sup>158</sup> Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (1970; London: Hart-Davis, 1971) 237-93.

<sup>159</sup> D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994) 32.

<sup>160</sup> Anne Fernihough, introduction, *The Cambridge Companion to D.H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 3. Emphasis added.

<sup>161</sup> It is worth noting that the two words employed by Fernihough, 'bafflement' and 'fascination,' occur themselves in *Women in Love*, in their variant forms, a total of nine and thirty-three times respectively. The kind of interpretative impasse exhibited in the passage under scrutiny is a consistent feature of the novel.



shown, again and again, to 'embody the contradictions of modernity' and the woman's bag here stands as a framework for such contradictory imperatives and impulses.<sup>162</sup>

I began this chapter by describing the emancipatory potential of the symbol of the bag as well as its special historical significance for women, as identified by Ibsen, Bly and Egerton, while equally highlighting, in the section that followed, the simultaneous sense of its disruptive capacity, as pinpointed by Wilde and Gissing together with a number of *fin-de-siècle* cartoonists. I subsequently argued that such emancipatory and disruptive associations are positively channelled by Michaëlis and Richardson, in their respective works, in order to produce an innovatory new conception of narrative form in a markedly 'feminine' vein. Wharton, a writer noticeably caught between paradigms of house and case, offers a necessary contrast to these figures in portraying a woman, Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth*, who cannot constructively embrace that emancipatory potential and can only interpret her luggage as the defining emblem of her impoverished exclusion. This last section has witnessed the collision of all of these conflicting meanings through a selection of works by modernist writers, Mansfield, Woolf and Lawrence. The struggle to control the woman's bag in each of these examples, but particularly so in Lawrence's case, must be seen as a struggle to control meaning in the context of the competing interests of new and old forms of chivalry, new and old understandings of the relations between the sexes. But above all, the very idea of escape from the proprietorial paradigm of the house of fiction is rendered problematic in this last section and it is as such that Mrs Brown's bag assumes importance as an overlooked detail in Woolf's seminal essay, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown,' referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Woolf offers us, as an exemplar of modern character fit for modern fiction, a portrait of an ordinary woman outside of the fictional house and on a moving train carriage, a woman 'unmoored from her anchorage' ('MBMB' 74), and, emphatically, a woman who carries her own bag. Yet, this is not quite figured as the triumphant gesture of emancipation we might suppose it to be, as set within the lineage we have been considering in this chapter as a whole. For a start, Mrs Brown is no such feisty modern woman and, if anything, her denial of Mr Smith's conventional courtesy in reaching for her bag amounts, in the imagined context, to a seemingly paltry retention of control in an otherwise desperate situation. The 'man of business,' the 'respectable' ('MBMB' 72) Mr Smith is palpably no 'Mr Smithereen' and Mrs. Brown herself is no burly 'Miss Sampson,' to refer back to that *fin-de-siècle* cartoon. The burliness is decidedly on the other side while Mrs Brown is portrayed as 'extremely small' ('MBMB' 72) and visibly apprehensive. There is no question of Mrs Brown's offering to carry Mr Smith's

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<sup>162</sup> Potter, *Modernism and Democracy* 51.

'stout leather bag' ('MBMB' 72), a bag as prominently placed, in this passage, as Mrs Brown's own. Indeed, this seems to me an encounter as much between two bags as two beings, an encounter, in other words, with proprietary implications. Woolf makes one rather telling surmise in her account of Mrs Brown: 'Perhaps she was going to London to sign some documents *to make over some property*. Obviously against her will she was *in Mr Smith's hands*' ('MBMB' 73, emphasis added). Mr Smith's 'stout leather bag' takes on an ominously acquisitive aspect in this light and Mrs Brown's seemingly paltry retention of control in denying Mr Smith's chivalric gesture acquires symbolic potency. By refusing to 'make over' her portable property to 'Mr Smith's hands,' she herself remains out of his hands and retains a measure of 'heroic' ('MBMB' 74) autonomy far beyond that achieved by the little governess or even Gudrun.

Mrs Brown's visceral attachment to her bag must, by the same token, be seen as a vehement expression of continued attachment to a proprietorial framework as opposed to a rejection of the very notion of stable property in line with previous conceptions of bag-carrying women. Her bag is presented as a touchstone of continuity at a point of instability. This is a curious paradoxical point at the centre of an essay which sets out to undermine the materialistic bent of Edwardian fiction, the 'enormous stress upon the fabric of things' ('MBMB' 82) manifested in such writing. It is the material fabric of Mrs Brown's world which is presumed to be under threat in her encounter with Mr Smith. Though Woolf pleads for the character of Mrs Brown to be 'rescued' by Georgian novelists 'at whatever cost of life, limb, and damage to valuable property' ('MBMB' 84), her own chosen sketch offers us a figure seeking to preserve herself *through* preserving her 'valuable property.' Mrs Brown's bag stands for Mrs Brown's house. Correspondingly, Woolf's essay subtly holds to the image of the house of fiction at the same time as it urges that house to be destroyed. It is no small wonder that her appeal on behalf of the woman writer several years later in 1929 was for a metaphorical room within the canonical house and not for a seat on a non-smoking counter-cultural train carriage (although, as Bowlby has pointed out, this essay is more mobile in emphasis than the title would have us believe.)<sup>163</sup> 'But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction - what, has that got to do with a room of one's own?'<sup>164</sup> Woolf's 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' demonstrates that the struggle surrounding the bag – this is a timely moment to re-insert Susan B. Anthony's words:

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<sup>163</sup> 'It might seem outlandish to think of *A Room of One's Own*, which is all about the importance of an inside, personal space for the woman writer, as having any connection with the links between women, walking and writing in Woolf's work. Yet the book is structured throughout by an imaginary ramble...' Bowlby, *Still Crazy After All These Years* 16.

<sup>164</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929; London: Hogarth, 1959) 5.

'[w]oman must have a purse of her own' - was a necessary and integral stage in the struggle surrounding the room but, further to this, that the woman's bag worked exceptionally well in itself as a means of encapsulating modernist contradiction in the attempted renegotiation of three key terms in relation: 'woman,' 'property' and 'freedom.'

**CHAPTER 3:**  
**Luggage Between the Wars**

***Introduction: Freedom by Necessity***

We envy streams and houses that are sure,  
 But, doubtful, artiled to error, we  
 Were never nude and calm as a great door,  
 And never will be faultless like our fountains:  
 We live in freedom by necessity,  
 A mountain people dwelling among mountains.

W.H. Auden, 'Sonnet XVIII,' April 1938<sup>1</sup>

After an almost exclusive concentration on women's luggage in Chapter Two, the scope of Chapter Three will be more expansive and will loosely focus on the period between the two world wars, allowing for some latitude on either side. I have demonstrated the import of women's luggage as a subversive symbol for the New Woman and as a beacon of early modernist innovation in miniature. I have equally dwelt on figurations of the woman's bag as revelatory of the impedimental difficulties and pressures attending any endeavour to achieve an uncompromised form of freedom. The following more inclusive discussion of the use of luggage, both men's and women's, addresses the intensification of these issues during the interwar period. It is not my intention to imply that the turn-of-the-century preoccupation with women's bags directly incited a more general sense of the bag's symbolic potential, though this might well be true in some cases. (It is worth adding parenthetically here that the special implications of bags for women endures throughout this period - it is an appeal which endures in the popular imagination to this day - and this is something I will come back to in my conclusion.) It would be more accurate to say, rather, that the figure of the woman who carried her own bag embodied an exclusionary form of dispossession as well as a departure from or challenge to a proprietorial status quo which came to be of driving importance for a range of modernist writers, whatever their sex. In other words, the emancipatory, disruptive, progressive, conflictual and ambivalent connotations of the woman's bag, as I have described, came to resonate more widely, making luggage-related metaphors more widely applicable. The specific question of the freedom of the woman becomes the question of the freedom of the individual in the face of rising political forms of

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<sup>1</sup> W.H. Auden, 'Sonnet XVIII' from 'Sonnets from China,' *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (1976; London: Faber, 1991) 193-4. All further references to Auden's poetry will come from this edition.

authoritarian oppression in Europe between the wars, forms of totalitarian and bureaucratic power which subjected each and every person to external systems of control, and rendered the condition of dispossession a more prevailing prospect. Luggage carries over as a vital metaphor through which to explore contradictory desires for freedom and security more broadly in literature of the 1920s and 1930s. It further carries over as a vital metaphor to probe the significance of the miniature, whether as subversive or vulnerable element, as set against gigantic, often unseen and unnameable, forces, to re-invoke Stewart's terms.

Having discussed literary luggage up to this point in conflict with and in relation to the house of fiction *and* as a significant motif in representations of shifting gender relations at the turn of the twentieth century, I have touched little upon the more immediately obvious line of association of luggage in relation to modernism; that is to say, the importance of the luggage paradigm in the stock sketch of the itinerant modernist artist and exile. Tropes of exile and alienation have long been foregrounded in modernist criticism, as I mentioned in my introduction, and luggage must necessarily be written into this picture. The most salient feature of the modernist luggage paradigm, as it is employed by early modernists, is its elevation of an ideal of artistic freedom; *either* through facilitating a posture of political and aesthetic detachment *or* through hinting at emergent possibilities of unfixed multiplicity and mobility inherent in the idea of a continually re-packaged, continually moving self within a new consumer-oriented culture. I will look at examples of both lines of usage as we go along. However, my broader aim in this chapter as a whole is to show how modernist luggage progressively attains an aspect of interrogatory self-reflexiveness in works by late modernist writers through the 1930s and into the 1940s. The first and third sections of this chapter will provide general thematic overviews, incorporating a wide array of works and writers, while the interwoven second and fourth sections will form author-specific case studies. Section 3.1 will consider the development of the luggage model for literary form from modernism to late modernism in the context of the disturbing transformation of the meaning of those idealised interwar activities of 'hasty packing' and 'travelling light.' Section 3.2 hones in on the fictional and non-fictional work of Elizabeth Bowen, with the inclusion of an extended close reading of *The House in Paris* as well as an account of her intertextual engagement with Forster's *Howards End*. If the formulation of literary architecture is bound up with Henry James, then the formulation of literary luggage is inseparable from Bowen. Yet her 'case of fiction' model must be seen to be just as problematic as James's house model, as I will elucidate. Section 3.3 attends more specifically to questions of character and character judgement as conveyed through the

recurring interwar motif of the customs inspection, charting the shift from a sense of early modernist intrigue produced by the figure of the stranger with a case to a sense of late modernist suspicion. The chapter will culminate in Section 3.4 with a reading of Henry Green's autobiographical *Pack My Bag* in conjunction with his fictional *Party Going*, both published around the outbreak of the Second World War and works in which late modernist luggage is at its most self-reflexive.

This self-reflexive aspect can be seen to derive, on one level, from the growing sense of the fragility of that modernist ideal of artistic freedom in the face of escalating political anxiety and international tensions and, on another level, from the implied breakdown of the distance between the avant-garde artist and the marketplace. In other words, the figure of the modernist literary exile is, in late modernist work, overshadowed by the figure of the refugee, on the one hand, and undermined by the figure of the tourist, on the other. Both of these intruding figures will surface in this account, the refugee most persistently. Caren Kaplan has, in recent years, taken issue with the promulgation, by critics, of the idea of modernist exile in ahistorical terms for the purpose of creating an exclusive category of aesthetic displacement:

Like all symbolic formations, Euro-American modernist exile culls meaning from various cultural, political, and economic sources, including the lived experiences of people who have been legally or socially expelled from one location and prevented from returning. [...] The Euro-American formation "exile," then, marks a place of mediation in modernity where issues of political conflict, commerce, labor, nationalist realignments, imperialist expansion, structures of gender and sexuality, and many other issues all become recoded.<sup>2</sup>

Kaplan is concerned with destabilising such a formation through demanding a more rigorous approach to the specificities of various and distinctive terms of displacement – as set against the frequent ‘conflation of exile and expatriation’ together with the dismissal of tourism, by certain modernist writers and critics – and by exposing the prevailing notion of ‘aesthetic gain’ through the ‘imperative of displacement’ as a very deliberate construction.<sup>3</sup>

What I intend to establish over the course of this chapter is that Kaplan's criticism of the mythologization of modernist exile is already inscribed in late modernist work through a re-envisioning of the modernist luggage paradigm in various ways. In

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<sup>2</sup> Kaplan, *Questions of Travel* 27-8.

<sup>3</sup> Kaplan, *Questions of Travel* 36.

raising this possibility, I am drawing upon recent work on the subject of late modernism which posits the phenomenon as a response to certain crystallised features of a recognised version of modernism as much as an anticipation of postmodernism. According to Shiach, '[t]he institutionalization of modernism began as early as the 1930s,' and this must have had an effect on writers during this period.<sup>4</sup> As Tyrus Miller notes:

...the late modernist response to modernism is inseparable from its emergence as a *historically* codified phenomenon. Modernism had to have aged, had to have become in a way "historical," had to have entered into a certain stage of canonization, for the kind of writing I discuss to be possible.<sup>5</sup>

For Marina MacKay, a vital facet of this response focuses indeed on the trope of exile highlighted by Kaplan: "The enduring emphasis on cosmopolitanism, deracination, expatriation, and cultural exchange in accounts of the 1920s and 1930s starts to look more complicated toward modernism's closing years."<sup>6</sup> She goes on, in the same article, to characterize the 'metaphor of the journey not made' as one of the key late modernist motifs in direct contrast to the stress on mobility so characteristic of early modernism.<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, Lyndsey Stonebridge identifies a late modernism 'responding to the dawn of the era of the refugee' as set against the affirmative cosmopolitanism of an 'earlier moment of modernism,' in particular relation to the work of Hannah Arendt (a writer I myself will come back to more than once).<sup>8</sup> Both MacKay and Stonebridge present a version of late modernism in which the ideal of the cosmopolitan subject is turned on its head through enforced stasis, on the one hand, and a politicized form of mobility on a mass scale, on the other. Correspondingly, as we will see, late modernist writing is replete with images of stalled or still-standing cases, cases which begin, with mounting intensity through the 1930s, to signal obstructed flight rather than the prospect of escape. During World War II, Robert Graves and Alan Hodge characterised the interwar era as *The Long Week-End* (1940), the title of their social history of Britain

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<sup>4</sup> Shiach, 'Periodizing Modernism' 28.

<sup>5</sup> Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction and the Arts Between the World Wars* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1999) 22-3. Emphasis in original.

<sup>6</sup> Marina MacKay, "'Is Your Journey Really Necessary?': Going Nowhere in Late Modernist London," *PMLA* 124 (2009): 1601-1602.

<sup>7</sup> MacKay, "'Is Your Journey Really Necessary?'" 1601.

<sup>8</sup> Lyndsey Stonebridge, 'Refugee Style: Hannah Arendt and the Perplexities of Rights,' *Textual Practice* 25 (2011) 72, 71.



between the wars, and we would do well to reflect on the implications of this title.<sup>9</sup> The period framed between the two world wars is posited by Graves and Hodge as an interim period, a 'long' week-end, but a short-lived escape from the habitual run of things, from a more mundane and troubled reality. The phrase, by the same token, suggests a public form of holiday, a common experience, over and above the idea of a private retreat. In the 1930s, we find an increasing recognition not only of the short-lived nature of the interwar escape, the imminent ending of the long week-end, but, equally, of the impossibility of a previous model of aesthetic and political detachment (a shift most strikingly conveyed in Woolf's well-known analogy of 'the leaning tower,' as proposed in her eponymous 1940 essay).<sup>10</sup>

Building on these observations of Kaplan, Miller, MacKay and Stonebridge as well as Graves and Hodge, I am proposing that in the work of certain late modernist writers, the case of fiction model becomes a negative inversion of the model foregrounded in early modernism in a number of key ways, but primarily through re-configuring that model in terms of aesthetic *loss* rather than gain. Samuel Hynes, in surveying the British literary output of 1939, defined it broadly as a 'Literature of Preparation' and his description of the impetus behind this kind of literature is interesting in the case of the present discussion:

...if you examined the past honestly, as a displaced person might examine his belongings before he fled his home, you might find what was worth saving; and if you imagined the future fully and without flinching, you might be able to survive it.<sup>11</sup>

The application of the luggage paradigm in relation to a literature of cosmopolitan possibility can be seen to shift thus towards its application in relation to a literature of preparation, as Hynes typifies it. In parallel, we find in such writing a reappraisal of the 'home,' and thus the house of fiction model; not as a model against which the case of fiction is set in productive opposition but as a model whose dominance has been irremediably overtaken and cannot be redeemed. The case of fiction figures towards the end of the interwar period in substitutive rather than competitive terms and, as such, signals a feared rather than a desired state of uncertainty.

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939* (1940; London: Faber, 1950).

<sup>10</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower,' 1940, *The Moment and Other Essays* (1947; San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974) 128-154.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (1976; London: Faber, 1979) 341.

'We envy [...] houses that are sure,' W.H. Auden writes in his 1938 'Sonnet XVIII,' quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The poem itself invokes a peculiar pre-war, post-fall scenario (reminding us of the pre- and post-lapsarian nature of the idea of the 'long week-end'). This is a scenario in which lost innocence is equated with the architectural stability of a previous time: 'But doubtful, articed to error, we/ were never nude and calm as a great door.' Architectural innocence is contrasted with the uncertainty of freedom but this, paradoxically, is figured as a 'freedom *by necessity*' (emphasis added). Similarly, as this chapter will reveal, the late modernist luggage paradigm represents a compromised ideal of artistic freedom in which the choice between house and case no longer exists in the same way, in which facility becomes obstruction, in which the alluring possibility of the package becomes the mundane interchangeability of the mass-market product, in which exciting uncertainty becomes dangerous suspicion, in which a world gained becomes a world lost and, most conspicuously, through which the figure of the escapee is shadowed by the spectre of the refugee. In this compromised paradigm, we find an acknowledgement of the rise of what Michael R. Marrus has described as a 'radically new form of homelessness,' whereby refugee-status has come to be equated with a sort of non-status, a complete deprivation of the rights allotted by nation state.<sup>12</sup> 'In practically every way we can imagine,' Marrus stresses, 'the First World War imposed on contemporaries the awesome power of the nation-state.'<sup>13</sup> The interwar figure of the refugee thus exposes, firstly, the submission of the individual to increasingly pervasive forms of national authority and, secondly, the illusion of the freedom of the individual beyond the parameters of state-authorised, state-bound national identity and citizenship. Moreover, the refugee becomes emblematic of a wider all-inclusive crisis. As Arendt notes in 1943, 'the outlawing of the Jewish people in Europe has been followed closely by the outlawing of most European nations.'<sup>14</sup> Late modernist luggage gestures accordingly beyond the individual towards a collective dilemma and is provocatively poised on a knife-edge between the dream of escape and the nightmare of inescapability in the artistic imagination at this time.

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<sup>12</sup> Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War Through the Cold War* (1985; Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2002) 4. Asylum seekers, of one kind or another, have naturally always existed but not on the mass scale witnessed in the twentieth century when the question of how to deal with refugees became a political problem. Marrus traces the 'emerging consciousness of a refugee phenomenon' back to the 1880s. Marrus 9.

<sup>13</sup> Marrus, *The Unwanted* 51.

<sup>14</sup> Hannah Arendt, 'We Refugees,' 1943, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007) 274.

### 3.1 Hasty Packing and Travelling Light

The development of literary luggage between the wars testifies to the progressive intensification of the issues explored in relation to the woman's bag in Chapter Two on a more pervasive level. My aim, in this section, is to account for the recurrent analogies between packing/writing *and* luggage/narrative form in fiction between the wars and, primarily, to interpret the shift from the kind of early prototypes of literary luggage as a literature of unhampered possibility, in the way of Max Beerbohm's hatbox for instance, to the more ambiguous models which came into play towards the Second World War, against a backdrop of mounting political uncertainty. Beerbohm, though by no means a modernist himself, articulates an early modernist approach to luggage in conceiving of exciting new formal and narrative possibilities and this is an approach which is fortified after World War I but with this difference: the 'Pack Up Your Troubles' taint of wartime movement never entirely disappears from representations of luggage thereafter. This is exemplified in one Selfridge & Co promotional feature on their stock of travelling goods in *The Times* in 1923, where we come across the following rather odd claim:

The ladies' big Black trunk, the Saratoga, the Wardrobe, the Cabin trunk, the Kit-bag, the Gladstone bag, the Hold-all, the Hat-box, all of them have a graceful line and all of them tell their tale of holiday-making and of new lands to be seen [...] And curiously their faces never have anything of the unhappy in them, they never suggest a journey of flight from trouble or to a death-bed.<sup>15</sup>

The effort to sever negative associations only serves to draw attention to them and a similar effect is produced, though much less obviously, in the literature of the immediate post-war period. This is not least because certain aspects of the imposition of wartime restrictions upon mobility - the passport, for example - are retained after the armistice.<sup>16</sup> 'Pack Up Your Troubles' might be posited as an epitaph for the entire interwar long week-end and not just 1914 to 1918. As Fussell remarks, the particular 'fantasies of flight and freedom which animate the imaginations of the 20's and 30's and generate its

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<sup>15</sup> CALLISTHENES, 'The Impedimenta Of Travel,' *Times* [London, England] 29 Dec. 1923: 6.

<sup>16</sup> This is not to suggest that passports came into existence at this time. Passports, in various forms, have, indeed, a long history. However, during the nineteenth century, passport requirements were relaxed, sometimes even abolished, in countries throughout Europe in line with the growth of an increasingly complex railway network, allowing for ease of movement across national borders until the reintroduction of stricter forms of frontier control with the onset of the First World War. For further information on the history and effect of the passport, see John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000); Fussell, *Abroad* 24-31; Marrus, *The Unwanted* 92.

pervasive images of travel can be said to begin in the trenches.<sup>17</sup> He goes on to lay bare the fragility of such fantasies: 'The illusion of freedom is a precious thing in the 20's and 30's, when the shades of the modern prison-house are closing in, when the passports and queues and guided tours and social security numbers and customs regulations and currency controls are beginning gradually to restrict life.'<sup>18</sup> Modern fantasies of flight and freedom existed alike and with equal force before the war, as Beerbohm's essay attests, but interwar fantasies are conspicuously troubled by comparison and the fantasist of this period must be seen to be a haunted fantasist.

If the troubled hue of interwar escapism begins in the trenches, so too does the shift in figurative emphasis I am charting here – we must remember that the re-drafting of national boundaries after World War I first gave rise to the phenomenon of the stateless, and therefore powerless, individual - though the effects of this shift in literary terms are hardly noticeable until the 1930s.<sup>19</sup> However, even Raoul Duquette's vision of unsettled portmanteaus in Mansfield's 'Je ne parle pas français,' cited in Chapter One, carries the suggestion of that compromised ideal of freedom which would become an unavoidable feature of literature in the latter part of the interwar period. Written in 1918, Mansfield's story cannot readily be removed from its wartime context and this becomes apparent if we place Duquette's image side by side with a strikingly similar passage from George Orwell's later *Coming Up For Air*, in which the protagonist George Bowling recalls his experiences of the First World War on the eve of the second in 1939:

I don't believe in the human soul. I never have. I believe that people are like portmanteaux – packed with certain things, started going, thrown about, tossed away, dumped down, lost and found, half emptied suddenly or squeezed fatter than ever, until finally the Ultimate Porter swings them on to the Ultimate Train and away they rattle....<sup>20</sup>

...it didn't occur to them to try to escape. The machine had got hold of you and it could do what it liked with you. It lifted you up and dumped you down among places and things you'd never dreamed of, and if it had dumped you down on the surface of the moon it wouldn't have seemed particularly strange.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Fussell, *Abroad* 4.

<sup>18</sup> Fussell, *Abroad* 203.

<sup>19</sup> For an explanation of the phenomenon of the stateless as '[s]ymptomatic of the new refugee problem' arising between the wars, see Marrus, *The Unwanted* 178.

<sup>20</sup> Mansfield, 'Je ne parle pas français' 60.

<sup>21</sup> George Orwell, *Coming Up For Air* (1939; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) 112.

On a first reading, the portmanteaus in Mansfield's story seem to epitomise the loosening of the modern subject from the defined parameters of a fixed place. As I mentioned earlier on, the arbitrariness of their motions can be set in paradoxical relation to a final aspirational shift towards an 'Ultimate' design. Yet in juxtaposition with Bowling's conception of his own wartime experience as a form of arbitrary yet machine-controlled motion, we find that it is, analogously, the complete lack of agency of the portmanteaus which is the most startling feature of Duquette's vision. They are 'packed,' 'started,' 'thrown,' 'tossed,' 'dumped,' 'lost,' 'found,' 'emptied,' 'squeezed' and finally swung. But by who or what? It is certainly not on their own respective initiatives. Suddenly Duquette's 'Ultimate Porter' starts to look a little more sinister and insidious in influence and the portmanteaux become paragons of powerlessness in the face of a modern machinery which is stamped with the uniformed authority of officialdom. This implicit sense of the delusion of the freedom of the modern individual is made both explicit and ominous in Bowling's retrospective description, which must be seen to be shaped by the prevailing anxieties of the late 1930s, anxieties forming the subject of Orwell's novel as a whole. That the illusion of freedom no longer exists is emphatically registered in Bowling's recollection: '*...it didn't occur to them to try to escape.*' In other words, it doesn't now occur to anyone to think they are free. Moreover, in presenting the submission of the modern individual to a form of machine-like totalitarian authority, his description also has a pointed political dimension scarcely, if at all, perceptible in Duquette's. The luggage paradigm proposed in Mansfield's story still articulates a principle of freedom through modern flux – compromised though this principle might be, not least through its articulation by the dingy and rather suspect character of Duquette – which has no overt political bearing. It is the gradual politicisation of literary packing in line with the deterioration of a belief in the very possibility of human freedom from 1918 to 1939 which this section seeks to chart.

In order to even begin to chart this process of deterioration, we must take note not only of the endurance, directly after the First World War, of that earlier strand of luggage imagery, as it can be traced back through Mansfield and Beerbohm to Dickens and Keats, but of its enlargement in 1920s literature; the amplified appeal, I mean, of a luggage paradigm comprising a formal response to a widespread nomadic urge, on the one hand, and a more elitist urge towards artistic detachment, on the other. '*Hasty Packing*: what excitement that phrase can still engender,' Fussell cannot refrain from uttering in parenthesis in response to an advertisement for the Travellers' Library, a

series of pocket-sized travel books published by Jonathan Cape from 1926.<sup>22</sup> 'Hasty Packing' would indeed have made an apt chapter title amidst the array of rather eccentrically titled chapters in his well-known interwar study, slotted, for instance, between Chapter Three's 'I Hate It Here' and Chapter Four's 'The Passport Nuisance.' It encapsulates the restless impulse to escape an artistically compromising situation, the disruption of stable notions of the individual (where hasty packing corresponds, as it repeatedly does in interwar fiction, to the hasty packing of a new identity, a key focus of Section 3.3) and the disengagement from a distasteful political reality in the interests of a 'holiday taste for the incognito,' to use Elizabeth Bowen's words in her 1927 novel *The Hotel*.<sup>23</sup> The hastily packed bag is certainly a prominent feature of literature between the two wars, often engendering the kind of excitement referred to by Fussell, and the luggage analogue proliferates both in writing from and about the period not only as a means of characterising a modern approach to literature but, furthermore, the cultural consciousness of the time. Prompted to recount some of her dreams during a psychoanalytic session in Rose Macaulay's 1921 novel *Dangerous Ages*, the elderly and troubled Mrs Hilary is shown to respond: "Oh, the usual things, I suppose. Packing; missing trains; meeting people; and just nonsense that means nothing. All the usual things that everyone dreams about."<sup>24</sup> Everyone at a particular historical moment, we might add, and though Macaulay is primarily concerned with sending up the psychoanalytic process in this passage as a whole (Mrs Hilary is not meant to be taken too seriously and ultimately gains very little from her psychoanalysis), her playful rendition of the subconscious preoccupations of 'everyone' in the wake of the war is telling. The compulsion to pack, the lure of the train and the fear of the train not taken as well as the intrigue of the stranger (more often than not, a stranger with a bag within a train carriage) are the very stuff of fiction at this time, elements Woolf used to good effect in 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown,' written shortly after Macaulay's novel. Packing was on the interwar authorial brain. Analogies between packing and writing occur with no small frequency and images of manuscripts in cases equally abound. From Ernest Hemingway's lost manuscripts, stolen from the suitcase of his wife Hadley on route from Paris to Lausanne in the 1920s, as recounted in *A Moveable Feast* (1964), and Aldous Huxley's expression of the aim to produce 'a novel in which one can put all one's ideas, a novel like a hold-all' to the 'neatly clipped together' bundles of the manuscript of a biography in the attaché case of expatriated literary aspirant Edgar Naylor in Cyril

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<sup>22</sup> Fussell, *Abroad* 59.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *The Hotel* (1927; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984) 34.

<sup>24</sup> Rose Macaulay, *Dangerous Ages* (London: W. Collins, 1921) 109.

Connolly's *The Rock Pool* (1936) and W.H. Auden's 1938 vision of the poet 'rummaging into his living' for inspiration in 'The Composer,' we can perceive the growth of an almost routine alignment between packing and writing, luggage and literature (both figurative and manifest) throughout the 1920s to the 1930s.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, to trace such luggage imagery from Hemingway and Huxley through to Connolly and Auden is to perceive the shift in emphasis I have described, to perceive literary luggage attain a level of interrogatory self-reflexiveness.

Huxley provides a good point of departure in tracing the beginnings of this shift. If he advocates a hold-all of ideas, this is not quite as straightforward as the image might imply. The main character of his 1921 novel *Crome Yellow*, an insecure young writer by the name of Denis Stone, carries the manuscript of the beginnings of his own novel in his luggage on his visit to Crome (a barely disguised version of Garsington Manor, famously presided over by literary hostess and patroness, Lady Ottoline Morrell). His literary luggage, in this case, goes hand in hand with his sense of artistic alienation and disenchantment, a state of mind wittily parodied by fellow-guest Mr Scogan in his surmise of the general outline of Denis's novel-to-be:

'I'll describe the plot for you. Little Percy, the hero, was never good at games, but he was always clever. He passes through the usual public school and the usual university and comes to London, where he lives among the artists. He is bowed down with melancholy thought; he carries the whole weight of the universe upon his shoulders. He writes a novel of dazzling brilliance; he dabbles delicately in Amour and disappears, at the end of the book, into the luminous Future.'

Denis blushed scarlet. Mr Scogan had described the plan of his novel with an accuracy that was appalling. He made an effort to laugh. 'You're entirely wrong,' he said. 'My novel is not in the least like that.' It was an heroic lie. Luckily, he reflected, only two chapters were written. He would tear them up that very evening when he unpacked.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *A Movable Feast* (1964; New York: Scribner, 2009) 69; Huxley's words come from an interview conducted by Yoi Maraini, quoted in Donald Watt's introduction to *The Critical Heritage: Aldous Huxley*, ed. Donald Watt (London: Routledge, 1975) 2; Cyril Connolly, *The Rock Pool* (1936; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981) 15; Auden, 'The Composer,' *Collected Poems* 181. Hemingway, perhaps to make up for this loss, later commissioned an elaborate library trunk from Louise Vuitton, a trunk custom-designed to securely carry books on the move. See Pierre Léonforte, '100 Legendary Trunks,' *Louis Vuitton: 100 Legendary Trunks* 259-61.

<sup>26</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Crome Yellow* (1921; London: Vintage-Random, 2004) 13.

Like Macaulay, Huxley satirises some of the wider imaginative preoccupations of the period but it is the image of manuscript in suitcase to be unpacked and destroyed which I would highlight here. The forbidding structure of *Crome* symbolically serves to obliterate the value of Denis's artistic work on arrival but the association of writing with luggage expresses a desire to depart from traditional forms and approaches to fiction, culminating, in *Crome Yellow*, in Denis's contrived escape from the '[s]evere, imposing, almost menacing' structure of the house itself at the end of the novel.<sup>27</sup> Despite his evident authorial failure and the satirical terms in which it is described, Denis's aspiration towards an innovatory point of artistic detachment reflects Huxley's own and it should be noted that *Crome Yellow* is, in subject and shape, not unlike the type of novel described by Scogan above. *Crome Yellow* represents, then, the kind of novel Denis fails to achieve in practice and an early example of Huxley's own conception of a hold-all of ideas. At the same time, the novel is directly modelled on the largely satirical nineteenth-century country-house-based novels of Thomas Love Peacock and, like many of Peacock's works, is named after the structure in which it is set.<sup>28</sup> Though Denis escapes from this structure, it is with a measure of reluctance and regret and his departure is characterised as a death. This is a novel which appears to be caught between paradigms of house and hold-all.

Or is it an attempted synthesis of the two? In proffering the image of the bursting hold-all of ideas, Huxley must have been sensitive to the fact that even new ideas draw from what has gone before and that luggage stands, in essence, as an important point of symbolic contact between past and future, between tradition and modernity. It is within the contours of long-established *Crome* that Denis is overwhelmed by the unoriginality of his manuscript on the move and if Huxley's novel is posited as a more successful holdall of ideas, it is one which succeeds through attempting to *hold* the past in unison. Luggage moves forward but it also carries forward. In his later *Point Counter Point* (1928), he offers a vision, through the voice of Lucy Tantamount, of what might be seen as the apotheosis of a nomadic metaphysics, but this is by no means heralded as a triumphant realization. For Lucy, in that novel, even hasty packing must be theoretically eliminated as an unnecessary impediment to independent movement of body and thought:

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<sup>27</sup> Huxley, *Crome Yellow* 50.

<sup>28</sup> Peacock's novels had titles such as *Headlong Hall* (1815), *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) and *Crotchet Castle* (1831).



'Living modernly's living quickly. You can't cart a wagonload of ideas and romanticisms around with you these days. When you travel by airplane you must leave your heavy baggage behind. The good old-fashioned soul was all right when people lived slowly. But it's too ponderous nowadays. There's no room for it in the aeroplane'

[...]

'...If you like speed, if you want to cover the ground, you can't have luggage. The thing is to know what you want and to be ready to pay for it. I know exactly what I want; so I sacrifice the luggage. If you choose to travel in a furniture van, you may. But don't expect me to come along with you, my sweet Walter. And don't expect me to take your grand piano in my two seater monoplane.'<sup>29</sup>

These pronouncements are made to her lover, Walter Bidlake, who desires more than a sensuous relationship. But Lucy, a negative incarnation of the modern woman like the domineering Gudrun Brangwen before her, maintains a hard line of autonomous self-sufficiency in the face of Walter's tender advances. For Lucy, modernity means travelling light *and* travelling alone and though she presents an extreme position here, it is intended as a commentary on a more prevalent tendency. 'Travelling at high speed through space was the first recreation of the age,' Graves and Hodge note.<sup>30</sup> Throughout the 1920s, *Punch* publishes cartoon after cartoon in response to the emerging popularity of the fleeting weekend getaway and motoring holiday and gets huge mileage – pun fully intended – out of repeated caricatures of the 'speed-fiends' of the moment.<sup>31</sup> Forster's fears of the ascension of motorised flux had clearly come to pass and, accordingly, the palpable sense of modern lives being lived quickly was perceived to be having a noticeable effect on the shape of fiction between the wars. 'It is seldom that a story is static,' journalist Watkin Haslam writes in a 1930 article entitled 'Transport in the English Novel' for *LMS Magazine*, the official organ of the eponymous railway company.<sup>32</sup> In considering the fictional role played by transport throughout literary history, he concludes in the present moment with the motorcar: '...our novelist of to-day has his characters motoring all over the world, and always in the most classic model

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<sup>29</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (1928; London: Chatto and Windus, 1934) 282, 283.

<sup>30</sup> Graves and Hodge, *The Long Week-End* 281.

<sup>31</sup> The 'speed fiend' label appears in an unnamed 1926 cartoon by D.I. Ghilchik, depicting a couple driving through the countryside with the following caption: 'Passenger: "I think the country round here is extraordinarily pretty. Speed-fiend: "Is it? I must see it some day."' D.I. Ghilchik, cartoon, *Punch* 171 (1926): 362. This is representative of the kinds of speed and motoring related cartoons which recur in the magazine.

<sup>32</sup> Watkin Haslam, 'Transport and the English Novel,' *LMS Railway Magazine* 7 (1930): 84.

cars, which flash them hither and thither, and give to the action of his plot that breathless speed which seems now to be essential.'<sup>33</sup>

In an age of perpetual hurry, new ideas must be mobilised and old ideas must be left behind and, if, as I have mentioned, 'Pack Up Your Troubles' might be applied as a suitable epigraph for the interwar period, then 'Travel light' was the more palatable public catchphrase. (Bowen must have had both in mind in coining the deliberately edgy 'Move Dangerously' as the slogan for Emmeline's travel agency in *To the North* in 1932, a slogan which captures with exquisite accuracy that double-edged attitude towards mobility at a point when the complicating factors were just starting to enter into fiction.)<sup>34</sup> We have tangentially touched on this catchphrase in various parts of the thesis already, but whereas before, travelling light was a not wholly sanctioned dream of the few, now it was the primary social call of the many. A 1922 editorial for that most established of broadsheets *The Times* devotes an extended paragraph to the subject of 'Travelling Light':

He who travels light is in a fair way to travel happily. But the happy state is not compassed without effort. There must first be wisdom in selecting the absolutely necessary, determination in discarding all else, and skill in the bestowal of the essential minimum. The principle is applicable not to train journeys alone. It is no less valid for the greater journey which is life.<sup>35</sup>

It is a principle which infuses every aspect of experience at this time but must particularly be set and considered against the growth of a new consumer culture. '[I]t is quite obvious that the lighter articles are what the public wants,' reports *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader* in 1919.<sup>36</sup> 'Nowadays we travel often – and we "travel light"; but more comfortably than before!' announces an advertisement for Mark Cross luggage in 1924, '[f]or the good reason that if we have learned to carry less, we have also learned to carry it properly.'<sup>37</sup> It is clear that modes of travel were changing at this time, with holidays becoming shorter and more frequent for those who could afford to go away. Air travel was paving the way for more compact and lighter forms of luggage, also the result of the development of fibre-based materials, as Graves and Hodge record.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Haslam, 'Transport and the English Novel' 85.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *To The North* (1932; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) 23.

<sup>35</sup> 'Travelling Light,' editorial, *Times* [London, England] 27 Dec. 1922: 11.

<sup>36</sup> Peripatetus, 'Current Trade Topics,' *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader and Fancy Leather Goods and Athletic Trades Review* 13.511 (1919): 16.

<sup>37</sup> 'Mark Cross,' advertisement, *Times* [London, England] 27 Mar. 1924: 11.

<sup>38</sup> Graves and Hodge, 'The Long Week-End' 232.

Yet if people were 'learning' to travel differently, they were also following a course laid down by advertisers. To keep people in circulation was to keep money in circulation. Consequently, lessons on modern modes of travel were superimposed onto other forms of advertisement and if the idea of travelling light infiltrated the marketplace, this must be seen in relation to the progressive shortening of the planned obsolescence of given commodities; to travel unencumbered was to use disposable products. The catchphrase 'travel light' was used to advertise everything from crispbread – 'Vita-weat: The crispbread that lets your stomach travel light' – to soap.<sup>39</sup> Consider, for example, the tagline for a 1927 advertisement for LUX: 'The modern girl "travels light" on her holiday, yet she looks fresh and dainty everyday. How does she do it?'<sup>40</sup> (It is worth mentioning parenthetically that the inclusion of "travel light" in quotation marks here, as in the Mark Cross advert, denotes a phrase in popular currency.) Moreover, the advent of portable radio and home cinematograph machines saw advertisers refer to them as 'suitcase' models and tags, such as 'carry it like a suitcase!', were used as a marketing device.<sup>41</sup> Modernity is cast, whatever the product advertised, as the age of mobility, portability, disposability and renewal. The further point to make is that 'travelling light,' while advocating, as a catchphrase, the repudiation of material ties, was used to promote the accumulation of a wide range of products, a paradox wittily exploited by Evelyn Waugh in *A Handful of Dust* (1934) and in his later *Scoop* (1938). Both novels feature characters (Tony Last in the former, William Boot in the latter) ludicrously weighted down with unnecessary travel goods and products in the attempt to appropriately fulfil the role of professional adventurer (explorer and war correspondent, respectively) abroad.<sup>42</sup>

I make this detour into consumer culture to show how the 'living modernly's living quickly' philosophy proffered by modern woman Lucy Tantamount merges unsettlingly with a capitalist ethos of mobility and replaceability. Lucy has no luggage because, in dispensing with a human 'soul' as Duquette does before her in his portmanteaux analogy, she herself becomes a continually moving package in a soulless

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<sup>39</sup> 'Vita-Weat,' advertisement, *Times* [London, England] 6 Oct. 1939: 11.

<sup>40</sup> 'Lux,' *Times* [London, England] 18 Aug. 1927: 9.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example: 'M.P.A. Portable Sets,' advertisement, *Times* [London, England] 25 Sept. 1926: 8.

<sup>42</sup> Tony Last adopts the posture of explorer in order to escape an unpleasant reality (chiefly, his wife's infidelity) at home yet his accumulated travel accessories - which are comically listed at some length - only serve to remind him of the inauthenticity of the posture. Waugh takes the joke a notch further in *Scoop*, in which William Boot is advised, by newspaper magnate Lord Copper, to 'Travel Light and Be Prepared,' advice producing a kit which requires an 'additional aeroplane,' putting the trappings of the earlier Tony in the shade. See Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (1934; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951) 155; *Scoop: A Novel About Journalists* (1938; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957) 41, 45.

capitalist world.<sup>43</sup> I could discuss other examples of this merging both in fiction and advertisement but my interest here is in demonstrating how this unsettling correspondence serves to disturb more elitist and rarefied notions of a modernist literary luggage, suggesting the avant-garde artist with his/her singular case of fiction. I cited the packed manuscript of Edgar Naylor in Connolly's *The Rock Pool* as an example of the many interwar images of manuscript in case a little earlier. Connolly's 1936 novel is presented as a re-visitation of the mythologised continental bohemianism of the literati of the previous decade and, from the standpoint of 1936, Naylor's packed manuscript must be seen as an attempt, conscious or unconscious, to tap into this nomadic mythology. Over the course of the novel, however, he is progressively shorn of his illusions and that initial image of self-conscious authorial distinction corrodes into something altogether more tawdry and prosaic: 'He felt old and miserable, going through life trying to peddle a personality of which people would not even accept a free sample.'<sup>44</sup> Bohemian writer with manuscript in attaché case here becomes travelling salesman with a case of cheap samples. The artistic freedom generated through the pluralisation of packaged selves here leads to a loss of aura in line with Walter Benjamin's theories in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (an essay, incidentally, published in the same year as Connolly's novel).<sup>45</sup> By the end of *The Rock Pool*, we are left with the image of Naylor's manuscript smeared with blood and pernod just as modernist bohemianism has been tarnished with an air of commercial vacuousness. In Connolly's attaché case, we are a far cry from Beerbohm's hat-box or even Huxley's not-altogether-straightforward literary hold-all.

Yet, if we pursue another interwar thread in the progressive complication of the luggage paradigm, we find that the concept of the autonomous, singular, *un*-packaged, *soulful* individual is brought to the fore, rather than obliterated through a kind of mass production. Let us return to 1924 and the immediate post-war period. The dystopian novel, *We*, a precursor to Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*, published in that year by the Russian Yevgeny Zamyatin, propels us into a future dimension and the realm

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<sup>43</sup> In this she resembles a further character from Waugh's fictional world, American millionairess Mrs Rattery in *A Handful of Dust*, who is a living embodiment of capitalism, her person shown to move at the same rate as her money. Waugh tells us that she is an 'American by origin, now totally denationalized, rich without property or possessions, except those that would pack in five vast trunks,' and, a page later, that she 'never noticed houses much.' Mrs Rattery has liberated herself from the constraints of class and country but also of responsibility. As with Lucy, a distrust of long-term material investment goes hand in hand with a distrust of lasting emotional investment. Her 'five vast trunks' are as deliberately expressive of her capitalist ethos as Hetton Abbey is of Tony Last's would-be feudal ethos in that novel. See *A Handful of Dust* 97, 98.

<sup>44</sup> Connolly, *The Rock Pool* 73.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' *Illuminations* 211-44.

of the 'One State,' where individuality has been entirely subdued by a process of rational and collective systematisation, as the title implies. Citizens are identified by number and, interestingly, the development of the state is described in terms of the ascendancy of a sedentary order:

...it is clear that the entire history of mankind, insofar as we know it, is the history of transition from nomadic to increasingly settled forms. And does it not follow that the most settled form (ours) is at the same time the most perfect (ours)? People rushed about from one end of the earth to the other only in prehistoric times, when there were nations, wars, commerce, discoveries of all sorts of Americas. But who needs that now? What for?<sup>46</sup>

Individuality is thus associated with a nomadic impulse which has been lost and, in the current settled state, the very suggestion of a 'soul' is considered a 'dangerous' and 'incurable' malady.<sup>47</sup> The novel recounts the gradual awakening of the narrator D-503 to his own irrational impulses and desires through his attraction to the alluring I-330 who is involved in the clandestine activities of a group of rebels known as 'Mephi.' Through I-330, D-503 is incidentally drawn into the revolution but is, in the end, subjected to an operation which quashes his imagination. Within this narrative, the object of the valise becomes a symbol of a repressed and primal nomadic impulse, imagination and, most importantly, the cultivation of a soul. D-503's friend, the State poet R-13 is continually and rather curiously described as having a valise-shaped head: "The back of his head is like a square little valise, attached from behind (I recalled the ancient painting, "In the Carriage")."<sup>48</sup> Though never explicitly stated, it is strongly suggested that R-13 is a member of the underground Mephi movement; he, too, is linked with I-330 and his room, though arranged in the same ordered fashion as all other rooms, becomes a scene of disproportional and displaced planes upon his entry, intimating a nonconformist bent.<sup>49</sup> There is also something about R-13 that the narrator cannot rationalise and this inexplicability is deliberately related to 'that little box of his with its strange baggage that I did not understand.'<sup>50</sup> If D-503 does not fully understand R-13 – he, in fact, falls out with him due to a mutual attraction to I-330 - this only serves to magnify his own realization that he does not fully understand himself. Before his eventual act of

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<sup>46</sup> Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, 1924, trans. Mirra Ginsburg (1972; New York: EOS-HarperCollins, 1999) 11.

<sup>47</sup> Zamyatin, *We* 89.

<sup>48</sup> Zamyatin, *We* 42.

<sup>49</sup> Zamyatin, *We* 41-2

<sup>50</sup> Zamyatin, *We* 61.

capitulation to the system, he makes a decision to depart into the 'unknown' in order to join the revolutionaries and this demands the formulation, in line with R-13, of his own figurative and strangely personal baggage, an acknowledged symptom of what he calls his 'soul sickness': '...I stand up and look around the room, the whole room; I hastily take with me, gather up into an invisible valise, all that I'm sorry to leave behind.'<sup>51</sup> Here we find another instance of the figurative act of interwar hasty packing and it simultaneously dramatises, we should note, the activation of D-503's authorial imagination through the use of metaphor (he parenthetically notes just prior to this passage that his 'eyes are now like a pen').<sup>52</sup> But this must be distinguished from the kind of hasty packing elevated by Fussell, on the one hand, and from the consumer-driven kind of modern mobility, just discussed, on the other. Zamyatin, a former Bolshevik turned anti-Communist, is writing with an eye to the freedom of the artist in the context of the rise of a totalitarian state in post-Revolutionary Russia, a subject on which he wrote countless essays in the early 1920s.<sup>53</sup> He was, indeed, himself driven into exile in 1929 as a consequence of the publication of *We* in a Russian émigré journal in Czechoslovakia two years before, lending the above passage an air of the prophetic. The valise, in this contextual light, must, therefore, also be seen to stand for artistic spontaneity as set against the totalising force of a repressive organisation. In addition, as D-503's 'invisible valise' markedly attests, it is linked to the preservation of the memory of the individual as this corresponds to the preservation of the idea of an individual human soul. D-503's imagined soul-recovering valise in singular forms the foil to Duquette's imagined soul-less valises in plural.

In Zamyatin's *We*, self-preservation is figuratively aligned with packing as autobiographical authorship, and this is a distinctive and recurrent feature of work by refugee writers, particularly at the approach of World War II. The interwar literary trend of depicting packing as a means of temporary re-invention must be offset with this equally prevalent trend of depicting packing as a means of self-preservation, just as any discussion of voluntary escape at this time must be counterbalanced by a discussion of forced flight. If the writing of this period is replete with images of manuscripts in suitcase, these are as often the imaginative conceptions of refugee writers working in situations of constraint as of Fussell's interwar fantasists of flight and freedom and it is important to distinguish between the kind of luggage paradigm employed in either case. Thus, when the fictional writer-figure and exile Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev

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<sup>51</sup> Zamyatin, *We* 194-5.

<sup>52</sup> Zamyatin, *We* 194.

<sup>53</sup> See Mirra Ginsburg, introduction, *We* v-xx.

announces on the very first page of his autobiography in Vladimir Nabokov's *The Gift* (1937-38), written between 1933 and 1937, that 'in my suitcase there are more manuscripts than shirts,' we must not forget that Nabokov had been obliged to depart from Russia in the 1920s, like Zamyatin before him, after the ascendancy of the Bolsheviks and, though there is a hint of the romance of exile surrounding this image, it is a claim which foregrounds a luggage paradigm by necessity first and foremost.<sup>54</sup> When his later Sebastian Knight, another fictional writer, from *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), is shown to abandon his bags in flight from Moscow and to entitle his 'most autobiographical work' *Lost Property*, we must not lose sight of the figure of the real writer, who is purported to have written the book itself on a suitcase balanced upon a bidet in the bathroom of the one-bedroom Parisian apartment he occupied with his family during its composition.<sup>55</sup> In his seminal work *The Death of Virgil* (1945), Hermann Broch conceives of the dying Roman poet, in transit with the Emperor Augustus from Greece to Italy, as 'driven by fate' and 'hunted [...] from the simplicity of his origins' while manifesting a continual anxiety about the safety of his manuscript-chest (containing the precious text of his *Aeneid*), the symbolic value of which is asserted again and again in the text.<sup>56</sup> This conception must be read with a view to Broch himself who, as an Austrian Jew, began the work in a Nazi concentration camp in 1938 and completed it in exile in America in 1945. If luggage looms large in Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française* (2004), in which the mass exodus from a Paris under siege is portrayed in terms of people 'clinging to their cases and hatboxes like shipwrecked men to their lifebelts,' then we must see this in relation to the creation of the novel itself, written in transit during World War II and forming part of her own wartime luggage, much later rediscovered in a forgotten suitcase.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, the preserved literary luggage of Broch and Némirovsky only heightens the severity of the loss of Walter Benjamin's renowned briefcase during his ill-fated flight from the Nazis across the French-Spanish border. Lisa Fittko, in his company at the time, recalls:

We walked slowly, like tourists enjoying the scenery. I noticed that Benjamin was carrying a large black briefcase which he must have picked up when we had

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<sup>54</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *The Gift*, 1938, trans. Michael Scammell and Dmitri Nabokov (London: Penguin, 2001) 11. Emphasis in original.

<sup>55</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941; London: Penguin, 1964) 6. For an account of the composition of the novel in the bathroom of his Parisian apartment, see Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1990) 496.

<sup>56</sup> Hermann Broch, *The Death of Virgil*, 1945, trans. Jean Starr Untermeyer (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983) 4. In the novel, Virgil, finally comes to the decision to burn this manuscript.

<sup>57</sup> Irène Némirovsky, *Suite Française* (Paris: Denöel, 2004) 109. My translation.

stopped at the inn. It looked heavy and I offered to help him carry it. "This is my new manuscript," he explained. "But why did you take it for this walk?" "You must understand that this briefcase is the most important thing to me," he said. "I cannot risk losing it. It is the manuscript that *must* be saved. It is more important than I am."<sup>58</sup>

This passage raises several significant points in the context of my broader discussion. Unlike earlier images of people as portmanteaux or as fast-paced interchangeable packages in an ever-moving commercialised modernity, here is an image not of case merging with person as such but of textual case substituting person as unique legacy. (In an odd way, it conjures Beerbohm's image of his irreplaceable, luggage-stamped hatbox.) Benjamin's manuscript in briefcase can be seen in retrospect, in effect, as a symbol of the fate of the work of art as well as the fate of the individual in the age both of mechanical reproduction and of mechanical devastation.<sup>59</sup>

Travelling light and hasty packing came to have palpably different resonances by the 1930s and for the remainder of this section, I will look at the disconcerting mode of interweaving these conflicting lines of luggage imagery in works in the 1930s and early 1940s. One aspect of the above passage about Benjamin is worth pinpointing in this light; the invocation of the leisurely-moving tourist. A similar blurring of lines occurs in *The Post-Office Girl* by Stefan Zweig, another Jewish writer of Austrian origin. In this rather bleak novel, written on the run during the 1930s but published posthumously, a young and downtrodden post-office employee, Christine Hoflehner, is unexpectedly invited to a high-class hotel in the Alps by an aunt, now married to a wealthy American. Christine, on taking up this invitation, is transformed and overwhelmed by her new and luxurious surroundings, realising happiness for the first time through the aristocratic persona of Christine von Boolean. This happiness is short-lived, however, and, upon discovery of Christine's background by fellow guests, her aunt dismisses her in fear that her own lowly origins will alike be exposed. The remainder of the novel describes the damaging impact of this fleeting fairy-tale turned sour. I draw attention to this novel here because throughout her time at the hotel, it is Christine's 'seedy little straw suitcase,' shown to swing with 'telltale lightness in her hand' upon arrival unlike the heavy and opulent wardrobe trunks of the other guests, which perpetually reminds her

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<sup>58</sup> Lisa Fittko, 'The Story of Old Benjamin,' 1982, *The Arcades Project*, by Walter Benjamin, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, prepared on the basis of the German volume ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1999) 948.

<sup>59</sup> The range of examples cited here are, again, intended as representative and there is clearly the scope for a more comprehensive study of literary luggage from the distinct angle of the refugee writer.



of the delusional nature of her adopted persona.<sup>60</sup> Christine is haunted by this suitcase. It fills her with a detestable uncertainty as she stands in the hotel lobby and, having unpacked her drab lower-middle-class belongings, she imagines the maid's ridicule of this incoming 'beggarly guest for the rest of the staff to hear.'<sup>61</sup> Once she has fully adopted her von Boolean persona, she packs her belongings in a cardboard box out of sight with the aim of forgetting her 'former, other, Hoflehner self.'<sup>62</sup> Her eventual discharge by her aunt – 'Sending me off like a package, express mail, special delivery' – enacts not only the death of Christine von Boolean but also the symbolic termination of the figure of the leisured tourist: 'It's beginning, inescapably: the day, the end, the departure. Now she must pack her things, leave, be that other, Postal Official Hoflehner of Klein-Reifling, forget the one whose breath had quickened to see the finery that is now no longer hers.'<sup>63</sup> I would argue that this novel cannot be read without taking account of Zweig's own status as a refugee at this time. If Christine's seedy suitcase casts a shadow over the authenticity of her status as a lady of leisure, this has everything to do with the centrality of the suitcase as a symbol of 1930s dispossession.<sup>64</sup> His autobiography, giving an unsparing account of his rise to and fall from grace as an established Austrian writer, expresses, in a dubious doubling up of the term used in relation to Christine in his novel above, the 'cruel truth for every Jew' of the old Russian proverb that "No one is safe from the *beggar's* pack and the jail."<sup>65</sup> This autobiography should be read as a companion piece to *The Post Office Girl* – he was most likely writing them at the same time - and serves to muddy the trope of tourism in the earlier fictional work.

The obfuscation and confusion of tropes of tourism and dispossession reoccurs alike in English fiction in the late 1930s. 'Any typology of '30s travelling is bound to be a rickety construct,' Valentine Cunningham opens his chapter on the subject of the 'pervasively escapist' aspect of this literary age in his comprehensive study, *British*

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<sup>60</sup> Stefan Zweig, *The Post Office Girl*, trans. Joel Rotenberg (1982; London: Sort Of Books, 2009) 35.

<sup>61</sup> Zweig, *The Post Office Girl* 41.

<sup>62</sup> Zweig, *The Post Office Girl* 93.

<sup>63</sup> Zweig, *The Post Office Girl* 132, 135.

<sup>64</sup> The object of the suitcase continues to be employed as a powerful emblem for the refugee, judging from the title of some recent books both on victims of the holocaust and on other situations of twentieth-century political displacement. See, for example, Karen Levine, *Hana's Suitcase: A True Story* (2002; London: Evans, 2003); *The Suitcase: Refugee Voices from Bosnia and Croatia*, ed. Julie Mertus, Jasmina Tesanovic, Habiba Metikos, Rada Boric, trans. Jelica Todosijevic (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997).

<sup>65</sup> Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography* (1942; London: Cassell, 1943) 319. Emphasis added.

*Writers of the Thirties*.<sup>66</sup> Typological discrepancies are aggravated by the sense that the very concept of travel had manifestly become a 'rickety construct' itself over the course of the decade. In Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), the well-to-do Jewish heiress Natalia Landauer disappears, 'smiling' and dreamy, in the middle of a party with the suggestion that she is to meet an admirer: '...all at once, she was in a hurry. She was late, she said. She'd got to pack. She must go at once.'<sup>67</sup> We are left in no doubt that this act of happy hasty packing serves to magnify the certainty of more unhappy displacements to come, as the narrator observes: 'I thought of Natalia: she has escaped – none too soon, perhaps. However often the decision may be delayed, all these people are ultimately doomed. This evening is the dress-rehearsal of a disaster.'<sup>68</sup> As if to corroborate this, Isherwood refers to the gathering as a 'party that didn't really "go"' (a description bearing a disquieting resemblance to the title and subject of Henry Green's novel *Party Going*, published in the same year, which I will discuss in some detail at the end of this chapter.)<sup>69</sup> Refugees intrude upon the English literary consciousness in ways that irreparably distort those cherished interwar fantasies of flight and freedom. When Auden portrays the poet 'rummaging into his living,' as referred to earlier, he presents a poet charged with the self-preserving, self-memorialising instinct of the displaced person in keeping what is significant close at hand, as the line that follows indicates: 'Rummaging into his living, the poet fetches/ The images out that hurt and connect.'<sup>70</sup> Even Robert Byron, a leading figure in Fussell's study, is forced, in his travelogue *The Road to Oxiana* (1937), to set his own hasty packing - of which there is much, though it is notably carried out by a servant, ostensibly to save precious time - against a less glorified form.<sup>71</sup> Refugee imagery infiltrates the book several times; he encounters a boat-load of Jewish refugees leaving for Palestine from Trieste and, later on, a home for Russian refugees in Teheran.<sup>72</sup> Despite his nomadic outlook, Byron dramatizes his final homecoming as a form of obstructive collision which enacts the ultimate elevation of an architectural paradigm (overseen by a maternal figure):

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<sup>66</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 377. The chapter I refer to, entitled 'Somewhere the Good Place?', gives a wide-ranging overview of 1930s tropes of travel and escape in British fiction (377-418).

<sup>67</sup> Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939; London: Minerva, 1989) 217.

<sup>68</sup> Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* 219.

<sup>69</sup> Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* 218.

<sup>70</sup> Auden, 'The Composer' 181.

<sup>71</sup> '[W]ithout a servant,' he remarks, 'one spends half every day packing and unpacking.' Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* (1937; London: Penguin, 2007) 158.

<sup>72</sup> Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* 5, 142-3.

At Paddington I began to feel dazed at the prospect of coming to a stop, at the impending collision between eleven months' momentum and the immobility of a beloved home. The collision happened; it was 19 ½ days since we left Kabul. Our dogs ran up. And then my mother – to whom, now it is finished, I deliver the whole record; what I have seen she taught me to see and will tell me if I have honoured it.<sup>73</sup>

We might see this conclusion as a dramatisation of the advent of late modernist obstruction, along Marina MacKay's line, as well as a recognition both of the impossibility of previous forms of untroubled mobility and the imminent threat to the immobile constancy of the beloved home.<sup>74</sup>

The beloved home reasserts its imaginative power towards the end of the 1930s while travelling light starts to ring a little hollow as a catchphrase with the onset of another war. As if in answer to that 1922 *Times* editorial on 'travelling light,' we find a more fraught version of the same theme in a 1940 editorial, entitled, with no small irony, 'The Happy Traveller':

It used to be said of a distinguished traveller and administrator that a toothbrush was all the luggage he needed to take him from one side of Africa to the other. We may well envy him his ability to cut down extraneous equipment to the bone. But nowadays even the most settled and stable of us may find himself compelled to leave home at a moment's notice with nothing more than he happens to be standing or sleeping in at the time. As for voluntary travelling, the best advice is "Don't," both in national interest and in one's own. But if travel cannot be avoided, then travel, as light, as patiently, and as cheerfully as you can.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* 333.

<sup>74</sup> A further thought-provoking fictional text in this regard is Francis Brett Young's *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, published a little later in 1940. It concerns the spontaneous escape of an established business-man and father from his work and family-related responsibilities. Taking refuge in obscurity, he pursues a vagrant pastoral course, mostly on foot, for several months but finds this fugitive obscurity increasingly difficult to maintain. Eventually, it is the prospect of the coming war which prompts him to relinquish what has become a troubled if not an impossible form of freedom: 'Try as he would, he could not insulate his mind from the high potential of anxiety that strained so many millions of human hearts and whose waves were propelled, hour by hour, through the insentient ether.' *Freedom*, in this context, has become a self-centered kind of irresponsibility. See Francis Brett Young, *My Lucton's Freedom* (1940; London: The Book Club, 1941) 318.

<sup>75</sup> 'The Happy Traveller,' editorial, *Times* [London, England] 28 Dec. 1940: 5.

The compulsion to uproot smacks less here of irresistible urge and more of emergency procedure as well as national duty and the practice of cutting down 'extraneous equipment to the bone,' of travelling light, has become, paradoxically, an enforced burden (*'may find himself compelled'*), largely because the beloved home is no longer guaranteed as a point of return. Leaving home at a moment's notice and hasty packing on the spot form the subject of Rose Macaulay's 1942 short story, 'Miss Anstruther's Letters.' If Macaulay earlier identified packing as the standard stuff of the post-war dream then this story serves to problematize that earlier dream like no other. Set in London during the Blitz, Miss Anstruther, one more fictional writer-figure, is given a fleeting opportunity to salvage some of the possessions in her flat before it burns to the ground on one 'wild, blazing hell of a night.'<sup>76</sup> Taking a suitcase, she furiously fills it with books and various other odds and ends but discovers, soon afterwards when it is all too late, that she has overlooked the key things, crucially letters from her lover (now dead), a collection spanning twenty-two years. The only remnant is a charred scrap of paper with the rather unrepresentative and unfortunate words, 'leave it at that. I know now that you don't care twopence; if you did you would...'<sup>77</sup> This story describes the horror of rummaging into one's living only to find you have left the most important objects behind, the horror of the bag all too hastily packed and the grim prospect of travelling, not light, but empty as a consequence, as the final words of the story convey: 'She was alone with a past devoured by fire and a charred scrap of paper which said you don't care twopence, and then a blank, a great interruption, an end. She had failed in caring once twenty years ago, and failed again now, and the twenty years between were a drift of grey ashes that once were fire, and she a drifting ghost too. She had to leave it at that.'<sup>78</sup>

Macaulay's story presents a suitably disenchanting vision - both of the act of hasty packing and of the prospect of travelling light - to end a section which, beginning with an acknowledgment of their romantic appeal, has charted the progressive complication of those very phrases. But apart from providing a culminating illustration of the complexification of literary luggage more broadly by the Second World War - a process of complexification I have delineated with reference to Mansfield, Huxley, Connolly, Zamyatin and Zweig, among many others - Macaulay's story is important as a concluding point here in that it depicts the absolute loss of the home. If I have considered imaginative devaluations of and departures from houses of fiction at various

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<sup>76</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'Miss Anstruther's Letters,' *London Calling*, ed. Storm Jameson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942) 302.

<sup>77</sup> Macaulay, 'Miss Anstruther's Letters' 307.

<sup>78</sup> Macaulay, 'Miss Anstruther's Letters' 308.

points in this thesis, it is worth noting that these have largely been departures by choice and devaluations by design and, whether devalued or abandoned, the house still stands as a symbolic alternative. (The exception here is Wharton's *Lily Bart* whose domestic exclusion is also largely involuntary, as outlined in Chapter Two, Section 2.4, yet the key point to remember in this case is that the novel itself might be said to be a critique of a representative architectural structure - the 'house of mirth' - which is ultimately shown to endure, even to dictate Lily's narrative fate.) Here, on the contrary, we find an image of unwilling dispossession, unwanted luggage *and* domestic destruction. 'Miss Anstruther's Letters' presents a world in which there is seemingly no architectural alternative to the case of fiction. Luggage becomes the only viable structural metaphor. Moreover, Miss Anstruther - an example of the independent woman who, by the 1940s, has come to have a room of her own - is reminded by her luggage, first and foremost, of the magnitude of her proprietorial loss. This is in stark contrast to earlier figures of adventurous mobility from Miriam Henderson to Lucy Tantamount. The following section concentrates wholly on the work of Elizabeth Bowen in order to understand her conception of a case of fiction model caught between the two orders of literary luggage probed here; that is to say, a literary luggage which heralds a positive architectural escape and one which signals a negative architectural deficit, as in the case of Miss Anstruther. Bowen's case of fiction model will also be interpreted with her imaginative engagement with Forster's earlier literary architectural ideal in mind and I intend to revisit the house-case conflict presented in *Howards End* in this discussion. As we will see, however, Bowen's rendering of the same symbolic and formal conflict within a 1930s context has radically different implications, implications Forster could never have envisaged from his 1910 standpoint.

### 3.2 Elizabeth Bowen, *Howards End* and the Luggage in the Hall Between Two Journeys

'I arrived into it with a sense of homecoming,' Elizabeth Bowen recalls of her experience of first entering into the world of an E.M. Forster novel as a schoolgirl, outlined in her introduction to a collection of essays marking his ninetieth birthday in 1969.<sup>79</sup> Forster's work is projected as a resting place retrieved, a final destination, a solid structure, both touchstone and stone to the touch. The novelist-in-the-making is shown to arrive home and into the house of fiction through reading Forster. And yet, the young Bowen was, to all intents and purposes, just preparing to set out, not to settle down, as a novelist herself. Bowen's sense of 'homecoming' through the work of Forster is shot through with a recognition of eventual departure; this is a characteristic superimposition in her fiction.<sup>80</sup> As Karen Michaelis perceives on a visit to a dying aunt in Ireland in *The House in Paris*, '[b]y having come, you already store up the pains of going away...'<sup>81</sup> While acknowledging Forster's profound influence on her development as a writer, his work is cast as a house she must also strike out from. Frequently regarded as a poetess of space and of the house, I will contend here that Bowen's model is not primarily architectural. The house that pervades Bowen's work is most often a house left behind. She presents us, rather, with a *case* of fiction, the 'luggage left in the hall between two journeys as opposed to the perpetual furniture of rooms,' as she herself articulates it in 'Notes on Writing a Novel' in a passage I will look at more closely a bit later on.<sup>82</sup>

This section will develop the concerns of the previous section - more specifically, the gradual exposure of the more ambiguous nature of the luggage model alongside the sense of an architectural lack - with a focus on one late modernist writer. Reading Bowen through her own reading of Forster, my objective will be to examine the renewal of a figurative tension between architectural and luggage imagery, a tension particularly

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<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, 'A Passage to E.M. Forster,' *People, Places, Things* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008) 278. Written as the introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Aspects of E.M. Forster*, edited by Oliver Stallybrass, to celebrate Forster's ninetieth birthday in 1969. Hereafter abbreviated 'PEMF' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>80</sup> There are a number of engaging critical discussions of what Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle call the 'Bowenesque temporality of arrival and departure.' See, for example, their own chapter on *Friends and Relations* and *To the North* entitled 'Shivered' in *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives* (1994; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995) 23-41 (28). See also John Hildebidle's 'Elizabeth Bowen: Squares of Light in the Hungry Darkness,' *Five Irish Writers: The Errand of Keeping Alive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989) 89-124.

<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris* (1935; London: Vintage-Random, 1998) 77. Hereafter abbreviated 'HP' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, 'Notes on Writing a Novel,' *Pictures and Conversations* (London: Allen Lane, 1975) 169. First written for John Lehmann's *Orion II* in 1945.

pronounced in *Howards End*, as it plays out in her own fictional work and equally informs her approach to the craft of writing, expressed in her non-fictional writing. I will begin by outlining Bowen's embrace of the modernity so feared in Forster's work through elevating a formal paradigm that is forward-looking and, above all else, mobile. This will be followed by a reading of *The House in Paris* (1935) as a reconceptualisation of *Howards End* at a time when the very idea of mobility has lost its straightforward appeal through political developments in the 1930s. I will assess the more politicised vision of the 'civilisation of luggage' presented by Bowen in this novel, as set against the 'civilisation of luggage' presented in *Howards End*. The difference between these representations can be understood through an observation made by Bowen herself in her discussion of Forster: 'The world of these novels is a world of conflict; its not being a world actually *in* conflict, fraught by battles and revolutions, makes the schisms within and oppositions between its people stand out more significantly and strongly' ('PEMF' 278, emphasis in original). Bowen's is also a world of personal conflict but for her, the external world *in* conflict (or verging on conflict) cannot but infiltrate the world of the personal, unavoidably altering and complicating the meaning and implications of Forster's phrase within a drastically different context. To conclude, I will reconsider Bowen's formal embrace of the quality of mobility in light of these complications. The broader aim will be to explore the manner in which this complex interplay of symbolic paradigms reflects a peculiar form of late modernist uncertainty.

The evident anxiety at the heart of *Howards End*, concerning the negative repercussions of a reversion to a 'civilisation of luggage', is certainly something Bowen shared more generally. A writer with a 'conservative vision' in many ways, as John Coates has claimed, she clearly set great store by tradition.<sup>83</sup> The loss of tradition is frequently presented, in her writings, as something to be regretted in an age that is 'decentralised', a word used by Lady Waters in *To The North* (1932).<sup>84</sup> Writing on the subject of 'Manners' in 1937, she considers some of these negative repercussions:

The lives of most people now, say, in their thirties have changed inconceivably since childhood. Tradition is broken. Temperament, occupation, success or failure, marriage or active nervous hostility to an original *milieu* have made

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<sup>83</sup> John Coates, *Social Discontinuity in the Novels of Elizabeth Bowen: The Conservative Quest* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998) 5.

<sup>84</sup> Bowen, *To The North* 170.

nomads of us. The rules we learnt in childhood are as useless, as impossible to take with us as the immutable furniture of the family home.<sup>85</sup>

Overarching codes of behaviour cannot be sustained in a decentralised age - we must also remember that this essay was written at a mid-1930s moment of acute anxiety as to wider security, the more so for the Anglo-Irish Bowen in an independent Ireland under Éamon DeValera - and central fragmentation implies the redundancy of that archetypal nineteenth-century central point of reference, the 'family home' with its 'immutable furniture'. The passage reeks of Forster. Here is a writer seemingly compelled to a metaphorical abandonment of the house against her will. Here we perceive a writer forced to join the 'civilisation of luggage' with some considerable reluctance.

However, other essays reveal the very idea of dislocation to be affirmatively foregrounded where literary style is concerned and it becomes apparent that if Bowen metaphorically departs from the model of the house of fiction in her work, it is figured as a departure as much by choice as by compulsion. Ideal language must, she advised the would-be writer in a much later essay on style and language, be 'clear as glass - the person looking out of the window knows there *is* glass there, but he is not concerned with it.'<sup>86</sup> Note that the person figured here is looking out of the window, unlike the internally-focused 'individual vision' ('P-PL' 485) upheld in James's 'house of fiction' model. In this model, James imagines an 'incalculability of range' ('P-PL' 485) in terms of the diversity of possible interior scenes. For Bowen, such an incalculability of range depends upon change of *scenery* (upon movement, in other words) and we would do well to imagine the individual in Bowen's vision to be looking out of a train or car window as opposed to a house. Her ideal language, clear as glass, is also mobile and she saw stylistic 'mobility' as something to strive for: 'Our language must on no account be allowed to set or harden; all the time we must get it to extend its range, keep it on the move...'<sup>87</sup> This is also a trait she identifies in the works of writers she admires. 'Ever on the move', Katherine Mansfield's 'tentative, responsive, exploratory' approach, never settling into any single mode, is seen to be informed by her restless propulsion: 'She had no time to form a consistent attitude to any one finished story: each stood to her as a

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<sup>85</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, 'Manners,' *Collected Impressions* (1950; London: Longmans, 1951) 68. This was part of a review of Viola Tree's *Can I Help You?*, first published in *The New Statesman and Nation*.

<sup>86</sup> Bowen, 'Advice,' *Afterthought: Pieces About Writing* (London: Longmans, 1962) 213. First published as 'Elizabeth Bowen Talks About Writing' in *Mademoiselle* in 1960.

<sup>87</sup> Bowen, 'Advice' 212.



milestone passed, not as a destination arrived at.’<sup>88</sup> Likewise, the ‘enormous sense of release’ evident in Woolf’s *Orlando* is, to Bowen’s mind, ‘partly an affair of effortless speed, mobility, action...’<sup>89</sup> This is a projection of style that cannot readily be contained within old forms, a projection of style as an act of breaking away.

Judging by a further post-war essay published in 1950, Bowen clearly saw the act of breaking away as necessary for authorial development but, more interestingly, conceived of this act as a form of ‘disloyalty’, picking up on Graham Greene’s use of the term. Such a term implies a personal betrayal. But who or what is Bowen purporting to betray here? She explains that to be disloyal is to recognise

the danger to the writer of anything which may exercise a restrictive and ultimately blinding hold. His ideal is to be at once disabused and susceptible and for ever mobile. This is not easily come at; for, indeed, the writer has, in an even greater degree than his fellow man, the disposition to be attached – ideas, creeds, persons and ways of life first magnetise then begin to absorb him.<sup>90</sup>

Unlike Forster’s damning judgement concerning the ‘imaginative poverty’ (*HE* 119) of detached modern nomads, Bowen suggests here that imaginative poverty must be seen as the outcome of excessive attachment and I would posit Forster, Bowen’s literary antecedent, as one such attachment from which she saw that she must break away.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, her subject is the ‘civilisation of luggage’ he disparaged, her interwar work forming a compendium of ‘case’ studies, from holiday-maker Sydney Warren in *The Hotel* (1927) through to the displaced Portia Quayne in *The Death of the Heart* (1938). In embracing the idea of a ‘civilisation of luggage’, however complicated that embrace might be, in her approach to writing, she is effectuating a necessary disloyalty to one key hereditary literary influence, a disloyalty she saw as vital for the intuitive writer:

This crisis, simultaneously felt in his personal being (because of debts and affections) and his aesthetic being is the crux of the feeling writer’s career. He

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<sup>88</sup> Bowen, ‘Stories By Katherine Mansfield,’ *Afterthought* 58, 57, 60. Originated as a preface to a collection of Mansfield short stories in 1957.

<sup>89</sup> Bowen, ‘Orlando,’ *Afterthought* 45. Originated as a preface to Woolf’s novel in 1960.

<sup>90</sup> Bowen, ‘Disloyalties,’ *Afterthought* 196. First published in the *New York Times*. The term was initially used by Graham Greene during a three-way discussion on the subject of writing between Greene, Bowen and V.S. Pritchett.

<sup>91</sup> Nicholas Royle has pointed to the ‘peculiar connection between Mrs Wilcox’s will (and its revised version) and the novel itself as a kind of strange will, a Forsterian document bequeathed to us as readers and to an unforeseeable future.’ One way we might look at Bowen’s relation to Forster’s novel is as a reluctantly refused inheritance. See Nicholas Royle, *E.M. Forster* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1999) 50.

cannot free himself from the hereditary influences without the sense of outraging, injuring and betraying them...<sup>92</sup>

To consider either Forster or his works with any degree of objectivity was something Bowen claimed to find extremely difficult, so immersed was she in his writing from adolescence ('PEMF' 283). A disloyalty to Forster was certainly personal as well as aesthetic and, as such, problematic.<sup>93</sup> In her birthday essay on his work, she recalls first coming upon *Howards End*, most likely a first edition of the book, in a 'half-empty valise in an attic at the top of an aunt's house' ('PEMF' 272). Here the very 'protracted crisis' of conflicting values as epitomised through luggage and architecture, implicit in Forster's novel, is captured in miniature.<sup>94</sup> The contextual pertinence of this disclosure is so marked that one wonders if it is a later retrospective reconstruction on the part of a writer who admitted that her own 'tendency to attribute significance to places [...] became warranted by its larger reflection in E.M. Forster' ('PEMF' 276). Bowen opens her essay on the same author with the comment: 'There was something to be said for first reading E.M. Forster when I did: 1915'. There is clearly also something to be said for discovering Forster *where* she did: in an immobile valise in a house not her own. The subsequent loss of this particular copy is described as 'catastrophic': 'It doomed me to remain without *Howards End* for I don't know how long' ('PEMF' 273). If she arrived into the world of Forster with a sense of homecoming, she departed from it with a sense of homelessness and such a sense of homelessness would become the keynote of Bowen's re-envisioning of *Howards End* through *The House in Paris* in 1935.<sup>95</sup>

My discussion of *The House in Paris* will turn around the 'catastrophe' (HP 35) which arises from Leopold Grant-Moody's ill-fated handling of Henrietta Mountjoy's paper-leather dispatch case, resulting in the sudden, 'crashing' distribution of her overnight belongings - 'two apples, a cake of soap and an ebony-backed hairbrush' along with a sponge bag and some reading material (HP 35) - around and about Mme Fisher's Parisian salon early on in the first part of the novel. The following is the young Henrietta's reaction to this event:

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<sup>92</sup> Bowen, 'Disloyalties' 198.

<sup>93</sup> The pair were, indeed, personally acquainted. See Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (1977; London: Phoenix, 1993) 141.

<sup>94</sup> The phrase 'protracted crisis' is Bowen's own from a recorded talk given on the BBC Home Service in 1956 in which she refers to Forster's novel as 'violent,' despite its Edwardian surface. This is an effect, she implies, of acute ideological discord: 'What causes this protracted crisis? Conflicting values, opposing views of life.' 'Truth and Fiction,' *Afterthought* 132.

<sup>95</sup> Certain critics have likewise interpreted Bowen's *The Hotel* as a re-writing of Forster's *A Room With A View*. See, for example, Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2003) 79-82.

For the first time this morning a smile twitched up her cheeks, then she laughed outright: she sat on the sofa excitedly laughing, pushing her hair back like a girl at a pantomime. (*HP* 36)

The catastrophe surrounding the mal-handled dispatch case is indeed presented as a form of pantomime on several different levels in the text. It enacts, in the first place, the epistemological crisis at the very heart of the novel in relation to Leopold's understanding of his own origins. It mimics, in the second place, the catastrophic sexual relationship between Karen and Max, played out in the middle part, which is shown to produce the illegitimate Leopold and culminates in Max's suicide. In the third place, it gestures outwards to more violent forms of historical upheaval in Europe in the mid-1930s.

Let us start, as Bowen herself does in the novel, with that paper-leather dispatch case. It is highlighted from the outset at Henrietta's feet in the taxi she shares with Naomi Fisher from the Gare du Nord on the way to Mme Fisher's house (*HP* 17). Why the unusual paper-leather material? Why a dispatch case (essentially a satchel-like carrier bag with two buckled straps) and not simply a small case or an overnight bag? These specific designations are important and the paper-leather dispatch case is an object that Bowen pointedly returns to, again and again, throughout the novel (*HP* 17, 18, 35-6, 51, 192, 235, 236). It is, as Leopold himself perceives, the 'symbol of [Henrietta's] departure' (*HP* 35) but, within the broader scheme of the novel, it also becomes, as I will argue, the symbol of Leopold's transgressive arrival and, extending beyond the novel's direct scope, an emblem of the politically disenfranchised between the wars. The nominally insubstantial 'paper-leather' material of the case combines with Henrietta's perception of Paris as a 'cardboard city' (*HP* 19) and of Mme Fisher's abode as 'miniature, like a doll's house' (*HP* 22) with 'doll's-house furniture' (*HP* 26) to convey a sense of semi-substance, semi-reality.<sup>96</sup> The interactions between Henrietta and Leopold indeed produce a sort of pantomime of grown-up reality, accentuated by the repeated reference to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (*HP* 28, 36). It is almost as if the case stands as a prop in a re-enactment of a grown-up world just out of their own sphere and, as we will see, an untold narrative just out of their ken. The word 'dispatch' points to the respective situations of both Henrietta and Leopold. The two (virtually) parentless children have been quite literally dispatched by their respective carers and it

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<sup>96</sup> For analyses of doll's house imagery in relation to Bowen's work, see Bennett and Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel* 12 and Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen* 78.

is as 'dispatches,' a word tainted with a sense of superfluity, that they cross paths. But further to this, 'dispatch' is a word with connotations of violence and death. The threat of 'being dispatched,' in the sense of being dealt a death-blow, casts a permanent shadow across the pages of this novel from Karen's visit to her dying aunt in Rushmore to the individual encounters of the children with the dying Mme Fisher, not to mention the central gruesome spectre of Max's act of suicide through slitting his own wrist. If, as Neil Corcoran has observed, *The Last September* is a 'novel full of holes,' then *The House in Paris* is a novel full of blood, imagined as much as real.<sup>97</sup>

The incident surrounding the dispatch case might itself be characterised as an incident of epistemological blood-letting or, to borrow a phrase used by Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle in their illuminating essay on *The House in Paris*, the occurrence of a sudden and bloody 'gash of knowledge.'<sup>98</sup> During Henrietta's interview with Mme Fisher, shortly after the incident, she is probed on the source of the recent disruptive noise: "'...What has he been breaking? I heard something fall just now'" (*HP* 51). This question, prompting a quick-fire exchange on the 'magnetic' (*HP* 52) subject of Leopold, swiftly leads to the startling and violently sudden revelation of Leopold's father's unfortunate involvement with Mme Fisher's daughter, Naomi Fisher:

'Oh', Henrietta said, 'did you know his father too?'

'Quite well', said Mme Fisher. 'He broke Naomi's heart.' (*HP* 52)

Bowen, consciously linking the 'breaking' sound of the dispatch case catastrophe to the painful exposure of Naomi's *broken* heart (an image of emotional bloodshed), conceives thus of the 'gaping dispatch case' (*HP* 35) as the visual expression of a gaping epistemological gash. It also represents the violent opening up of a Pandora's box with a life of its own. 'Its two clasps', we are told, 'indignantly sprang open' (*HP* 35). More than this, the gaping dispatch case nods to *the* epistemological gash of all gashes. To reiterate Mme Fisher's words with emphasis added: "'I heard something *fall* just now"'. Bowen deliberately invokes the narrative of the original fall of man and woman through the will to greater knowledge. We must remember that Henrietta's dispatch case dispatches two

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<sup>97</sup> Neil Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) 39. Bowen also makes allusions to forms of political bloodshed through an early observation of Henrietta's: '[she] had heard how much blood had been shed in Paris...' (*HP* 22). Jean Radford uses the same line to show the 'links between Paris, violence and revolution,' established from the beginning of the novel and evidence of Bowen's historical and political interests. Jean Radford, 'Late Modernism and the Politics of History,' *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender Politics and History*, ed. Maroula Joannou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999) 40.

<sup>98</sup> Bennett and Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel* 57.

apples and it is one of these apples which leads Leopold into the temptation of an illicit investigation of his own origins through 'breaking' in upon Naomi's handbag: 'Set on driving Henrietta upstairs, [Miss Fisher] had forgotten the rubbed black Morocco bag sitting there by the apple. Leopold's eye lit on it with the immediate thought that inside there might be letters about him' (*HP* 39). The catastrophe surrounding Henrietta's dispatch case serves thus to open up the quintessential narrative of origins, original sin and epistemological longing.

But the fall of man is also a narrative about the emergence of a consciousness of sex, and the dispatch case catastrophe likewise has an important sexual dimension, parodying the adult interactions in the novel, particularly the relationship between Karen and Max. Both engaged to other people, their illicit relationship is, in effect, a relationship which is founded on and associated with luggage, visible or absent. Theirs is a love which has no place in any house and Bowen will not permit us to forget this fact. When they fleetingly touch hands in the grass, it is next to an 'upturned packing-case' as makeshift tea table (*HP* 104) in the garden of Naomi's late aunt. When they say goodbye shortly afterwards in a train carriage at Victoria station, they are momentarily locked into a crucial proximity by a baggage blockage on both sides of the narrow corridor in which they stand (*HP* 121-2). When they meet for a day in Boulogne, the illegitimacy of their relationship is rendered even more conspicuous through the complete lack of luggage on route: '[Karen] sat in the train in her thin dress; everyone else had luggage' (*HP* 133). Finally, on the way back from their brief trip to Hythe, during which they consummate that relationship, their separated suitcases announce the placelessness of their love and the impossibility of a union on fixed ground. Theirs is a love with no address:

Karen stared at her suitcase on the opposite rack. Past midnight, that other train would crash into the Gare du Nord; Max getting out would be carrying *his* suitcase and the Folkestone mackintosh through the angry steam a French train makes. She thought suddenly: I don't know his address. (*HP* 168, emphasis in original)

Maud Ellmann has referred to Leopold, the product of this meeting, as a 'misdirected' letter, a letter, in other words, with the wrong *address*.<sup>99</sup> But a further useful way to think about Leopold would be as a bag without a label, a piece of lost or, perhaps more fittingly, left luggage: "But look here," Henrietta prods him, "Who do you really belong

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<sup>99</sup> Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen* 115.

to?..."' (HP 62) As the legacy of this relationship founded on luggage, he is himself later figured as part of the 'baggage' (HP 206) of his adoptive American parents by Mme Fisher when she meets him late in the novel. Thus his 'rough' handling of Henrietta's dispatch case – '...going across to pick up the dispatch case, [he] weighed it and swung it boastfully' (HP 35) – is really a rough handling of his own history. The crash of the dispatch case belatedly enacts, in fact, an earlier luggage-related accident that does not happen, at the very moment Karen and Max part company: '...their parting had been voluntary and busy: the great thing had been for him to balance her suitcase so that, when her taxi started, it should not fall on her feet' (HP 167).

Bearing both Leopold and luggage (and Leopold as luggage) in mind, I would like now to suggest a number of interesting parallels and disjunctions between this novel and *Howards End*. We find a socially unsanctioned affair in both; affairs that end, in each case, with the death of the man (Leonard Bast and Max Ebhart) and the birth of a boy (Helen Schlegel's child and Leopold). We find an elderly woman with a palpable influence over the atmosphere of a house, benevolent in the early novel (with Mrs Wilcox) and malign in the later (with Mme Fisher). Moreover, the name 'Leopold' is, I would suggest, a reference to the character of Leonard in Forster's novel. Certainly, those two characters, Leopold and Leonard, share a thirst for knowledge but inhabit a world which denies them any kind of fulfilment in this line. But Leopold, with his Jewish heritage, has also, quite rightly, been aligned, by Corcoran, with that 'most famous literary Jew written by a gentile – and, like Elizabeth Bowen, an Irish gentile – in the twentieth century'.<sup>100</sup> He alludes, of course, to Leopold Bloom in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and this other alignment marks a vital point where Bowen departs from Forster and from *Howards End*. Corcoran draws upon Jean Radford's forceful political and historical reading of *The House in Paris* in making this observation and both critics foreground the implications for Leopold of the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, laws which rendered boys of his background exceptionally vulnerable.<sup>101</sup> Radford argues that Bowen's novel is representative of the modernist text of the 1930s which sought to integrate 'personal and collective histories', thus positing the novelist, in V.S. Pritchett's

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<sup>100</sup> Corcoran, *The Enforced Return* 97.

<sup>101</sup> Leopold, being without a Jewish mother, is not technically Jewish but these laws served to obscure such distinctions as Radford explains: 'Under Jewish law, neither Max Ebhart nor Leopold Grant-Moody is Jewish. [...] The year in which *The House in Paris* was published was the year in which the Nazi Government in Germany introduced the Nuremberg Laws which defined the Jew in a more inclusionary sense – as anyone with a Jewish grandparent. All such persons were in 1935 legally deprived of German citizenship, made 'homeless' within the German homeland.' Radford, 'Late Modernism and the Politics of History' 42.

words, as the 'historian of a crisis in a civilisation.'<sup>102</sup> Corcoran is a little more reticent than Radford in pressing the historical point of the novel but, despite his reservations, he acknowledges that

it is hard not to think of the child whom Ray considers "this brittle little Jewish boy" [...], carrying his suitcase at the Gare de Lyon, without recalling those other brittle little Jewish boys who would, only a few years after the contemporary date on which this novel is set, also stand on European station platforms, but not in order to return to their mothers.<sup>103</sup>

As Bennett and Royle argue, anticipatory 'dread' is a keynote in *The House in Paris*.<sup>104</sup> However, it should be noted that it is a present reality of European affairs, not just a future prospect of more serious situations of upheaval, which is reflected here. By 1935, vast numbers of people had already been set in motion for political reasons. That 'radically new form of homelessness,' identified by Marrus, is certainly a troubling spectre in Bowen's novel.<sup>105</sup>

Like Forster, Bowen envisages a 'civilisation of luggage' but it is one of involuntary refugees as much as voluntary exiles and she does not attempt to bring them in under the narrative roof.<sup>106</sup> If *Howards End* begins and ends in a house, then *The House in Paris* begins and ends in and around a train station and a continental train station at that. If Forster's novel concerns the 'condition of England,' as is so often stressed, then Bowen's must be seen to concern the condition of Europe. If, in *Howards End*, English liberal values are at stake, in *The House in Paris*, these same values are critiqued through the representation of the blatant anti-Semitism of the Michaelis family.<sup>107</sup> The fate of England is bound up with that of Europe in Bowen's novel, as individual history is bound up with collective history. Leopold, poised between England and the continent, is also poised at the point where the two kinds of luggage civilisations meet. In light of this, the most important difference between the two novels lies in the fact that the illegitimate child in *Howards End* becomes heir to a house while Leopold,

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<sup>102</sup> Radford, 'Late Modernism and the Politics of History' 35, 39.

<sup>103</sup> Corcoran, *The Enforced Return* 97-8.

<sup>104</sup> They note its appearance over forty times in the novel, about once every five pages. Bennett and Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel* 61.

<sup>105</sup> Marrus, *The Unwanted* 4.

<sup>106</sup> Refugee imagery abounds in Bowen's novels of the late 1930s and 1940s, *The House in Paris* (1935), *The Death of the Heart* (1938) and *The Heat of the Day* (1949) particularly. Max and Karen are indeed characterised as 'refugee' lovers in *The House in Paris* itself. (HP 113).

<sup>107</sup> Radford and Corcoran both draw attention to this. See Radford, 'Late Modernism and the Politics of History' 41 and Corcoran, *The Enforced Return* 96-7.

abandoned by his own mother at birth, becomes the very embodiment of 1930s dispossession. Despite offering the suggestion of a possible reconciliation and homecoming beyond the ending, we take leave of Leopold at a paradoxical point of still-standing transit. We are left in no certainty about his ultimate re-instatement and security. The question of whether or not his luggage will, in the end, be reclaimed hangs unanswered in the chilly Parisian air at the end of the novel.

The politically charged representation of the 'civilisation of luggage' in *The House in Paris* lends a nightmarish quality to the 'Move Dangerously' slogan of the earlier *To The North*.<sup>108</sup> It also casts Bowen's emphasis on stylistic mobility in a new and somewhat more chequered light. This is not least because travelling light is figured more often within the realm of fantasy than that of possibility. Her essay on 'Disloyalties,' though upholding an ideal of mobile detachment on the part of the writer, also acknowledges that this is not always easy to achieve in practice, nor is it always desirable: 'In turning away from resting-places, from lighted doorways, to pursue his course into darker country, [the writer] carries with him a burden of rejected alternatives and troubling regrets'.<sup>109</sup> The writer portrayed in this image moves heavily, reluctantly, with regret. And it is his carried burden which hinders his progress. We must remember that luggage, while enabling mobility, also encumbers it and the case of fiction paradigm that Bowen presents as an alternative to the house of fiction model, in her 1945 essay 'Notes on Writing a Novel,' is indeed strangely static. Even more curiously, it is an image of *left* luggage:

[The novelist] is forced towards his plot. By what? By the "what is to be said." What is "What is to be said"? A mass of subjective matter that has accumulated – impressions received, feelings about experience, distorted results of ordinary observation and something else – x. This matter is *extra* matter. It is superfluous to the non-writing life of the writer. It is luggage left in the hall between two journeys as opposed to the perpetual furniture of rooms. It is destined to be elsewhere. It cannot move till its destination is known. Plot is the knowing of destination.<sup>110</sup>

Bowen's case of fiction suggests the dream of movement rather than movement itself and this aptly corresponds to the characteristic experience of a Bowen novel. It also

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<sup>108</sup> Bowen, *To The North* 23.

<sup>109</sup> Bowen, 'Disloyalties' 196.

<sup>110</sup> Bowen, 'Notes on Writing a Novel' 169. Emphasis in original.



aptly corroborates MacKay's identification of the 'metaphor of the journey not made' as a key late modernist trope.<sup>111</sup> This is epitomised in *The House in Paris* and the above might well describe Leopold's situation in that novel in fact. Driven by an 'anxiety to be elsewhere' but stalled at every turn, her characters are shown to be perpetually in transit but also perpetually obstructed, a quandary numerous critics have highlighted and one reflected in her use of luggage imagery between the wars.<sup>112</sup> Luggage, in Bowen's work, conveys escapist mobility and paralytic detention in equal measure. Lois Farquar in *The Last September* (1929), coming upon some luggage left in the hallway of Danielstown (that of the newly-arrived Marda Norton), is struck by the feeling of adventurous possibility that the accumulated luggage evokes beyond the enclosed domain of the Big House.<sup>113</sup> Slipping on Marda's fur coat, Lois imaginatively escapes her surroundings: '...the blurred panes, the steaming changing trees, the lonely cave of the hall no longer had her consciousness in a clamp. *How she could live, she felt*'.<sup>114</sup> But if the very sight of luggage spells imaginative escape for Lois, it is an image applied, in turn, by Theodora Thirdman in *Friends and Relations* (1931), to denote a sense of social and physical stagnancy. "'But don't we want to *matter* in this place? Aren't we ever going to begin?'" She cries out to her woefully inadequate mother. "'...you're like someone sitting for always on a suitcase in a railway station. Such a comfortable suitcase, such a magnificent station! *Eeooch!*'"<sup>115</sup> Lois's naive fantasy and Theodora's lament are exemplary of two distinctive and oppositional Bowensque leitmotifs and together articulate the peculiar paradox of luggage in conjuring escape and obstruction at one and the same time. The luggage paradox is, in effect, the Bowen paradox and, to my mind, she is to literary luggage what Henry James is to literary architecture.

I have suggested that luggage became emblematic of the search for a new kind of form for emerging modernist writers. In conclusion to this section, I would like to suggest that luggage equally enunciated the nostalgic sense of the loss of a previous stable structure - embodied in the image of the house - and the difficulty of a departure in imagination from that old representative form, most particularly in works by late modernists like Bowen. Forward and backward-looking at one and the same time,

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<sup>111</sup> MacKay, "Is Your Journey Really Necessary?" 1601. MacKay explores this trope in part in relation to Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*.

<sup>112</sup> Bowen, *To the North* 64. Hildebidle neatly sums up this typical quandary in one rather memorable line: 'It is as if Bowen's characters must, in the end, choose between the rather airless spare room of someone else's house or the front seat of a speeding vehicle' (Hildebidle, *Five Irish Writers* 115).

<sup>113</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (1929; London: Vintage-Random, 1998) 76.

<sup>114</sup> Bowen, *The Last September* 77. Emphasis in original.

<sup>115</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *Friends and Relations* (1931; London: Penguin, 1946) 26. Emphasis in original.

luggage in Bowen's work exposes, as such, a certain ambivalence in relation to modernism; the deliberate experimental alienation from a previous architectural model in favour of a more mobile conceptual approach can be found to coexist disconcertingly with an enduring belief in the overarching force and importance of that previous model *in absentia*. In her interwar-time writing, this formal and stylistic ambivalence must be seen to be inextricably linked to the political context. By the end of the 1930s, 'the sense of crisis and of even greater crisis ahead was never out of men's minds [...] [a]nd that constant consciousness of disaster must necessarily have had consequences for the forms that the imagination conceived'.<sup>116</sup> These words of Samuel Hynes apply equally to the work of women writers at this time. For one thing, that sense of crisis engendered a reappraisal of the stability encoded in traditional structures. For Bowen, as for many late modernist writers, the house no longer worked as an enclosing framework and yet the longing for an eventual destination, an ultimate resting place is palpably felt throughout her work. A novelist of the nomadic horde, she admits in *Bowen's Court* (1942) that we have 'everything to dread from the dispossessed'.<sup>117</sup> If she advocated mobility in writing, it is in order to get somewhere and the pervading nightmare, subdued yet ever-present, is the idea of an indefinite entrapment in a state of limbo, the suspension of progress, or, as she puts it in *The Last September*, 'the sense of detention, of a prologue being played out too lengthily'.<sup>118</sup> This is the dilemma that her 1945 luggage paradigm brings to the fore and it is a paradigm which acutely captures her contradictory relation to the forms of modernism and to the experience of modernity.

In this she is not unlike Forster who had an 'awkward relationship to modernism,' in the words of Alistair M. Duckworth.<sup>119</sup> If Forster looks out at the 'nomadic horde' from the inside of a threatened structure in *Howards End*, Bowen looks in wistfully from the outside, as at a house of words no longer possible but imagined nonetheless. We might say that *Howards End/Howards End* is the other house which haunts her work, the shadowy fictional third in her imaginative relation to the structure of *Bowen's Court*, her much-loved family estate in Ireland. *Bowen's Court* was itself a structure from which she was forced ultimately to part, due to the prohibitive expense of its upkeep. Sold in 1959, it was knocked down the following year and these circumstances must, of course, be factored into a reading of her retrospective essay on Forster, written exactly ten years later. *Howards End/Howards End* forms the fictional counterpart to the real house left behind but it is also the house projected at some

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<sup>116</sup> Hynes, *The Auden Generation* 300.

<sup>117</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court* (1942; New York: The Ecco Press, 1979) 455.

<sup>118</sup> Bowen, *The Last September* 118.

<sup>119</sup> Duckworth, *E. M. Forster's House of Fiction* 137.

fantastical future destination point. To reiterate the words of Margaret Schlegel towards the end of Forster's novel:

“This craze for motion has only set in during the last hundred years. It may be followed by a civilisation that won't be a movement, because it will rest on the earth. All the signs are against it now, but I can't help hoping, and very early in the morning in the garden I feel our house is the future as well as the past”. (*HE* 268)

In her essay on Forster, Bowen claimed that his work became a 'landmark' for her during World War I when all others 'were swept away' ('PEMF' 274). The essay itself is entitled 'A Passage to E.M. Forster' and I would suggest that Bowen's case of fiction model also represents, in effect, an inconclusive search for Forster's lost house, that literary house of the future as well as the past, a stable and historic landmark. Permanence, she once remarked, is an 'attribute of recalled places' and the projected destination in her work might be said to be the permanent place, the house recalled.<sup>120</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that that house is recalled, for Bowen, from a point of ineffaceable modernist experience (the experience of liminality, obstruction, transience, if you like), accentuated both by World War II and by the later very personal loss of Bowen's Court. To return to the wording of her case of fiction model, notably formulated at the end of World War II: '[x] is luggage left in the hall between two journeys as opposed to the perpetual furniture of rooms. It is destined to be elsewhere. It cannot move till its destination is known. Plot is the knowing of destination.' If plot is the knowing of destination then modernism witnesses the collapse of the idea of traditional plot as the obliteration of the idea of a knowable end-point. Thus that conception of luggage in the hall between two journeys above all sustains the illusion of a permanent resting-place (the luggage is 'destined to be elsewhere') known in practice (the luggage 'cannot move') to be irrecoverable, impossible.

Significantly, the year before Bowen's essay on Forster, her final novel, *Eva Trout* (1968), ends with the death of the most dislocated of all her characters, Eva, at the hands of her own adopted child, Jeremy, who accidentally comes upon a revolver within her luggage, accumulated 'like a fallen city' in a London hotel suite.<sup>121</sup> Jeremy himself is the proud young owner of a dispatch case of 'vermilion tartan' as if to signify, following

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<sup>120</sup> Bowen, 'Pictures and Conversations,' *Pictures and Conversations* 44. This comprises two chapters of a longer intended autobiographical work Bowen was unable to complete before she died.

<sup>121</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *Eva Trout Or Changing Scenes* (1968; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) 253.

*The House in Paris*, a final self-destructive, vengeful impulse on the part of the dispossessed, unwitting and innocent as the young Jeremy himself is in carrying out the act.<sup>122</sup> Much earlier in the novel, when probed on the question of what she is afraid of, Eva responds: "'That at the end of it all you'll find out that I have nothing to declare.'"<sup>123</sup> In this she invokes the standard interrogatory question of the customs official at customs control: 'Have you anything to declare?' The intentional irony of this early customs-invocation is evident, given her later death as a result of the illicit component in her baggage, but her words also register the threshold anxiety of the displaced person under scrutiny which harks backwards to the heightened nervousness of the interwar years. Edwin J. Kenney points out that the 'fear of customs officials was one of Miss Bowen's concerns as an outsider, an alien, and becomes a metaphor for all complex people...'<sup>124</sup> In this, she was no exception. The section to follow shifts attention to those numerous depictions of luggage in the *customs hall* between two journeys during the interwar period and to the complex, displaced person under scrutiny.

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<sup>122</sup> Bowen, *Eva Trout* 254.

<sup>123</sup> Bowen, *Eva Trout* 64.

<sup>124</sup> Edwin J. Kenney, Jr., *Elizabeth Bowen* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1975) 98.

### 3.3 Have You Anything to Declare?: From Cases of Intrigue to Cases of Suspicion

'Chests, especially small caskets, over which we have more complete mastery, are objects *that may be opened*. When a casket is closed, it is returned to the general community of objects; it takes its place in exterior space. But it opens!'<sup>125</sup> In my analysis of Karin Michaëlis's *The Dangerous Age* in Chapter Two, I alluded to Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological appraisal of hiding-places within his study of the 'topography of our intimate beings' as mapped out in the structure of the house, *The Poetics of Space*.<sup>126</sup> Some of his further remarks on this subject make for a suggestive starting-point to this section. Bachelard sees such small containers as concentrated points of intimate expression, evidence of the human '*need for secrecy*,' first of all, but also serving to condense past, present and future; the containers are 'unforgettable for us but also unforgettable for those to whom we are going to give our treasures.'<sup>127</sup> I will be looking, in this section, at the dynamics of containment and disclosure enacted through the framework of the case from the angle, more specifically here, of character. One factor in the appositeness of luggage as a framework for character was its frequent fabrication from the skin of an animal, whether cowhide or crocodile skin, a disconcerting human affinity certain writers hint at, as we will see, and one neatly articulated by early-twentieth-century French diplomat, writer and perpetual traveller Paul Morand: 'When I die, I'd like them to make a trunk from my skin.'<sup>128</sup> Luggage can be seen thus to represent both the materialisation *and* the mobilisation of the private space of the self in a number of modernist texts, capturing the intimate being in motion but also under an unpredictable form of public scrutiny. Intrigue is the keynote in the game of concealment and revelation recurrently played out. (The luxury luggage designer Louis Vuitton astutely exploited the playful aspect of this game of intrigue in the slogan 'Montre-moi tes bagages et je te dirai qui tu es'/'Show me your luggage and I'll tell you who you are,' used for a 1921 advertising campaign.)<sup>129</sup> In a related vein, I will trace the

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<sup>125</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* 85. Emphasis in original.

<sup>126</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* xxxii.

<sup>127</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* 81, 84. Emphasis in original.

<sup>128</sup> Louis Vuitton, Advertisement From the International Publicity Campaign for European Sleepers and Fast Trains, 1 Feb 1921, rpt. in Pierre Léonforte, '100 Legendary Trunks,' *Louis Vuitton: 100 Legendary Trunks* 237.

<sup>129</sup> Advertisement reproduced in Pierre Léonforte, '100 Legendary Trunks,' *Louis Vuitton: 100 Legendary Trunks* 364. It is also worth noting here that Louis Vuitton patented and promoted its own failsafe luggage locks from the 1890s. Their advertising campaigns cleverly appealed to the human need for privacy as much as to the human inclination to posture. Éric Pujalet-Plaà, 'The Trunk in All its States,' *Louis Vuitton: 100 Legendary Trunks* 454-5.

emergence of the figure of the Customs Official in interwar literature, a figure frequently aligned with the psychoanalyst poised in a position of judgement over the 'case' in question and will argue that those slogans 'travelling light' and 'pack up your troubles' are accompanied by the refrain 'Have you anything to declare?' over this period.

But a playful form of case-related intrigue is only one side of the story to be recounted here. Taken outside of the poetic but also protective space of Bachelard's house and placed in motion, the casket of the individual secret self might be liberated but, by the same token, the 'complete mastery' of the subject over this casket is relinquished. From the 1920s to the 1930s, we can perceive that borderline customs exchange transform from light-hearted game into aggressive interrogation in parallel with the complication of the modernist trope of the escapist journey as outlined in the first section of this chapter. The 'fate of individuality,' to refer to the title of Levenson's study of the relation between character and form in modernism, hangs in the balance in those later interrogatory confrontations.<sup>130</sup> Levenson points to a prevailing paradox which undercuts the notion of liberating instability in the range of fictional works he discusses in this study: '...part of what makes these novels so tense and nervous is that they pursue their formal disruptions of character even as they so often sustain nostalgic longing for a whole self.'<sup>131</sup> As I will outline, such a conflict comes to a head in the mid-to-late thirties as the question of the fate of individuality takes on a critical and political significance. My overarching aim then is to account for the progressively sinister aspect of the figure of the Customs Official, on the one hand, and the figure of the stranger with a case, on the other and to show that when it comes to late modernist luggage, suspicion overtakes intrigue as the keynote in that typical modernist encounter between strangers.

'For who in this world can give anyone a character? Who in this world knows anything of any other heart – or of his own?' John Dowell exclaims midway through Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* in 1915.<sup>132</sup> "It's appalling;" Mr Wimbush owns in Huxley's *Crome Yellow*, "in living people, one is dealing with unknown and unknowable quantities."<sup>133</sup> A few years later, Peter Walsh is shown to recall a youthful conversation with Clarissa Dalloway on the subject of the 'dissatisfaction' arising from 'not knowing

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<sup>130</sup> To reiterate the full title of Levenson's study: *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality: Character and Novelistic Form from Conrad to Woolf*.

<sup>131</sup> Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality* xiii. The novels in question in Levenson's study are: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, James's *The Ambassadors*, Forster's *Howards End*, Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*, Lawrence's *Women in Love* and Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

<sup>132</sup> Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier* (1915; Manchester: Carcanet, 1996) 139.

<sup>133</sup> Huxley, *Crome Yellow* 158.

people; not being known' in Woolf's 1925 novel.<sup>134</sup> These are representative expressions of a sentiment repeated again and again in modernist fiction and it has now become something of a truism to say that the 'unknown' as well as the 'unknowable quantities' of the human psyche become an area of obsessive interest for modernist writers. But the localisation of epistemological questions of accessibility in and around the object of the case is entirely undocumented and adds an illuminating dimension to an on-going discussion. I have touched upon this idea of accessibility in my consideration of the figure of the woman who carried her own bag, the bag frequently serving to signal a female interiority outside of masculine and/or domestic control. As Nancy Armstrong has argued, the 'modern individual was first and foremost a woman' and I agree with her to the extent that the 'turn-of-the-century preoccupation with the unconscious arose in response to the question of what women want.'<sup>135</sup> Correspondingly, the modernist literary fascination with a secreted interiority implied rather than fully (if at all) revealed through luggage, owes much to those earlier figurations. From the 1910s onwards, instances of this fascination became more prolific. Mansfield, to give one early-modernist example, in her 1910 short story 'The Baron,' turns the spotlight back upon the man. The female narrator, guest at a German pension, is struck by the mysterious figure of the story's title, also a guest but remaining conspicuously aloof from the main pension contingent. His aristocratic status (source of his allure for the other guests) aside, a large part of the enigma surrounding this figure for the narrator is the black bag he carries with him at all times: 'I wondered where he was going, and why he carried the bag.'<sup>136</sup> The narrator's fascination only increases with time: 'Days lengthened into weeks. Still we were together, and still the solitary little figure, head bowed as though under the weight of the spectacles, haunted me. He entered with the black bag, he retired with the black bag – and that was all.'<sup>137</sup> Finally, the narrator comes into contact with the mysterious Baron and is granted a seeming insight into his elusive character but what is most interesting is that he only volunteers '*some* information': "'I fear," he said, "that my luggage will be damp. I invariably carry it with me in this bag – one requires so little – for servants are untrustworthy."<sup>138</sup> The Baron suggests reasons for why he carries this single black leather bag with him at all times but gives no further indication as to its contents. Both narrator and reader remain largely in the dark. The bag, in effect, publicises inaccessibility. At the same time, it intimates a secret essence,

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<sup>134</sup> Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 134.

<sup>135</sup> See Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* 8, 224.

<sup>136</sup> Mansfield, 'The Baron' 703.

<sup>137</sup> Mansfield, 'The Baron' 704.

<sup>138</sup> Mansfield, 'The Baron' 704. Emphasis added.

however much its discovery is denied to the narrator/reader. To add to this, titillation is faintly touched with the macabre in this story. The solitary Baron admits to a voracious appetite, requiring him to eat alone in public and to 'imbibe nourishment' in his room during the day in private, a revelation of a form of gluttony which is as unnerving as it is eccentric.<sup>139</sup> Does the Baron distrust, we are led to ask, the covetousness of his servants or their curiosity? In other words, does his bag contain something of value to protect or something of the illicit to conceal?

Luggage brings to the fore what Trotter has identified as two fundamental impulses in the 'psychopathology of modernism': desire and disgust.<sup>140</sup> This can be reformulated more specifically here as desire to know and disgust at finding out. Luggage has long been recognised as a device to incite speculative curiosity and, with the emergence of modernism, this evocative quality takes on a self-consciously hermeneutic function. The malleability of meaning is one important aspect of the appeal of Beerbohm's hat-box, as he outlines in 1909:

You must know that I loved my labels not only for the meanings they conveyed to me, but also, more than a little for the effect they produced on other people. Travelling in a compartment, with my hat-box beside me, I enjoyed the silent interest which my labels aroused in my fellow-passengers. If the compartment was so full that my hat-box had to be relegated to the rack, I would always, in the course of the journey, take it down and unlock it, and pretend to be looking for something I had put into it. It pleased me to see from beneath my eyelids the respectful wonder and envy evoked by it. Of course, there was no suspicion that the labels were a carefully formed collection; they were taken as the wild flowers of an exquisite restlessness, of an unrestricted range in life. ('I' 126-7)

Beerbohm knowingly manipulates fantasy through a well-rehearsed set of provocative gestures in this passage and it is worth paying some attention to the terms and figures of desire employed; interest, arousal, unlocking, the prospect of discovery and the seductive power of the unseen 'something'. The hat-box triggers 'wonder and envy' first and foremost as an object 'that may be opened,' to return to Bachelard's description of the small casket. And in this act of opening up, the *meaning* of the 'carefully formed collection' is pitted against the *effect* of the 'unrestricted range' it evokes, (a line which, it is worth noting, tellingly echoes the 'incalculability of range' ['P-PL' 485] of the 'house of

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<sup>139</sup> Mansfield, 'The Baron' 705.

<sup>140</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History* 195, 197.



fiction' as described by James the previous year). Here we find a tension between unity and disunity along the lines suggested by Levenson; this hatbox can narrate any story, depending on the perspective of the spectator, while it is the material apotheosis of one single story, that of the owner. We also find an early example of the classic modernist train carriage encounter between unfamiliar passengers and it is rendered in performative terms. Beerbohm elaborates on this theme at some length in his essay, going on to ask: 'The love of impressing strangers falsely, is it not implanted in all of us?' ('I' 127) Such a rhetorical question is far from surprising from the man who penned that other most notorious of essays 'A Defence of Cosmetics' in the very first issue of *The Yellow Book* in 1894, an essay which loudly proclaims that 'the day of sancta simplicitas is quite ended.'<sup>141</sup>

The implied sense of a new and unholy complexity brings us back around to desire's modern counterpart, disgust. The unholy is also the impure, the unsavoury. The projection of Beerbohm's labels as the 'wild flowers of an exquisite restlessness' offers only one side of a double-edged luggage fantasy. There is equally the dreaded prospect of what a case might conceal, as realised, to give one rather graphic illustration, in the mock-horrific discovery of the body of Maisie Maidan in Ford's *The Good Soldier*:

[Leonora Ashburnham] had not cared to look round Maisie's rooms at first. Now, as soon as she came in, she perceived, sticking out beyond the bed, a small pair of feet in high-heeled shoes. Maisie had died in the effort to strap up a great portmanteau. She had died so grotesquely that her little body had fallen forward into the trunk and it had closed upon her, like the jaws of a gigantic alligator.<sup>142</sup>

Alligator skin was used in the manufacture of a more extravagant and expensive type of luggage and though the material of Maisie's luggage is unspecified, it is tempting to see in this an image of a trunk not simply coming to life, but coming *back* to life with a vengeance. More prosaically, trunks were becoming a common motif in golden age detective fiction, often employed for stowing corpses, and Ford was evidently drawing on a relatively recent trend in the above episode. As far back as 1878, in Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Story of the Physician and the Saratoga Trunk,' Englishman Dr Noel comes to the aid of American Silas Q. Scuddamore, who has happened upon the body of a dead man in his Parisian hotel-room bed. Surveying the room in search of a solution to this

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<sup>141</sup> Max Beerbohm, 'A Defense of Cosmetics,' *The Yellow Book: An Illustrated Quarterly* 1 (1894): 65.

<sup>142</sup> Ford, *The Good Soldier* 73.

rather unfortunate dilemma, Dr Noel's eye falls upon what he refers to as 'one of those monstrous constructions which your fellow-countrymen carry with them into all quarters of the globe – in a word, a Saratoga trunk,' observing that 'the object of such a box is to contain a human body.'<sup>143</sup> The Saratoga trunk is duly employed for that purpose. Luggage enters into detective fiction vocabulary in this 'monstrous' capacity more prominently in the twentieth century (owing perhaps, in part, to certain high-profile murder cases involving trunks of various kinds), becoming particularly popular in the 1930s.<sup>144</sup> Ian Carter explains that, following the requirement by Parliament that railways become common carriers, trunks, trains, and left luggage offices provided an innovative solution to the age-old problem of how to dispose of a body.<sup>145</sup> As a literary device, the trunk, with its 'grisly' deposit, replicates that 'key device in detective fiction,' the 'tiny sealed room.'<sup>146</sup> It also, of course, replicates the coffin, an association we have already encountered in *Bleak House* (in Chapter One), and one which recurs in fiction at this time, disclosing the blind spot at the end of the archetypal modernist journey.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Story of the Physician and the Saratoga Trunk,' *New Arabian Nights* (1882; London: Heinemann, 1927) 45, 46. The story itself was first published in 1878 in the *London Magazine*.

<sup>144</sup> I refer here particularly to the Crossman trunk murder of 1904, in which the remains of a woman's body were found packed in a trunk and embedded in cement at Kensal Rise, and the Devereux trunk murder of 1905, in which the bodies of a woman and her twin children were disposed of in a tin trunk and left at a warehouse in Harrow. The husbands of the two women were culpable in both cases and, in the latter, the man admitted to using the Crossman case as a precedent. The later popularity of the luggage murders in fiction around the 1930s had much to do with the Charing Cross Station case of 1927 and the two famous Brighton trunk murders of 1934. In two of these three later cases, body parts were found in trunks in railway station cloakrooms. See 'Supposed Murder And Suicide At Kensal-Rise,' *Times* [London, England] 25 Mar. 1904: 9; 'Central Criminal Court, July 28,' *Times* [London, England] 29 July 1905: 4; 'Trunk Murder Charge,' *Times* [London, England] 30 June 1927: 5; 'Trunk Crime,' *Times* [London, England] 16 July 1934: 14; 'Trunk Crime No. 2,' *Times* [London, England] 18 July 1934: 14.

<sup>145</sup> Ian Carter, 'The Lady in the Trunk: Railways, Gender and Crime Fiction,' *The Journal of Transport History* 23.1 (2002): 46-59.

<sup>146</sup> Carter, 'The Lady in the Trunk' 47.

<sup>147</sup> This blind spot is periodically glimpsed through the bringing together (and sometimes merging) of images of coffin/grave and trunk. Miriam Henderson, for instance, in the 1916 *Backwater* chapter of *Pilgrimage*, is disturbed to find her sisters chattering carelessly next to one of their open trunks: 'Did they see that it was exactly like a grave?' (*P:1* 305) she asks herself, catching a prospective glimpse of the inevitable interruption of her own journey. Joanna Bannerman, the main protagonist of Catherine Carswell's *Open the Door!*, is likewise forced to acknowledge this association through juxtaposition upon the death of her mother. Called to her deathbed in a remote Scottish village, she finds that 'everything' recalls 'the unforgettable journeys of childhood...with piles of luggage...' Soon after this, on transporting her mother's body back to Glasgow in the company of her brother, the idea of the unforgettable childhood journey is brought up against the idea of the undeniable final destination: 'On the steamer, the coffin having been slung on board from the ferry like any other piece of heavy luggage, Linnet and Joanna felt as if they were the sharers in a shameful secret.' Such a shameful secret underlies the modernist journey at all times and it is a secret unremittingly divulged in depictions of the journey in late modernist writing, as will become clear in my discussion Henry Green later in this chapter. 'Life, seen whole for a moment, was one act of apprehension, the apprehension of death,' Lois suddenly grasps in Bowen's *The Last September* in a line which re-writes the

Furthermore, the exposure of buried corpses is frequently related to the interpretative process in modernism – we need only think of T.S. Eliot’s 1922 vision of graveyard agitation as textual agitation at the end of ‘The Burial of the Dead’ in ‘The Waste Land’ – and it is remarkable how often the search for the skeleton in the closet becomes the search for the skeleton in the suitcase.<sup>148</sup>

These double-edged luggage fantasies must thus be set in the context of changing approaches to psychology as well as parallel developments in interpretative processes from the late-nineteenth century. Allon White has made a convincing case for a connection between the tendency towards textual obscurity in modernist writing and the cultivation of a more intrusive mode of what he calls (after Louis Althusser) ‘symptomatic reading,’ that is to say the attempt to probe beneath a surface statement in order to get at its underlying import. According to White, readers were becoming more visibly distrustful towards the end of the Victorian period and symptomatic reading correspondingly more sophisticated in technique: ‘Its intrusion indelibly inscribed itself on the sensibilities of modern writers. With subtlety and violence it continually transgressed their defensive privacies, provoking in its turn renewed attempts at evasion.’<sup>149</sup> Textual obscurity or difficulty was therefore a response to forms of transgressive curiosity on the part of the reader and it consequently became an end in itself:

The obscurity of modernism is not susceptible to simple de-coding. It is usually not a matter of information suppressed or omitted which the critic can patiently recover. It is rather that, despite a remarkable diversity of intent and effect, modernist difficulty signifies in and by the very act of offering resistance.<sup>150</sup>

This might be said to be the point of ‘The Baron,’ for instance; obscurity, a word indeed invoked by Mansfield, is the threat the story attempts but fails to overcome. It is the fear that the Baron will ‘drift into obscurity’ before his mystery is uncovered which so bothers the narrator and that this is, in fact, what happens – ‘Next day the Baron was gone,’ we are told quite simply at the end – is testament to this evasive modernist

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Arnoldian/Fosterian ‘see life steadily and see it whole’ (*HE* 212) equation and goes some way to elucidate this figurative luggage/coffin/journey amalgamation. See Carswell, *Open the Door!* 345-6, 352; Bowen, *The Last September* 202.

<sup>148</sup> T.S. Eliot, ‘The Waste Land,’ 1922, *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, ed. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, John Stallworthy (New York: Norton, 1996) 1238.

<sup>149</sup> Allon White, *The Uses of Obscurity: The Fiction of Early Modernism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981) 3.

<sup>150</sup> White, *The Uses of Obscurity* 16.

imperative.<sup>151</sup> Similarly, Beerbohm invites at the same time as he resists a symptomatic interpretation of his identity through his semi-revelatory hatbox and it is the interplay between the two urges which is shown to foster imaginative 'range.' Ideas of symptomatic reading and resistance (and we might add, of desire and disgust) immediately conjure Freudian theories of the unconscious.<sup>152</sup> Figurations of identity through luggage in the interwar period can frequently be seen to draw from psychoanalytic models; certain unfixed cases of modernist selfhood are *cases* of a distinctly and often deliberately Freudian hue. We might even say that those trunks of a more macabre nature, inducing disgust over and above desire, can be said to go beyond the pleasure principle in exemplifying the death drive, even before Freud himself articulates it in 1920.

Customs inspection analogies for acts of symptomatic character reading and concomitant acts of resistance abound in writing after the First World War. The interwar-time context in which these analogies most often occur is important, as I will demonstrate in a moment, but the Freudian influence on such conceptions is equally marked. Carl Jung drew attention to a dream situated on the Swiss-Austrian border and featuring the 'ghost of a customs official' who appears 'peevish, rather melancholy and vexed' and pays no attention to him.<sup>153</sup> This dream occurred in 1909, shortly before his intellectual and personal rift with Freud. It was also while he was working on *Psychology of the Unconscious*, which marked his departure from Freud's psychoanalytical model towards a model which incorporated mythological elements while disputing Freud's emphasis on the centrality of the sexual instinct. To start with, his own analysis of this dream gives us an insight into the suitability of the luggage model for the representation of the unconscious as well as making a direct link with Freud himself:

I set about analysing this dream. In connection with "customs" I at once thought of the word "censorship." In connection with "border" I thought of the border between consciousness and the unconscious on the one hand, and between Freud's views and mine on the other. The extremely rigorous customs examination at the border seemed to me an allusion to analysis. At a border suitcases are opened and examined for contraband. In the course of this

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<sup>151</sup> Mansfield, 'The Baron' 705.

<sup>152</sup> White, though acknowledging Freud, locates the beginnings of the rise of modernist obscurity somewhat earlier, in the growing interest in irrational states of mind in relation to artistic creativity in the work of Cesare Lombroso, Max Nordau and J.F. Nisbet among others. See White, *The Uses of Obscurity* 44-9.

<sup>153</sup> Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, ed. Aniela Jaffé (1963; London: Flamingo, 1990) 186.

examination, unconscious assumptions are discovered. As for the old customs official, his work had obviously brought him so little that was pleasurable and satisfactory that he took a sour view of the world. I could not refuse to see the analogy with Freud.<sup>154</sup>

Jung's early connection between Freud as analyst and the persona of the customs official anticipates figurations of customs inspections as acts of character judgement in literature, as we will see. The suitcase stopped at border control proved an apposite means of conveying not only a mind under scrutiny but also a mind with the suggestion of something to hide. But Jung's dream is fascinating for another reason too. It had a crucial second section in which he envisaged the 'contrasting' persona of a 'knight in full armour' on a busy modern city street.<sup>155</sup> He interpreted this as a reference to the holy grail quest and as a reflection upon his own early sense of a 'great secret' behind that myth, a secret and a quest with wider and, by the same token, deeply personal implications: 'My whole being was seeking for something still unknown which might confer meaning upon the banality of life.'<sup>156</sup> Though both dream figures are externally visualised, Jung implicitly posits himself as the knight with the spiritual quest as set against Freud's 'sour' customs official on the hunt for the contraband content and censored areas of the unconscious. He is thus positioned both as subject of analytical examination on the customs border – though it is also notable, in light of the decline in his relationship with Freud, that he is virtually ignored by the customs official at the point of examination – and as analytical explorer by turn. However, the difference between the two forms of analysis, as represented in the dream, is of significance here in that it reasserts once again that tension in the approach to character in modernist writing, as construed by Levenson; character as dislocated, inherently untrustworthy and without a centrally definable essence, on the one hand, and as a unified, meaningful, almost transcendental individual essence to be preserved or discovered, on the other. The customs official, seeking to locate the corrupt, undermines the knight's quest for purity and, in adopting a posture of suspicion, stands, in one sense, in this dream, as a threat to the very idea of greater meaning, of a unified essence. We are left in little doubt about the reductive nature of this principle of interrogatory suspicion for Jung in contrast to the protective principle embodied by the knight (the knights of the holy grail are linked, after all, to guardianship as much as questing). But Jung's is perhaps itself a

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<sup>154</sup> Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 187.

<sup>155</sup> Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 189, 188.

<sup>156</sup> Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 189.

reductive approach to the idea of suspicion. Nathalie Sarraute, in classifying the modern period as the 'age of suspicion,' offers an alternative take on the idea. She saw suspicion as enacting the destruction of 'character and all the obsolete apparatus which ensured its power' but characterised this destructive suspicion as a creative force, impelling the writer towards novelty as a self-defensive reflex.<sup>157</sup>

Jung's dream in its entirety, together with Sarraute's comment, gives some indication of the dilemma addressed through the literary invocation of customs control in that suspicion is shown to demand either a protective or a destructively creative response. 'Have you anything to declare?', the stock phrase of the customs official, became a question relating to what character means in a modern context; a sacred essence to be shielded from the disruptive intrusion of modernity or an identity to be created and performed in order to conceal something more unsavoury, on the one hand, or the 'appalling' possibility of the indefinite and 'unknown,' to reiterate Mr Wimbush's words in *Crome Yellow*, on the other? Two examples bring these various and conflicting facets to light. The first returns us to Duquette's portmanteaux in Mansfield's 'Je ne parle pas français' and the second is taken from Woolf's *Orlando* in 1928:

Not but what these portmanteaux can be very fascinating. Oh, but very! I see myself standing in front of them, don't you know, like a Customs official. "Have you anything to declare? Any wines, spirits, cigars, perfumes, silks?" And the moment of hesitation as to whether I am going to be fooled just before I chalk that squiggle, and then the other moment of hesitation just after, as to whether I have been, are perhaps the most thrilling instants in life. Yes, they are, to me.<sup>158</sup>

Orlando now performed in spirit (for all this took place in spirit) a deep obeisance to the spirit of her age, such as – to compare great things with small – a traveller, conscious that he has a bundle of cigars in the corner of his suit case, makes to the customs officer who has obligingly made a scribble of white chalk on the lid. For she was extremely doubtful whether, if the spirit had examined the contents of her mind carefully, it would not have found something highly contraband for which she would have to pay the full fine.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Nathalie Sarraute, *L'ère du soupçon: essais sur le roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956) 79. My translation.

<sup>158</sup> Mansfield, 'Je ne parle pas français' 61.

<sup>159</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (1928; London: Hogarth, 1964) 239.

To be fooled or not to be fooled, to fool or not to fool; in the juxtaposed passages, we have the customs/character inspection from an external and an internal point of view. The extension of Duquette's portmanteaux vision moves us from the issue of the freedom of the individual to the issue of the nature of the individual and character judgement is represented as a kind of hermeneutic game. We must remember that Duquette does not 'believe in a human soul' and so this encounter is characterised as performative on both sides. There is no suggestion of any kind of sacred essence beneath the 'fascinating' lids. Moreover, the pleasure is in the guessing game of judgement itself, not in the accuracy of the squiggled decree. In the rather ambiguously phrased passage from *Orlando*, a novel in which the idea of character is rendered inherently unstable, on one level, but shown to aspire towards 'what is called, rightly or wrongly, a single self, a real self' on another (a conflict epitomised in the symbol of the oak tree, as ever-changing poem and rooted natural element), we see suspicion of the other turned back upon the self.<sup>160</sup> Orlando seems both 'conscious' and 'doubtful' about the mode of her own psychic censorship and so uncertainty is internalised here. The 'moment of hesitation' before the nature of character exhibited without in Duquette's case is exhibited within in *Orlando*. The passage appears in the context of a discussion of authorship in the nineteenth century. Orlando, now a woman, has recently married and must publicly conform to the expectations of the age in order to continue writing: 'She had just managed by some dexterous deference to the spirit of the age, by putting on a ring and finding a man on a moor, by loving nature and being no satirist, cynic or psychologist – any one of which goods would have been discovered at once – to pass its examination successfully.'<sup>161</sup> It is clear that the spirit of this age has no interest in delving into the murky depths of psychology as long as there is outward conformity. That the customs metaphor itself is shown to be a product of a retrospective 1928 standpoint suggests that the spirit of the age has markedly altered, following the genesis of Freudian explorations of the unconscious, towards an ethos of symptomatic suspicion engendering a culture in which the human mind is conceived as an unfixed object subject to passing interrogative examination. But the most important point to make here is that the form of suspicion (internal or external) on display in both of the above examples is of a relatively harmless kind, falling more on the side of playful curiosity than fearful misgiving. (In this, we can perceive a likeness to the wonder/envy evoked by Beerbohm's hat-box which is pointedly said to prompt 'no suspicion'.) The key

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<sup>160</sup> Woolf, *Orlando* 282.

<sup>161</sup> Woolf, *Orlando* 239.

sentiment is *fascination* over and above suspicion; fascination with the unknown quantities of other people and fascination with the unknown quantities of one's own self.

For the rest of this section, I intend to explore the progressive shift from suspicion as playful curiosity to suspicion as fearful misgiving, whether in relation to the within or the without, the interrogator or the interrogated, over the course of the interwar period. The above literary customs analogies are written after the First World War and I would argue that the figure of the customs official as a literary construct came to the fore particularly between the wars, as the spectral nemesis of the escapee/refugee, discussed in Section 3.1 of this chapter, but equally as index to the normalisation of suspicion in any dealings with strangers. Indeed, over the course of this period, suspicion became something of a knee-jerk response to the unknown in a climate of increasingly state-controlled scrutiny and initially subdued, but soon to rise, national tensions. Though Sarraute, like White after her, traces the growth of a climate of suspicion back through Joyce, Freud and Proust to the late nineteenth century, it was in the aftermath of the First World War that suspicion was given a more politically legitimised edge and a protective posture became widely adopted side by side with a performative posture as a necessary response to a sense of the public intrusion upon the private. In the words of George Dangerfield, 'the war hastened everything – in politics, in economics, in behaviour – but it started nothing.'<sup>162</sup> One thing it hastened was the formalisation of administrative restrictions on mobility following the extension of the Defence of the Realm Act in 1915, which made it necessary to carry a passport on the move. This change brought about an inescapable imaginative awareness of state-authorised border control between countries (serving to accentuate the sense of imaginative frontiers between individuals, between public and private, between conscious and unconscious mental states, in line with Jung's intuitive interpretation of his dream frontier earlier on).<sup>163</sup> 'However limited or eccentric such preoccupations,' Marrus notes of the reaction to new forms of systematised regulation, 'there is no doubt that they marked an important change.'<sup>164</sup> And he adds: 'Travel was no longer the free and easy passage that it was [...]. Citizenship, once an irrelevant issue for European travelers, now assumed cardinal importance.'<sup>165</sup> Though Duquette and Orlando are far from openly betraying anxiety in their respective customs analogies (for both there is a

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<sup>162</sup> Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* viii.

<sup>163</sup> For a more extensive account of the effect of these regulations, particularly the imposition of the passport, see Fussell, *Abroad* 9-10, 24-31.

<sup>164</sup> Marrus, *The Unwanted* 93.

<sup>165</sup> Marrus, *The Unwanted* 93.



certain enjoyment in the game of hide and seek), other examples in the immediate aftermath of the Great War sound a more obviously ominous note. Hope Mirrlees's 'Paris,' an experimental poem depicting the impressionistic journey of a flâneuse through a Parisian cityscape and published immediately after the war by The Hogarth Press in 1919, brings art into overt relation with the customs office in a disjointed and corpse-strewn post-war scene:

The ghost of Père Lachaise  
Is walking the streets;  
He is draped in a black curtain embroidered with the  
letter H,  
He is hung with paper wreaths,  
He is beautiful and horrible and the close friend of  
Rousseau the official of the Douane.  
The unities are smashed,  
The stage is thick with corpses....<sup>166</sup>

Henri Rousseau was a Post-Impressionist painter who died in 1910. Why conjure up one of the more obscure of the Post-Impressionists here? Apart, of course, from the Parisian affiliation (an affiliation shared by many other more prominent Post-Impressionists, often from origin), this has much to do, I believe, with the artist's all-too-suggestive nickname. He was dubbed 'Le Douanier' (The Customs Official) for his work in the Parisian toll office.<sup>167</sup> We perceive here again a 'close' association between death (through Père Lachaise) and luggage imagery, in the first place, but the custom-house is also aligned with art through the invoked Rousseau as well as with a post-war artistic sense of smashed unities. Death and art and state-sanctioned taxation and intrusion are brought into uncomfortable proximity here. Significantly, Freud is later named directly in the poem - 'Freud has dredged the river, grinning horribly/ Waves his garbage in a glare of electricity' - linked to the earlier graveyard ghost by the 'horrible'/'horribly' repetition.<sup>168</sup> We might say that Freud is a friend of the 'close friend' of the official of the Douane by association and the subject for artistic as well as psychoanalytic interrogation, by implication, is shown to have become the refuse or *wasteland* of the post-war mind projected onto a corpse-ridden urban stage.

<sup>166</sup> Hope Mirrlees, *Paris: A Poem* (London: Hogarth, 1919) 11.

<sup>167</sup> Rousseau never undertook the role of customs official in actuality though he was popularly perceived to be in that particular line of work.

<sup>168</sup> Mirrlees, *Paris* 21.

The mention of the 'official of the Douane' in connection to post-war art as well as psychology in this instance is an early indicator of a more pronounced frontier-oriented fear for the fate of art as much as the fate of the individual in the face of restrictive forms of interwar officialdom. The 'consciousness of frontiers,' in Fussell's words, comes into play in fiction after the First World War - '...unknown before 1915 is that ritual occasion for anxiety so familiar to the modern person, the moment one presents the passport at a frontier' - but becomes an even more persistent feature of 1930s literature, something most critics of the period observe.<sup>169</sup> Cunningham pays particular heed to that variety of anxiety induced by the frontier for 'anyone with anything to hide or lose,' observing that 'ordinary worrisomeness' is shown to rise 'dramatically' in such circumstances.<sup>170</sup> Yet the peculiar customs-oriented branch of frontier fixation also produced many comic and satirical interpretations, not least in relation to the dubitable (not to say dutiable) contents of the authorial bag. In Waugh's *Vile Bodies* in 1930, the main protagonist Adam Fenwick-Symes is stalled on the border by his admission that he is carrying books: "'Yes," said the Customs officer menacingly, as though his worst suspicions had been confirmed, "I should just about say you had got some books."' <sup>171</sup> When it is further revealed that amongst these books is the typescript of his memoirs, he is taken aside for a more serious cross-examination, his typescript ultimately confiscated. Likewise, Byron records one customs encounter in similar terms in *The Road to Oxiana*: "Do you write books?" asked the customs officer, scenting an author of dutiable obscenities. I said I was not Lord Byron, and suggested he should get on with his business.<sup>172</sup> What is most interesting about both of these examples (as well as the example from *Orlando*, itself a tongue in cheek account, not too long before) is that they either come from or are about autobiographical work so that what we find

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<sup>169</sup>Fussell, *Abroad* 32, 30. For Hynes, the border can be seen to represent the 'edge of the unknown and the beginning of uncertainty' for the Auden generation and this obsession is manifested particularly in the idea of 'going over' the class border for that set of writers. Cunningham writes more generally about 'threshold anxieties' and perceptively identifies the ambiguity of the border's meaning during this decade: 'The ancient taboos of the threshold - the place where the excitement of leaping across into the new is chequered by the fear of being stuck on the border, suspended in no-man's-land, dangerously exposed, fearfully indeterminate [...] - are inevitably focused at very many of the '30s huge roster of thresholds.' Cunningham also briefly discusses the 'border traumas of Europe's political refugees.' Hynes, *The Auden Generation* 56; Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* 366, 364, 372.

<sup>170</sup> Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* 371.

<sup>171</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies* (1930; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951) 24.

<sup>172</sup> Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* 15. This was in Palestine. Customs officials are invariably rendered throughout Byron's travelogue in disdainfully comical terms. Their inherent corruption is taken for granted. A further encounter in Persia is recounted as follows: '... the Persian officials offered us their sympathy in this disgusting business of customs and kept us three hours. When I paid duty on some films and medicines, they took the money with eyes averted, as a duchess collects for charity.' Byron 41.

here are depictions of a comic tension between authored and authorised forms of selfhood. Yet these humorous takes only serve to emphasise the prevalence of a concern for privacy and for artistic freedom at a time when totalitarian forms of public authority, whether left-wing or right-wing, Communist or Fascist, are on the rise throughout Europe. Looking back on the decade, George Orwell drew attention to the impact of an intensifying atmosphere of competing ideological demands upon the individual, an atmosphere which fostered anxiety as to how exactly to author an authorised version of the self: 'It was a time of labels, slogans and evasions. At the worst moments you were expected to lock yourself up in a constipating little cage of lies; at the best a sort of voluntary censorship ("Ought I to say this? Is it pro-Fascist?") was at work in nearly everyone's mind.'<sup>173</sup>

In the 1930s, the customs official no longer represents simply an intrusive analyst with sophisticated symptomatic reading skills but a far more perturbing and not so easily identifiable form of public surveillance, the political orientation behind which surveillance is not necessarily always itself 'declared'. Another customs-related dream, this time from 1936 rather than 1909, will illustrate the shift in emphasis from psychoanalytical to political invasiveness in the use of the customs analogy:

I dreamed once that, like Clarence, I had "pass'd the melancholy flood, with that grim Ferryman that poets write of", and that when we reached the other side, there was a Customs House and an official who had inscribed in golden letters on his cap *Chemins de fer de l'Enfer*, who said to me, "Have you anything to declare?" And he handed me a printed list on which, instead of wine, spirits, tobacco, silk, lace, etc., there was printed Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Scandinavian, Chinese, Arabic and Persian, and it was explained to me that this list referred to the literary baggage I had travelled with during my life, and I need only declare those things of which I had a permanent record either in my memory or in written notebooks. There, sure enough, on the counter before me appeared two boxes, one labelled *Memory*, the other *Notes*. The Customs House official gave me a look, and said: "Small Latin and less Greek?"

And then I woke up.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> George Orwell, 'Inside the Whale,' *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 1 (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968) 519.

<sup>174</sup> Maurice Baring, *Have You Anything To Declare? A Notebook With Commentaries* (1936; London: Heinemann, 1951) 1.

This dream description forms the opening to Maurice Baring's 1936 collection of miscellaneous reading notes and 'literary odds and ends' and is cited as the stimulus for the ensuing declaration of what he refers to as his 'literary baggage' for the benefit of other readers.<sup>175</sup> The luggage metaphor recurs throughout the collection as an adjoining and rather tedious thread but this overlaboured literary metaphor clearly takes its cue from rather subtler conceptions. Baring is, in other words, capitalizing on a motif in common currency at this time. Subtlety aside, what makes Baring's introduction, of which the above dream forms part, notable is that, although outwardly light and untroubled in tone, it yet admits an inadvertent pitch of anxiety, carried over from other employments of the same motif. Consider his dream alone. In response to this dream, Baring remarks only upon a newly-awakened 'desire to make a declaration of such luggage as I have travelled with and kept, or discarded' and quite casually overlooks the more disquieting elements: the interrogatory nature of the scene, the sense of an impasse and of being ultimately tested, the hellish inscription on the Customs official's cap, the note of insinuation and superciliousness in the final question, the hint of Babelian chaos in the list of languages, the association of the written word with the contraband.<sup>176</sup> In retrospect, Baring's unconscious vision is very much of its time and, as such, politically charged. 'Looking back on the 'thirties,' Hynes notes of the course of events leading up to World War II, 'we can see in the history of the decade the shape of a tragic play – the initiating errors, the complicating actions, the climax and the fall toward disaster and death. In that pattern, 1936 is the peripeteia, the point where the action turned...'<sup>177</sup> Among other important developments, he refers here to the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland, signalling the failure both of the Versailles Treaty as well as the League of Nations, and paving the way (with the kind of inevitability only perceptible with hindsight) for the events of 1939. In this sense, Baring's dream position at a border is fitting, corresponding to a kind of spatial peripeteia. As Graham Greene was to observe three years later, 'The

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<sup>175</sup> Baring, *Have You Anything to Declare?* 2.

<sup>176</sup> Baring, *Have You Anything to Declare?* 1. The trope of the ultimate test is one that recurs in writing of the 1930s, as both Hynes and Cunningham point out, attributing its development to the younger 'Auden' generation of writers who had missed out on the First World War and felt the need to prove themselves. Baring himself did participate in the Great War but I would argue that his use of the customs analogy picks up on and shows the influence of these circulating ideas and motifs. Baring moreover involuntarily exhibits the kind of frontier anguish of the person with something to hide, typical of this period as remarked upon by Cunningham, even if he does not show a conscious awareness of it. This lack of awareness is an even greater testament to the consonance of the analogy in a 1936 context. See also Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* 170-1; Hynes, *The Auden Generation* 127, 244.

<sup>177</sup> Hynes, *The Auden Generation* 193

border means more than a customs house, a passport officer, a man with a gun. Over there, everything is going to be different; life is never going to be quite the same again...'<sup>178</sup> The border represents the gateway to hell in Baring's dream and in 1936, 'hell' was another word for 'war'.

By extension, customs official became another word for warmonger. Christopher Isherwood drew attention to the 'fairly sinister air of leisure which invests the movement of officials at frontier stations,' making them 'not unlike prison warders,' in *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (1935), a characterisation calling to mind the unsettling late-1930s confusion of tropes of leisure and forced flight, highlighted in the Section 3.1.<sup>179</sup> War is repeatedly figured as a day of borderline judgement in more ways than one. Hitler himself was known to be the son of a prominent Austrian inspector of customs. Referring to Rebecca West's record of a journey through Yugoslavia in 1937, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), Fussell comments that 'Hitler is considered a phenomenon more or less understandable once it is remembered that he was literally "the child of one of those parasites on our social system, a douanier."' <sup>180</sup> Correspondingly, war is considered a phenomenon more or less understandable in a customs-controlled world. In his 1939 novel *Coming Up For Air*, George Orwell imaginatively reaches out beyond the moment of borderline judgement and his conception of what follows is one of a brutal form of invasiveness: 'War is coming. 1941, they say. And there'll be plenty of broken crockery and little houses ripped open like packing cases...'<sup>181</sup> For Orwell, the day of judgement, the coming of war amounts to a destructive intrusion upon the realm of the private and it is rendered here in terms of an aggressive frontier customs inspection. The implications of this allusion to that culminating outcome of frontier suspicion should not be underestimated nor overlooked. Orwell was of a generation which was, as has been well documented, acutely conscious of frontiers and his image of the ripped open house as ripped open packing case equally signals the end of the long week-end, the obliteration of those interwar fantasies of flight and freedom not to mention the topography of the intimate being (whether mapped out through house or case), the firm and explicit establishment of suspicion in ordinary intercourse and as the *raison d'être* of wartime aggression.

But if customs control had become a byword for aggression on the 1930s literary and artistic horizon so too had the figure of the stranger with a case, a case

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<sup>178</sup> Graham Greene, *The Lawless Roads* (1939; London: Vintage-Random, 2002) 23.

<sup>179</sup> Christopher Isherwood, *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (1935; London: Hogarth, 1969) 15.

<sup>180</sup> Fussell, *Abroad* 31. The source of the West quotation is: Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: The Record of a Journey Through Yugoslavia in 1937*, vol. 2 (1941; London: Macmillan, 1942) 501.

<sup>181</sup> Orwell, *Coming Up For Air* 223.

which was palpably losing that earlier aura of wonder, envy and intrigue. The beginning of *Mr Norris Changes Trains*, in which the narrator William Bradshaw first encounters the Mr Norris of the title in the carriage of a train on route to Germany, marks this change. The opening line – ‘My first impression was that the stranger’s eyes were of an unusually light blue’ – invokes a clichéd signifier of honesty only to subvert it. Such a cliché is introduced in order to expose the farcical nature of former conceptions of honesty.<sup>182</sup> Duplicitousness is now so much the norm that Bradshaw, upon perceiving Mr Norris’s evident nervousness on approaching the frontier, suspects him to be ‘engaged in a little *innocent* private smuggling.’<sup>183</sup> ‘Probably a piece of silk for his wife or a box of cigars for a friend,’ he muses, a conception not unlike Orlando’s envisioning of her own internalised contraband.<sup>184</sup> Innocence now comprises an innocuous form of duplicitousness. Mr Norris is engaged, it is later insinuated, in somewhat more shady activities and, though hardly a dangerous individual, nonetheless presents a compromised version of the enigmatic earlier modernist train carriage *anonyme*. He is still an intriguing individual but not in a way conducive to personal fantasy. His are secrets one would rather not discover, adventures in which one would rather not partake. This waning of the stranger’s aura of intrigue must be viewed against a background of failing diplomatic negotiations in Europe from the end of the First World War, negotiations very much played out in the public eye. The Versailles Treaty of 1919 and the 1925 Locarno Agreement (which worked to resolve differences arising from Versailles) served to stabilise the European political scene through diplomatic cooperation in the 1920s, lulling all concerned into a false sense of security. When diplomatic relations fall into decline through the 1930s, this decline is more often than not construed in terms of a breach in trusting and honest relations. But honesty and transparency are portrayed, in an age of suspicion, as all-too-naïve and simple-minded and, consequently, dangerous. ‘Have you anything to declare?’ became a highly charged political and diplomatic question of the day. Consider the following selection of *Punch* cartoons, ranging from 1929 to 1936:

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<sup>182</sup> Isherwood, *Mr Norris Changes Trains* 7.

<sup>183</sup> Isherwood, *Mr Norris Changes Trains* 11. Emphasis mine.

<sup>184</sup> Isherwood, *Mr Norris Changes Trains* 11.

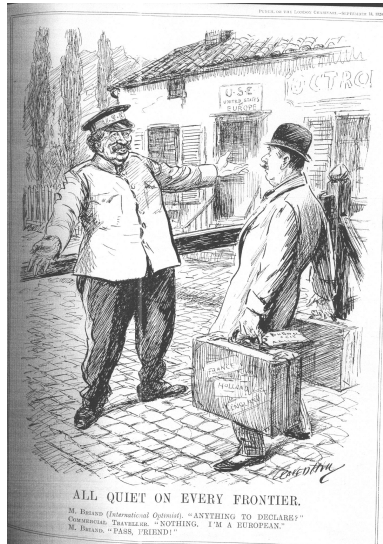


Figure 10: Leonard Raven-Hill, 'All Quiet On Every Frontier,' *Punch* 177 (1929): 323.

M. Briand (*International Optimist*). "ANYTHING TO DECLARE?"

Commercial Traveller. "NOTHING. I'M A EUROPEAN."

M. Briand. "PASS, FRIEND!"<sup>185</sup>

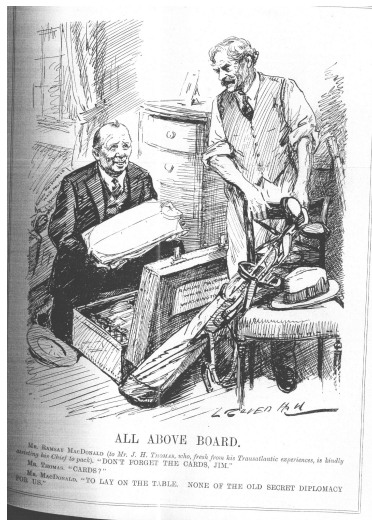


Figure 11: Leonard Raven-Hill, 'All Above Board,' *Punch* 177 (1929): 351.

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald (to Mr. J.H. Thomas, who, fresh from his Transatlantic experiences, is kindly assisting his Chief to pack). "DON'T FORGET THE CARDS, JIM."

Mr. Thomas. "Cards?"

Mr MacDonald: "TO LAY ON THE TABLE. NONE OF THE OLD SECRET DIPLOMACY FOR US."<sup>186</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Aristide Briand was President of France in 1929 and had been central in negotiating the Locarno Treaty in 1926, for which he was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize.



Figure 12: Ernest H. Shepard, 'Carrying a Suit-case in an Unsuspicious Manner,' *Punch* 185 (1933): 151.



Figure 13: Leonard Raven-Hill, 'St. George for Merrie Europe; Or, Chivalry Begins Abroad,' *Punch* 188 (1935): 151.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>186</sup> Ramsay MacDonald became the first Labour Prime Minister in 1929. J.H. Thomas was the Lord Privy Seal. The cartoon refers to a visit undertaken by the Prime Minister to the United States in September of that year.

<sup>187</sup> The cases are labeled after a variety of European cities where post-war negotiations were held or treaties signed in the 1920s and 1930s. The cartoon appeared on April 24, shortly after the Stresa conference (at which representatives from Britain, France and Italy met to formulate a response to German rearmament.)



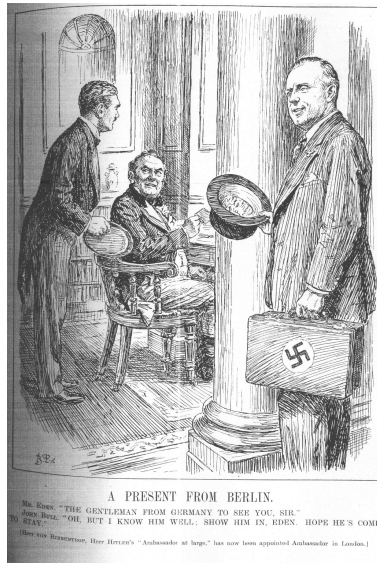


Figure 14: Bernard Partridge, 'A Present From Berlin,' *Punch* 191 (1936): 211.

Mr. Eden. "THE GENTLEMAN FROM GERMANY TO SEE YOU, SIR."

John Bull. "OH, BUT I KNOW HIM WELL; SHOW HIM IN, EDEN. HOPE HE'S COME TO STAY."

[Herr von Ribbentrop, Herr Hitler's "Ambassador at large," has now been appointed Ambassador in London.]<sup>188</sup>



Figure 15: Charles Grave, 'Diplomatic Exchanges (Unofficial),' *Punch* 191 (1936): 283.

Adolf: "MY MASTERPIECE!"

David: "AND - POSSIBLY - MINE!"<sup>189</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Anthony Eden was the foreign secretary in 1936.

Without going into too much individual detail here, I will make some broad observations on the basis of these cartoons in juxtaposition. We can perceive a repeated alignment between political interests and the packed contents of the case of the diplomatic negotiator here but the idea of readily declaring those contents is characterised as a form of political artlessness. The cartoons together sketch a general loss of trust both in the opposition and in political leadership at home over the course of the interwar period and this development is hardly confined to Britain. As Zweig observes of the difference between the 'childish naive credulity' attending the First World War and the fatalism accompanying the arrival of the Second: 'In 1939 [...] this almost religious faith in the honesty or at least in the capacity of one's own government had disappeared throughout Europe. Diplomacy was despised, since one had seen with bitterness how the possibility of a lasting peace had been betrayed at Versailles...'<sup>190</sup> The increasingly farcical depictions of diplomacy in terms of the breakdown of hospitality/chivalry is accompanied by a realisation of the necessity of viewing any case 'carried in an unsuspecting manner' as inherently treacherous and a harbinger of danger, forcing everyone to assume the perspective of the customs inspector in relating to the unknown other. The figure of the enemy alien entered into fiction with a dubious case in hand with the onset of the war, a dual arrival anticipated in W.H. Auden's 1938 poem 'Gare du Midi':

A nondescript express in from the South,  
Crowds round the ticket barrier, A face  
To welcome which the mayor has not contrived  
Bugles or braid: Something about the face  
Distracts the stray look with alarm and pity.  
Snow is falling. Clutching a little case,  
He walks out briskly to infect a city  
Whose terrible future may have just arrived.<sup>191</sup>

At the same time, the necessity for adopting an attitude of suspicion in the face of the stranger '[c]lutching a little case' was in conflict with the hospitable impulse arising

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<sup>189</sup> The cartoon depicts Adolf Hitler (of whom there were many caricatures in *Punch* throughout the 1930s) and David Lloyd George. Lloyd George represented Britain as Prime Minister at the Versailles Treaty conference (during which he took a hard line where Germany was concerned) and met with Hitler in Germany in September 1936 to discuss foreign policy.

<sup>190</sup> Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* 175.

<sup>191</sup> Auden, 'Gare du Midi' 180.

from the realisation of a growing European refugee problem. How to distinguish between the enemy alien and the genuine asylum seeker?<sup>192</sup> Whether found to be genuine or not, it is clear that the figure of the stranger had come to suggest something very different by the outbreak of the war. During the war itself, intriguing question marks become 'little dark menacing question mark[s],' to use Greene's expression for unfamiliar individuals in *The Power and the Glory* in 1940, a novel itself teeming with suspicious-seeming strangers.<sup>193</sup>

What did all this mean for modernist literary luggage as well as for the case of the modernist individual? Let me approach this question through a surrealist work of art by René Magritte entitled 'The Key of Dreams,' created in 1936, that temporal turning-point identified by Hynes:



Figure 16: René Magritte, 'The Key of Dreams,' 1936, Private Collection. (Courtesy of DACS.)

<sup>192</sup> According to Marrus, Britain adopted a cautious posture towards refugees throughout the 1930s and the numbers of incoming immigrants were low for much of the decade. After 1938, under pressure to admit greater numbers of asylum seekers, a more open policy was somewhat reluctantly taken up and refugee entry accelerated. But hospitality was accompanied by a 'deep-seated anxiety' about illegitimate and potentially threatening aliens, an anxiety leading to rounds of internments: 'In Britain, 27,000 enemy aliens (including some merchant seamen) found themselves behind barbed wire. British intelligence officers and other officials then began the sometimes clumsy efforts to ascertain whether the internees were, in fact, dangerous enemy agents.' Marrus, *The Unwanted* 152-3, 204-5.

<sup>193</sup> Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory* (1940; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 35. This is a phrase which recurs in various forms to refer to strangers throughout the novel.

One of the most striking aspects of the painting is that 'the valise,' despite being the only object correctly labelled, does not declare its contents.<sup>194</sup> This is a work largely understood as a statement on the nature of the relationship between visual images and language, invoking museum display case and children's vocabulary book, transparent window and blackboard, as well as the title of Freud's seminal psychoanalytic work. It forms a surrealist vision of dreamlike disorientation. The painting has been seen to disorientate because, with the exception of the valise, word and image do not appear to correlate. In the words of Laurie Edson: 'Magritte has presented the reader with a series of conflicts between word and image that invite us to re-evaluate the assumptions we make about the relationship between the two.'<sup>195</sup> Contrary to the standard interpretation of a conflict between reading and viewing, it is my contention that the most disorienting element in this painting is, in fact, the correctly labelled item, the single point at which reader and viewer coalesce, where image and word correspond. The semantic disruption is crucially caused by the inscription of 'the valise' *for* the valise in this artwork and this is not least because the word 'valise' itself is derived from another language.

An alternative way to see the painting would be as a commentary on both the functioning and failure of metaphor, which I.A. Richards defined that very same year as a 'borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a transaction between contexts.'<sup>196</sup> As a whole, Magritte's work can be described as enacting a 'transaction between contexts'; the visual and written/verbal, most obviously, but also childhood and adulthood, the domestic and natural, internal and external spheres, and so on. But, upon closer inspection, we find a form of interaction on the level of the individual examples of seemingly disjunctive juxtaposition too. The word 'wind' conjures the *winding* of a clock. By the same token, time itself has long been construed in terms of wind – the winds of time – and we might even say that the clock hands are shown to slant forward in the same direction as the written script as if at the whim of a gust. Likewise, the jug is noticeably bird-like in shape, the rim of its opening pointed like a beak, its handle protruding like a tail. We might even stretch this correlation to the onomatopoeic 'jug jug' of the nightingale, brought to the fore in T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' the previous

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<sup>194</sup> This is a late third addition to a series of similarly structured works beginning in 1927, all entitled 'La Clef des Songes' or 'The Key of Dreams.' This last 1936 version is the only one in this series constructed through the English language.

<sup>195</sup> Laurie Edson, *Reading Relationally: Postmodern Perspectives on Literature and Art* (Michigan: U of Michigan P, 2000) 45-6.

<sup>196</sup> I.A. Richards, 'Metaphor,' 1936, *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1981) 51. Emphasis in original. The essay was first published in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* in 1936.

decade.<sup>197</sup> In other words, in each of these cases, the two elements merge to create another kind of meaning. While these ostensibly arbitrary juxtapositions invite imaginative interpretation, the correctly labelled figuration of the valise paradoxically wards off definition and understanding. It is inherently resistant but not, I would suggest, in a way that incites experimental interpretation as in White's model of modernist obscurity. The figure of the case directly corresponds to the concept of metaphor in that the very word 'metaphor' derives etymologically from an original sense of 'bearing' or 'carrying.'<sup>198</sup> But if we are presented with a metaphor for metaphor in that final image, it is a metaphor which does not immediately divulge its semantic load. It is a metaphor which fails to complete its contextual transaction, reflecting a sense of the failure of contextual transactions on all fronts during this period. Symptomatic interpretation (like diplomatic or political negotiation) is stopped short. We, the viewers, are posited as interrogators before Magritte's 'valise'. 'Have you anything to declare?' we ask. The valise says nothing. We remain in a state of uncertainty, of suspicion. In thinking about small boxes, chests and caskets, Bachelard, as mentioned, made the observation that '[w]hen a casket is closed, it is returned to the general community of objects.' However, the valise, as I hope to have shown, was, by 1936, no ordinary object, could not simply return unobtrusively to that general material community. Does the valise, in Magritte's image, have something to declare, we are forced to ask, and, if so, what kind of declaration can it be? Is the valise another emblem of treachery in line with the title of his earlier most famous image of a pipe bearing the caption 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe,' 'La Trahison des Images' or 'The Treachery of Images'? Is it, on the other hand, an image of vulnerability at a time of pending crisis? Does it conceal the remnant of an essential self to be protected? Is it the 'tough case of something labelled fragile,' to again borrow an expression used by Greene to describe a character, this time in *The Lawless Roads* (1939)?<sup>199</sup> Or does it have nothing whatsoever to declare? Does it announce a rejection of the symptomatic mode altogether? Is it a late modernist premonition of a postmodern aesthetic of surface value? Does it declare the absence or negation of interiorised meaning?

These questions together bring us back round to the original question posed as to the status of modernist literary luggage as well as the case of the modernist individual towards and during the Second World War. Magritte's painting conveys the quandary

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<sup>197</sup> Unlike the earlier francophone images in the 'Key of Dreams' series in 1927 and 1930, this 1936 specimen is deliberately anglicised, thus authorising such an English literary frame of reference.

<sup>198</sup> 'metaphor, n,' *OED Online*, March 2012, Oxford University Press, 12 June 2012  
<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/117328?redirectedFrom=metaphor>>

<sup>199</sup> Greene, *The Lawless Roads* 109.

faced by writers and artists at a point when the fate of the modern individual was being put to the test along with the idea of symptomatic interpretation. While the difficulty of modernism might indeed have arisen as a form of resistance to symptomatic intrusiveness, I agree with Alan Wilde that 'what is at issue is the same epistemology of the hidden.'<sup>200</sup> We might say that the modernist conception of character both withstands and cultivates symptomatic interpretation at one and the same time and the idea of a unified essence which might be discovered beneath the layers of obscurity is not entirely lost (as Levenson also highlights.) The effect of this is a sort of impervious ambiguity. A large factor in the pertinence of that recurring line, 'have you anything to declare?', in the 1930s, however, is that it demanded an unambiguous stand – a yes or no (there is no getting away with a 'maybe' at customs control) – and it was a question which could be mapped onto matters of aesthetic and political alignment.

One way of responding to this predicament of having to take account of one's position was, indeed, to take an unambiguous stand and it is no coincidence that this was the era when the documentary style, or the 'new vernacular,' in Cyril Connolly's phrase, came into vogue in line with the foregrounding of a politically committed art, on the part of emerging left-wing artists and writers.<sup>201</sup> The new vernacular was represented as a means of reaching out to the proletarian masses as well as a response to early modernist obscurity (what Connolly labels, as set against the 'new vernacular,' the 'mandarin' style, espoused by writers 'whose tendency it is to make their language convey more than what they mean...')<sup>202</sup> However, the new vernacular must be considered, just the same, as a reaction, though of a very different kind, to the prevailing air of suspicion, as if the only way to counteract intrusiveness is to get rid of hiding-places altogether. Isherwood, one of the lead proponents of the documentary style, himself saw it in terms of a rejection of figurative ambiguity, a shedding of the metaphorical load. In describing an earlier failed novelistic effort, he diagnoses the problem in retrospect in *Lions and Shadows* (1938) as follows: 'As usual, I was trying to pack a small case with the contents of three cabin trunks: my little comedy of bohemian life was, by this time, so overloaded with symbolism; the interplay of *motifs* (to use a very favourite word of mine, just then) was so complex and self-contradictory, that the book, had it ever been actually written, would have been merely a series of descriptions

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<sup>200</sup> Alan Wilde, 'Surfacings: Reflections on the Epistemology of Late Modernism,' *boundary 2* 8 (1980): 210.

<sup>201</sup> Cyril Connolly, *Enemies of Promise* (1938; London: André Deutsch, 1996) 70-84.

<sup>202</sup> Connolly, *Enemies of Promise* 25.

of the effects which I had hoped in vain, to be able to produce.'<sup>203</sup> Mandarin ambiguity is cast as an over-packed bag at odds with the transparency required of the vernacular school.

But, on the opposite end of the scale, we find an embrace of excess. This was also the era of the 'inside the whale' /back to the womb approach, famously identified by Orwell, and with this approach, by contrast, the over-packed bag as well as the retreat to an ultimate form of private hiding-place is the ideal. Take this representative passage from Laurence Durrell's *The Black Book* (also 1938), which features the retirement of the narrator writer-figure Lawrence Lucifer, with his emotional freight:

Forgive my imprecision, but it is as if I were packing to go on a long journey. Hilda lies open like a trunk in the corner of the room. There is room for everything, the gramophone, the records, the cottage piano, the microscope, the hair restorer, seven sets of clean clothes, manuscripts, a typewriter, a dictionary, a pair of jackboots, skates, an ice pick, a crash helmet, a sheath knife, a fishing rod, and the latest Book Society Choice. There is even room for a portable God, if you rope it up among the canvasses. With these labels to assure me of my distinct and unique personality, I step down into the red tunnel, to begin my journey. For the purposes of simplification, let me be known as Jonah.<sup>204</sup>

If, as I have established here, luggage provided a metaphorical framework for the space of the unconscious, yet an unconscious liable to be publicly exposed, in modernist fiction, this reads like a complete retreat through the trunk into a protected womb-like unconscious zone with no intention of return or of public exposure. He continues on this line at some length. This is excess baggage at its most excessive: 'there is room for everything.' It is almost as though the loss of any one item will serve to detract from the complete essence of the individual and so all must be accounted for and transferred to the self-contained, enclosed space of the trunk/womb.

Deborah Cohen remarks that '[a]mid the turmoil and sacrifices of the war, possessions became both less and more important to their owners' in that the emergency forced people to select the most essential, the most sacred personal objects while belying the importance of any object when life itself is at stake.<sup>205</sup> Luggage encapsulates that odd duality in expressing detachment and attachment at once. Her

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<sup>203</sup> Christopher Isherwood, *Lions and Shadows: An Education in the Twenties* (1938; London: Methuen, 1979) 128-9.

<sup>204</sup> Lawrence Durrell, *The Black Book* (1938; New York: Dutton, 1963) 177-8.

<sup>205</sup> Cohen, *Household Gods* 199.

remark is penetrating in a number of ways but primarily for highlighting the extreme positions the wider crisis forced upon the individual, extremes which can also be perceived in the literary output and in the literary conception of the fictional case. We find, during this period, the expression of a renewed belief in the need to safeguard the essential self cast into doubt by modernists, a response which can be witnessed, not only in the popularity of the 'back to the whale/womb' motif, but also in the range of autobiographies which appeared late in the decade, all proclaiming a need to preserve the self through 'declaring' everything before the onset of disaster.<sup>206</sup> But, we find, at the same time, a wartime impetus to obliterate this idea of the plumbed or unplumbed depths of a private unconscious in favour of a surface transparency, on the one hand, or a model of absolute performativity, on the other, induced by the same threatening circumstances. Hannah Arendt exposes the latter as a desperate form of desire in 'We Refugees': 'A man who wants to lose his self discovers, indeed, the possibilities of human existence, which are infinite, as infinite as is creation. But the recovering of a new personality is as difficult – and as hopeless – as a new creation of the world. Whatever we do, whatever we pretend to be, we reveal nothing but our insane desire to be changed, not to be Jews.'<sup>207</sup> 'Have you anything to declare?' It seems that in the late 1930s political climate, only two answers presented themselves to this resonating question: 'nothing' or 'everything.' The final section of this chapter will discuss the wartime work of Henry Green as a late modernist attempt to negotiate these extremes.

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<sup>206</sup> For an account of the sudden burst of autobiographical writing at the end of the 1930s and into the 1940s, see Jonathan Bolton, 'Mid-Term Autobiography and the Second World War,' *Journal of Modern Literature* 30.1 (2006): 155-72.

<sup>207</sup> Arendt, 'We Refugees' 271.



### 3.4 The Closing Case of Henry Green

It seems fitting to conclude this study by considering the particular case of Henry Green (born Henry Vincent Yorke), with his retrospective and, at the same time, forward-looking outlook both in his 1939 novel *Party Going* and in his autobiographical *Pack My Bag*, published in 1940. Luggage features very prominently in his work around the outbreak of the war and packing is also intimately related to the writing process. In this thesis, I make a case for a modernist case of fiction and Green's work in the late 1930s and early 1940s, like Bowen's, is at once an affirmation and an interrogation of this model. As such, all of the associated issues, explored in this and previous chapters, are addressed and reappraised in this work; the emergence and *raison d'être* of the 'civilisation of luggage,' the use of the case as a substitute for the house as a formal analogue, the distinctive expression of female interiority through luggage, the politics of packing (the very title *Party Going* itself has potent political connotations, as we will see), the envisioned plight of that other 'civilisation of luggage' from an English perspective, not to mention the unresolved problem of the fraught relationship between freedom and property. It is worth reiterating the words of MacKay on the subject of late modernist impasse once again here as she partly had Green in mind: '[t]he enduring emphasis on cosmopolitanism, deracination, expatriation, and cultural exchange in accounts of the 1920s and 1930s starts to look more complicated toward modernism's closing years.'<sup>208</sup> In *Party Going* and *Pack My Bag*, texts which I intend to read as companion pieces here, the image of the packed bag - as thematic motif and, more specifically, as analogic case of fiction - marks one critical locus where modernism looks back at and interrogates itself in a number of key ways. Principally, it does so through the disjunctive invocation of various and conflicting tropes of mobility, as I will show. No less importantly, we find in Green's packed bag the formulation of a late modernist response to what I would call the crisis of the intimate being; that is to say the pressure placed upon the individual to take an unambiguous stand - to declare everything or nothing - at a time of emergency.

Green's most direct use of the luggage analogue was in the title of his autobiographical *Pack My Bag*, published in 1940 but written between 1938 and 1939 (thus hot on the heels of *Party Going* which was composed between 1931 and 1938). While some attention has been given to his somewhat unusual subtitle of 'Self-Portrait,' as opposed to the more obvious alternatives of 'autobiography' or 'memoir,' little

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<sup>208</sup> MacKay, "Is Your Journey Really Necessary?" 1601-1602.

sustained analysis has been given to the rich implications of the main title itself.<sup>209</sup> Green purportedly had some difficulty in choosing a name, as Jeremy Treglown relates in his biography of the writer, opting, in the end, for the final words of philosopher F.H. Bradley on the advice of John Lehmann, words which, as Treglown further notes, ‘in their new context hinted at wartime exigencies as well as picking up the morbid strain that runs through the book.’<sup>210</sup> We are, on the surface, a far cry from early modernist literary luggage here. His textual endeavour is throughout conveyed as an act of hasty packing that is a deeply personal account of the intimate being, incited by the threat of war. ‘That is my excuse,’ he writes on the opening page, ‘that we who may not have time to write anything else must do what we now can.’<sup>211</sup> And he later adds: ‘everything must go down that one can remember, all one’s tool box, one’s packet of wrigley’s’ (*PB* 12). This is material, we are told, which in less constrained circumstances ‘would be used in novels’ (*PB* 5). *Pack My Bag* is thus outwardly projected as an exercise in self-exposure and the bag is, by the same token, posited as a substitutive form at a time of crisis in line with Hynes’s definition of a late 1930s ‘literature of preparation,’ discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Hynes further explains this literary tendency in terms of a forward-backward-looking dynamic: ‘In such a time one might expect that the imaginations of writers would turn away from the immediate present...[...] They would turn instead backward, toward nostalgia, and forward, toward apocalypse.’<sup>212</sup> A form of apocalyptic nostalgia is palpable throughout *Pack My Bag* and the authorial bag then is proffered as a mobile archive of the past self as much as it stands as an unmistakable sign of future emergency withdrawal. As in those works examined in Section 3.1 of this chapter, from Isherwood’s *Goodbye to Berlin* to Zweig’s *The Post-Office Girl*, we can perceive a shift from an application of the luggage paradigm in relation to a literature of modernist cosmopolitan possibility towards its application in relation to a wartime literature of preparation, and this negative inversion is the most salient aspect of the luggage analogue as it is presented in *Pack My Bag*.

This very pointed conception of the packed autobiographical bag with an eye to imminent evacuation, a luggage analogue reconfigured in terms of aesthetic loss rather

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<sup>209</sup> In a recent article, Marius Hentea points out that few works were entitled ‘self-portraits’ during this period and he provides an elucidating interpretation of the deliberate distinction Green makes in characterizing his work as a form of portraiture. Marius Hentea, ‘A Guilty Self-Portrait: Henry Green’s *Pack My Bag*,’ *The Cambridge Quarterly* 40 (2011): 36-52.

<sup>210</sup> Jeremy Treglown. *Romancing: The Life and Work of Henry Green* (London: Faber, 2000) 130, 310 (note 36). Other possibilities, recorded by Treglown, were ‘Henry Green by Henry Green,’ ‘Before a War,’ ‘Taking Stock’ and ‘A Chance to Live.’

<sup>211</sup> Henry Green, *Pack My Bag* (1940; London: Hogarth, 1952) 5. Hereafter abbreviated ‘*PB*’ in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>212</sup> Hynes, *The Auden Generation* 340-1.

than aesthetic gain (to assert again the terms of Caren Kaplan's critique of the trope of modernist exile), must be taken into account in any consideration of luggage imagery in his novel of the previous year, *Party Going*. In brief, the novel describes the congregation of a group of frivolously rich young Londoners in an unnamed train station, most likely Victoria, all packed and set for a continental holiday, hosted and funded by the richest among them, a man by the name of Max. As fog descends, the trains are held up. The bright young set retreat to rooms in the station hotel, soon separated, by the crash of a steel barrier, from the accumulating masses of lowly office workers below. In the hotel, the group gossip (mainly about the escapades of a figure known as Embassy Richard) and squabble amongst themselves. There are cocktails a-plenty. From time to time, they peer down at the increasingly impatient and clamorous crowd from the balcony and come to feel more than a little edgy themselves as the novel progresses. The women, joined mid-way through by a renowned beauty by the name of Amabel, compete for Max's attention. We are treated to sexual intrigue and boredom by turn. (Edward Stokes pertinently invokes a line from T.S. Eliot's 'The Four Quartets' to express the prevailing mood: 'Distracted from distraction by distraction.')213 Meanwhile, the servants take charge of the luggage on the station floor. An aunt, who has come upon and taken responsibility for a dead bird, falls ill and must be nursed in another bedroom, subject to feverish nightmares. And an unidentified man with a shifting accent, thought to be the hotel detective, circulates throughout. Finally, the fog lifts and the trains begin moving again just as the group is joined by the infamous Embassy Richard in person. Mrs Hilary's 1921 dream of '[p]acking; missing trains; meeting people; and just nonsense that means nothing' would make a concise description of this novel except that in *Party Going* this is nonsense which is shown to mean nothing and everything at once, an 'untrivial treatment of triviality' as Stokes articulates it.<sup>214</sup>

We are clearly in *Vile Bodies* territory but why resurrect these vile bodies in 1939? Significantly, critics vary considerably in attributing particular dates to the events narrated, setting the novel anywhere between the late 1920s and the late 1930s, but this temporal opacity is part of the point.<sup>215</sup> *Party Going* offers, in effect, an impressionistic

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<sup>213</sup> Edward Stokes, *The Novels of Henry Green* (London: Hogarth, 1959) 144.

<sup>214</sup> Macaulay, *Dangerous Ages* 109; Stokes, *The Novels of Henry Green* 82.

<sup>215</sup> To give some examples, John Lehmann is known to have surmised 1929 to 1931, as recounted by Stokes. Similarly, Tim Parks takes it to be set in the late 1920s. On the other hand, Frank Kermode surmises that it must be 'at some date [...] in the Thirties' while Marina MacKay assumes the timeframe of the novel to correspond with the time of its composition just before the Second World War. See Stokes, 149; Tim Parks, introduction, 2000, *Party Going*, by Henry Green (1939; London: Vintage-Random, 2000) v; Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (1979; Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1980) 6; MacKay, "Is Your Journey Really Necessary?" 1603.

vision of the long interwar week-end but with the climax as yet unwritten. And the accumulated luggage of the party-goers at the centre of the station forms the important vanishing point at the centre of this picture. Written almost entirely in the past tense, there is a single momentary shift into present tense around twenty-one pages into the novel:

So now at last all of this party is in one place, and, even if they have not yet all of them come across each other, their baggage is collected in the Registration Hall. Where, earlier, hundreds had made their way to this station thousands were coming in now, it was the end of a day for them, the beginning of a time for our party.<sup>216</sup>

Ostensibly drawing a distinction between the type of journey undertaken by office-worker and partygoer, there is something inherently ominous about this passage from a late 1930s standpoint, especially that last line with its emphasis on mounting activity and stages of process. What exactly is beginning for this party? What is it that is ending for those surrounding them? And why does the very idea of baggage amassed in a Registration Hall ring so portentously here?

I would like to consider these questions in relation to a passage from Zweig's autobiography, briefly invoked in relation to his novel *The Post-Office Girl* in the context of the complication of leisured movement in the first section of this chapter.<sup>217</sup> Fittingly entitled *The World of Yesterday*, his autobiography was written during World War II and, in some ways, falls into the 'Literature of Preparation' category in its combination of nostalgic reassessment with apocalyptic fatalism.<sup>218</sup> For Zweig, as a fleeing Jewish refugee, however, this was more a literature of post-preparation. His bag had already been packed in material rather than metaphorical terms. Forced to take up asylum in England in the late 1930s and, looking back on the period immediately following the

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<sup>216</sup> Green, *Party Going* 21. All further references will alike come from the Vintage-Random edition referenced above, hereafter abbreviated 'PG' in parenthesis within the text.

<sup>217</sup> Green's *Pack My Bag* is often usefully read in relation to other memoirs of the period by British writers from a public school background – Christopher Isherwood's *Lions and Shadows* (1938) and Cyril Connolly's *Enemies of Promise* (1938), among others – but I believe a comparison with autobiographical writing by refugees from continental Europe can offer equally fruitful, sometimes more interesting, lines of enquiry. Although I can only touch on such a comparison here, there is certainly material for a lengthier comparative study of the memoirs of Green and Zweig together. For accounts of Green's work in relation to other British memoirs of the late 1930s, see Jonathan Bolton, 'Mid-Term Autobiography and the Second World War' 155-72; Rod Mengham, 'Pack My Bag: The Poetics of Menace,' *The Idiom of the Time: The Writings of Henry Green* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982) 56-7.

<sup>218</sup> In Zweig's case, this temporal double bind ultimately proved too much. He committed suicide shortly after he finished the autobiography, along with his wife, in exile in Brazil in 1942.

1938 Munich agreement (which served to accentuate the refugee crisis in Europe), he makes this rather telling observation:

[The English] were generous to the refugees who now came over in hordes, they showed the most noble sympathy and helpful understanding. But a sort of invisible wall grew between them and us, it was here, there and everywhere; *the thing that had already happened to us had not yet happened to them*. We understood what had occurred and what was to occur, but they still refused – partly against their inner conviction – to understand. [...] Thus those of us who had been subjected to trial and those who as yet had been spared it, the immigrants and the English, spoke different languages. It is no exaggeration to say that besides a negligible number of Englishmen we were then the only ones in England who did not delude ourselves about the extent of the danger.<sup>219</sup>

I would like to isolate one particular line here – ‘the thing that had already happened to us had not yet happened to them’ – in order to assert that Green’s *Party Going* is an evocation of this very scenario, of this invisible wall. In his discussion of ‘latent’ and ‘manifest’ senses in the interpretation of narrative in *The Genesis of Secrecy*, Frank Kermode takes *Party Going* as a specific case study and his terms are useful in the context of my own discussion.<sup>220</sup> By this I mean that the figure of the refugee, that persistent 1930s spectre, is latent in the manifest figure of the party-goer in *Party Going* just as the prospective is latent in the retrospective in a novel which, as I am contending, forms an impressionistic vision of the interwar period as a whole. If Zweig’s ‘invisible wall’ refers to the psychological divide between the innocent and the experienced, it might equally be seen as a temporal divide between past and future and *Party Going* sits on this cusp. It is in the shift to present tense in the passage earlier quoted that this temporal wall becomes momentarily visible. On one side, we see the leisured ‘civilisation of luggage’ at a late-twenties height of interwar restlessness, held up in their pursuit of pleasure due to a heavy fog. But, with his foot in an imagined future, Green also looks across and envisions the other side. There we encounter the prospect of a party held up in its troubled flight from pain. The train station is, accordingly, a very strategic choice of setting. The railways, ‘our gates to the glorious and the unknown,’ as Margaret views them in *Howards End*, were also seen to be of central importance to the war effort and were, in fact, shortly to be used to evacuate civilians in unprecedented

<sup>219</sup> Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* 314-15. Emphasis added.

<sup>220</sup> Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* 3

numbers, just after Green had published *Party Going* and probably while he was writing *Pack My Bag*.<sup>221</sup> The collected and abandoned luggage in *Party Going* is likened on more than one occasion to an 'exaggerated grave yard' (PG 21) implying a pending fate which, for all their frivolity, the party-goers cannot escape, a sense of detention aggravated moreover by the purgatorial imagery throughout. In MacKay's words, the novel 'describes a festivity turning into a funeral' and her emphasis here on a transformational process – 'turning' – rather than a final outcome picks up on that sense of detention.<sup>222</sup> The vile body is resurrected in this luggage-constructed graveyard only to be marked or - should we say? - registered. And hasty packing? What dread that phrase must be seen to implicitly engender in this context, in line with Green's own autobiographical bag, hurriedly assembled in the light, as he puts it, of 'imminent death' (PB 207).

This interpretation of *Party Going* is informed by Green's overt employment of a reconfigured luggage analogue in *Pack My Bag*. But just as a reading of the manifest qualities of *Pack My Bag* can be shown to inform a reading of the latent qualities in *Party Going*, to borrow again Kermode's terms, so too can the manifest in *Party Going* lead us to the latent in *Pack My Bag*. For the remainder of this discussion, I intend to unsettle my own initial conception of Green's act of autobiographical packing, drawing on elements from his novel. Treglown's perception of an undertone of wartime exigency and morbidity in the title of Green's autobiographical work accurately pinpoints one obvious aspect of its relevance. Yet it is a title which resists precise definition in the same way that the work itself is well-known to obfuscate just as much as it reveals about Green as a man.<sup>223</sup> To begin with, the phrase 'Pack My Bag,' in its imperative form, emphatically

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<sup>221</sup> Forster, *Howards End* 10. British Railways ran a promotional campaign during the war with the tagline 'The Lines Behind the Lines' (i.e. 'Your Parcels and Letters Depend on the Lines Behind the Lines.') The railways were pivotally involved in the mass evacuation from London between September 1 and 4, 1939, described by *The Railway Gazette* at the time as 'the greatest civilian mass movement in history.' This was to be trumped by the mass exodus of civilians from Paris upon Nazi occupation the following year (June 1940) which, as Marrus records in retrospect, was the 'greatest single upheaval of the entire war in Europe,' comprising 6-8 million escapees. This evacuation is the subject of Némirovsky's *Suite Française*, a novel which might be read as *Party Going*'s fictional correlative (just as *The World of Yesterday* might be read as *Pack My Bag*'s in the life-writing line). See 'Your Parcels and Letters Depend on the Lines Behind the Lines,' poster, 1940, National Railway Museum Search Engine, York, 8 June 2012, <<http://www.nrm.org.uk/OurCollection/Posters/CollectionItem.aspx?objid=1978-9678&pageNo=890>>; 'Some L.M.S.R. Evacuation Statistics,' *The Railway Gazette* 71 (1939): 559; Marrus 200, 201.

<sup>222</sup> Marina MacKay, *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007) 93.

<sup>223</sup> *Pack My Bag* is widely held to go against the grain as an autobiographical work. Mengham describes the memoir as the 'autobiographical form unlearned' in its resistance to the expectation that an autobiography should aim to provide a clear account of the self. Mentea likewise casts it as an 'autobiography that, in many ways, does not conform to expectations,' and further asserts that it is a work 'informed by a wholesale hesitancy about writing and authorship.' See Mengham, *The Idiom of the Time* 63; Hentea, 'A Guilty Self-Portrait' 38, 50.

announces a particular class affiliation, markedly aligning Green with the smart set portrayed in his earlier novel.<sup>224</sup> 'I was born a mouthbreaker with a silver spoon in 1905' (*PB* 5), runs the well-known opening line. The aristocratic Green was, in the early days of his marriage to Dig Biddulph, a wealthy man about town himself and he was, in fact, a guest on a trip not unlike that depicted in *Party Going* hosted by none other than Aly Khan, playboy son of the Aga Khan, in 1932.<sup>225</sup> His friend and fellow writer Evelyn Waugh coined the tag 'Bright Young Yorkes' for the newly married couple.<sup>226</sup> Might there be a veiled reference in the title *Pack My Bag* to the main protagonist of Waugh's *Vile Bodies*, Adam Fenwick-Symes, who, as has been mentioned, at the beginning of that novel is interrogated at Customs for carrying the manuscript of his own autobiography in his suitcase, a manuscript subsequently seized by the authorities?

Speculations and biographical insights aside, the title patently asserts in and of itself a privileged social status. Comparison with the memoir title of working-class writer William Holt, first published the year before Green's in 1939, makes this startlingly clear. Holt's was called *I Haven't Unpacked: An Autobiography*.<sup>227</sup> In his title and subtitle, it is almost as if Green was deliberately setting his own title against Holt's: a juxtaposition of the two makes the imperative form of *Pack My Bag* difficult to ignore. It is a phrase which might well have been addressed by any one of the elite party-goers to his or her servant in *Party Going*. Max, incidentally, in his tardy decision to join the party, comes closest to voicing that order – 'pack my bag' - directly, but we learn that there is no need. His Edwards is 'too good a servant to leave things so late' and so, with the arrival of his car, we are given instead a post-hasty-packing command: 'My bags in? Yes, then come on, I'm in a hurry' (*PG* 18). The accumulated luggage in *Party Going* is emblematic of an elite class, even more so when it is abandoned to the servants. Green wrote an earlier unpublished short story entitled 'Excursion' along similar thematic lines, set at a train station and featuring a delayed train, in 1930 (the year before he

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<sup>224</sup> The imperative form of the title *Pack My Bag* is worth noting for its anomalous status alone when positioned within the wider body of Green's oeuvre. Most of his titles strikingly take the gerundive form (*Living, Party Going, Loving, Nothing, Concluding, Doting*) with a small number of other exceptions, none imperative (*Blindness, Caught, Back*). For an attempted interpretation of these titles *en masse*, see John Russell, *Henry Green: Nine Novels and an Unpacked Bag* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1960) 16-17.

<sup>225</sup> See Treglown, *Romancing* 107.

<sup>226</sup> See Treglown, *Romancing* 101.

<sup>227</sup> William Holt, *I Haven't Unpacked: An Autobiography* (1939; London: The Book Club, 1942). Holt's autobiography charts his rise from humble origins. Not unlike Green's, it concerns, in large part his experiences of the First World War (though Holt was old enough to fight). The style as well as the use of the luggage metaphor in the journey of life mode is, in contrast to Green, unremarkable though the record itself is interesting on its own terms

began work on *Party Going*).<sup>228</sup> Conspicuous in its absence in this story is the luggage. This, however, is the story of a working-class group taking off for a bank holiday. We might well surmise that holiday luggage is taken to be for the leisured classes only and packing reserved for the servants.

Yet it might equally be argued that the image of the packed bag aligns Green, with the same force, with his left-leaning 1930s contemporaries. 'The younger sons were packing their bags,' Cunningham writes of this generation, 'kicking over traces, leaving home.'<sup>229</sup> In this, he is picking up on a common motif, explicitly echoing the opening line of Cecil Day-Lewis's *A Hope For Poetry* from 1934, a line which seems to contain the kernel of Green's title within it: 'In English poetry there have been several occasions on which the younger son, fretting against parental authority, weary of routine work on the home farm, suspecting too that the soil needs a rest, has *packed his bag* and set out for a far country.'<sup>230</sup> It is no coincidence that C. Northcote Parkinson entitled his later 1967 survey of the rise and fall of British socialism *Left Luggage*.<sup>231</sup> The packed bag was a key indicator of the socialist interests of the 'Auden Generation,' a generation of writers who attempted to leave their social origins behind in their acts of 'going over' the class border. These attempts were mostly unsuccessful and, as Cunningham wryly notes, their bags were 'perpetually packed for the journey back.'<sup>232</sup> But 'going over' was undoubtedly one more 1930s literary watchword. Cunningham has himself noted the invocation of that very phrase, 'going over,' along with the idea of party politics in the title of *Party Going* and Carol Wipf-Miller, among other recent critics, has made a strong case for – in her words – 'relocating Green in the contexts of 30s leftism and the new realism' as much as situating him at the tail end of high modernism.<sup>233</sup> Indeed, *Pack My Bag* itself betrays a degree of class-guilt on Green's part, and makes his own act of 'going over,' in working on the floor of his father's factory in Birmingham for two years, a central point of focus. This was an experience which provided the inspiration for his second novel *Living* in 1929, a novel which adopts a working-class idiom and which Christopher Isherwood called the 'best proletarian novel

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<sup>228</sup> Henry Green, 'Excursion,' *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green*, ed. Matthew Yorke (1992; London: Harvill-HarperCollins, 1993) 64-74.

<sup>229</sup> Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* 112.

<sup>230</sup> Cecil Day Lewis, *A Hope for Poetry* (1934; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936) 1. Emphasis added.

<sup>231</sup> Northcote Parkinson, *C. Left Luggage: From Marx to Wilson* (1967; London: John Murray, 1968).

<sup>232</sup> Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* 249.

<sup>233</sup> Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* 9-10; Carol A. Wipf-Miller, 'Fictions of "Going Over": Henry Green and the New Realism,' *Twentieth Century Literature* 44 (1998): 137. For another interesting discussion of Green and the politics of class identity which delves into ideas of cross-dressing and masquerade, see Peter Hitchcock 'Passing: Henry Green and Working-Class Identity,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 40 (1994): 1-31.



ever written.'<sup>234</sup> I don't myself think that the act of 'going over' is intentionally inscribed in Green's luggage analogue. The expression of class guilt within the body of the text does, however, serve to undercut the upper-class assertion of his title, making us doubt the authenticity of the identity foregrounded.

Indeed, if we overlook Green's conspicuous definition of the luggage analogue along the lines of a literature of preparation, we will find that it is an indeterminacy of identity which the image of the packed bag conjured for him more broadly. Green was attuned to the fact that packing a bag creates a fiction of the self, one that can be re-written as his later intention to compose a follow-up memoir entitled *Pack My Bag Repacked* intimates. (This particular book never materialised though William Holt did manage to get his own *I Still Haven't Unpacked* out by 1953 and again the difference in title here, though only projected in Green's case, tells us much about his own distinctive authorial approach by contrast.) In *Party Going*, various characters are shown to compose narratives of self through their luggage.

Squatting down apart [Julia] opened this case. Everything was packed in different coloured tissue papers. They were her summer things and as she lifted and recognized them she called to mind where she had last worn each one with Max. She often went away weekends to house parties and it often happened that he was there. If she had no memory for words she could always tell what she had worn each time she met him. Turning over her clothes as they had been packed she was turning over days.

Her porter sighed. He had enjoyed what he had seen of her things. (PG 25)

Julia's clothes are her words, her case is her book, a lavishly illustrated book with tissue separating the pages. Not so lavish, however, as that of her main rival, Amabel, who, having joined the party unannounced, promises a more compelling narrative: 'So she is coming after all, Julia thought, maid and all and six cabin trunks full of every kind of lovely dress' (PG 99). Green was well aware of the special significance of bags and luggage for women and for those seeking to gain a feminine *insight*, as evidenced by another unpublished story entitled 'Mood,' in which a man's glimpse into the handbag of an elegant young lady produces a yearning for an 'exquisite transparency, like a seashell in the sea, where her thumb branched off from the palm of her hand.'<sup>235</sup> But if bags generate narratives of desire in Green's work, they generate disgust in equal measure, to

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<sup>234</sup> Quoted in Hitchcock, 'Passing' 6.

<sup>235</sup> Green, 'Mood,' *Surviving* 45. It is believed this extended story was written around 1926.

re-invoke those two keywords. Clive James, one critic who has devoted some attention to baggage imagery in *Party Going* (and this back in 1971), interprets the accumulated trunks as 'symbols of the corruption of the spirit' of the party-goers, as 'surrogates for the people to whom they belong,' and, as such, brands these trunks 'parcels of falsity.'<sup>236</sup> To some extent, I agree with James but I would be less inclined to view these parcels of falsity in purely negative terms. Green had, after all, great sympathy with the impetus behind the masquerade, Henry Green itself being a pseudonym. He owned, in *Pack My Bag*, to a period of lying 'outrageously' to strangers in train carriages and advocated reticence above complete exposure in human relations: '...surely shyness is the saving grace in all relationships, the not speaking out, not sharing confidences, the avoidance of intimacy in important things which makes living, if you can find friends to play it that way, of so much greater interest even if it does involve a lot of lying' (*PB* 126). This description goes some way to account for the technique as well as the appeal of *Pack My Bag* as a text, its elusiveness despite the continual claims of self-exposure, leading critics like John Russell to take issue with the promise embedded in the title itself: 'If the reader of this book were to expect a kind of carefully stowed bag of remembrances and self-evaluations, he would discover that Green left the bag unpacked.'<sup>237</sup>

It also reminds us that that the bag itself is less important than the position allotted to the reader in relation to the bag. Green's autobiographical impulse in packing a narrative of self is not unlike Julia's, and whether either case is a parcel of falsity or not is beside the point. The point here is access. Like the porter eyeing Julia's case, the reader is only really granted a fleeting glimpse of the contents of Green's bag. And, just as it is more the idea of Amabel's six cabin trunks which stimulates Julia's imagination as well as envy, so Green was well aware that the bag that does not fully declare its contents often feeds the imagination more provocatively than the bag that does. On the subject of his preference for obscurity, his son, Sebastian Yorke recalled a trip taken by his parents to New York in 1950 to settle a tax question. With a view to remaining anonymous, the Yorkes travelled as 'Mr and Mrs H.V. Yonge, the initials matching the initials on their luggage.'<sup>238</sup> 'It was also about this time that he started to insist on being photographed only from the back,' he adds.<sup>239</sup> This is obscurity but only partial obscurity and of a playful kind. It is an anecdote which should likewise alert us to the importance of the half-truth in a consideration of his fictional bag. His approach to

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<sup>236</sup> Clive James, 'The Structure and Technique of *Party Going*,' *The Yearbook of English Studies* 1 (1971): 195-6.

<sup>237</sup> Russell 5.

<sup>238</sup> Sebastian Yorke, 'A Memoir,' *Surviving* 299.

<sup>239</sup> Yorke, 'A Memoir' 299.

masquerade is as a flirtation with different roles but always from the basis of the known, an approach critics like Andrew Gibson have equally highlighted on the level of his narrative style: '...his narrative idiom,' Gibson remarks, 'is not so much a new one as a familiar one that is constantly [...] yielding to other idioms.'<sup>240</sup>

Tyrus Miller has described late modernism as the reassembly of 'fragments into disfigured likenesses of modernist masterpieces' and Green's late modernist luggage might be viewed on these terms.<sup>241</sup> It is for this reason that he makes such a compelling concluding example in this chapter and in this study. It can certainly be said that his is a disfigured version of an early modernist *case* of fiction in that it is a model unavoidably compromised by historical circumstances and political realities. Hasty packing in Green's work is far from engendering the kind of excitement Fussell has in mind in *Abroad*. At the same time, we cannot entirely take the alternative preparative model he puts forward at face value in its more than wistful nod to the experimental escapism of a previous age of literary bohemianism. Green is indeed the master of the semi-escape and, correspondingly, the semi-distortion of the recognisable through the often disconcerting interplay of latent and manifest elements. The peculiar intensity of this interplay in the works I have looked at here owes everything to their composition on the brink of war, as he himself so eloquently explained: '[A]s I see it people are taking a last look around. Picking, fingering, saying good-bye to what they could use to drape their hearts where everyone now wears his in the stress of the times, on his sleeve, not naked as hearts will be when the war comes, still covered but in a kind of strip-tease with rapidly changing, always fewer and ever more diaphanous clothes' (*PB* 186). In Green's *Party Going* and *Pack My Bag*, luggage is used as an analogue for a form of self-fiction which serves to strip and tease in equal measure, a semi-solution to the crisis of the intimate being in the 'stress of the times,' and on this playful if poignant note of partial declaration, I think I'll rest this authorial case.

Green's peculiar case, suggesting freedom by choice *and* freedom by necessity, draws together many of the strands and issues elaborated upon in this chapter as a whole. The chapter has given an overview of the development of literary luggage, both in general thematic and analogic terms, with detailed attention to two individual authors, Bowen and Green, from the First to the Second World War, broadly following a trajectory from modernist to late modernist literature. The inherent paradox of literary luggage - and I refer here both to the use of luggage as a signifying object and as a model

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<sup>240</sup> Andrew Gibson, *Reading Narrative Discourse: Studies in the Novel from Cervantes to Beckett* (1989; New York: St Martin's Press, 1990) 126.

<sup>241</sup> Miller, *Late Modernism* 14.

for fictional form - in generating and inhibiting a sense of freedom at one and the same time, can be seen to become more acutely apparent between the wars. This is in line with an awakening sense of obstacles to unhindered movement, on the one hand, and the more traumatic manifestations of a mobilities paradigm, chiefly the phenomenon of refugee displacement, on the other. More specifically, we have investigated the problematisation of the idea of modernist exile against this background over the course of the period as figures of avant-garde artist, travelling salesman, tourist and refugee merge in provocative and perturbing ways. We have surveyed, in parallel, the use of the case as a framework for a private self under increasingly hostile forms of public scrutiny in an age of suspicion as well as the changing approach to the figure of the stranger with a case as a harbinger of danger rather than as a source of captivation. Throughout the chapter, various luggage-related interwar catchphrases and refrains - 'travel light,' 'hasty packing,' 'pack up your troubles,' 'going over,' 'have you anything to declare?' etc. - have been interrogated as they intersect with and inform one another more and more disconcertingly from the 1920s to the 1930s. The cases of fiction respectively proffered by Bowen and Green bear witness to these evolving complications yet must be seen to express literary possibility as much as problematic impediment, as I have shown. In the late modernist work of these two writers in particular, we discover literary luggage at its most complex, innovative, ambiguous, compelling and self-aware. Finally, the literary luggage evoked in this chapter gestures, with regret as often as relief, towards a lost architectural principle corresponding to a lost sense of certainty. If my first chapter traced the faded lustre of the house as symbolic form around the turn of the twentieth century, it is the case which is, more often than not, found wanting with the outbreak of World War II. Auden's 1938 sonnet, with which I began, best articulates the sense of an irreversible sacrifice to insecurity inscribed in the very idea of a luggage model by necessity. With his opening words, I close this chapter: 'We envy streams and houses that are sure.'

## Conclusion: Mid-Century Legacies of Luggage

In arriving at this conclusion, the thesis itself has the hue of a worn but well-travelled case which has covered a lot of ground over many decades, spanned two continents across two centuries and endured two world wars, dipped into a variety of disciplinary fields, holds within itself a memorial store of literary and non-literary encounters through space and time while bearing witness to the inevitable excitements and anxieties of a long journey. Modernist literary luggage, as I hope to have shown here, makes for a fascinating subject for study, for its diversity and signficatory complexity alone. We have come across all manner of luggage here from shapeless hold-alls and diminutive dispatch cases to colossal wardrobe trunks and intricate Saratogas. We have attended to luggage in all conditions and situations; well-kept or careworn, basic or elaborately designed, still-standing or in motion, located at home or abroad, empty or overflowing, unassuming or label-smothered, open or closed, lost or found, examined or ignored, personal or functional, heavy or lightweight, set in the hall between two journeys or in transit on the journey itself. We have grappled with its remarkable expressive capacity as well as its in-built ambiguity. Luggage casts forward and backward at once. It strives towards an uncertain future, forms a material connection to the past but, above all, is a paragon of the transitional moment. It implies a departure from the home and an inability to fully detach. It exhibits but it also harbours, deceives as much as it exposes, declares nothing as often as everything. It obstructs and it facilitates. It points to dispossession and loss but equally to liberation and experiential abundance. It can mean deprivation but it can equally mean privileged, moneyed mobility. It generates fantasy and collects memories. It announces solitary movement but can likewise form the focal point of social interaction and exchange, whether as an object of intrigue, conflict or interrogation. It encapsulates the gigantic potential of the miniature in motion, on the one hand, and the insignificance of the mobilised miniature in the face of gigantic external forces, on the other. It outwardly speaks of life's journey but covertly communicates death's end.

Through such inscribed ambiguities and contending significations, literary luggage presents a new way of reading and understanding the literature of modernity. It identifies a prevailing symbolic form which writers and critics to date have only gone so far as to negatively determine *not* to be a house.<sup>1</sup> In attempting a 'survey, even the freest

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<sup>1</sup> This is not, of course, to suggest that various key modernist symbols have not been discussed before - we need only think of the motor-car or the mirror, to cite a couple of examples offhand - but that no one defining symbolic form has been identified to replace the house of fiction.

and loosest, of modern fiction' in 1925, for instance, Woolf describes a rebellious questioning of a literary architectural framework of the kind 'so well constructed and solid in its craftsmanship that it is difficult for the most exacting of critics to see through what chink or crevice decay can creep in:' 'And yet - if life should refuse to live there?'<sup>2</sup> She thus acknowledges a domestic departure - 'Life escapes;' - but does not offer an alternative symbolic paradigm.<sup>3</sup> Modernist literary luggage captures life's refusal to live in the house of fiction and I am convinced that the case replaces the house as the central metaphor of and for modern fiction as such. This is precisely and paradoxically because it calls the integrity of centralised meaning into doubt by virtue of its centrifugal proclivity as well as its emphasis on a decentralised, wide-ranging plurality. 'Is it not the task of the novelist,' Woolf asks, 'to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?'<sup>4</sup> The case of fiction indeed offered the modern novelist a model for the conveyance of the varying, unknown and uncircumscribed spirit in all its aberrations and complexities. Yet, I am equally convinced that it served the modern novelist well because, contrary to Woolf's last supposition, it *allowed for* a mixture of the 'alien and external,' the kind of materialistic approach Woolf sets out to disparage in her essay. The modernist case of fiction gave a material form to the escaping spirit in the way of a 'tough case of something labelled fragile,' to reiterate the evocative phrase of Greene.<sup>5</sup> Materiality and solid craftsmanship are just as integral to the case as to the house. The case of fiction draws attention to a materialism which cannot quite be left behind at the house of fiction door even if it is a kind of materiality which fosters a liberating irregularity, a materiality which does not confine or pin down in the same way. Life escapes, yes; but it escapes with certain things, belongings, objects. It is in the revelation of the compromised quality of the modernist escape - the proprietorial underpinnings to its immaterial longings - that the case of fiction model is so vitally important.

Modernist literary luggage is thus never unproblematic, as my thesis makes clear, but neither is modernism. The contradictions and paradoxes are there from the outset. Indeed, it is telling that literary luggage is most fully realised and explored in the works of those with a demonstrably uncomfortable relationship to modernism - Wharton, Bowen, Green - as if luggage looms largest for those most attuned to the abiding complications. In many ways, the narrative I recount here is that of intrinsic

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<sup>2</sup> Woolf, 'Modern Fiction,' *The Essays of Virginia Woolf* (Vol IV) 157, 158-9.

<sup>3</sup> Woolf, 'Modern Fiction' 159.

<sup>4</sup> Woolf, 'Modern Fiction' 160-1.

<sup>5</sup> Greene, *The Lawless Roads* 109.

problems becoming gradually more unavoidable and difficult to ignore. At a glance, the thesis seems to mimic thus the dramatic structure of a play in three acts. My first chapter might be characterised as the *exposition*; I outlined the building rhetorical conflict between age-old paradigms of house and case at the turn of the twentieth century and delineated the rise of literary luggage as a force to be reckoned with on the rhetorical field to the extent that the influence of literary architecture is revealed to be on the wane, as exemplified in James's 'house of fiction.' My second chapter treated the *development* of the luggage paradigm from the particular angle of the emergence of the modern woman, as treated in a range of works, while pointing to some of the complicating factors casting that paradigm in a more problematic light. My third chapter considered the case of fiction model more broadly in light of the further complications instigated by the First World War and aggravated through the interwar years, leading up to the *crisis* and *climax* of the Second World War. In this crisis, the condition of literary luggage comes to measure the fate not just of fiction but of the individual on the verge of what is construed as an apocalyptic disaster. This is a crude and convenient outline but it does usefully beg the question of post-war *dénouement* and I will dwell for the remainder of the conclusion on the fate of literary luggage after World War II.

In surveying the state of mid-century fiction in Britain, MacKay and Stonebridge highlight a 'a distinctive aesthetic in which realisms emerge that are written self-consciously "after" modernism,' in contrast to the conventional perception of this period's literary output as a 'conservative literature of retreat.'<sup>6</sup> Thus we come across outlines of former realist models through returns to the house of fiction of the *Brideshead Revisited* genre and, as MacKay and Stonebridge further testify, resurrections of the Edwardian family saga. Yet re-visitations are fraught and blood-stained - most obviously, *Brideshead* has become a military wartime base in Waugh's 1945 novel - while re-enactments of the Edwardian *belle époque* form deliberately unsparing and disenchanting visions.<sup>7</sup> The house of fiction can never quite be the same after the disruptions, intrusions and mobilisations of modernity, the decline of the empire and two world wars and if realism comes back into plain view in the middle of the century, it is a realism no longer vaunting the grandeur of its house. '[T]he story we tell here,'

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<sup>6</sup> Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge, 'Introduction: British Fiction After Modernism,' *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century*, ed. Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007) 7.

<sup>7</sup> MacKay and Stonebridge, *British Fiction After Modernism* 8; Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945; London: Penguin, 2000).

remark MacKay and Stonebridge, 'describes how the English literary 'centre' ceased to understand itself as central.'<sup>8</sup>

By the same token, the case of fiction can never quite be the same from the Second World War onwards either. It is a model which comes to be associated more fully with wartime violence, on the one hand, and wartime vulnerability, on the other. Thus we find an image of a bomb detonating in a suitcase supposedly filled with books in Graham Greene's *The Ministry of Fear* (1943) and, as already noted, a suitcase harbouring the gun that finally kills the heroine in Bowen's *Eva Trout* (1968), to give a couple of examples.<sup>9</sup> The skeletons are not just in the suitcase any more but round and about it. Put another way, luggage does not now simply serve to conceal a horror but is used to generate or channel that horror. It is also a model which serves to cast forward to a cosmopolitan, globalised future, announcing the impossibility of restoring the insularity of a domesticated past. Marcel Duchamp's series of art-works entitled *Bûte-en-valise*, initiated between 1935 and 1941, then developed throughout the 1940s and 1950s, illustrates this aspect very well. The series consists of boxes containing over sixty replicated miniatures of Duchamp's former artworks. Of the three hundred or so boxes he constructed altogether, he created twenty deluxe editions, in the early 1940s, custom-packed in leather suitcases. Nodding to the renaissance cabinet of curiosities and to Joseph Cornell's boxed assemblages, Duchamp himself saw the *Bûte-en-valise* as a personal portable archive, as he explained to James Johnson Sweeney in a television interview in 1956:

It was a new form of expression for me. Instead of painting something the idea was to reproduce the paintings that I loved so much in miniature. I didn't know how to do it. I thought of a book, but I didn't like that idea. Then I thought of the idea of the box in which all my works would be mounted like a small museum, a portable museum, so to speak, and here it is in this valise.<sup>10</sup>

As portable museum or personal archive, this work of art is a conspicuous 'expression' of the exigencies of an age of upheaval. Duchamp moved from France to the United States, evading the Nazis through disguise, while he was working on his *Bûte-en-valise* - it was at this time that he conceived of the valise itself as a framing device - and, in fact,

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<sup>8</sup> MacKay and Stonebridge, *British Fiction After Modernism* 10.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Greene, *The Ministry of Fear* (1943; London: Heinemann and Bodley Head, 1973). See the chapter entitled 'A Load of Books' (95-117).

<sup>10</sup> Interview reproduced as "'Regions which are not ruled by time and space....'" in *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michael Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975) 136.



carried his materials for the series in a large suitcase. It is thus a project borne of and self-consciously reflecting upon displacement. In an illuminating essay on this work, T.J. Demos, drawing on Theodor Adorno's recognition of the redundancy of the very idea of the house as this was uncomfortably coupled with the simultaneous sense of a need for somewhere to live during this period, makes the point that 'Duchamp's suitcase occupies just such a paradoxical position, revealing the impossible desires for a home in a period of homelessness, for objects when possessions have been lost, and for an independent existence in an era of institutional determination, fascist domination, and exile's desperation.'<sup>11</sup> Yet the *Bôte-en-valise* has also been likened to a 'travelling salesman's sample bag,' an alignment we have come across before.<sup>12</sup> In its references to the artist and to the refugee, in its acute attention to exact individual detail in miniature while gesturing at cosmopolitan displacement on a global scale, in its allusions both to the experimental culture of the avant-garde (particularly, Surrealism and Dadaism) and what Demos calls the 'institutional acculturation' of that experimental art on a commercial level, Duchamp's *Bôte-en-valise* is like a mid-century artistic interpretation and crystallisation of the contradiction-engendering case of fiction model I have been discussing in this thesis as a memorial *objet d'art*.<sup>13</sup>

If we follow the fate of the woman's bag too, we discover an interesting trajectory towards a mid-century sense of the bag as a sort of *objet d'art* with a complex literary history. In my second chapter, I looked at figurations of the woman's bag in positive terms of emancipation, in negative terms of disruption, in progressive terms of narrative innovation, in uncertain terms of success/failure, and in contentious terms of modernist sexual and hermeneutic dispute up to the early 1920s. By way of conclusion, I would like to suggest that later employments of the image of the woman's bag would take on a degree of intertextual and retrospective self-consciousness in light of these figurations, while, in parallel, the potency of the image was beginning to be seized upon by custodians of high fashion, as evidenced in the following 1924 Vogue cover:

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<sup>11</sup> T.J. Demos, 'Duchamp's *Bôte -en-valise*: Between Institutional Acculturation and Geopolitical Displacement,' *Grey Room* 8 (2002): 10. Demos makes some interesting comparisons between Benjamin's lost briefcase and Duchamp's valise throughout this article.

<sup>12</sup> James Housefield, 'The Case of Marcel Duchamp: The Artist as Traveller and Geographer,' *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005) 108.

<sup>13</sup> Demos, 'Duchamp's *Bôte -en-valise*' 13.



**Figure 17:** Eduardo Garcia Benito, Cover Illustration, *Vogue* 1 Feb. 1924.

This image is representative of the repute the woman's bag would attain and still holds in the popular imagination as an object with wonder-inducing capacities in the Mary Poppins line.<sup>14</sup> Other literary depictions over the interwar period are more unsettling. When the impecunious and downtrodden female protagonist of Storm Jameson's 1933 novella 'A Day Off,' for example, steals another woman's hand-bag, it is as a way out of immediate financial constraint but her act only serves to re-enforce her impoverished insecurity and disempowerment.<sup>15</sup> She is a pathetic and conscious parody of previous bag-carrying/bag-absconding women. After the Second World War, the woman's bag becomes charged, like Duchamp's box-in-case with a sort of gigantic particularity in certain works. Samuel Beckett was, without doubt, purposely casting back to those subversive female characters of Ibsen (Hedda as much as Nora) in imagining the character of Winnie in his 1960 play, *Happy Days*, a character whose predominant prop is a large bag, notably containing, amongst an array of other items, a revolver.<sup>16</sup> It is likely that Beckett also had Miss Prism's equally well-known theatrical hand-bag in mind as Winnie's bag is described, like Miss Prism's, as 'capacious' in the opening stage directions.<sup>17</sup> Winnie is up to her waist, then neck, in sand for the duration of the play and thus rendered completely immobile – she is, like Jameson's character, set in marked

<sup>14</sup> The Mary Poppins phenomenon began as a 1934 children's book by P.L. Travers and revolves around one more governess.

<sup>15</sup> Storm Jameson, 'A Day Off,' *A Day Off: Two Short Novels and Some Stories* (1933; London: Macmillan, 1959) 210-305.

<sup>16</sup> If the abiding symbol of *A Doll's House* is the travelling bag, in *Hedda Gabler*, it is, of course, General Gabler's set of pistols, one of which is finally used by Hedda to commit suicide. Winnie adopts both props but the bag dominates.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days* (1961; London: Faber, 1973) 9.

contrast to previous bag-carrying women in this respect – and yet her bag is aligned both with imaginative escape and self-sufficiency in her situation of confinement. The woman's bag is poised on a knife-edge, in these representations, between illusion and disillusion, unavoidable materiality and existentialist abstraction, the very personal and the all-embracing.

Such invocations - both Duchamp's and Beckett's - play upon previous conceptions of bags and luggage in ways that merit independent analysis. My intention here is simply to emphasize the importance and longevity of this motif, in all its various guises, as an illuminating point of enquiry in the larger study of the history of literature as a history of rhetorical forms, to come back to Franco Moretti's proposition. In this sense, my conclusion must not be seen as a *dénouement* but as an opening out and as a registration of the enduring relevance of literary luggage alongside literary architecture but equally on its own terms. Having said this, I maintain, in drawing this thesis to a close, that modernism represents the apotheosis of the case of fiction. In Greene's *Travels With My Aunt* (1969), another of his novels incidentally replete with suspicious-seeming cases of all kinds though approached in a more light-hearted vein, the elderly Aunt Augusta of the title advises as follows her more conservative ex-banker nephew, the novel's narrator who is later revealed as her son:

'My dear Henry,' Aunt August said, 'if you had been a young man I would have advised you to become a loader. A loader's life is one of adventure with far more chance of a fortune than you ever have in a branch bank. I can imagine nothing better for a young man with ambition except perhaps illicit diamond digging. [...]

'Sometimes you shock me, Aunt Augusta,' I said, but the statement had already almost ceased to be true. 'I have never had anything stolen from my suitcase and I don't even lock it.'

'That is probably your safeguard. No one is going to bother about an unlocked suitcase. Wordsworth knew a loader who had keys to every kind of suitcase.

There are not many varieties, though he was baffled once by a Russian one.'<sup>18</sup>

This novel is, in many ways, a nostalgic homage to an earlier epoch of travel and both characters are, in their own ways, somewhat anachronistic. The septuagenarian Aunt Augusta, a woman who is pointedly shown to travel light and of an age to number amongst those first women who carried their own bags, is shown to cling onto a past full of adventurous escapades. Henry, on the other hand, attempts to recover a past that

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<sup>18</sup> Graham Greene, *Travels With My Aunt* (1969; London: Vintage-Random, 1999) 67.

never quite happened through embarking on a range of belated escapades with his aunt/mother. I quote the above passage here because it reminds us that literary luggage came to prominence in an age of suspicion and, however sour and destructive suspicion is shown to become, it was still the illicit allure of luggage - the cultivation of a collection of symptomatic keys and the bewilderment at the one case which yet resisted, the exhilaration at standing judgment over a locked case and the corresponding exhilaration at unlocked bluffing under scrutiny, above all, the inscribed promise of unsanctioned 'adventure' - which made it such an apposite symbolic form for modernism. And this is clearly a literary case study which has not yet fully declared its contents.

## Appendix: Some Luggage Models and Materials

The following provides a sample sketch of the kinds of materials employed to produce luggage during the period in question as well as the types of travelling goods I thought relevant for this thesis. It is by no means intended as a comprehensive list but serves to give some indication of the range of luggage in circulation as well as to provide an illustrative aid.

### *Some Common Materials:*

Materials used to produce a piece of luggage naturally varied according to function and bag-type. Soft-bodied items were generally produced from a single durable but light and malleable material. Hard-bodied cases and trunks were more complex, frequently having several different component parts; a rigid frame which was then, more often than not, covered on the outside and, in more upmarket products, upholstered on the inside, sometimes with added internal divisions and compartments. Supplementary protective elements included supportive wooden staves, metal or leather reinforced corners/edges and zinc/leather/canvas-lined bases.

**Alligator/Crocodile/Lizard:** Provided a more exotic genre of reptile-skin covering for more extravagant items. The patterns of such reptile skins were often (and still are) imitated to give a more affordable alternative to the authentic product.

**Canvas:** Used as a covering for wooden/fibre-based frameworks. It did not have the same durability as leather but was much less expensive (although some luxury brands like Louis Vuitton developed a high-end monogrammed and waterproof woven canvas cover as its brand identity).

**Compressed Cane and Vulcanised Fibre:** Developed from the late nineteenth century as lightweight though strong synthetic materials for the structural frame of a case or trunk. These light and modern frameworks were often covered in canvas or leather in order not to lose the classic luggage look while being easier to convey in practice and, again, cheaper. Fibre was, however, increasingly used on its own without any kind of leather/canvas covering. Exposed synthetic-based cases (constructed from polycarbonate, for example) are the most widely sold and circulated today.

**Cowhide:** The highest-quality leather luggage was made of cowhide and this was the favoured material for leather goods though there were other kinds of hide-based products available. Different kinds of tanning processes were employed to treat the hide and it was later fitted over a wooden, cardboard or synthetic foundational frame.

**Metal/Copper:** This was used in the production of the most sturdy and impregnable kinds of trunks, demanded for expeditions to more tropical climes. (Trunk beds -trunks made to fold out into beds - were alike constructed for such exploratory voyages.)

**Vellum:** This kind of specialised material came into vogue in the 1930s, a form of rawhide, sometimes bleached, which generated a creamy, beige colour. Such white luggage was targeted mostly at women and it became exceptionally fashionable for its frivolous and extravagant connotations.

**Wood:** The trunk, as we know it today, can be traced back to the eleventh century when wooden boxes were used to store valuables and a large segment of a tree trunk acted as a lid. Wood is therefore an age-old integral element of luggage design. It entered into modern luggage in the form of the inner, hidden framework for a trunk/case or in the form of the outer supportive slat. Lighter and flexible kinds of wood, such as poplar and beech, as well as wood-based materials like plywood were generally favoured.

**Wicker:** Wicker was a cheaper and flimsier material signalling a less well-off traveller. Yet it was also a conveniently lightweight material and was often utilised for the creation of elegant picnic baskets and portable tea sets.

**Select Luggage Index:****Attaché Case**

Essentially a small, rectangular case mostly used for the carriage of business documents, which came into fashion in the 1900s and 1910s. Seen to be the accessory of the well-to-do professional in its leather form though fibre-based models were also manufactured and widely sold.

**Brief bag**

Soft-sided leather bag with a handle. Preceded the attaché case as the business requisite of choice and was considered somewhat old-fashioned in this regard by the 1910s. Derived from the legal profession as the type of bag a barrister would use to carry his briefs.

**Cabin Trunk**

The cabin trunk was a flat, shallow and compact style of trunk designed to slot under railway compartment seats. Made of leather or canvas (and later synthetic materials) with supporting wooden hoops circled round the outside. It became popular in the early twentieth century for its convenience and portability while remaining sizeable and durable.

**Dispatch Case**

A satchel-like bag with two straps and a handle with the implied function of carrying important objects - written dispatches, documents or valuables - though it was also adopted in a more quotidian capacity.

**Dress Basket**

A travelling case aimed at women, principally for lighter articles of dress. They were sturdier than the name suggests.

**Dressing-Case**

Dressing cases were designed for both men and women and held objects necessary for grooming. Often elaborately constructed with all kinds of intricate compartments, containing, amongst other items, mirrors, hair and clothes brushes, buttonhooks (for footwear), nail files, scissors, tweezers, even portable clocks.

**Gladstone Bag**

Named after the British Prime Minister, William Gladstone, this was a form of kit bag which overtook the more traditional carpet-bag in popular use towards the end of the nineteenth century. It had a very specific shape. A leather-fitted metal frame allowed the bag to split in half evenly on both sides when opened. By the 1910s, the Gladstone bag had become somewhat antiquated but was seen as a worthy cost-effective option for those who could not afford a more expensive case.

**Hat-Box**

At a time when hats formed an essential part of a person's attire, hat-boxes were constructed in many shapes and sizes to accommodate and protect all varieties of individual headgear, both men's and women's. Larger rectangular boxes were equally designed to hold a number of different hats at once.

**Holdall**

A soft-bodied travelling bag with handles, more amenable to stuffing than organized packing unlike hard-bodied cases with more structured frames, hence the name. Unlike other cases with very specific functions, this was intended as a multifunctional and collapsible bag to carry miscellaneous objects. It has a long history and versions of the object are still in use today though the word 'holdall' is itself less common. Louis Vuitton currently sells a version of this kind of bag with the name 'keepall.'

**Kit Bag**

A cross between a brief bag and a Gladstone bag in shape, this was intended as a container for the carriage of equipment, often military, (though it was used for more general purposes too). It is popularly associated with the First World War due to the well-known ballad.

**Portmanteau**

Like the Gladstone bag, the portmanteau was structured to allow it to open evenly on both sides. It was usually made of a stiff leather with encircling straps and originally evolved as a portable travelling bag, often with horseback riding in mind. Derived from the French for 'porter' - to carry - and 'manteau' - a cloak - this is one of the older forms of luggage model. In figurative terms, the word has long been employed to denote the carriage of a mixture of disparate materials, later adopted by Lewis Carroll to suggest a word blending two distinct words and their respective meanings.

**Saratoga Trunk**

A dome-topped trunk which originated in Saratoga Springs, a popular American holiday destination, in the late nineteenth century. Designed for the lengthy visit, these trunks were intricately fitted with compartments on the inside, including trays and hangers. They were created principally for women.

**Suitcase**

The suitcase, as the name suggests, was conceived as a case for men's suits. What is less well-known is that it had a feminine equivalent in the object of the 'blouse case' but this term became obsolete with time and the suitcase was employed generically thereafter. The suitcase (it, in fact, originated as two words which only later merged into one) was developed in line with new modes of transportation. It was a rectangular container with a hinged lid, portable yet sturdy and, crucially, flat so that it could be slotted under a railway seat or onto a rack, allowing for independence of movement.

**Valise**

The valise (derived, again, from the French) falls between the attaché case and the suitcase in size and function. It was likewise of the hand-luggage variety and of a similar form and size to the attaché case but employed for the carriage of personal objects rather than for professional/business purposes. It was thus a smaller, more compact version of the suitcase.

**Wardrobe Trunk**

Created around the turn of the twentieth century, these were very much luxury items of luggage for the long trip, enabling a person to, quite literally, bring their wardrobe with them (some indeed had this dual function). The cases stood upright and contained pull-out racks for clothes and, sometimes, shoes as well as drawers and other compartments. More novel examples can be found with folding ironing boards! These pieces were more popular in the United States than in Europe and Americans were renowned at this time for the extent of their required baggage.

***Appendix Sources:***

Most of the information in this appendix is derived from Helenka Gulshan's *Vintage Luggage*, Linda Edelstein and Pat Morse's *Antique Trunks*, Éric Pujalet-Plaà's 'The Trunk in All Its States' in *Louis Vuitton: 100 Legendary Trunks* (387-470) and a close survey of *The Bag, Portmanteau and Umbrella Trader* from 1907 to 1921.



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