

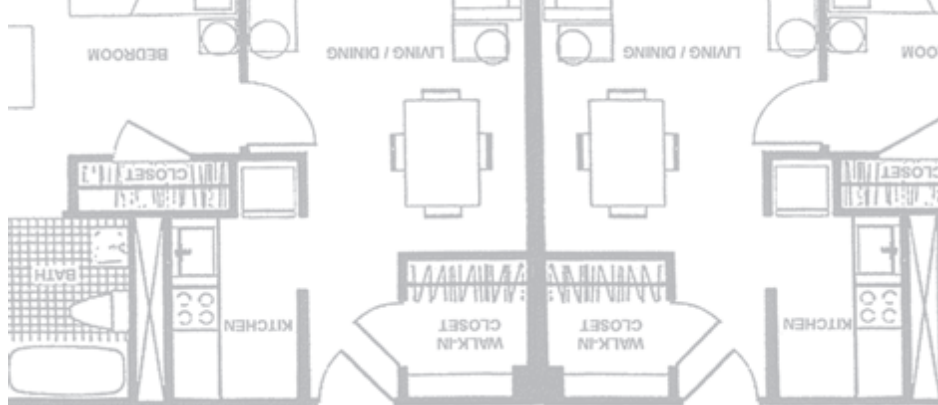
THE APARTMENT PLOT



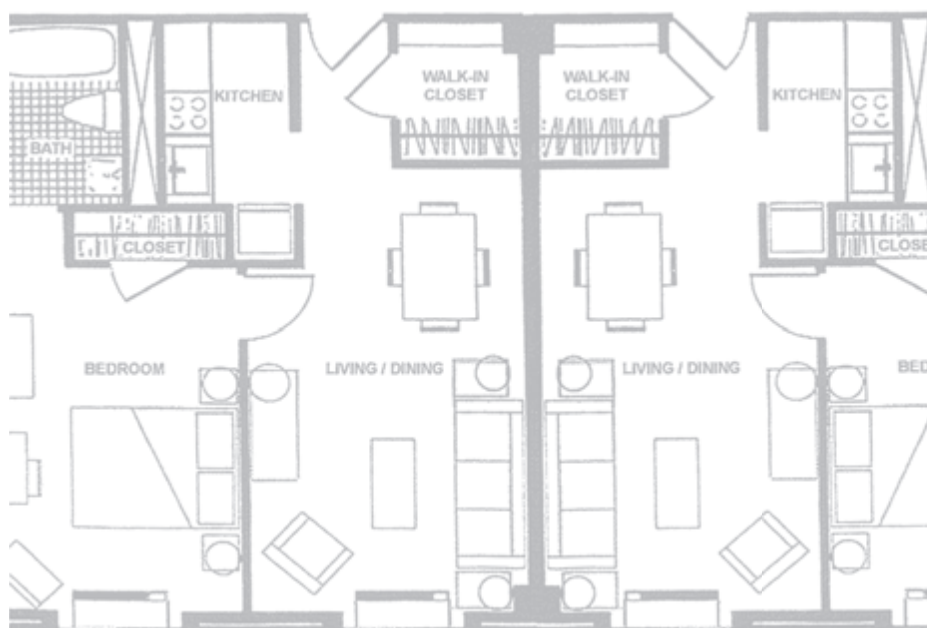
*Urban Living in American
Film and Popular Culture,
1945 to 1975*



PAMELA ROBERTSON WOJCIK



THE APARTMENT PLOT





Pamela Robertson Wojcik

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS DURHAM AND LONDON 2010

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Printed in the United States of America

on acid-free paper ☺

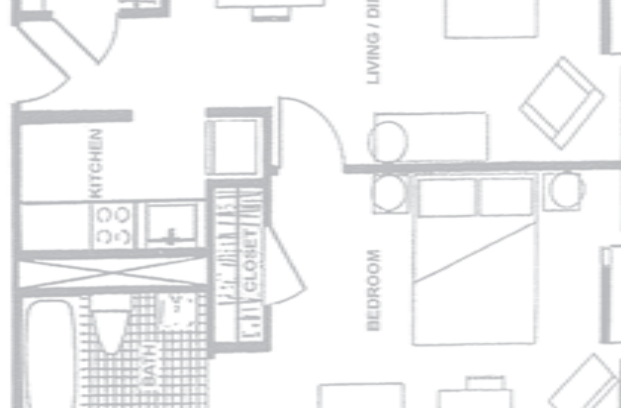
Designed by C. H. Westmoreland

Typeset in Bembo by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
appear on the last printed page of this book.

frontispiece illustration: Christoph Niemann

Duke University Press gratefully acknowledges the support of the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, College of Arts and Letters, University of Notre Dame, which provided funds toward the production of this book.



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PREFACE

Some years ago, more than I care to count, when I was not quite thirty years old, I got my first academic job, in Australia at the University of Newcastle. As part of the laborious paperwork required to secure a residential permit to live and work in Australia, I had to obtain a document from the sheriff of Chicago stating that, to the best of his knowledge, I was not a criminal (an ironic requirement for a nation founded as a penal colony). In order to obtain this document, I had to provide the sheriff with a list of my addresses from the previous ten years. A history of my twenties, this produced, not surprisingly, a history of apartments. Mine was a long list, but probably not an unusual one. My apartments included a two-bedroom in Earl's Court, London, which I shared with four roommates during a semester's study abroad my junior year. This was a very bohemian apartment. Here, I kept my clothing in the kitchen cupboard (where the mice lived), experimented with black hair dye, and got avant-garde haircuts at the Vidal Sassoon school. From the bathroom window, we could hear announcements from the tube station below, as well as the shouts of rioting soccer fans returning home from a game. After graduating Wellesley College, I moved into a single-family home on Magazine Street in Central Square, Cambridge, owned by a friend of my sister's. My sister and I each rented a room, and shared space in the kitchen and bathroom. I was a paralegal and she was in law school. We went to aerobics class together and cooked curries. Eventually, the owner married and had two children, while still renting out rooms, adding to the boarding-house effect. When I moved away from Cambridge to go to graduate school at the University of Chicago, my first apartment was a shabby one-bedroom apartment in Hyde Park assigned to me by the university. This was like a return to dorm life, and a regression.

I shared it with a library student who enjoyed listening to music on the radio and watching football games on TV, at the same time. After that, I moved to a two-bedroom in a gorgeous courtyard building I shared with a fellow female English graduate student. After house sitting at a condo for a faculty member who spent half of every year in New Jersey, I finally moved into my first solo apartment, a large one-bedroom in a building where a former boyfriend had lived before he moved to the East Coast. My best friend moved into the same building, across the courtyard. This was great fun, until one night I watched a sometimes boyfriend of mine sneak over to her apartment after leaving mine. Eventually, I moved to the North Side, swapping apartments with another graduate student, taking her tiny studio in posh Lincoln Park. My last Chicago apartment was a one-bedroom in Lakeview in a building much favored by single women because it was close to public transportation and in the heart of Boys' Town, a gay neighborhood that was always lively and safe—a model for Jane Jacobs's ideals of urbanism.

Once I got to Australia, I added two more apartments. The first was a furnished flat in a prefab building. The second was a much more romantic apartment—a twisted warren of oddly shaped rooms in a rambling beach house. From my bedroom window, I could see and hear the ocean, dotted with tankers and surfers. While living in that apartment, but visiting Chicago, I fell in love with my now husband. He visited me in my Australian flat a few times, adding to its romance. Returning to Chicago, and working at the Chicago International Film Festival, we lived in his condo, the basement duplex in an attractive brick three-flat in Chicago's Ukrainian Village. Shortly after we got married, and after I started working at the University of Notre Dame, we moved to a single-family home a few blocks away. Or, rather, we moved to a three-flat and rented two apartments to tenants until we could afford to convert it to a single-family home. One tenant was a single woman and medical student, the other a gay male writer and friend. As they each moved on to new phases of their lives, and their own home ownership, we took over their space, converting the three-flat to a single-family home. The conversion was completed just before the arrival of our second child.

I begin with this history because my movements are typical, I think, of the movements that many of us make from shared apartments to solo apartments to “living together” to home ownership, with these moves often but not always reflecting changes in status—including not only marital status, but also career and financial status. My movements also

reverse the conversion process begun when apartments were introduced to America, when four-story row houses, like mine, were viewed as too inefficient and costly and were, therefore, often turned into apartments.

Long before I lived in apartments, I envisioned my future through images of apartments, especially those I'd seen on TV or in movies. As a young girl, I imagined my life as a single woman as some mishmash of Mary Richards's, or, more likely, Rhoda's apartment, in *The Mary Tyler Moore* show, and the somewhat more glamorous high-rise Manhattan apartment inhabited by Ann Marie in *That Girl*. (Following the logic of the shows, either scenario led to dating Ted Bessel.) In due course, I figured I'd have a fancier career girl apartment, like one of the Doris Day apartments in a Rock&Doris movie. And eventually, I'd settle into a Bob Newhart building, where I'd wear chic maxi dresses and have charming and affable neighbors dropping in at all times. Though I never lived in my imagined apartment—to this day, I've never lived in a high-rise, and my apartments never really got past the bohemian phase—I still inhabited spaces that I read through the fantasy of urban living I'd formed through those representations.

This book is about that urban fantasy, or what I am calling here a “philosophy of urbanism.” It is about the apartment as an imagined space, and a genre. It is about the way in which representing the apartment—in film, novels, comic strips, and more—functions as a way of imagining the urban, and of imagining identities as produced and shaped by the urban. It is neither a history of apartments, nor a book about architecture. At the same time, however, the apartment is always described in relation to historical discourses—discourses on family, gender, sex, race, class, space, urbanism—that shape the philosophy of urbanism and the apartment as urban habitat.

This book began its journey as a different sort of musing. Watching *That Funny Feeling* one day, I was struck by its similarity to *Pillow Talk*. I began thinking about many different kinds of apartment plots—such as *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Rear Window*, *Wait Until Dark*, and *The Boys in the Band*—and started seeing links between them. I called Ken Wissoker at Duke—who has his own deep history of apartments—and asked him, “Is this an idea?” Happily, Ken said yes, and I thank him for the opportunity to publish this with Duke. (But, if you think it isn't an idea, or if the execution of the idea is problematic, the blame is solely mine.) As I began researching and writing the book, numerous friends and family helped and encouraged me. Steven Cohan, Don Crafton, Kyle and Jeffrey Neal,

Jacob Smith, Keir Keightley, Oliver Gaycken, and Chris Sieving all provided material and suggestions. Thanks to all of them for Tivo-ing “apartment,” sending bachelor pad music, and digging up obscure videos. Over the years, I presented portions of this book at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, the Chicago Film Seminar, the Critical Feminist Division of the Cultural Studies Association, the University of Illinois Conference on Humanities and the Family, and the University of Notre Dame. My thanks go to audiences at those events, whose questions helped me sharpen my thinking, and who often reminded me of movies I’d forgotten or provided references I did not know. Mary Squillace, Jonathan Retartha, and Mary Hannan were student research assistants at Notre Dame and spent numerous hours reading *Mademoiselle*, *Playboy*, the *New Yorker*, and other magazines, as well as tracking down academic articles and books. I am grateful to them for their keen eyes and hard work. Javi Zubizarreta helped with permissions and copyediting. Christina Ries and Jackie Wyatt provided administrative support that made the process of preparing the manuscript much easier. Lisa Blye, Lindsey Madden, Carli McKenney, and Barb Elliott provided the absolutely essential aid of babysitting—my deep thanks to them for giving me time and space to write. Una Moon created the architectural rendering of the *Rear Window* courtyard, and I thank her for her time and her assiduousness. Christoph Niemann graciously agreed to design a cover image for me; thanks to him for his imaginative capture of the philosophy of urbanism. Courtney Berger provided crucial support and lines of communication at the Press. Gerry Lemmon was my tour guide at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, and Kristine Harris and Robert Polito accompanied me for that informative visit.

Thanks to the University of Notre Dame and the Department of Film, tv and Theater for giving me leave and the resources necessary to research the book. The Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts provided absolutely critical financial support. Without their help, this book would not have been published. In particular, they provided key funds for some of the volume’s images.

Many friends read and commented on this project in draft. Thanks to Virginia Wright Wexman, Jennifer Peterson, David Boyd, Susan Ohmer, Don Crafton, Peter Holland, Daniel Morgan, Terri Kapsalis, Robert Polito, Kristine Harris, and Jim Collins, all of whom improved the book through their insights. Thanks also to the anonymous readers at Duke University Press for their careful reflection on the manuscript. Students

in the courses Gender and Space; Cinema, Gender and Space; and the Hitchcock Seminar, all between 2006 and 2009, read and commented on various chapters. Thanks especially to Barbara Green, who, more than any other friend, lived this project with me. Her insight and attention to the project always improved it. I'm honored to have her friendship and scholarly consideration.

Rick Wojcik deserves special mention for his deep involvement in this project. My thanks to him for watching so many apartment plots, reading sections of the book, and listening to me talk about apartments — and kvetch about the work — as well as providing suggestions for comic references, LPs, and more. Just as important, my thanks for living the urban life with me. I look forward to one day retiring to a high-rise with him, becoming Bob and Emily as octogenarians. Finally, this book is dedicated to Samantha and Ned Wojcik, who helped me rediscover the ballet of the good city sidewalk from the ground up. I wish them both many apartments.



INTRODUCTION

A Philosophy of Urbanism

The history of American houses shows how Americans have tried to embody social issues in domestic architecture, and how they have tried, at the same time, to use this imagery to escape a social reality that is always more complex and diverse than the symbols constructed to capture it.

—GWENDOLYN WRIGHT, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*

If Billy Wilder’s *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)¹ is the quintessential fifties film about the last gasps of old Hollywood, in the persona of Gloria Swanson’s character, Norma Desmond, and her fellow silent-era “wax-works”—most notably Buster Keaton and Erich von Stroheim—it is also very much a film about the New Hollywood that emerged after the 1948 Paramount Decision. As the film venomously looks back to the then largely forgotten silent era, it looks forward to the blockbuster epics of Cecil B. DeMille, himself a potential waxwork who nonetheless thrived in fifties Hollywood. In the film, DeMille plays himself as a director who recalls his past with Swanson/Desmond, but has continued working, making the transition into sound and beyond. DeMille’s scenes in the film, shot on Stage 18 on the Paramount Lot, where he actually was filming the biblical epic *Samson and Delilah*, point toward one tendency in fifties cinema—large-scale epics intended to compete with tv. Of course, *Sunset Boulevard* itself points toward a darker, more cynical tendency in fifties films, reflected in fifties noir, social problem

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films, revisionist westerns, and dark comedies. But while these various strands of fifties films are often noted by scholars, *Sunset Boulevard* also points toward another trend, one generally overlooked in accounts of the period, that I will call “the apartment plot.”

In *Sunset Boulevard*, William Holden’s character, Joe Gillis—a down-on-his-heels writer trapped in a loveless “arrangement” with the forgotten fifty-year-old Desmond—begins to overcome his writer’s block and gain new hope in his personal and professional life through his relationship with Betty Schaefer (Nancy Olson)—a pretty young script reader at Paramount who has hopes of being a writer. Taking a small flashback about a schoolteacher from one of Gillis’s early scripts, *Dark Windows*—a 1940s-style psychological thriller about a murderous psychopath—Betty convinces him to turn it into a new script. While Betty initially envisions a realist social problem film about the scarcity and difficulty of work for teachers, Gillis advises her: “Don’t make it too dreary. How about this for a situation? She teaches daytime, he teaches at night, right? They don’t even know each other, but they share the same room. It’s cheaper that way. As a matter of fact, they sleep in the same bed. In shifts, of course.” Betty, sharing perhaps our uncertainty, asks, “Are you kidding? Because I think it’s good.” “So do I,” answers Gillis, and their project begins.

This contrived plot, which is all the detail we are ever given about the *Untitled Love Story* that Joe and Betty write, might be seen as a parodic twist on the warped shared-house plot that shapes *Sunset Boulevard*; as Joe leaves his apartment, and the independence it represents, to enter the macabre mansion on Sunset Boulevard. At the same time, the script echoes or apes a variety of texts, including the charming romantic comedy *The More the Merrier* (Stevens, 1943), in which due to a wartime housing shortage Jean Arthur shares her one-bedroom Washington, D.C., apartment with both Charles Coburn and Joel McCrea; ultimately—with Coburn’s stage-managing—engaging in a quickie romance and wartime wedding to McCrea. Alternately, with its emphasis on concealed identities, and ships-that-pass-in-the-night, *Untitled Love Story* reiterates elements of *The Shop around the Corner* (Lubitsch, 1940), in which two shop clerks fall in love via a Lonely Hearts Club without realizing that they work side by side. I would suggest, however, that the plot of *Untitled Love Story* captures perfectly and presciently the general premise of many fifties films, in which romance is organized around apartment living, including, of course, Wilder’s own films *The Seven Year Itch* (1955) and *The Apartment*

(1960). Whether a prophetic reference to his own work or simply a coincidence, this précis for a script provides an apt point of entry to the dominance and centrality of the apartment plot from the “long fifties” (1945 to 1964) and into the seventies.²

What I am calling “the apartment plot” is any narrative in which the apartment figures as a central device. This means that the apartment is more than setting; it motivates or shapes the narrative in some key way. By apartment, I mean a private rental unit in a built-to-purpose apartment building, or conversion. Apartment buildings might include high-rise buildings with or without doormen, walk-ups, converted brownstones, or other styles. The apartment is distinguished from ownership properties such as condominiums and town-homes. The apartment is also distinct from other kinds of rental properties, such as tenements. Whereas apartments tend to be marked by having individual plumbing and are viewed as working or middle class, tenements often have shared bathrooms and are culturally marked as lower working class. Apartments are also distinct from public housing projects, in being privately owned and operated, rather than government funded or otherwise subsidized. Apartments, in this study, are also differentiated from rooms in boardinghouses and from collective spaces such as dormitories. While there are apartment hotels, for the most part I distinguish between apartments and hotels because they offer different degrees of transience and different amenities.³ The apartment plot dominates romantic comedy of the period but also appears in thrillers, horror films, noir, realist films, musicals, and melodrama, and in numerous other media. The apartment plot comprises various and often overlapping subplots, including plots in which lovers encounter one another within a single apartment house or live in neighboring apartment buildings; plots in which voyeurism, eavesdropping and intrusion are key; plots that focus on single working women in their apartments; plots in which married or suburban men temporarily inhabit apartments in order to access “bachelor” status; and plots in which aspects of everyday life are played out and informed by the chance encounters and urban access afforded by apartment living. Most, but not all, examples of the apartment plot are set in New York. Most, but not all, revolve around white, middle-class characters.

Examples of the many varied films in which the apartment centrally motivates the plot include not only the obvious examples such as the Wilder films mentioned above and, of course, *Rear Window* (Hitchcock, 1954) but also the following: both versions of *My Sister Eileen* (Hall,

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1942 and Quine, 1955), *The Naked City* (Dassin, 1948), *Apartment for Peggy* (Seaton, 1948), *Rope* (Hitchcock, 1948), *My Dear Secretary* (Martin, 1948), *The Window* (Tetzlaff, 1949), *My Friend Irma* (Marshall, 1949), *In a Lonely Place* (Ray, 1950), *An American in Paris* (Minnelli, 1951), *The Marrying Kind* (Cukor, 1952), *The Moon Is Blue* (Preminger, 1953), *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Negulesco, 1953), *Dial M for Murder* (Hitchcock, 1954), *Pushover* (Quine, 1954), *It Should Happen to You* (Cukor, 1954), *The Bad Seed* (LeRoy, 1954), *Artists and Models* (Tashlin, 1955), *The Man With the Golden Arm* (Preminger, 1955), *The Delicate Delinquent* (McGuire, 1957), *Bell, Book and Candle* (Quine, 1958), *I Married a Woman* (Kanter, 1958), *Pillow Talk* (Gordon, 1959), *Bells Are Ringing* (Minnelli, 1960), *Lover Come Back* (Mann, 1961), *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Edwards, 1961), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Petrie, 1961), *The Connection* (Clarke, 1961), *If a Man Answers* (Levin, 1962), *Boys Night Out* (Gordon, 1962), *Two for the Seesaw* (Wise, 1962), *Bachelor Flat* (Tashlin, 1962), *The Courtship of Eddie's Father* (Minnelli, 1963), *Come Blow Your Horn* (Yorkin, 1963), *Under the Yum Yum Tree* (Swift, 1963), *That Funny Feeling* (Thorpe, 1965), *Patch of Blue* (Green, 1965), *Any Wednesday* (Miller, 1966), *Walk, Don't Run* (Walters, 1966), *Barefoot in the Park* (Saks, 1967), *Wait Until Dark* (Young, 1967), *The Odd Couple* (Saks, 1968), *Rosemary's Baby* (Polanski, 1968), *Cactus Flower* (Saks, 1969), *The Owl and the Pussycat* (Ross, 1970), *The Boys in the Band* (Friedkin, 1970), *Diary of a Mad Housewife* (Perry, 1970), *Klute* (Pakula, 1971), *Butterflies Are Free* (Katselas, 1972), *Claudine* (Berry, 1974), and *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* (Frank, 1975). In addition to the role the apartment has in these (by no means comprehensive) examples from narrative film, it serves as vital milieu in avant-garde films such as *Wavelength* (Snow, 1967) and, more characteristically, in TV shows of the period, including *I Love Lucy* (1951), *Mr. and Mrs. North* (1952), *My Little Margie* (1952), *My Friend Irma* (1952), *Make Room for Daddy* (1953), *The Honeymooners* (1955), *The Jetsons* (1962), *Love on a Rooftop* (1966), *Occasional Wife* (1966), *Family Affair* (1966), *The Odd Couple* (1970), *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970), *Bob Newhart* (1972), *Diana* (1973), *Welcome Back Kotter* (1975), *The Jeffersons* (1975), and *One Day at a Time* (1975). Not coincidentally, many of the apartment plot films are based on Broadway plays, such as *Bell, Book and Candle* (van Druten, 1950), *The Seven Year Itch* (Axelrod, 1952), *Dial M for Murder* (Knott, 1952), *The Tender Trap* (Shulman and Smith, 1954), *The Bad Seed* (Anderson, 1954), *My Sister Eileen* (Fields, 1955), *The Connection* (Gelber, 1960), *Raisin in the Sun* (Hansberry, 1960), *Come Blow Your Horn* (Simon, 1961), *Barefoot in the Park* (Simon, 1963), *Any Wednesday* (Resnick, 1964), *The Owl and the Pussycat* (Manhoff,

1964), *The Odd Couple* (Simon, 1965), *Wait Until Dark* (Knott, 1966), *Play It Again Sam* (Allen, 1969), *Butterflies Are Free* (Gershe, 1969), and *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* (Simon, 1971). Broadway examples also include many musicals set in mid-century New York that thematize apartment living in different ways, such as *Subways Are for Sleeping* (Comden and Green, 1961), *Skyscraper* (Van Heusen and Cahn, 1965), *Wonderful Town* (Comden and Green, 1953)—based on the 1942 *My Sister Eileen* stories—and *Promises, Promises* (Simon, Bacharach, and David, 1968), based on the film *The Apartment*. It emerges in the short-lived recorded music genre of vocal suites, notably in Gordon Jenkins's *Manhattan Tower* (1946) and *Complete Manhattan Tower* (1956).⁴ In literature, novels such as Rona Jaffe's *The Best of Everything* (1958), Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1950), and Mary McCarthy's *The Group* (1963); children's books such as *Harriet the Spy* (Fitzhugh, 1964); and self-help and advice books such as *Living Alone: A Guide for the Single Woman* (Faherty, 1964) and Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) focus attention on the role of apartment living, especially but not exclusively among singles. Apartment life is also well represented in comic books and comic strips of the era, markedly in *Apartment 3-G* (Dallis and Kotzky), which began syndication in 1961.⁵

Rather than an incidental setting, the apartment, this book argues, functions as a particularly privileged site for representing an important alternative to dominant discourses of and about America in the mid-twentieth century, and as a key signifier of an emerging singles discourse. The apartment plot offers a vision of home—centered on values of community, visibility, contact, density, friendship, mobility, impermanence, and porousness—in sharp contrast to more traditional views of home as private, stable, and family based. The apartment is key, of course, to the imaginary of single and queer life, but it also offers alternative visions of urban married life and child rearing. Along with sex and gender, representations of the apartment negotiate issues of class and race. The unique characteristics of the apartment, as site and plot, bring to the fore a range of human relations—not just heterosexual pairings, but also lived relationships with roommates, servants, neighbors, merchants, doormen, and bartenders—that often cross class lines and touch on marginalized communities. The apartment plot can also serve as a focal point for a host of other city spaces—bars, taxis, offices, hotels—that highlight the way in which the apartment plot blurs distinctions between public and private, work and home, masculine and feminine, inside and outside.

The Apartment as Genre

Thus far, I have been referring to the apartment plot, rather than the apartment genre. In part, I use the term *plot* to capture the force of the apartment as a narrative device rather than as mere setting. Plot also makes sense insofar as many of these films involve elaborate plots and stratagems that relate to the apartment—plots to conceal the identity of an apartment’s “owner,” plots to borrow or steal an apartment in order to assume an identity, plots to conceal the use of an apartment for extra-marital affairs, plots to commit and conceal murder inside the space of the apartment, and so on. Moreover, I want to maintain a sense of the mobility of the apartment plot, that is, its appearance in numerous established genres, such as romantic comedy, thrillers, film noir, and horror.

Nonetheless, as the following chapters will show, there are certain thematic and aesthetic features that link films in the apartment plot, and these links are sufficiently consistent to be able to identify the apartment plot as a genre. Grouping together such seemingly disparate films as *The Seven Year Itch*, *Artists and Models*, *The Courtship of Eddie’s Father*, and *Rear Window* within the apartment plot demonstrates affinities that are often obscured through auteurist approaches focused on Billy Wilder, Frank Tashlin, Vincente Minnelli, and Alfred Hitchcock, among others. Conversely, an emphasis on genre reveals hitherto unnoticed apartment auteurs, such as Richard Quine (director of the films *Pushover*; *My Sister Eileen*; *Bell, Book and Candle*; and *Sex and the Single Girl* [1964]) or Gene Saks (*Barefoot in the Park*, *The Odd Couple*, *Cactus Flower*, and *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*). Moreover, by grouping together such seemingly dissimilar texts, one can see affinities between genres such as romantic comedy, melodrama, and film noir.

Film noir presents an especially important parallel to the apartment genre. Not coincidentally, perhaps, both are critical genres that were named after the fact and were invisible, perhaps, in their historical moment, recognized later not by producers or fans but by critics, who notice commonalities from some historical distance (Altman, 77–82). A key difference between the genres, however, would be that the critical invention of film noir offered a means for critics to see affinities between a group of films that encompasses a relatively small network of previously established genres—thrillers, detective films, crime films, gangster films, and so on—whereas the apartment film traverses much greater ge-

neric territory, including romantic comedies, horror films, melodrama, musicals, and film noir itself.

To a degree, then, the apartment plot may offer a notion of genre that troubles traditional definitions of genre, even more so than film noir does, insofar as it seemingly privileges setting over other generic conventions. However, the apartment plot entails more than setting: the apartment not only hosts but motivates action; it entails certain sets of relationships; it involves formal and thematic elements; it conveys ideologies of urbanism. In this light, another parallel to the apartment plot might be the road movie. The road movie, like the apartment plot, intersects with numerous established genres, including romantic comedy (*It Happened One Night* [Capra, 1934]), social problem films (*The Grapes of Wrath* [Ford, 1940]), musicals (*The Wizard of Oz* [Fleming, 1939]; *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* [Elliot, 1994]), buddy films (Hope and Crosby's "Road movies"), postapocalyptic science fiction (*Mad Max* and *Mad Max II: The Road Warrior* [Miller, 1979 and 1981]), art cinema (*Kings of the Road* [Wenders, 1976], *Weekend* [Godard, 1967]), and more. Like the apartment plot, the road movie is a genre defined by aspects of the *mise-en-scène* (minimally a road, usually a car, bus, or other vehicle) and thematics (travel, escape, self-discovery) that are closely related to the *mise-en-scène*.

Thus, rather than dismiss its claim to generic legitimacy, I'd like to use the apartment plot to query some of our precepts about genre. First, in using space as a primary key to genre, I want to link discourses on genre more closely to discourses on cinematic spaces. Certainly, some genres have been regarded in spatial terms. The western by most accounts depends upon its location in the American West, and tends to revolve around a familiar set of places: saloons, jails, banks, and ranches. But, for the most part, genre theory has tended to assume that while some genres are spatially determined, others are not. For Thomas Schatz, for instance, the western, along with the gangster and detective film, represents a "genre of determinate space" in which are enacted "conflicts that, indigenous to the environment, reflect the physical and ideological struggle for its control" (697). Against this, Schatz pits "genres of indeterminate space," such as musicals, romantic comedies, and melodrama. These "indeterminate" genres "have conflicts that are not indigenous to the locale but are the result of the conflict between the values, attitudes, and actions of its principal characters and the 'civilized' setting they inhabit" (697). Defining genre in terms of conflict, Schatz views only some

genres as spatially defined insofar as the contested status of their locale generates conflict; whereas other genres introduce conflict into more or less stable settings.

To be sure, some genres—melodrama, romantic comedy, and the musical—are more spatially *mobile* than others, and certainly more so than the western. However, that does not mean individual films within those genres are not spatially *defined*. I would suggest that rather than assume that some genres are spatially determined and others are not, we attend to the spatial dynamics of all films and consider whether and how space sets the parameters for the plot, themes, and ideology of not only individual films but also genres. At a minimum, one would have to concede that choice of setting, on a semantic level, using Rick Altman's famous formulation, would be closely aligned with the syntactic meaning and that just as certain semantic elements (such as guns) imply certain actions (e.g., shooting), certain spaces (e.g., a Broadway stage) entail certain sets of actions, certain plots (e.g., singing, dancing) that are not *as* readily or *as* typically generated in other spaces (e.g., a hospital).⁶ As Laura Mulvey says, "Mise-en-scène, space and place are central to the signifying system of Hollywood cinema, evoking genre, its narrative possibilities and constraints, but also more detailed nuances of shared cultural meanings" ("Cinematic Space," 209). Like other signifiers, the built environment communicates on both denotative and connotative levels, conveying function and form, use-value and meaning (Rappaport). As David Hattenhauer argues, "Architecture is rhetorical because it induces us to do what others would have us do. Architecture, then, is a persuasive phenomenon" (71). Like props, characters, and other semantic elements, space and place are more than just one lexical choice among many; they are imbricated in signifying structures that are historically determined and that carry tremendous connotative and ideological weight related to issues of sex, gender, class, race, the body, individuality, family, community, work, pleasure, and more. Thus, it makes a difference whether a musical is of the subset "folk musical" and set in rural America, or a "show musical" set backstage on Broadway; and it matters whether a melodrama takes place in a suburban fifties home or Civil War-era Atlanta. Alternately, one might argue that a melodrama of the suburban home in 1950s such as *All that Heaven Allows* (Sirk, 1955) ultimately has less in common with the Civil War melodrama *Gone With the Wind* (Fleming, 1939) than it does with the suburban romantic comedy *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* (Walters, 1960).

In claiming the apartment plot as a genre—not *just* a setting, plot, trope, or motif—I want to establish some relatively deep connections between films, connections that traditional genre distinctions obscure. Hence, in seeking to recognize the apartment plot as a genre, I revalue and relocate some films, to privilege aspects in them that a traditional genre analysis might overlook. For example, a traditional genre analysis would place Fritz Lang’s *Scarlet Street* (1945) in the category of film noir, emphasizing its cynicism, its strong sense of doom, its bleak and ironic ending, and its chiaroscuro lighting. Without denying those elements of the film, I’d like to ask whether *Scarlet Street*, looked at from a different vantage point and with a different set of genre expectations, might not have as much in common with the romantic comedy *Any Wednesday* as it does with another noir film. In terms of narrative, both *Scarlet Street* and *Any Wednesday* can be described as films in which a married man accidentally meets a younger woman, then keeps this younger mistress in an apartment, and then, when freed from his marriage, discovers that his mistress has paired with another younger man and ends up alone. To be sure, the films end on radically different notes—the noir, not surprisingly, ends with the lovers dead and the married man insane and homeless, whereas the comedy unites the lovers and leaves open the possibility of a revived erotic relationship between the husband and his wife. But consider the parallels. Both women are housed in Greenwich Village apartments. In both cases, the rival single man deceives the married man to take advantage of his assumed business status: in the noir, he hides his own affair with the woman and steals the married man’s paintings to sell; in the comedy, he pretends to be the mistress’s husband to conceal the married man’s affair and blackmail the husband in order to promote a business deal. In both cases, the single girl assumes a false identity: in the noir, she takes on the married man’s identity as painter; in the comedy, in order to conceal the affair, she pretends first to be a telephone operator and then the wife of a business associate.

Of course, genre entails more than plot details. As with the narrative, there are formal differences between *Scarlet Street* and *Any Wednesday*, related to lighting, for instance, but there are also significant overlaps in *mise-en-scène*, framing, and theme. These include the representation and connotations of the apartment in terms of gender, marital status, and bohemian taste and class; as well as the emphasis on the porousness of the apartment and its susceptibility to drop-ins and break-ins, as shown in numerous shots of doors opening. In addition, the *mise-en-scène* of

both films includes the married man's work space, shown in alternation with the apartment. Although both films include scenes between the married man and his wife, they only show the single man in the woman's apartment or in public, never in his own work space or residence. Additionally, both films place great emphasis on role-playing, spontaneity, surprise, lying, and improvisation.

Rather than view these two films as representative of film noir or romantic comedy, we might view them as points on a continuum in the apartment plot, a genre in which issues of contact, entanglement, and privacy are played out through the figure of the apartment and in which the apartment mobilizes themes of porousness, spontaneity, play, simultaneity, and improvisation. Rather than argue that certain films ought *really* to be characterized as apartment films and not as film noir or romantic comedy, or to claim hybrids such as "the apartment *noir*," I'd like to suggest that genres be considered as sedimented cross sections, as it were, or networks that touch upon or intersect with individual films but do not fully characterize them. Rick Altman approaches this understanding of genre when he describes genres as "multi-coded" and "multi-discursive," shaped by "multiple groups"—such as producers, consumers, and critics—who, each in their own way, "speak" the genre (208). Altman's view of the multiple codes and discourses surrounding genre allows him to account for genre change, repurposing, and redefinition. He acknowledges that not only genres but films are multicoded and that those codes are determined by users. Multiple discourses and codes come together to produce a genre, and the codes of one genre often intersect with the codes of another genre across a film or group of films. In highlighting links between films that traditional genre studies tend to separate, I am aiming for a dense and porous model of genre that opens films up to contact with each other and places them in productive conversation, and that considers the use-value of genre and not just the products or exchange-value of genre.

Thus, in considering the apartment plot as a genre, I am considering its properties not as exclusionary but as cutting across a group of films that may, in a different context and for a different use, be recognized as having different generic elements. Certainly, there are points of intersection between film noir and the apartment plot, as my discussion of *Scarlet Street* would indicate. My readings of films such as *Scarlet Street*, *In a Lonely Place*, or *Pushover* that are traditionally characterized as noir would acknowledge their noir elements. However, in emphasizing the

function of the apartment in these films, I argue that these films activate a philosophy of urbanism that is not identical to that traditionally associated with film noir. Without denying noir elements, I highlight aspects of the films that a noir analysis might overlook and show their affinity with films outside the genre of film noir.

At the same time that I am arguing for recognizing a previously unnamed genre of film, my attention will be on the apartment plot in a particular historical context. I would argue that one can historicize a genre—without abandoning the force of calling it a genre—so that the fifties western is both part of a genre and a cycle of films, participant in the broader imagining of the western and reflective of particular contextual issues, such as the burgeoning Civil Rights movement. I am primarily focusing on a cycle of films from 1945 to 1975. That these films share narrative features, stylistic features, and themes (among themselves and with various books, records, plays, and comics) is important, but equally important is their value in opening up new ways of understanding mid-twentieth-century concerns and popular culture.

Early Apartment Plots

I am focusing on the apartment plot in mid-twentieth-century America, but the apartment plot was not invented in the 1950s and is not exclusive to the American context. Abram Room's *Bed and Sofa* (1927) offered an early Russian apartment plot in which a housing shortage leads to an adulterous ménage-à-trois. *Hands Across the Table* (Leisen, 1935) showed two gold diggers—one female (Carole Lombard) and one male (Fred MacMurray)—sharing quarters, while each searches for a rich prospect. Early musicals such as *Sunny Side Up* (Butler, 1929) and *Gold Diggers of 1933* (Berkeley, 1933) revolved around female apartment roommates who date and marry rich men. Certainly, there are boardinghouse films, such as *Stage Door* (La Cava, 1937), *Pot o' Gold* (Marshall, 1941), and *Broadway Melody of 1938* (Del Ruth, 1937). Early silent film not only showed urban tenement living in films such as *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (Griffith, 1912), *Broken Blossoms* (Griffith, 1919), and *It* (Badger, 1927) but presented “views from the street” that, in effect, removed the walls from apartment buildings to show inhabitants inside. Hotel films—*Grand Hotel* (Goulding, 1932) and *The Bellboy* (Lewis, 1960), for instance—have something in common with the apartment film, as do the hotel apartments of such

film noirs as *The Big Heat* (Lang, 1953). However, the apartment plot in America seems to have reached its pinnacle in the mid-twentieth century, establishing a system of representation and a cluster of themes and meanings that have continued from the seventies to the present, most particularly in TV shows, such as *Three's Company* (1977), *Seinfeld* (1990), *Melrose Place* (1992), *Frasier* (1993), *Friends* (1994), *Will and Grace* (1998), *Two and a Half Men* (2003), *How I Met Your Mother* (2005), and *Rules of Engagement* (2007).

For some understanding of the apartment plot and for its dominance in the mid-twentieth century, it is useful to consider an early and oddly similar historical moment when the apartment plot came to the fore. In *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London*, Sharon Marcus investigates the status and meaning of apartment houses in the nineteenth century and challenges the still somewhat taken-for-granted oppositions between city and home, masculine and feminine, public and private, interior and exterior in many discourses about the period. Examining a wide variety of discourses including architectural history, demographics, public health documents, and fictional representations, Marcus argues that the apartment functions as a microcosm of the city. She claims:

The discourses that praised, condemned, or neutrally accepted apartment houses often imagined them as sites for activities we now take to be exclusive to city streets. Apartment houses were vantage points for visual observation and exhibition, nodes of commercial and sexual exchange, and settings for the sensory overload and chance encounters associated with crowds. Attempts to separate the city and the home had to contend with powerful celebrations of the apartment house's capacity to make urban and domestic spaces continuous and often foundered on the impossibility of fully separating the city and the home. (3)

As quarters that combined the private rooms of individual apartments with common spaces—staircases, lobbies, shared walls—and which were situated in relation to the street, the apartment in the nineteenth century “embodied the continuity between domestic and urban, private and public spaces” (2) and “produced an urban geography of gender that challenged current preconceptions about where women and men were to be found in the nineteenth-century city” (3). Thus, against views of the Victorian era as operating on a strict system of gender differentiation in which men are associated with the city, mobility, and public spaces,

and women attached to the private home, Marcus finds an alternative in apartment houses as both real and imaginary spaces.⁷

Along with public discourse about apartment houses in both Paris and London, Marcus proposes that there are enough fictional representations of apartment life in short stories, plays, and especially novels to constitute a genre. In the Parisian context, she locates a subcategory of the realist novel. This subgenre, which she locates in texts such as Honoré de Balzac's *Le cousin pons* (1846) and Émile Zola's *Pot-bouille* (1882), "took elements from comic and melodramatic modes—particularly random sexual encounters, cases of mistaken identity, and acts of voyeurism, eavesdropping, and spying—and situated them within a single apartment house or in neighboring and facing buildings." According to Marcus, these plots combine "the salon novel's emphasis on domestic interiors and microscopic social networks" and "the urban novel's emphasis on chance encounters, the interplay between isolation and community, and the sudden transformation of strangers into kin." These are urban novels, but rather than merely situate action in the public streets, shops, theaters, and parks of the city, they "situate the city's flow and multiplicity *inside* the home" (Marcus, *Apartment Stories*, 11–12).

Why, in the nineteenth century, is there is so much attention paid to the Parisian apartment house? During the Restoration and July Monarchy, from the 1820s to the 1840s, and predating Baron Haussmann's 1860s modernization of the city, apartments become the dominant architectural element in the Parisian landscape. According to Marcus, apartments in Paris serve a rapidly expanding population and an expanding middle class with relatively inexpensive, spatially compact properties. Also, and more importantly, "the characteristic Parisian house took on a new form, that of the modern six- to eight-story apartment building with shops on the ground floor and an imposing entrance supervised by a porter" (Marcus, *Apartment Stories*, 19) that alters the cultural status of apartments. Marcus claims that this characteristic nineteenth-century form of apartment differs from earlier apartment styles in creating more appealing common areas while at the same time lending more privacy to individual units. Parisians take to apartment houses, she suggests, because this new style appeals not only to an emerging middle class, but also to potentially conflicting desires for transparency and privacy, city and home.

In London, where the ideal of the private single-family home is held more dearly than in Paris, a similar demographic and economic demand

produces a different result. There, Marcus argues, the stopgap emergence of subdivided homes, rather than built-to-purpose apartment houses, collapses the distinction between private homes and lodging houses. The subdivided home, then, like the apartment house, blurs the distinction between private and public, home and city, and also confuses attendant distinctions between middle and working class, families and bachelors, reputable and disreputable, clean and dirty. Thus, in literature of the period, the apartment plot merges with supernatural haunted house plots that “broadcast the urban deformation of the domestic ideal”: “They concentrated on houses that were rented, not owned, and on the inconveniences that collected around renting; they depicted homes that were uncomfortable, riddled with noise and dirt; and they set in motion ghosts who attacked the middle-class home’s status as an insular, individuating single-family structure” (Marcus, *Apartment Stories*, 122). In the haunted house variant of the apartment plot, ghosts become thinly veiled versions of the noisy unseen inhabitants of subdivided apartments, and the porousness and permeability of apartments are emphasized by the intrusion of unwanted guests.

By examining French and British discourses around apartment living, Marcus casts new light on nineteenth-century culture and opens up a new way of reading central texts of the period. But, while Marcus’s book provides an important point of entry and model of sorts for this project, there are key differences between the apartment stories she discusses and those I identify. These differences relate obviously to the difference in media and, equally, to the difference in context.

The rise of the apartment plot in mid-twentieth-century America can be partially explained as a convergence of economics, aesthetics, and opportunity. In TV, apartments dominate both because early TV was situated in New York and reflects New York living, and because the relatively shallow, indoor setting of apartment plots works well with the shallow shooting space of early television technology. Apartment settings were also popular in postwar theater because they were simple and inexpensive, at a time when theaters were under some economic strain. In addition, the apartment suited an inward tendency in postwar theater, which Arthur Miller claims began as “an attempt to analyze the self in the world” but ended “as a device to exclude the world” (209). As Gerald Weales describes it, postwar theater “concentrated on the private instead of the public problem” and was “psychological rather than social,” “explanatory rather than dramatic” (viii). While the psychologi-

cal drama these writers describe takes many forms, and is not exclusively the province of the apartment plot, the apartment plot lends itself well to psychological drama.

Many of the films in question are adapted from Broadway plays, or are influenced by aspects of a realist urban aesthetic, which spurs them to shoot on location in New York or re-create sections of New York and apartment living there, on soundstages and back lots. New York's prominent status in the cultural imaginary depends, in part, on technological and institutional factors that encourage filmmakers to represent the city. In the immediate postwar period, technological advances made location shooting practical and affordable but bureaucratic influences, such as taxes on filmmaking, discouraged location shooting. To offset city costs, and "justify the added expense, directors had to incorporate the city in ways that could not be duplicated by a soundstage or backlot set" (Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, 1174). Thus, even when apartments were created in the studio, there was an impetus to film exteriors in New York and to represent aspects of life that were seen to be uniquely urban. In the 1940s and 1950s, increasing numbers of films were at least partially shot in New York, and this trend reached a peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Mayor John Lindsay launched a campaign to bring filmmaking to New York by easing the bureaucracy and offering incentives. In the first months of 1967, twenty-five feature films were made wholly or partially in the city and during Lindsay's administration (1965-73), an average of forty-five movies a year were shot in New York (Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, 1174-75). More often than not, New York living was signified by the apartment.

To a degree, then, the apartment plot contributes to the postwar glamorization of New York City. At the conclusion of the Second World War—with London, Berlin, and Tokyo all severely damaged and with Paris deflated by war and occupation—New York was not only a powerful city but also a key symbol of America's prosperity and optimism. To a large degree, functioning as America's symbolic capital, New York was broadly perceived as the world's financial capital, and after December 1946, when the United Nations agreed to locate its permanent headquarters in Manhattan, it in effect became the world's political capital as well (Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, 14). In her retrospective account of postwar New York, Jan Morris describes the media's glamorization of New York, and especially Manhattan: "Seen in magazine photographs, in propaganda leaflets, or in the backgrounds of Hollywood musicals, Man-

hattan looked all panache, all rhythm, all good-natured dazzle, all Frank Sinatra and Betty Grable. It was the Present tantalizingly sublimated. It was the Future about to occur” (7–8). Whatever the complex realities of postwar New York, there was a strong tendency in this period to gloss it and imbue it with cultural capital. The apartment plot, in its most optimistic variants, cemented New York’s position as glamour capital.

While these practical and aesthetic issues are clearly important, and might encourage the use of urban apartments as settings, they do not fully explain the use of the apartment as plot. Rather than simply a convergence of practical or aesthetic issues, the emergence of the apartment plot needs to be understood in relation to dominant discourses around domesticity and urbanism. The nineteenth-century variant emerged in a time and in places in which apartment living was essentially being invented. The apartment plot in American film, by contrast, surfaced roughly a century after the development of apartment houses. However, the meaning and status of the apartment was crucially up for grabs in this period, as the ideals of suburban living and private home ownership dominated the cultural imagination. Therefore, the apartment plot needs to be viewed in relation to various discourses on family, home, and suburbia. But it is precisely the dominance of those discourses, both during the period, and retrospectively, in accounts of the period, that have rendered the apartment plot virtually invisible.

Relocating the Fifties

Although my analysis extends past the 1950s to the mid-1970s, discourses of and about the 1950s are key to understanding both the relative neglect and significance of the apartment plot. While the nostalgia for the *Leave It to Beaver* version of the fifties has been tempered in many ways—by revisions of our understanding of men’s and women’s dissatisfactions with the roles assigned them, the reality of women’s work, race politics, and more—the image of the ideal 1950s suburban home has remained largely intact. For example, although in *Make Room for TV* Lynn Spigel herself deepens and complicates our understanding of the fifties in her analysis of the discourses around TV in the period, she offers a summary description of the dominant view of the American fifties, as “a time when domesticity was a central preoccupation of the burgeoning middle class”:

During and after the war, the marriage rate rose to record heights; of those who came of age, 96.4 percent of the female and 94.1 percent of the male population married—and at younger ages than ever before. The baby boom, which began during the war and lasted through 1964, reversed declining birthrates of previous decades, creating a revitalization of the nuclear family as a basic social construct. The resurgence of the family unit was met with a new model for living—the prefabricated suburban tract home, so affordable that young middle class couples, and, at times lower middle class, blue collar workers, could purchase their piece of the American dream . . . Popular media also participated in the cultural revitalization of domesticity, taking the white middle-class suburban home as their favored model of family bliss. (33)

This description brings together key elements of the fifties ideal—the white, heterosexual middle class, rising marriage rates, the baby boom, and suburban living—and claims that popular culture fed this ideal. James Harvey puts it simply: “The movies, like their audience, were moving to the suburbs” (74).

Elaine Tyler May extends this analysis of the fifties to incorporate Cold War politics into our understanding of the suburban home, and explicitly links the gender politics of the fifties to the Victorian cult of domesticity. In particular, May argues that the suburban home of the 1950s reflected and refracted Cold War policies of “containment,” U.S. ambassador George Kennan’s 1947 term for U.S. foreign policy a propos the Soviet bloc:

In the domestic versions of containment, the “sphere of influence” was the home. Within its walls, potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed, where they could contribute to the secure and fulfilling life to which postwar women and men aspired . . . More than merely a metaphor for the cold war on the homefront, containment aptly describes the way in which public policy, personal behavior, and even political values were focused in the home. (14)

While acknowledging that the “traditional” family of the fifties represented a newly constructed ideal, without deep roots in the past, May nonetheless views it, and the suburban ideal that goes along with it, as overriding: “In the postwar years, Americans found that viable alternatives to the prevailing family norm were virtually unavailable. Because of the political, ideological, and institutional developments that con-

verged at the time, young adults were indeed homeward bound, but they were also bound to the home" (15).⁸

In a different vein, Peter Biskind describes the fifties as "an era of conflict and contradiction, an era in which a complex set of ideologies contended for public allegiance" and claims that fifties' films "pitted different ways of being and acting against each other" (4). He promises to complicate the stereotypical view of the fifties as focused on themes of conformity and domesticity, "a nightmare of repression or a paradise lost, depending on the view" (4). However, for Biskind, the contradictions of the period fall predictably along a liberal-conservative ideological divide: they are sides of a coin. So, when Biskind discusses sex roles, he notes the myth of the fifties as "the Dark Ages of sexual ideology, a time when sex roles were polarized into incompatible stereotypes, a time when men were men and women were women, and never the twain did meet, except in the missionary position" (262). But, rather than fully dislodge that myth, Biskind merely reverses the terms and claims that men were "feminized" and women "masculinized"—for good or for bad, depending on one's position on the liberal-conservative spectrum. When he discusses sex roles, Biskind situates them squarely in the home, arguing that, in fifties ideology, "man's place was in the home" (251) and women were expected to be civilizing forces: housewives and matriarchs (267). Thus, while acknowledging the complexity and contradiction at the heart of various fifties stereotypes, Biskind, like May, does not open up alternatives.

In each of these accounts, domesticity and home are defined exclusively in relation to the single-family suburban home. The apartment is left out of this discourse because it doesn't fit the ideal image of fifties America, or of "home." As Elizabeth Cromley says, "New York's mode of apartment living is especially foreign to American practices and myths of private-house ownership, where a house of one's own on one's own piece of land is the 'correct' mode for family life" (1). Nonetheless, as John Hancock notes, although the single-family home is the "most esteemed" type of housing, most people have been apartment dwellers at some stage in their lives (151). Certainly, as I will discuss below, the fifties witnessed a huge boom in suburban development and cities felt the effects of white flight. Nevertheless, apartment living was a "viable alternative" to prevailing norms and the only real choice for many people left out of the suburban imaginary, including single and divorced people, African Americans, working-class whites, ethnic mi-

norities, and gay people. Apartments were, as well, the preferred option for many married, middle-class families with urban or bohemian tastes. While some percentage of films and other media were perhaps “taking the white middle-class suburban home as their favored model of family bliss” (33), as Spigel says, an equal number were troubling the waters of the suburban ideal—think of *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (Potter, 1948), *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray, 1955), *All that Heaven Allows, Please Don't Eat the Daisies*, or *Bachelor in Paradise* (Arnold, 1961). And many films were representing the alternative of urban apartment living, sometimes in collusion with the dominant suburban ideology, sometimes in opposition to it, and sometimes without any direct reference to or acknowledgment of it.

Certainly, the apartment plot can be seen as a correlative of the suburban domestic ideology of the period. The suburban, after all, requires the urban for its definition. The suburb needs the city to center itself, as a site for commuting, as what is proximate, and as its antithesis. Similarly, the ideal definition of home—as privately owned, single-family home—requires a notion of the apartment, rental units, multiple dwellings, subdivided homes, and tenements. And obviously heterosexual family ideals depend upon the opposing examples of the single, divorced, childless, and gay.

In relation to the suburban ideology, the apartment may have served as a residual reminder of the suburban family's urban youth, or as a fantasy space of single life (as it partly functions in *The Apartment* and *The Seven Year Itch*). Spigel acknowledges this possibility when she identifies the urban views of diverse neighborhoods in TV shows such as *The Goldbergs* (1949), set in a Bronxville Jewish neighborhood, or *The Honeymooners*, in a working-class milieu, as offering residual surrogate communities that would serve as a reminder of prior modes of living for suburban viewers and offset the homogenization of suburbia (128–29). But for the most part, Spigel absorbs the apartment plot and milieu into the discourse of suburban domesticity, without fully acknowledging its fundamental difference from the suburban ideal. For instance, she describes *I Love Lucy* not as a surrogate urban setting so much as another family, with Fred and Ethel as “parents” and the couples' moves to the country as reflecting viewers' moves to the suburbs (130). And, similarly, rather than note the difference between the skyline views of New York City in *My Little Margie* and *Make Room for Daddy* as compared to the view of the suburban backyard in *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* (1950), Spigel

links both to the increasing popularity of picture windows and sliding glass doors in suburban homes (102). While raising an important point about an ideal of porousness in suburban design, and its connection to the spatial illusion of travel and access enabled by TV, Spigel nonetheless neglects to acknowledge the appeal of apartment settings as particularly representative of porousness or as offering a distinctly urban view on the world, a view that would be at odds with the view out most suburban windows.

Spigel's focus in *Make Room for TV* is on the discourses surrounding television and its relationship to the suburban home, not urban living. The point here is not to castigate her fine book. However, like most authors on the fifties, Spigel aligns home so strongly with the ideal of family and suburbia that she takes little notice of other models of home. For instance, because of her interest in suburbia and family, Spigel examines discourses on design, TV, and more in *Better Homes and Gardens*, *American Home*, *House Beautiful*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*, all of which hail married female consumers and represent "home" and "house" as virtually identical.⁹ This focus necessarily elides magazines aimed at singles or urban readers, such as *Mademoiselle*, *Vogue*, *Playboy*, and the *New Yorker*. Yet these magazines offer ideas about urban domestic life, and especially apartment living, that need to be taken into account as part of the discourse on home—including ideas about decorating, entertaining, and relationships. *Playboy*, in particular, will be discussed more fully in a later chapter on bachelors, but here it is worth noting a few images of urban family life that emerge in the *New Yorker*, linking apartment living to the more typical fifties family ideal.

In a search of *New Yorker* covers from the fifties, I found several that show scenes of urban family living.¹⁰ In one, from 26 July 1952, by Roger Duvoisin, a stereotypical fifties family—two white blonde children, a girl and a boy, with two parents and a dog—are loading the car for a day at the beach. We see a beach ball, sailboat, umbrella, cooler, chairs, fishing pole, and pail and shovel. The car and the family are in front of an apartment building that appears to be a four- to six-story brownstone. Representing, on the one hand, an escape from the city, this scene also shows the mobility of the urban family, the family's ability to participate in contemporary cultural ideals, and to find open spaces, despite city living.

Another cover, by Perry Barlow, from 21 March 1953, shows the interior of an apartment looking out the window at other apartment

buildings, and also shows trees outside. A man sits in his easy chair, and his wife sits on the floor. A playpen with a toddler is between them. They are both reading the Sunday newspaper and appear to be searching the real estate pages. While this might appear to be the herald of their flight from the city into suburbia, and seem to emphasize the relatively crowded space of the apartment, the idyllic quality of the scene—the couple's relaxed attitudes, the pot of coffee, the plants that decorate—lends a sense of contentment to the scene that makes their perusal of the real estate pages seem potentially more casual than motivated—like a married woman reading the engagement announcements.

A third *New Yorker* cover, from 31 July 1954, by Edna Eicke, shows a cityscape with the skyline, including the Empire State Building, in the background, and a few four- to six-story buildings in the middle of the image (see plate 1). In the foreground, a cluster of gorgeous green trees grow from three urban backyards. These yards, shown from a high angle, as if from the apartment above, combine paving stones with green plants, including flowers. In one, a child sits in a wading pool with a hose, bucket, and shovel nearby. Certainly, this view sets up a contrast between the urban setting and the garden, between the scale of the skyscraper and the tiny pool, even between the built environment and nature. At the same time, though, this scene registers the compatibility and proximity of ideals of city and home, inside and outside, buildings and gardens afforded by apartment living. It is in some sense the ideal image of the Garden City advocated by many twentieth-century urban planners and architects.

As these *New Yorker* covers suggest, representations of apartments exist alongside suburban discourse in the fifties, and interact with it. Rather than be subsumed into suburban discourse, this book suggests, the apartment needs to be placed in conversation with that discourse. Neither a true subculture nor a counterculture, the apartment represents a curiously marginalized dominant that is often represented as subcultural or countercultural, due to its distance from normative ideals. In most accounts of the period, the apartment and other forms of urban housing are taken for granted as the antithesis of suburban living, and treated as relatively stable precursors to suburban development. But the development of apartments and the development of suburbs emerge out of the same concerns; their development runs parallel; and both crest (at least temporarily) in the mid-twentieth century. Thus, rather than a stable precursor to suburban development, or a residual and outmoded form,

apartment living needs to be understood as dynamic and changing, and urban domestic life needs to be seen as a viable alternative, in both the real and the imaginary of American culture.

Origins of Apartments

In order to understand the emergence of the apartment plot and the meaning of the apartment in mid-twentieth-century America, it is useful to consider the historical evolution of apartments and their relationship to suburban expansion. Prior to the industrial era of the mid-nineteenth century, there was a range of housing options with a few dominant trends. In Puritan colonies, the wood frame house was dominant. In the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth, housing models ranged from slave cabins and rural cottages for farmers, to boardinghouses and cottages in mill towns for workers; in bigger cities, they ranged from lodging houses and dormitories for workers to urban row houses for families (G. Wright). Prior to the nineteenth century, home ownership was available only to a privileged minority. Even in the eighteenth century, there was a rental economy and the ideal of a self-owned, single-family home was out of reach for most people, especially in cities. According to Gwendolyn Wright, between 1785 and 1815, the value of land in Manhattan rose by nearly 750 percent. “By then, more than half of the homes in the nation’s larger cities were rented, mostly by the families of artisans and unskilled laborers. They could seldom raise the capital for a down payment; and since loans were not amortized over time, they risked losing their home on the date the mortgage fell due” (26; see also Blackmar).

From the 1820s through the 1850s, immigration swelled and the large population put additional pressure on land and housing stock (Cromley, 14). According to Clifford Edward Clark, between 1820 and 1860, more than 4.3 million German and Irish immigrants flooded into Philadelphia, Boston, and New York; the proportion of people living in American cities skyrocketed by 777 percent (15). Between 1850 and 1860 alone, the population increased more than 50 percent. After the Civil War, the urban population grew even more. In the 1870s, ’80s and ’90s, blacks migrated from the South at the same time that Italians, Eastern Europeans, Russian Jews, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants flooded American cities (G. Wright, 110). Consequently, in 1900 “New York’s population alone,”

3.4 million, “almost equaled the nation’s total urban population in 1850” (C. Clark, 72).

To handle the increase in population, a variety of new urban housing forms developed in cities.¹¹ In various ways, these all, in Elizabeth Blackmar’s words, “followed the same logic of absorbing land costs through intensified occupancy” (252). Starting in the 1830s, tenements developed to provide housing for immigrants, blacks, and lower-class whites. They were sometimes adaptations of existing warehouses, breweries, or residences; sometimes they were built-to-purpose multiple-unit structures (G. Wright, 115; Hawes, 12; Dolkart). In another vein, prior to the Civil War, the hotel came to serve as ad hoc living quarters. Hotels were primarily for the wealthy, but soon came to serve the needs of people in a range of professions, classes, and lifestyles (Cromley, 18). At the same time, to accommodate middle-class families who could not afford owning or renting a single-family home, row houses were often subdivided and shared by several families or turned into boardinghouses (G. Wright, 37; Cromley, 16–17). Not just an economical form of living, the boardinghouse became fashionable among the well-to-do and young married couples in the 1830s. These people “chose to forsake the demands of supervising their own households and the difficulties of procuring good servants” (G. Wright, 37). By 1860—whether in tenements, hotels, ad hoc subdivisions, or boardinghouses—nearly two-thirds of all New York City families surveyed lived in shared quarters or multiple dwellings (Cromley, 15–16).

Faced with this housing crisis, starting in the 1850s and especially in the 1860s, there emerged a strong discourse about the need for more housing for the middle class (Cromley, 6). Because land costs and taxes discouraged development of single-family homes in the city, this discourse split into two main camps—one favoring the development of built-to-purpose apartments in the city, the other favoring expansion and single-family home development into the suburbs. On the one hand, some architects, city planners, and others promoted the idea of apartment homes as a means of retaining the middle class in the city, improving the city’s appearance, and dealing with land costs (Cromley 28). On the other hand, there were competing discourses in magazines and newspapers about how the apartment threatened the sanctity of the home, and especially family privacy, as well as the purity of women, and raised fears of infidelity (Cromley 22–24).

Part of the difficulty with early apartments was a perceived class prob-

lem. By definition, any building in New York City with three or more family dwellings was a tenement. Thus, at the same time that there came to be a need for apartments, there was a need to create the idea of the apartment as distinct from the tenement and to market it to the middle class. Of course, both the concept of apartment and of the middle class were irresolute and helped define each other. As Cromley says, “The right kind of dwelling helped create the middle class, even as those engaged in building such dwellings meant to provide for that class” (8).

Those architects and other civic leaders who were critical of urban living, and skeptical of the apartment, encouraged middle-class (white, nonimmigrant) families to move to newer housing developments on the outskirts of cities, to combine the best of both worlds, a “rural” setting and urban access (via new railroads) (C. Clark, 24). Nonetheless, antebellum suburbs were primarily aristocratic. Gwendolyn Wright points out that the wealthy could afford leisurely trips into town in their horse-drawn carriages, but most people who worked in the city walked to work and valued proximity (97). However, after the Civil War, and following the transportation revolution—beginning with horse-cars, then steam railroads, then electric trolley lines—a new vision of suburban living developed. In the late nineteenth century, suburbs were increasingly targeted to salesmen, teachers, clerks, carpenters, and others of the middle class. The suburbs grew, and, with the development of building-and-loan associations and amortized mortgages, private home ownership increased. (G. Wright, 99). These early suburbs were lands located at the city’s periphery, such as Brooklyn in New York, or Dorchester and Roxbury on the outskirts of Boston, areas that were eventually annexed to the city (C. Clark, 89; G. Wright, 99).

The proximity of early suburbs to the city serves as a reminder of how dependent early suburbs were on the city as sites of work and pleasure. To be sure, the “suburbs provided a clear expression of the private home as a haven for family, a temple of refined culture, and a sound investment in land and property . . . The suburban home was the apotheosis of late Victorian culture” (G. Wright, 94). In particular, the suburban home was looked to as a sheltering influence for women and children, who were considered the most susceptible to the dangerous influence of the city. But, the suburban home and the projected gender division it afforded were still not a reality for most people. Many working-class women not only lived in the city but worked in urban factories or stores before marriage, then took in boarders, and did laundry or piecework in tene-

ments after marriage. Even among middle-class and upper-class female residents of the suburbs, it was both fashionable and necessary to venture into the city for shopping, dining, theater, charity work, and other amusements (108).

While suburban development was considered the ideal by some, for many city planners and residents, “the apartment house represented a positive alternative to suburban privatism” (G. Wright, 94) and a new middle-class ideal. There is some dispute as to what counts as the first apartment building, due to changing definitions of “apartment.” The Hotel Pelham in Boston, from 1855, and the Stuyvesant Flats in New York, from 1869, are generally agreed upon as two of the earliest, but Cromley cites three properties dating from the mid-1850s as possible contenders (G. Wright, 136; Cromley, 62–65). The model for early built-to-purpose apartments was the Parisian apartment building, itself a relatively recent arrival. Thus, early apartments are generally called French flats. This nomenclature serves, on the one hand, to distinguish apartments from tenements and, on the other, to add to their perceived foreignness. While the Paris flat was the architectural model, this model was adapted to American needs, and in the first few decades of development a variety of new building styles became available, serving a wide range of tenants. The popularity of apartment buildings can be gauged by their stunning rate of growth. According to Cromley, in 1876 there were about 200 built-to-purpose apartment buildings in New York City and by the 1910s there were 10,000 (4).

More than just economics or practicality, the “apartment house captured the nation’s fancy with unheard-of technological advances and the efficient organization of domestic chores” (G. Wright, 138; see also Harris). Rather than a step down from single-family home ownership, early apartments were promoted as preferable to the urban row house. Row houses were generally built on narrow lots and had relatively small rooms on four floors. Much of the useable space was taken up by staircases, and each floor was zoned for different activities, usually with cooking on the basement level, entertaining on the ground floor, sleeping quarters upstairs, and servant rooms and sewing on the top floor. This arrangement meant that even with servants, which were a necessity, the verticality of the row house was viewed by many as a hindrance, since servants were required to walk up and down multiple flights of stairs carrying water, food, dishes, firewood, laundry, and more (Cromley, 32–37).

To entice initial renters, who were mainly drawn from the wealthy,

early apartments offered central water heating, central gas mains for lights, and fully equipped bathrooms for each unit. Eventually, they offered steam elevators, with separate elevators for service and residents, switchboard operators, and electric lights. Rather than multiple narrow floors, apartments were organized horizontally, on single floors. Despite these conveniences, early apartments still relied on the use of servants. Buildings did not have janitors or handymen on staff. Thus, they included space for servants in design (even if many people would have a maid come to the house rather than be a live-in) (Cromley, 117; Alpern). Emphasizing its amenities, in 1871, the Grosvenor Apartments on Tenth Street and Fifth Avenue supplied each unit with two servants—a maid and a waiter. The Grosvenor also provided basement laundries and inaugurated public kitchens and public dining rooms, which allowed residents to take food in the dining room or have it delivered to them (G. Wright, 138).

Beyond their luxury amenities, one of the appeals of the built-to-purpose apartment building was its flexible design and ability to accommodate many different kinds of people and lifestyles. As Cromley points out, even in the nineteenth century, the variety of tenants expected in apartment buildings was indicated by the range of offerings in apartment units (102). In a single building, for example, there might be suites with kitchens, for families adhering to an older style of housekeeping; suites without kitchens or with small cooking closets, for young marrieds seeking convenience; and small units with no kitchens, for bachelors (Cromley, 102; G. Wright, 142). A convenience such as centralized cooking offered collective eating or delivery to tenants, which appealed especially to bachelors and young marrieds (Cromley, 120). Despite warnings against city life, and claims for the superiority of the suburbs for women, women were noticeably attracted to apartments because they provided exceptional convenience and enabled women to enjoy urban amusements and diversions outside the home, and apartments were less isolating than the suburban home (3).

While apartments appealed to many families and married people, they were the first form of noncollective housing created principally for singles. To a large degree, the apartment enabled single life and has become inextricably linked with singles. At first, the single apartment was a male prerogative. The bachelor flat was developed for men and consisted of a private bathroom, sitting room, and bedroom, with no kitchen (Cromley, 114–15). Bachelors could eat in collective dining halls

or take their meals in clubs or other people's homes (G. Wright, 141). Sometimes bachelor flats were included in the design of a larger building and mixed with larger family suites; other times they were located in designated bachelor buildings. The designated bachelor building developed in the 1870s and gained full popularity in the 1890s (Cromley, 188).

The apartment was especially important for gay men. As George Chauncey says, "the development of apartment hotels and [apartment] houses in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century" made it "possible for a middle-class gay world to develop" (158). Boardinghouses and residential hotels, like those operated by the Young Men's Christian Association were, of course, popular among gay men. These residences put men into contact with other men, were not closely supervised, and—because guests were expected to socialize and take meals away from home—enabled secret lives. Still, as Chauncey argues, the apartment gave gay men access to greater privacy, space to entertain at home, and respectability. As a result, starting in the nineteenth century and flourishing in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, gay enclaves (and, in some cases, all-gay buildings) developed in elegant bachelor apartments on the Upper East Side and in the West Fifties, and in more bohemian apartments in Greenwich Village.

Initially, single women did not have society's blessing to live alone. In the nineteenth century, some collective housing options developed for single women, including settlement houses, dormitories, almshouses, and boardinghouses (Israel, 33). In rare cases, more bohemian bachelor girls were directed to unconventional studio apartments in artists' buildings (Cromley, 188). For women, an important precursor to the built-to-purpose apartment was the all-female hotel with collective dining halls, as in a dorm (Cromley, 114–15). For instance, in 1878, the Working Women's Hotel in New York City was completed. It had 500 sleeping rooms, an ironing room, a laundry room, a library, and several dining rooms. To distinguish itself from tenements, where residents often did piecework at home, the Working Women's Hotel prohibited sewing machines and other work-related equipment in sleeping rooms (G. Wright, 141).

Because female hotels tended to restrict women's movements with curfews and strict rules, many women sought more independent living. In an unusual response to single women's needs, in 1907, the large ocean liner *Jacob A. Stamler* docked in New York and offered "to let rooms cheaply and without serious restrictions to 'self-respecting

girls who would behave with honor” (Israel, 105). Unfortunately, the boat was forced to move after a few months because the city needed the pier space. Also offering some measure of freedom, in 1910, the Trowmart Inn opened its doors (105–6). It was for self-supporting girls under thirty-five. It offered a range of options, including large dormlike rooms with beds, smaller private rooms for several girls to share, singles, and more expensive rooms with private bathrooms. Common areas included a dining room and parlor. In 1927, the Barbizon Hotel opened, serving as a residence for women. It enforced codes of conduct and dress and was chaperoned, with no men allowed above the first floor. Like the Trowmart, the Barbizon offered a range of options from dorm-size rooms to sprawling tower suites, and included common areas such as a swimming pool and terraces. While all-female hotels and exclusive buildings continued to be important, eventually and increasingly in the mid-twentieth century women were able to occupy apartments in a range of buildings without being segregated from male and married populations. Thus, as with straight and gay bachelors, the apartment enabled new modes of living and afforded a new cultural status, to single women.

Mid-century Booms

Apartments, it follows, appealed to a wide demographic, including married and unmarried people, and variegated class populations. Perhaps due to this, as well as the high cost of home ownership and despite the strong discourse on private home ownership, by the 1920s more apartments were being built than houses. In 1920, only 46 percent of American families were homeowners, and in cities the figure was lower. In New York, only 12 percent owned their own homes. (G. Wright, 195)

The real boom in suburban development and home ownership did not occur until after the Second World War. The Great Depression and then the war had severely curtailed new housing starts so that by the end of 1945, there were 3.6 million families lacking homes. On top of this, the return of 13 million men and women from the war created a massive housing shortage. To deal with this, Congress passed the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act (commonly referred to as the GI Bill), providing loans to servicemen enabling them to purchase, build, or renovate their homes (C. Clark, 196). As a result, in 1950 there were a million new housing

starts, reaching a record 1.65 million in 1955, then leveling off to 1.5 million for the rest of the decade (217, 223).

At the same time that suburbs expanded, and partly as a result of their sudden growth, the status of cities came into question. The sense of crisis in the city largely related to changes in urban demographics and the white flight associated with suburban expansion. In the fifties, suburbs excluded blacks, either through explicit restricted covenants or more subtle discriminatory housing practices, both of which were encouraged by the Federal Housing Administration, which was concerned about the “Negro invasion.” As a result, blacks and other minorities entered cities in huge numbers. Between 1950 and 1960, the twelve largest cities in the United States gained 4.5 million nonwhites and lost 3.6 million whites (C. Clark, 233; G. Wright, 233). In New York, the densest American city, where the population after the Second World War consisted of sixty different nationalities, 2 million foreign born, and 0.5 million black people, white flight saw 1.2 million whites leave New York City for suburbs in New York and New Jersey (Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, 14).

In addition, urban sprawl posed its own threat to the idea of the city. Jean Gottmann’s 1961 watershed book, *Megalopolis: The Urbanized Northeastern Seaboard of the United States*, dissected suburban development to suggest that the city might no longer function as the center—politically, culturally, or geographically—but as merely the largest place in the diffuse urban sprawl he called Megalopolis. While Gottmann viewed this decentering as a positive development that enabled culture, politics, and economic power to disperse across a broad area, others viewed sprawl as creating a host of problems for the city. These included massive traffic problems in the city, as suburban commuters clogged city streets. They also included population loss for the middle class, and declining employment for blue-collar workers, with fears that the city would become “a managerial center,” home only to the very rich and very poor, with a “grey belt of blight between the city center and healthy residential edges” (Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, 26).

However, rather than mere condemnation and despair, worries about the city among residents and observers also created efforts to preserve and revitalize the city. Efforts to revitalize the city led, in New York especially, to an enormous postwar boom in development. This building boom partly resulted from a change in New York City’s zoning ordinance. In 1916, the city had established that streets and avenues were to

be bounded by buildings that honored the street wall. In 1961, this code was relaxed, which paved the way for building unmodulated, independently spaced skyscrapers with plazas. Because the old zoning was seen to be less restrictive in terms of space and environmental requirements, builders rushed to take advantage of the old codes (Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, 63, 88). Ironically, while the change in zoning and building style stemmed from urban renewal plans, it produced another reason the city was seen to be in crisis; as the shift toward building isolated towers seemed to displace an older model of community, diversity, and neighborhood dependent on dense city blocks.

The mid-century building boom in New York included a massive program of building express highways, roads, and bridges, to ease traffic problems. In addition to structural planning, one large area of development was in office buildings, intended to shift urban business culture to a second business center in Midtown Manhattan. A boom also occurred in the development of high-rise, high-density public housing projects for the urban poor, and especially minorities. This was in collusion with controversial “slum clearance” projects, many of which made way for the new expressways.

In addition to offices and public housing, the third boom area was in the development of apartment houses. Apartment building reflected the range of ideas and issues about urban planning that affected other kinds of building. Some of the new buildings were high-rise concrete buildings, which were viewed as barely distinguishable from public housing projects, except in location and color (anything but public housing red!). In response, and borne partly out of a new preservationist movement, much apartment development consisted of conversions—of brownstones, prewar apartment buildings, and even tenements, which were emptied out as part of slum clearance projects (Hancock, 151; Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, 30–35).

Rona Jaffe’s 1958 novel of urban life among single working girls, *The Best of Everything*, captures the feel of a city in process: “New York is a city of constant architectural change, buildings being torn down, new ones being put up in their places, streets being torn up, fenced off, signs proclaiming politely SORRY! WE ARE MAKING WAY FOR A GROWING NEW YORK. Its inhabitants, more likely than not, live in recently converted houses—converted brownstones, converted whitestones, converted rococo mansions, all partitioned off into two- and three-room apartments and what is euphemistically called ‘the one-and-a-half.’” (16). In a

similar vein, and recognizing the new preservation movement, the 1965 Broadway musical *Skyscraper* pits a high-rise developer against preservationists and a young woman living in a brownstone who refuses to sell. At the center of the show is a song “Spare that Building.” Interestingly (*appallingly*, by today’s standards), and suggestive of how ambivalent the writers are about development, the woman ultimately marries the developer, leaving her brownstone to be torn down.

Thus, during the long fifties and into the seventies, at the same time that the suburbs grew, New York grew. Many whites left the city in the postwar years, true, but New York still had a population of 6.7 million whites and large newer black and Puerto Rican populations (Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, 15). Despite the middle-class exodus to the suburbs, New York managed to maintain significant numbers of white middle-class residents and attracted even more as the high volume of office space increased, bringing more and more workers to the city. In addition, by the late 1950s, empty nesters from among “the first wave of post-Depression era suburbanites began to return to the city” (27), seeking convenience and culture. Many of the very rich remained, too, often maintaining a second residence in the suburbs, rural, or shore areas.

Mid-century Urbanism

I would suggest that the apartment plot emerged strongly in the postwar period, as a key signifier of urban living, at a time when the meaning and status of urban living were undergoing a sea change. To be sure, the apartment plot provides a counterpoint to the suburban ideal, as shown in story lines that vary in their attitude as to which is preferable. But the apartment also mobilizes a host of themes that are not simply positive or negative reflections of the suburban home but articulate, in their own right, ideas that are at the heart of debates about the status of the city.

These debates inform all areas of the mid-century building boom, including urban planning projects, slum clearance, expressway building, architectural styles, and more. They reached a crescendo in the mid-1970s, when New York experienced a severe financial and municipal crisis, but had their roots in the early twentieth century and intensified in the period under consideration here, from 1945 to 1975. Postwar ideas about the city related to earlier theories of urbanism; these include, prominently, Lewis Mumford’s emphasis on decentralization,

dating from the 1930s, and Le Corbusier's architectural designs, originating in the 1920s. Mumford, a prominent architectural critic and urban planner, borrowed heavily from Ebenezer Howard's nineteenth-century British ideal of the Garden City—essentially a satellite town outside the metropolis, with some industry and a strong town center—and incorporated this ideal into the city. Rather than creating satellite communities outside the city, on a suburban or Garden City model, Mumford envisioned the city itself as “a new type of ‘poly-nucleated city,’ in which,” he explains, “a cluster of communities, adequately spaced and bounded, shall do duty for the badly organized mass city” (489). For Mumford, such “communities” would “multiply the number of centers in which the population is housed, instead of permitting a few existing centers to aggrandize themselves on a monopolistic pattern” (489).

Although Mumford's ideal home was a single-family Frank Lloyd Wright design, and he valued low-density communities dispersed across the city, his conception of clustered communities nonetheless dovetailed with Le Corbusier's ideal of a *Ville Radieuse*, or “Radiant City.” To be sure, Mumford clings to a fairly romantic and nostalgic notion of town life, while Le Corbusier offers a more radical Modernism. But both the “poly-nucleated city” and the Radiant City emphasize decentralization and organized centers. Famously, Le Corbusier favors high-rise, high-density buildings, standing in superblocks with gardens below and radiating throughways connecting them. From a certain vantage point, these towers are not antithetical to the Garden City but serve to verticalize it.

The emphasis on decentralization and the ideal of high-rise, high-density housing converged in mid-century urban planning in New York. The key public figure who came to symbolize urban renewal was Robert Moses, a towering public figure, who held various positions of power in New York from the 1920s to the 1960s, including serving as a member of the City Planning Commission, as park commissioner, and as city construction coordinator. Moses was initially associated with the reorganization of parks and highways but eventually handled the redevelopment of tenements and developed large-scale public-housing projects. His prewar construction of parks, parkways, and arterial roadways was viewed positively, as suitable for both urban and suburban living, allowing the city to disperse populations and better manage traffic flow in and out of the city. By contrast his postwar work, in the 1950s and especially the 1960s, was viewed as less aesthetically oriented and

more brutally efficient in its aims. He became an exponent of the modernist ideal of high-rise, high-density housing, creating isolated public-housing towers, as a relatively expedient way to house large populations in small areas. His emphasis on the automobile seemed to privilege traffic over neighborhoods, cars over people. Ultimately, rather than creating a thriving “poly-nucleated city,” Moses became associated with slum clearance projects that cut a swath through old neighborhoods and displaced populations, creating racial and class segregation (Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, 37–40; Caro; Ballon and Jackson).

As Americans, and New Yorkers in particular, became increasingly frustrated with the failed ideals of government-initiated urban renewal projects, and above all the specter of high-rise, high-density housing projects, Jane Jacobs’s 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* offered a different view of the city and urban planning. The book achieved remarkable sales and was hotly debated not only in the pages of *Architectural Forum* but also in *Vogue*, *Fortune*, and numerous other popular arenas.

In a barely concealed attack on Moses, Jacobs—an urban planner and activist—critiqued not only “the decay of old cities” but also the “fresh minted decadence of the new unurban urbanization” (7). She argued against the most influential ideas of urban planning—especially Mumford’s “poly-nucleated city” and Le Corbusier’s Radiant City, but also including Daniel Burnham’s “monumentalist” City Beautiful movement—as each in their own way a model of containment, “sorting out certain cultural or public functions and decontaminating their relationship with the workaday city” (25). According to Jacobs, despite their superficial differences, all of these in different ways aim to create something like a Garden City or series of city centers and to separate various city functions, such as work and residences, from each other. Against this, she offered a model for urban planning based on principles of density, diversity, community, porousness, and public life.

Marshall Berman tags Jacobs’s view of the city as particularly feminine, “a fully articulated women’s view of the city” (322). Berman views the gendering of the city in Jacobs as related to the particular urban experience she describes—a life of neighbors, shopkeepers, and children—with an emphasis on urban issues, such as safety, that might be viewed as “women’s issues.” I would emphasize further that Jacobs offers a feminist view of the city, in which she not only rearticulates what counts as pub-

lic space and public life to include women's experience, but also breaks down the distinctions between public and private, work and home that underpin more masculinist, modernist conceptions of the city. Rather than a view of the city from a woman's perspective, an alternative public sphere, as it were, Jacobs provides a view that complicates our understanding of private and public, and reimagines the public sphere and public discourse for all city dwellers, male and female.

For Jacobs, the high-rise, high-density Radiant City is "unurban" insofar as it works against central principles of urban life and, in particular, creates an alienating and unsafe environment. The city, she argues, requires density and diversity of use to guarantee that there are clearly marked public spaces, that these spaces are full of people at various times of day and night, and that people in these places provide effective surveillance and intervention when crime or danger are imminent. Rather than dispersing populations, or sorting work and residences, Jacobs argues for concentration and mixed use. Against pseudopublic spaces such as public housing playgrounds or meeting rooms, Jacobs argues for less isolated, clearly marked public spaces that are on the "by-way to people's normal public sorties" (62) and available to a wide range of users for a wide range of reasons.

Jacobs offers a view of the city that differs from decentrists in seeking to value the city's unique character, as opposed to creating what she views as a suburbanized city. As opposed to Mumford's managed and orderly communities or Le Corbusier's towers, her ideal cityscapes are densely populated and slightly chaotic. Her key points of reference are Greenwich Village in New York and the North End in Boston. Whereas Le Corbusier, in Vincent Scully's words, hated the street, "hated its complex multiplicity and what seemed to him its mess and confinement" (167), Jacobs places great emphasis on the street and especially on sidewalks. Underneath "the seeming disorder of the old city" she locates "a complex order" "for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city" (50). This order, she describes as "the ballet of the good city sidewalk":

This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance—not to a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off *en masse*, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinc-

tive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any one place is always replete with improvisation. (50)

The sidewalk, for Jacobs, brings together strangers in a careful rhythm determined by use. These uses include shopping, walking, play, and observation. The sidewalk has a rhythm and personality; it provides contact and safety, surveillance and anonymity.

For Jacobs, one key difference between cities and towns or suburbs is that “cities are, by definition, full of strangers” (30), and as a result the city affords greater privacy to its citizens than towns or suburbs do. She distinguishes this urban privacy from what she calls “window privacy” or the ability to hide indoors, insofar as true urban privacy is “the privacy of having reasonable control over who shall make inroads on your time and when”: “A good city street neighborhood achieves a marvel of balance between its people’s determination to have essential privacy and their simultaneous wishes to have differing degrees of contact, enjoyment or help from the people around” (59). Rather than isolating, urban privacy allows and depends upon public contact, but contact in public places like sidewalks that “bring together people who do not know each other in an intimate, private social fashion” (55), where one can have contact—conversation, acquaintanceships—without entanglements.

This balance between privacy and community, and the contradictory pull toward contact and away from entanglement, are key to many views of the city besides that of Jacobs’s, including Serge Chermayeff’s and Christopher Alexander’s *Community and Privacy: Toward a New Architecture of Humanism* (1965) and the more isolationist Percival and Paul Goodman’s *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (1947) (see also Coppa and Avery Consultants). It is the chief principle of E. B. White’s *Here Is New York*, from 1949. Written initially as a *Holiday* magazine article, White’s small book provides a snapshot of New York and its “ballet.” Like Jacobs, White emphasizes the diversity of the city, the localism of its neighborhoods and streets, and its spectacle. All of this contributes to the “loneliness” and “privacy” of the city: “On any person who desires such queer prizes, New York will bestow the gift of loneliness and the gift of privacy. It is this largesse that accounts for the presence within the city’s walls of a considerable section of the population; for the residents of Manhattan are to a large extent strangers who have pulled up stakes somewhere and come to town” (19). Like Jacobs, White

views the city as a collection of strangers who afford a degree of anonymity to each other. More than just the privacy of anonymity, however, White argues that New York affords the insulating privacy of size and density: “New York blends the gift of privacy with the excitement of participation; and better than most dense communities it succeeds in insulating the individual . . . against all enormous and violent and wonderful events that are taking place every minute . . . In most metropolises, small and large, the choice is often not with the individual at all. He is thrown to the Lions . . . the event is unavoidable” (22, 24). White views the city as affording a particular blend of privacy and contact, excitement and insulation. In this, he echoes Georg Simmel, who notes that the city produces a blasé attitude among its inhabitants, a form of reserve with “an overtone of concealed aversion” (“The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 332), which allows the individual an incomparable degree of personal freedom. However, in a somewhat different vein than Simmel, and more like Jacobs, White views the city and especially New York as not more alienating but as more protective of privacy than the suburbs or other towns.

Jacobs’s ideas have become increasingly fashionable over the years, most recently enjoying a new vogue undergirding principles of the New Urbanism. I focus on Jacobs here, and especially her dispute with the architects of urban renewal, to emphasize the currency in mid-century thought of ideals of porousness, density, community, and public life that her work signals. These ideals run counter to dominant notions of containment that have colored so many of our perceptions of the fifties and beyond. While the urban life Jacobs describes is particularly public urban life, and only concerned with housing forms insofar as she favors low-level buildings in mixed-use areas, her work is relevant for my analysis of the apartment plot because the apartment stands as a figure of urban living and because the apartment plot navigates the tensions between privacy and community, loneliness and density, contact and entanglement that Jacobs describes. The unique qualities Jacobs attributes to the city are, I argue, animated in the apartment plot, not simply as an external feature of public city life but situated inside the apartment unit and building.

Certainly, architectural theory of the time also reflects a concern with issues of community and privacy. However, the apartment plot seems to me less a reflection of ideas about architectural style or interior design

than a reflection on urbanism and urban living. In sketching contemporary ideas about urbanism, such as those of Jacobs or White, I seek to place those ideas in conversation with the apartment plot, as part of the discourse circulating in and around the apartment plot. But rather than simply apply contemporary ideas about urbanism to the apartment plot, I want to consider the apartment plot as itself presenting a philosophy of urbanism. By calling it a “philosophy of urbanism,” I suggest that the apartment plot explores urban living, its form, and its possibilities; that it imagines urban living through its portrayal of the apartment.¹²

My understanding of urbanism as a philosophy stems partly from my reading of Jacobs, but also from my reading of the French philosopher and theorist of space Henri Lefebvre, and especially his *Right to the City* (*Le droit à la ville*). Written in 1968 to celebrate the centenary of Karl Marx’s *Capital*, *Right to the City* addresses what Lefebvre views as a worldwide crisis of the city, but was especially motivated by and attentive to the condition of Paris, which was undergoing its own urban sprawl, with the working class (rather than the middle class) being pushed out of central Paris by government-led and market-led development. In *Right to the City*, Lefebvre identifies a “pathology of space” (99) related to urban sprawl and the development of Megalopolis. In terms similar to the debate in the United States, he views suburbanization as producing, on the one hand, an urbanized countryside, “the absorption of the countryside by the city and the total predominance of industrial production, including agriculture” (122). On the other hand, he views a paradoxical “tendency towards destruction of the city” (129). In terms not unlike Jacobs, Lefebvre attacks the “segregationist tendencies of the city”—in the extreme case, ghettos, “those of the Jews and the blacks, and also those of intellectuals or workers” (140) as well as residential ghettos, leisure ghettos, work ghettos, and so on.¹³

The city, for Lefebvre, is a language, a writing, a semiological system, and most importantly, what he calls “an *oeuvre* of certain historical and social agents, the action and the result” (*Right to the City*, 102–3). The *oeuvre* is linked to the form of the urban—creative activity, information, symbolism, the imaginary and play, “particular expressions and *moments* which can more or less overcome the fragmentary division of tasks” (147). These moments are akin to the improvisations Jacobs describes, rife with the potential for play, contact, and encounter. The *oeuvre*, according to Lefebvre, is use-value, “the eminent use of the

city" (66) as opposed to urbanization, which transforms the urban into exchange-value and products (electricity, gas, the car, television, fashions, music, and other markers of an urban sensibility).

Against the destruction of the city, Lefebvre claims the persistence of the urban "in a state of dispersed and alienated actuality, as kernel and virtuality" (*Right to the City*, 148): "The form of the urban, its supreme reason, namely simultaneity and encounter, cannot disappear . . . As a place of encounters, focus of communication and information, the *urban* becomes what it always was: place of desire, permanent disequilibrium, seat of the dissolution of normalities and constraints, the moment of play and the unpredictable" (129). In analyzing the concrete problems of the city in mid-century, then, Lefebvre arrives at a philosophy of the urban, a conception of its ideal form. Something of a utopian ideal, the urban figures in his writing, nonetheless, as a right and a possibility. The attainment of this right requires and produces a transformation of everyday life. Describing the right to the city as a right which defines civilization, alongside the "right to work, to training and education, to health, housing, leisure, to life," Lefebvre characterizes it as "the right to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete *usage* of these moments and places" (179).

The right to the city demands a full transformation or urban revolution. It requires political and economic revolution, to reinvest the urban with use-value rather than exchange-value, to "renew the meaning of productive and creative activity by destroying the ideology of consumption" and "produce a new humanism." Equally essential, the right to the city depends upon a "cultural revolution" that revives the *oeuvre*: "Now, the working class does not spontaneously have the sense of the *oeuvre*. It is dimmed . . . Where can be found this precious deposit, this sense of the *oeuvre*? . . . Philosophy and the whole of philosophical tradition on the one hand, and on the other all of art (not without a radical critique of their gifts and presents) contain the sense of the *oeuvre*" (Lefebvre, *Right to the City*, 180). Existing as "kernel and virtuality" then, the urban can be animated and recovered through philosophy, art, and critique.

The philosophy of the urban in the apartment plot is not identical to Lefebvre's or Jacobs's, though it has points in common with both. Rather, what Lefebvre's philosophy lends to my understanding of the apartment plot is this sense of the urban as something to be imagined, accomplished, or won, rather than as something to be simply reflected.

If, as I have suggested, the apartment plot presents a philosophy of or reflection upon urbanism, it is an imaginary urbanism set in and around the urban habitat, the apartment. As a philosophy of urbanism and urban living, the apartment plot represents specific cities, notably New York, but represents something akin to “the right to urban life” more than, or beyond, a particular locale. This imaginary urbanism may function as a trace of the “precious deposit” of the urban. The apartment plot maintains and celebrates the urban against the forces of suburbia, against containment, and against the destruction of the city.

The Urbanism of the Apartment Plot

The apartment plot is not uniquely urban. Certainly, there are city films, gangster films, and musicals that engage the city and model urbanism. However, it seems to me that the apartment plot is uniquely attendant to the experience of *domestic* urbanism. Hence, the urbanism of the apartment plot needs to be distinguished from the urbanism of other films. In particular—because of its parallel status as a critical genre and because of its predominantly mid-century urban setting—the apartment plot needs to be distinguished from the urban geography of film noir that Edward Dimendberg vividly details in his book *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*.

For Dimendberg, film noir functions as an “*aide-mémoire* for an American culture whose spatial environment was undergoing rapid transformation . . . a social memory bank that provides a means for the film spectator to remember disappearing urban forms” (10). Focusing especially on the noir cycle between 1946 and 1959, Dimendberg invests the urban experience of the period with great significance, as do I. However, because of his focus on noir, Dimendberg emphasizes the erasure of certain urban sites attendant upon urban renewal and locates the significance of the urban landscape in its seeming disappearance: “Nostalgia and longing for older urban forms combined with a fear of new alienating urban realities pervade *film noir*. The loss of public space, the homogenization of everyday life, the intensification of surveillance, and the eradication of older neighborhoods by urban renewal and redevelopment projects are seldom absent from these films” (7). Thus, for Dimendberg, mid-century noir registers the contemporary effects of alienation engendered by urban renewal and at the same time captures aspects of the built en-

vironment before they are eradicated, providing viewers, then and now, with an aide-mémoire for a lost version of the city.¹⁴

Whereas the noir cycle, in Dimendberg's view, provides a backward-looking imprint of a transitional moment—a moment that recedes as fast as it is represented—the apartment plot navigates the same terrain from a somewhat different perspective. Public spaces are treated not as lost, but as dynamic and changing. Rather than be dominated by nostalgia or longing for older forms, the apartment plot substitutes a revitalized sense of neighborhood and community. This sense of community is neither outmoded nor residual but inherent to the apartment, for good or bad. It relates to the porousness and permeability of apartment living, to the knowledge and awareness residents have of each other, through sight, sound, gossip, and other encounters. Rather than solely emphasize the alienating effects of urban life, the apartment plot tends also to emphasize the erotic possibilities for accidental and surprising encounters in the city, for simultaneity and play. This is not to say that these encounters are never dangerous but that they marshal utopian fantasies of neighborhood, community, contact and porousness, even as they present the darker side of urban encounters.

For Dimendberg, reading noir through Simmel, Walter Benjamin and Jean-Paul Sartre, urban space requires “surveillance regimes” (25) that puncture the indifference and anonymity of the street and link observation to detection. Focusing attention on the use of overhead shots and aerial views, Dimendberg notes that “the surveillance of urban space” is “the intersection point of the city with the cinematic apparatus.” While noting the “latent transformability of a street corner into a site of observation” in the third-person gaze of the camera, Dimendberg describes both city and cinema “as a machine for making space visible” (33).

To be sure, surveillance is key to the urban imaginary and is central to Jacobs's ideas about the city especially. However, while Dimendberg rightly notes, as others have done, the visual regime of surveillance, his emphasis on the gaze downplays sound, as a crucial feature of both the city and the cinema. Certainly, the apartment plot navigates some of the same terrain Dimendberg describes and touches upon surveillance as a narrative device or visual aesthetic. However, while sometimes foregrounding visual surveillance, the apartment plot often shifts the locus of surveillance from the eye to the ear—emphasizing eavesdropping and conversation. Rather than focusing on the ear of police or other authorities, the apartment plot shows eavesdropping as woven into the fabric

of everyday urban life. Jacobs, for instance, refers to the importance of “public characters,” as conveyers of news, through gossip and other forms of both casual and motivated conversation (68). These “public characters” are people who not only observe the street but talk to people they meet, pass on news and information, and make connections between people.

Most significantly, and uniquely perhaps, the apartment plot draws attention to the fissure between sound and body (between being heard and being seen) that characterizes urban living, where anonymity is less about being faceless or unnamed than about being a body without a voice, or a voice without a body. Mary Cantwell’s memoir *Manhattan When I Was Young* perfectly describes the detachment of voice and body as a feature of apartment living. Describing her first married apartment, on the thirteenth floor of a high-rise, Cantwell writes:

All the apartment’s windows—one in the living room, one in the bedroom—faced an airshaft, and, when it snowed, the flakes drifted into the warm air toward the bottom of the shaft and then rose, so that looking out a window during a blizzard was like looking into a popcorn machine.

Sound drifted upward, too. From the apartment directly below us, where a woman whose romantic life kept us sleepless fought with a long series of boyfriends . . . Which of the women we saw leaving for work the next morning was she? we wondered. And which of the men was the homosexual who had gone to a costume party naked but for a coat of gold paint on his penis? Living in a big apartment house, with our ears forever to the wall or out the window, we knew more about our neighbors than our parents knew about the people with whom they shared “Good morning”s and “Looks like we’ve got another nice day”s for years. But we preserved silence in the building’s elevators, as did the rest of the residents . . . and could not have matched a voice to a person to save our lives. (178–79)

In Cantwell’s description, the mismatch between voice and body characterizes apartment living and produces a fissure in which one knows persons by sound and by sight, but not at the same time. Rather than alienating, in the apartment plot, this feature of urban life produces an odd intimacy, a set of erotic possibilities, false identities, role-playing, and surprise encounters.

Whereas photography models the urban and cinematic gaze that Dimendberg describes, a different set of technologies underscores the disengagement of sound and image in urban life that I describe. These technologies include intercoms, radios, and, above all, telephones. In the

apartment plot, these technologies are often foregrounded and turned into plot. They are sometimes charged with erotic possibility, as in *Pillow Talk* or *Bells Are Ringing*, and sometimes portend danger, as in *Pushover*, *Rear Window*, or *Wait Until Dark*.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the urbanism of film noir and of the apartment plot relates to the distinction Marcus makes between urban novels and apartment stories, where the former situates action in the public spaces of urban life and the latter “situates the city’s flow and multiplicity *inside* the home” (*Apartment Stories*, 12). Dimendberg characterizes film noir as a spatially defined but homeless genre. He writes, “It is hardly surprising that the movement of protagonists from urban center to periphery is a pervasive spatial trope . . . the protagonists in *film noir* appear cursed by an inability to dwell comfortably anywhere” (7). The locations of noir—police stations, diners, hotels, bars, phone booths, cars, restaurants, and streets—mark the genre as particularly urban but not domestic, and in fact much of noir registers the failure of the protagonist to achieve the ideal of home, which is often a false ideal, as in *Detour* (Ulmer, 1945), or vulnerable to criminal forces, as in *The Big Heat*. The apartment plot, by contrast, mobilizes urban themes inside the home. It considers the status of urban life through its representation of the quintessential urban dwelling, the apartment. Thus, the apartment plot underscores the degree to which American film is so often and so broadly about notions of home and of spatial identities, along with bodily identities; and in this sense the apartment plot offers another way of thinking about cinema and modernity, and how cinema mirrors and models ways of being in the modern world.

Floor Plans

Chapter 1 takes up the issue of genre through an examination of, perhaps, the most renowned apartment plot: *Rear Window*. There, I argue that *Rear Window* represents an archetypal apartment plot and use it to open up many of the thematic and formal elements of the genre. Against purely auteurist readings, I emphasize the film’s commonalities with a mix of auteurist and nonauteurist films, and suggest that together they activate a philosophy of urbanism that figures domestic urbanism as a site of philosophy.

Thereafter, each chapter examines a different “tenant” in the apart-

ment plot. In chapter 2, “We Like Our Apartment,” I examine the way in which the apartment plot thematizes the bachelor pad as both a mirror and a closet for male sexual desire. Chapter 3, “The Great Reprieve,” considers the single girl’s apartment as a space of temporary modernity, a liminal space that situates the woman between modernity and domesticity. Chapter 4, “Suburbs in the City,” considers representations of marriage in the apartment plot and locates a tension between marriage and urbanism that serves to critique marriage from a woman’s perspective as much as it critiques urbanism within a discourse of familism. The last chapter (chapter 5), “Movin’ On Up,” examines representations of African American apartments, alongside representations of tenements and the suburbs, and discusses the exclusions and limitations of the apartment plot as a genre that largely figures the city as a white-dominated space. Throughout, I examine the ways in which space and place are imbricated by discourses of gender, status, race, and class, and suggest that the philosophy of urbanism available to urban residents are housed within systems of power and privilege related to one’s identity. In this sense, the philosophy of urbanism might be seen as something of a conspiratorial plot, justifying heterosexual closure, the “taming” of the feminine, and the deracialization of urban space.

Some of the films I analyze are canonical texts, such as *Rear Window*, *Pillow Talk*, *The Apartment*, *Klute*, or *Rosemary’s Baby*. Others are well known but not prominent in much academic discourse, such as *Boys in the Band* or *Barefoot in the Park*. Others might be viewed as the detritus of film culture. Films such as *Under the Yum Yum Tree*, *That Funny Feeling*, *Diary of a Mad Housewife*, *Patch of Blue*, or *Claudine* have slipped under the radar. Some are obscure while others have a happy existence on cable tv and in video stores, but are not generally held up as crucial examples of American cinema. In selecting films for discussion, I have deliberately mixed the canonical and noncanonical, both to more clearly map the breadth of the genre and to show the formal and thematic intersections between different films. Because there are so many apartment plots, I have not been able to include them all. I especially regret that the book does not discuss *In a Lonely Place* or the Italian-French coproduction *Last Tango in Paris* (Bertolucci, 1972)—both of which are key apartment plots and bring together the discourse of the bachelor pad and the single girl’s apartment in particularly provocative ways.

Because the apartment plot needs to be understood historically, as a philosophy of urbanism produced at a particular moment in American

history, I examine apartment plots in their historical context by examining related cultural and historical discourses. I not only address the discourse on apartments and urban living in magazines — *Playboy*, *Mademoiselle*, *Ebony*, etc. — but I analyze contemporary self-help books, sociologies, cookbooks, feminist tracts, and other texts that help contextualize the films.

For the most part, I focus on films, only touching upon TV shows, novels, comics, and other texts as part of the larger cultural discourse on the apartment. In part, this is a practical issue, as the sheer volume of available texts could overwhelm writer and reader. But I also want to maintain a sense of the apartment as plot, which the serial form of comics and television somewhat counteracts. For this reason, some novels and other relatively closed texts will be discussed alongside films whereas more serial narratives will not. In addition, I have not included non-American examples of the apartment plot, though clearly other film cultures, notably French film, have evinced a strong interest in it. My reason here is again partly practical, but more so reflects my sense that the philosophy of urbanism in the American apartment plot needs to be distinguished from foreign counterparts. Perhaps if this book sparks interest, another writer or writers will analyze the French apartment plot, the Polish apartment plot, or other variants.

My analysis extends beyond the postwar baby boom to the mid-seventies, since I am interested not only in the relationship between the apartment plot and the fifties' suburban ideal, but also in emerging singles and urban discourses of the sixties and seventies. I use 1975 as a cut-off date, as it is a year that marks unemployment, slowed economic growth, and a significant drop in housing starts nationwide; and when New York City, in particular, experienced severe financial and municipal crises that together with changes in the urban landscape effectively altered the perception of the city, leading toward more alarmist views of the urban (See Chudacoff and Smith, 291–94; Stern, Fishman, and Tilove, 12–36; Macek). Therefore, the philosophy of urbanism that I examine captures a transitional phase when the city is being reimagined: the apartment plot produces an urban imaginary that is neither wholly utopian nor fully entrenched in later dystopian views of the city, although late 1960s and early 1970s versions of the apartment plot swing toward the dystopian more than their 1950s counterparts.

At the same time, I view the philosophy of urbanism in these films as not merely a historical artifact but as still vitally important. This book

examines a specific moment in time that in many ways relates to our own in the United States, as we have experienced a massive housing boom and bust, and a new cult of domesticity; at a time when cities and suburbs are both growth machines, but losing much of their distinctiveness to a global generic; at a time when urbanism is being revalued in light of both economic shifts and green politics; and at the same time that we are engaged in wars, both real and ideological, that have raised anew the specter of containment, in all its forms. Thus, this book looks to the apartment as a space through which we can uncover and recall alternatives to overly rigid ideologies of borders and containment, family and home.



1

A PRIMER IN URBANISM

***Rear Window's* Archetypal Apartment Plot**

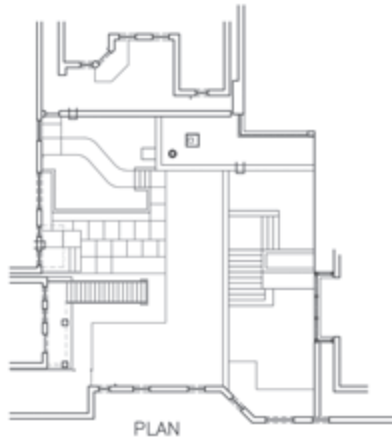
Characters seem almost literally to take their sense of the shape of the world from the shape of the floor plan of their apartments . . . the rims of the apartment embody rules that can be touched. —**PENELOPE GILLIAT**, review of *Diary of a Mad Housewife* (1970)

It begins with a static shot, the image cut into roughly equal parts by three separate bamboo blinds for the front flat panes of a large bay window. Slowly, moving from screen-left to screen-right, each of the blinds opens mechanically, one at a time, as the credits roll and a jazzy score plays. As the blinds open, the window, initially an image, is transformed into a frame. From a darkened room, over the window sill, this first shot reveals a richly detailed rear courtyard setting. It is daytime, seemingly morning. To the left, and almost perpendicular to the framing window, we see a light red brick building and steel dark green fire escape, partially obscured by a tree (building A). This building extends to the street. To the right of this building, we see a sliver of street and sidewalk, a lamppost and, across the street, a door with a red light, which will later be identified as a bar sign. In the far background, across the street, we see just the top of a three-story building. Behind it, we see the skyline of larger buildings, including a few skyscrapers. In front of it, in the middle plane of the image, facing the courtyard, a woman walks down



KEY:

- (A) NEWLYWEDS' BUILDING
- (B) MISS TORSO'S BUILDING
- (C) THORWALD'S BUILDING
- (D) BALCONY BUILDING
- (E) COMPOSER'S BUILDING
- (F) JEFF'S BUILDING



1. Architectural rendering of *Rear Window* courtyard.
 Courtesy of Una Moon.

the back porch stairs of a two-story light brown building with a flat roof (building B). This building shows signs of renovation and conversion. The house has been divided into apartments: from the rear, we see two separate studios, upstairs and down. The bricks on the top and bottom floors are of different shades and of seemingly different vintage, and the wooden porch and stairs are add-ons. To the right of building B, with no visible space between, we see three stories of a darker red brick building with a stepped terrace on its far left fourth floor, but at least four full interior stories across the rest of the building, where we see two columns of windows and a figure in a fourth floor window (building C). Each floor contains a single rear one-bedroom railroad apartment. This building has white steel fire escapes and balconies. We are prevented from seeing much of the third far right column of smaller bathroom windows by the camera position and by an open fourth pane in the window that frames our view.

As the credits conclude, a woman passes from screen-left to screen-right on the sidewalk, and at the same time the camera starts to move. The camera moves through the center window pane and over the sill, angling slightly down. A dramatic cut shows a high angle shot of a black cat placed below the framing window's vantage point. The cat walks up cement stairs from a brick patio. As the cat climbs, the camera follows and leads our eyes past a weathered brick wall along the patio stairs. The wall has been painted white, but is stained and in disrepair. To the left, and over the brick wall, we see container plants, a patch of grass, a few flower beds, steps, and a cement walkway leading from a ground floor door in building C. The camera cranes up and shows that the cat is on an additional patio below a red brick building (building E) that stands to the right and perpendicular to the framing window. We see part of a studio with large greenhouse windows. The studio is enclosed with a brick wall. Inside the brick wall, there are various mechanical vents and a chimney stack. Adjacent to this building, heading left, and at a right angle to building C, the largest building facing our window, there is a lighter concrete building, of indeterminate height, with a third-floor free-standing balcony (building D). A man, woman, and child are on the balcony, along with one or two flower pots. This building is also enclosed by a red brick wall.

The camera pans left, showing more clearly the far right side of the large red brick building (building C). The curtains and windows in this building are in various states of openness. As we pan left, we see a light

flash, presumably from a camera, in a fourth floor window, and an arm dangling off a fire escape balcony on the third floor. The camera continues its pan left to the small light brown building (building B) and we see pigeons on the roof, and what appears to be a woman brushing her hair in the small second-floor window at the top of the stairs. The camera moves down and to the left, showing the downstairs doorway of this small house. There is a chair by the door on the bottom porch, and a small white picket fence with a gate opening from the service entrance into the courtyard. A milkman is visible, exiting the service entrance. At the same time, we see more details of the building (building A) that is to the far left of the framing window—one window with an awning, a fire escape, a covered birdcage sitting on a window sill, some climbing ivy, and some patched bricks at the corner. The camera continues its movement left and shows an angled wall with arched windows in building A, then returns us to the opened framing window and window sill. The camera crosses back over the sill to reveal James Stewart in medium close-up, sweating and presumably asleep, with his eyes closed and his back to the window.

This, of course, is the opening of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*. Soon, we will meet the various tenants. In building A, the Newlyweds. In building B, Miss Torso, upstairs, and the Sculptress, down. The Childless Couple, the Thorwalds, and Miss Lonelyhearts all live in building C, on the third, second, and first floor, respectively. The Bathing Beauties will adorn its terrace. The Composer dwells in the studio in building E. Thus far, however, we have not seen most of the buildings' occupants—the Thorwalds, the Composer, Miss Lonelyhearts, or the Newlyweds. We have only grazed in passing the Childless Couple, Miss Torso and the Sculptress, and their characteristics have not yet been established. Certain key visitors to Jeff's apartment—Lisa, Stella, and Doyle—are also still to be introduced. Also, while this opening sequence gestures toward the film's theme of voyeurism insofar as it establishes a view, it does not identify the look of the camera with that of any character. Instead, the film resolutely underlines both Jimmy Stewart's incapacity to see—as he is sleeping and turned away from the window—and the omniscience of the narration—in the opening of the blinds and in the itinerant camera. Indeed, we will have one full additional pan of the courtyard while Stewart's character, Jeff, still sleeps.

Rather than introduce characters or develop plot, this opening functions to lay out the geography of space and provide a sense of setting.



PLATE 1. *New Yorker* cover, 31 July 1954.
Drawing by Edna Eicke. © Condé Nast Publications

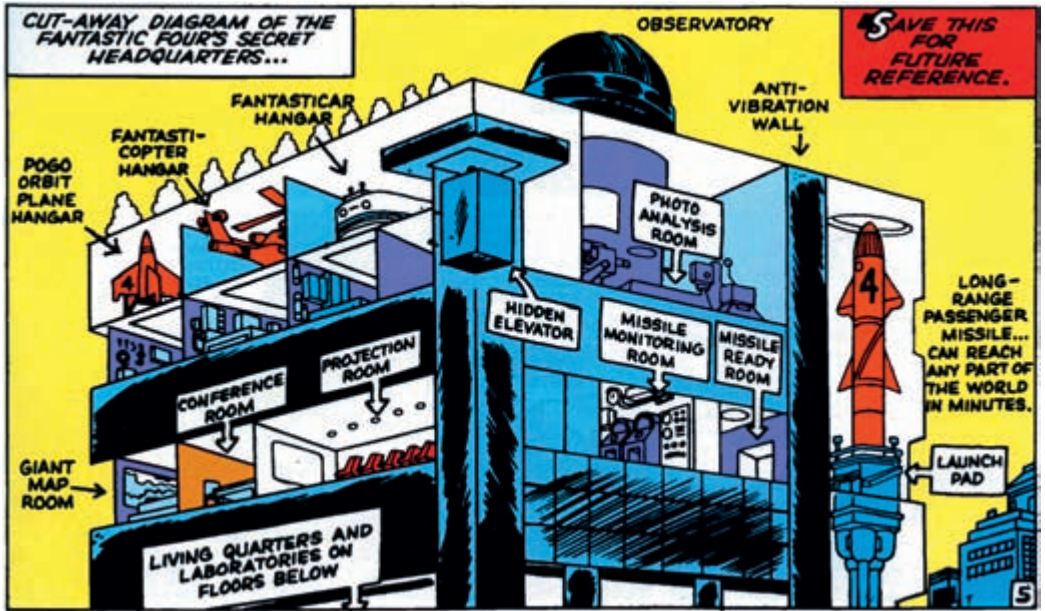


PLATE 2. The Fantastic Four hideaway.

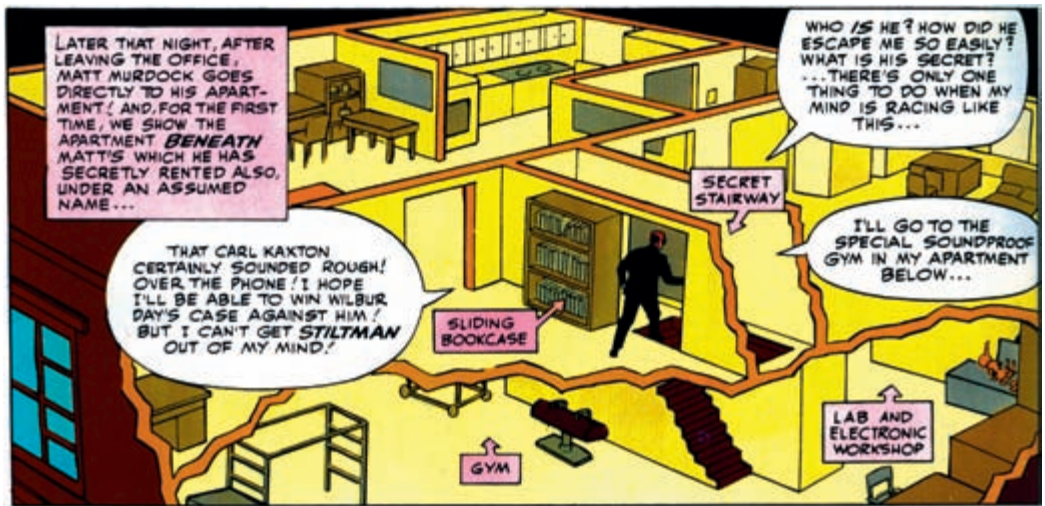


PLATE 3. Daredevil's secret lair.



PLATE 4. The bachelor pad in *Pillow Talk*.



PLATE 5. The bachelor pad redecorated in *Pillow Talk*.



PLATE 6. The bachelor pad in *That Funny Feeling*.



PLATE 7. The bachelor pad redecorated in *That Funny Feeling*.



PLATE 8. Eavesdropping in *That Funny Feeling*.



PLATE 9. The line dance on the terrace in *The Boys in the Band*.



PLATE 10. The party contained indoors in *The Boys in the Band*.



PLATE 11. Cramped quarters in *That Funny Feeling*.



PLATE 12. The luxury apartment downsized in *How to Marry a Millionaire*.



PLATE 13. The bohemian apartment in *Cactus Flower*.



PLATE 14. Igor enters Toni's apartment through an airshaft window in *Cactus Flower*.



PLATE 15. The “chic” career-girl apartment in *Designing Woman*.



PLATE 16. Hogan's "Centaur Apartments" in *Under the Yum Yum Tree*.



PLATE 17. A burlesque of marriage in *Under the Yum Yum Tree*.



PLATES 18.1 and 18.2. Victor and Corie versus Ethel and Paul
in *Barefoot in the Park*.

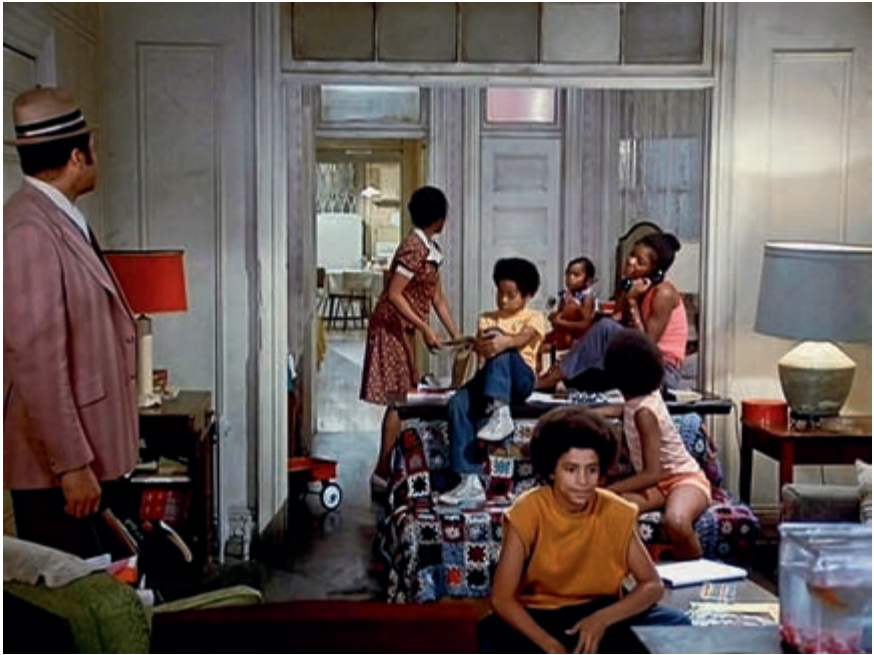




PLATE 19. Minnie seen through the peephole in *Rosemary's Baby*.



PLATE 20. Bachelor pad with kids in *For Love of Ivy*.



PLATES 21.1 and 21.2. Claudine's apartment, above, and Roop's, below, in *Claudine*.



In these few shots, we discover an urban domestic space. We know it is urban from the close proximity of buildings, from the dominance of apartments, from the brief glimpses of the street and bar. We know it is residential from architectural signs such as porches and balconies, and from domestic touches, such as flower pots, birdcages, and children. We see the proximity of this domestic space to public spaces—street, sidewalk, service entrance, bar. Without seeing many people at all, we nonetheless know that this setting has multiple users—tenants, delivery people, passers-by, children, and others—and multiple uses—sleep, work, play, gardening, and so forth.

In the courtyard arrangement, we see the spaces between buildings and their borders, consisting of gardens, walls, gates, and fences. That it is a back courtyard is significant. It is neither fully public nor fully private.¹ We see individual spaces (apartments, private balconies), shared public spaces (fire escapes, walkways, stairs), semiprivate spaces (interior hallways, fire escape balconies, apartment entryways) and spaces whose “ownership” is hard to establish (flower gardens, terraces, patios). We see built-to-purpose apartment buildings and conversions, side-by-side, with different styles of building, different building materials, different heights, differently shaped windows. We see traces of time and history—patched bricks, added fences, conversions, worn paint. And there is much we do not see. We do not see the front of any building, nor details of most interiors.

We recognize this as an American space and very likely as in New York. In particular, all those fire escapes, the crowded arrangement of buildings, the modest size of the apartments, the small gardens, and the rear courtyard all point to a Greenwich Village location. The Village itself is symbolic: a favored locale for Hollywood and dominant in the apartment plot, it instantly conjures a New York bohemian culture populated by artists, writers, intellectuals, homosexuals, cafes, bars, and bookstores. However, while this location signifies a specific locale, it also serves as both a microcosm of the city and a macrocosm of apartment living. It can be multiplied out to the city as a whole or divided into its parts. As Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol suggest, it provides “an opportunity to paint several types of fauna flourishing in Greenwich Village in particular and a big city in general. A sealed world inside that other sealed world represented by the City” (125). Beyond marking locale, the courtyard, the buildings, and the characters are all in some way emblematic, a “world.” This typicality is heightened by the fact that the courtyard is



2. *Rear Window* credits. 3. Aerial view of the Dakota, during credits of *Rosemary's Baby*.

a manufactured set, a Hollywood invention; and extends to the typification of most of the characters, the “fauna,” who are without name, but defined by some combination of their status (married, single), work (composer), and appearance (sexy, lonely).

Like the courtyard it represents, this famous credit sequence is also simultaneously unique and generic, a specific instance and one of a type (figures 2 and 3). Despite its immediate recognizability, numerous other films in the genre of the apartment plot begin in a similar fashion, with an omniscient narrator laying out a larger urban space before eventually entering one space, clearly marked as a microcosm of the city. Con-

sider, for instance, the opening of *Rosemary's Baby*, in which the camera slowly pans the Upper West Side in an aerial shot, arriving at the rooftop of the Dakota on West Seventy-second Street, before moving into the entranceway where Mia Farrow and John Cassavetes meet their new landlord. *How to Marry a Millionaire* offers aerial views of such landmarks as Rockefeller Center, Central Park, and the Queensboro Bridge before arriving at a sign marking the intersection of East Fifty-fifth Street and Sutton Place, the posh address of the apartment Lauren Bacall will sublet as a snare for rich men. *Bells Are Ringing* offers a series of dissolves of the city, then switches from aerial shots to ground-level shots, with particular attention to signs of urban renewal and construction, before entering the dilapidated Greenwich Village brownstone that serves as a live-work residence for Judy Holliday. *The Courtship of Eddie's Father* produces a curious box-shaped iris out, that opens from the center of the image, like a window, to move through several Technicolor skyline views before landing inside Glenn Ford's kitchen.

In a somewhat different mode, the opening song of Gordon Jenkins's vocal suite, *Manhattan Tower*, offers a first-person description of the narrator's view of his apartment building. The building, the narrator's "tower," is at once a unique bricks-and-mortar space and the realization of his fantasies of an imaginary urbanism:

It was raining the first time I saw my tower.
That is, the first time I saw it in reality.
In my mind, I'd seen it many times before —
Standing at the ocean,
Looking out a train window at night,
Even the structure I'd made with blocks as a
 child was this same tower,
that long ago.

Viewing the exterior of the apartment building as the concretization of his dreams of an apartment skyscraper, the narrator enters the apartment, which he renders "pure enchantment," and looks out the window:

I went over to the window and looked out at my beloved town.
The buildings were constant flames, bright and shining stronger
 than the rain.
And, on the street below, were the people who built that fire
 and kept it alive,
Seven million keepers of the flame!

Moving, in effect, from a low angle exterior shot to a high angle vantage from the apartment's window, the narrator links his dream tower to all the buildings he sees, each one an imagined space produced and "kept alive" by the people below, thus establishing his apartment as at once an idealized imaginary space and as a microcosm of the city as a whole.

Just as many apartment films begin with aerial shots or other mechanisms that emphasize the apartment's link to the larger city, many apartment films, similar to *Rear Window*, begin with an image of a window or enter the narrative through a window. The credits for *The Apartment*, for instance, focus on the nighttime exterior of a brownstone, our attention directed to the light in one apartment window. *Rope*, usually remembered as occurring strictly within its single set, actually begins with an exterior shot of a city street then pans left to enter the murderers' apartment window, just after the victim's scream. *Bell, Book and Candle* begins with a wintry street scene then tracks to the exterior of a shop window with a sign reading "Gillian Holyrod, African and Oceanic Primitive Art," before entering the window to examine the live-work space inhabited by Kim Novak's Holyrod.

Even the camera's arrival at the image of a sleeping resident in *Rear Window* reverberates throughout the apartment plot. For example, *An American in Paris* piles up tourist images of Paris before arriving at, first, the wrong window and, then, the correct window of Gene Kelly's voice-over narrator, who, sleeping, opens his eyes briefly, then rolls over, away from the camera's view. Similarly, the original credit sequence for the pilot of *I Love Lucy* features skyline views in miniature before entering, first, the wrong window and, then, the appropriate bedroom window, to show Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball sleeping (in twin beds, of course).

The opening of *Rear Window* is similar but not identical to these other credit sequences. It is, in some sense, a distilled version. Whereas these other films move from the very large (the city) to the very small (the apartment), *Rear Window* never acknowledges the larger urban context of the city through aerial views, but establishes a relatively small sphere—the courtyard—and stays within it. In addition, once these other films have situated the narrative inside a particular apartment, they do not return to the larger view. *Rear Window*, by contrast, will alternate consistently throughout the film between the interior of Jeff's apartment and the courtyard view, without leaving the premises or allowing the camera to enter inside the other individual apartments. Along with this, whereas most apartment films use the window as a point of entry for the camera

in the credit sequence, and often as a literal point of entry for characters, *Rear Window* will make the window and the act of looking through the window dominate the plot. This is not totally unique. Both *The Window* and *Pushover* are centrally organized around window voyeurism. Additionally, *The Window* revolves around a child who witnesses a murder through an apartment window, and climaxes with the murderer entering the witness' apartment to attack him. However, the persistence of voyeurism, combined with the rootedness of the plot in one set, are somewhat unique to *Rear Window*.

The chief distinguishing attribute of *Rear Window*'s credit sequence, however, may be that this sequence features the name Alfred Hitchcock, which appears at the end of the static shot and signals the beginning of the camera's movement. Therefore, this sequence, unlike those for *The Courtship of Eddie's Father* or *Rosemary's Baby*, despite their auteurist credentials, has been subject to deep and frequent critical analyses. Not surprisingly, most of the critical discourse around *Rear Window* celebrates it as an auteurist film with technical and thematic links to other Hitchcock works. In auteurist accounts, *Rear Window* stands as an exemplar of Hitchcock's manipulation of point of view and sound; it contains numerous Hitchcock motifs, including his famous cameos, his use of handbags and jewelry, and a fall from a high place; it is one of his single-set films, along with *Rope*, *Lifeboat* (1943), and *Dial M for Murder*. In its use of signature Hitchcock actors, it is one of the Jimmy Stewart films, along with *Rope*, *Vertigo* (1958), and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956); and one of the Grace Kelly films, sandwiched between *Dial M for Murder* and *To Catch a Thief* (1955) (Coon; M. Walker; Wood, *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*; Fawell, *Hitchcock's Rear Window*; Fawell, "Torturing Women and Mocking Men"; Weis, *The Silent Scream*; Rohmer and Chabrol).

Most notably, *Rear Window* has been dissected and debated as a film about voyeurism, in discussions which link the film to stylistic and thematic voyeurism in other Hitchcock films but which also claim the film as the consummate example of voyeurism. For many critics, the voyeurism represents a kind of mirroring, and the views in the courtyard are Jeff's dreams, his projection onto the world, "visual representations of Jeff's thoughts and fantasies," his "amorous fixation" (Fawell, "Torturing Women and Mocking Men," 102; Chabrol, 137). For Rohmer and Chabrol, the voyeurism produces a moral Christian allegory of knowledge; whereas, for Robin Wood, it has a therapeutic function. Reading the courtyard as Jeff's projections, critics tend to read the tenants as negative

doubles for Jeff and Lisa, representing various unhappy states of single-ness and of marriage.

A more dominant set of readings claims the film as “the very essence of cinema, which is *seeing, spectacle*,” “concerned with cinema itself, with its unique way of looking and perceiving,” “a brilliant essay on the cinema and on the nature of the cinematic experience” (Rohmer and Chabrol, 124; Sharff, 7; Stam and Pearson, 193). In one of the most influential readings of the film as a self-reflexive text, Robert Stam and Roberta Pearson claim that “the film performs the metalinguistic dismantling of the structures of scopophilia and identification operative in dominant cinema generally and in Hitchcock’s own films particularly, even while exploiting those very structures” (193). In their reading, the film “evokes the diverse ‘windows’ of the cinema: the cinema/lens of the camera and projector, the window in the projection booth, the eye as window, and film as ‘window on the world.’” Jeff stands in as a substitute director who “not only looks, but uses binoculars and telephoto lens to facilitate different set-ups and perspectives. He guides other spectators to look and frames their vision and interpretation” (195–96). In this reading, Jeff is both a stand-in for Hitchcock and for the film’s spectator, who is immobile and passive but who has the illusory power of seeing, and whose spectatorship can be compared to a dream or a mirror.²

In line with these arguments about voyeurism, and critiquing the film’s voyeurism from a feminist perspective, Laura Mulvey famously positions the film as a paradigmatic instance of the “male gaze” in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” According to Mulvey, Hitchcock personifies the two broad tendencies of patriarchal cinema. These are distinct but overlapping responses to the castration anxiety evoked by the image of woman: on the one hand, sadistic voyeurism, which serves to lessen the threat of castration by demystifying and punishing the woman, and on the other, fetishistic scopophilia, which serves to overvalue the image of woman to make it reassuring rather than threatening. In *Rear Window*, according to Mulvey, Hitchcock “takes scopophilic eroticism as the subject of the film . . . the look is central to the plot, oscillating between voyeurism and fetishistic fascination” (“Visual Pleasure,” 36). For Mulvey and other feminists, the moment at which Lisa crosses over to Thorwald’s room is particularly significant: “When she crosses the barrier between his room and the block opposite, their relationship is reborn erotically. He does not merely watch her through his lens, a distant meaningful image, he also sees her as a guilty intruder

exposed by a dangerous man threatening her with punishment, and thus finally saves her" (37). In this reading, Jeff's voyeurism and the concomitant point-of-view shots are particularly directed at images of women — the Bathing Beauties, Miss Torso — and also entail a sadistic component, insofar as Lisa is most endangered when she becomes the object of Jeff's gaze.

Mulvey's reading of *Rear Window* has been complicated by those critics who argue that rather than simply representing masculine power, the male gaze in the film exposes masculinity in crisis. Rather than a controlling gaze, critics have argued, Jeff's gaze is passive and immobilized; he is unable to accede to his appropriate masculine role as husband. In this amplification of Mulvey's ideas, the film can either be seen as critiquing masculine attitudes toward women, masculine voyeurism, and masculine violence; or it can be seen as shoring up masculinity by, first, showing it as castrated, weak, or impotent and then by restoring and reasserting masculine strength (Fawell, *Hitchcock's Rear Window*; Fawell, "Torturing Women and Mocking Men"; Stam and Pearson). Whereas many critics redress Mulvey by focusing on Jeff's agency or lack thereof, Tania Modleski's influential reading challenges Mulvey by emphasizing Hitchcock's strong identification and fascination with femininity. According to Modleski, the film emphasizes female mobility, freedom, and power through Lisa's portrayal; and through Jeff's portrayal, it places the spectator in a classically "feminine" position that subverts masculine authority.

While accounts of the film's self-reflexivity or links to patriarchal ideologies move away from some of the thematic and moral concerns of early auteurist readings, they do not escape the logic of auteurism. Whether discussing Hitchcockian self-reflexivity or debating Hitchcock's feminist credentials, the film is usually treated as a unique text whose primary affiliations are to other Hitchcock films. In particular, auteurist readings tend to resist genre analysis. While the auteur can become a specialized instance of the genre, as in the John Ford western or the Busby Berkeley musical, in Hitchcock's case especially the author's name seems to overtake any generic consideration. William Rothman presents one of the most insistent auteurist readings when he argues that Hitchcock is essentially a genre unto himself: "The 'Hitchcock thriller,' as we might call it, is a genre whose features cannot even be characterized, apart from relating the role the figure of the author plays within it" (36). For Rothman, everything that the Hitchcock signature

comprises—visual style, themes, motifs, and so forth—not only marks a Hitchcock film *as* a Hitchcock film but also simultaneously excludes the film from genre categories. Somewhat more attentive to the limitations of auteurist analysis, James Naremore questions why Hitchcock is so little mentioned in studies of film noir, noting that when Hitchcock is linked to noir, he is always treated as “*sui generis* or a ‘strange case’” (263). At the same time, however, Naremore describes features of the Hitchcock canon that “make his films appear slightly alien to the *noir* universe” and ultimately argues that Hitchcock transcends the genre of noir even as he can be seen as “central to the larger, more broadly cultural history of *noir*” (266, 276). In a similarly exceptionalist vein, Lesley Brill places Hitchcock within the genre of romance but explores “the Hitchcock romance” as a special case, a genre unto itself. Stanley Cavell aligns one Hitchcock film, *North by Northwest* (1959), with the comedy of remarriage, though he still treats the Hitchcock text as exceptional—not only because it is a thriller and not a comedy but also, and perhaps more importantly, because the Hitchcock film shows the male character, rather than the woman, being “reborn.” Thus, the Hitchcock film, though available to be classified among genres as various as thrillers, noir, romance, and comedies of remarriage, tends on the whole to be viewed as, above all else, a Hitchcock film and not a genre film.

Robin Wood takes up the issue of genre with respect to *Rear Window*, in particular. Apologizing for possibly overreading the film, he writes, “This may strike the reader as an absurdly inflated and pretentious way of talking about a film which is, on the surface, a light comedy thriller”; but, he argues, the film doesn’t fit generic conventions: “As a ‘light comedy thriller’ it is often found vaguely unsatisfactory because it ‘leaves a nasty taste.’” However, he argues, “when we emancipate ourselves from a response exclusively on the ‘comedy thriller’ level, the images . . . take on great power,” and “it is impossible not to associate them” with other Hitchcock images (*Hitchcock’s Films Revisited*, 106). Viewing genre criticism as something to be “emancipated” from, Wood makes the case for finding more in *Rear Window* via auteurism than through genre analysis. In line with Wood’s claim, *Rear Window* is rarely if ever associated with other genre films, such as the “light comedy thrillers” Wood mentions or even thrillers generally, let alone the apartment films I’ve mentioned.

Not surprisingly then virtually no critic besides James Sanders, in *Celuloid Skyline: New York and the Movies*, has acknowledged *Rear Window*’s links to other apartment films, except for Hitchcock’s own *Rope* and

Dial M for Murder. Even then, the specificity of an apartment set seems less important than the use predominantly of a single set, so that critics link those films to *Lifeboat* as well. With respect to *Rear Window*, most critics discuss the setting as mainly an expression of the film's auteurist themes. Despite the fact that the set was based on numerous photos of Greenwich Village courtyards and sound recordings of Village street life (Curtis, 29–30), most critics treat the film as offering a subjective point of view within a realist style, or as “artificial realism” (White, “Eternal Vigilance in *Rear Window*,” 120). Wood, for instance, reads the set as an imaginary or psychological space: “The Hitchcock hero typically lives in a small, enclosed world of his own fabrication, at once a projection and a prison, artificial and unrealistic, into which the ‘real’ chaos erupts” (*Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, 106). For John Belton, in line with Stam and Pearson, the set serves the film's self-reflexivity. Discussing the two chief spaces of the film—the apartment complex across the way and the interior of Jeff's apartment—Belton argues, “Both spaces invoke notions of the theater and the cinema and use them as metaphors through which spectators are asked to read the action that takes place within these spaces” (“The Space of *Rear Window*,” 1122). Thus, rather than view the setting as a microcosm of the city or as specifically and interestingly an apartment setting, critics read the set as a metaphor, whether for Jeff's fantasies or for the cinema.

A few critics have discussed the social dimension of the urban setting, but still largely as metaphor. Most of these readings view the setting as a negative emblem of modernity. John Fawell, for example, claims, “The set in *Rear Window*, though it does have realist touches, seems to exist more to express an idea: the isolation and loneliness of urban life” (*Hitchcock's Rear Window*, 115). This reading extends back to Chabrol's initial review of the film, in which he refers to the apartments as “rabbit hutches” (137); it also informs Wood's claim that the tenants are “semi-live puppets enclosed in little boxes: yet puppets whose frustrations and desperations can drive them to murder or suicide” (*Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, 107). Viewing the apartments as “rabbit hutches” or isolated boxes, most readings of the film tend to see it as a critique of modern urban alienation. Scott Curtis, for example, views the slightly chaotic crowded courtyard as representing distinct disassociated spaces: “Even though they share a common space—the courtyard—it is just as fragmented and inviolate as the apartments; its maze of different levels and fences discourages anyone from entering another's area . . . The set design, then, expresses the theme of isolation and alienation that runs throughout the

film” (29). Similarly emphasizing alienation and isolation, George Toles proffers a Marxist reading in which the windows reveal actions similar to factory work or office labor. In Toles’s account, the so-called rabbit hutches reveal patterns of routinized existence, hidden under a veneer of diversity, in which only the violence of murder upsets the carefully regimented routines of life under capitalism: “Though the view from one’s window may offer a daily scene that is at most points unvarying, even slight discrepancies warrant careful scrutiny . . . Thus, murder opens the possibility of establishing a play of vital difference within the cellblock of leisure where the tenants continually re-enact the same handful of defining gestures. Experience under capitalism is so devalued that Hitchcock can present a series of wholly reified behaviors as a convincing embodiment of urban diversity” (227). Rather than painting a picture of urban diversity, then, according to these readings, Hitchcock proffers a critique of modernity as urban alienation, isolation, and containment.

By contrast, a few writers view the setting for *Rear Window* in terms of urbanist discourse. Armond White, for instance, emphasizes the film’s social dimension in its efforts “to expose and then explore the tension between private and public, interior and exterior, the individual and the community” (120). Against the idea of the spaces as isolated or inviolate, White notes that “the backyard and terrace set design, featuring a slivered view of street traffic . . . is both closed and open, contained yet suggesting the uncontainable” (121–22). Even more to the point, Sanders calls the film “virtually a primer in urbanism” (212). Explicitly invoking Jane Jacobs’s distinction between “window privacy” and “true urban privacy,” Sanders argues that “the courtyard . . . is a place of perceived privacy—a subtle yet enormously valuable quality in an urban space. Real privacy comes from actual isolation, from placing oneself behind closed doors and solid walls. *Perceived* privacy grows from the sense that, while others *might* be looking, it is reasonable to act as if they are not” (233). In his account, Jeff’s voyeurism needs to be understood as an *aberrant* intrusion on privacy, since he would not be looking into windows if he hadn’t broken his leg and since he seems only recently to have discovered the view, despite obviously living in the apartment for some time.

White and Sanders both approach the kind of understanding of *Rear Window* that I’d like to explore—in viewing the film’s urban space not as alienating or isolating but as porous, dense, and permeable; and as navigating the tension between privacy and community, loneliness and density, contact and entanglement that are key to a philosophy of urbanism.

White's observations, though, are a relatively small part of his larger argument about Hitchcock's relation to 1950s politics and his influence on more "political" directors, such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Francis Ford Coppola, and Brian De Palma. Sanders, by contrast, discusses the setting more fully. He places the film in the larger context of Hollywood's representations of apartments, not as a genre but as a subset of New York movies, or one of a broad spectrum of films that focus attention on architecture and space. My interests clearly intersect with his, but are somewhat more attentive to issues of genre and plot.

In what follows, my goal is not simply to contradict or fully abandon any of these readings. Indeed, I'd be hard pressed to dismantle the logic of self-reflexivity or voyeurism, and I cannot deny the Hitchcockian elements in the film. Rather, I'd like to offer a different perspective, a view not unlike the vantage of *Rear Window*, to offer a somewhat less obvious but not at all extraordinary view of the film. Skirting the more obvious portals of auteurism and voyeurism, I read the film not as distinctive in its self-reflexivity or as contained within an auteurist vision, but as a rich example of the apartment plot, one informed and shaped by the auteur, certainly, but in which auteurism isn't determining. My reading looks closely at the film and also references Cornell Woolrich's original story, to suggest the kinship that both the film and the story have with other instances of the apartment plot and to draw out key thematic and formal elements of the genre.

The Neighborhood

If, as I have argued, the opening of *Rear Window* lays out a locale that is emblematic, a microcosm of the city, what kind of locale is it? It is a courtyard, created by the juxtaposition of the sides and backs of six separate buildings. As commentators point out, the courtyard is not equally available to all residents of those buildings, but has lines of demarcation and boundaries. Some buildings are behind walls; not all have exits into the courtyard; some are fenced. Nonetheless, the film encourages us to view this courtyard and these residents in toto, as sharing something, if only their availability to Jeff's gaze.

In his phone conversation with his editor, Gunnison, Jeff refers to his "neighborhood." But what is his neighborhood? Broadly, Greenwich Village. However, this larger space is never shown or even mentioned in the

film, though it is implied. Given that Jeff is watching Thorwald and his wife while discussing his neighborhood—in a scene much discussed as an instance of “mirroring” or “projection” on Jeff’s part—we are encouraged to read his “neighborhood” as this courtyard, the sphere of neighbors with whom he has become intimate while homebound. The courtyard is a microcosm of New York and further of the Village, but it is also its own entity. In her discussion of neighborhoods, Jacobs distinguishes between districts and street neighborhoods. Whereas Greenwich Village may be a district, a medium-sized area within a city that mediates “between the politically powerless, street neighborhoods, and the inherently powerful city as a whole” (121), the courtyard is akin to a street neighborhood or a subset of it. Street neighborhoods are small streets or groups of streets within which people can live, run errands, work, and play. At their best, street neighborhoods provide a sense of safety, a sense of belonging, and familiarity.

The courtyard is similar to a street neighborhood insofar as it functions as a way of grouping residents, and provides a sense of smallness within the large city. As Sanders notes, the city comprises innumerable parcels, or “neighborhoods”:

Cities are often celebrated for their sheer extent of population. Less noticed is the means they have devised for organizing their residents, so that each person has a clear place among the millions. This is more than a matter of ensuring that everyone can receive his or her mail. It is a question of providing urbanistic subdivisions—neighborhoods, blocks, buildings, and so forth—that give each inhabitant a comprehensible sense of the enlarging environment, intermediate levels of community that mediate between the single home and the immensity of the overall city. (197)

The district, in Jacobs’s terms, mediates between the street and the city as a whole; subdivisions, in Sanders’s terms, mediate between the individual house or apartment and the larger city.³ As an intermediate community, the courtyard provides a sense of belonging and smallness within the larger entities of the Village and of the city. Due to Jeff’s immobility, his ability to navigate between the large and the small has been diminished so that, within the space and time of the movie, the courtyard is his neighborhood. The courtyard differs from a street, of course, in that the courtyard and our view of it comprise private and semiprivate spaces and in that fully public spaces—such as the service entrance—are not very populated. Nonetheless, the courtyard serves, to all intents and

purposes, as a street in the film, showing the comings and goings of characters and allowing not only residents but also “strangers” such as Doyle, Miss Lonelyhearts’s date, and delivery men, to pass through. In effect, the film situates aspects of external street life inside the complex “neighborhood” of the courtyard. It does so by transforming Jeff into a people watcher. Or, to put it another way, Jeff’s immobility transforms his rear window view into his “neighborhood.”

As Jacobs discusses, streets need both “users” and “watchers” to be safe; and watchers require something to watch. Thus, Jacobs argues, streets need bars, restaurants, shops, and other attractions that will draw people at various times of the day and night. The courtyard lacks these amenities, of course, and would not ordinarily, on the ground level, reward a watcher very much. However, while the courtyard would not normally catch Jeff’s attention, his boredom and immobility have made it interesting to him; and his vantage allows him to watch not only the ground-level space of the courtyard but also the goings-on in the apartments above.

As a watcher, Jeff provides an important role in policing the neighborhood. Safety, according to Jacobs, requires that streets “have eyes on them as continuously as possible”: “Safety on the streets by surveillance and mutual policing of one another sounds grim, but in real life it is not grim. The safety of the street works best, most casually, and with least frequent taint of hostility or suspicion precisely where people are using and enjoying the city streets voluntarily and are least conscious, normally, that they are policing” (36). Taking this description of street surveillance as a lead, I would argue that while Jeff’s gaze might be seen to invade privacy, it also serves the community by making secret and dangerous activities public. Through his eyes, the courtyard is transformed into something very much like the “ballet of the good city sidewalk” (50) that I discussed in the introduction. Through Jeff’s windows, we see movement, change, comings and goings. Because Jeff is so attentive to the routine he witnesses, he can see that the courtyard has multiple users, including a mix of residents and strangers. Despite the fact that he fails to observe the murder or some key clues in the case, he is attuned enough to variations in the routine, such as Mrs. Thorwald’s scream and her absence, that lead him to draw other watchers and eventually the police to the neighborhood.

Moreover, Jeff’s watching, from the domestic space of his apartment and into diverse public, private, and semiprivate spaces—the courtyard,

the buildings, individual apartments—reminds us of how complicated notions of privacy are in an urban setting. Jacobs, as Elissa Rosenberg points out, reimagines the city from a domestic perspective, acknowledging “the mutually supportive role of the private residential domain and the public life in the street . . . the fundamental interconnectedness of the domestic and public realms” (139). In this sense, the film can be seen to highlight the porousness of urban life, the fluidity of boundaries between public and private. In other words, in fixing Jeff to his rear window spot, and identifying his gaze with the camera, the film approaches the city from a domestic perspective that breaks down distinctions between public and private.

Jeff announces his identification with this “neighborhood” in his conversation with Gunnison, partly as a social-class distinction. When Jeff complains that he will end up married to a nagging wife, Gunnison reminds him that “wives don’t nag anymore. They discuss.” Jeff counters, “Maybe in the high-rent district they discuss. In my neighborhood, they still nag.” Both the fear of marriage and the class discourse are mapped onto his relationship with Lisa, whom he later describes as “too sophisticated”: “She belongs to that rarified atmosphere of Park Avenue. You know, expensive restaurants, literary cocktail parties.” Jeff identifies Lisa with her Upper East Side neighborhood, where we learn she lives, on East Sixty-third Street. He declaims, “If she was only ordinary.” Of course, what Jeff wants isn’t “ordinary” at all—he wants an adventuress—and his neighbors and neighborhood are, by certain lights, far from ordinary, too.

Here, Jeff produces a theory of what sociologists refer to as “residential differentiation,” the idea that similar people live close to each other; or, in other words, that residential areas differ from one another and are internally homogenous (Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 108–24). In Jeff’s view, residential differentiation is, to a certain extent, a class distinction. By “ordinary,” then, Jeff partly means “not rich.” In his categorization of apartments, John Hancock lists three different kinds of “high-rent” apartments, any of which might appear in Lisa’s Park Avenue neighborhood. These are “palatial” apartments (those with their own private entrance), “luxury” apartments (generally high-rise) and “owner occupied” apartments (overlapping with the other two previous categories). Against these, Hancock notes that “by far the largest number of multi-family dwellings” are “efficiency” apartments, compact units of one to five rooms in small walk-up buildings several stories high (160–

71). Unlike the Park Avenue world of expansive “high rent” apartments, Jeff’s courtyard neighborhood consists of small efficiency apartments—studios, one bedrooms, railroad flats, and Jeff’s own two-room apartment (in an “old fashioned stoop house,” according to the Woolrich story [33]).

Within a modest income level, the tenants in Jeff’s courtyard represent the lower rung on what Constance Perrin refers to as “the ladder of life: from renter to owner.” Renters, who tend to be less socially esteemed than owners, tend to be young, single, or in small households (Hancock, 157–58; Schaefer, 45–58). In *Rear Window*, many but not all are single—Miss Lonelyhearts, the Composer, Miss Torso, the Bathing Beauties, and Jeff. Married tenants include the Thorwalds, the middle-aged Childless Couple, and the Newlyweds, as well as the only family with children, who live in the seemingly larger and possibly more expensive apartment with the private balcony. As numerous critics have pointed out, this family has a negligible presence in the film. Missing from this “ordinary” array of tenants are nonwhite tenants, the elderly, and—surprising for the Village location—gay tenants.

In whom it excludes as much as whom it includes, *Rear Window* presents a representative cross section of the typical tenants of the apartment plot, if not those of a typical 1950s Village courtyard. Like *Rear Window*, the apartment plot is a genre heavily populated by bachelors, single women, and young marrieds. Across the genre, nonwhite characters are rarely represented. (*A Raisin in the Sun*, as I will discuss in chapter 5, is more a tenement film than an apartment plot.) There are few children, rarely more than one per apartment (e.g., *The Bad Seed*, *The Courtship of Eddie’s Father*, *The Window*), and few elderly people (in both *Apartment for Peggy* and *The More the Merrier*, the older gentleman is housed with a young couple).

Along with the lack of wealth “ordinary,” in Jeff’s terms, signals bohemian and unconventional. To a large degree, the tenants consist of artists—Miss Torso, who is a dancer; the Composer; the Sculptress; and Jeff himself, who is a photographer. Many of these tenants are home during the day—rehearsing, composing, sculpting. Their apartments function as combined live-work spaces and show traces of work—the Composer’s piano; the Sculptress’s work-in-progress, titled “Hunger”; Jeff’s cameras, negatives, flashbulbs, lenses, and photographs. The mix of tenants who are men and women, single and married, combined with the fact that most of them work at home, further breaks down traditional dis-

tinctions between private and public spheres, family and work. The film presents a striking contrast to the stereotypical representation of the suburbs, in which hordes of men with briefcases are seen getting into their cars in the driveway and heading to work, leaving their wives behind, waving goodbye.

In relation to the bohemianism of the neighborhood, Thorwald is something of a square peg. Stam and Pearson identify his work as a jewelry salesman as being related to the culture of “glamour and artifice” and thus related to the broadly conceived “entertainment industry” represented by the other tenants (195). I think, by contrast, that the mundane quality of Thorwald’s work, its true ordinariness, denotes his difference. Further, Thorwald’s adherence to a different model of family and work marks him as somewhat different from the other tenants and always already potentially out of place. Unlike the tenants who work at home, Thorwald carries work home in his sample case but goes on sales calls outside the home. Prior to the murder, we and Jeff witness a pattern in which Thorwald, not unlike the suburban stereotype, leaves his bedridden, homebound wife to go to work, then comes home for the “nagging.” The space of the apartment is similarly bifurcated and gendered, as the wife is enclosed within the bedroom and Thorwald moves in and out of her room, taking custody of the living room for himself.

Both Jeff’s larger neighborhood of Greenwich Village and Lisa’s Upper East Side residence are prominent within the apartment plot. In fact, virtually all New York apartment films are set in Manhattan (never the outer boroughs), clustering principally in the Village, the Upper East Side, and the Upper West Side. The assumptions about neighborhood, class, and character voiced in *Rear Window* tend to play out across the genre. In these films, as in *Rear Window*, Greenwich Village signifies bohemian culture, relative poverty, and often youth. Examples of Greenwich Village apartments include those with writers, intellectuals, and artists, such as *My Sister Eileen* (dancer, writer), *Scarlet Street* (painter), *It Should Happen to You* (documentary filmmaker), *Two for the Seesaw* (dancer), *Artists and Models* (comic book writers), *Wait Until Dark* (photographer); or those living a bohemian lifestyle, such as *Bell, Book and Candle* (witches) and *Lover Come Back* and *Boys in the Band* (implicit and explicit homosexuals, respectively). In these films, the Upper East Side is relatively more fashionable and wealthy than the Upper West Side. But, both the Upper East Side and Upper West Side feature characters who operate within

commercial artistic or intellectual professions, such as advertising and publishing (*Pillow Talk*, *Lover Come Back*, *The Seven Year Itch*), or characters who aspire to wealth and class, such as the husbands in *Diary of a Mad Housewife* and *Rosemary's Baby* (both of whom have ties to theater) or the gold-digging single women in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *How to Marry a Millionaire* (escort, models).

If other parts of the city—Queens, Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, Harlem, and so on—are not much represented in the apartment plot, they are implicitly signified in the figure of secondary characters. In this film, both Stella and Doyle seem to live somewhere else, neither in the Village nor the Upper East Side. But where? Despite the film's attentiveness to neighborhood and its mapping of identity onto neighborhood, their addresses are never referenced. In her discussion of character actors, Patricia White notes how often supporting characters embody marginal identities meant to support “the imbricated ideologies of heterosexual romance and white American hegemony. They prop up a very particular representational order” (93). White's very compelling notion is that character actors not only serve as the repository for sexual and ethnic difference in classical Hollywood cinema, but also support the dominant by providing a measure of difference against which the dominant can assert itself. Thus, it is not merely the case that queer encoded characters are relegated to minor roles, but that the dominant requires reinforcement from these marginal identities; therefore, minor roles are necessarily rife with queer encoded characters who serve to buttress the main character's heterosexuality (see also Doty). Here, we could read Stella in terms of a queer discourse: as White notes, Thelma Ritter, like Eve Arden, is one of many female character actresses whose sardonic persona has made her a favorite for lesbian viewers. More to the point for my argument, however, is Ritter's thick Brooklyn accent, which signifies not only ethnicity and class but also place.⁴ This place, Brooklyn, signals a certain kind of authenticity at the same time that it relegates her to the margins. Just as the “queer” characters are rarely explicitly identified as such, Stella's residence is never mentioned but is nonetheless transparent. As a Brooklyn native, Stella serves to “prop up” a “representational order” in which Manhattan is the *representational* dominant and the boroughs are the marginalized communities. At the same time, Stella's ethnic difference distracts us from the absence of racial difference in the film: a place, Brooklyn, serves as the marginal, thus effectively ignoring

the existence of more truly marginal characters within the apartment plot, namely African American characters who are almost entirely absent from the genre.

These representational choices serve to remind us that despite the illusory differences between Manhattan neighborhoods, both the Village and the Upper East Side are privileged within the cultural imaginary, dependent upon yet holding sway over more marginal city neighborhoods and identities. Consequently, the residential differentiation produced within the apartment plot—distinguishing between Lisa’s Upper East Side and Jeff’s Village, say—highlights surface distinctions at the level of neighborhood that mask deeper class and race affiliations. Whatever their true class or race makeup, the dominant neighborhoods of the apartment plot are largely represented as white and middle class; conversely, neighborhoods not of these categories are largely absent from the urban imaginary of the films (Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 108–24).

Of course, Jeff is wrong about Lisa, or wrong to think that her sophistication blocks her from fitting into his world. As Stella advises, “People with sense belong wherever they’re put.” Lisa supports Stella’s view when she queries, “What is so different about it here from over there? Or any place, that one person couldn’t live in both places just as easily?” Part of Lisa’s transformation in Jeff’s eyes will occur not just through her transformation into spectacle or victim or adventuress, but through her entrance into the courtyard and into the “ordinary” apartment across the way. And, often, the apartment plot involves just such “class” crossings, of Greenwich Village and Park Avenue types, in which the so-to-speak ordinary values of the bohemian will transform and educate the more conservative or seemingly sophisticated type. Think of *Barefoot in the Park*, *Two for the Seesaw*, *Any Wednesday*, and *Bells Are Ringing*. (*An American in Paris* transposes this trope into a Parisian context that nonetheless crosses bohemian apartment culture with upper-class apartment culture, in the figure of the painter and the patron.)

It is a seeming contradiction of the apartment plot that characters are identified strongly by place or dwelling, but that one’s place is figured as constantly changing. In *Rear Window*, neither the buildings nor the residents are permanent. As I mentioned, the buildings show signs of conversion and change—worn paint, added fences, and so on. In Woolrich’s story, signs of urban renewal figure prominently. The narrator distinguishes Thorwald’s building from the rest in the courtyard as a built-

to-purpose “flat building”: “Unlike all the rest, it had been constructed originally as such, not just cut up into furnished rooms” (2). However, the flat building is being “modernized”: “Instead of clearing the whole building while the work was going on, they were doing it a flat at a time, in order to lose as little rental income as possible. Of the six rearward flats it offered to view, the topmost one had already been completed, but not yet rented. They were working on the fifth-floor one now, disturbing the peace of everyone all up and down the ‘inside’ of the block with their hammering and sawing” (3). In the story, the renovation of Thorwald’s building becomes key to the mystery, as Thorwald hides his wife’s body in the still-wet cement floor in the apartment upstairs from his. More applicable to the genre as whole, the renovation also marks the courtyard as having a past, a history. This sense of history often figures in the apartment plot, as characters discover signs of conversion, like stairs that used to connect parts of a house (*Seven Year Itch*, *If a Man Answers*) or secret passageways between apartments that used to connect rooms (*Rosemary’s Baby*, *Butterflies Are Free*).

The sense of change also figures in the awareness of transience in the apartment plot. *Rear Window* is bracketed by scenes that emphasize the impermanence of apartment life, as the Newlyweds move in at the start of the movie and Thorwald’s apartment is shown being repainted for new tenants at the end. The trope of new tenants moving into an apartment appears in numerous apartment films, including *Butterflies Are Free*, *How to Marry a Millionaire*, *My Sister Eileen*, *It Should Happen to You*, *Apartment for Peggy*, *The Odd Couple*, *Barefoot in the Park*, and *Rosemary’s Baby*. Signs of a tenant vacating an apartment occur at the conclusion of *Raisin in the Sun*, *The Odd Couple*, *The Apartment*, *Two for the Seesaw*, and *Come Blow Your Horn*. This trope underscores the degree to which the apartment motivates action in these films, and also the way in which space and time are mutually imbricated in forging actions and identity.

The Urban “Gaze”

If, as I have suggested, *Rear Window* presents a neighborhood and Jeff functions as a “watcher” within that neighborhood, then, we need to consider the precise nature of his watching and its links to broader trends in the apartment plot. Whereas most readings of *Rear Window* describe

Jeff's voyeurism as prurient "peeping" or cinematic spectatorship—readings certainly warranted by the film—I would suggest that there are alternate readings.

First, if Jeff's gaze does function as an allegory of spectatorship, it may be more akin to television viewing than film spectatorship (see also Fawell, *Hitchcock's Rear Window*, 130). Woolrich allows this when he has Jeff comment, "It was like television. I could see to the other end of my call . . . by a direct channel of vision from window to window" (26). Critics have noted the various "aspect ratios" of the windows as reinforcing a cinematic allegory; however, at least some of these windows share a televisual ratio as well. Moreover, Jeff's watching is not absorbed, like a cinema spectator, but distracted, like that of a TV viewer. He watches out of boredom, not selection. He, in effect, changes channels frequently, as he switches his gaze from one apartment to the next. He sits in a recliner, the chair most proto-typically represented in TV ads of the 1950s. As Lynn Spigel explains: "For men, television viewing was most often represented in terms of a posture of repose. Men were usually shown to be sprawled out on easy chairs as they watched the set. Remote controls allowed the father to watch in undisturbed passive comfort . . . Relaxation was condoned for men because it served a revitalizing function, preparing them for the struggles of the workaday world" (93–94). However, Jeff's repose can also be seen as feminizing because this posture inverts normative stereotypes of male activity and female passivity and in his case provides a substitute for the workaday world, not a respite from it. In addition, Jeff's watching can be seen as both televisual and feminizing insofar as he watches during the day and watches what are, in effect, soap operas—stories of lonely women, broken marriages, and romance—rather than more stereotypically masculine genres.

In recognizing the televisual aspects of Jeff's voyeurism, I support readings that view Jeff as feminized or impotent. However, we can reverse the direction of this reading if we remember that TV aimed to provide viewers with a "window" onto the world much like the one Jeff has looking onto his courtyard. As Spigel discusses, early TV advertising often placed TV sets in rooms with "panoramic window views" and "used the illusion of the outside world as part of their promotional rhetoric." Moreover, early TV programs provided a "privileged opening onto the public sphere" by "incorporating the illusion of outdoor spaces that could be seen through large picture windows" (104–5). In this sense, *Rear Window* is simultaneously like television spectatorship, insofar as Jeff

“watches” his neighbors; and like a television show, in that *we* see Jeff’s apartment and also the space outside it, framed by a picture window. It is further like the ideal “outside space” pictured on TV—a somewhat privileged, private urban view that suburban viewers, at least, might access primarily through TV.

Rather than regard Jeff’s view as primarily a metaphor for TV, we can see it as the “authentic” or original view against which TV measures itself. In other words, instead of being like TV watching or like film spectatorship, Jeff’s watching is at base an urban gaze. Linking his gaze to urban modernity, Dana Brand characterizes Jeffries as a flâneur. Her claim seems off the mark in certain respects: the stereotypical flâneur strolls or observes the passing crowd from a panoramic vantage point whereas Jeff is immobilized, his observations confined to a small coterie of familiar neighbors. Nonetheless, her analysis points to aspects of Jeff’s voyeurism that mark it as particularly urban and as linked to processes of detection as well as erotics. Idle, observant and initially detached, Jeff reads and categorizes his neighbors as typical members of the crowd, defined by easily readable signs (of work, sexuality, status). Inevitably, however, the flâneur, attuned to patterns and potentially bored by too much regularity, seeks anomalies—changes in the landscape, variations in the crowd. Here, as in Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Man of the Crowd,” Brand argues, Jeff takes on the role of detective.

Jeff’s watching bears some similarity to both flânerie and detection, especially since he is associated with the technology of detection and observation par excellence, the camera. However, though both the flâneur and the detective can be seen as extraordinarily observant, Jeff’s gaze—in both its similarity to TV viewing and in its rootedness in an apartment setting—seems more typical of domestic urbanism and its attendant voyeurism. In a gloss on Honoré de Balzac, Sharon Marcus identifies voyeurism as endemic to apartment life: “Apartment houses destroy private life by making each apartment simultaneously function as an observatory, theater, and mirror in which the residents of one apartment spy on those of another, providing unwitting spectacles for each other, and see their own lives reflected or inverted in their neighbors” (*Apartment Stories*, 57). In this sense, the mirroring that critics note in *Rear Window* need not be psychoanalyzed or allegorized; rather, it can be seen as an urban practice in which people observe each other with varying degrees of investment. In the opening of Woolrich’s story, the narrator describes the knowledge gained from his observation of the apartments

around him: “I didn’t know their names. I’d never heard their voices. I didn’t even know them by sight, strictly speaking, for their faces were too small to fill in with identifiable features at that distance. Yet I could have constructed a timetable of their comings and goings, their daily habits and activities. They were the rear window dwellers around me” (1). Here, Woolrich details a form of passive spying. As an apartment dweller, the narrator gains intimate but not specific knowledge of his neighbors, neighbors whose identities are partial or bifurcated, visual but not audible, and who retain their anonymity even while disclosing their secrets.

While Woolrich emphasizes the lack of audible sound, Mary Cantwell, whom I quoted in the introduction, identifies her urban experience as one of eavesdropping, in which sound, rather than images, permeate her apartment and in which she participates as an active listener, “ears forever to the wall or out the window” (179). Navigating between these two modes of anonymous urban prying, Hitchcock places great emphasis upon both the signs and the sounds of the courtyard, with special attention to their separateness. When critics write about the sound in *Rear Window*, they invariably comment on the dissociation between sound and image in the film. In her book-length analysis of sound in Hitchcock films, for instance, Elisabeth Weis notes that “Hitchcock was always a proponent of asynchronous sound” (*The Silent Scream*, 109). In her reading of *Rear Window*, Weis emphasizes the way in which Hitchcock provides a subjective point of view within a realist style: “An ideal way to manipulate sound without distorting it is to dissociate it from its source . . . less than one-tenth of the time that we are looking at Jeff’s neighbors does the sound emanate from the particular window under surveillance” (108–9). John Fawell, similarly, notes the use of off-screen sound in the film and attributes it to Hitchcock as auteur: “Hitchcock’s soundtrack contributes to the unity of the film by aurally tying together the neighbors even when they are visually separated from one another, by introducing the sound of one apartment into the image of another” (*Hitchcock’s Rear Window*, 28).

In light of *Rear Window*’s soundtrack, then, we need to consider Jeff as not only a voyeur but also as an eavesdropper. In another context, Weis suggests that if voyeurism is inherently cinematic, so too is eavesdropping, at least since the advent of sound. As with voyeurism, eavesdropping is endemic to cinema—we “overhear” characters as much as we observe them. Weis notes that eavesdropping entails sonic parallels to

the erotic pleasure of voyeurism and scopophilia. Moreover, she comments, just as with the voyeur, there are people who prefer overhearing to interacting with people. Eavesdropping can produce different kinds of knowledge and raises moral and philosophical issues related to questions of intrusion and privacy: “Movie eavesdropping . . . can foreground, as does voyeurism, the way in which cinema seems to invade privacy” (Weis, “Eavesdropping,” 80; see also Weis and Thom).

Despite the attention to issues of privacy and voyeurism in *Rear Window*, critics have not tended to categorize Jeff as an eavesdropper. This is likely because the dialogue in *Rear Window* is often indistinct or muffled so that the information Jeff gains about his neighbors is primarily visual. But I would suggest that it is precisely the separation of sound and image that makes Jeff an eavesdropper as well as a voyeur and that sound cues—not least Mrs. Thorwald’s off-screen scream—play a key role in the film. Moreover, to the degree that we are implicated in Jeff’s prying, we are sonically as well as visually engaged by the film.

As with the establishing shots of the courtyard which orient our eyes to the view, the film affords us an “establishing soundscape” or *précis* of sounds. In the first two pans of the courtyard, while our eyes take in the courtyard, our ears hear primarily the musical score with only a few diegetic sounds—the cat’s meow stands out. At the start of the third pan, however, the jazzy Franz Waxman instrumental that plays over the credits stops, and our attention shifts to other sounds. Initially, this music seems to function as nondiegetic music in its placement and sound quality, but it is reoriented as diegetic when we cut from the image of the thermometer in Jeff’s apartment, where he still sleeps, to a shot of the Composer. The music, listed on the cue sheet as “Rear Window Prelude and Radio,” slides into the sound of a male radio announcer: “Men, are you over 40? When you wake up in the morning do you feel tired and rundown? Do you have that listless feeling?” Annoyed, the Composer switches the dial to a different station and we hear, softly, the beginnings of Waxman’s “Rhumba” and then, more loudly and from another space, the bell of an alarm clock. The bell leads our gaze to the balcony where, amusingly, the Childless Couple awaken from sleeping head to toe. “Rhumba” continues and gets louder as we witness Miss Torso put on her pink bandeau and “exercise” while getting breakfast. As the camera pans left to show a container truck pass the alley, we hear the sounds of children playing, then see the children, in bathing suits and soaking wet, splashing in the spray from the back of the truck. As “Rhumba” con-

tinues, the children's voices are mixed with a bird's "tweet" as the bird's owner removes the cover from its cage. We return to the image of Jeff sleeping and examine the signs of his job as a photographer and of his accident, all the while still listening to "Rhumba" (Sullivan).

Critics have commented on the significance of the radio announcer's remarks, as part of the larger commentary on masculine inadequacy that shapes the beginning of the film. Few, however, have noted how significant it is that the first distinct voice we hear on the soundtrack is that of a radio announcer. As a technology that separates speaker and listener, radio is the eavesdropping technology par excellence. Unlike classical cinema, radio acknowledges its listener and speaks in a direct address. But it hails the listener from an elsewhere, remaining a free-floating voice, disconnected from the body of the speaker, penetrating the body of the hearer. The hearer may actively choose to listen or may accidentally overhear. One listener in this scene, the Composer, actively listens and changes the station when he does not like what he hears. Others in the scene, like Miss Torso and Jeff, are enveloped by the sound and seemingly interact with it but do not clearly listen. The sound of the radio is distinct from but overlaps with the sounds of the alarm and the children, both of which are initially off-screen before being matched with an image. The radio, along with these other sounds, emphasizes the sonic landscape and defines it as a landscape in which sound and source have some autonomy.⁵ However, the separation of sound and source reminds us that if voyeurism or looking is an activity one chooses, eavesdropping or hearing is often unavoidable.

Just as the opening shots of *Rear Window* reverberate throughout the genre of the apartment plot, these opening sounds do too. They are echoed most explicitly in films that use a radio announcer at the beginning of the narrative. These include *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*, in which a radio announcer murmurs, "Wake up Manhattan. Come out of that warm cozy dream . . . what you need is a nice cup of coffee" as we arrive inside Glenn Ford's kitchen, to a close-up of his coffee pot; we then hear the warning, "Look out! Don't burn those delicate sensuous hands!" as Ford burns his hands on the pot and eventually turns off the radio, annoyed at the announcer. *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* also begins with the voice of a radio announcer broadcasting a heat wave. In a somewhat more complicated instance, *Bells Are Ringing* incorporates an advertisement for the answering service, Susanswerphone—serving "New

York's smart East Side." It seems to be a TV ad, in that it has images and dialogue as well as a voice-over. However, it becomes "radio," as one of the girls from the ad crosses the "real" diegetic space of Susanswerphone headquarters while the voice-over continues playing.

Of course, the second distinct voice we hear in *Rear Window* is Jeff's, as he answers the phone. Like the radio, the phone separates voice from body. Thus, both Jeff and his caller, Gunnison, are in effect disembodied, connected yet separate. Like radio, the telephone is a private technology in which a voice in one space can be heard and made public in another space through eavesdropping, overhearing, wiretapping and more. As film spectators, we "eavesdrop" on both ends of the conversation and hear both voices.

The telephone enables the speaker to be anonymous, a voice only, or to disguise himself merely by changing his voice or name. Woolrich makes a point of this telephonic anonymity, and links it to urban anonymity when his narrator calls Thorwald: "I didn't try to disguise my own voice. After all, he'd never see me and I'd never see him" (26). In the apartment plot, telephones frequently generate plots involving mistaken identity, disguise, and anonymity. In *Pillow Talk*, Doris Day and Rock Hudson share a party line. She hates him but has never met him. He discovers her identity and disguises himself by changing his voice and accent. In *That Funny Feeling*, Sandra Dee and Bobby Darin know each other as employer and employee and only by telephone, until she "borrows" his apartment. He knows she is lying about her residence—since it is his apartment—but he can't match her voice to her face, because she uses a false Japanese accent in her role as cleaning lady. In *If a Man Answers* Dee makes Darin jealous by having her mother call and hang up, leading Darin to assume she is having an affair. In *Any Wednesday*, Jason Robards conceals his affair with Jane Fonda by having her call his wife every week pretending to be the telephone operator in various cities, so that he seems to be away on business. Eventually, after meeting Fonda, his wife "hears" the operator's voice in her head and makes the connection. In *Wait Until Dark*, the blind Audrey Hepburn realizes that her ally is her enemy when she discovers that the telephone number she has been calling, thinking it is her friend's hotel room, is that of a phone booth across the street. *Bells Are Ringing* features Judy Holliday as a girl working for an answering service who adopts various persona for her callers—a little old lady, an Italian restaurateur, Santa Claus, and so forth. She decides to intervene in the lives

of her callers, appearing to each of them as a mysterious helper, without acknowledging her identity.

In each of these films, the moment of the “reveal,” when a false or secret identity is discovered, happens when one party closes the gap between a disembodied voice and its source. In *Rear Window*, the telephone also plays a crucial role in the reveal. First, Jeff calls Thorwald. To set up the fake blackmail scenario, he muffles his voice, hides in the dark, and says, “Meet me at the Albert Hotel . . . to settle the estate of your late wife.” Thorwald initially falls for the gag, but eventually discovers the caller’s true identity. After Lisa is caught in Thorwald’s apartment she screams, “Jeff!” as she looks across the courtyard at Jeff’s window. Then, when the police arrive, Thorwald sees her signal Jeff with the wedding ring. Minutes later, Jeff’s phone rings—Jeff speaks, but no one answers. He knows it is Thorwald. Anonymous until now, able to send notes, make calls, and hide in his apartment, Jeff is now recognized and located. Thorwald makes a connection between a voice, a name, and, in this instance, not so much a face as an apartment.

This plot plays on the dual status of the telephone as a technology that allows people to be separate and one that brings them together. On the one hand, as Jean Gottmann points out, the telephone allows people located at a distance from one another to communicate, and thus could contribute to isolation, containment, and suburban sprawl. On the other hand, the telephone functions to create density because using it fosters the growth of urban “transactional centers.” The telephone, according to Gottmann, makes spaces *fungible*—interchangeable—but also able to be joined. Accordingly, “help to the lonely must be recognized as a great social virtue of the telephone . . . the use of the telephone relieves some aspects of isolation, which in recent times have been characteristic of certain large, dense urban centers. In fact, the telephone can be described as first aid as much for individuals located in high-rise towers . . . as it is for those on isolated farms” (Gottmann, “Megalopolis and Antipolis,” 308). Recall that Lisa is caught by Thorwald in the first place because Jeff, who is supposed to call her when Thorwald approaches, is on the phone calling the police, to stop Miss Lonelyhearts’s suicide. The telephone therefore functions to heighten the separation between voice and body that characterizes urban living, but also enables people to reconnect, to attach sound and image; it simultaneously allows distance between people and allows them to traverse it.

Rear Window Ethics

Just as the radio and the telephone produce an indeterminate sonic landscape that both separates and connects people, the apartment itself serves simultaneously to separate and to bring people together. Etymologically, the word *apartment* suggests both “to separate” and “to be part of”: to apportion, to divide, to share. Those critics who view the apartment complex in *Rear Window* as a negative emblem of modern urban alienation are somewhat off the mark, I think, in viewing the apartments as “rabbit hutches,” or “boxes.” In characterizing them in this way, they recognize the division and separation apartments afford, without fully acknowledging that each apartment is part of a larger whole and that apartments and apartment dwellers must, by necessity, share. Lefebvre offers a useful gloss on the apartment building in which he, on the one hand, characterizes apartments as “stack after stack of ‘boxes for living in’” but also recognizes the relationship between “boxes”: “The spectators-cum-tenants grasp the relationship between part and whole directly; furthermore they recognize themselves in that relationship” (*The Production of Space*, 98).

Rather than isolated units, the apartments in *Rear Window* are separate spaces within a “neighborhood.” They are not contained or inaccessible, but porous and permeable. This permeability is expressed in the way sound penetrates the space, but also in the geography of the courtyard. Against the claim that the courtyard is “fragmented and inviolate” or a maze, consider how easily characters are able to traverse the various spaces there. It is no accident, perhaps, that the first pan of the courtyard begins with the image of a cat who moves easily from one level to another: the movement of both cat and camera establishes a motif of movement through the courtyard. Both Thorwald and the Sculptress exit their apartments and move into the courtyard. Thorwald tends his flowers, which are in an indeterminate space, between building B and building C, in a walkway assigned to no individual apartment. The Sculptress goes outside to sunbathe, crosses over to building A to talk to a neighbor and also leans over her stairs to address Thorwald. Stella and Lisa exit the basement of Jeff’s building, climb the same cement stairs the cat climbed, then climb a fire escape ladder on building E, and finally hop a fence to examine Thorwald’s flowers. Lisa enters Thor-

wald's building twice — once, through the front door, when she delivers the anonymous note, and later, through the window, when she searches Thorwald's apartment. At the film's climax, Thorwald enters Jeff's apartment easily, through the front door.

In *Rear Window*, as in other apartment films, doors are represented as permeable. Rather than barriers, they function as what a mid-century architectural theorist refers to as “locks,” a passage or transition between two zones (Chermayeff and Alexander, 218). Due to his immobility, perhaps, Jeff's door is always open. Stella, Lisa, and Doyle each enter without knocking or ringing a buzzer, and appear, like mirages. The open door is a frequent motif in apartment films. In *Bell, Book and Candle*, Jimmy Stewart returns home to find his door open and his upstairs neighbor, Elsa Lanchester, at his desk. In *Barefoot in the Park*, Jane Fonda is awakened in the middle of the night to find her upstairs neighbor, Charles Boyer, entering her apartment. In *My Sister Eileen*, the door to the flat shared by Betty Garret and sister Janet Leigh is always open to drop-ins, including their landlord and neighbor. Near the end of the film, the entire Brazilian Navy pushes through the door, and into the tiny apartment, doing a conga. In *Under the Yum Yum Tree* the landlord, Jack Lemmon, repeatedly breaks into Carol Lynley's apartment using his master key.⁶ *Bells Are Ringing* makes a joke of the trope of the unlocked door: it shows Judy Holliday searching her purse for the appropriate picklock to break into Dean Martin's apartment, when the already-unlocked door simply swings open. As a corollary, locked doors tend to signal danger — as when Audrey Hepburn finds herself locked into her apartment in *Wait Until Dark* or when a locked door prevents Mia Farrow from escaping when Satanists steal her baby in *Rosemary's Baby*.

Even more than doors, windows become points of entry. In *Rear Window*, of course, Lisa leaps across the fire escape to enter Thorwald's window (figure 4) and Jeff is thrown out of his.⁷ Characters also enter and exit windows in *The Moon Is Blue*, *Barefoot in the Park* (figure 5), *Artists and Models*, *Dial M for Murder*, and many other apartment films. In *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Audrey Hepburn escapes the date in her apartment by exiting her window and entering George Peppard's above (figure 6). In *Cactus Flower*, Goldie Hawn is rescued from her suicide attempt by her next-door neighbor, who breaks and enters her window after finding her door locked. In *The Window* the young boy, Bobby Driscoll, plays upstairs in a condemned building. To get to where his playmates are, on the ground floor of the same condemned building, he exits through the



4. Lisa enters Thorwald's apartment window in *Rear Window*.
5. The Bratters wave to their neighbor through skylight window in *Barefoot in the Park*.

roof, crosses two roofs to his apartment building, climbs down the fire escape, and passes a neighbor's apartment. He then enters his own apartment through the window, before exiting his front door, to go down three flights of internal stairs and outside to enter the front of the condemned building.

Like doors, windows can function as barriers, blocking air, sound, or sun. But windows most often function in multiple and contradictory ways—as fenestration or barrier, to transmit or block air, to permit light



6. Holly peers through the window in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

to pass through or diffuse it, to frame a view or create privacy. In *Rear Window*, while the window provides an opening and frame for Jeff's voyeurism, it also opens him up to the gaze of others. In Woolrich's story, Thorwald's gaze pans the courtyard three times on the night of the murder. The narrator describes his own gaze as distracted: "My eyes may have rested on those windows at times, during the day, but my thoughts had been elsewhere" (5). By contrast, he views Thorwald's look at the courtyard as purposeful and worried. In any case, the narrator is both a spectator and the object of the gaze. After he reveals himself to Thorwald on the phone ("I kept giving away samples of my voice") he realizes that Thorwald looks at him, "a glance with a purpose" (31–32). In the film, similarly, the window provides a two-way look (Toles, 237): Thorwald looks at Jeff and discovers his identity. As Sanders notes, "It is possible to look back, in rough but fair reciprocity" (233). Not only Thorwald, but also Lisa and Stella, look at Jeff and communicate with him through the window. And don't forget that flash in a window during the first pan of the courtyard. Is there another photographer, watching Jeff?

In addition to serving as points of entry and transmission, the windows also make connections between apartments by allowing us to see simultaneity among the actions in separate units. For Lefebvre, simultaneity is key to the urban. It relates, above all, to the possibility of encounter. In film, simultaneity almost always implies an eventual connection, most notably in the structure of classical parallel editing in which simulta-

neous action in two separate spheres will eventually draw actors together into a single space, as in a chase or rescue. In *Rear Window* separate activities may seem to mark the actors in each apartment as isolated and alienated, but their simultaneous performance creates relationships and sets the stage for encounters. Simultaneity is expressed in various ways in the film. It is emphasized through the sounds that link disparate spaces; through crosscutting and the mobile camera, both of which allow us to move among different apartments; and through framing that often leads us to watch actions in more than one space at a time. The *mise-en-scène* contributes to this, as it provides a partitioned space in which different actions are parceled out so that, for instance, we see Thorwald in one room and his wife in another. Or, we move between Miss Lonelyhearts's suicide attempt and Lisa's entry into Thorwald's flat. In an active frame, our eye is drawn to activities in all corners, including the sliver of street where we see passers-by, deliveries, trucks, and children playing.

Numerous apartment films frame the action to emphasize simultaneity and encounter. Like *Rear Window*, *Pushover* frames its action showing the exterior of an apartment building, as detectives stake out bad girl Kim Novak in one apartment but can also see good girl Dorothy Malone in the apartment next door (figures 7.1 and 7.2). *Pillow Talk* famously shows Doris Day and Rock Hudson in a split-screen telephone scene in which each takes a bath, their toes perfectly matched to "touch" at the center divide, as well as showing other simultaneous phone conversations through split screen (figure 8). *Any Wednesday* also uses a split screen to show triangulated telephone conversations among the husband, wife, and mistress. Both *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Courtship of Eddie's Father* use open doors to show actions in two apartments simultaneously. In the former, a pried-open door reveals a secret passage between the apartment of Mia Farrow and the people who have taken her baby. In the latter, we see Glenn Ford in one apartment, on the telephone, trying to make a date with Shirley Jones across the hall, as matchmaker Ronnie Howard stands in the hallway between, beaming.

In *Rear Window*, not just simultaneity but also synchronicity is important. In the original story, the narrator solves the mystery when he notices "an odd little bit of synchronization" (Woolrich, 25) in which the landlord and a prospective tenant on the sixth floor stand in the exact same spot in the kitchen apartment as Thorwald on the fourth floor. "Something about it had disturbed me," he narrates. "There was some slight flaw or hitch to mar its smoothness" (25). This flaw is a slight



7.1 and 7.2. Window views in *Pushover*.

difference in height that leads the narrator to uncover that Thorwald has buried his wife in the sixth floor apartment's new cement. In the film, Jeff has a similar moment in which he recognizes a shift in height of flowers in the flower garden by overlapping a photograph to show a "hitch" between the present garden and its recent photo. Synchronicity also plays an important role in *Miss Lonelyhearts's* saga, as the sound of the Composer's music enters her apartment at the crucial moment when

8. Split screen in *Pillow Talk*.

she is about to swallow the pills and, miraculously, stops her. In another bit of synchronicity, as Miss Lonelyhearts stands still in her window, listening, Lisa stands directly above her, in Thorwald's apartment, also listening (figure 9).

Synchronicity and simultaneity produce spatial connections, and underscore the way in which space and time are interconnected. In Lefebvre's terms, they can be linked to the form of the urban, "particular expressions and *moments* which can more or less overcome the fragmentary division of tasks" (*Right to the City*, 147). These moments break routinization and animate the urban; they relate to movement, change, and improvisation. The theatricality of *Rear Window* has been remarked upon, both in relation to the "stage" setting and also to such scenes as when Miss Lonelyhearts acts out her "date" (Belton, "The Space of *Rear Window*"). But less noticed is the strong sense of play and improvisation in the film. The key sequence in which Lisa enters Thorwald's apartment demonstrates the importance of play and improvisation: Realizing that Thorwald may have buried something in the flower bed, Lisa and Stella decide to play detective and go downstairs and dig. In order to get Thorwald out of the way, Jeff improvises a fake blackmail scheme. He makes, in effect, a prank call to Thorwald. When Stella and Lisa fail to



9. Synchronicity in *Rear Window*.

find any evidence in the flowerbed, Lisa spontaneously decides to break into Thorwald's apartment. When Thorwald returns, Jeff makes another fake phone call in order to get the police to Thorwald's apartment. Lisa improvises and pretends to be an upstairs neighbor who just happened to notice Thorwald's door open. When the police arrive, she continues her masquerade but playfully wiggles her ring finger to show Jeff the evidence. Throughout this sequence, the Composer and his friends have a jam session in which they improvise variations on "Lisa," the song that both Lisa and Miss Lonelyhearts (but supposedly not Hitchcock) admire.

As I suggested, masquerade and role-playing are key to the plots of many apartment films, especially among romantic comedies. In *That Funny Feeling* and *Any Wednesday*, the characters can assume a false identity because their face is unknown. Other films involve more elaborate performances and forms of bricolage. In *Pillow Talk*, Rock Hudson's character, Brad, spontaneously disguises himself as the Texan Rex Stetson by imitating and assuming his date's southern accent. In *Lover Come Back*, Rock Hudson adopts the persona of a Greenwich Village scientist on impulse, simply by putting on his lab coat. In *Bells Are Ringing*, Judy Holliday quickly realizes that she will have to adopt a beatnik persona to address the tormented Method Actor played by Frank Gorshin, so she

purchases the clothes off the back of a man passing by. Each of these spontaneous performances is transformative and leads to an encounter between otherwise disparate people.

By refiguring the courtyard as a porous and permeable space that brings people together and by emphasizing the role of improvisation and play, I am not suggesting that the various characters are not separate, lonely, and potentially alienated. However, the courtyard does not function as a site of alienation in any simple way. Rather, the courtyard represents a particular form of urban community that navigates carefully between separation and togetherness, loneliness and privacy, contact and entanglement. Along with Sanders, I would argue that most writers who view the courtyard as particularly alienating are viewing it with an inappropriate expectation of privacy, one that does not fit the urban setting. Set in a space that is both domestic and urban, the film plays on the divide between real and perceived privacy. Domestic urbanism occupies an indeterminate space, which is neither fully public nor fully private, but occupies what might be called public privacy. In public privacy, one functions as an individual, yet relies upon the community for help and assistance; one acts as if alone, yet is aware of the presence and possible intrusion of others. As Jacobs argues, urban privacy allows and depends upon public contact—conversation, acquaintanceships—without entanglements or unwanted intrusions. Public privacy has the potential to be transformed into social space, the ideal form of which is “encounter, assembly, simultaneity” (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 101).

In *Rear Window*, when the Childless Couple’s dog is found dead, the wife delivers what many take to be a stinging indictment of the courtyard: “You don’t know the meaning of the word ‘neighbors.’ Neighbors like each other, speak to each other, care if anybody lives or dies. But none of any of you do!” However, as viewers, we see that she is wrong. Most of the neighbors do care. The Newlyweds raise their shade. Miss Torso and the Sculptress come outside. The guests at the Composer’s party all spill out of his apartment to see what is going on. Miss Lonelyhearts places the dog in its basket as its owner comes out on her balcony. For the first time in the film, we get closer views of the neighbors’ faces. We see signs of emotion and concern on the faces of the Newlywed Wife, Miss Torso, and Miss Lonelyhearts, as well as of Jeff and Lisa. Later, these residents will emerge again, in response to Jeff’s scream, when Thorwald attacks him.

Only Thorwald fails to respond to the crisis of the dead dog. See—

ing the light of his cigarette in the dark apartment, Jeff recognizes that his failure to show concern marks him as guilty. This is not Thorwald's only social failure. Early in the film, we see the Sculptress exchange a "good morning" with a woman in building A. She then attempts to chat with Thorwald about his flowers: "You're giving them too much water." Thorwald's rude response, "Why don't you shut up?" is striking because it is the first time in the film we see conflict between apartments, rather than internal to characters or inside a single dwelling. It betrays a lack of civility and manners, and an inability on Thorwald's part to navigate between privacy and entanglement, to maintain his distance while still allowing contact. Thorwald will eventually suffer a real invasion of his privacy—not just "window privacy" but "the privacy of having reasonable control over who shall make inroads on your time and when" (Jacobs, 59). His question to Jeff "What do you want from me?" is an oddly pitiful cry of despair. While it could be a question directed at a blackmailer about payment, it registers as the question of a man who wishes to be left alone, to not have anyone tie or ensnare him.

Thorwald seems to view Jeff's actions, like the Sculptress's comment, as meddling. The apartment plot often concerns itself with the ethics of meddling. Sometimes, as in *Rosemary's Baby*, the concern of neighbors is intrusive and even dangerous. Often, though, meddling turns out to serve to bring people together. In *Bells Are Ringing*, for instance, Judy Holliday's meddling solves the personal and professional problems of numerous characters and creates a new feeling of community. In *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*, Ronnie Howard functions as matchmaker for his father and next-door neighbor. In *Rear Window*, similarly, Jeff's "meddling," his insistence on worrying about Mrs. Thorwald, not only solves the murder but also leads to new configurations and connections among the characters. At film's end, not only are Lisa and Jeff together but Miss Lonelyhearts and the Composer are together in his apartment, having met each other when Jeff fell out of the window.

Conclusion

If, then, *Rear Window* is an exemplary Hitchcock film, or an outstanding film about spectatorship, it also participates in the broader cultural history of imagining the urban. It speaks from a particular historical moment in which the meanings of urban living were being renovated or

renewed. *Rear Window* circulates in the context of numerous apartment plots, including not only those I have referenced here but plays, comics, short stories, record albums, and more. That *Rear Window* and those myriad other texts share so much—in terms of form, aesthetic, narrative, and theme—suggests how deeply engaged it is with contemporary discourses about urban living. Without acknowledging the film's ties to other contemporary representations of apartment living, one might not recognize its urbanism or historicity. Viewed solely as a Hitchcock film, *Rear Window* may be exceptional. From a different perspective, however, *Rear Window* represents an archetypal but not incomparable apartment plot.

Reading *Rear Window* in the context of the apartment plot, my goal has not been to claim direct influences. Indeed, many of the films I mention follow and are possibly influenced by *Rear Window*. Rather, by placing Hitchcock's film in the generic framework of the apartment plot I have tried to show resonances and connections that transcend authorship. These resonances suggest how strongly setting and place influence and affect action. Further, in showing the way in which aspects of *Rear Window* reverberate throughout the genre, I have tried to draw out features of the genre that speak to a particular philosophy of urbanism. Against auteurist readings of the film's setting as a metaphor or projection, I have described it as an animated urban neighborhood, one that is porous, dense, and permeable. Against views of the film as bemoaning the alienation and isolation of urban life, I have claimed that it navigates tensions between public and private, work and home, privacy and community, loneliness and density, contact and entanglement—tensions that are specific to the domestic urban setting. Through its representation of one courtyard neighborhood, *Rear Window* figures domestic urbanism as a site of possibility. The film represents aspects of everyday life infused with the possibilities of the social. It imagines the urban as a space open to play and improvisation, in which synchronicity and simultaneity charge and animate daily life, in which space is permeable and porous and thus available to encounter and assembly, and in which individuals can function simultaneously as private individuals and as part of a larger community.



2

“WE LIKE OUR APARTMENT”

The Playboy Indoors

“Yes, yes, that would be lovely,” she said to the invitation for a drink in his newly air-conditioned apartment.

“You *would*?”

“I’d love it,” she cried. “To see what kind of prints you have on your wall. Your record collection. Your clothes hanging in the closet. These things are so expressive of personality, don’t you think? To really know a man. To *understand*.”

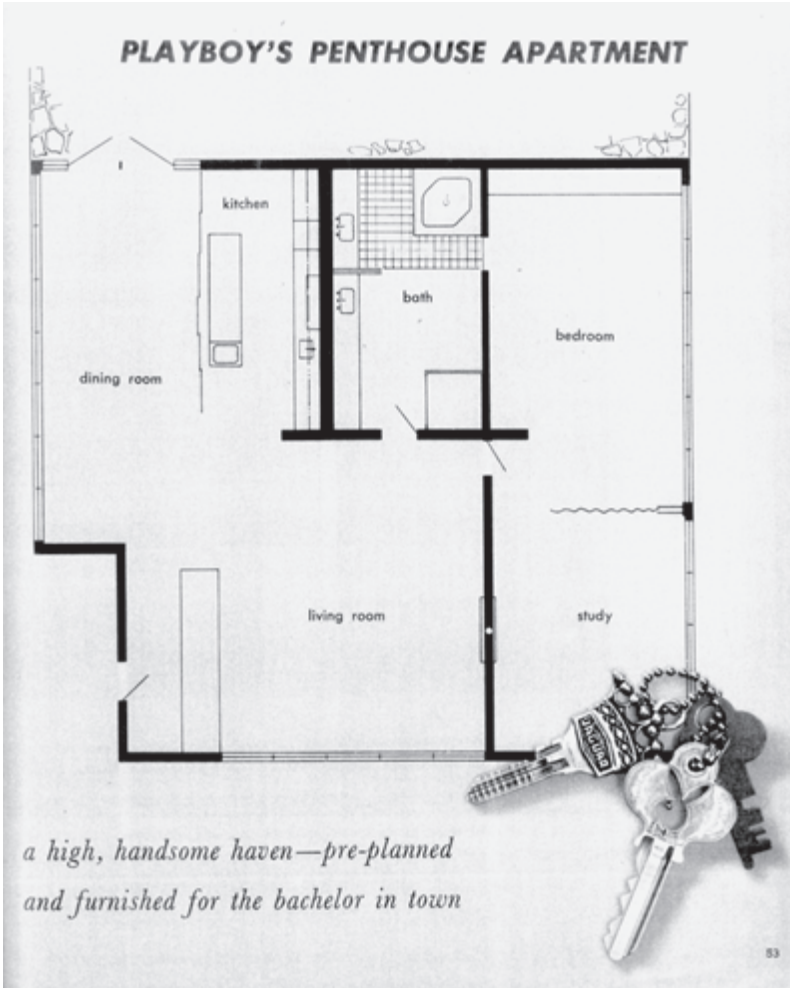
—HERBERT GOLD, “The Not Nice Guy”

A man’s home is not only his castle, it is or should be, the outward reflection of his inner self—a comfortable, livable, and yet exciting expression of the person he is and the life he leads. But the overwhelming percentage of homes are furnished by women.

What of the bachelor and his need for a place to call his own?

—“*Playboy’s* Penthouse Apartment,” October 1956

As suggested in the two quotes above the figure of the bachelor, more than any other person, is associated with the apartment or, more aptly, with the bachelor pad, which is inherently an apartment. The bachelor pad is “expressive of personality,” “the outward reflection of his inner self,” and “to really know a man. To *understand*,” is to see his apartment, his record collection, his paintings. Rather than an apartment that happens to be occupied by a single man, the bachelor pad, in the cul-



10. Frontispiece for “*Playboy’s Penthouse Apartment*,” October 1956.

tural imaginary, differs in kind from other apartments: it produces and is produced by the condition of bachelorhood. In particular, in mid-twentieth-century American popular discourse, the bachelor pad produces the bachelor as playboy; simultaneously, the figure of the playboy produces the space of the bachelor pad.

When we think of the mid-century playboy, inevitably we picture him in a bachelor pad. Consider, for example, the bachelor pad in Peyton Reed’s retro film *Down With Love* (2003). In the film, Ewan McGregor’s

playboy Catcher Block inhabits the quintessential bachelor pad—sunken living room with tiled stairs and floor, nubby beige textured walls, minimalist modern furniture in a mix of masculine earth tones with occasional splashes of blue and red, expressionist and cubist modern art, an enormous skylight, and dark wood-paneled walls. More than a glamorous high-rise apartment, indicative of wealth, this space functions as a high-tech lair for seducing women, with handy switches that variously operate the hi-fi, dim the lights, move wooden shutters to uncover a fabulous urban view, open a hidden door to reveal a well-stocked and well-lit bar, and most tellingly convert a curved sofa into a bed.

A virtual remake of a Rock&Doris movie and a parodic primer on the mid-century apartment plot, the art direction and set design of *Down With Love* mimic the style of numerous bachelor apartment plots. In particular, Block's apartment is reminiscent of Rock Hudson's in *Pillow Talk*. As Steven Cohan notes in *Masked Men: Masculinity and Movies in the Fifties*, Hudson's character, Brad Allen, lives in the perfect "fantasy playpen" (265). His walk-up apartment contains all the features of the stereotypical bachelor pad: numerous modern paintings hung densely on the wall; contrasting textures with one exposed red brick wall and others covered in a nubby beige fabric; a fireplace; an earthy color scheme with dusty reds, brown, and beige punctuated with a few bright red cushions. The apartment flaunts a piano, which marks the conflation of work and sex, as Brad is a songwriter but primarily uses the piano to seduce women (inserting each woman's name into lyrics—"You're my inspiration, NAME HERE"—like a vaudeville comedian inserting local material). Most hilariously, the apartment displays the playboy's technologized domination and control via a system of electronic switches that turn down the lights, turn on the phonograph, lock the door, and open a sofa bed.

These two apartments are immediately readable as bachelor pads, backdrops for seduction; and, through their placement in a bachelor pad, we read Catcher Block and Brad Allen as not just bachelors but as successful playboys. Their apartments have the unmistakable connotative codes of apartment design that speak "playboy": modern art, modern furniture, a mix of rich textures and earthy colors, open spaces for easy flow, a bar, and high-tech entertainment technologies. The mise-en-scène of these apartments serves as a shorthand to link these spaces to a playboy lifestyle of easy access to women, parties, leisure activities, and financial success.

The image of the bachelor pad signals a very particular urban fantasy

or philosophy of urbanism tied to sexuality and masculine ideals. Both the connotative codes of a playboy lifestyle and the attendant philosophy of playboy urbanism come to the fore in mid-twentieth-century America, primarily through the new publication *Playboy* magazine. In what follows, I describe *Playboy*'s imagining of the bachelor pad and apartment living as a key mid-twentieth-century discourse on the meaning of apartment living that informs the apartment plot. First, the bachelor pad reflects a particular philosophy of urbanism that links the urban with sophistication and seduction pitted against the suburban, which is associated with marriage and emasculation. Second, the concept of the bachelor pad maps identity and action onto a particular space with a specific design aesthetic. The bachelor pad thus foregrounds the space and mise-en-scène of the apartment as producing certain kinds of narratives, involving sex and romance. In addition, the discourse in *Playboy* underscores the many contradictions that define the bachelor apartment. On the one hand, the bachelor pad is marked as avowedly masculine; on the other, it requires the man to take on stereotypically feminine interests in consumption, decorating, hosting, and cooking. The bachelor pad is determinedly heterosexual but vulnerable to queer influences. It functions as a fantasy space or mirror, into which the average male can see his idealized self reflected, but it also functions as a closet, where the average male may conceal an identity or disclose another one. The bachelor pad seemingly intersects with ideologies of containment, as it situates the single man's identity and lifestyle in the home, but it troubles the idea of containment by envisioning the urban home as a public, social, porous, and permeable space.

The *Playboy* Philosophy

In its inaugural issue, in December 1953, *Playboy* magazine defines its readership as not only masculine but also interestingly as apartment dwellers. It first differentiates itself from women's or family magazines: “If you're somebody's sister, wife, or mother-in-law and picked us up by mistake, please pass us along to the man in your life and get back to your *Ladies Home Companion*.” But the magazine also asserts its difference from other men's magazines that “spend all their time out of doors.” Rather than an outdoorsy masculinity that might escape the confines of suburbia and the office through fishing, hunting, or other outdoor sports,

Playboy opts from the start to define its masculine ideal in terms of urban domesticity: “We don’t mind telling you in advance — we plan on spending most of our time inside. We like our apartment. We enjoy mixing up cocktails and an *hors d’oeuvre* or two, putting on a little mood music on the phonograph and inviting in a female acquaintance for a quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex” (*Playboy*, “Editorial: Volume I, Number 1”). *Playboy* suggests that it speaks from the space of an apartment and that it will provide its readers with a vision of a lifestyle defined by apartment living that they can emulate. For the would-be playboy, the apartment functions as the “exciting expression of the person he is and the life he leads.”

Playboy did not invent the bachelor or the bachelor pad (Chudacoff). Ideas of the bachelor apartment exist already in *Esquire* magazine from as far back as the 1930s and earlier in films like *Bachelor Apartments* (Walker, 1920) and *Bachelor Apartment* (Sherman, 1931). However, pitching a lifestyle intrinsically rooted in the apartment, *Playboy* stitched the discourse of bachelorhood to the image of the bachelor pad so that *Playboy*—and the playboy—are unthinkable without the image and ideal of the apartment. Beyond the pages of *Playboy*, the bachelor pad came to serve as “obligatory backdrop” to a “universe of masculine hedonism” for the numerous copycat men’s magazines that followed on the heels of *Playboy*, such as *Gent*, *Gay Blade*, *The Dude*, *Escapade*, *Nugget*, *Rogue*, and *Hi-Life*, all of which emerged within a few years of *Playboy*’s debut (Osgerby, “The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon,” 106).

In part, *Playboy*’s identification with the apartment reflects the magazine’s urbanism, which another editorial links to its “sophistication”: “Since ancient times, men have associated true sophistication with cities. Excuse the armchair etymology, but we’d like to point out that our very word ‘city’ stems from the same Latin root as does ‘civil’ . . . and our word ‘urbane’ meaning suave, elegant, polished, refined, is a direct descendant of the Latin *urbanus* (belonging to a city)” (“Most Urban of Them All”). Linking urban with urbane, *Playboy* suggests that the “sophisticated” lifestyle it advocates—“Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex”—requires an urban setting and, more especially, the accoutrements of the bachelor pad—with its phonographic mood music, cocktails, and *hors d’oeuvres*. The apartment, then, serves as synecdoche for the city; this association in turn suggests a certain level of sophistication—a catchall phrase signaling culture, style, erudition, and urbanity.

In addition to urbanism, the apartment in *Playboy* also signifies mas-

culine autonomy. Despite the apartment’s status as domestic space, and despite the magazine’s emphasis on “indoors” domesticity, the apartment stands in opposition to feminized forms of domesticity, figured in the magazine as the suburban home. *Playboy* frequently suggests that the single-family home, above all the suburban home, emasculates the man. In “The Dream House and How to Avoid It,” Sheperd Mead warns marriageable males:

Every marriage *must* have a home. A marriage without walls around it is a flimsy thing indeed. You will need a cozy nook for just you two . . . It takes a heap of living to make an apartment a home, but it takes a heap less than if you are driven into a freestanding house . . . You will discover, however, that every woman wants a house of her own. From the very moment you move into your apartment she will make it clear that she thinks of it only as a temporary expedient—until you find your dream house. (53)

Associating the desire for a house entirely with the woman’s interests, Mead’s article proceeds to detail myriad means by which the married man can avoid being trapped in a dream house. Rather than a one-off satire, Mead’s article must have struck a nerve: originally appearing in July 1956, it was reprinted with little revision in April 1963. And other writers expressed similar views. Writing in the magazine in 1958, Philip Wylie—author of *Generation of Vipers*, and the man who coined the term *momism* to reflect what he saw as the feminization of the American male—bemoans the “womanization of America” and locates much of the trouble in the home: “The American home, in short, is becoming a boudoir-kitchen-nursery, dreamed up by women, for women, and as if males did not exist as males” (Wylie, 77). While Mead suggests that the man should avoid the home altogether, Wylie suggests that the man needs to reassert his ownership of nondomestic spaces like the men’s club, or somehow regain mastery of home decoration and design. Thus, rather than a stereotypically gendered binary of public and private or work and home, *Playboy* posits a different set of oppositions between city and suburbs, apartment and home.

Playboy’s interest in the bachelor pad as a masculine space that would stand in opposition to the feminized home—as well as the office—underscores a key aspect of what has come to be called the “*Playboy* philosophy.” Not only does the magazine frequently represent bachelor pads, even commissioning architectural designs for them (notably in “*Playboy*’s Penthouse Apartment” quoted at the beginning of the chapter

and shown in figure 10); it also conceives of the playboy in spatial terms. As George Wagner suggests, “*Playboy* was always dependent on the spatialization of the lifestyle imagined in its pages” (195). For Wagner, the magazine’s frequent commissions for bachelor pad designs can be seen as a “strategy of recovery of the domestic realm by the heterosexual male” (199).

Oddly enough, as numerous critics have pointed out, in positing the bachelor pad as the spatial manifestation of the playboy lifestyle, *Playboy* (similar to, but more intensely than *Esquire* before it) produced an ideal of masculinity that went against norms of masculine behavior by blurring the lines between “masculine” production, on the one hand, and “feminine” consumption, on the other (Osgerby, “The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon”; Wagner; Cohan). The bachelor pad was depicted as a site of consumerism (Cohan, 266), a “paean to a masculine lifestyle of material pleasure” (Osgerby, “The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon,” 100). As “the outward reflection of his inner self,” the bachelor pad demanded the male’s participation in a consumerist design culture, to have just the right things to express his personality and display his playboy prowess.¹ Therefore, *Playboy* magazine could promote such accoutrements as the “Playboy Bed” — “much, much more than a place to placidly assume a supine position after a wearying day at the office” (“The *Playboy* Bed,” 66) — and “the Kitchenless Kitchen,” for whipping up a late night fondue or waffle, and other “gear and gadgets for the bachelor’s buffet” (“The Gourmet Bit,” 27).

The blurring of lines between stereotypically “masculine” and “feminine” interests extends beyond the playboy’s consumerism to his domestic activities. In the pages of *Playboy*, the bachelor is envisioned as not only an inhabitant of the apartment but as a frequent host in the apartment. The magazine features numerous articles on hosting, decorating, and cooking.² Rather than marked as feminizing, these activities all appear as appropriate masculine endeavors pitched toward the smooth performance of bachelorhood. Hosting, cooking, and decorating enable the bachelor to perform the role of sophisticated urbanite, which in turn enables him to seduce women. As “Playboy at the Chafing Dish” suggests, “catch her eye with that romantic blue flame,” and “you’ll have her eating out of your hand” (Mario, 29), while “Let’s Go to My Place” advises men: don a red velvet host coat (much like Hefner’s famous smoking jacket) to “brighten up your prospects” (Rutherford, 57).

In company with *Playboy*, other mid-century discourses advocate

hosting and cooking as masculine activities, but only for single men. For instance, *Esquire* offers *Esquire's Handbook for Hosts* in 1949 and again, with some revision, in 1953. *Esquire* assumes both that the male host is a bachelor, not a married man, and that being a bachelor requires near constant hosting: "Granting that you are a bachelor and not a hermit . . . you are going to entertain pretty regularly in the apartment and not spend all your time prowling after a pair of nylon legs" (277). To that end, it provides a calendar of 365 excuses for a party (e.g., dates as outlandish or as in poor taste as 20 April, Hitler's birthday, or 1 June, Anniversary of the Separation of Kentucky from Virginia). *Esquire's Handbook for Hosts* acknowledges that hosting is a performative act: "IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO SHOWMANSHIP!" (20); or, as *The Madison Avenue Cookbook* puts it: "Remember, you are not perpetrating dinner but a deception" (Koehler, 11). Like *Playboy*, the *Esquire* guide suggests that the male's performative culinary efforts are geared primarily toward seduction—"a new twist on the old 'come see my etchings routine'" (11). It differentiates itself from the "standard womanly cookbook" and asserts its masculinity: "The world's greatest cooks are men. Since the beginning of time, he-men have always prepared the savory dishes that caress the palates of epicures of every nation . . . You won't find doily tearoom fare here: no radish roses, no menus designed for their calorie content. Esqy has concentrated on food of, for and by MEN" (11). Along with chapters on cooking and cocktails, this handbook offers the male host advice on etiquette, drinking, "how to keep the party going," the art of conversation, games ("the life-savers of the party"), party tricks, and attire.

Of course, the emphasis on decorating, cooking, and hosting always has the potential to be read as not only feminizing but also queer.³ As I will discuss later in the chapter, interior decorators are frequently stereotyped in this period as homosexual, and likewise the word *decorator* functions as a knowing surrogate for the word *gay*. Wylie's "womanization" article evokes the specter of the gay interior decorator as a threat to masculinity in cahoots with women: "Home design fell into the hands of women and decorators who were women or, when not, usually males in form only—males emotionally so identified with the opposite sex they could rout reluctant husbands because their very travesty made men uncomfortable" (77). Thus, the "recovery of the domestic realm" signified by the bachelor pad is not only a recovery from womanizing influences but also from the impression of homosexuality that lurks around unmarried males or "confirmed bachelors," as another surrogate term for

homosexuals suggests. As Wagner notes, “In the shadows of the cocktail party, the speculation is that the bachelor is a loser, or even worse—he’s a queer. And as a result, the décor of the bachelor must be carefully calibrated not to send off the wrong signals” (196).

The consumerist design impulses of *Playboy* are, it follows, marked as “avowedly heterosexual and resolutely ‘manful’” (Osgerby, “The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon,” 100). The bachelor pad underscores the bachelor’s heterosexual masculinity through a modernist iconography that figures masculine fantasies of control and domination (Wagner). The aesthetic Osgerby identifies as “*Playboy* modernism”—a mid-century aesthetic defined by clean lines and sleek surfaces, with wood and glass partitions, decorated with designer furniture made of steel, leather, and wood such as an Eames lounge chair, a Florence Knoll desk, or a Noguchi coffee table—links the playboy bachelor to an aesthetic of “hip non-conformity” (“The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon,” 109) defined in opposition to both feminine and queer tastes.

The masculine iconography associated with the bachelor pad is not, therefore, merely a backdrop for seduction. To a large degree, the bachelor pad aesthetic is foregrounded as signifier of a lifestyle and an identity; and *Playboy*’s emphasis on style, decorating, and design represents a decisive ingredient in the *Playboy* philosophy and lifestyle. As J. Anthony Lukas notices in 1972, style, and especially interior design, defines the *Playboy* lifestyle:

The more time I spent in the *Playboy* empire this spring, the less I felt that overt sex was central to it . . . *Playboy* seemed to me to be symbolized less by the Gouda breasts overlapping those bunny corsets than by brown wood, orange shag and bronze trim. I came to recognize the *Playboy* “look”: what the press releases call “the clean, contemporary look,” but always in “warm, earthy tones”; lots of dark, textured, oiled woods; nubby fabrics in tan, brown, ochre, mocha and orange; leather or Naugahyde couches and chairs; bronze accessories; and lots of electronic devices—TV, radio, hi-fi, tape machines—in sleek rectangular console units. (76)

Comparing *Playboy*’s empire to that of Disney, Lukas finds a similarly controlled fantasy world. Rather than rampant sex, Lukas argues, *Playboy* proffers a coherent aesthetic. The “clean” *Playboy* design aesthetic not only mirrors the “clean” (hairless, airbrushed) look of the mid-century *Playboy* bunnies, as Lukas claims, but also functions as objective correla-

tive for the bachelor’s identity, a cultural shorthand for heterosexual urbanity.

The design for “*Playboy’s* Penthouse Apartment” suggests how crucial the “look” is to the playboy identity. The blueprint transforms the discourses of sophistication, seduction, and sexuality into design principles. The penthouse apartment first appears in a twelve-page spread over two issues of the magazine in 1956. The penthouse offers the *Playboy* reader the fantasy of a masculine domain, expressive of his personality:

A man yearns for quarters of his own. More than a place to hang his hat, a man dreams of his own domain, a place that is exclusively his. *Playboy* has designed, planned and decorated, from the floor up, a penthouse apartment for the urban bachelor—a man who enjoys good living, a sophisticated connoisseur of the lively arts, of food and drink and congenial companions of both sexes. A man very much, perhaps, like you. In such a place you might live . . . in a man’s world which fits your moods and desires. (“*Playboy’s* Penthouse Apartment,” 54)

The apartment promises “masculine richness and excitement” stemming from the “juxtapositions of textures” (57) with cork tile flooring and stone hearth, skylight and fireplace, aquarium, and a modern kitchen divided from the dining room by moveable Shoji screens. As Steven Cohan has pointed out, “*Playboy’s* Penthouse Apartment” suggests simultaneously that the bachelor pad will reflect the man’s inner self and that it will theatricalize his masculinity and heterosexuality (*Masked Men*). A built-in bar enables the bachelor to simultaneously display himself as host and perform his seduction: “This permits the canny bachelor to remain in the room while mixing a cool one for his intended quarry. No chance of missing the . . . moment—no chance of leaving her cozily curled up on the couch . . . returning to find her mind changed, purse in hand, and the young lady ready to go home, damn it” (“*Playboy’s* Penthouse Apartment,” 59). A living room with reclining couch and casual lounging cushions creates conversational groupings, as well as emphasizing the bachelor’s modernist urbanity with designer Saarinen couch and chairs, an Eames chair, and a Noguchi table. A large TV and a hi-fi system wired throughout the apartment and run by remote control—as well as a remote control headboard for the bed, to control lights, lock doors, close drapes, and turn off the phone (68)—emphasize the bachelor’s fondness for high-tech gadgetry and his technologized domination and control.

Crucially, as Wagner notes, “We never see the bachelor, which allows the reader to project himself into the image of the space” (211). In the reader’s imagination, then, the bachelor is potentially “a man very much, perhaps, like [himself]” and the reader can imagine that “in such a place [he himself] might live.”

The penthouse apartment became strongly identified with the *Playboy* lifestyle, not least through the TV show “*Playboy’s Penthouse*,” which began airing in 1959. The show emphasizes its urbanism in the opening credits, which travel from an aerial view of Chicago’s Lake Shore Drive to track a car that arrives at a Mies Van der Rohe high-rise building (much like the opening credits for many apartment films). A jazz score written for the show by Cy Coleman establishes a cool and sophisticated tone. Titles show the *Playboy* bunny insignia and identify “Your host, Hugh M. Hefner, Editor-publisher of *Playboy*.” The camera then cuts inside the building to enter the elevator. Elevator lights rise thirty floors to the top button, where a *Playboy* bunny insignia marks the penthouse apartment. As the elevator door opens, the camera, and by extension the audience, arrives at a party in progress hosted by the ur-playboy, Hugh Hefner.

In “*Playboy’s Penthouse*,” we see features of the model *Playboy* bachelor pad and an ideal party space. Numerous modern low-slung couches, low glass and wood coffee tables, and scattered ottomans and cushions provide lots of space for sitting and lounging. The separate spaces of the penthouse allow for flow but are also demarcated to allow smaller groupings and intimacies. Interior railings, interior steps, sunken rooms, a bar, piano, fireplace, and terrace create distinct but connected conversation areas. The original show is in black and white. When it returns in color a decade later as “*Playboy After Dark*,” in a larger penthouse, we see orange shag carpeting juxtaposed with black tile flooring, orange and yellow chairs, red walls, and exposed brick, and interior staircases, suggesting a duplex. Paintings by Leroy Neiman, Mark Rothko, and Franz Kline punctuate the rooms. A large entertainment room with a dance-floor, amps, and speakers provides a stage for performances.

Like the magazine, “*Playboy’s Penthouse*” and “*Playboy After Dark*” promote a lifestyle and encourage the man at home to project himself into the space. The show hinges on its placement in a penthouse apartment, which is represented as a public social space more than a single person’s private domestic space. The show highlights certain accoutrements—such as the Kitchenless Kitchen shown in one episode, in syn-

ergy with the magazine, or the hi-fi set highlighted in a few episodes — as tools of seduction rather than spaces inhabited by a solitary man. Beyond the technologies of domestic socialization, “*Playboy’s* Penthouse” and “*Playboy* After Dark” showcase the “sophisticated” lifestyle the magazine promotes by juxtaposing such celebrities as Cy Coleman, Mort Sahl, Ella Fitzgerald, Ike and Tina Turner, and Sonny and Cher, if not quite “Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex.” In the show, guests gather in small mixed-race and mixed-gender groups so that Lennie Bruce, Nat King Cole, and Rona Jaffe share a couch and discuss the film based on her book (until Cole wanders off for a drink); Sammy Davis Jr. performs a duet with Anthony Newley and then is joined by Jerry Lewis, as Bill Cosby sits in with the band; Linda Rondstadt sings with Billy Eckstine; and so on. Guests come and go, sometimes perform — sometimes on a stage but more often in the living room, kitchen or bar — and sometimes chat with Hefner or one of the *Playboy* editors. Occasionally, Hefner introduces a *Playboy* bunny: always, the party is filled with bunnies who drape themselves on furniture and guests, fulfilling the fantasy that the bachelor pad, and especially the *Playboy* pad, operates as a magnet to attract sexually available women.

Sexing the Apartment

Mrs. Bonner, I love you. I love lots of girls and ladies and women and so on. But you’re the only one I know why I love. And you know why? Because you live right across the hall from me. You’re mighty attractive in every single way, Mrs. Bonner, but I’d probably love anybody who lived right across the hall from me. It’s so convenient.

—Kip in *Adam’s Rib* (Cukor, 1949)

The bachelor pad in the *Playboy* imaginary, then, is both gendered male and, as Wagner indicates “enthusiastically sexualized” (186) or, more accurately, heterosexualized. This sexualization of space extends well beyond descriptions and representations of the bachelor pad. In addition to apartment designs and decorating features in the magazine, or “*Playboy’s* Penthouse,” *Playboy* magazine features a multitude of jokes, cartoons, and stories that not only sexualize the bachelor pad but also, and insistently, sexualize apartment living more generally.

In many of these texts, as in the bachelor pad designs, the apartment is figured as the lair for a predatory bachelor. For instance, “*Playboy’s*

Party Jokes” from December 1962 proffers: “Our Unabashed Dictionary defines *bachelor apartment* as a wildlife sanctuary.” A small decorating feature links the apartment to a spider web (disregarding the importance of the female’s web in spider mating practices): “Like Mr. Spider, the smart playboy keeps his surroundings inviting” (“Won’t You Step into My Parlor?” from *Playboy*, May 1954:9). One cartoon shows a man shopping for groceries: four nude women are stored in a refrigerated case, and the grocer advises the man, “You merely defrost two hours at penthouse temperature” (Hefner, 371).

“Playboy’s Progress” (from *Playboy*, May 1954) presents a virtual map of seduction. It shows an artist’s rendering of a bachelor pad, complete with modernist furniture, modernist nude paintings, hi-fi and bar, dotted with numbers that correspond to actions in a scene described between a “playboy and a friend,” taking place shortly before midnight. Moving from spot number 1 by the front door (“Playboy enters with friend after an evening at theater”), the playboy moves to the hi-fi in spot number 4 to play Glenn Miller LPs; then, spot 6 at the bar, mixes cocktails; and spot 10, by the bookcase, reads aloud from the Kinsey report in effort to seduce the “friend,” ultimately arriving at spot 25, the bedroom door, mission complete (figures 11.1 and 11.2).

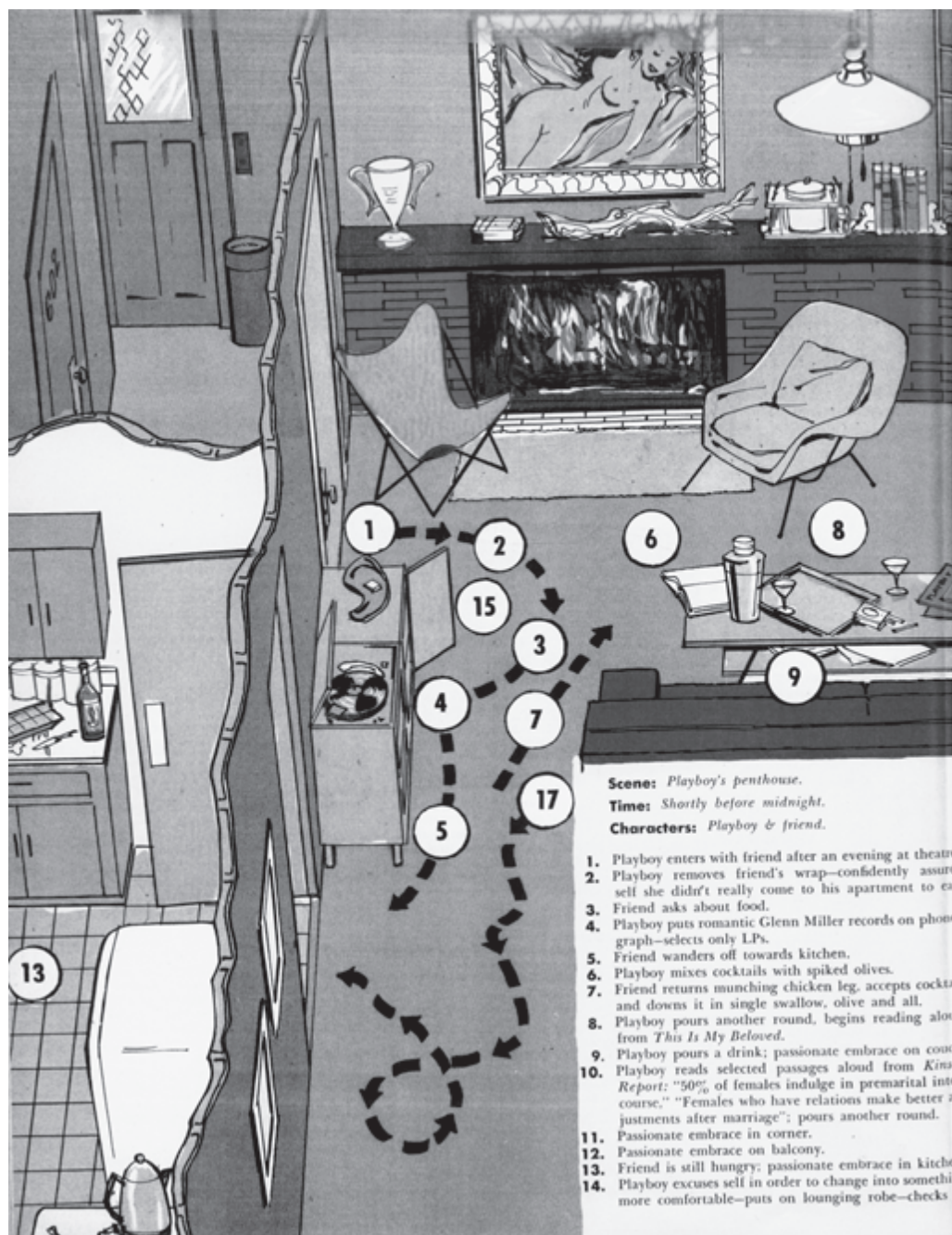
“The Playboy Coloring Book” is a similarly playful, but somewhat nastier, rendering of bachelor pad seduction. This four-page spread offers black-and-white line drawings with instructions for coloring. It begins by parodying the stereotypical features of the bachelor pad, as well as modern art (see figure 12): “THIS IS WHERE THE PLAYBOY LIVES. It is called a pad. The pad is full of toys. There are seven stereo speakers in this picture. Find them and color them loud. See the blank picture frames on the wall? They are part of the playboy’s modern art collection. You may scribble in the blank spaces with your eyes closed” (68). After this snide beginning, the coloring book offers pages detailing a party at the bachelor pad. Readers or artists are invited to guess which “pal” will be invited to stay and help clean up the pad after the party: “Will the ravishing redhead in the green cocktail dress be invited to stay and help? . . . One thing is sure, the fat man will not be invited to stay and help.” After the party, the playboy having chosen his helper (“the pretty blonde wearing the glasses and the strapless dress and the strapless 39-D brassiere”), he proceeds to seduce her with promises of trips to the Italian Riviera, France, and Egypt: “Make her glasses rose-colored. Color the playboy’s lies white.” Finally, the blonde is pictured in a wedding gown and veil:

"Why is she wearing that funny white dress? . . . Color this page completely black. Then tear it out and burn it."

In addition to representations of the bachelor pad as lair, *Playboy* offers an adjacent, but slightly different set of fantasies about apartment living. As much as the *Playboy* philosophy hinges on the site of the bachelor pad, it depends equally upon a complex set of fantasies about women in apartments, whether singly, with female roommates, or as available married women. Much of this material, as above, emanates from the seeming marginalia of jokes and cartoons.

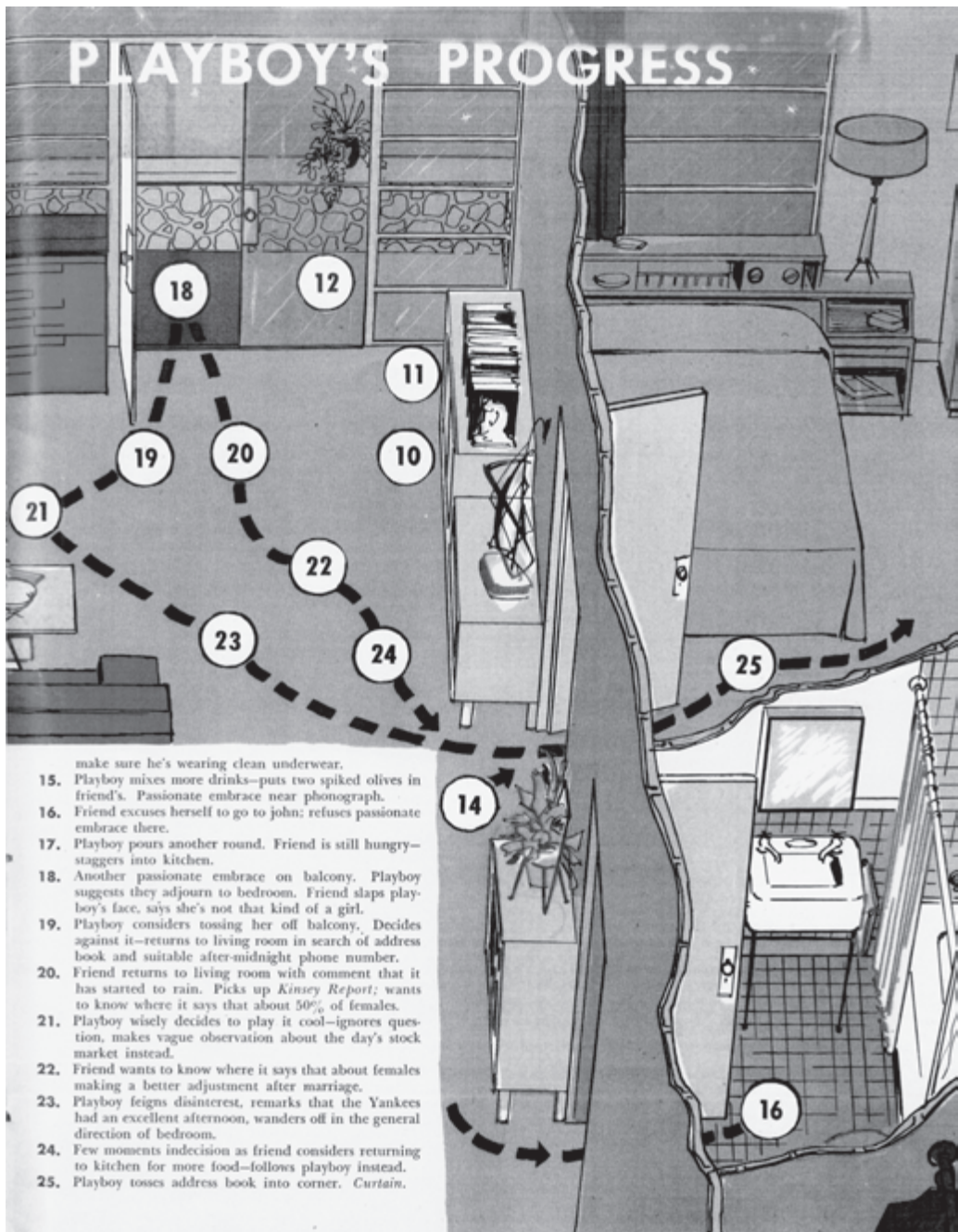
One set of assumptions in the cartoons, especially, is that apartment living affords easy access to women, and especially to nude women. Numerous cartoons show a prospective tenant—single or married—agreeing to rent after being shown an apartment that affords a view of a single woman's apartment where she is nude or semidressed. In a variation on this trope, in one cartoon a landlord stands at the door with a prospective tenant facing a woman who is nude and barely clutching a towel over her abdomen, so that her breasts are exposed: "The apartment is available fully furnished, but—uh—not with Miss Cudlow" (*Playboy*, September 1957:68). In another variation, in a two-frame cartoon, a woman agrees to rent an apartment in the top frame, and in the bottom frame undresses as her landlord spies on her from inside the TV set. Others play off the inherent exposure and lack of privacy in apartment living. In one, a man and woman, presumably married, stand on their balcony. The woman looks out at the skyline while the man looks down at the buxom woman in a strapless dress below (*Playboy*, April 1962:111). Numerous cartoons show women answering the door wearing only a towel. In a typical example, a man at the door picking up the dry cleaning says, "We're running a special this week where you can throw in a green, fuzzy bath towel free" (*Playboy*, February 1959:30). In another, a voluptuous woman wearing only a towel opens the door to an elderly man delivering a telegram and ponders, "I wonder who this 'secret admirer' is who sends me a telegram every day at this time" (Hefner, 367).

In the *Playboy* imaginary, it is not merely the case that apartments afford easy access to women but that the women in apartments are easy. Frequently, there are jokes and cartoons about women paying their rent with sex. "Playboy Party Jokes" from August 1961 has Roger, "the handsome real estate agent" rent to a desirable female tenant. When he gives her the apartment's two keys, "She straightened up, accepted the keys, and favored him with a dazzling smile. 'And here is a month's rent in



11.1 and 11.2. "Playboy's Progress," a map of seduction that spatializes the bachelor's game plan.

PLAYBOY'S PROGRESS



make sure he's wearing clean underwear.

15. Playboy mixes more drinks—puts two spiked olives in friend's. Passionate embrace near phonograph.
16. Friend excuses herself to go to john; refuses passionate embrace there.
17. Playboy pours another round. Friend is still hungry—staggers into kitchen.
18. Another passionate embrace on balcony. Playboy suggests they adjourn to bedroom. Friend slaps playboy's face, says she's not that kind of a girl.
19. Playboy considers tossing her off balcony. Decides against it—returns to living room in search of address book and suitable after-midnight phone number.
20. Friend returns to living room with comment that it has started to rain. Picks up *Kinsey Report*; wants to know where it says that about 50% of females.
21. Playboy wisely decides to play it cool—ignores question, makes vague observation about the day's stock market instead.
22. Friend wants to know where it says that about females making a better adjustment after marriage.
23. Playboy feigns disinterest, remarks that the Yankees had an excellent afternoon, wanders off in the general direction of bedroom.
24. Few moments indecision as friend considers returning to kitchen for more food—follows playboy instead.
25. Playboy tosses address book into corner. *Curtain.*



**THIS IS WHERE THE PLAYBOY LIVES. It is called a pad.
The pad is full of toys. There are seven stereo speakers in this picture.
Find them and color them loud. See the blank picture frames on the wall?
They are part of the playboy's modern art collection.
You may scribble in the blank spaces with your eyes closed.**

12. Excerpt from "The *Playboy* Coloring Book." A parody of the bachelor pad and playboy lifestyle that nonetheless promotes the essential design and ideology of the *Playboy* bachelor pad.

advance, honey,' she replied. And she handed him back one of the keys." Similarly, a cartoon shows a deli delivery man in an apartment with two girls: "It's your turn, Shirley—I took care of the rent this month" (*Playboy*, April 1958:21). In another cartoon, one woman answers the door and addresses her roommate who is in the bedroom: "Hold it, Shirley—There's another guy out here says he's supposed to collect the rent" (*Playboy*, September 1957:19).⁴

Not just single women, but married women are also represented as easy and accessible. In fact, the *Playboy* cartoons strongly corroborate Balzac's assumption in *The Physiology of Marriage* that the apartment building creates the conditions for adultery. In "The *Playboy* Advisor" of December 1961, M.G. from Seattle writes: "In the apartment above my bachelor digs there lives a toothsome young chick who is charming, voluptuous—and married. . . . Am I a fool for ignoring such temptation? Wouldn't I be better advised to raid the pantry while the breadwinner is away?" (47). Despite advising M.G. to stay away from the married woman, *Playboy* abounds in jokes and cartoons that detail the easy philandering available in apartment buildings. In one cartoon, for instance, a woman in a negligee looks carefully out an apartment front door and says, "It's my husband, but relax—he's sneaking into *your* apartment across the hall" (*Playboy*, September 1954:41). Another cartoon shows a woman hanging nude off a balcony facing a man inside the apartment below, who says, "I'd like to help, miss, but *my* wife just came in, too" (*Playboy*, July 1964:53). In a two-frame cartoon (figures 13.1 and 13.2), a man returning from work amusedly witnesses a man sneaking away from an apartment, wearing polka dot pajama bottoms, only to enter his own apartment, in the second frame, to find his wife wearing nothing but the matching polka dot pajama top (Hefner, 18).

The Bachelor Pad as Fantasy

Of course, the bachelor pad and the broader image of apartment living in *Playboy* are both fantasy constructs. While *Playboy* proffers designs for bachelor pads, it does not build them; and "*Playboy's* Penthouse" is shot in a studio, with props and veneers substituting for the books, LPs, hi-fi, and other hallmarks of the sophisticated bachelor lifestyle. More than a literal space, the bachelor pad functions as a site of fantasy. As Osgerby notes, "The concept of the 'bachelor pad' was always, to a large degree,



"You're home early, dear."

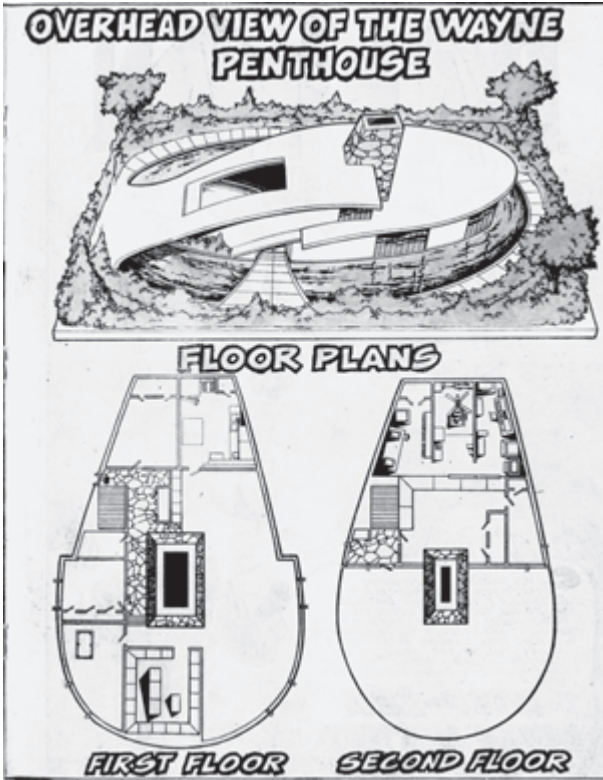
13.1 and 13.2. Claude Smith cartoon. Cartoons such as this one, published frequently in *Playboy*, reinforce assumptions that apartments inherently create the conditions for adultery.

a mythological construct . . . Few men could hope ever to own a 'Playboy Penthouse,' 'A Playboy Entertainment Wall,' or even a 'Playboy Bed,' but just as important was the ability to conceive of oneself as the *kind* of man who *would* buy into the *Playboy* lifestyle" ("The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon," 110). As often as not, the *Playboy* reader was not a swinging bachelor but a married man. The magazine and its concept of bachelorhood provided "a private fantasy escape for the man whose home had been appropriated as the domain of wife and family and whose office was the site of a definitive reality—the wage . . . the playboy acquired a fantasized mobility because he was a bachelor" (Wagner, 195).

The bachelor pad is thus a fantasy space that functions like a mirror, allowing the married or suburban man to see reflected an idealized version of himself. The *Playboy* reader, or TV viewer, can identify with the projected idealized image of himself as a bachelor and attain fantasy feelings of mastery. At the same time, his projection of himself into that other space produces a potentially bifurcated self, a dual identity or identities—married/single, suburban/urban, emasculated/predatory, monogamous/promiscuous, and so forth.

In this sense, the imaginary bachelor pad functions much like the secret lair of comic book superheroes—spaces which contain and enable secret identities, and spaces that are equally spaces of technology, control, and domination. It is no accident, perhaps, that so many superhero lairs are located in penthouse apartments. The Fantastic Four, for instance, inhabit the tower of a New York skyscraper. While living quarters are on lower floors, the penthouse contains an observatory, hangars for planes and helicopters, a photo analysis room, projection room, map room, and missile-monitoring room (see plate 2) (Lee and Kirby, 58). Matt Murdock, a.k.a. Daredevil, rents the apartment below his under an assumed name. Accessible via a sliding bookcase and secret stairway, it contains a lab, electronic workshop, and soundproof gym (see plate 3) (Lee and Wood, 170). And when Robin, a.k.a. Dick Grayson, leaves Wayne Manor to attend Hudson University, Batman, a.k.a. Bruce Wayne, moves the Wayne Foundation to a high-rise in Gotham City, taking the penthouse for his "digs"—"much better bachelor accommodations" than stuffy Wayne Manor, as Alfred notes (*Batman in the Sixties*, 202; *Batman Limited Collector's Edition*) (figure 14).

As much as the bachelor pad functions like a mirror, its potential to produce another potentially secret self also links up with the discourse of the closet. Steven Cohan has suggested that the specific design of the 1956 *Playboy* penthouse invokes the closet in its division of the interior into an "active" theatricalized public sphere for entertaining and a "quiet" inner sphere for contemplation (274). He reads Rock Hudson's bifurcated identity and apartment in *Pillow Talk* as associating the image of the bachelor pad with "the invisible edifice" of the closet. I would suggest further that the bachelor pad in its entirety has the quality of a closet. The closet is already invoked in imagining the bachelor pad as a lair, insofar as the lair can be a dwelling or a hiding place (it is no accident that the word "lair" is so often preceded by "secret"). In Benjamin's gloss on the nineteenth-century domestic interior, he writes: "To live in these in-



14. Bruce Wayne's bachelor quarters.

teriors was to have woven a dense fabric about oneself, to have secluded oneself within a spider's web, in whose toils world events hang loosely suspended like so many insect bodies sucked dry. From this cavern, one does not like to stir" (216). In this reading, the lair, figured as a web, not only traps unwitting visitors but also hides the spider, secluded within a "dense fabric" and housed in a "cavern."

Additionally, as Henry Urbach notes in his analysis of the twin spaces of the architectural closet and the metaphoric sexual closet, the closet signifies both storage and display. It is a space that keeps things secret and also discloses them; it contains things but provides access to them; it is a space where one hides or tries on not one but multiple identities. Since *Playboy* situates its lifestyle "indoors," the bachelor identity is stored or contained inside the apartment. Nonetheless, the bachelor pad also provides a space or stage for display: the smooth performance of bachelor-

hood enacted via activities such as hosting and decorating and via external codes of design and costume.

Following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the closet reminds us that the binary opposition between heterosexuality and homosexuality is never secure but always being enacted. As Urbach writes: “The binary logic of the closet/room pair, the rigid opposition of in and out, does not account for the dynamic entanglement of closet and room, the ways in which they constantly separate and reattach, the ways in which one is always *both* in and out, *neither* in nor out” (347). And, as Sedgwick suggests, all gendered binaries, including those invoked by the *Playboy* imaginary—masculine/feminine, urban/suburban, married/single, indoors/outdoors, apartment/home—are “quite indelibly marked” by the male homosocial/homosexual division and equally vulnerable to collapse. Accordingly, rather than argue that the bachelor pad is *really* queer, I am suggesting that by locating masculine heterosexuality so squarely in the bachelor pad, *Playboy*—and related mid-century discourses—inevitably *invokes* the homosexual closet. To suggest that the identity of the bachelor depends upon its location in the bachelor pad raises the possibility that one’s identity is not stable or essential but determined by location. Thus, it may be that a different space will produce a different identity, a different sexuality. And it may be that one goes into and “comes out of the closet” at different times and for different audiences. For the married suburban reader of *Playboy*, the fantasy of the bachelor pad produces a fantasy other identity as a swinging urban playboy. The fantasy of the bachelor pad therefore enacts the open secret of male desire but also marks that desire as queer, something to be disclosed to certain audiences and concealed from others.

In the following, I will discuss how the apartment plot mobilizes these complex ideas about the bachelor pad. My analysis will include some films—such as *The Tender Trap*, *Come Blow Your Horn*, *Pillow Talk*, *If a Man Answers*, and *That Funny Feeling*—that “draw on the cultural currency of the bachelor playboy” (Cohan, 275) and represent the apartment as both lair and magnet for women. However, as Cohan has argued, these films do not valorize the playboy’s status as a permanent condition but represent his status, and consequently his residence in the bachelor pad, as temporary or under pressure from women. These films pin the bachelor’s identity so closely to the apartment that his eventual coupling often requires his leaving the apartment or, alternately, the redecorating of his apartment to reflect the woman’s presence. Other films show married

or suburban men who access bachelor status via use or possession of an apartment, as in *The Apartment*, *Boys Night Out*, and *The Seven Year Itch*. These films generally figure the apartment as mirror and closet; that is, the man both produces an idealized image of himself in the apartment and conceals it there. Like the single-man films, these films also figure the man's residence in the apartment as temporary. Another category of film will include films such as *Artists and Models*, *The Odd Couple*, and *Rope*, which show male roommates and emphasize the slippery slope between homosocial and homosexual coupling. Finally, I will turn to *The Boys in the Band* to consider how an explicitly gay film employs the tropes of mirror and closet, bringing to the fore some of the themes in other bachelor apartment films.

The Lair

Secretary: I don't work in men's bedrooms.

Mr. Scott: It's not a bedroom. It's a bachelor apartment.

Secretary: My husband was a hotel manager. One room is a bedroom.

Two or more is an apartment.

The exchange above, from the film *My Dear Secretary*, hints at the slippage in common parlance between the bachelor apartment and the bedroom. More than a question of size—one room or two—the bedroom and the bachelor pad coincide in the imaginary: each serves as synecdoche for the other. *The Tender Trap* and *Come Blow Your Horn* make the link between the bachelor apartment and the bedroom by showing the bachelor pad as a magnet for available women. In both films, another male looks to the bachelor pad as a mirror into which he projects his own unfulfilled playboy destiny. Both films also enact what Cohan calls the “taming of the bachelor” scenario (275) and suggest that in order to fully exit his playboy lifestyle and enter family life, the man will have to leave his bachelor quarters.

At the beginning of *The Tender Trap*, we are introduced to theatrical agent Charlie Reader (Frank Sinatra) through his bachelor pad. The film opens with a close-up of Charlie kissing a beautiful woman on a couch. Dialogue makes clear that they are frequent but not exclusive lovers. When she gets up to leave, and Charlie opens the sheer curtains behind the couch, we see the apartment. Located at 600 East Fifty-seventh

Street, Charlie's apartment opens out to a terrace with a dramatic view of the Fifty-ninth Street Queensboro Bridge. There is a separate bedroom to the left and up the stairs from the couch, but the rest of the apartment is open and seems designed for flow and entertaining. It has multiple levels and iron railings that divide the living room into various areas for entertaining and conversation—the couch and a cluster of modern chairs in a sunken living room with fireplace, a tall table with two bar stools behind and above the couch, a full bar above and to the right of the couch, and a desk to the front and left of the couch. Like the *Playboy* penthouse, the apartment promises "masculine richness and excitement" stemming from the "juxtapositions of textures"—wood, brass, and leather—and it offers the "clean" masculine color scheme of cream, gray, and brown to provide an appropriate background for Charlie's modern art.

The Tender Trap presents a new twist on the association between the playboy lifestyle and urbanism by suggesting not just that the urban bachelor is sophisticated but that being urban transforms the bachelor into a playboy.⁵ In this film Charlie Reader's best friend, Joe McCall (David Wayne), arrives on a vacation from Indianapolis—and from his wife of eleven years. When Joe arrives, he marvels at Charlie's pad: "What a water hole!" He marvels even more at the parade of beautiful single women entering Charlie's apartment, all of whom not only have designs on Charlie but also cater to his needs—offering to clean his apartment, bring him exotic cheese and fish, walk his dog, and more. "Where do all these tomatoes come from?" he asks. "What have you got?" Charlie responds that it isn't what he's got, "It's what I haven't got—a wife." Charlie explains that while he was nothing special in his midwestern hometown, he was transformed by his arrival in New York: "They've got kind of an underground here. As soon as a bachelor sets foot in this town, the signals go out. And even before you get your bags unpacked, you're up to *there* in dames." As Joe exclaims, awestruck, "all you've got to be is a bachelor." A seemingly rare commodity, Charlie is so desirable that the women come to him, even picking him up at his apartment for dates (rather than vice versa).

Initially, Charlie's apartment and the lifestyle it signifies function—like *Playboy* magazine and its imaginary bachelor pads—as a mirror into which Joe projects his ideal self. Joe views his life back home as a boring and costly suburban life of wall-to-wall carpeting, dentists' bills, car-pools, and kids' lessons. Charlie, claiming unconvincingly to want what Joe has, astutely observes, "I bet you were pretty happy with your set-up

until you came here and saw what I'd fallen into." Ultimately, however, Joe's idealized view of Charlie's life sours, and he realizes the value and appeal of his married suburban life.

At the same time that Joe opts to return to his marriage, Charlie chooses to abandon his playboy lifestyle. He is "tamed" by Julie Gillis (Debbie Reynolds) a stereotypical fifties girl hell-bent on marriage. She has chosen the wedding date and planned her married life with three children, even before meeting the man she will marry. At the end of the film, when Charlie proposes to Julie, we know that his tenure in his New York apartment will soon come to an end. As part of her life plan, Julie predicts that she and her husband will stay in New York for a few years at most, to enjoy themselves while young, but will move to the country shortly after having the first of their three children. Thus, Charlie will lose both his bachelor status and his urbanism in one fell swoop. In addition, we sense that the aesthetic of Charlie's apartment will change, even if he and his wife stay there for those two years. In contrast to Charlie's hip modern apartment, Julie's apartment is decorated in a much more old-fashioned and feminine manner. Where Charlie has sleek lines, she has curvy Louis XIV chairs; where he has cool masculine colors, she has sweet pastels; where he has nubby tweeds and leather, she has chintz; where he has a gorgeous terrace with a breathtaking view, she has an air-shaft that looks directly into another apartment; and where he has modern art, she has a photo of her parents. Her aesthetic matches that feared by Wylie, as reflecting "their she-owners' softness and vagueness" (77). Her apartment predicts the future, as Charlie, like Joe, will be subject to not just suburbanization but wall-to-wall "womanization."

Another Sinatra vehicle, *Come Blow My Horn*, ties the playboy lifestyle even more explicitly to apartment design. In this film, Sinatra plays Alan Baker whose (much) younger brother Buddy (Tony Bill) runs away from the family home in Yonkers to join his brother in Manhattan. Buddy wants in on the playboy lifestyle, which the film weds to Alan's apartment. The first time we see the apartment, Alan returns from a ski trip with his downstairs neighbor, Peggy (Jill St. John). (We learn that they met when she accidentally entered his apartment, thinking it was her own—a perfect *Playboy* fantasy.) When they enter the apartment together, she exclaims, "Ooh, this apartment! Every time I come up here, it just sends me!" And when Buddy arrives, he concurs, "Boy, this apartment is always more exciting than I remember." Alan makes clear his investment in the apartment's appearance when he remarks,

“I’ve redecorated. Do you like it?” The apartment is somewhat showier than the one in *The Tender Trap* but shares a similar aesthetic. A black, brown, and white color scheme, with bold touches of red, sets off a mirrored bar, modern art, modern furniture—including a giant curved white couch and red leather director’s chairs—and giant windows overlooking the skyline view from the twentieth floor. Dark interior railings and a sunken conversation area serve to partition but not close off the space, enhancing the room’s porousness and flow. Brass fixtures, wood panels, glass surfaces, marble statues, tile floors, and shag carpeting create the vital juxtaposition of textures. Signs of masculine sophistication lurk in leather-bound books, scales of justice, candelabra, and a classical bust. Accoutrements for entertaining include two fireplaces, a gaming table, a large TV, and a hi-fi (prominently featured in one of the film’s many inside jokes when Alan places a Sinatra record from Sinatra’s own Reprise label on the turntable).

In order for Buddy to fully inhabit the playboy lifestyle signified by the bachelor pad, he must alter his personal style. This brings him into the world of playboy consumerism. In the film’s only musical number, Alan gives Buddy a makeover. Singing “make like a milquetoast and you’ll get shut out,” he removes Buddy’s milquetoast appearance in bow-tie, sweater vest and brown car-coat for one better suited to, as the song goes, “make like a mister big” and “come blow your horn.” In a montage sequence, we see Alan take Buddy on a shopping spree for suits and sport coats, cufflinks, a wallet, a fedora, shoes, and an overcoat. He also takes him for a haircut and manicure. Ultimately, wearing suit, fedora and checked overcoat, Buddy looks just like Alan, or more accurately like a younger version of Reprise-vintage Sinatra.

However, having transformed Buddy into a mirror image of himself, Alan sees reflected his own image anew. The film, then, reverses the logic of the mirror. In the parlance of the film Alan realizes he is a “bum”—not married, a slacker at work, irresponsible. Disgusted by Buddy’s deteriorating work ethic and constant womanizing, Alan is eventually alienated from his own apartment when he comes home to find Buddy having a party with beatniks, engaged in such party games as hypnotism and strip Scrabble. Now wishing to project himself into another ideal—that of his father (Lee J. Cobb)—Alan remakes himself. Previously an idler at his father’s fake fruit company, he lands an enormous account and further restores himself in his father’s eyes by getting married. No longer a bum or a bachelor, Alan cedes the bachelor pad to Buddy. Though the film

places Alan on the side of married respectability and displaces him from the playboy lifestyle, it keeps the playboy fantasy alive through Buddy, who learns that Alan leases the apartment from a woman and that “if she likes you, she practically gives it away.”

To a degree, *The Tender Trap* and *Come Blow Your Horn* participate in the logic of containment, insofar as the taming scenario seems to move the bachelor into the ideal of suburban marriage. However, the plots of these films turn on the porousness and permeability of the apartment, and its availability to spontaneous encounter, and thus endorse a philosophy of urbanism. In dialogue with the suburban ideal, these films, like those that follow in my discussion, speak the urban fantasy even as they forecast its eventual abandonment.

Whereas both *The Tender Trap* and *Come Blow Your Horn* end at the point of marriage, other apartment films put the fantasy of the bachelor pad under pressure by situating a marriage inside the bachelor’s former apartment. Initially, however, they play off the familiar synecdoche of bedroom and bachelor pad. For example, *If a Man Answers* triangulates the bedroom, the bachelor pad, and the work space, and, similarly, it enacts a taming scenario. In this film, Eugene Wright (Bobby Darin) is a successful commercial photographer with a near-constant parade of beautiful models to his live-work apartment. By chance, he meets Chantal Stacy (Sandra Dee) at a hat store. After offering to buy her a hat, he offends her by telling her he is only interested in her body and offers her \$10 an hour to come to his apartment. After realizing that he is a photographer, Chantal decides to model for him but only to ensnare him. When they first meet, she tells him her last name is “only temporary” until marriage; when they meet again she tells him that marriage is “the ideal state for men.” Eugene’s reply echoes the *Playboy* philosophy. He tells her that as a New Yorker, he has access to hundreds of restaurants, can easily hire a maid, and has phone numbers for 111 models in his little black book.

If a Man Answers enacts the bachelor’s taming in stages. Chantal first pursues him—modeling for him, cleaning his kitchen, and cooking for him. Then, once they start dating, she challenges him by suggesting that he may not be man enough for marriage: “I can’t help wondering . . . Could you keep a woman interested day after day after day? And all through the night?” Once she hooks him and they marry, she transforms his apartment. We first see the bachelor apartment when Chantal arrives to model. It is a one-bedroom with a photography studio partitioned from the living room by a sheer curtain. The bottom floor of what used

to be a duplex, the apartment has a staircase “to nowhere” that serves as backdrop for Eugene’s photos. The living room has an exposed brick wall, sleek modern chairs, a modern dinette set, and a prominent sofa bed. Walls are off-white and the furniture is a mix of colors and textures. Shelves hold trophies, books, photographs, and other traces of Eugene’s life. A large closet doubles as a dressing room for models, and a kitchen off the living room can be closed off with shuttered folding doors. We do not see the bedroom. Once Chantal and Eugene are married, the apartment is feminized. Instead of the mismatched furniture, the living room now has a red and white color scheme with touches of light blue (signifying, perhaps, Chantal’s mixed French-American heritage). The sofa bed, chairs, and dining set have all been reupholstered. A wicker chair and a bold white wicker room divider have been added. The painted walls now have striped wallpaper. And now we see the bedroom, decorated in bright peach and white with a frilly lamp and other feminine touches.

While Chantal’s redecoration of Eugene’s apartment signifies his transformation from confirmed bachelor to married man, the apartment remains a magnet for women and still, therefore, threatens the marriage. Eugene is still a commercial photographer and still has lingerie models in his home and in his address book. Frustrated with the playful camaraderie Eugene displays with his models, and prohibited by Eugene from modeling herself anymore (as he associates modeling with easy availability), Chantal begins a second stage of taming. Taking her mother’s advice that “if you want a perfect marriage, treat your husband like a dog,” Chantal employs tricks from a dog-training book to make Eugene a more attentive and obedient husband. This works until he discovers the deception, after which Chantal, with her mother’s coaching, initiates another taming scheme. This time, she pretends to have a lover by sending herself flowers and having her mother call and hang up whenever Eugene answers. This deception is again discovered, and the couple split.

Eugene’s final taming is signified, like the marriage, by changes to the apartment. After they have broken up, Eugene invites Chantal to come to the apartment. When she arrives, she does not see him but hears the sounds of dogs barking. Her puppy walks up the stairs and she discovers a door. Inside the now-accessible top floor, Chantal finds Eugene, along with numerous dogs, chained up inside a doghouse. His transformation from bachelor to married man to fully subjugated married man is complete. And, as his identity changes, so does the appearance and design of

his apartment, from comfortable bachelor pad with photographic studio, to feminized redecorated apartment, to doghouse.

The motif of redecoration in the bachelor apartment plot signals the degree to which the apartment is identified with the bachelor: changes in his identity require changes in the apartment's decoration, and likewise changes in the apartment are transformative for him. Two films—*Pillow Talk* and *That Funny Feeling*—employ this motif to show the man's taming under feminizing influences and, at the same time, bring into play a queer reading of the bachelor. My use of the word *queer*, here and elsewhere, signifies partially that there are gay elements and gay references in these texts; but more importantly, I would suggest, along with Alexander Doty, that “basically heterocentrist texts can contain queer elements” and that there are a “wide range of positions within culture that are ‘queer’ or non-, anti-, or contra-straight” (3). Rather than serving as an alternative reading, then, the queer reading highlights “the complex range of queerness that has been in popular culture texts and their audiences all along” (16).

As mentioned at the start of the chapter, *Pillow Talk* links the bachelor's décor to seduction more insistently than any other mid-century film. The film's love interest, Jan Morrow (Doris Day) also has a modern apartment, but differences emerge. Rather than a lair for seduction, Jan's apartment reflects her identity as an interior designer: it signifies taste. Her apartment, like Brad's, has an exposed brick wall and some open shelving, plus a modern curved couch. However, her apartment is decorated in pastels—yellow and white for the bedroom, and pink, gray, and blue for the living room and kitchen. Her apartment has feminine touches: floral curtains, vases of flowers scattered throughout, a cherub lamp, and the like. We see her most often in typically feminine spots—in the kitchen or sitting at her vanity mirror. And, until Brad invades her space at the end of the film, we never see a man in her apartment.

Brad's apartment reflects a lifestyle and philosophy like *Playboy's*. His apartment functions as a magnet and lair. We see numerous conquests in his apartment, including the female phone inspector who melts as soon as Brad opens the door. Brad explicitly enunciates an antimarriage philosophy: “Before a man gets married, he's, uh, like a tree in the forest . . . then, he's chopped down, his branches are cut off, he's stripped of his bark . . . Then this tree is taken to the mill. And when it comes out, it's no longer a tree. It's a vanity table, a breakfast nook, baby crib, and the newspaper that lines the family garbage can.” This analysis obvi-

ously paints the man's subjection under marriage as a form of castration, his "branches" cut. More tellingly, it uses the metaphor of furniture and décor. In Brad's rendering, the married man is transformed from his natural state—a tree—to a domestic fabrication—furniture. In this sense, he becomes "womanized" décor, the stuff of "a boudoir-kitchen-nursery, dreamed up by women, for women, and as if males did not exist as males" (Wylie, 77).

Not surprisingly, then, when Brad is "tamed" and elects to get married, he expresses his desire in terms of redecorating. Having offended Jan, he seeks to win her back by hiring her as decorator, in the hopes of spending time with her and in an effort to show his willingness to be reformed. When Jan sees his apartment, especially its technologies of seduction, she asks, "Why redecorate? It's so functional for your purposes!" Brad's response indicates that in redecorating his apartment, she would be changing his personality: "Not anymore. That's why I want you to redecorate. That bed is the first thing I want you to get rid of. And anything else you think is in bad taste, throw it out. I want you to make this the kind of place that, well, *you'd* feel comfortable in." In giving Jan carte blanche, Brad opens himself to her feminizing influence; he invites her to project herself into the space and to remake it as an apartment for two, rather than a site of playboy seduction.

Jan's redecoration, however, takes a different turn: she queers the playboy aesthetic. Rather than eradicate the overly sexualized décor, she heightens it, turning his apartment into "a violent parody of the playboy's den" (Babington and Evans, 210), "a cross between a Turkish bordello and the tent setting of *Son of the Sheik*" (Cohan, 265). Rather than the clean modern playboy look, the new décor is gaudy, cramped and much too colorful, with incoherent combinations rather than "manly" juxtapositions of textures. Some walls of the apartment are bright red, others papered with a bright orange heraldic motif. A moose head hangs on the wall. Multicolored beads and tassels hang from the ceiling, and a bright multicolored canopy hangs over the open bed. Art Nouveau nude statues, a potbellied stove, and a Tiffany lamp dot the room. The stairway has magenta shag carpeting, the rest of the room pink carpet. And the piano, formerly site of Brad's work and seduction, has been replaced with a pink player piano that only plays "You're My Inspiration" (see plates 4 and 5).

Much of the decoration, such as the Art Nouveau statues and Tiffany lamp, are already associated with a gay camp aesthetic (Sontag). The

colors too, and especially the pink and purple flooring, are marked as queer.⁶ In addition, the queering of the space furthers a running gag in the film about Brad's sexuality that links queerness and decorating: Brad has adopted a fake persona, Rex Stetson. In his "real" persona as Brad, Hudson suggests to Jan that the reason Rex hasn't made a pass at her may be that he is gay: "Must I spell it out? . . . There are some men who just, well, they're very devoted to their mother. You know, the type that likes to collect cooking recipes, exchange bits of gossip." Then, in his Rex persona, Brad plays off the homophobia he has engendered in her. Raising his pinky while he takes a sip of his cocktail, he wonders aloud whether he can get the recipe for a dip, because he knows his mother would love it. Most tellingly, he asks Jan about her work: "Must be very exciting, working with all them colors and fabrics and all."

Pillow Talk plays off the fine line between the heterosexual playboy aesthetic and a homosexual aesthetic. It points to the potential queerness of the bachelor's apartment, and his activities as cook, host, and decorator. This doubling of the heterosexual and homosexual parallels the theme of doubling in the film, as Brad adopts a fake persona as Rex. His impersonation of Rex has a queer element, insofar as Rex's accent is modeled on one of Brad's girlfriend's and since Brad casts some doubt on Rex's sexual orientation. Yet despite the queerness represented by Rex, it is Brad, the playboy, who is the closeted persona. Jan knows Brad only by voice, as they share a telephone party-line. For her, Brad is identified with the telephone located in his apartment. By contrast, Rex, meant to be a shy rural Texas gentleman, is associated with public spaces; such as the nightclub where he first meets Jan, his hotel room, and the numerous public places we see him and Jan attend in an extended montage sequence of dates—including the Statue of Liberty, Madison Square Garden, Rockefeller Center, and various bars and clubs. As opposed to this publicness, Brad must maintain secrecy. In order to maintain the ruse, Brad's true identity and his true sexual desires and past history must remain hidden from Jan. Nonetheless, Brad's true identity is always threatening to be revealed, as when his friend Jonathan (Tony Randall) spots him at a restaurant. And, for those in the know, his true identity as a playboy is visible beneath his performance—so that the driver of a horse-drawn carriage in Central Park and the singer in a piano bar both recognize his motives as a seducer. Thus, while he has a bifurcated identity, with a separate public and private self, the boundaries between those selves are porous and available to collapse (this, of course, is further complicated if one takes

Rock Hudson's own complicated closeted identity into account). Therefore, when Jan redecorates his apartment, it is an act of disclosure rather than transformation: she reveals one of many identities lurking in his apartment—an identity that is simultaneously a caricature of the playboy and somewhat queer. The full implications of this are foreclosed, however, when Brad tells Jan he wanted to marry her and she uses his technologies of seduction to lock him into the redecorated apartment with her.

Both the theme of redecoration and the motif of the gay interior designer appear in the film *That Funny Feeling*. In this film, Bobby Darin portrays the bachelor, Tom Milford. His apartment has a black, white, and red color scheme with lots of wood paneling, leather, modern paintings, fireplace, a bar with barstools facing into the kitchen, and hi-fi and TV on an entertainment wall. Seeming to have been schooled by the *Esquire's Handbook for Hosts*, Tom's apartment is the site of near-constant parties—celebrating, for instance, 13 October 1792, when the cornerstone of the White House was laid, or the birthday of the Statue of Liberty. Sandra Dee plays Joan Howell, Tom's maid, who knows him only as a voice on the phone and a messy apartment. After literally bumping into each other, twice as pedestrians then again in a taxicab fender bender, they start dating. Ashamed to take Tom back to her cramped apartment, Joan spontaneously and unknowingly has him drop her off at *his* apartment on West Sixty-second Street, since she believes Tom Milford to be away on business. He does not identify himself or uncover the deception, because he likes her. She identifies herself as Joan Milford, and he claims to be Tom Baffle ("Like confused?" she asks. "Very," he replies.)

The theme of redecoration emerges as Joan must alter Tom's apartment to look more feminine. First, she pawns his suits to get money. This action initiates another mistaken identity plot as the pawnbroker assumes that she has been wronged and abandoned by the suits' owner. With the money, Joan buys fabric and supplies. With help from her roommate, Audrey (Nita Talbot) and friend Luther (Larry Storch), she sews slipcovers, curtains, and wall coverings. Instead of black and white, with touches of red, the apartment is given a blue-and-white color scheme with touches of yellow. Rather than a mix of textures, the apartment is given a more unified appearance. The leather couch is covered in white with blue chintz pillows. An armchair and ottoman are covered in the same blue and white chintz. The dinette chairs are covered in yellow and curtains are blue and yellow (see plates 6 and 7).

In redecorating, Joan removes the modern paintings and puts up sentimental pictures of fawns instead. The paintings form part of a subplot that highlights the role of the apartment as closet. Tom's friend, Harvey (Donald O'Connor), has been using Tom's apartment as a secret storage space for his modern art collection, so that the wife he is divorcing can't find those assets. In part, this aligns with what Sharon Marcus calls the museum plot in the apartment genre. In her description, the museum plot "transfers objects from public spaces to a private one and then details the effort required to protect that space from invasion . . . the hero's desire to keep his museum closed suggests an opposing desire to force it open—to make it, that is, more like a transparent apartment" (*Apartment Stories*, 62). Here, Harvey worries incessantly that Joan has stolen his paintings. He fears not only that he will lose the valuable artworks, but also that the existence of the paintings will be made known to the outside world, in particular his ex-wife. While Harvey's use of the apartment converges with the museum plot, his use of the bachelor pad to hide his secrets from his ex-wife also invokes the closet. This reading is furthered by Harvey's slightly queer aspect—he is a nervous, wealthy, much-divorced man like Tony Randall's Jonathan in *Pillow Talk*, the stereotypical queer best friend. The décor of Harvey's apartment—a palatial apartment with lots of marble and tile, decorated in pastel blue and white, with Louis XIV furniture, faux finishes, and gilded details—is also readable as queer, or at least not as *Playboy*-masculine.

While the paintings suggest that the apartment can be used as a closet, and Harvey is portrayed as something of a closet queer, the paintings also bring the stereotype of the gay interior decorator into play. When Tom sees his redecorated apartment, he does not see the paintings, and fears that Joan has sold them. In order to find out what happened to them, he pretends to be an interior decorator. He tells Joan, "As far as my interest in your apartment is concerned, why, it is purely professional . . . You see, I'm interested in things that people live with—furniture, accessories, paintings . . . I'm an interior decorator." When Joan expresses some surprise at Tom's profession, presumably because of its feminine and gay connotations, he asks, "Is it so strange that I enjoy chintzes and frilly gingerbread knick-knacks?" When she asks to see his apartment, he takes her to Harvey's, thus furthering his association with a feminized or queer aesthetic.

The assumption that a male interior decorator must be gay is underscored through a running gag in the film about eavesdropping (see

plate 8). First, one bartender overhears Joan tell Tom that her job is a “secret.” Then, as Tom and Joan play twenty questions to allow Tom to guess her job, the bartender hears Tom ask Joan questions like “Could I avail myself of your services?” “Could what you do be done in an apartment?” “Are your clients mostly male?” and “Would what you do bring extra comfort and happiness to me?” When the bartender steps away, Tom is relieved to discover that Joan’s clients do not need to be present when she does her work. Not hearing this, the bartender identifies her as a “swinger.” When she and Tom come to the bar a second time, he tells a second bartender to go and get an earful. But, instead of hearing Joan say anything that makes her sound like a swinger, this bartender hears Tom identify himself as an interior decorator and mocks his fellow bartender for thinking there could be anything going on between Tom and Joan.

As in *Pillow Talk*, when Joan discovers Tom’s deception, she takes revenge by turning his apartment into a parody of the bachelor pad. In this case, she returns the apartment to its original decoration and prepares a large party, not unlike those Tom has at the beginning of the film. She invites every woman in Tom’s address book, but not a single man, and tells the women to come dressed as ladies of the evening. His bachelor pad remade into a bordello, Tom tells Joan he wants her to marry him and move into his apartment permanently. In this way, the apartment is changed from a bachelor pad to a married couple’s apartment. At the same time, Harvey recovers his paintings, removing any connotations of the closet.

The Hideaway

While these examples of the apartment plot represent the bachelor pad as a magnet and lair for women, others play off this fantasy by placing married men in bachelor settings. This is, famously, the plot of *The Apartment*, as C. C. Baxter (Jack Lemmon) loans his bachelor apartment to a coterie of married men from the office in hopes of advancement. Baxter’s apartment is hardly the bachelor pad of the playboy imaginary—it is an unassuming one-bedroom, modestly furnished, with few accoutrements of the playboy lifestyle. Nonetheless, for the married man, it provides a bedroom in the city. In the logic of the film, married men need an apartment in order to regain their sexual freedom. The Burt Bacharach/Hal David song “Where Can You Take a Girl?” from *Promises, Promises*,

the musical remake of *The Apartment*, candidly asserts that apartments are for extramarital affairs:

Where can you, if you're a man, take a girl, if she's a girl,
 That you can't ever take home for a little drink,
 Like other guys who live alone can do?
 That is the reason why, most married men are true.
 . . .

One night to be a man and not a mouse.
 Most married men play cards.
 Most single men play house.
 We like to play house, too.
 All we need is one place,
 A small apartment.

This song treats male sexual desire as an open secret, and claims that men are only monogamous if and when they do not have an appropriate hide-away to have sex. It suggests that married men envy their single counterparts and aspire to be like them, “playing house” in an apartment on their weekly night of freedom. In the film, the married men make Baxter’s apartment a bachelor pad by bringing single available women there. By using his apartment, they gain a false sense of freedom and mastery, but this fantasized mobility is tenuous at best. It is, on the one hand, only an occasional identity dependent upon Baxter’s good graces. When Baxter decides to rescind the offer, the men lose their credibility as dates. And, on the other hand, they do not have full mobility and cannot take their dates out in public—they must keep their affairs secreted in the apartment or shady bars. Ultimately, one of the men is found out and forced to divorce his wife.

Like the married men, the apartment figures Baxter as a playboy bachelor, but also produces cycles of secrecy and disclosure. Baxter himself is a regular Joe, unmarried but unable to maintain the playboy lifestyle, and unremarkable at the office. However, through the activities of the married men who host numerous women at his apartment—creating the sights and sounds of women coming and going, as well as telltale bottles in the garbage—he is mistaken for a playboy by his neighbor, who scolds him for his promiscuous ways, and by the brother-in-law of Fran Kubelik (Shirley MacLaine) who gives him a black eye. At the same time, in tandem with the married men’s dual identities as husbands and playboys, Baxter has a secret life as pimp of sorts, enabling extramarital

affairs. Ultimately, in order for Baxter to abandon both the false playboy persona and the role as pimp, and to pursue a relationship with Fran, he has to vacate the apartment.

Boys Night Out enacts a more elaborate plot to move married men into a bachelor pad. In the film, four suburban men, three married and one divorced, become weary of their lackluster efforts to bring more excitement to their lives through repeated boys' nights out. Reading an article in *Playmate* magazine which lists "Ten Things Every Ideal Bachelor Pad Should Have," they decide to pool their money to rent an apartment in the city and each use it one night a week. The divorced man is enlisted to sign the lease, or "be the beard." But when one of the men complains about the list of "Ten Things" — "Number One, we don't have. Without Number One, who needs the rest?" — implying that this "first item" is a playmate, the men decide to hire a woman to live in the apartment. The apartment is a perfect bachelor pad — with wine rack, bar, hi-fi controls in every room, and a mirrored ceiling in the bedroom. The girl, Cathy (Kim Novak), however, is not the perfect playmate. She is secretly a sociology student studying the sexual habits of married suburban men. She views their effort to live a playboy lifestyle as "the modern pipe dream." Cathy avoids having sex with the men through various ruses and instead tape-records their conversations.

More important than providing sex, Cathy serves a mirroring function (replacing the bedroom's mirrored ceiling). As each of the three married men arrive for their night, she allows them to be their ideal self, a self shown as repressed and emasculated by their wives. So, for instance, at home, when George Drayton (Tony Randall) talks, his wife Marge (Janet Blair) never lets him finish a sentence and never listens to him, obsessed as she is with crosswords (all puns intended, as George and Marge speak at cross-purposes or speak crossly). But with Cathy, George talks all night and she listens. Doug Jackson (Howard Duff) likes to fix things, but his wife never lets him, presumably because the sight of him repairing in the garage would be too *déclassé*. Cathy keeps him busy — and fulfilled — with handyman tasks, like fixing the hi-fi and the kitchen sink, and so on. Whereas Howard McIllenny (Howard Morris) is forced to duplicate his wife's reducing diet, despite having no weight problem of his own, Cathy prepares him lots of delicious and fattening food. Thus, without ever entering the bedroom, the men experience an escape from the confines of home and can assert some autonomy from their wives.

The apartment in *Boys Night Out*, however, is as much a closet as a mir-

ror. Emphasizing the secretive nature of their activity, each man fabricates a variant of the same story—that he is taking a course at the New School for Social Research one night a week. (Given Cathy’s research in sociology, their lie runs closer to the truth than they realize.) Additionally, the men lie to one another or, rather, omit to tell the truth that none of them are sleeping with Cathy. Like the closeted gay male, who discloses his identity in varying degrees to various audiences at various times, the men accord different levels of knowledge about their activities to different people at different times; sometimes performing a masquerade of playboy manliness, sometimes masquerading as dutiful husbands, sometimes performing their ideal self (e.g., as talker, handyman). However, these multiple masquerades are vulnerable to disclosure. The apartment is spied on by a nosy neighbor and a private detective, each of whom details the men’s comings and goings. In addition, Cathy records their conversations and plays the tapes to her professor. The men’s secret identities are nearly revealed when Cathy goes to their suburb and interviews their wives for her research; and again when Cathy comes to a town Little League game after Fred Drayton (James Garner), the divorced man, proposes to her. The men are finally “outed” when their wives get drunk and go to the apartment to confront them—finding all of them with Cathy. At this juncture, the men’s asexual foray into a playboy lifestyle affirms rather than negates their marriages. At film’s end, all four “boys” have a night out with all four wives, Cathy included.

While *The Apartment* and *Boys Night Out* shows married men seeking out bachelor pleasures through their use of an apartment, *The Seven Year Itch* shows a married man’s apartment metamorphose into a bachelor apartment. When the wife and child of Richard Sherman (Tom Ewell) head to the beach, Sherman becomes one of the city’s many “summer bachelors.” Sherman tries to resist “the urges of the middle-aged male” that he reads about in a manuscript he’s editing. He eats at a vegetarian restaurant, and locks up his cigarettes and alcohol in the apartment. But the apartment building conspires against him. It is a small walk-up brownstone, with the Shermans on the first floor; a married couple, the Kaufmanns, on the second floor; and two men—“interior decorators or something”—on the top floor. When the Kaufmanns take a summer vacation, they sublet to Marilyn Monroe, known only as “The Girl.”

Sherman’s encounter with The Girl fits nicely with the *Playboy* imagery of easily accessible women. Sherman first meets The Girl, a sometimes nude model, when she accidentally drops a flowerpot on his head

from the balcony above. She is wearing only a towel. He invites her downstairs for a drink. Then, after she tells him that she’s been sleeping in the bathtub to stay cool, he entices her with the bait of air-conditioning. Later, she discovers that an internal staircase connects the apartments and she drops into his, cocktail shaker in hand, telling him that they can go back and forth all summer long. With Monroe on the scene, all Sherman’s closeted desires—for sex, cigarettes, and alcohol—come to the fore. He smokes, drinks, and tries to get fresh with Monroe. Ultimately, however, The Girl proves to be a mirroring device more than a sexual playmate. In her eyes, he is sweet and attractive, very desirable, and someone over whom his wife should be jealous. When she tells him this, it bolsters his sagging self-confidence and sends him running to his wife, leaving the cool air-conditioned apartment to The Girl. Thus, as in *Boys Night Out*, the man’s temporary foray into a playboy lifestyle affirms his marriage.

Cox and Box

Cox: What shall part us?

Box: What shall tear us asunder?

Cox: Box!

Box: Cox! [*About to embrace—BOX stops, seizes COX’s hand, and looks eagerly in his face.*] You’ll excuse the apparent insanity of the remark, but the more I gaze on your features, the more I’m convinced that you’re my long lost brother.

Cox: The very observation I was going to make you.

Box: Ah—tell me—in mercy tell me—have you such a thing as a strawberry mark on your left arm?

Cox: No!

Box: Then it is he! [*They rush into each other’s arms*]

Cox: Of course we stop where we are!

Box: Of course!

Box and Cox, A Romance of Real Life in One Act was written by John Maddison Morton, Esq. in 1847. In 1886 it was put to music by Arthur S. Sullivan of Gilbert and Sullivan fame, and renamed *Cox and Box, or the Long*

Lost Brothers. In both versions of the play, a Mr. Cox and a Mr. Box unknowingly share an apartment. The landlord, Sergeant Bouncer, explains the ruse: “Luckily they’ve never met yet; for Mr. Box is hard at work at a newspaper office all night and doesn’t come home until morning, and Mr. Cox is busy making hats all day long, and doesn’t come home till night; so that I am getting double rent for my room, and neither of my lodgers is any wiser for it.” When Cox and Box meet and uncover the deception, we learn that they share a woman as well as a room. Box was engaged to a “widow at Ramsgate,” Penelope Ann Wiggins, but faked a suicide to escape marrying her. Cox is now engaged to the same woman and tries to give her back to Box. But both Box and Cox are saved from the marriage when Mrs. Wiggins marries a third man, a Mr. Knox. Cox and Box then decide to stay in the apartment, where nothing shall tear them asunder.

This elaborate male roommate plot will serve as a point of entry to a variant on the bachelor pad apartment plot. Although the image of the bachelor pad is that of an apartment inhabited by one man, some apartment plots focus on male roommates. Often, like Cox and Box, their relationship with each other substitutes for their relationship with a woman. These films put pressure on the image of the bachelor playboy by placing a homosocial relationship inside the apartment. The trope of the male roommate shows the slippage between the homosocial and homosexual and also between the gendered binaries of masculine/feminine and married/single. As well, it troubles the distinction between in and out, insofar as going in—to the apartment—seemingly forces the roommates out—of the closet.

The Martin and Lewis vehicle *Artists and Models* locates the male roommate scenario at the border between adolescence and full maturation, defined in the fifties context as becoming a breadwinning married male (Cohan). In the film, Rick Todd (Dean Martin) and Eugene Fullstack (Jerry Lewis), an aspiring painter and writer, respectively, share a small one-bedroom apartment in Greenwich Village. Eugene, like many Lewis characters, seems stalled in adolescence. He is obsessed with comic books, so much so that he cannot hold down a job. In the pre-“graphic novel” era of the world of the film, comics are depicted as strictly for kids, who are seen to be vulnerable to their dangerous influence (à la Fredric Wertham’s famous *Seduction of the Innocent*, published in 1955, the year of the film’s release). Eugene aims to write children’s books about such innocent characters as Little Goosey Goose and

Freddie the Field Mouse, but the comics penetrate his subconscious so that he only "writes" a luridly violent comic book—about "Vincent the Vulture," "half man, half boy, half vulture"—which he dreams aloud, talking in his sleep, every night. More boy than man, or vulture, Eugene seems sexually immature, especially compared to Rick or in relation to Bessie Sparrowbrush (Shirley MacLaine), the aggressive hoyden from upstairs who pursues him. Eugene's youthful affect is furthered by his lack of cynicism, his playfulness, and his faith in make-believe worlds. As he joyfully prepares and eats an imaginary steak, he sings to his starving roommate, "You have to pretend, 'cause then your dreams come true" and "life is full of happy endings, when you pretend."

In contrast to Eugene, Rick is sexually mature, sophisticated, and cynical. However, his full maturation is also stalled, largely due to his affiliation with Eugene. For starters, Rick cannot attain success as a painter. Thus, he tries to get commercial jobs, but because of problems that occur when he partners with absent-minded Eugene, he is fired many times. He therefore must "borrow" Eugene's stories of Vincent the Vulture to write and draw comic books, obliging him to inhabit Eugene's childish fantasies. Likewise, Rick's success with women depends upon his association with Eugene. Since Rick's ability to work is hampered by Eugene, he claims that he cannot afford to take women on dates. Threatening to move out, he tells Eugene, "You know, on account of you, I'm going to be an old maid."

Just as the film plays on the vulnerable border between adolescence and manhood, it also plays on the slippage between homosocial and homosexual pairings. In claiming that Eugene will make him an old maid, Rick points to Eugene's negative impact on his ability to become a breadwinner. At the same time, however, the film offers numerous suggestions that Rick will become an "old maid" because his relationship with Eugene precludes or substitutes for heterosexual romance. When Rick threatens to move out of the apartment, he describes his decision in terms of marriage: "Divorce is the only way out. We've been together too long . . . You can have the whole apartment. Full custody." Rick and Eugene's relationship certainly has queer elements. Eugene, for instance, sits on Rick's lap. They share a bedroom, sleeping in twin beds. One extended sequence delightfully suggests that they have a baby together: Rick (rather oddly) takes a bath in the middle of the day with the door open. He gets a phone call on the shared telephone three flights down. Eugene answers it. Getting only partial information each time he

speaks to the telephone caller, Eugene must go back and forth, up and down the stairs, to get the full message for Rick. He enters the bathroom four times, and briefly joins Rick in the tub, eventually conveying the message that the comic book publisher wants to have lunch with Rick. When Rick asks, "Where?" Eugene returns to the telephone a fifth time. Back in the bathroom, exhausted from climbing, and unable to speak, he does a pantomime, first acting like a stork, then wrapping a grapefruit in a blanket and cradling it like a baby to signify "The Stork Club." At the end of the film, Rick and Eugene pair with upstairs roommates Abigail (Dorothy Malone) and Bessie in a musical number that mimics a double wedding. The song they sing, however, reprises Eugene's song, "When You Pretend," suggesting that the "happy ending" of a marriage is only "pretend," a masquerade.

Like *Artists and Models*, *The Odd Couple* also maps the language of marriage onto its male roommates. Here, rather than adolescent immaturity, the queer homosocial relationship takes place after both men have been married. Divorced, they seem unable to give up the notion of marriage and so read their relationship in terms of it. When Oscar Madison (Walter Matthau) invites his friend Felix Unger (Jack Lemmon) to move into his palatial eight-room apartment, he pleads like a would-be fiancé: "Don't you understand? I want you to move in . . . I can't stand living alone, that's why. For crying out loud, I'm proposing to you. What do you want, a ring?" When Oscar kicks Felix out, he returns to the marriage metaphor: "It's all over, Felix, the whole marriage. We're getting an annulment." While living together, the men project the memory of their marriage partners onto each other. Felix calls Oscar Frances, his ex-wife's name. And, when they part, they say, "So long, Frances," "So long, Blanche."

Beyond the metaphoric relationship their status as roommates bears to marriage, *The Odd Couple* script has a through line of suggestive queer jokes. Even before Felix moves in, Oscar adopts a camp manner of speaking, calling one of his poker buddies, Vinnie (John Fiedler) "darling" and threatening to tell another poker player's wife that he is wearing a dress in Central Park. On the first night Felix moves in, he gets a neck spasm. Oscar gives him a massage, saying "Bend over . . . if this hurts, Felix, tell me because I don't know what I'm doing." After Felix moves in, and Oscar tires of nights at home, he tells Felix he needs an erotic release: "Unless I get to touch something soft in the next two weeks, I'm in big trouble." Felix asks, "Oh, you mean women?" Oscar answers,

obliquely and somewhat queerly, “If you want to give it a name, alright, women.” And, explaining to the Pigeon sisters how his apartment is so clean, Oscar, referencing Felix, says, “Oh, I have a man who comes in every night.” The Pigeon sisters, with a *Carry On* level of innuendo, remark, “Oh, aren’t you the lucky one?”

The theme song for *The Odd Couple* brings the latent queerness of the film to the fore. While Neal Hefti’s instrumental composition is well-known and was used for the opening credits of the TV show as well as the film, the lyrics, written by Sammy Cahn, are less familiar. Nonetheless, a vocal version was released on the film’s original soundtrack album. This extraordinary lyric is worth reproducing in its entirety:

No matter where they go,
 They are known as The Couple.
 They’re never seen alone,
 So they’re known as The Couple.
 As I’ve indicated,
 They are never quite separated.
 They are peas in a pod.
 Don’t you think that it’s odd?
 Their habits, I confess,
 None can guess
 With The Couple.
 If one says no, it’s yes,
 More or less, with The Couple.
 But, they’re laugh provoking.
 Yet, they really don’t know they’re joking.
 Don’t you find, when love is blind,
 It’s kind of odd?
 Don’t you think it’s odd?
 Don’t you think it’s odd?
 Don’t you think it’s odd?⁷

Most interpretations of the “odd” in *The Odd Couple* would point to the pairing of opposites—one man messy, the other neat—and suggest that the two men make a mismatched couple. Cahn’s interpretation, by contrast, suggests that what is odd is that they are a couple. In his lyrics, the men are not antagonistic opposites but “peas in a pod, never quite separated.” They live in some secrecy, “their habits . . . none can guess.” And they are united by a love that is blind (to the fact that they are both

men?). This lyric, in circulation at the time of the film's release, accentuates the potential queerness of the text and provides at least one contemporary queer reading of "The Couple."

In addition to the queer subtext, *The Odd Couple* explicitly and implicitly invokes the discourse of the closet. At one point Felix hurts his arm throwing a cup, prompted by Oscar, who has pushed him to express anger. After, Oscar disgustedly asks Felix the rhetorical question, "Why don't you go live in a closet?" However, Felix already lives in a closet. He comes to Oscar's apartment to try on a new identity, that of divorced man. From a certain perspective, his new status as divorced man provides an opportunity to enter into a bachelor lifestyle, as Oscar has done. However, living together, Felix and Oscar are not playboys but virtually another married couple. In the film, the married poker buddies suggest that the homosocial pairing produces a playboy lifestyle. Leaving the apartment to get food for his pregnant wife, Murray (Herb Edelman) says, "Marriage. These two playboys sure got the life, eh, Vinnie," and Vinnie concurs, "Some life those playboys got." But Felix points out that the playboy identity projected onto them is a masquerade at best: "That's funny, isn't it, Oscar? They think we're happy. They don't know, they just don't know . . . Playboys? Us? That's really funny. I think they actually envy us . . . Don't you see the irony of it?" The irony is both that Felix and Oscar are more like a married couple than playboys and that Felix is unwilling or incapable of assuming the playboy mantle because he is still attached to his wife. He might try to put on a public face as a playboy when the Pigeon sisters come downstairs for a date, but he inevitably discloses his real identity as a faithful ex-husband, weeping over his lost marriage.

At the same time, Felix has another identity that is only revealed when he moves into Oscar's apartment. He is a neurotic hypochondriac, an obsessive-compulsive neat freak. Until his divorce, this identity was housed in the suburbs, known mainly to his wife and children. But his divorce forces Felix to disclose this side of himself. Felix's neuroses are an open secret that Oscar has chosen, throughout their friendship, to ignore. Once forced to acknowledge it, Oscar is horrified by this aspect of Felix's personality and tries to repress or conceal it. But it keeps revealing itself—to the poker buddies and the Pigeon sisters, who see Felix fuss over cooking and cleaning; to Oscar's work friends, who take his endless calls to Oscar about cooking and shopping for dinner; and to

people at a restaurant, who hear Felix's famous "honk" to clear his sinus passages.

While many aspects of Felix's personality could be aligned with a playboy lifestyle—such as his interests in cooking and decorating—his failure to instrumentalize them for seduction mark those interests as neurotic and feminine, so much so that he, rather than his wife, seems to have been the "womanizing" influence in the home. In this text, the fear of so-called womanizing overtakes the attraction to those "feminine" aspects of the playboy lifestyle; and Oscar's authenticity as a bachelor depends upon his utter refusal to participate in domestic activities, such as cooking, cleaning, or decorating. While Oscar might have tolerated Felix if the cooking fed a playboy lifestyle, he must in the end force Felix to vacate the premises in order to extricate himself from the queer marriage and return to his bachelor status.

While *Artists and Models* and *The Odd Couple* each bracket the male roommate as a premarriage and postmarriage stage, *Rope* figures the male roommate as potentially a permanent condition signifying a gay relationship. As Robin Wood and others have pointed out, most spectators now read the two murderers—Brandon Shaw (John Dall) and Phillip Morgan (Farley Granger)—as gay ("The Murderous Gays"). This reading has been furthered by later interpretations of the Leopold and Loeb characters, notably Tom Kalin's film *Swoon* (1991). However, the characters' gayness in *Rope* is not made explicit: instead, like most Hays Code representations of gay and lesbian characters, the characterization depends upon coding and innuendo. As D. A. Miller suggests, homosexuality in *Rope* is signaled through "coital" dialogue; stereotypes, such as the prep school for boys; and performance, as Dall and Granger clearly make legible the sexual release that occurs at the moment of strangulation to suggest that the murderous act substitutes for a sexual one. To a certain degree, the coding here fits into an auteurist homophobia. Brandon and Phillip are coded as gay in the respect that they are rendered sociopaths. As John Hepworth has suggested, Hitchcock equates "homosexuality with moral depravity and pathological derangement" (193). In this sense, Brandon and Phillip can be read alongside Mrs. Danvers (Judith Anderson) in *Rebecca* (1940) and Bruno Anthony (Farley Granger) in *Strangers on a Train* (1951) as "crowd-pleasing scapegoats" (Hepworth, 188).

At the same time, a queer reading of Brandon and Phillip also relies upon the stereotyped assumption that two men living together are gay.

This assumption is at play in *The Seven Year Itch*, when Richard Sherman's voice-over narration identifies his upstairs neighbors as "interior decorators or something." Without knowing their profession, Sherman nonetheless labels the two men "interior decorators," which, as I have suggested, is code for gay, "or something." This stereotype also underpins the advice in *Sex and the Single Girl*. In her discussion of how to spot a homosexual, Helen Gurley Brown writes: "Suppose he's over thirty and lives with another man. The situation bears watching. If he has a male roommate and he's over *forty*, there's very little doubt about his sex. He's a girl" (28). Male roommates are also stereotyped as gay in Jaffe's *The Best of Everything*. Barbara considers her apartment building as a "House of Women" because it has all female tenants, except for a "strange, studious boy" (possibly code for queer) who lives with his mother in one apartment and two male roommates (definitely coded gay) who share another: "The two middle-aged men . . . lived together in a one-and-a-half down the hall and looked more like nice old ladies than men. In fact, one of her dates had said once that they probably live in the one-and-a-half because it made it easier for them to chase each other" (Jaffe, 88). Later, the same novel again points to gay male roommates in much more blunt language. The playboy bachelor Dexter Key invites naïve April to his apartment. As she asks about the building, he identifies his neighbors as "two faggots who live downstairs." April fails to understand: "Two what?" Dexter reiterates with a different derogatory slang term, "Fairies . . . I have fairies at the bottom of my garden" (117).

As Robin Wood has suggested, the famously restricted *mise-en-scène* and framing of *Rope* contributes to the queer reading, as much by what it does not show as what it does. Although dialogue references two bedrooms, we never see either one. Whereas both *Artists and Models* and *The Odd Couple* show the bedroom—so we understand that Eugene and Rick share a room with separate twin beds, and that Oscar and Felix have their own rooms with double beds—*Rope* shows only the living room and entranceway to the apartment. "It's not simply that *Rope* cannot tell us the two men sleep together; it also cannot tell us clearly that they *don't*, since that would imply they might" (Wood, "The Murderous Gays," 209). Dialogue, though, insinuates that they do share a bedroom. When told that the telephone is in the bedroom, Phillip's previous girlfriend Janet (Joan Chandler) remarks, somewhat nonsensically, "How cozy."

In representing "the love that dare not speak its name" without explicitly naming it, *Rope* participates in the discourse of the closet. To

the degree that we can read Phillip and Brandon as gay, their relationship would seem to be a closeted one, contained in the apartment. The narrative, moreover, invokes the closet, as the two murderers conceal a dead body in their apartment and demonstrate simultaneous and contrary desires to, on the one hand, secrete the body and, on the other, disclose it; to get away with the perfect crime *and* reveal it to an audience. Phillip, especially, wants to expose the secret to Rupert Cadell (James Stewart), his older male mentor, a bachelor of indeterminate sexuality. Because both the murder and the potentially gay relationship between Brandon and Phillip are enclosed within the apartment, both are vulnerable to intrusion. We see this clearly in the opening shot, when the camera travels through the window to witness the murder, suggesting the possibility of an urban gaze from another apartment. And we are aware of it when Rupert returns to the apartment, unannounced, seeking to confirm his as yet unstated fears about what he knows. The risk of disclosure finally comes to fruition when Rupert hails neighbors by firing a gun, thus drawing the community and the law to the apartment and revealing Phillip and Brandon’s secret.

Public Privacy

If, as I have suggested, the domestic urbanism of the apartment occupies an indeterminate space—neither fully public nor fully private—what might be called “public privacy,” then *Rope*, along with the other films I’ve discussed here, suggests the degree to which public privacy makes the apartment dweller vulnerable. If the bachelor pad partially functions as a closet in which one can try on, secrete, or disclose one’s identity, it is nonetheless a permeable space. Rather than a simple container, the closet is a space meant to be opened and closed, but is often left open, to communicate with other rooms. The bachelor pad, like the closet, is always vulnerable to intrusion: like all apartments in the apartment plot, it is a porous space.

The Boys in the Band crystallizes many of the issues I have been discussing, including the use of the apartment as a mirror and closet. Here, however, the queerness of the bachelor pad is explicit. *The Boys in the Band* is, by most accounts, the “first Hollywood feature to take a close-up look at queer culture” (G. Morris) and the first one “in which all but one of the characters were self-identified homosexuals” (Rickard). While heralded

as a film that exposes gay culture to the mainstream, *The Boys in the Band* has also been denigrated as a film that can only imagine homosexuality via the self-loathing associated with the closet. The film portrays a cadre of gay male friends and sometime lovers who are, to varying degrees, closeted. Through the device of a birthday party, it situates the men in a Greenwich Village apartment, where they can presumably be “out.” However, the arrival of a straight man to the apartment opens the private party to some scrutiny, suggesting how tenuous one’s control over knowledge about oneself is, even in private.

Although the play *The Boys in the Band* takes place entirely in an apartment, the film opens up the setting slightly by including a montage of shots showing the men prior to their arrival at the party. This opening—scored to a Harpers Bizarre cover of the Cole Porter song “Anything Goes”—shows each man in his public life. Each man’s public persona indicates the different degree to which he is “out” or readable as gay in public. Michael (Kenneth Nelson), wearing a suit, is shown walking the street and then shopping at a men’s clothing store and, later, a gourmet shop. His is the refined bearing of a sophisticated urbanite. Emory (Cliff Gorman) is more transparently gay than Michael. He displays effeminate gestures, works in an interior design studio, and walks a small white poodle on a leash. He is ultimately shown cruising Times Square, where numerous glances indicate his readability as gay and, where, we later discover, he rents the male prostitute Cowboy (Robert La Tourneau) as a birthday present for Harold (Leonard Frey). The most straight-seeming man in the montage is Hank (Laurence Luckbill), who plays basketball. However, after the song ends, we see him nervously enter a gay bar to join Larry (Keith Prentice). In the montage, Larry’s profession as a fashion photographer both signals and obscures his gayness. As we see him wearing a bright shirt and scarf shooting gorgeous models, he could be read as either a fashionable hipster or gay (and he is both). Donald (Frederick Combs) is initially difficult to decipher. He is shown driving a vw Bug, then entering a bookstore. There, the exchange of glances between him and the clerk, Bernard (Reuben Greene), registers as queer coding (given the primacy of the glance as a substitute for gay sex in the movies). He drops off one package of books and picks up another, in an exchange later revealed to be a continuing activity in which Bernard “lends” Donald books from the store.

This opening montage points toward a complex system of mapping and coding that George Chauncey, in *Gay New York*, identifies as key gay

male strategies in New York in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Chauncey, gay men developed a "sexual map of the city" (195), geared toward public spaces—such as streets, parks, beaches, auto-mats, tearooms, and burlesque theaters—where "privacy" or sex could be had in public. In order to move freely through the city, gay men developed a highly codified system of gestures, fashions, conventions of speech, and glances that "allowed them to recognize one another" (187). According to Chauncey, "fairies," like Emory "used codes that were intelligible to straights as well as gays" while other gay men ("queers" in his terminology) "developed codes that were intelligible only to other men familiar with the subculture" (187). The "gay territorialization of the city"—the play between public and private, visible and invisible—meant that "the boundaries of the gay world were thus highly permeable" (204). For Chauncey, gay men's use of public space did not just challenge heteronormativity, but was "part of a more general challenge to dominant culture conceptions" of the boundaries between public and private space and "of the social practices appropriate to each sphere" (204). Elsewhere, as I noted in the introduction, Chauncey discusses the importance of apartments for producing a middle-class gay world. But, here, I want to take up his discussion of public space because his insights into the challenge that gay men posed to dominant conceptions of public and private are relevant to the apartment plot. The apartment plot challenges many conceptions of public and private by exploring the notion of public privacy. In particular, in this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which the bachelor pad links up with the discourse of the closet, and mobilizes public privacy through the interplay between in and out, containment and porousness, secrecy and disclosure.

In *The Boys in the Band*, the movement from outside to inside seems to herald a movement "out" into open gayness. As the men arrive, they acknowledge their gayness to each other in direct references, innuendoes, and dirty jokes. In a sense, the apartment provides a mirror into which they can enact their ideal gay self, a self that cannot exist as fully or openly in the outside world. At the same time, they acknowledge their varying degrees of difficulty and discomfort with their gay identities. We find out about Emory's being beaten, Donald's need for therapy, Michael's obsessive-compulsive shopping and churchgoing, Hank's inability to drop his straight-acting front, and Larry's promiscuity. The friends express their gay identity most freely when they reenact a line dance they did at Fire Island. In a high angle shot, we seem them dance,



15. The line dance on the terrace in *The Boys in the Band*.

laughing, and joyous to Martha and the Vandellas' "Heat Wave" on the apartment's open terrace (see plate 9, figure 15).

However, they are interrupted—and their queerness suddenly made visible, and strange—by the entrance of the straight man, Alan (Peter White), Michael's former college roommate. His entrance snaps the men back into their public selves—Emory continues mincing and calling the men "Mary," but Hank, Michael, and Donald accommodate themselves to Alan's gaze. This intrusion marks a major shift, and eventually leads to Michael coming out to Alan and accusing Alan of being a "closet queen." Shortly after, the party moves indoors from the terrace when a down-pour starts, so that the party is more enclosed (see plate 10).

Alan's entrance is not, however, the only time the apartment is shown as vulnerable to straight surveillance. Earlier, when the doorbell rings, the men think that Harold, the birthday boy, has arrived. But twice they are wrong. First, a delivery boy brings the cake. Then, Cowboy, Emory's gift to Harold, arrives. Each time, we see Michael approach the door cautiously, aware of the potential risk of opening the door. When the cake arrives, Michael steps outside the apartment to take it, while the delivery boy peers curiously past him up the stairs, trying to get a glimpse inside. The sense of the group's vulnerability is furthered by the camera, which frequently shoots the men through exterior windows or through the terrace door, as if spying.

The film animates the metaphor of the closet through attention to

the literal closet. Both the mirror and the closet loom large in the film's mise-en-scène. We see Michael repeatedly change his clothes, trying on new identities for the party. First, he takes off his suit and puts on a paisley robe. Then he puts on a shirt and gray V-neck cashmere sweater, as he does a Judy Garland impersonation. He quickly casts off this sweater and replaces it with an olive green cashmere V-neck, taking it from his amply stocked armoire. He ties a brightly colored pink, yellow, and gray scarf around his neck. He changes into a purple V-neck and removes the scarf after Alan calls to say he will not be stopping by. When Michael changes clothes, he is in his bedroom upstairs, in a space in front of the armoire. In Urbach's analysis, this space is the "ante-closet." The ante-closet is the space in front of the closet "where one selects clothes, where one dresses and undresses oneself, where one changes (349). According to Urbach, the ante-closet extends one representational range; it allows one to "explore the effects of sartorial gestures and imagine their significance to others" (349). As Michael tries on different costumes, he tries on different identities and produces different versions of himself.

The film's representation of the literal closet, or ante-closet, marks gay identity as neither in nor out but always moving between spaces. As Sedgwick argues, coming out is not something that occurs once, but instead requires frequent acts of declaration and revelations, different self-representations (68; see also Urbach, 347). In a key scene, the men play a game in which each one is forced to telephone someone he loves and declare his love, thus outing himself to the, presumably, straight listener. The game plays off the fissure between sound and sight that the telephone affords, as the men are not visible to those they call. But the aim of the game is to force a match between image and sound, to reveal oneself to the person on the other line. As I discussed in the last chapter, the telephone can serve to bring people together, as it does when Larry calls Hank's answering service and tells him that he loves him. In most cases—as when the African American Bernard calls the white man his mother worked for when he was a boy—it serves to make the men feel more isolated, as they are forced to confront their own histories of secret and unrequited desire.

As with the bachelor pad in the *Playboy* imaginary and in the other films I've discussed, *The Boys in the Band* situates the man's identity, an identity defined by his sexuality, in the space of the apartment. Here, as in the other texts, the apartment provides a space for storage and display, for self-expression and theatrical masquerade. *The Boys in the Band*,

though, brings to the fore the tenuousness of the freedom of the apartment. In stitching the apartment plot to a narrative of the gay closet, it not only underscores the link between the bachelor pad and the closet but reminds us that an identity is not a simple thing to be expressed, but rather an ongoing process of negotiations, small acts, declarations, and recastings.

Conclusion

While *The Boys in the Band* may seem to inhabit a different filmic universe than *Pillow Talk* or *The Apartment*, or may seem a far cry from the heterosexist ideals of *Playboy* magazine, I have tried to show resonances among these various texts. In claiming these all as a variant of the apartment plot whose narrative hinges on the image and ideal of the bachelor pad, I have suggested the ways in which the bachelor pad functions in the imaginary as both a mirror and a closet for male sexual desire. In various ways, all these texts assume that the bachelor pad is the “outward reflection” of the man’s “inner self.” They articulate a model of masculinity that is uniquely urban, and curiously domestic. At the same time, they represent this indoors masculinity as under constant pressure, vulnerable to intrusion, and marked by feminine and queer influences. In different ways, they each posit a model of masculine identity that is tenuous, contingent, and mobile. In the apartment plot, the playboy’s identity may be indoors, but it is hardly contained.



3

THE GREAT REPRIEVE

Modernity, Femininity, and the Apartment

If you are normal, female, single, over twenty-one, live in a small town or suburbia, and want a sure present instead of an uncertain future—leave home now. Life in the big city may not produce fame, fortune, or a solid gold ring on the appropriate finger, but the big city is where big girls belong.

—JEAN BAER, *The Single Girl Goes to Town*

The average career girl with an apartment of her own is notorious for the abandoned way she runs her domestic life. Home is not really home—it is a base of operations.

—AMY AIKMAN, “How to Feed a Roommate”

Near the beginning of the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Paul “Fred” Varjak (George Peppard) first meets Holly Golightly (Audrey Hepburn) when he moves into his new apartment, upstairs from hers in an Upper East Side brownstone. Asking to borrow her phone, Paul enters Holly’s one-bedroom apartment. Looking around at Holly’s underfurnished apartment—one legless plastic sofa, a phonograph, a suitcase on the floor, empty kitchen, empty bookshelves, blank white walls—Paul remarks, “Nice little place you’ve got here. You just moved in, too, huh?” In this, the film echoes Truman Capote’s original novella in which the narrator describes Holly’s apartment as having a “fly-by-night look” (29), a



16. European press pack for *Any Wednesday*, aptly retitled *Bachelor Girl Apartment*. Author's collection.

“camping-out atmosphere; crates and suitcases, everything packed and ready to go, like the belongings of a criminal who feels the law not far behind” (52). Stating that she has been in her apartment for about a year, Holly explains her “fly-by-night” manner of living and her unnamed cat: “I don’t want to own anything until I know I’ve found the place where me and things go together” (See figure 17).

Holly imagines the place where she and things would go together: “I’m not sure where that is, but I know what it’s like . . . It’s like Tiffany’s . . . It calms me down right away, the quietness and proud look of it; nothing very bad could happen to you there.” Tiffany’s provides Holly with



17. Holly Golightly's underfurnished apartment in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

a sense of security when she experiences “the mean reds,” the “horrible” feeling when “suddenly you’re afraid and you don’t know what you’re afraid of.” Her description of “the mean reds” invokes the uncanny, or *unheimlich*, which in Freud’s conception blurs the dividing line between home (*heimat*, *heimlich*) and its other (Von Moltke, 2). For Freud, the *unheimlich* is “that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (Freud, 220). It is something familiar but repressed; it is the “un” or repressed of home. Thus, for Holly, Tiffany’s stands in opposition to the uncanny, as *heimlich*, the familiar, home. But Tiffany’s is not home. Rather, it is a commodified fetish or substitute for home: “If I could find a real life place that made me feel like Tiffany’s, then I’d buy some furniture and give the cat a name.”

Holly’s original home, like her original identity as Lulamae Barnes, is located in her rural past, where she first runs away from her parents and then from the fatherly protection of her husband, Doc Golightly (Buddy Ebsen). The “mean reds” seem to repress and return to this past, and especially to the memory of her “dotty” brother Fred, whom she uncannily rediscovers in Paul (“You look a lot like my brother Fred. Do you mind if I call you Fred?”). The film’s theme, “Moon River,” musically associates Holly’s vague longings, Tiffany’s, Fred, and her rural past

through its diegetic and nondiegetic placement in the narrative. It plays first as an instrumental over the credits when she has her “breakfast” at Tiffany’s; then, in a more somber key, when she has a “mean reds” nightmare about Fred, after telling Paul about her dream of buying herself and Fred a horse ranch in Mexico. Later, Holly sings it when she is alone and at her most “natural”—wearing a sweatshirt and no makeup—seemingly expressing her true self and desires. Through the imagery of “two drifters off to the sea the world . . . after the same rainbow’s end,” the somewhat oblique lyrics express Holly’s yearning for an escape with Fred. But the lyrics make clear that the dream is deferred; it will happen “some-day” and the rainbow is always “waitin’ ’round the bend.” The suggestive “huckleberry friend,” along with the imagery of a “moon river” evokes the south, Huck Finn, runaways, and the fear of entrapment, thus replaying Holly’s rural history (Smith, 82–98). As the song insinuates, Holly seems to habitually repress her home and reenact its leaving.

Holly’s is a story of constantly leaving and remaking herself—from a fourteen-year-old “wild thing” stealing turkey eggs, to devoted teenage bride, to California starlet, and New York sophisticate. Unable to dwell comfortably in the present, she has unrealized and unrealizable fantasies of new homes in the future—raising horses in Mexico with her simpleton brother Fred or, when Fred dies, married to her paramour, José, and mother to lots of children in Brazil. Briefly, being kept by José, she tries to more fully inhabit her apartment, buying some furniture and even learning to cook. But when José abandons her, she exits the apartment and tries to run away. Paul stops her, and forces her to admit both her pain and her capacity for love. By film’s end, despite the promise of a union with Paul, Holly is homeless and rain-soaked in an alley.¹

From one perspective, Holly’s reinvention of herself makes her story quintessentially American, or more particularly a quintessentially New York story. As Peter Lehman and William Luhr suggest, “The film’s image of New York City as a glamorous magnet for people who reinvent themselves and find success draws upon relatively recent (post-eighteenth century) presumptions, ones in which rootlessness can be seen as a valuable and not a pathetic thing” (23–24). Whereas social prestige would once have depended upon property ownership, family roots, and the continuity of one’s name, modern society allows for more mobility. New York, especially, in the cultural imagination encourages self-invention and “the old cliché . . . that the quintessential New Yorkers come from out of town” (23). As an icon of New York, Holly Go-

lightly accrues glamour and sophistication through her association with New York landmarks such as Tiffany's, and with chic costumes, without fully accounting for how those landmarks and costumes figure in the narrative as fantasy.² In this light, her rootlessness speaks glamour and sophistication. At the same time, "the fashionably white 'poverty' of social escorts and struggling writers" in the story glamorizes New York by masking true unemployment and poverty, by deflecting attention away from more deeply rooted identities determined by class and race (27).

Holly's refusal or inability to furnish her apartment would seem, equally, to signify her inability to fashion a self, her lack of identity. From the nineteenth century forward, a strong tendency in interior design was the "conviction . . . that the domestic interior expressed its inhabitant's inner self, especially in the case of women" (Cohen, 123). In Benjamin's gloss on nineteenth-century interiors in *The Arcades Project*, he compares the Victorian house to a shell: "The original form of all dwelling is existence not in the house but in the shell. The shell bears the impression of its occupant. In the most extreme instance, the dwelling becomes a shell" (220). The home, then, functions as objective correlative for the woman's interior self, or "bears the impression of its occupant." In Holly's case, however, the apartment is neither home nor shell, but a place-marker between homes: a stopping place, but not a dwelling.

Holly's sense that she has not yet found a place where she "and things go together" indicates a peculiarly modern kind of homelessness. As Hilde Heynen has argued, "A metaphorical 'homelessness' indeed is often considered the hallmark of modernity" (2). In part, the clash between modernity and home depends upon a shift in modern aesthetics. Le Corbusier, for instance, argues in *Towards a New Architecture* that modernity requires machines for living, a "House Tool," that suits contemporary man's needs. He pits this new conception of dwelling against older models which he conceives as overstuffed ("a furniture store," 122), impractical, and ultimately destructive: "Disturbed by the reactions which play upon him from every quarter, the man of to-day is conscious, on the one hand, of a new world which is forming itself regularly, logically and clearly, which produces in a straightforward way things which are useful and useable, and on the other hand he finds himself, to his surprise, living in an old and hostile environment . . . his lodging . . . his house or his flat" (288). Casting the home as a "dream," Le Corbusier argues that the "dream" is "impossible in the existing state of things" (263). He links the traditional home with death: "To build one's own house

is very much like making one's will" (263). Thus, he advises, "Eradicate from your mind any hard and fast conceptions in regard to the dwelling-house" and choose the modernist mass-production house, "beautiful in the sense that the working tools . . . are beautiful" (263).

Beyond the turn in modern design, many philosophers and theorists of modernity imply that modernity itself is at odds with particular conceptions of home and dwelling. As Heynen suggests, the break with tradition signaled by modernity seemingly requires a break with home: "In as far as modernity means change and rupture, it seems to imply, necessarily, the leaving of home" (2). In another vein, Marx argues that modernity's unequal distribution of wealth alienates the worker from his dwelling:

The basement apartment of the poor man is a hostile dwelling, "an alien, restraining power, which gives itself up to him only insofar as he gives up to it his blood and sweat." Such a dwelling can never feel like home, a place where he might at last exclaim, "Here I am at home!" Instead, the poor man finds himself in someone else's home . . . someone who daily lies in wait for him and throws him out if he does not pay the rent. (quoted in Benjamin, 223)

For Adorno, as individual autonomy has lessened, so has private life: "Dwelling, in the proper sense is now impossible . . . the house is past" (38–39). While Heidegger glosses the verb *dwell* as "to remain, to stay in a place" (144), Adorno views "the enforced conditions of emigration a wisely-chosen norm" (39), against refuge in a house, which he, like Le Corbusier, associates with death.

Benjamin's comments on interiors and dwelling, scattered throughout *The Arcades Project*, similarly suggest a contradiction between modernity and dwelling. For Benjamin, the house as private dwelling emerges only in the nineteenth century, with the rise of industrial capitalism and imperialism. As the public sphere develops, and home becomes opposed to work—as a refuge from work, and as distinct from the public world of debate and discourse—then an ideal of domesticity emerges: "The nineteenth century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling. It conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person, and it encased him" (Benjamin, 220; see also Habermas). By contrast, modernism "unsettled the world of the shell in a radical way" and "put an end to dwelling in the old sense" (Benjamin, 221). Dwelling has "diminished" both through modernist design, "with its porosity and transparency, its ten-

dency toward the well-lit and airy" (221) and also through alienation, "a collective state of no longer being *heimisch* or *at home*" (Hanssen, 2). For Benjamin, then, in the modern world, *to dwell* becomes "a transitive verb," transitional and intermediate, rather than permanently located in one place (221).

Of course, the association between modernity and homelessness is usually gendered male, in opposition to the female gendering of home and domesticity. In her famous essay "The Invisible *Flaneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity," Janet Wolff argues that "the literature of modernity describes the experience of men" (34). It is epitomized through such masculine figures as "the dandy, the *flaneur*, the hero, the stranger" (41), and "occurred mainly in the public sphere" (35); it was thus unavailable to women, "who could not stroll alone in the city" (41). In Wolff's view, the break with home signaled by modernity and modernism was available only to men: women, in effect, remained rooted in the nineteenth-century ideal of domesticity. She calls for critics to deepen our understanding of modernity by looking at, on the one hand, the role of women who did participate in the public sphere and, on the other, manifestations of the modern for both masculine and feminine subjects in the private sphere.

Feminist critics, sometimes challenging Wolff's assumptions and sometimes taking up her call to revisit modernity, have troubled our understanding of gender and modernity in numerous ways. Rita Felski in *The Gender of Modernity*, for example, questions whether the modern is, in fact, gendered male. She details the ways in which numerous fin-de-siècle texts gender modernity as feminine, creating hybrid and contradictory gendered identities for the modern. Other feminists have problematized the gendering of the public sphere by showing that despite the cult of domesticity and ideology of separate spheres, nineteenth-century women of all classes did traverse public spaces, such as department stores and restaurants; that the city was populated by prostitutes, shopgirls, political "platform women," charity workers, and others; and that women's use of certain public spaces—such as the department store, the cinema, and the culture of amusements—opened up alternative public spheres for women (Wilson; Ledger; Friedberg; Hansen; Peiss).

Approaching the issue from a different angle, some writers have complicated our understanding of the modern private sphere and domesticity. Dolores Hayden, for example, marks out the ways in which material feminists historically imagined alternative designs for homes

in order “to overcome the split between domestic life and public life created by industrial capitalism” (4). Christopher Reed’s work on the Bloomsbury Group argues that against modernism’s “suppression” of the domestic, “Bloomsbury made the conditions of domesticity its standard for modernity” (5). Judy Giles examines British women’s households in the early twentieth century to explore what she calls “domestic modernity”; Lesley Johnson’s work on mid-century Australian women suggests that women figured “domesticity and home . . . not as an escape from modernity, but precisely as what modernity should be” (“As Housewives We Are Not Worms,” 462). Thus, these writers imagine modes of domesticity which are not separate from, but interact with, modernity and modernism.

Despite these challenges to the ideology of separate spheres in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most critical discourse on mid-twentieth-century America reduplicates Wolff’s argument about women’s subjection to the home. As I discussed in the introduction, most analyses of the 1950s, especially, spurred in part by Betty Friedan’s analysis in *The Feminine Mystique*, suggest that the ideal of the single-family home and increased suburbanization reanimates the Victorian cult of domesticity and returns women to the separate sphere of home. Friedan famously argued that college-educated postwar women, unlike the career women of the thirties, had been convinced to give up their ambitions and focus their identity in the home. Friedan articulated women’s growing dissatisfaction with their roles as housewife and mother, and suggested that women’s emancipation would come only by breaking out “of their comfortable concentration camps” (462)—their ascribed roles of wife and mother and their ties to the domestic suburban home. In seeking change for women, then, Friedan nonetheless reinforced the stereotype of the fifties woman as a married, white, suburban housewife, surrounded by children and domestic technologies (Meyerowitz, 3). Against this, the stereotypical fifties male is the image of the white domesticated breadwinner who leaves the suburban house for work. It follows that the polarized divisions Wolff cites as key to modernity and modernism are revived in critical and popular discourse on the fifties: masculine/feminine, urban/suburban, public/private, work/home, change/tradition (Saegert).

However, a consideration of mid-century urbanism, apartments, and singles helps complicate the ideology of separate spheres. As I discussed in the last chapter, the suburban married male needs to be placed in

constellation not only with the married suburban female but also, at a minimum, with his single urban counterpart: the playboy. Thus, to the list of oppositions above, we can add married/single and straight/queer (and crucially white/black, which I will take up in chapter 5). As I have argued, the playboy's bachelor pad complicates our understanding of the fifties by breaking down the oppositions between work and home (insofar as the playboy dwells and works in the same space); masculine and feminine (insofar as the bachelor pad stands in opposition to the feminized suburban home but is also a site of domestic consumerism and activities); straight and queer (insofar as the bachelor pad invokes the closet); public and private (insofar as the apartment occupies an indeterminate space, which is neither fully public nor fully private but what I've been calling public privacy); and both married and single, suburban and urban (insofar as the married man attains a fantasy status as an urban single via the playboy imaginary).

I would suggest, similarly, that the figure of the single girl in the apartment plot also complicates our understanding of the fifties and beyond by troubling the associations between women, suburbia, home, and domesticity. As Giles argues, "The realm of the private and its spatial manifestations have all too often been set in polarized dichotomy to the public with the result that the private sphere has frequently been understood as a refuge from the modern, a repository of traditional values, a haven from the excitement and dangers of living in the public world" (4). The apartment, even more obviously than the single-family home, resists such polarizations, given that the apartment represents domestic urbanism, neither fully public nor fully private. Rather than a "shell" or a "haven," the apartment is permeable and porous. Rather than a refuge from the modern, the apartment facilitates encounter, with an emphasis on chance and contingency. It is a transient space, dependent upon rent and not ownership.

Holly Golightly's move away from her childhood and child-bride homes signals her entry into modernity, insofar as modernity is understood as antithetical to conceptions of home and domesticity. However, Holly does inhabit an interim domestic space, the space of her apartment. In vital ways, the character of Holly Golightly is produced by her domestic space—she and her relationship with Paul exist in and through the space of the apartment. The apartment is both home and not home, a space for living and a space defined as "un-home," or *unheimlich*, that place that represses home. Rather than view Holly's movement away

from home as a move toward masculine domains, or into the public sphere, I want to consider the ways in which her apartment maps an indeterminate space between domesticity and modernity, or a kind of modern domesticity that produces a particularly modern feminine identity. The single girl's apartment represents an alternative private sphere for women, a space that challenges the association between women and domesticity and that enables women to create a transitive or liminal identity away from their family home, prior to—and, sometimes, rather than—entering marriage.

A Single Girl's Subculture

Holly Golightly's "homelessness" stands in opposition to most stereotypes of femininity, especially the association between women and domesticity. In some sense, Holly represents an avant-garde type. Herbert Feinstein's 1962 review in *Film Quarterly* refers to her as a "Beat anti-heroine," and Holly describes herself as "top banana in the shock department." She has been compared to modern literary types, notably Christopher Isherwood's Sally Bowles (Krämer). However, as a single woman living in New York, Holly is far from atypical. "Starting in about 1953," according to Betsy Israel, "there seemed to be a rise in the number of single young women settling in New York City" (186–87). By 1960, according to the Census Bureau, there were 9.3 million households—meaning 18 of every 100 households—headed by women. This represented an increase of 3 million female-run households since 1950. While some large percentage of these households can be attributed to women who were widowed, close to 2 million of these female head of households were divorced, just under 1 million were separated, and most interestingly 1.4 million were single women who had never wed (Porter). Many of these single women, "setting aside domestic destiny, . . . [had] left home for New York and jobs in theater, dance, publishing, or just to cut themselves off from suffocating fiancés, dull jobs, or like Holly Golightly . . . lives so desperate and dreary one can only guess at the details" (Israel, 186).

Rather than either avant-garde, or merely typical, Holly Golightly, along with other urban single women, can be seen as part of a large subculture. The sociologist Claude Fischer argues that rather than alienation

and social disorganization (Wirth), cities produce “unconventional” behavior and subcultural affiliations. Fischer claims that there is more than an anecdotal association between urban residence and unconventionality, or in other words that people in cities are more “unconventional,” in all senses, than people in suburbs or rural areas. He suggests that the more urban a place, the greater its subcultural variety and intensity, and the greater the diffusion of subcultures. On the one hand, of course, people from various subcultures (homosexuals, artists, criminals) migrate to the city seeking people similar to them. On the other hand, through processes of intensification and dissemination, the city produces subcultures and absorbs emigrants into those subcultures.³

In the context of the 1950s marriage boom, the single girl is clearly marked as “unconventional.” Whereas a certain number of single women must have stayed home in suburbs or rural areas as singular exceptions to the rule, many migrated to urban areas, either seeking unconventionality or making themselves unconventional by virtue of leaving home and not marrying. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, these girls were recognized as a significant subcultural type—variously called the Bohemian Girl, the Bachelor Girl, the Career Girl, the Lone Girl, or simply, the Single Girl—analyzed, anthropologized, photographed, interviewed, and represented in myriad books, magazines, and films.

In one analysis, near the end of this period, in 1969, Caroline Bird suggested that single women in New York, living in “the girl ghetto on the Upper East Side” (59), were “acting out the dissatisfactions all women feel with traditional marriage” (66): “Girls who can’t find husbands they can look up to come to New York in hopes of finding something better than what happened to Mother. They aren’t sure, at first, whether they’re looking for a new set of men, hopefully ‘better’ than the ones at home, or whether they’re looking for ‘an interesting job’ or both” (61). In migrating to the city, she argued, single women rejected those spaces—suburbs and rural areas—associated with traditional marriage. In the city, single girls were “trying out new styles of marriage and non-marital man-woman relationships” (66), as well as discovering themselves in careers (figure 18).

Rather than looked upon as a permanent identity, the single girl’s foray into an urban subculture tends to be understood as a provisional state. In a 1960 article for *Mademoiselle*, Joan Dideon characterized the experience of single girls in New York as “The Great Reprieve”:



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18. *Apartment 3-G*, 9 May 1961 © North American Syndicate. Working single girls as roommates in apartment 3-G. Married, temporarily, to their careers.

However myriad the reasons that draw the young to New York, there is often this common thread, this feeling that the future can be postponed, forgotten about for a few years and picked up later, still intact and brighter than ever. Make no mistakes: what they have in mind is a sabbatical, not a break with anything; their intentions, however vague, have more to do with exploration than with rebellion, more to do with making themselves “ready” for something than with splashing in the Plaza fountain. (150)

In Dideon’s account, the single girl in New York is “above all, uncommitted” (103). As in Bird’s analysis, Dideon suggests that single girls are not seeking marriage, but want instead to “prolong the period when they can experiment, mess around, make mistakes” (103). The urban “reprieve” offers girls a “leave of absence” in which they can avoid “the gentle pressure” to marry.⁴ The single women Dideon interviews, in line with those in Bird’s article, recognize their own “unconventionality” and express dissatisfaction with conventional expectations about marriage, family, and home. Dideon quotes one woman who says, “I don’t want anything to do with any mainstream.” Linking the mainstream with feeling “trapped,” she says, “Sure I want children. But I don’t see why that means I also have to want diapers in the living room this year, instantly, don’t-lose-a-minute” (150).

Though temporary, the “reprieve” Dideon describes is nonetheless transitive—during this period, young women grow and change. According to Dideon, urban life enables girls to reinvent themselves, “to start over, to make mistakes and erase them” (148). Initially, the single woman’s move to the city enables her to break free from her established

(home) identity and craft a new (city) identity. As Jean Baer writes: “You can be the New You because no one but you knows the old you” (xii). Further, the anonymity and privacy of the city allow a young woman to make mistakes without “the judgment of the community” hanging over her head and “without having to show the scratches in public”: “You know about them, you’ve learned from them. But nobody else need really concern himself” (Dideon, 148). In particular, women can experiment with sex, trying out various nonmarital relationships and even new sexual identities. Often equated with losing one’s virginity, these sexual “experiments” and “mistakes” are presumably like virginity itself, transformative but invisible.

Sexual knowledge, above all else, marks the urban single girl as “unconventional.” On the one hand, the urban girl seeks sexual knowledge. As one girl in Dideon’s article says, “I got depressed when I looked at those engaged girls [in the hometown newspaper] Sunday morning. None of them looked as if they *knew* anything. They all looked like Richardson’s Pamela, I swear” (150). On the other hand, as I discussed in the last chapter, the urban girl, especially the apartment dweller, is often presumed to be sexually active. As one girl interviewed in 1957 puts it: “I mentioned that I’d just moved out of my parents’ home into an apartment of my own in Greenwich Village. The young man’s ears perked up, his eyes took on a new gleam, his smile grew enterprising, and his manner insinuating. ‘Oh-h-h, so you live *alone*, do you? And in the Village?’ I realized I’d apparently not taken on a new address, but a new address that gave me a whole new character” (quoted in Israel, 201). Here, in moving away from her parents’ home and into an apartment, the girl seemingly takes on a new character, marked especially strongly by her Village address, an address that signifies both *bohemianism* and *sexuality*, terms often equated in the discourse of the period.

The Greenwich Village Approach

The “unconventionality” of the single girl’s life is often associated with a kind of bohemianism. According to Israel, the Bohemian Girl first emerged as a stereotype in the first decade of the twentieth century, but has reappeared continuously. Much like the women Bird and Dideon describe, the Bohemian Girl “could not *live within the strictures of the bourgeois society she had only narrowly escaped*” (Israel, 107, original italics). Though

initially delegated for women of an artistic bent, the Bohemian Girl quickly became indistinguishable from the “less deeply poetic, slightly less intense” Bachelor Girl, a working girl out for fun. Both the Bohemian Girl and the Bachelor Girl, called “B-girls” in the lingo of the early twentieth century—sought to “create themselves anew” (108). In the discourse of the time, the B-girl was recognizable by her costume—cropped hair and smocks—and especially by her apartment—a space located in Greenwich Village and characterized by a willful disregard for proper furnishings. As one newspaperman described the B-girl apartment: “[Their] room[s] . . . are a mass of delightful contrivances whereby her gown inhabits the window seat and her frying pan the bookcase . . . They eat off the ironing board, roaring with laughter about having only cheese to feast upon” (quoted in Israel, 111). Of course, the B-girl’s apartment and lifestyle were dictated by poverty as much as eccentricity—lights are turned out as a “necessary economy” (111). But contemporary discourse views her poverty as a willful perversity, part of her unconventional choice to live alone in the city.

In mid-twentieth-century America, the Bohemian Girl and the Bachelor Girl were again conflated, insofar as being a single girl was taken to be a bit of a bohemian choice. Wini Breines characterizes the 1950s urban female subculture as “a barely visible cultural rebellion of some white middle-class girls and young women in the 1950s, a number of whom flirted with or lived a bohemian life” (383). An article in *Mademoiselle* by Helen Lawrenson suggests that women are drawn to the bohemian life because they are dissatisfied with marriage options at home: “The average eligible young man acceptable to her relatives simply doesn’t stir her imagination. Rather than settle down with the country-club male of her own age and listen to interminable discussions of baseball and the relative merits of new cars, she prefers to sit with some insolvent but Promethean soul in an all-night lunch wagon and exchange ideas on experimental art forms—and who can blame her?” (98). More than an artistic bent, bohemianism signifies “a compulsion to rebel against whatever represents conventional patterns” (98)—including parents, hometowns, and moral codes. Arguing that in America, working-class women “wouldn’t be caught dead with some of the crummy looking characters and certainly [don’t] want to live in a cold-water flat or some rat hole on MacDougal street,” Lawrenson characterizes the Bohemian as the “well-bred well-educated girl with a cultural bent” (54).

The characterization of an urban girl subculture as bohemian domi-

nates the mid-century apartment plot. Whether or not she is associated with artistic or intellectual life, the single girl's apartment in the 1950s and 1960s is most often represented as a bohemian space, like Holly Golightly's. There are instances of well-appointed career-girl apartments—Doris Day's in *Pillow Talk*, Lauren Bacall's in *Designing Woman* (Minelli, 1957), or Natalie Wood's in *Sex and the Single Girl* (Quine, 1964), for instance—which I will discuss later in the chapter. But, more often, the girl's apartment is represented as inexpensive, inadequate, underfurnished, cramped, messy, or eccentric. In *That Funny Feeling*, roommates Joan and Audrey share a tiny one-bedroom apartment. The bedroom is so small and cramped—with sewing machine, radio, old dolls, and stuffed animals—that Audrey can't open the drawers to her bureau or the door to the kitchen without rearranging furniture (see plate 11). They are so close to their neighbor's apartment that *his* alarm clock wakes *them*; then they bang on their wall with shoes to wake *him*. In order to make coffee, Audrey must shout to neighbor Luther to turn off his shower. In *How to Marry a Millionaire*, the three roommates are so poor that they must sell furniture in the apartment they sublet, eventually living with just one small chair and telephone table (see plate 12). In *Butterflies Are Free*, when Jill (Goldie Hawn) moves into her new apartment, she opens a shopping bag of clothes and dumps them unceremoniously on the closet floor, willfully disregarding the rod and hangers. Women, stereotypically, live in small Greenwich Village apartments, as in *My Sister Eileen*, *Cactus Flower*, *Any Wednesday*, *Scarlet Street*, and *Bells Are Ringing*. In these apartments, decorations are usually quirky—colorfully painted walls, mismatched furniture, multihued throw pillows, and thrift-shop finds.

The bohemian apartment is necessarily urban and usually gendered female. Thus, the discourse on the bohemian apartment differs markedly from discourses on both the suburban home and the bachelor pad. The bohemian apartment bears an inverse relation to the consumerism of both the suburban home and the bachelor pad: the single girl runs her apartment by economy. Unlike the suburban woman, the single girl doesn't order her life with modern domestic technologies. Unlike her urban male counterpart, the single girl cannot afford to decorate her apartment in high-tech designer modern style. In what Helen Gurley Brown refers to in *Sex and the Single Girl* as "the Greenwich Village approach," the girl can "make everything gay and colorful and warm and cozy, and no single item of furniture or refurbishing costs more than ten

dollars" (125). Even for the sophisticated woman aiming to go beyond the bohemian apartment, Brown advises buying secondhand furniture at thrift shops, the Salvation Army, Junior League, and the like (131). In *The Single Girl Goes to Town*, Jane Baer suggests that single women adopt a DIY ("do-it-yourself") attitude: she tells women to "get acquainted with the best in home furnishings and copy them" (57); stencil the walls; fashion a desk out of sawhorses, build a Murphy Bed into a bookcase, armoire, or closet; and so on. In addition, she recommends that single women look for bargains, raid the family's attic, and wrangle items such as linens, appliances, and silverware from family members.

Unlike her single male and married female counterparts, the single girl is mostly not expected to host. Brown says: "As a single woman, you don't have to entertain nearly as much as other people if you don't want to. You are a glamorous acquisition for anybody's party—a breath of oxygen at the married board. Feel free to be American's guest!" (138). The single girl is not expected to cook much, either. Brown, who offers advice on dieting as well as décor, suggests: "Keep an almost bare cupboard. *You* don't eat much" (110). Yet Brown also recommends that women have a shelf of extravagant spices to entice a man: "They say you're a good cook" (136). When girls do entertain and cook, they are always expected to operate with a tight budget. Baer encourages girls to have potluck dinners or "offbeat" parties—such as a "Thirties party" or a "Mexican Hayride"—and she counsels, "Don't be put off entertaining because you think it has to be fancy. There are a lot of parties that can be given for under \$20" (177). *Saucepans and the Single Girl*, a cookbook aimed at working girls, puts it simply: "Bearing in mind that most career girls are on strict monthly budgets . . . we have tried to keep our recipes and menus realistically geared to this type of financial chicanery" (Kragen and Perry, 12). Like Brown, they assume a model of self-sacrifice and suggest that when alone, women will eat TV dinners and bowls of soup, so that cooking skills are needed primarily to entertain men. They offer menus to suit various men, including the "Man in a Brooks Brothers Suit" (fondue), the "Man in a Garret" (Cornish game hens), and the "Amorous Athlete" (beef burgundy flambé).

For the most part, the bohemian apartment is figured as a "temporary setting" (Baer, 57). Like "The Great Reprieve" of single life, bohemia functions for middle-class girls as "a transitional phase between the safe and orderly routine of home and school and the often equally stylized routine of career and marriage. It provides a free interlude for

experimentation and discovery, unhampered by rules or overseers and glowing with the lovely magic of first flight" (Lawrenson, 54). And, like the "reprieve," the bohemian life is meant to be transitional, not permanent: "The only drawback lies in mistaking the life for the talent and accepting the Bohemian existence as an end in itself. There are few things in life drearier than a middle aged female Bohemian, but most girls are smart enough to take it in their stride—and then leave" (54). In order to leave, the Bohemian Girl can either professionalize her artistry in some form of "constructive nonconformity" in a commercial theater or other artistic venue, or she can "begin to think in terms of a normal household, complete with children" (100).

As a liminal and transitive space, the bohemian apartment needs to be considered not only in spatial terms but also in its temporality. Via the mechanism of place, the bohemian apartment signifies a time in a woman's life, an ephemeral moment. As Felski reminds us, if modernity entails a kind of dislocation or homelessness that can be expressed spatially, it also entails "experiences of temporality and historical consciousness" (9) and especially "the ephemeral and transitory qualities of an urban culture" (13). The bohemian apartment thus registers as modern not only in its opposition to notions of home but in its contingency and temporality. The single girl who inhabits the apartment is "modern," neither by virtue of producing modern art, nor in her affiliation with modernist design or modern technologies, but in the way she organizes her domestic and private life. She rejects traditional conceptions of femininity and tries on "new" identities, related to urbanism, work, and sexuality. Her modernity, however, is a temporary condition, an identity she inhabits only as long as she inhabits the apartment. Rather than a permanent rupture (with tradition, home, stability), modernity can be understood, in this case, as a temporary displacement, an experience of limited duration, and a space one enters and exits at will.

Star Sapphires and Spinsters

The presumed impermanence of both the single girl's urban experience and her concomitant bohemianism predicts, in part, her eventual capitulation to the "mainstream" or "a normal household"—marriage, children, domesticity, and suburban life. Consequently, while the bohemian urban experience challenges the domestic ideal, it also preserves it:

single women engage in a *fort/da* game of leaving home, with the promise of a return when “ready.” Not surprisingly, then, when the single girl’s apartment is conceived as a dwelling and not a resting place, it represents a threat. On the one hand, the permanent single threatens the domestic ideal because her single status is taken to be a refusal to marry, and because her sexuality cannot be swept under the rug as experimentation but becomes a lifestyle, much like that of the playboy. On the other hand, the permanent single represents the potential failure to marry: the spinster stays too long at the fair and winds up alone.

Two competing self-help books for single women from the sixties will serve to chart the twin threats of the long-term sexually active single and the spinster. Famously, Brown’s *Sex and the Single Girl* from 1962 proclaims that “the single woman, far from a creature to be pitied and patronized, is emerging as the newest glamour girl of our times” (5). Against numerous magazine articles and manuals aimed at helping women find husbands, Brown says her book “is not a study on how to get married but how to stay single—in superlative style” (11). For Brown, marriage is a choice: “You may marry or you may not. In today’s world, that is no longer the big question for women” (267). Regardless of whether a woman will eventually marry, Brown advises her to enjoy her freedom, especially her sexual freedom. Buttressing Kinsey’s claim in 1953 that between 25 percent and 50 percent of all unmarried women engaged in premarital sex, Brown counters the myth of premarital virginity: “Theoretically a ‘nice’ single woman has no sex life. What nonsense! She has a better sex life than most of her married friends. She need never be bored with one man per lifetime. Her choice of partners is endless and they seek *her*” (7). *Sex and the Single Girl* presents a threat to domesticity not only in championing the single state, but in its indifferent attitude toward marriage. Suggesting that marriage can be postponed until age thirty or later, Brown critiques the presumptive normativity associated with marriage, early marriage in particular: “We know the married state *is* the normal one in our culture, and anybody who deviates from ‘normal’ has a price to pay in nonacceptance and nonglorification. There is no one universal ‘normal’ time, however, for participating in the normal state of marriage. Furthermore, part of what you are, at the moment, missing in marriage may be well *worth* missing!” (253) In addition to questioning the value of marriage for the single girl, Brown challenges the sanctity of the institution when she advocates casual affairs with married men. Advising single

women to keep married men as “pets” (24), Brown admits to a “rather cavalier attitude about wives” (25) because the wife will almost always get the husband back after the affair.

For Brown, the single girl’s apartment is key to her “superlative” style: “If you are to be a glamorous, sophisticated woman that exciting things happen to, you need an apartment and you need to live in it alone!” (119). When Brown discusses the apartment, she echoes some of the ideas about the playboy pad. Claiming, for instance, that “a beautiful apartment is a sure man-magnet,” she recommends, “Think of yourself as a star sapphire. Your apartment is your setting” (120). She suggests that an inexpensive bohemian apartment, “the Greenwich Village approach,” will do for “very poor or very young . . . college girls and working girls” (125) but that a “star sapphire” requires a better setting: “If you are into your thirties marching straight toward forty or gaining on fifty, you need a place with enough elegance to say successfully ‘up your backside’ to society” (125). Here, as elsewhere, young, college-educated working girls are associated with a bohemian apartment, whereas the longer-term single requires a more elegant dwelling space. While the young girl may be enjoying a temporary reprieve from marriage, and a temporary rebellion, her older sisters more defiantly oppose society’s rules.

William B. Faherty’s book *Living Alone: A Guide for the Single Woman*, from 1964, analyzes the single woman from a Christian perspective. Whereas Brown emphasizes the pleasures of being single, at least temporarily, Faherty views those who have chosen the single state as having “unsound motives,” unless they have chosen it for altruistic or religious motives. For the most part, he concentrates on those who “have a reasonable hope of marriage,” those who still have “wistful” hope, and those who are “reconciled” to their “unchosen single state” (xi). Recommending abstinence to single women, Faherty chastises Brown’s book as “a call to fornication and adultery” (14).

In contrast to Brown, Faherty recommends that single women either move to less populated areas, such as the Rocky Mountains, where men are plentiful,⁵ or, if they remain in the city, that they live in residence halls or with roommates. In part, Faherty suggests that the residence frees a woman from domestic responsibility: “After a busy day at the office, the resident faces no burdensome housework . . . no cooking, no marketing” (58). More than freedom, however, the residence, like having a roommate, keeps the woman social. When Faherty discusses the apart-

ment, he views it partly with an eye to privacy and safety, claiming that it affords “an easier freedom of movement and a greater privacy.” “The one dwelling alone does not have to adapt to the ways of others. If she can afford the apartment, if it is comfortable, sufficiently convenient, and on a well-lighted street so that she need not fear to walk two doors for a milk shake after dark, the situation looks fine. And it may prove so” (58–19). However, Faherty warns against complacency: “There is a danger. Inertia might set in. The single woman likes her place and her Hi-Fi. She begins to turn down invitations to concerts and church festivals. It’s easier to stay home and daydream” (59). Thus, for Faherty the apartment, rather than a “man-magnet” guaranteeing a sexy single life, represents a trap, a cocoon with the potential to birth a spinster.

On the one hand, then, à la Brown, the single girl’s apartment can signify a critique and refusal of domestic expectations—saying “up your backside” to society. On the other hand, à la Faherty, the apartment represents a woman’s failure to marry, her reconciliation with her “un-chosen” single state. However, if figured as bohemian or shared with roommates, the apartment counteracts these two threats. Instead of a permanent state, the bohemian apartment represents a liminal space for youth, a space in which the single girl can experiment with sex and alternate relationships as a rehearsal for marriage, not as a substitute for it. Hence, the bohemian apartment serves to clearly demarcate the single girl both from her married suburban counterpart and from the permanent single. Because of these qualities, it becomes a crucial marker of a woman’s status in the apartment plot.

Where Friedan and others would emphasize women’s return to traditional domesticity as a moment that suppresses her modernity, as well as her individuality, I am interested here in exploring the power and appeal of the “temporary modern” in the apartment plot. Rather than suppressing modernity, numerous popular texts, through their female apartment plots, represent the ritual modernization of women. Certainly, many of these texts ultimately support the traditional domestic ideal, in positing the apartment as a phase rather than a lifestyle. But these texts do more than promulgate a fantasy. They not only serve as pockets of resistance to and critique of the mainstream, but also suggest that acquiescence to the mainstream *requires* at least a temporary reprieve. Thus, these texts also function as a powerful mode of dissemination for urban girl subcultures, drawing women away from home and into the city.

She's Leaving Home

Rona Jaffe's bestselling novel from 1958, *The Best of Everything*, stands as an archetypal narrative of female migration to the city. As such, it serves to open up some of the dominant themes in the apartment plot.⁶ The omniscient narration moves freely among a group of girls working for a publisher in New York. Each girl represents a different category of single girl, and each meets a different degree of success or failure. The women include Caroline Bender, a Radcliffe graduate who moves to New York and a career in publishing after being abandoned by her college fiancé; April Morrison, who migrates from Springs, Colorado, and initially hopes to be an actress but settles for publishing; Mary Agnes, a frowsy girl from the Bronx who is saving up money for her wedding; Gregg Adams, a free spirit who works as an actress; Barbara Lemont, a divorced single mother; and Amanda Farrow, a middle-aged career editor who never married. The novel's opening paragraph emphasizes their typicality:

You see them every morning at a quarter to nine, rushing out of the maw of the subway tunnel, filing out of Grand Central Station, crossing Lexington and Park and Madison and Fifth Avenues, the hundreds and hundreds of girls . . . They carry the morning newspapers and overstuffed handbags. Some of them are wearing pink or chartreuse fuzzy overcoats and ankle strap shoes and have their hair up in pin curls underneath kerchiefs. Some of them are wearing chic black suits (maybe last year's but who can tell?) . . . None of them has enough money. (Jaffe, 1)

While the girls are all defined as workers, career is not determining: "They go to their typing pool or their calculating machines as to a waiting place, a limbo for single girls who are waiting for love and marriage" (277).

Part of a large subculture, the girls are easily stereotyped. On a first date, for instance, Caroline's date analyzes her, correctly guessing that she went to "either Radcliffe or Wellesley," has a roommate, and lives on "the East Side between Fiftieth and Eightieth. "A safe guess," Caroline asserts (Jaffe, 134). Their typicality ensures that they will be replaced. When April packs her belongings to move back home, she reflects on the girl who will replace her: "After I go away, another girl will move in here in a week or two and she'll think it's all so wonderful, the way I

did." When Caroline suggests that the new tenant might be a widow on relief, April argues, "No, it will be a girl, I know it will . . . It has to be another new girl, like I was" (377).

The novel shows the process of acculturation into the urban girl subculture. Caroline and April are both new to Manhattan. Both girls learn the ways of the office together, learning who's who, finding the cafeteria, and so on. In addition, Caroline, a sophisticated college girl, teaches April, a country girl, about fashion. Copying Caroline's style, April appears looking like "a stranger," "a gamin" in a black sheath dress, with makeup that hides "the farm-girl freckles" (Jaffe, 56). April, an earlier arrival to the city, introduces Caroline to apartment living: "She had never seen the apartment of a working girl who lived alone in New York, but from the fashion magazines she had read she had her own ideas of it, and already the image arose of herself and April chatting cozily until four in the morning in a small, austere but romantically chic apartment, the kind she would like to have someday soon" (48). April's apartment is "tiny," with clothes strewn about, "almost no furniture and no rug," a closet kitchen, and a Murphy bed. But rather than view it as inadequate, Caroline views it as the sort of bohemian dwelling she'd imagined: "It was seedy, you had to admit that, but Caroline felt her heart begin to pound. It could be fixed up so easily, and it could be enchanting. How wonderful to have an apartment of one's own—one's own things around, one's own taste everywhere" (50).

Caroline has a fantasy of an apartment that would express her individuality, but when she moves in with Gregg, their apartment—a second-floor walk-up in a converted brownstone over a Chinese laundry—offers a more generic image of single-girl culture: "A typical picture for anyone from out of New York: career girl's apartment, stockings drying over the shower rod, clothes flung helter skelter . . . a scrap of cheese and some orange juice in the icebox, perhaps a bottle of wine there, too" (Jaffe, 289). The bohemianism of the girls' apartment is less about being chicly decorated than about signs of her life outside the apartment, "as if she lived a mad, gay life." Instead of her "own things" and "own taste," Caroline's apartment is filled with matchbooks from fancy clubs and restaurants, "so that even if one managed only two good and sufficient meals a week, one could still light one's cigarettes for the rest of the week with the memory" (289). Rather than a shell bearing the imprint of its owner, the single girl's apartment is represented as "a base of operations," "a place to sleep and change clothes and take phone calls, that's all" (204).

The novel marks out the pleasures and dangers of the “reprieve” for women. For Mary Agnes, work in Manhattan provides only a brief interlude and financial support prior to marriage. Born and raised in the Bronx, she lives at home until she has enough money to marry her childhood sweetheart and set up their own household in the Bronx. At the other end of the spectrum, Amanda Farrow fulfills the spinster role, condemned both for being too careerist and for participating in an adulterous affair. She has a long-term relationship with a married man; then, when she realizes he will never leave his wife, she has a quickie marriage and divorce with another man before returning to her job as editor alone. April, tragically, is seduced by a rich playboy. After promising to marry her, he forces her to have an abortion. She spirals into a brief period of casual sex, but eventually meets a boy from her hometown who marries her. When April wonders whether to tell him of her past lovers, Caroline advises her, “That’s supposed to be a secret . . . And you’d better start forgetting about them as fast as you can” (Jaffe, 374). April’s experience represents the ideal of a temporary reprieve, having had experiences that make her ready to go home but that do not permanently mark her. Barbara Lemont represents a different success story: a young divorced mother, she falls in love with a married man who eventually divorces his wife and marries her. Like April, Barbara leaves her job and the city.

Caroline’s story, like Amanda’s, functions as a cautionary tale. Initially, she views her time in the city as a stopgap measure to forget her fiancé. However, she quickly becomes a success at work, rising from secretary to reader to editor in just two years. For Caroline, work and home bear an inverse relationship: “She had always thought of an office as a place where people came to work, but now it seemed as if it was a place where they also brought their private lives for everyone else to look at, paw over, comment on and enjoy. The typing pool . . . was like the village square, and the offices that surrounded it were people’s homes” (Jaffe, 43). Unable to dwell comfortably in her apartment, Caroline overinvests in her job. She makes a life of drinking with fellow employees, and has a near-miss office romance with an alcoholic workmate. Her casual boyfriend, Paul, suggests that as she becomes ambitious, she risks becoming like Amanda Farrow, “a crabby bitch” (293). At the same time, Paul suggests that Caroline might linger too long in her single life: “Getting to like it too much can turn into a trap” (294).

But for Caroline neither work nor the appeal of the single life turns

her away from marriage with Paul. Instead her romantic longings for her ex-fiancé and for the marriage that never happened preclude her making herself ready for marriage. Whereas both April and Barbara experiment sexually, Caroline remains a virgin until her ex-boyfriend Eddie shows up. Thinking that he plans to divorce his wife and marry her, Caroline sleeps with him. Then she is horrified to realize he wants to keep her as a mistress. Her future as a mistress is imagined through the figure of the apartment: “So that’s your solution . . . And twenty years from now I’ll still be sitting in that little apartment in Dallas, waiting for you to come and have lunch with me, waiting for you to come and make love to me in the evening and then go back to your wife; and I’ll be forty-three years old and I’ll never have had any children, or a real home” (Jaffe, 414–15). Faced with the prospect of a life as a permanent mistress, Caroline still cannot accept the love and proposal of her casual boyfriend, Paul. Caroline envies the security of domesticity: “Mary Agnes knew what she was going to do tonight; she was going to be home with her husband and baby. She would not go to an empty apartment and wait for the telephone to ring, and put a few records on the phonograph (not sad ones, because they would be dangerous)” (330). However, she cannot quite project herself into that scene with Paul. “She was not Mary Agnes and she never had been” (330). Escaping both Paul and the memory of Eddie, she runs off to Las Vegas with a celebrity author and becomes fodder for newspaper gossip, ending the novel alone in her hotel room, virtually homeless.

Like Caroline, Gregg is shown as having unrealistic and unrealizable domestic fantasies. Initially portrayed as a true bohemian, Gregg projects domestic fantasies onto her affair with a famous playwright, David Wilder Savage. Her fantasies have as their objective correlative a pair of curtains. The first time Gregg sleeps with Savage, she admires his bachelor apartment—loaded with books, LPs, a phonograph, and a fireplace—but she notes the absence of a kitchen curtain: “Wouldn’t it surprise him if she made curtains for him!” (Jaffe, 79). After a few months’ affair, Gregg sets out to do so:

Although she hardly knew how to sew, and certainly had never cared about putting up a stepped-in hem when a tiny safety pin could do, Gregg was painstakingly hemming curtains in an expensive fabric . . . There was something symbolic in the act, something that broke through the veneer of Broadway and cocktail parties and bright quips and might even break

through the veneer of the man she was desperate to marry . . . It made her feel good just to look at them, as if she were really married to him and had to do domestic things. (204)

Viewing the curtains as symbol of her own domesticity, Gregg considers the undomesticated space of her own apartment: "It was a laugh, really, to look at her own unkempt apartment and then think of all the wifely chores she was anxious to do for his" (204). Whereas for Gregg they are invested with symbolic value, for Savage "the curtains had absolutely no extra symbolism . . . none at all"; "they could not change her or what she meant to him" (217). When Savage rejects Gregg, kicking her out of his apartment, she becomes unmoored and largely "un-homed." She climbs a fire escape outside his apartment, spending her nights listening to his conversations and dates. She begins going through his trash for signs of his new relationship. Eventually, she is startled by a janitor and falls to her death in the alley below.

In part, *The Best of Everything* supports certain stereotypes about postwar ideologies, insofar as it stitches the discourse of spinsterhood to careerism. If work becomes a career rather than a "waiting place," it may prevent the woman from readying herself for marriage. At the same time, it offers a progressive view of premarital sexuality. Rather than promote virginity or dissuade women from leaving home, the novel suggests that the single girl *should* try out different relationships and *should* stay uncommitted, though she should *not* confuse the experiment, or rehearsal, for its intended result, marriage.

Both Caroline and Gregg have to confront their failed dreams of domesticity. April, similarly, invests in mistaken hopes of marriage and domesticity with her first boyfriend, Dexter. But she gets another chance:

The incurable optimists are those who always say, Tomorrow will be better, and mean tomorrow literally, or at the most, next week. Those who are more practical, and more often right, think in long terms like a year. April Morrison, who had never had a long-term philosophy of life, thinking only, I won't think about it today or else I'll suffer twice, was thinking for the first time in terms of measured change as she sorted and packed her belongings. (Jaffe, 372)

While April is superficially transformed when she alters her clothing and hairstyle, she is more deeply transformed through her unhappy relationship with the playboy Dexter. This experience, though, enables

her to move on and marry her true love. When April imagines the new girl who will inhabit her apartment, she wishes she could leave her a note, “Just something that says, I know just how you feel” (377). Caroline concurs, “Nobody ever thinks that other people have exactly the same problems and thoughts that she has. You always think you’re all alone” (377–78). In reminding us of the girls’ typicality and imagining the next girl, *The Best of Everything* invites women to identify and project themselves into the various narratives. The novel suggests that the “limbo of waiting for love” might not work, that some women will not succeed in finding love. At the same time, the novel works to seduce and acculturate women into a fantasy of a successful urban reprieve, another chance, time for “measured change.”

Valerie Taylor’s pulp novel, *The Girls in 3-B*, offers a similar story of female urban migration; however, while this story shows the respective struggles of two heterosexual B-girls—a Bohemian Girl and a Bachelor Girl—it also depicts and participates in a process of lesbian acculturation. The novel presents the migration of three girls from rural Illinois to Chicago. Pat, the Bachelor Girl, heads to the city to work. Not yet ready for marriage, she nonetheless plans to save herself for her husband. Annice, the Bohemian Girl, intends to go to college only until she sells her first book of poetry, and she plans to lose her virginity in the city, “ashamed to be so inexperienced at eighteen” (Taylor, 2). While Pat seeks better opportunities for meeting men and finding work, and Annice wants to escape the provincialism of small-town life, the third girl, Barby, seeks to erase a secret past blotted by her rape at the hands of a bank executive, her father’s suppression of the secret, and his consequent incestuous desire for her.

Annice and Barby, especially, imagine that they can remake themselves in the city. Annice thinks, “*When I come back, if I ever do, I’ll be changed*” (Taylor, 7, original italics throughout), and Barby thinks, “*Maybe . . . I’ll be a different person from here on out*” (16). However, the two girls respond to the city differently, foreshadowing their eventually different degrees of success at acculturation into an urban subculture. Annice imagines that in the city she will be someone special, and is shocked to find herself part of the crowd: “*It’s too big. All these people loving their own lives and going about their own business—there’s too many of them . . . I’m nothing; nobody even knows I’m alive.*” Barby, by contrast, appreciates the privacy and anonymity the city affords: “*I’m safe. Nobody’s looking at me, nobody even knows I’m alive*” (17).

For Pat and Annice, the city provides a reprieve in which they experi-

ment and prepare themselves for marriage. Pat develops a mad crush on her womanizing boss and decides to transform herself into the kind of chic glamour girl she imagines he'd like, dieting and spending all her money on clothes. She discovers, however, that her coworker, Phyllis, had an affair with the boss that ended in an abortion and a suicide attempt. Phyllis's experience makes her a bitter careerist: "That's what keeps you going, that little old job . . . Get yourself a good skill you can depend on, something that doesn't depend on anybody's whim and won't let you down . . . something you know how to do, that's the answer to everything" (Taylor, 105). Confronted with the reality behind her fantasy, Pat quickly reverts to her "old" self: "*I'm me*, she thought, *and not no skinny society blonde . . . How come I've been trying to be somebody else all the time?*" (177). As she recovers her identity, she declines the long-awaited proposition from her boss and turns her attention to a local Catholic Polish "kid," Stanley, whom she'd initially rejected. Pat realizes the appeal of domesticity—"to have your pattern of life all set seemed restful and reassuring" (103)—and looks ahead to a life with Stan, whom she correlates with an image of home: "*Stan*, she thought. Very neatly, she drew a comma and put a roof over it. It looked, she thought, like a little house" (173).

Where Pat needs only a small interlude to prepare her for marriage and domesticity, Annice rebels more strongly and undergoes a more dramatic reformation. She falls in with a group of intellectual writers: "This was what she had longed for back on the farm, listening rebelliously to the supper-table talk about the price of soybeans" (Taylor, 47). Soon, she loses her virginity to a misogynistic beatnik, Alan. He ridicules her poetry, urges her to abandon her bourgeois "stuffy suburban" ways (99), introduces her to drugs, leads her away from college, and takes her money for his rent and food until, finally, he flees to Mexico, leaving her alone, broke, and pregnant. Determined to keep her child, she has an epiphany at the employment office: "*I'm no artist*, she thought, *whatever that cheap bum thinks he is. I'm like everybody else*" (15). Accepting her typicality and conventionality, Annice accepts the help of her friend Jackson, who agrees to marry her and raise the child, erasing her "mistake." When Annice's parents show for a surprise visit, Annice and Jackson pretend to have been married for seven weeks and Jackson notes with some wonder that "wifeliness sat on her like an apron, cut and stitched to measure" (158). In the end, Annice finds herself happily in love with Jackson and thrilled to be moving out of the city to a farm in Missouri.

Unlike Pat and Annice, for whom the urban experience provides a recess before marriage and a return to domesticity, Barby's experience in the city opens her up to a new sexual identity and an alternate mode of urban domesticity. At first, Barby's life in Chicago mirrors her life back home. When she goes to put a deposit on a furnished apartment, she is raped by the building's janitor, a Sicilian named Rocco (a dark counter-narrative to the *Playboy* fantasy of loose women and rent paid in sexual favors). Suffering repeated rapes, and trying to keep them secret from her roommates, she gets migraines and feels the return of her past shame, "that nightmare of hurt and shock that had ended her little-girlhood" (Taylor, 83). Feeling she is at a turning point, Barby cannot imagine her future because she cannot imagine marriage or a life with men. Like Holly Golightly, she is caught between her past and future, unable to dwell comfortably in the present. Barby's chance to create a future and "*be born fresh*" comes when she falls in love with Ilene, a confident lesbian, who doesn't "believe in grieving for the past" (136).

Barby's movement into a lesbian relationship enables her to "move ahead" (Taylor, 137) and to find a place where she can dwell happily. In contrast to Barby's apartment, which, as she puts it, "looked the way she felt, beat and dirty" (80), Ilene's is "the sort of apartment Barby had learned to appreciate through her noonday prowlings through department stores and specialty shops" (135), a middle-class, well-furnished, tasteful apartment with fireplace, "bijou dining room" (163), and a bright well-stocked kitchen. Though "Barby had never wanted a home of her own, thinking of it as a by-product of marriage" (163), she finds herself with "a home and love" at Ilene's. To some degree, their apartment and life are closeted and vulnerable to disclosure: they leave work separately and keep a false bedroom to conceal their sleeping together. But where the secrets of her past—"fearful secret lives" (117)—bring Barby shame, these new secrets—"secret hidden emotions" (118)—bring contentment. Importantly, the concealment keeps Barby safe from her father, who meets Ilene and misreads her as a careerist spinster, thus also misreading Barby and allowing her to remain with her "roommate." As Sarah Elwood suggests, the lesbian home can be a contradictory space. It offers both "sheltering invisibility" and a space to enact a visible lesbian identity, but it may also be a space in which expressions of lesbian identity are "rigidly confined by societal disapproval and harassment" (Elwood, 12; see also Johnston and Valentine, and Wallace).⁷

Ilene draws Barby into the lesbian subculture, first inviting her to a les-

bian restaurant, then lending her a book of lesbian fiction. For Barby, “it was like stepping into a new world . . . Was it possible that she belonged in that world, too?” (Taylor, 118). For lesbians, Taylor’s novel serves a similar purpose, introducing them to a new world where they can find themselves. In the 1950s and 1960s, lesbian pulp fiction served to acculturate many women into a lesbian lifestyle and “was an integral part of the process of lesbian identification” (M. Miller, 37; see also Keller).

The themes and events of *The Girls in 3-B* serve to critique aspects of the patriarchy—in Pat’s story, via her boss’s womanizing; in Annice’s story, through Alan’s misogyny; and in Barby’s experiences of rape and degradation. At the same time, the novel offers heterosexual women readers possibilities for identifying with a temporary reprieve coordinated with conventional happy endings. For lesbian readers, it offers a positive view of their “unconventionality,” a way to imagine staying out of the mainstream and of creating a new form of domesticity.

Taken together, *The Best of Everything* and *The Girls in 3-B* signal some of the contradictions at the heart of the single girl’s apartment plot. On the one hand, these texts promulgate some form of monogamous domesticity. And they seem to steer female readers away from careerism and the life of a spinster. On the other hand, they suggest that successful surrender to conventional domesticity might require a detour, a passage through bohemianism and sexual experience. They counter the myth that virginity prevailed in the fifties and also offset views that fifties texts “were sexually repressive, punishing (or mocking) sexually active women, depicting them as bad (foolish)” (Biskind, 273). And, in the case of *The Girls in 3-B*, this kind of text imagines subcultural sexual alternatives outside marriage. The apartment plot of the 1950s and 1960s presents a model of modern promiscuity that challenges the logic of the fallen woman film of the 1930s and 1940s, in which sexually transgressive women are punished for their sexual desire. But the apartment plot is not yet fully participant in the logic of sexual liberation. Instead, these texts further the process of domestication by allowing for the power and appeal of the second chance. In these texts, female sexual history can be expunged, and female identity is figured as ephemeral and contingent.

Most tellingly, both novels show the dominant arc of the “reprieve” as a movement away from a female subculture toward the “mainstream” of heterosexual coupling. The process of acculturation into a subculture, and the further grouping of girls as roommates would seem to hold out the promise of community. Instead, both texts show the girls

being pulled away from their friends—moving into relationships that take them away from their friends, or literally moving away and into marriage. Only Barby in *The Girls in 3-B* manages to find herself in a homosocial dwelling: her homosexuality, of course, represents the exception and, for dominant culture, the caution of “unsound motives” (Faherty, ix).

The single-girl subculture, then, rather than forging community, positions girls for marriage, both in providing sexual “readiness” and in acculturating women into marriageability. An article in *Mademoiselle* from 1952 puts it bluntly, arguing that having a roommate provides “intensive on-the-job training” for marriage: “As preparation for the career of marriage it’s unbeatable, for after all a husband is a roommate, too” (McCreary, 76). Rather than a unique homosocial bond that will carry past the “reprieve,” female friendships and roommates are taken to be “training” for marriage.⁸

Rehearsals for Marriage

The apartment plot plays off the tension between the women’s temporary modernity and her future domesticity by representing her single life as a rehearsal for marriage, a time to experiment sexually and also to shed homosocial bonds. Certainly, as I discussed in the last chapter, some apartment films position the single girl within a “taming” scenario, in which she tames and traps the bachelor, moving him out of his bachelor pad and into a married home. Those films (*The Tender Trap*, *That Funny Feeling*, *If a Man Answers*) tend to center action in the man’s apartment, using the woman’s apartment as a contrast or foil to the man’s. Other films, however, situated more squarely in the girl’s apartment, show the single girl as more sexually adventurous and experimenting with relationships and identities prior to marriage. At the same time, these texts demonstrate the failure and limitations of female bonding.

In these films, the bohemian girl often prepares herself for an age-appropriate marriage by experimenting with an older man. In *Cactus Flower*, for instance, Toni Simmons (Goldie Hawn) has what she believes to be an adulterous affair with Julian Winston (Walter Matthau). Julian is not married but pretends to be so that he can maintain his freedom; Toni accepts him because she admires his “honesty.” Toni’s bohemianism is quickly established: She lives in Greenwich Village, and the first time

we see the exterior of her apartment building, a hippie outside places flowers in the windshields of parked cars. The apartment is a small studio, facing an airshaft, decorated with colorful throw pillows, a few shelves of thrift shop tshochkes, and a water heater covered with flower decals (see plate 13). Toni works at a record store, Stereo Heaven, in the Village. In contrast to her youth and bohemianism, Julian, a Park Avenue dentist, represents middle-class, middle-aged values. His residence is never shown nor referenced, and Toni has never seen his office. Because he pretends to be married, her apartment cloisters their relationship: when he tells her he will leave his wife and marry her, Toni exclaims, "Let's do something we've never done before. You can take me out in the daytime."

The film next shifts Toni from a relationship with Julian to a more age-appropriate one with her next-door neighbor, Igor Sullivan (Rick Lenz), a young writer, while simultaneously pairing Julian with his nurse, Stephanie (Ingrid Bergman). It starts when Julian breaks a date and Toni, distraught, attempts suicide. Toni and Igor "meet cute" when Igor, smelling gas, breaks into her apartment, entering the fire escape window, to rescue her. Toni's suicide attempt leads Julian to admit his love and propose to her. When Toni demands to meet his "wife," Julian convinces his spinster nurse Stephanie to pose as Mrs. Winston. As the ruse spins out of control, Stephanie blossoms, like the cactus flower of the title, and Toni discovers Julian's deceit. At film's end, as Toni dumps Julian, she beckons Igor by pounding on her kitchen wall and he enters her apartment through the airshaft window, wearing only a towel (see plate 14). Against the closeted "illicit" romance of an older man and younger woman, the film posits Toni's and Igor's relationship as more transparent and equally matched.

Cactus Flower hinges on the interaction between Toni and Stephanie, but depends equally upon separating them from one another. When Toni demands to meet Julian's "wife," she meets and admires Stephanie. She tells Julian she can't marry him, because Stephanie still loves him. Julian then seeks to undermine Stephanie in Toni's eyes by casting Stephanie as a nymphomaniac. Toni witnesses Stephanie on a supposed date and becomes protective again when the "date," a friend of Julian's posing as Stephanie's boyfriend, flirts with another girl. Through her interactions with Toni, Stephanie meets Igor and spends a romantic but supposedly chaste evening with him. Toni's jealousy leads her to view Stephanie as inappropriately sexual. However, in a last effort at bonding, Stephanie

extends herself in friendship to Toni, telling her of Julian's lie. At film's end, however, each woman is paired with the appropriate man and in the appropriate space—Toni and Igor in Toni's apartment and Stephanie and Julian in his office—with no indication that the women or couples will meet again.

Any Wednesday, similarly, gives Ellen Gordon (Jane Fonda) a second-chance relationship with a younger man after an adulterous affair. In this case, Ellen meets the wealthy executive John Cleves (Jason Robards) while living with two roommates in a Greenwich Village basement apartment. At the same time that Ellen's roommates leave her—one to get married and one to join the Peace Corps—the apartment goes co-op. Cleves offers to buy it as an executive suite for his company, on the condition that he be allowed to stay every Wednesday night. Each Wednesday, then, Ellen poses as a phone operator putting through Mr. Cleves's call to his wife from his phony business trips. Thus, Cleves uses Ellen's apartment to access a phony bachelor status and cheat on his wife, similar to *The Apartment* and *Boys Night Out*. As in *Cactus Flower*, the apartment functions as a closet for their relationship—both his fame and his marriage preclude their being seen in public together.

After two years, on Ellen's thirtieth birthday, a series of mishaps and masquerades expose their relationship and lead to its demise. First, a new secretary at Cleves's firm sends a young executive from Omaha to the apartment. Entering the apartment unannounced, and finding Ellen alone and crying—upset at her status as a once-a-week affair—Cass Henderson (Dean Jones) soon sniffs out the setup (Ellen describes it as “a special arrangement, like a scholarship”) and plans to blackmail Cleves. While Ellen tries to budge Cass from the premises, Cleves's wife, also sent by the secretary, arrives. Ellen and Cass are forced to masquerade as a visiting married couple and are invited to dine with the Cleves. Eventually, the wife determines that Ellen's is the voice she hears every Wednesday and divorces Cleves.

The narrative shows Ellen as desiring marriage but, at the same time, portrays her as not yet ready for suburban domesticity. When Mrs. Cleves (Rosemary Murphy) first sees Ellen's apartment, she says she is “thoroughly appalled” with its decoration. Looking at such decorative touches as church candlesticks, plastic flowers coming out of a gramophone nailed to the wall, a cigar-store Indian turned into a lamp, white wrought-iron chairs, Tiffany lamps and hurricane lamps, she trumpets: “Overdone, diffuse, bizarre. Obviously done by someone insecure.”

Mrs. Cleves brings her gay decorator, Felix (Jack Fletcher), who views the apartment as high camp: “The most excruciatingly exquisite example of bad taste!” But Ellen defends her taste to Cass: “Diffuse and bizarre it may be . . . but it’s mine.” And she makes clear that she has adhered to the single girl’s DIY principles: “I spent years scouring Third Avenue, the Salvation Army and auctions.”

Ellen views her bohemian apartment as crucial to her identity and considers it her home. When Cass first enters, she berates him: “You’re invading the privacy of my home!” Seeking a way out of her illicit relationship after meeting Mrs. Cleves, she proposes to Cass, in terms that make clear her close identification with the apartment: “Do you like me? You’ve seen my place? You like it? Then let’s get married!” Despite Ellen’s urbanism and love for her apartment, when Cleves gets divorced Ellen must prepare to become the new Mrs. Cleves, leave her apartment, and move to the wealthy suburb of Short Hills, New Jersey. When she sees the thirty-seven-room house she will live in, and meets the large household staff who will serve her, however, she admits wistfully, “It’s not the way I want to be married.” By film’s end, Ellen chooses Cass over Cleves. While she will, presumably, move with him to Omaha, the film closes with an image of them in her apartment, as Cleves stands outside the door, alone.

As in *Cactus Flower*, a temporary bond emerges between the two women. Mrs. Cleves takes an interest in Ellen and seeks to help her. Even after discovering the affair, Mrs. Cleves takes Ellen to the suburbs to introduce her to the staff and to see the house. Ellen extends herself to Mrs. Cleves, as well. When Mrs. Cleves stops in the city before taking the train to Reno for her divorce, Ellen offers her use of the apartment for a bath. However, Mrs. Cleves and Mr. Cleves get locked into the bedroom and momentarily rekindle their romance; simultaneously, in split screen, we see Ellen and Cass kiss in the living room. As Mr. Cleves is pushed out of the apartment, Mrs. Cleves also exits, taking a taxi to the train station.

In both *Cactus Flower* and *Any Wednesday*, the single girl in effect tries on a new identity—as adulterer or kept woman—and a nonmarital relationship before adopting a simpler, more honest role in her new relationship. The logic of the second chance depends upon a notion of masquerade, or role-playing, of identities that can be tried on and cast off. These temporary identities are situated in the bohemian apartment and, like the apartment and like female friends, are transitive and intermediate, meant to be left behind. The single girl in the apartment away from

home can be “the New You” or, like Holly Golightly and Ella Peterson (Judy Holliday) in *Bells Are Ringing*, she can adopt multiple new personae. However, as with Holly, Ella, or Pat in *The Girls in 3-B*, the single girl must abandon her masquerade (or be unmasked) to be ready for marriage.

Klute explicitly joins the masquerade to sexual experimentation. In this film, Bree Daniels (Jane Fonda), a would-be actress, works as a part-time call girl. Explaining to her therapist why she enjoys prostitution, she links it to her work as an actress: “For an hour, I’m the best actress in the world . . . It’s an act.” Through her various masquerades, Bree seeks an erasure of self. “What I would really like to do is to be faceless and bodiless and be left alone,” Bree remarks at another therapy session. In an earlier scene, with a prospective agent, Bree says she “forgets” herself when she acts. So, the masquerade of prostitution and acting alike allow Bree to take on new identities and forget her own identity.

Bree’s identity is in transition, as she attempts to move away from “the life” of prostitution into legitimate work as an actress or model. Her transition moves her away from a subcultural community of women—prostitutes—into a more isolated and competitive world of acting. The first time we see her, on an audition for a cosmetics commercial, she is lined up with a large group of girls, none talking to each other, who are each then judged, found wanting, and sent home. In the world of modeling and acting, Bree is indistinguishable from the crowd; she is a type but not part of a community. She cannot return to the world of prostitution, however. Its promise of community is false. Bree’s former friends are now splintered, living in different parts of the city. Some have become junkies. Three turn up dead, murdered by the same killer, Peter Cable (Charles Cioffi), who happens to be pursuing her as well.

Bree’s apartment reflects her indeterminate identity. First, her apartment incarnates her move from full-time to part-time call girl, as she makes clear when she asks John Klute (Donald Sutherland) the rhetorical question: “Do you think I’d be living in this kip if I were taking calls full-time? I’d be back on Park Avenue!” Being a full-time call girl gives Bree an identity and what one Madame describes as a “home”: “You’ll always have a home here,” she tells Bree. Like Holly Golightly, Bree both represses that home and seeks to return to it. She is drawn to “tricking,” but no longer wants to inhabit “the life.” In comparison to her posh Park Avenue apartment with leather furniture, her current apartment



19. Bree's sparsely furnished "kip" in *Klute*.

fits the bohemian mold. It is a walk-up studio with a bed right next to a small kitchen and table, a rocking chair, coat-rack, a single bookcase, and a bureau. It is decorated with a picture of John Fitzgerald Kennedy and little else (figure 19).⁹ In addition, the apartment's location marks Bree's potential erasure. As Robin Wood points out, "We are carefully made aware of the apartment's physical location in the street (next to a funeral parlor, whose sign, visually prominent in the foreground when Bree comes home connects her at once with the threat of death, of becoming faceless and bodiless . . .)" ("*Klute*," 34). Whereas Bree's "kip" houses her transitive and indeterminate identity, the funeral home signals a more permanent dwelling, the death so many modernists associate with home.

Rather than a container or shell, the film's *mise-en-scène* and narrative mark Bree's apartment as particularly porous. At numerous times in the film, we watch Bree through a window or through her skylight, reflecting the peeping gaze of the murderer, Cable. Emphasizing how vulnerable her space is, Cable breaks into Bree's apartment and trashes it, leaving semen on her underpants. Klute also penetrates Bree's privacy. First, he pushes his way in to ask her questions about the disappearance of Tom Gruneman, his friend who was murdered by Cable. Then, he moves into a curious half-room below hers, where he surreptitiously lis-

tens to her phone calls. This reminds us that the porousness and transparency of the apartment—utopian in some instances—can have a darker tinge.

As in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Cactus Flower*, and *Any Wednesday*, the woman's transformation depends upon the man's unwanted entrance into her apartment and invasion of her privacy. After Klute convinces Bree to help him investigate, he spends the night in her apartment protecting her and later nurses her back to health after a drug binge. When Bree sneaks into Klute's temporary space and sleeps with him, she treats him like a john and doesn't have an orgasm. When they sleep together in her apartment, though, she admits to feeling physical pleasure. Once she has had an orgasm and once she is able to give Klute control of her life, Bree is ready to leave her life of prostitution and her apartment. She tells her therapist she is not quite ready to set up "housekeeping in the suburbs," but she exits her empty apartment with Klute, who is from the suburbs of Pennsylvania and who admits to being "homesick" for his suburban life. At film's end, Bree is un-homed: "I have no idea what's going to happen. I can't stay in the city." But she seems to have reached her turning point, as she tells a final john, "I'm leaving town right now and I don't expect to be back."

Bedroom Problems

The bohemian apartment situates the single girl in discourses of modernity, insofar as it effects a rupture with home, and captures the contingency and temporality of modernity. The Bohemian Girl represents a progressive view of sexuality because her transgressions are not punished but valued: her sexual experience makes her marriageable. However, in embroidering the single girl's life with bohemian stitching, the apartment plot steers women away from any serious commitment to work and, concurrently, suggests that poverty is the single woman's preferred state. Against this, representations of the well-appointed career girl apartment indicate both a single girl's immersion in work and her higher economic status. While the Bohemian Girl moves away from a community of women into heterosexual pairing, the career woman moves independently in the professional world of men. Accordingly, the career girl's apartment tends to symbolize the woman's potential failure

as a mate, because her economic status or careerism mark her as potentially castrating and, crucially, as a virgin or prude.

Designing Woman clearly sets out a castration scenario through the figure of the apartment. Mike Hagen (Gregory Peck) and Marilla Brown (Lauren Bacall) meet and have a whirlwind romance on vacation in California. Upon returning to New York, they each view the other's apartment with some dismay. First, Marilla sees Mike's small one-bedroom walk-up. More like the stereotypical bohemian girl's apartment than the stereotypical bachelor pad, Mike's apartment is cluttered with newspapers, magazines, books, and random objects, including a toaster in the living room. Mike is immediately diminished in Marilla's eyes. In a flashback voice-over, she says: "The first thing I thought of was my little brother's shoebox, in which he used to keep all his possessions—string and marbles, and bits of colored glass. The prospect of taking up permanent residence in the shoebox was somewhat unnerving, but I didn't want to hurt Mike's feelings. He was so proud of everything." Marilla's gaze reduces Mike's apartment from a man's haven to a child's toy box, insufficient both as a bachelor pad and as a married domicile.

Already diminished by her gaze, Mike must then confront the difference between his and Marilla's spaces. Mike has a preconceived notion that Marilla will live in a bohemian apartment: "For some reason, I'd pictured Marilla living in a one-room kitchenette with a girlfriend who studies music." When he sees her apartment, however, it signifies wealth and career, rather than youth and poverty. She lives in a high-rise building with a doorman. Inside, she has a large, multiroom apartment with tiled floors, marble, faux finishes, elegant furniture, and a tasteful cream-and-gold color scheme with discreet touches of color (see plate 15). Mike calls it "chic." After a surprise party, in which Marilla's designer friends crowd the apartment, ignoring and excluding Mike, he admits to feeling deflated: "It's a shock, you know. You marry a nice girl out in California. You think it might be quite a treat for her if you take the little girl East, show her the big city, let her meet a few people. Then you find out she already knows everybody in New York *and* she owns a sizeable chunk of it. It's a shock. Bad for the ego." Marilla's apartment makes Mike feel small. Imagining himself as the one who could elevate the single girl into society, Mike has to confront the fact that Marilla has a higher status and higher income than he does. She is not only rich, but rich from her work as a designer. Her apartment, taken as indicator of status, far exceeds his

and signals an imbalance in their relationship. Marking his reduced status even more, he moves into her place and gives up his.

In *Pillow Talk*, Brad Allen infers that Jan Morrow's chic apartment intimates not only her careerism but also, concomitantly, her lack of sexual experience. When Jan sends a phone inspector to Brad's apartment to sort their party line, he asks, "Why are you so fascinated with my personal affairs? . . . You don't see me going down to the phone company complaining about your affairs." When Jan retorts that she has "none to complain about," Brad says, "It figures . . . Obviously, you're a woman who lives alone, doesn't like it." He tells her to stop taking her "bedroom problems" out on him and suggests that her problems are a lack of activity in bed. Jan defends her single life: "I have a good job, a lovely apartment. I go out with very nice men to the best places . . . What am I missing?" What she is missing, from Brad's perspective, is clearly sex. It is no accident, then, that Brad storms into Jan's bedroom at film's end and takes her in pajamas to his (queerly decorated) apartment before proposing to her.

The bizarre film adaptation of *Sex and the Single Girl* offers perhaps the most brutal attack on the career girl. In the film, Natalie Wood plays Dr. Helen Gurley Brown, a research psychologist and the only female employee at the "International Institute of Advanced Marital and Pre-Marital Studies." Tony Curtis plays Bob Weston, editor-in-chief of *Stop* magazine, a scandal rag that boast proudly of its own filthiness. The magazine has published one article dismissing Helen as "a 23 year-old virgin," incapable of advising single women about sex. Bob plans to do a follow-up exposé: "Does She or Doesn't She?" To get near Helen, who hates him, he poses as his next-door neighbor Frank (Henry Fonda) and seeks marital counseling.

The film's view of Helen and her bestselling book, *Sex and the Single Girl*, is incoherent at best. The film pays some lip service to some of Brown's ideas in the original book: Helen claims to take *Stop*'s classification of her as an "insult," and says she can "get love, sex and romance" outside the bounds of marriage. But the film undermines Brown's central ideas about staying single, and about the single woman's sexuality. The film portrays Helen's book as a marriage manual that considers marriage a "moral ideal." And despite her protests, Helen is characterized as a young, virginal, or even frigid woman. Asked direct and pointed questions throughout the film about whether she "is that kind of girl," Helen repeatedly dodges the question. However, she implies that the

book does not reflect her experience: "It is a research book, not an autobiography!" Unlike the Bohemian Girl who experiments with sex before marriage, Helen suggests that she has substituted academic research for a real-life rehearsal: "I made sure very early on I was going to know all about love and marriage *before* I made my mistakes." There is some suggestion that if Helen has had sex, she has not experienced pleasure or orgasm but treats sex matter-of-factly as research only. In one scene, her coworker Rudy (Mel Ferrer) attempts to ferret out whether she is a virgin or not. Repeatedly, he bestows passionate kisses on her while she barely notices but continues busying herself, putting on earrings and gloves. Later, she offers to serve as a sexual surrogate for "Frank," who claims to be having bedroom problems. As she shows him various erogenous zones for women, such as the neck, she repeatedly tells him not to worry if she does not respond when he touches her, because she has a "dead zone" there.

Helen's apartment serves in the film as a signifier of her misplaced priorities and what Faherty would call "inertia." Since *Sex and the Single Girl* has become a bestseller, Helen says she has "solved all my problems." She has all the material goods she wants, such as furs and jewelry and, as she puts it, "I've got this new apartment." In part, her apartment (figure 20) reflects her identity. It is a cool, elegant one-bedroom, with hi-fi and etchings, decorated in black, white, and beige. The color scheme mirrors her wardrobe, which is exclusively black and white. It also echoes her office, which has the same color scheme. In linking her apartment, wardrobe, and office the film suggests that she has only recently acquired these, as a result of her book's success; that Helen does not differentiate between home and work, and that work permeates her home; and that the veneer is false. While the apartment appears to be the sort of "man-magnet" that the real Helen Gurley Brown promotes, the film's Helen appears to be a lonely professional and a phony. After kissing "Frank," she does not keep him as a "pet," but kicks him out, then calls her mother, crying "I'm in love with a married man!" Rather than imparting the cavalier attitude of the book, she sacrifices her love for the sanctity of "Frank's" marriage.

Not surprisingly, for Helen to overcome her frigidity and marry Bob, she must leave her apartment and her job. First, Helen uncovers Bob's ruse. She returns to the office to find the institute being destroyed, its owners running off with the funds from her book. She agrees to run away to Fiji with Rudy. However, Bob, realizing his love for her, quits



20. Helen Gurley Brown's apartment in *Sex and the Single Girl*.

his job and follows her. After a lengthy and quite funny chase scene, Bob and Helen fight, and Bob prepares to leave with his former girlfriend, Gretchen (Fran Jeffries). Seeming to have missed her chance for marriage with Bob, Helen adopts a feminine masquerade. Cradling a doll from the airport store, she approaches Bob and simply cries. Her tears easily win him. As she announces that she will give up her practice to become his wife, Bob tells her he already has a new editorial position lined up. The film ends with them en route to Fiji.

Conclusion: Stranger in a Strange Land

Viewed in isolation, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* seems to figure Holly Golightly's refusal to furnish her apartment as a quirky manifestation of her unique social and psychoanalytic profile. However, if we view *Breakfast at Tiffany's* in the broader context of the apartment plot, we can see that Holly's bohemian rootlessness is typical among mid-century representations of single female life. Holly—along with the female characters in *The Best of Everything*, *The Girls in 3-B*, *Cactus Flower*, *Any Wednesday*, and

Klute—embodies a subcultural mode of female domesticity. The single girl's apartment in these texts figures as distinct from both the bachelor pad and the single-family home. It is decidedly bohemian and temporary.

The bohemian apartment produces a temporary modernity, allowing the single girl to experience the rupture of leaving home without effecting a permanent break. In the apartment, she inhabits a new temporality of contingency and encounter. Her apartment enables play with identities and roles, especially sexual experimentation. To be sure, she pays significant rent for her temporary accommodation in modernity. She enters a single-girl subculture and comes out a solitary girl, isolated from the female community. In figuring female experience as rehearsal, or masquerade, the girl's identity is erased, her history expunged. If she lingers too long and the apartment becomes a permanent dwelling, rather than an intermediate base of operations, she risks stagnation and death.

A liminal space that always exists in relation to some conception of home—as the other, the repressed, the future—the single girl's apartment is not really home but an uncanny space, an interlude, that situates the woman between modernity and domesticity. In this uncanny space, the woman appears similar to Georg Simmel's modern stranger: "The stranger . . . not in the sense often touched upon in the past, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the *potential* wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going" ("The Stranger," 402). Like the stranger, the urban girl can be seen as one who is not a "soil owner" (403) in the literal or figurative sense, who does not belong to the dominant group, and who is fundamentally mobile and free. Her presence—in novels, pulps, books, TV shows, and comic strips—exists alongside and amidst the dominant stereotypes of domestic femininity. In reverse, her strangeness makes those stereotypes strange, opens them up to critique and questioning. Even as she joins the group, and acquiesces to domesticity, she points toward an alternate space and time, a repressed memory of the *unheimlich*, of being the "un" of home.



4

THE SUBURBS IN THE CITY

The Housewife and the Apartment

We can't be sentimental as to what we consider is the desirable life. We can't have the suburbs in the city.
—“What Women Want in the City of the Future”

Women symbolize everyday life in its entirety. They embody its situation, its conflicts and its possibilities. They are its active critique.
—HENRI LEFEBVRE, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 2

In May 1966, *Mademoiselle* hosted a roundtable discussion among urban women and male students of city planning on the topic “What Women Want in the City of the Future.” When queried, “What makes you want to live in a city rather than a suburb,” the female participants cited “the proximity of everything,” including proximity to work, theater districts, and financial district, along with “convenience,” “a sense of anticipation in meeting new people, the quickness of ideas,” and “the feeling that around the next corner something new may be lurking” (160). Chief among the women’s responses to the question “What is wrong with city living today” were concerns about the viability of city life for families: problems of pollution and crime that endanger children, inadequate playgrounds and facilities for family living, and the sheer difficulty of finding an affordable apartment large enough to house a family. While

When in Southern California visit Universal Studios 

*I, Tina Balser, housewife, did
not do the laundry today.
Did not walk the dog.
Did not polish the silver.
Today, I, Tina Balser
did... Something Else!*

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Movie
Making!"**
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TIMES



**"A
dazzling
piece of
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— REX REED
HOLIDAY

**diary of a
mad housewife**
a frank perry film

starring
richard benjamin · frank langella
carrie snodgrass · screenplay by eleanor perry
from the novel by sue kaufman · produced and directed by frank perry

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21. Press kit image, *Diary of a Mad Housewife*.
Author's collection.

the women argued for better city planning to enable family life, the student planners suggested that perhaps city living was not intended for families: "What attracts people toward the city? It's a function of their marital status. People tend to gravitate toward various types of living environments as they progress in age and go through various periods in their life" (161). Arguing that the city "is—or should be—for" singles, one young city planner suggested that trying to "make the city appeal to all age groups" amounted to making "the city into a suburb" (161).

Both the “taming” of the bachelor scenario and the idea of the “Great Reprieve” discussed in previous chapters seem to support a commonplace assertion about the place of the city in the life cycle: namely, that at least among white middle-class people, apartment rental coincides with one’s life as a single, queer, or young married person but that the arrival of children necessitates a move to the suburbs. As Scott Greer puts it in his 1962 book, *The Emergent City*, the “division of rewards in the form of residence is . . . related to the life cycle. Those who have not yet married, not yet had children, find the central city an adequate site for their activities, but with the commitments to a family, the suburbs become a logical residence” (84–85). In Greer’s analysis of urban living patterns, he finds that new white immigrants to the city “remain familistic in their way of life” but that among second and third generation white immigrants, “Familism is a free choice” (76). Assimilation produces a class rise and potential displacement from the city: “After acculturation to the city, the urbanite rises in social rank and, perhaps, returns to a new version of the conventional family-centered existence—in the suburbs” (76).

More than merely a stage in the life cycle, of course, urbanism can also be characterized as a lifestyle. As discussed in previous chapters, *Playboy* aligns urbanism with “sophistication” and Fischer attributes subcultural “unconventionality” to urban populations. In line with these lifestyle characterizations, Greer takes up Louis Wirth’s famous phrase “urbanism as a way of life” (Greer, 77; Wirth) and suggests that the choice between the city and the suburbs signals more a choice between lifestyles than a strict indicator of class or family status. Greer claims that while the city has “exclusive possession of most non-assimilating ethnics (the darker-skinned migrants) and most of the very poor,” and suburbs have more of the very wealthy white population, “the two halves of the metropolis”—the central city and the suburbs—nonetheless share a large overlapping white middle class who “represent different configurations of the same attributes, different ‘mixes’ of the same population types” (85). Sorting the “mix” of heterosexual, white, middle-class population types in cities and suburbs, Greer argues that urbanism appeals to “those who choose single blessedness, or childless marriages, or few children” (84) and who opt for a more careerist and entertainment-oriented lifestyle, while the suburbs appeal to a more family-centered lifestyle.

Theories of lifestyle generally highlight the “construction of identity through consumption practices, ‘leisure-work’ and domestic space” (Bell and Hollows, 3). Rather than individual identities, lifestyle marks

out classed identities and attendant “transformations in, and movements within, the social space of class relations” (5). Thus, the distinction between a suburban lifestyle and an urban lifestyle tends to be understood not only as a distinction between “familism” and careerism, but also as defined through consumption, modes of leisure, and kinds of domestic space. For example, in the mid-twentieth century the white, middle-class suburban dweller is associated with the consumption of various home technologies, such as the washer, dryer, and refrigerator; outdoor amenities, such as swimming pools, barbecues, and lawn furniture; and children’s items, such as toys and bicycles. The stereotypical suburbanite also engages in certain modes and sites of leisure, ranging from home television viewing to the bowling alley and the country club. Most strongly, the suburbanite is exemplified by ownership of a single-family home. By contrast, urban lifestyles are marked by the consumption of food from restaurants, eclectic furnishings, books, and other markers of “sophisticated” taste; sites of leisure such as the theater, nightclubs, museums, and restaurants; and rental of an apartment.

Mary Cantwell’s memoir provides a window into the lifestyle of the married urban middle class at mid-century. When Cantwell describes the furnishings of her first apartment after marriage, on Perry Street in the Village, she indicates the role of consumption in marking “sophisticated” taste:

An interior decorator could not date that apartment . . . but I think a cultural historian could. The little foreign matchbooks came from West Fourth Street and were very Village. The Chinese export porcelain cups, each of which had at least one hairline crack and held cigarettes, were very New England, as was the white ironstone pitcher crammed, depending on the season, with chrysanthemums or laurel leaves. The Spode dinner service spoke of a trip or two to London, the copper pots in the kitchen of a trip or two to Paris, and the reproduction eighteenth-century silver-plate of an inability to afford sterling combined with a rejection of stainless steel modernism. The two wine racks in the coat closet told of someone venturing beyond Soave and Chianti, and the copies of *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn*, and *Les Amours Jaunes* argued junior year abroad. (224)

In this catalogue, Cantwell knowingly communicates the way in which domestic items function as props that convey character. Here, rather than the marvels of modern technology associated with the suburban home, we discover things—cracked antique cups, eighteenth-century

silver—striking for their sense of history and time; things used against their expected function, such as a cup holding cigarettes or a pitcher used as a vase; things that signify travel and education; and things that signal a deliberate refusal of contemporary style (“stainless steel modernism”) and middle-of-the-road taste (“Soave and Chianti”). Cantwell and her husband travel in circles with other “bright young men and their first wives” (227) who read *Gourmet* magazine and clip Craig Claiborne recipes from *The Times*; bohemians whose social lives consist of a constant round of ever more elaborate, more gourmet dinner parties. They are writers, editors, and artists who view themselves as not only urban but cultured and worldly: “Paris was what we, our crowd, wanted New York to be” (255).

In addition to these signifiers of suburban and urban ways of life, respectively, the distinction between a suburban and urban lifestyle is often taken to be a distinction between massification and individuality. As early as 1928, in an article “Is Suburban Living a Delusion?” Christine Frederick argued that “the suburb standardizes those things which a true individual doesn’t want standardized” (290). In part, Frederick decries the sameness of the suburban house: “Neat little toy houses on their neat little patches of lawn and their neat little colonial lives, to say nothing of the neat little housewives and their neat little children—all set in neat little rows, for all the world like children’s blocks . . . It is so sugary and commonplace; so pathetic in its pretense of an individualism which doesn’t exist” (290). For Frederick, suburban standardization does not address “the comfort of living” but “the flattening out of personality” (290). By contrast, the apartment provides “a much more frank standardization of life, and a far more efficient one” (290). The individual house does not provide greater efficiency but increases the “burden of living,” through assigning each owner an individual set of repairs, cleaning, and supply problems. Moreover, she argues, the suburban home affords its owner less privacy than an apartment, with its houses sandwiched together and visible to one another in what is commonly referred to as the “goldfish bowl” effect (see also Spigel, 128). Against the idea that suburbia produces a sense of community and facilitates the social, Frederick argues that suburbs also standardize the social: people in the suburbs choose their friends based on their being neighbors and within socio-economic “sets” (291), whereas urbanites choose friends dispersed across the city, based on like interests.

Of course, the suburban lifestyle also seemingly necessitates the stereotyped gender role of the housewife. For Betty Friedan, the synchronization of lifestyle and life cycle signaled by a family's move to the suburbs correlates with the "feminine mystique" that "causes educated modern American women to become and remain full-time housewives" (345). Friedan suggests that an urban lifestyle offers women more choices to counter "the mystique":

Families where the wife intends to pursue a definite professional goal are less likely to move to the suburbs. In the city, of course, there are more and better jobs for educated women; more universities, sometimes free, with evening courses, geared to men who work during the day, and often more convenient than the conventional daytime program for a young mother who wants to finish college or work toward a graduate degree. There is also a better supply of full- or part-time nurses and cleaning help, nursery schools, day-care centers, after-school play programs. (346)

However, Friedan suggests that if the urban woman does not work or go to school, her role as housewife trumps the urban lifestyle; or, put another way, that a housewife is a housewife, regardless of where she lives. Friedan claims that in the modern age, more and more of the jobs that used to be performed in the home—such as canning, baking bread, weaving, making clothes, educating the young, caring for the aged—have been taken away by mass-production and professional services. Thus, the housewife feels bored and restless; and she makes choices that expand, rather than contract, her domestic obligations.

The move to the suburbs, in Friedan's appraisal, represents the housewife's efforts to fill her time. "There is . . . less room," she argues, "for housewifery to expand to fill the time in the city" (346): "The woman with two children, for example, bored and restive in her city apartment, is driven by her sense of futility and emptiness to move, 'for the children's sake,' to a spacious house in the suburbs. The house takes longer to clean, the shopping and gardening and chauffeuring and do-it-yourself routines are so time-consuming that, for a while, the emptiness seems solved" (345). Consequently, the inconveniences and inefficiencies that Fredrick describes as an increased "burden of living" in the suburbs are paradoxically valued; they become both lifestyle and skill in the housewife's cultivation of domestic duties. In terms of the life cycle, then, the move to the suburbs follows not just marriage or the birth of children,

but the woman's concomitant abandonment of work and transformation into a housewife role, which may come after one or two children or immediately after marriage.

Please Don't Eat the Daisies (Walters, 1959) animates Friedan's thesis. In the film, Kate Mackay (Doris Day) and her husband Larry (David Niven) move with their four small boys, maid, and dog from a cramped apartment in New York City to a rambling ramshackle house in the fictitious country town of Hooton. In the city, as a housewife, Kate is somewhat out of place. Her husband, a newly powerful and famous theater critic, wants her to participate in his new lifestyle of cocktail parties among "interesting" people. Kate tells him, "Interesting people don't want to make friends with housewives." In the suburbs, she announces, "I am no longer a member of the cocktail set. I'm a lady of Hooton with a rich, full life." While Kate's life in New York consists of theater openings and cocktail parties, which she begrudgingly attends with her husband, in the suburbs, by contrast, she is busy with house renovations (painting, papering, shopping for fabric, etc.), school volunteer activities, and her participation as an actor in the local theater group. In fact, she is so busy that her husband becomes resentful. While their lives in New York were intertwined with his work, in the suburbs they are increasingly separate, as his work takes him away from home most evenings, and she but not he becomes a busy "club woman" during the day.

In reverse, the housewife's move back to the city is, for Friedan, a first step toward liberation—and Friedan herself moved back to the city, renting a seven-room apartment in the Dakota, when *The Feminine Mystique* became a bestseller: "My roots are in what's happening. And now I don't have to worry about a septic tank" (quoted in Marcus, "Placing *Rosemary's Baby*," 4). In line with this, in the August 1965 issue of *House Beautiful*, devoted to "the lure of the city," two articles by women writers articulate numerous benefits to wives gained by living in the city. In "We Never Left," Andy Logan (Mrs. Charles Lyon) argues that "a mother of a family who wants to keep her hand in some trade or profession" must have proximity to work and domestic help, which, she claims is more readily available in the city (132). Similarly, in "We Moved Back to the City," Mary Scott Welch explains that she moved back from the suburbs when she discovered that "convenience of a purely interior, domestic sort is no longer the Be-all and End-all of living. More important to us now is the kind of adult-oriented convenience the city offers" (118). In Welch's account, in the suburbs her time was absorbed by chauffeur-

ing children and home maintenance. Now, the size of her domicile reduced—and the distances between home, school, work, and shopping greatly reduced as well—she walks instead of driving and spends little time on the home. In the city, she says, “we all seem to be expanding” (125). Her husband gains three hours a day he would have spent commuting, and she gains time to spend on herself, which enables her to rejoin a career in freelance magazine writing that she largely abandoned in the suburbs.

In *The Fall of a Doll's House*, Jane Davison, likewise, suggests that moving out of a single-family suburban home and into an urban apartment can prove liberating. Davison compares her family's exit from their suburban Cambridge home to Nora's famous exit at the end of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Initially tied to the ideal of single-family living, Davison eventually realizes that her time as a housewife is futile and unsatisfying. Transplanted to a Boston apartment complex, she is saved from a “sense of lonely obsolescence” and liberated from full-time domesticity by a “deliberate course of Bad Housekeeping” (244). In her new environs, she chooses “time over space,” “seizing time” so that she can take up a career in writing (255).

Friedan's term “the feminine mystique” can be joined to what Lefebvre calls the emergent 1950s “reprivatization” of everyday life (*Critique of Everyday Life*, 88ff). Reprivatization revives the nineteenth-century ideal of domesticity and the concept of home as a restorative separate sphere, apart from the public sphere of work. For Lefebvre, reprivatization binds together the everyday and family life and leads to the withdrawal of consciousness. The private, in this account, removed from “real knowledge, real power and real participation,” does not provide a shelter from the public sphere but its deprivation: “So the word ‘private’ has not lost its main meaning: privation. Private life means privation. The ‘world’ is there to plug up the holes, fill in the cracks, paper over the gaps, camouflage the frustration. Time is crammed full and life seems fit to burst. Or else it is empty. ‘Chock-a-block full and completely empty’” (90). Reprivatization occurs across middle-class society—privacy is a privilege not accorded the lower classes—but is nonetheless gendered: “‘Women’ in general bear all the weight of everyday life; they are subjected to it much more than men, in spite of very significant differences according to social classes and groups. Their situation sums up what the everyday is” (11–12). Thus, for Lefebvre, as for Friedan, women, subject to the family and the everyday, exist in a condition of privation and what Le-

febvre elsewhere refers to as a “general alienation which determines and damages ‘the feminine condition’” (211). Privatization, accordingly, is an uneven proposition in which the women, more than the man, suffers the deprivation of private life.

In Lefebvre’s writings, reprivatization would seem to run counter to the philosophy of urbanism. If the urban, for Lefebvre, represents “the right to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete *usage* of these moments and places” (*Right to the City*, 179), reprivatization signals a retreat from the urban, from centrality; it offers empty time rather than life rhythms, alienation instead of encounter. There is then a contradiction between reprivatization and the figure of the apartment, as urban habitat and as objective correlative for a philosophy of urbanism. Rather than fully private the apartment, I have been arguing, represents a form of public privacy; is a porous and permeable space that enables encounter; and activates contingency and spontaneity, not alienation or withdrawal.

At the same time, both Lefebvre’s and Friedan’s assessment of women’s roles and subjection to the everyday would seem to suggest that the figure of the housewife might trouble the philosophy of urbanism and characterization of the apartment that I’ve so far articulated. If, as Friedan suggests, the empty time of housewifery exists in both the apartment and the home, it follows that the apartment might also be a space of privation and alienation for the married women or mother. Cantwell suggests as much when she details her own restless alienation: “A man and a woman are sitting at night in a living room in Greenwich Village. It is nicely furnished and so are they. Both are reading. The woman is lonely, she is always lonely . . . So what is she to do? Writing is out of the question . . . Another job is out of the question . . . A baby is out of the question . . . There is nothing for it but to move” (221). For Cantwell, the apartment becomes a repressed space, a space in which the externals of a happy lifestyle are in place but hide her emptiness and distance from her husband.

Most positive accounts of urban housewifery place emphasis upon the woman’s ability to work, her freedom from full-time house labor, and her ability to use time rather than merely fill it. Thus, urbanization stands in opposition to housewifery, as an escape from it, a means to take the woman back into the public sphere rather than limit her to the private everyday. However, numerous urban women are, of course, housewives,

and numerous apartment plots revolve around the figure of the housewife who does not work outside the home or in a paid capacity. What then is the difference between the city and suburbs for traditional housewives? What sense does it make to talk about a philosophy of urbanism or urban lifestyle for the housewife? Does the figure of the housewife produce the suburbs in the city?

This chapter takes up the married variation on the apartment plot, especially the married woman's experience of the apartment, as a possible litmus test. My analysis extends across a wide range of films, including the light romantic comedies *Under the Yum Yum Tree* and *Barefoot in the Park*; to the melodramatically tinged comedy *The Marrying Kind*; to more dystopic, even horrific portraits of married urban life in *Diary of a Mad Housewife*, *Wait Until Dark*, and *Rosemary's Baby*. My analysis is limited in this chapter to representations of white married couples, because the representations of black urban family living raise different issues—related to class and in conversation with tenements and housing projects as much as the suburbs—that will be discussed in the next chapter. In different ways, each of these films shows the space of marriage and the space of the apartment as being at odds. Rather than represent urban marriage as different in kind from suburban marriage, they import suburban ideologies into the space of the apartment via the representation of marriage. In particular, they align marriage with privatization or containment and the apartment with porousness, pitting the woman's potential entrapment and isolation within marriage against her potential freedom, and, at the same time, implying that the woman in the apartment is vulnerable to intrusion and danger. On the one hand, these texts can be seen as critiquing the hegemonic ideals of suburban marriage, especially the gendered division of work and home, by showing the woman's alienation. On the other hand, they can be seen as critiquing the apartment and feeding the dominant ideal of a single-family suburban home by showing the woman's vulnerability in the city.

Deplorable Encouragement

Of course, the tension between privatization and porousness in the marriage plot relates partially to the woman's sexuality. In *The Physiology of Marriage*, Honoré de Balzac promotes the virtual imprisonment of married women: "Your house and its rooms must be so arranged as to leave

your wife as few opportunities as possible for delivering you, if she is disposed to, into the hands of the Minotaur; for half the misery in the world comes from the deplorable encouragement that the wife is accustomed to derive from her own rooms" (156). In Balzac's account, wives (or at least the attractive, wealthy, white wives who are his subject) have a propensity toward infidelity, and thus husbands must seek to contain their wives, to prevent or defer their inevitable cuckolding. However, Balzac recognizes the "deplorable encouragements" to adultery intrinsic to the typical French flat—including its availability to intrusion and drop-ins, its proximity and accessibility to potential lovers, and the anonymity afforded visitors. As a porous and permeable space, the apartment is insufficiently isolated from the world. As a space that is neither fully public nor wholly private, the apartment enables access and provides cover: it is anonymous and discreet. In this respect, the married woman in an apartment is "encouraged" by "her rooms," as well as by her idleness, to commit adultery.

Balzac's notion that the apartment building creates the conditions for adultery is a common assumption in the early American discourse on apartments. Indeed, this concern informed much of the opposition to apartments from those who promoted suburban living. In pro-suburban discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, magazines and newspapers frequently published articles claiming that the apartment presented threats to the sanctity of the home. In part, the apartment was perceived as a threat to family privacy, since it would place families in close proximity to one another and since the private domestic space would bleed so easily into public space. Moreover, the apartment was viewed as a threat to the purity of women, with an assumption that apartment living would significantly increase the incidence of infidelity (Cromley, 22–24). In 1902, for example, *House Beautiful* denounced the apartment as a "demoralizer" of women, likely to lead them into "idleness and frivolity" (quoted in Davison, 49). As I discussed in relation to *Playboy* cartoons and the imaginary of the bachelor pad in chapter 2, fifties discourse still promotes the idea that apartments and adultery go hand in hand. *Playboy* evinces a dual assumption, first that the married urban housewife will conduct affairs in the apartment while her husband is away, and second, that the married suburban male needs an urban apartment to conduct *his* affairs.

In line with the assumption that apartment living goads infidelity, *Under the Yum Yum Tree* shows the vulnerability of the married couple's

apartment by placing a couple next door to a predatory bachelor. In the film, Jack Lemmon plays Hogan, owner and landlord of a courtyard building that rents only to young, pretty, single women, charging them a mere seventy-five dollars a month for apartments that would cost hundreds more on the open market. In a perfect *Playboy* fantasy, the apartment courtyard provides easy views of girls outside putting on suntan oil or visible through their bathroom windows wearing only a towel (see plate 16). Hogan figures himself a playboy, and decorates his apartment accordingly. Mostly red in color, containing a mix of modern and oriental art, his bachelor pad has a sunken living room with automatic switches that light the fireplace and produce Animatronic violins playing romantic music. In his apartment, he has a key-cutting machine, with which he makes red heart-shaped keys for all his tenants; he can cut duplicates of any key, to give himself access to the apartments at any hour. As Hogan's janitor, Murphy (a henpecked Paul Lynde), admiringly asserts, Hogan's system is to "move one out, move another in. Beats the heck out of marriage." Named the "Centaur Apartments," the courtyard features a sculpture of Hogan as centaur—near kin, certainly, of Balzac's Minotaur.

Through a misunderstanding, in which he thinks he is renting to two girls, Hogan rents an apartment to Robin (Carol Lynley) and David (Dean Jones), a young couple. Robin and David are as yet unmarried, but Robin, a college girl, insists they live together as a married couple, "without sleeping together" to see if they can fulfill "each other's non-physical needs" before they get married. Robin's "experiment" in living together with David is a misguided rehearsal for marriage. Unlike the bohemianism of the single girl discussed in the last chapter, in which the single girl experiments sexually to make herself "ready" for marriage, Robin attempts to prepare herself for marriage intellectually, by avoiding sex. Rather than train for marriage by having a female roommate, she tutors her would-be husband to become a platonic roommate.

Living together produces what David calls "a burlesque of married life." First, like the stereotypical married couple, the rules of the pretend marriage necessitate that Robin and David do not have sex, or even engage in the heavy petting they practiced before living together. Like a husband in the doghouse, David sleeps on a cot in the living room. In addition, David becomes a parody of the masculine breadwinner. Advised by Hogan to exhaust himself to exorcise his sexual desire, David engages in a strenuous exercise regime that takes him away from home all day and returns him home exhausted, so that he falls asleep on the

couch before dinner. Robin, similarly, becomes a pretend housewife. As soon as they move into the apartment, she starts skipping her college classes to unpack, decorate, shop for supplies, and cook a romantic dinner. Eagerly awaiting David at home with cocktails and dinner, her efforts are rendered fruitless when he falls asleep (see plate 17).

In the burlesque, Hogan fulfills the role of would-be lover. He repeatedly lets himself into the apartment using a pass key, regardless of whether it is day or night. To glean information he can use for seduction, he eavesdrops on Robin's and David's conversations, using first a drinking glass, then a stethoscope at the door. To see into their apartment, he positions a mirror to see in the window, then dangles from the roof to get a better view, as Robin undresses for bed. Crucially, he makes himself available during the hours when David is away. During the day, he takes Robin shopping and tries to whisk her away to an impromptu picnic. When David falls asleep on the couch, Hogan takes Robin to dinner and dancing at a fancy nightclub. When David leaves the apartment one night, afraid he will seduce a drunken Robin and compromise their "marriage," Hogan swoops in and very nearly beds her.

In the end, David decides to abandon the pretend marriage, which cannot survive the pressures of apartment living: "With people walking in and out, a landlord with a million keys . . . it's a looney bin." When David and Robin decide to get married for real, they leave the apartment and give up their lease, despite the fact that the film situates its plot amid a housing crisis in which apartments are expensive and hard to find. Marriage, in the logic of the film, cannot sustain itself in a porous environment. At the end of the film, the apartment building returns to its "proper" function, when a busload of single girls arrive to take up residence.

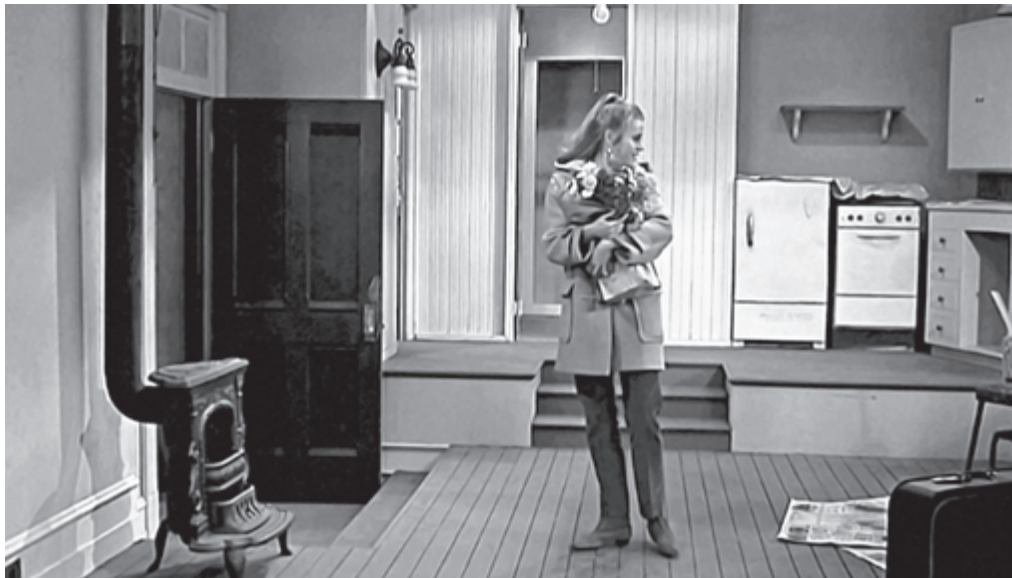
The Bride as B-Girl

In positing a conflict between Robin's intellectual ideas about marriage and "real" marriage, *Under the Yum Yum Tree* indicates a conflict between the woman's bohemianism and domesticity. To be "successful," the bohemian moment is meant to be transitive, an interlude that the woman moves beyond when "ready" for marriage and a "normal" household. In *Yum Yum*, Robin's experiment fails but that prepares her for marriage, which necessitates a move out of the apartment. However, if the house-

wife does not move to the suburbs, she may still hold onto her bohemian ideals and lifestyle and not be fully ready for a “normal” marriage.

Barefoot in the Park can be seen as problematizing the figure of the bohemian housewife. In the film, Jane Fonda’s Corie Bratter is clearly marked as bohemian, particularly in relation to her sexuality. Corie herself declares a possible conflict between her sexuality and wifeliness when she tells Paul, “I think I’m going to be a lousy wife, but I love you very much and I’m very sexy.” Sexually open and playful, she flouts convention. At the beginning of the film, we see Corie and her new husband, Paul Bratter (Robert Redford), enjoying a honeymoon in public tourist sites of New York. First, they take a carriage ride through Central Park during which Corie throws her bouquet to a policeman and shouts that she just got married. At the Plaza Hotel, Corie engages in numerous public displays of affection which clearly make Paul uncomfortable. After six days, during which they never leave their room, Corie tries to seduce Paul to prevent him from going to work. When his elevator comes, she stands boldly in just a men’s shirt and pretends to be a hooker as she loudly remarks that he should call her again when he is in town.

Barefoot in the Park stages the conflict between bohemianism and traditional marriage not just by rendering Corie’s behavior inappropriate but also, more importantly, by identifying her with the space of the apartment. When Paul leaves the hotel, Corie tells him the address of their new apartment, 49 West Tenth Street, in Greenwich Village. We learn that she found the apartment and signed the lease without Paul present. The apartment is a top-floor walk-up in a six-story brownstone. When Corie arrives at the apartment, she scribbles, “The Bratter Lovers” on the mailbox and cheerfully bounds up the stairs. Inside, we see a small studio apartment, with stairs up from the door to the main room and stairs up to the kitchen area, and a wood-burning potbelly stove for heat. What Corie calls the bedroom is a large closet into which she plans to put a twin bed. A radiator hangs high off the wall, and a large broken skylight takes up most of the ceiling (figure 22). Corie recognizes that the apartment does not fit traditional tastes, but views its bohemianism as appropriate to a young couple. She projects any negative feelings onto her mother: “She’s going to hate it. She’s going to think we’re gypsies living in an empty store . . . She has a different set of values. She’s practical. Not young like us.” However, conflict arises between Corie and Paul when she realizes that Paul resembles her mother and does not share her bohemian tastes.



22. Corie's bohemian apartment in *Barefoot in the Park*.

Foremost, Paul's reaction to the apartment differs significantly from Corie's. When he arrives, he has a number of encounters that mark the building as more weird than charming. First, he sees a couple of indeterminate gender—wearing matching long hair and berets—exit the building, as a man in a first-floor flat peeps out at Paul through venetian blinds. Then, as Paul climbs the stairs, someone else peers at him through a crack in the door. Trying to find his way, he accidentally kicks over a stack of empty cat food cans outside another apartment. All the while, he is panting, stopping occasionally to catch his breath, and calling to Corie, assuming that his apartment is on one of the lower floors. When he finally enters the apartment, Corie wants him to say “Wow!” to show his excitement, but his “wow” registers disappointment instead. Paul sees all the apartment's flaws—no bathtub, a hole in the skylight, a broken radiator, a bedroom too small to fit a bed, and no furniture. Paul's response is duplicated by Corie's mother, Ethel (Mildred Natwick). Like Paul, she finds the long climb up the stairs difficult. She demands water and “pink pills” when she arrives. Inside, she reveals even more flaws in the apartment, like the impossibility of accessing the clothes hangers without climbing over the bed.

In addition, Paul and Corie respond differently to their bohemian up-

stairs neighbor, Victor Velasco (Charles Boyer). Emphasizing the porousness of apartment living, Corie meets Victor when he breaks into the Bratters' apartment in the middle of the night. (He cuts through their apartment to gain access to his, ignoring the landlord's efforts to evict him for failure to pay rent.) Though initially startled, Corie is quickly charmed. Victor tells her how to fix the radiator and provocatively boosts her up in her shorty nightie to do so. He invites the Bratters for cocktails and invites himself to dinner. Then he walks across her bed and out her bedroom window to traverse the rooftop and climb in his own window, in the upstairs attic apartment. Later, Victor helps Corie decorate her apartment, in bohemian style—featuring bullfighting posters, modern art posters, bits of Wedgwood, a folding screen, phonograph, hand-sewn curtains, and throw rugs.

For Corie, Victor represents a potential father figure, as she attempts to make a match between him and her widowed mother. However, both her mother, Ethel, and her husband, Paul, find Velasco's lifestyle intimidating and overly eccentric. When Corie, Paul, and Ethel are invited to Victor's for cocktails, they must climb a metal attic ladder to enter his apartment. Corie ascends easily, Paul less easily, while Corie's mother is self-conscious and nervous as she scrambles up awkwardly. Inside, Victor's apartment is decorated with beads, exotic foreign objects and sculptures, and cushions instead of chairs. Corie plops down and praises the comfort of the cushions, while Paul and Ethel perch uncomfortably. When Victor, wearing a kimono, serves an exotic hors d'oeuvre that must be eaten quickly at exactly the right moment to bring out its flavor, Corie happily pops it into her mouth while the less adventurous Paul and Ethel nibble at it, bringing out its bitter taste.

The disparity between Corie and Victor, on one side, and Paul and Ethel, on the other, intensifies as the group heads out to dinner. Victor selects an obscure hole-in-the-wall Albanian restaurant on Staten Island. Corie and Victor breeze out of the apartment building happily, as Corie chastises Paul for complaining about the cold and wanting to get his gloves. On the ferry, Corie and Victor brave the wind standing at the mast, while Paul and Ethel huddle under an awning. At the restaurant, Corie tries all the new exotic food and drink and joins the restaurant owners in their singing and dancing, even performing a belly dance for the crowd. Paul and Ethel both look queasy when the food comes and eat very little. They appear shocked and cowed by the singing and dancing. On the way home, Corie and Victor race down the street and run

upstairs to the top-story apartment, while Paul and Ethel lag behind miserably (see plates 18.1 and 18.2).

A crisis occurs when Corie states that she and Paul have nothing in common and should divorce. She criticizes him for being too stuffy and boring. Nevertheless, it is she who will have to change for the marriage to succeed. Her mother advises her, “Give up a little bit of you for him. Take care of him. Make him feel important.” Initially after the confrontation, Paul adopts Corie’s bohemian manners. He leaves the apartment and goes wandering in Washington Square Park. He gives his coat and shoes to a hobo and rambles around barefoot, an impractical act Corie had asked him to perform one day. After Corie grumbles that he is an uptight drunk, he gets publicly smashed, drinking from a bottle, and becomes silly and playful. Rather than embrace the new Paul, however, Corie rejects his bohemian turn and demands the old Paul back. In offering to change her ways and become more like Paul, Corie again identifies herself with the apartment—she promises to make the apartment more palatable, to fix the hole, stop a leak, and put in a bathtub. Paul’s bohemianism is exorcised and order restored when he steps onto the roof, duplicating Victor’s balletic midnight walk. Paul panics and Corie goes up to rescue him, suggesting that both have learned not to imitate Victor’s ways.

Ironically, Ethel is somewhat liberated by her detour through bohemianism. Finding herself at Victor’s overnight, after slipping on the ice, she sleeps “without a board” for the first time in years, chooses a hair-of-the-dog morning cocktail rather than a “pink pill” to cure a hangover, plays music on a jukebox, and agrees to go on a date with Victor. Single, she can access an urban bohemianism and find it liberating. However, at the same time, Victor is forced to admit that he cannot maintain his lifestyle, that he is old and has an ulcer, so that he has been having less fun than he pretended.

Togetherness versus Breadwinning

In *Barefoot in the Park*, Corie’s bohemianism conflicts with certain conceptions of domesticity—namely the traditional, “stuffy” domesticity favored by Paul. However, Corie’s erotic playfulness, which the film characterizes as part of her bohemian freedom, can also be seen as partially appropriate to the dominant ideology. In line with ideologies of

containment, Corie seeks to establish an “eroticized marriage” (May, 133–34), a “relatively new form of social union” that locates the marriage and home as “the only legitimate site for finding emotional and sexual fulfillment” (Cohan, 9). Corie’s eroticism thus serves the feminine mystique, which positions women as sex objects as well as homemakers (Friedan, 166–94). According to Friedan, the ideal of an eroticized marriage, in concert with Freudian theory, bases a woman’s identity on her sexuality. Sex not only becomes part of women’s efforts to fill time, but also creates a sense of self in the vacuum of housewifery. By contrast, the man has outwardly directed energies and other ways to define himself, notably as breadwinner.

The ideal of eroticized marriage, however, comes into conflict with other ideals of domesticity, including privatization and the ideology of separate spheres. Part of Corie’s problem is that her eroticism is too public and not contained in the private sphere. At the same time, however, Paul does not fulfill her needs in private because he fails to separate work from home. Corie’s sexuality is disproportionate to Paul’s. In the hotel, and at the apartment both, Corie is represented as what Friedan calls the “sex seeker” (362–93). Paul resists Corie’s advances both at the hotel and the apartment because he needs to work. In certain ways, Corie is more conventional than Paul. Corie says that Paul should work during the day, not at night. She articulates the need for a division between work and home. But not only does her desire keep penetrating his work, as she phones him at work eight times a day, but also his work bleeds into their domestic space. In *Barefoot in the Park*, the conflict between the ideals of an erotic marriage, on the one hand, and the demands of breadwinning, on the other, are staged most dramatically around the twin bed. More than just her bohemian taste or poverty, the tiny bed symbolizes Corie’s desire for erotic union. Corie wants sex. Paul wants rest to prepare for work. Therefore, on their first night in the apartment, as they huddle together in bed wearing coats, she views the bed as cozy and romantic and he views it as a deterrent to sleep.

The paradigm of the eroticized marriage overlaps with the ideal of “togetherness,” a fifties catchphrase, propagated by *McCall’s* magazine, that views the married couple as a domestic partnership, spending time together and working equally as companions in the home. In a rare editorial, in May 1954, “Live the Life of *McCall’s*,” editor and publisher Otis L. Weise announced a shift in the magazine’s pitch from being a women’s magazine to a family magazine. “The life of *McCall’s*,” accord-

ing to the editorial, had changed over the decades, from “a rosy realm of fashion and folderol” in the late nineteenth century, when the magazine was called *Queen of Fashion*, to a patriarchal view of women in the early twentieth century, “mirroring the nature of life with Father,” to helping women “carve out large areas of living formerly forbidden to your sex” during the “the battle of the sexes” over suffrage, to focusing on women’s needs “*as women first*” (original italics throughout) from the twenties to the fifties. Weise thus positions the magazine as participant in a feminist project of creating a female space through periodical culture, both reflecting and fashioning changes in ideologies about women’s proper roles. However, according to Weise, a sea change had occurred: “*Today women are not a sheltered sex*”:

Men and women in ever increasing numbers are marrying at an earlier age, having children at an earlier age and rearing larger families. For the first time in our history the majority of men and women own their own homes and millions of these people gain their deepest satisfaction from making them their very own . . .

But the most impressive and the most heartening feature of this change is that men, women and children are achieving it *together*. They are creating this new and warmer way of life not as women *alone* or men *alone*, isolated from one another, but as a *family* sharing a common experience. (27)

Rather than viewing the rising birth rates and suburbanization of American women as backsliding on the feminist principles of political equality and women-centered experience, Weise sees the new marriage ideologies as creating a more balanced and equal partnership for women and men alike. Built on a model of suburban home ownership, the notion of togetherness promises women a less isolated existence, one in which the husband would serve as helpmate and companion.

As the follow-up article to *McCall's* editorial argues, “A Man’s Place Is in the Home.” In this article, we meet Ed Richtscheidt of Pines Lake, New Jersey, “a modern American husband and father.” “Had Ed been a father twenty five years ago,” the article contends, “he would have had little time to play and work along with his children.” The running of his household would have been left entirely in the hands of his wife. Husbands and fathers were loved and respected then, but they weren’t friends and companions to their families.” Instead, Ed now exemplifies the new togetherness: “Today the chores as well as the companionship make Ed part of his family. He and Carol have centered their lives almost

completely around their children and their home. Every inch of their house and yard is lived in and enjoyed. And it's a very happy place" ("A Man's Place Is in the Home," 28). The ideal of togetherness, then, situates the man squarely in the home, and promises that men and women will be contained in the home but not isolated from one another. Thus, both the ideals of "eroticized marriage" and "togetherness" promulgate a view of the home as a space of contentment, rather than privation, "a very happy place" (29).

Togetherness is explicitly a suburban ideal: *McCall's* connects it to home ownership. Yet the ideal of togetherness permeates the apartment plot, as well as other representations of marriage. It is usually, however, an unrealized aspiration, because the ideal of togetherness conflicts, at heart, with the ideology of separate spheres, especially with the man's role in the public sphere as breadwinner. On the one hand, the ideal of togetherness and eroticized marriage both promise to overcome the gendered division of roles by directing the man's interest, time, and attention homeward. On the other hand, the stereotype of the masculine breadwinner justifies the division by making home life a separate but equal partnership in which the woman works at home as homemaker and the man leaves home to earn money (Cohan, 10). Ideally, the division between work and home is clear, and the man can commit to the domestic when he returns from work. (Ed, for instance, carpools to the office, leaving Carol at home, but he helps with the children and housework "whenever he can" ["A Man's Place Is in the Home," 32-33].) But often, as in *Barefoot in the Park*, the man cannot separate work and home so tidily. The pressure to produce, as a breadwinner, can permeate everyday life. The more ambitious he is, the less able he is to don the role of domestic partner, lover, or companion. Particularly in the context of the apartment plot, the man's proximity to work, along with the inherent porousness of apartment living and the apartment's blurring of public and private space all work against the ideology of private spheres; however, for the woman, privatization trumps porousness and she is isolated rather than liberated. The married woman in the apartment plot is often a figure of dissatisfaction who seeks but cannot achieve togetherness.

Togetherness is, of course, another word for *familism*. Greer suggests that familism and careerism are each distinct lifestyle choices, with the former appropriate to a suburban lifestyle and the latter appropriate to an urban lifestyle. Rather than merely a suburban-versus-urban distinction, however, the distinction between familism and careerism

is often mapped onto a gender divide, with women placed on the side of familism and men associated with careerism. In the apartment plot, frequently, the woman's familism comes into conflict with the man's careerism, in effect bringing suburban and urban ideals into conflict in the space of the apartment.

A somewhat darker film, *The Marrying Kind*, also suggests a conflict between familism and masculine ambition. The film starts at the Domestic Relations Court, which has as its logo "The Sanctity of the Home and Integrity of the Family." Inside, Florence and Chet Keefer (Judy Holliday and Aldo Ray, respectively) are in court seeking a divorce. Not convinced that their marriage is dead, the female judge (Madge Kennedy) invites them into her quarters to hear their story. Through a series of his-and-her flashbacks, we discover some of the strains on the marriage, including the loss of a son. Ultimately, Florence and Chet decide to give the marriage another try. In both spouses' accounts, their marriage suffers from unfulfilled masculine ambition. In Chet's account, he and Florence are unlucky and, therefore, he can't "get ahead," and the marriage can't be sustained. In Florence's account, it is not poverty but Chet's distraction that causes the problems. She calls it "consideration" and views his lack of attention at home as correlate to his fixation on work and ambition.

To a large degree, Chet and Florence each aim to uphold an ideal of domesticity but find those ideals beyond their reach. For example, Florence and Chet are unable to achieve the ideal of an eroticized marriage. Lying on twin mattresses on the floor before the bed frame is delivered, Chet asks Florence if she could order a double bed, stating that he himself would be too embarrassed to ask the salesman for one. Florence says she will, but when the bedroom is furnished it inexplicably has twin beds, not a double. The ideal of togetherness is also compromised. At a few key moments in the film, we see the family together, enjoying each other's company. But each of these moments is tainted by "bad luck." Once, when they are working as a family, building and painting furniture, Florence gets called by a radio quiz show. Though she knows the answer, she allows Chet to dictate her answer and loses the large cash bonus. Another time, Chet and Florence plan a big night out to celebrate their anniversary. Chet's sister and brother-in-law show up to babysit but are drunk, so the Keefers stay home. Most brutally, when the family goes to a Decoration Day picnic, their son, Joey, drowns at the exact moment that Florence plays a ukulele and sings to Chet.

More than anything, however, their marriage is challenged by Chet's ambition and failure to fulfill the breadwinner role to his satisfaction. His insecurity and resentment get mapped onto the apartment. Securing an apartment in the new lower middle-class Peter Cooper Village, Chet recalls their apartment as underfurnished, "one table and one chair." But Florence asserts that the apartment had "three chairs and quite a lot of furniture, and the bedroom was completely [*sic*]." Florence's mother, like Chet, views the apartment as somewhat bohemian: "It's kind of, uh, transient looking." For Chet, the apartment represents his failure as a breadwinner because Florence's wealthy sister and brother-in-law help with finances. In addition, the large radio in the living room is a gift from Florence's former boss. Chet resents this boss and views him as a rival. His resentment comes to a head when the boss leaves a bequest to Florence, as well as to many other former employees. Though Chet wants the money, he is emasculated by the wealth and power the gift signifies.

Rather than king of the castle, Chet is alienated in his home, and his estrangement alienates Florence in turn. Chet's discomfort at home is marked by two failed homecomings. First, after Joey dies, Chet walks distractedly home from work and is run over by a car. Then, after spending six weeks away from the family in rehabilitation following the accident, his homecoming is disrupted by the delivery of the letter announcing the boss's bequest. The film equates the space of the apartment with the marriage itself. Chet asserts himself numerous times throughout the film by stomping out of the apartment during a fight. When Florence leaves the apartment, returning to work to make extra money while Chet is hospitalized, it produces tension. In their last fight, over the bequest, when Florence storms out of the apartment and forces Chet to stay home with their daughter, it leads to the decision to divorce.

Chock-a-Block Full and Completely Empty

In the more dystopic apartment plots about married couples, the apartment is a repressive space that traps the woman and reflects the man's control and dominance over her. Whereas *Playboy* pitches its masculine urbanization in opposition to the feminized suburban home—"a boudoir-kitchen-nursery, dreamed up by women, for women, and as if males did not exist as males" (Wylie, 77)—thus casting "togetherness"

as a mode of castration, certain apartment plots with marrieds reverse the logic, subjecting the woman to the man's control in the home. No film does this more insistently than *Diary of a Mad Housewife*. In both the novel by Sue Kaufman and the film adaptation, directed by Frank Perry, the Manhattan housewife Bettina Balsler is oppressed by the ambition and resultant demands on her housekeeping by her husband, Jonathan.

Because the novel *Diary of a Mad Housewife* provides more of a backstory than the film, let's begin there. In many ways, the novel charts a prototypical course on women's liberation for its heroine. Bettina, or Tina as she is called, begins her urban life as a typical Bohemian Girl. She graduates from Smith College, after studying literature and art, then moves to New York with a female roommate who is "doing her own version of the rebellion bit" (Kaufman, 25). Tina works at a Village bookstore and takes art classes. Tina's sexual experiments comprise numerous affairs, including with a bisexual fashion photographer, a gallery owner, and an older married sculptor. Rather than finding herself "ready" for marriage, though, Tina—all alone after her roommate moves to the suburbs—becomes depressed and develops migraines, anorexia, eczema, and other outward symptoms of inner turmoil. With strong echoes of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, Tina moves back to her parents' suburban home and undergoes intensive therapy that forces her to admit that her desire to be a painter is foolish and that she "badly wanted a husband and children and a Happy Home" (28).

After Tina meets Jonathan, an up-and-coming politician and activist, she experiences a class rise that can be graphed by changes in address. First, they move into Jonathan's two-room apartment on West Ninth Street. Then, after the Balsers have their first child and Jonathan goes into private law practice—disappointed in a run for public office—they move to four rooms in Peter Cooper Village. Next, when Jonathan's firm moves from downtown to the Upper Fifties (consequence of Robert Moses's development of a new business center in Midtown), the Balsers move to five rooms overlooking a courtyard on Seventy-Seventh Street off Madison. Finally, with two children and a higher income, they move to seven rooms on the Upper West Side, where they live at the start of the film.

As Jonathan becomes more successful, he becomes more ambitious. The couple switches from a "partnership" (Kaufman, 42) akin to "the life of *McCall's*," to an unequal pairing of "Passive Female" and "Forceful Dominant Male" (44). The "superbly repellent" (Andrews, 162) Jonathan

(played by Richard Benjamin in the film) becomes what Penelope Gilliat refers to in the review of the film as “the most alarming pedant about food, wine, housekeeping, Christmas presents for the firm and getting the R.S.V.P.s properly counted for some ambitious party that he is making his harried wife hold” (“The Current Cinema: God Save the Language, at Least” 68). Rather than acting like the stereotypical castrating housewife who traps the man in a home, Tina must acquiesce to Jonathan’s household demands, including his oily requests for “a little ol’ roll in de hay.”

In the novel, Jonathan delegates the labor of decorating the apartment to Tina, but makes clear that she must fulfill his desire perfectly:

He said that he wanted it done with style, really Done. He told me that he didn’t want a decorator because they gave the place a “stiff decorated look,” and also because I had perfectly marvelous taste which I’d never had the chance to *utilize* . . . [A]ll you need is a little boning up on technicalities. That can be done by a book or two on antiques and periods which I’ll buy you at Brentano’s this week . . . What I want is a place that is a mixture of things—antiques, but real antiques, no reproductions, the best of the modern designers, like a Barcelona chair, only not a Barcelona chair because everybody has them, and a lot of really first-rate art—a place that has that great rich, eclectic look the Barker’s place has . . . if you know what I mean.” (Kaufman, 44–45)

When Tina complains that the kind of furnishings Jonathan wants are beyond their means, he shuts down her complaints and tells her that he controls the money and makes the decisions. Ultimately, Tina decorates just as he wishes.

Gilliat writes that “the characters seem almost literally to take their sense of the shape of the world from the shape of the floor plan of their apartments” (“The Current Cinema: God Save the Language, at Least,” 69); but it is more accurate to say that the characters project their sense of themselves onto their apartment. For Jonathan, the apartment serves as a mirror, a reflection of his idealized self, one constructed by mirroring others such as the Barkers. More than just keeping up with the Joneses, however, Jonathan aspires to accumulate cultural capital, investing money in theater (in the novel) and wine (in the film). He expresses his class aspirations and desired sophistication through furnishings. Like Mary Cantwell, Sue Kaufman’s narrator makes clear the degree of calculation that lies behind Jonathan’s “eclectic” markers of a sophisticated

urban lifestyle: “Jonathan is particularly fond of the coffee table, which holds a Careless Clutter that he personally weeds out and rearranges from time to time, and which at the moment is composed of a tiny Vermeil fish, a Pre-Columbian bird with turquoise eyes, a massive Steuben ashtray, several thick art books, and *The New Republic*, *Réalités*, *Punch*, *Financial World*, and *The Partisan Review*. Even our Clutter is eclectic” (Kaufman, 49). Thus, rather than true individuality or sophistication, the apartment serves to reflect an ideal of eclecticism (as opposed to suburban standardization) that marks social status. For Tina, the “Beautiful Home” is a masquerade, a false front that, along with other trappings of a sophisticated lifestyle, conceal rather than reveal her husband’s true self: “Jonathan. Are you there, Jonathan? If you are, come out. Please. Come out, come out wherever you are” (50).

Tina responds to her husband’s increasing ambition and dominance by retreating. She becomes fearful of everything, especially but not exclusively, spaces associated with urban living: “elevators, subways, bridges, tunnels . . . crowds, deserted parks, cockroaches, teen-age gangs, muggers, rapists” (Kaufman, 8). The apartment is both cause and cure for her feeling, as she shuts herself up and dreads leaving, even to walk the dog or take her daughters to the bus. Hence, the urban environment becomes contaminated by Tina’s marriage, as she projects her feelings of repression onto the city. In a sense, Tina transforms the city into the isolationist un-urban space that Jane Jacobs decries, avoiding contact, density, encounter, and spontaneity.

Bound to the home, Tina nevertheless feels tremendous guilt for not being able to adequately fulfill her role as housewife. To calm her nerves when she suffers insomnia, she conjures “up a vision of myself as a paragon housewife, a model of efficiency” (Kaufman, 75). Viewing this model housewife as a cross between Beatrix Potter’s stern mother cat, Tabitha Twitchit, and “an unsinister Mrs. Danvers” (the very sinister housekeeper from *Rebecca*), she imagines herself wearing a tidy bun in her hair, with a calico dress, a starched apron, and a bunch of keys at her waist, inspecting perfectly stocked pantries, closets, and cabinets. Thus, for Tina, the apartment is a repressive space, reflecting her husband’s unrealistic aspirations, but also a space into which she projects her own fantasy identity as a model housewife.

In contrast to Friedan’s view of the city housewife as “bored and restive,” Tina, due to Jonathan’s aspirations, keeps busy but unfulfilled. Her

time is, to recall Lefebvre's quote from earlier in the chapter, "chock-a-block full and completely empty" (*Critique of Everyday Life*, 90). The film underscores this point in a montage sequence: we see Tina (Carrie Snodgrass) deluged with "help"—a laundress, floor waxer, window washer, and maid—all hired to enable her to match Jonathan's household targets. Her home invaded, Tina watches helplessly as workers dirty her carpets, waste time on the job, and even steal. Another montage shows Tina obsessively preparing a gourmet Thanksgiving dinner, only to have her children reject it outright and Jonathan, sick with the flu, eat it in his bathrobe then promptly vomit. Later, when hosting a disastrous party that Jonathan holds to boost his social standing, Tina is bullied by caterers who dictate when guests can eat and drink (driving all the guests to leave by 9 PM); she drifts helplessly through the apartment while guests steal trinkets from among the Careless Clutter, badmouth her husband, and otherwise indicate the disdain they have for Jonathan Balsler.

The *mise-en-scène* of the film emphasizes Tina's feelings of entrapment. Although the novel describes the Upper West Side apartment as "seven large, airy, high-ceilinged rooms filled with light" (Kaufman, 49), the film portrays the apartment as seemingly airtight and dark. Against the image of the apartment as airy and light, we do not see windows in most of the rooms and, when we do, they have blinds and curtains, which filter the light and block any view, thus adding to the feelings of suffocation. When Tina ventures into public—as when she and Jonathan go to the restaurant Elaine's, to a party at a gallery, or shopping for Christmas presents—those public spaces are represented as equally oppressive and suffocating. At Elaine's, she and Jonathan sit at a tiny table and argue. At parties, Jonathan abandons Tina, and she jams herself into small spaces near the exit or against a wall. Whereas department stores are often represented as spaces of female desire, here they are spaces of oppression, as Tina is shopping to implement Jonathan's Christmas list. When she goes shopping, the crush of shoppers and goods overwhelms her and she nearly collapses.

The *mise-en-scène* suggests not just the claustrophobia of Tina's marriage, but the isolation of urban living. In most scenes, Tina is pictured as alone in a crowd or boxed in at home. Her situation makes clear the potential loneliness of public privacy, the feeling of alienation that can complement the anonymity of urban living. Located exclusively in the urban setting, *Diary of a Mad Housewife* cannot imagine a real alternative

or escape for Tina. In a contemporary review, Nigel Andrews writes that “the film, indeed, is about the impossibility of cultivating any private oasis” (162).

Tina finds false hope of liberation in an affair with a writer, George Prager (Frank Langella). At first, George seems to promise change, as he bucks the trend of breadwinning and domesticity. Against Jonathan’s class-climbing ambition, George is more bohemian. Whereas Jonathan has an expansive wardrobe, George doesn’t even own a bathrobe. Whereas Jonathan seeks entry into the world of theater through financial investment, George writes plays. In opposition to Jonathan’s fastidious interest in décor, George lives in a relatively spare apartment on Fiftieth Street. His décor is masculine and simple—geometric carpets, bare walls, and black-and-brown couches. Crucially, his apartment has a large window, overlooking the Hudson. “What a wonderful view to inspire you!” says Tina. George, however, turns out to be as domineering and callous as Jonathan. Rather than a true escape, George represents a duplication of Tina’s relationship with Jonathan. George’s apartment becomes a closet for their affair. Rather than a sign of freedom and porosity, the window becomes a backdrop for humiliation: in one scene, Tina undresses in front of it, modeling George’s Christmas gift of a negligee, only to be insulted by him and to realize that he bought it for another girl.

In the end, Kaufman’s novel chooses acquiescence to the ideal of housewifery. Jonathan confesses that he has been having an affair and has accrued enormous debt. Tina does not confess her affair, deciding that it was a bohemian detour, a mistake that rereadied her for her marriage: “I’d had enough of mucky messes; I knew what I was meant to have and be” (Kaufman, 309). “I know at last what I’m going to settle for and who I’m going to be. Who? Who is that? Why, Tabitha-Twitchit-Danvers, of course. The lady with the apron. And check-lists. And keys. It’s me. Oh, it’s *very* me, and I can’t see for the life of me why I didn’t realize that before” (300). When Jonathan suggests that they move out of the city to the country for “simpler values, simpler things,” Tina refuses: “I want to go on living here.” She argues that “they have rat races in the country too” and “Thoreau is dead” (310). Tina regains her comfort in the city only as she regains her comfort in the role of housewife.

The film, however, is more open ended. As in the novel, Jonathan confesses his affair and reckless spending. Seeing him crushed and defeated, Tina is soft and nurturing. However, in the film, Tina does not reclaim

housewifery. Rather, the film ends with Tina at a group therapy session, with all the participants yelling different opinions at her, some sympathetic and some less so—“Stay in the marriage,” “Leave him,” “Stop whining,” and more. The film closes with a zoom into Tina’s widening eyes. In this imagining, there is no resolution, no escape, only analysis.

Total Self-Sufficiency

If *Diary of a Mad Housewife* articulates the conflict between togetherness and ambition via the woman’s alienation, the thriller *Wait Until Dark* pushes the woman’s alienation to an extreme, isolating and endangering her in an apartment. In *Wait Until Dark*, Susy Hendrix (Audrey Hepburn) is doubly isolated by her handicap and by marriage. Newly blind, she cannot participate fully and independently in the urban, because she cannot work or access urban amusements and conveniences, such as movies or shopping. In addition, her husband’s control and dominance over her are isolating. Ironically, her husband Sam (Efrem Zimbalist Jr.), a photographer, represses her by insisting that she become independent. When a neighbor helps her take out the trash, Susy warns, “Don’t tell Sam you helped me. I’m supposed to be learning total self-sufficiency.” In this context, self-sufficiency means not only being able to do for herself but to do *by* herself, except for the small help she gets from a neighbor girl, Gloria (Julie Herrod). And, as in *Diary of a Mad Housewife*, being self-sufficient means that Susy must fulfill Sam’s desires, not her own. In one scene, Sam dictates chores that Susy should perform while he is out at work: “Icebox needs defrosting darling. Only my way, this time. Use plenty of boiling water.” When Susy raises the possibility that “his way” might cause her to burn her hands, he tells her there is ointment in the first aid kit. “Do I have to be the world’s champion blind lady?” she asks. “Yes,” he insists. And Susy acquiesces, “Then I will be. I’ll be whatever you want me to be. Just tell me what you want me to be and I’ll be it. I mean it.”

Sam’s demand that Susy be self-sufficient actually endangers her. When Sam announces that he has to take a sudden trip to Asbury Park for a photo shoot, Susy raises some concern about her vulnerability in the city: “You know there was a murder around here last night? They found the body this morning in the parking lot next door.” Sam dismisses her fears: “You’re making it up, Susy.” However, Susy is not making it

up. Unbeknownst to either of them, the woman was murdered in their apartment before being dumped in the parking lot. She was a drug runner, Lisa (Samantha Jones), who gave Sam a doll stuffed with heroin in the airport, pretending it was a surprise present for a little girl and that she would pick it up later. Sam misplaced the doll and, therefore, Lisa was killed, and, therefore, the Hendrix apartment will be searched by drug dealers and murderers looking for the doll. Indeed, Sam's job in Asbury Park is being orchestrated by the murderer, Sam Roat (Alan Arkin), to get him away from the apartment. When Susy asks to go with him, he refuses on the grounds that she is not satisfactorily self-sufficient and will hamper his work. Insisting nonetheless that she is self-sufficient enough to be safe in the city by herself, he leaves Susy at home, vulnerable to Roat and his accomplices.

The film plays off fears of women's vulnerability in the city, fears that were prominent in early discourse on the apartment but that had come to the fore again in the 1960s, following a number of famous incidents. In what came to be called the "Career Girl Murders" of 1963, for instance, Richard Robles broke into an Upper East Side apartment and brutally raped and killed the two twenty-something female roommates, Emily Hoffert and Janice Wylie (coincidentally, niece to *Playboy* writer Philip Wylie).¹ In 1964, the stabbing murder of a twenty-eight-year-old, Kitty Genovese, and subsequent (somewhat inaccurate) claims that thirty-seven people witnessed the murder but didn't call police, brought equal attention to women's vulnerability and the apathy or callousness of urban bystanders (Gansberg). In another prominent case, Richard Speck methodically raped and killed eight nurses in a dormitory in Chicago. These murders along with others contributed to the increasingly dystopic view of the city and made women, especially, seem to be at great risk in the unfriendly city.

In *Wait Until Dark* the director, Terence Young, portrays the city as particularly isolating. The Hendrix apartment is located at 4 St. Luke's Place in the West Village—officially Leroy Street (the same street used for *The Cosby Show* and the street where Theodore Dreiser, Marianne Moore, and Mayor Jimmy Walker each lived at one time). As opposed to Jacobs's characterization of Greenwich Village as densely populated and chaotic, the film characterizes St. Luke's Place as exceptionally quiet and almost completely vacated (figure 23). Except for one brief scene in which the criminals ask neighborhood kids for directions, there are virtually no passers-by, no extras, no traffic, and thus no sense of Jacobs's urban com-



23. An eerily quiet St. Luke's Place in *Wait Until Dark*.

munity or casual street surveillance. Instead, one feels that the Hendrix apartment is as secluded as it must have been in the earlier stage production. The closed location reinforces the narrative, in which Susy is not merely left alone by her husband Sam but left in a largely uninhabited apartment building—as the apartment directly above hers is empty and has a prominent “For Rent” sign, Gloria’s seemingly no-good mother is off somewhere with a man, and the bachelor neighbor upstairs (who helps Susy with the trash) has left for a ski weekend. Despite being in a densely populated city, and in a four-unit building, Susy and Gloria are represented as completely isolated, a dysfunctional parody of the suburban mother and child in an urban gothic setting. It is not surprising that when Susy finally screams for help, near the end of the film, her cries go unheard or, as with Kitty Genovese, unanswered. Susy is alone and trapped, in a basement railroad apartment with no back exit and with criminals, but no one else, lurking out front. By film’s end, she is literally confined, as the criminals chain her door shut.

While Susy’s apartment is shown as isolated, it is also overly porous and vulnerable to danger. Before we even see Susy, we see the criminals Mike (Richard Crenna) and Carlino (Jack Weston) enter the basement flat. The main building door is unlocked and the Hendrix apartment un-

latched, so they walk right in. They are followed by Roat, who has led them there on false pretenses. He reveals Lisa's dead body, hanging in Susy's closet. We are led to understand that Lisa was killed in the apartment, suggesting that Roat was able to enter at least one other time. The porousness of the apartment is exaggerated by Susy's blindness, which makes her unable to accurately detect if anyone is there. When Susy returns home from "blind school," the men are all still in her apartment. We watch as she brushes past the men, who stand silently, and then opens the closet door, nearly touching Lisa's body. Sensing a presence, all Susy can do is call out to Gloria, suspecting that the little girl is there playing a trick on her.

Susy's loneliness, as well as her blindness, opens her to danger. When Mike comes to her apartment pretending to be an old army buddy of Sam's, she welcomes the contact. First, she smells fire and can't locate the source, so asks him to find it. Then, she welcomes his help during the frightening multilayered ruse the criminals enact to locate the doll, in which Roat first enters her apartment pretending to be an old man (Roat Sr.) looking for his daughter-in-law; comes again, playing a younger man (Roat Jr.) looking for his wife—Lisa; and is followed by Carlino, who comes pretending to be a policeman. In addition, Susy seems to appreciate the companionship Mike offers, as she tells him about her accident and how she met Sam. In contrast to Mike's companionship and help, Sam's absence, due to work, not only leads him away from Susy and some special activity she had planned for the afternoon, but also implicates him in Lisa's murder, as the actor-criminals suggest that he was having an affair.

The tension between isolation and porousness in *Wait Until Dark* plays out most powerfully through the telephone. As I discussed in relation to *Rear Window* (see chapter 1), the telephone has special status as a technology that both contributes to and overcomes isolation (Gottmann, "Megalopolis and Antipolis"). It can be a means of communication and connection, but it can also emphasize distance. It heightens the fissure between sight and sound that is characteristic of urban living. In this case, the phone becomes a correlate to Susy's blindness as she can only hear without seeing. In the film, the phone functions as a weapon, an intrusive force, which the criminals use not only to communicate with one another but also to create a false reality for Susy, cutting her off from any connection to the real world. Repeatedly, the criminals make and receive phone calls between Susy's apartment and the pay telephone across the

street. Roat and Carlino both get bogus calls on her phone telling them new details in the disappearance of “Mrs. Roat.” Mike pretends to call the police for Susy and, when she asks for his number, he gives her the number of the pay phone across the street.

As in other apartment plots, the moment of the reveal comes when Susy can connect the sound of the phone to its source, using Gloria’s eyes as proxy. As she becomes suspicious that the phone calls relate to the men’s opening and closing of her blinds, Susy sets up a code with Gloria, telling her to phone her and let the phone ring twice if anybody uses the phone booth. After she receives a call from Mike, Gloria rings twice and Susy knows he is one of the criminals.

Susy eventually outsmarts and then overcomes the criminals, by becoming exactly the “champion blind lady” Sam wants her to be. First, she uses her heightened sense of sound. She hears the same squeak in the shoes of both Roat Sr. and Roat Jr. and begins to suspect they are the same man. She hears Carlino wiping down furniture and grows suspicious that he is not really a policeman. She hears the blinds being opened and closed and understands that they are a code of some sort. Next, she takes advantage of her blindness by knocking out all the lights in the apartment to level the playing field with the criminals, who then cannot see to attack her. She forces Roat to use a cane to tap on the floor—threatening him with matches and lighter fluid—so she can locate him in the room. Crucially, she uses household objects as tools, especially the refrigerator. When the apartment is totally dark, Roat crawls to the refrigerator and opens it to get light. When he attempts to rape Susy, after she gives him the doll, she stabs him. When he emerges, in a famous leap across the screen, she hides behind the refrigerator, darkly fulfilling Sam’s wish that she find the plug and defrost the icebox while he is out. When Sam and the police arrive, summoned by Gloria, Susy is still cowering behind the refrigerator. Rather than run to her, even after seeing the dead bodies of Mike and Roat on the floor, Sam still demands Susy’s self-sufficiency as he waits for her to walk out to him in the middle of the apartment.

From a feminist perspective, *Wait Until Dark* could be taken as a critique of Sam, who fails to be a helpmate and whose demands that Susy be self-sufficient serve to isolate her and make her vulnerable to intrusion. In this light, Susy can also be seen as a nascent female action heroine, who uses her wit and imagination to defeat the cunning criminals and protect her home, thus becoming totally self-sufficient. However,

Wait Until Dark also plays into views of the city as threatening the sanctity of the home, as overly dangerous for women, and as lacking in an appropriate sense of community or surveillance. In this sense, it speaks the impossibility of having the suburbs in the city and questions whether and how the figure of the housewife belongs in the city.

“There’s a plot!”

“Awful things happen in every apartment house.”

—Rosemary Woodhouse

Near the end of *Rosemary’s Baby*, as pregnant Rosemary Woodhouse (Mia Farrow) tries desperately to convince her former obstetrician, Dr. Hill (Charles Grodin), to help her escape her husband and current doctor, she announces, “They’re all in it together . . . There’s a plot . . . There are plots against people, aren’t there?” Here, Rosemary signals the Faustian plot of the narrative, in which her husband Guy (John Cassavetes) makes a deal with the devil, offering his wife’s body as a vehicle for birth of Satan’s child, in order to get the “breaks” necessary to launch his acting career. This Faustian plot is also an apartment plot, in that the plot against Rosemary and the plot of the narrative both hinge on their placement in an apartment setting: Guy makes his deal with a couple of Satanists named Roman and Minnie Castevet (Sidney Blackmer and Ruth Gordon) who happen to live in the apartment next door. Both the novel *Rosemary’s Baby* by Ira Levin and Roman Polanski’s film adaptation of it, which cleaves very closely to the original, underscore the inherent danger of the urban, chiefly the porousness and public privacy of apartment living through the figure of the overly intrusive neighbor. Here, more starkly than in any other narrative, we have an apartment plot that pits the woman’s desire to create the suburbs in the city against a dark philosophy of urbanism that imagines the urban as a disturbing gothic space.

In both texts, Rosemary and Guy Woodhouse are shown as typical young urbanites. Guy’s urbanism relates largely to his career as a New York actor who has done a few plays, as well as TV shows and commercials. He is an artistic snob: when the landlord comments “That’s where the money is, commercials,” he sarcastically remarks, “And the artistic thrills, too!” But he is also ruthlessly ambitious. As his career fortunes improve, due to his Faustian bargain, he sets his sights on Hollywood, viewing Broadway as a mere stepping stone. Both Guy and Rosemary

also have urban taste, marked out in part through their interest in fashion. For instance, Guy proudly purchases a shirt he saw in the *New Yorker*. As a review in *Positif* noted, Rosemary is an “urbanite eager to keep up with the latest styles” (Pérez, 103). Her frequent costume changes in a parade of mod tent dresses and her Vidal Sassoon pixie haircut reflect the height of youthful urban style.

The Woodhouses’ choice of apartment reflects their urban taste. The opening paragraph of the novel contrasts the newly available four-room apartment in the Bramford—“old, black and elephantine, . . . a warren of high-ceilinged apartments prized for their fireplaces and Victorian detail”—to a modern apartment in a “geometric white house” where the Woodhouses have already signed a lease (Levin, 3). In choosing to live in the more famous and prestigious Bramford, the Woodhouses assert their preference for the old, the eccentric, and the historic over the modern; the unconventional over the conventional; the urban over the suburban. Rather than a new, clean apartment, they opt for one with chipped floor tiles, worn paint on the walls, and stained carpet, all of which they view as “character.” For the most part, the Bramford is viewed as a thinly disguised version of the famous Dakota apartment building at the intersection of Central Park West and Seventy-second Street (though Ira Levin carefully distinguished the Bramford from the Dakota, and may have modeled it on the Alwyn Court Apartments, where he lived, at Fifty-eighth and Seventh Avenue; see Marcus, “Placing *Rosemary’s Baby*,” 3). This impression is furthered in the film, which uses the Dakota for exterior shots, notably the magnificent and spooky helicopter shot into the courtyard that opens the film. As Sharon Marcus details, the Dakota, when it was built in the 1880s, initially “represented the utmost in urban modernity, progress and dynamism,” but by the 1960s it “bore the patina of respectability conferred by age.” In opposition to the razing of old buildings in favor of new hygienic modern ones, that was part and parcel of urban renewal, the Dakota garnered a hip and charming authenticity, associated with the “labyrinthine, the invisible, the overstuffed, and the slightly decayed” (4–5). As a friend of the couple gushes, “The Bram? . . . I’m mad about it! . . . All those gargoyles and weird creatures climbing up and down between the windows” (Levin, 13).

The Woodhouses’ choice of apartment relates partly to Guy’s careerism. Rosemary convinces him to take the apartment because of its proximity to the theater district. However, Guy’s careerism conflicts with Rosemary’s familism. Teary-eyed, Rosemary puts on a brave face but

admits to her friend Hutch (Maurice Evans) that Guy is overly “pre-occupied” with his career. Guy apologizes, more than once, for being “a creep.” Pretending to place family first, like the ideal *McCall's* husband, Guy tells Rosemary he wants to have a baby or “three babies, one at a time.” However, Guy twists the ideals of togetherness and the eroticized marriage to serve his Faustian goals. He wants Rosemary to produce a child for the coven and on the night that he and Rosemary plan to have an erotic celebration to get pregnant, he allows Satan, along with members of the coven, to drug, rape, and impregnate her. When she awakes covered in scratches, Guy tells her he raped her and had “fun in a necrophiliac way.”

While the Bramford reflects a hip urban address, it also suits the urban gothic tale, as the mix of Victorian and gothic detail contributes to the building’s appearance as a kind of castle in the city. Its gothic tone is furthered by the strong sense of history in the building. This relates partially to the building’s internal architectural history of renovation and repurposing. As he takes the couple up to the apartment in an old-fashioned elevator with iron gate and operator, the landlord (Elisha Cook Jr.) explains: “The smaller apartments used to be nines (nine rooms) but now are fours, fives, and sixes. 7E is a four, originally the back part of a ten.” The apartments have been cut up, their rooms refigured: “The original dining room for its living room, another bedroom for the bedroom, and two servants’ rooms sewn together for the dining room, or another bedroom.” In addition to this structural history, Rosemary’s friend Hutch warns them of another darker history associated with the building, an “unpleasant history” of murder, witchcraft, cannibalism, and infanticide. Rosemary initially dismisses Hutch’s warnings about the building’s bizarre history as endemic to urban living: “Awful things happen in every apartment house.” But the two histories coincide, as the front and back of the original ten-room apartment—the Castevet and Woodhouse apartments, respectively—are connected by a secret passageway hidden in a closet, through which the coven of witches enters Rosemary’s apartment in the rape scene, and through which she accesses their meeting when she discovers her demon son.

In her urban chic, Rosemary is a bohemian bride, who employs DIY style to transform her apartment into a replica of those she has studied in women’s magazines. While Rosemary has urban taste, she is a “country girl at heart” and she maps un-urban ideals onto the space of the apartment. Rosemary imagines that as a transient space, the apartment can

be wiped clean as a blank slate, that its history will not impinge upon her. She attempts to rout the past by literally whitewashing the apartment, painting all the dark wood white. Denying the transitory quality of apartment living, she tries to turn her apartment into a dwelling. She views the dining room as a potential nursery. She declares her desire for a garden and three children, suburban desires betrayed by the quaint old-fashioned sound of her name and its connotations of a single-family home — Woodhouse.²

The Castevets are, in many ways, an exaggerated version of “the neighbors from hell” endemic to apartment living. Before meeting them, Guy and Rosemary eavesdrop on Minnie’s and Roman’s loud boorish conversations through their bedroom wall and also hear chanting and other strange sounds. The neighbors first meet outside the apartment building, following the suicide of the Castevets’ boarder Terry (Angela Dorian), after the Castevets proposed to her that she carry Satan’s baby. Soon Minnie pushes her way into the Woodhouse apartment, and nosily inquires about the furnishings, their cost, and Guy’s and Rosemary’s personal life. Guy initially resists their advances, asserting, “[If] we get friendly with an old couple like that, we’ll never get rid of them.” By contrast, Rosemary attempts to adopt a polite acquaintanceship without unnecessary entanglements. She calls Minnie “the nosiest person [she has] ever met.” But Rosemary partially views the Castevets’ intrusiveness as a welcome counterpoint to the anonymity of urban living. She tells Terry, “It’s nice to know there are people like that when you hear so much about apathy.”

However, Rosemary and Guy each respond differently to the Castevets. Once Roman alerts Guy to his powers and plans for Guy’s career, Guy begins to see more and more of the Castevets. His friendship with the Castevets seemingly betrays the urban ideal that Christine Fredrick posits, in which one needn’t be friends with one’s neighbors but can choose people from across the city based on like interests. Because Guy does not share his like interests in Satanism with Rosemary, she misreads his attachment to the Castevets as filial and thinks he is seeking a substitute family. She thus views Guy as having quasi-suburban ties to the neighbors based on proximity and some ideal of familism

Against the potential anonymity of apartment living, Guy’s friendship with the Castevets opens Rosemary up to entanglement and intrusion, all geared toward controlling her and isolating her at home. The Castevets and their coven subject Rosemary to intensive surveillance. Rather than the casual street surveillance Jacobs locates in busy city streets, this

surveillance is closer to the “goldfish bowl” effect of suburban living. When Guy goes to the Castevets on the second night to hear more of Roman’s “stories,” Rosemary plans a quiet evening at home, listening to records on the phonograph and reading. However, Minnie and another old lady from the building intrude, pushing their way into the apartment and settling in with an evening’s worth of knitting. When Guy and Rosemary have their “romantic” night, Minnie appears at the door with a drugged chocolate “mousse” for their dessert. When Guy and Rosemary announce their pregnancy, Minnie and Roman insist that Rosemary give up her doctor, Dr. Hill, and see their friend, the famous Dr. Saperstein (Ralph Bellamy) instead. Indebted to Minnie for access to this prestigious doctor, Rosemary becomes increasingly entangled and increasingly isolated, as Saperstein tells Rosemary to ignore advice from any other women or books and to only take an herbal drink prepared for her and delivered to her daily by Minnie. When Hutch visits Rosemary, and becomes wary of how ill she looks, her herbal concoctions, and the “lucky” tannis root she wears in a charm, Roman bursts into her apartment and attempts to deflect Hutch’s concerns, then is quickly followed by Guy, who runs home from rehearsal to steal a glove belonging to Hutch to initiate a spell that will put him in a coma. Whenever Rosemary steps out of the apartment, Minnie appears, asking where she is going. She even tracks Rosemary down at the Time-Life Building and quickly hustles her home when she goes for an appointment to see Hutch. As Guy and the Castevets seek to isolate Rosemary more and more, Guy cuts ties to other friends. But Rosemary insists on holding a dinner party for their “old” friends: “Our old, I mean our young friends.” However, after that party and another venture outside the apartment, when she learns that Hutch has fallen into a coma, she agrees to stay homebound, nesting for the baby.

Rosemary is in a state of privation, removed from access to her friends and to the public sphere, increasingly contained in the apartment. She is deprived of community but controlled by the secret community of the coven. Because they surround her, dominating the apartment building, when they steal her baby her cries for help go unheard. Thus, like for Susy in *Wait Until Dark*, the urban setting for Rosemary becomes, on the one hand, decidedly un-urban, as it isolates her; on the other hand, it represents the worst version of city living, as it emphasizes anonymity and potential loneliness.

Even as the apartment becomes a container it is also, as in *Wait Until*

Dark, overly porous. The film's sound emphasizes the porousness of the space through what Weis and Thom call "aural intrusion," in which selectively chosen off-screen sounds—the sounds of children playing or sirens, for instance—function as reminders of the urban setting and also heighten tension. Aural intrusion also complements the intrusiveness of Minnie into Rosemary's space, as "extreme reverberation" at the threshold of her apartment whenever Minnie appears "conveys Rosemary's feelings that her home is being invaded" (Weis and Thom, 218) (see plate 19). During the rape scene, the intrusive sound blurs with Rosemary's internal imagination, as she "hears" Minnie's voice along with the sound of chants and incantatory music in the intense dream sequence that blurs fiction and reality for Rosemary. (The film makes a joke of this when a Jackie Kennedy look-alike in her dream asks Rosemary if the music bothers her.) This intrusion into Rosemary's mind inaugurates the literal intrusion of Rosemary's body during the rape scene, and via the demonic pregnancy. As Marcus argues, Rosemary's pregnancy is closely identified with the space of the apartment: "Rosemary's pregnancy both coincides with and is caused by her move to the Bramford; the gargoyled Bramford and the pregnant Rosemary share a monstrous appearance, the Bramford by virtue of its Gothic excesses and Rosemary by virtue of her sickly mien while pregnant . . . and Rosemary and her apartment both share a similar shape, since both are subdivided" ("Placing *Rosemary's Baby*," 3). Like the apartment, Rosemary's body houses a transient tenant, divided from her by a porous placenta. That tenant, like the mother's neighbors next door, belongs to Satan. He is fathered by Rosemary's husband only to the extent that Guy's careerist ambitions produce the child. While Guy thinks that the transience of the tenant and the apartment itself means that they will be able to leave the baby and the apartment behind and move to Hollywood, Rosemary understands that the maternal bond she feels for the baby ties her to the apartment, and she chooses to stay. In the end, then, *Rosemary's Baby* plays it both ways, merging familism and careerism but only through relegating both to the realm of dark fantasy.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the figure of the married housewife in an apartment setting as a possible litmus test for the apartment plot. In one respect, the idea of a litmus test was meant to suggest that these films

might put pressure on my definition of the apartment as a porous and permeable space that activates encounter, improvisation, play, and spontaneity. In that sense, I was seeking to ascertain whether and how the figure of the housewife and related ideas about reprivatization might challenge or alter the meaning of the apartment. In another respect, these quite disparate texts might present a litmus test for my notion of the apartment as plot, in linking texts as wildly disparate as the horror film *Rosemary's Baby*, at one end of the spectrum, and the silly comedy *Under the Yum Yum Tree*, at the other.

In examining these films, I hope I have suggested ways in which the married apartment-plot fits into the broader rubrics of both the philosophy of urbanism and the genre of the apartment plot. First, we can say that all of those films have narratives organized around apartment living, and are not merely set in apartments. Along with that, we can say that all these films in distinct ways mobilize ideas about apartment living with themes of porousness, encounter, and even improvisation and play: Think of the play of identities and Guy's improvisations in *Rosemary's Baby*, or Susy's improvisations and the role of masquerade in *Wait Until Dark*, or Corie's playful improvisations at the restaurant in *Barefoot in the Park*, or Hogan's schemes in *Under the Yum Yum Tree*.

At the same time, the valence of those themes changes as the primary tenant of the apartment changes, so that the apartment becomes a container when the tenant is a housewife, whereas it was a mirror and closet for the playboy and was a base of operations for the single girl. In the context of marriage, the porousness of the apartment becomes a threat. The woman, in particular, becomes equated with the apartment and seems vulnerable to intrusion.

These films all put forward a philosophy of urbanism, related to an urban lifestyle. However, they each in different ways suggest a conflict between marriage and urbanism. Partly, this plays out as a conflict between marriage and bohemian lifestyles, as in *Under the Yum Yum Tree* and *Barefoot in the Park*. More broadly, these films gender urbanism by aligning the suburban ideals of marriage, togetherness, and familism with the woman while aligning the man with the more stereotypically urban emphasis on career, especially careers associated with the arts or entertainment industries. Rather than separate spheres, these films suggest, man's careerism permeates the domestic and traps the woman. Seen in this light, the movies show marriage as producing the suburbs in the city, by isolating, taming, and containing the woman. At the same time, these

films offer a critique of marriage from an urban perspective by showing the woman's alienation and the work required to achieve her eventual acquiescence to an ideal of housewifery. Here, the apartment does not liberate the woman from the alienated condition of housewifery, but plots against her to produce the suburbs in the city.



5

MOVIN' ON UP

The African American Apartment

Well we're movin' on up
To the East Side!
To a deluxe apartment in the sky.
We're movin' on up!
To the East Side!
We finally got a piece of the pie!
— *The Jeffersons* theme song

Black man, born free.
That's the way it's supposed to be.
Chains that bind him
Are hard to see.
Unless you take this walk with me.
Place where he lives
Has got many names.
Slum, Soulsville.
They are one and the same.
— "Soulsville," from *Shaft*

When the Jeffersons leave their single-family home in Queens during the fifth season of *All in the Family* ("The Jeffersons Move on Up," 11 January 1975) to move to a "deluxe apartment in the sky" on Manhattan's Upper East Side, in the pilot episode of *The Jeffersons*, they seem from a certain perspective to be reversing the American dream and climbing



24. George and Louise Jefferson moving in, and moving up, in *The Jeffersons*.

backward down the ladder of life—from a single-family home to an apartment. However, the show clearly marks this move as a move up—representing the attainment of “a piece of the pie” in “the big leagues,” after “a whole lotta tryin’ / Just to get up that hill.” In moving from a five-room house in the Bunkers’ working-class Queens neighborhood to an Upper East Side high-rise, the Jeffersons achieve a rise in class. Their move serves as proof of George Jefferson’s success as owner of a chain of dry-cleaning establishments. It differentiates him from the white, blue-collar Bunkers, who cannot escape Queens—as even the second-generation daughter, Gloria (Sally Struthers), and her college-educated husband, Mike Stivic (Rob Reiner), cannot afford to rent an apartment in Manhattan; in fact, they eventually move into the Jeffersons’ old house, ironically renting from George Jefferson (Sherman Hemsley), who can afford to maintain the house as an investment. The Jeffersons’ move also promises to bring George into closer contact with the forces of capital, as his banker lives in the penthouse of the same high-rise building.

Before and after the Jeffersons move, they are represented as a somewhat atypical example of an African American class rise. In moving to the Upper East side, they move from one white world and model of uneasy integration in the outer boroughs to another edgy site of assimilation in the central city; from being the one black family on a working-class block to living in a largely white, middle-class to upper-class

building with a mixed race couple as neighbors. George's resistance to the mixed race marriage marks him as less culturally sophisticated than his neighbors, and more like his former neighbor, the conservative racist Archie Bunker (Carroll O'Connor). Ironically, the mixed race couple—a white man, Tom (Franklin Cover), and his black wife, Helen (Roxie Rover), who are parents to the girlfriend Jenny Willis (Berlinda Tolbert) of Lionel Jefferson (Mike Evans)—serve to emphasize the Jeffersons' difference, as a black family with no obvious marital or blood ties to the white world, and as *nouveau riche*. As their white British neighbor, Harry Bentley (Paul Benedict), a UN interpreter, exclaims upon meeting them in the pilot episode: "Good God, you're black!" For much of its ten-year run (1975–85), the show relies on the incongruity of the Jeffersons, especially of George, in a largely white, middle-class milieu—"Good God, they're black!"—as a hinge for the show's comedic effect.

While the blackness of the Jeffersons is key, and differentiates the family from the white worlds they inhabit, at the same time their living in a mostly white building and in a "deluxe apartment in the sky" also differentiates them from other African American urban dwellers. This difference is marked in the first episode of *The Jeffersons* ("A Friend in Need," 18 January 1975), when Louise Jefferson (Isabel Sanford) befriends Diane Stockwell (Paulene Myers), a maid in the building. When Harry Bentley asks Diane if she lives in the building, she replies, "No, but thanks for the compliment. I'm a maid. I work for some of the families in the building." Taking for granted that all the tenants are white (despite working for Helen Willis), Diane assumes that Louise too is a maid and not a tenant. She refers to George Jefferson as Louise's employer. Under this mistaken impression, she calls Louise her "friend" and compares her favorably to the other, more snobby maids: "It sure is nice having somebody like you to talk to, Louise. Some of the maids around here are so snooty, you'd think they own the apartments themselves." Diane's assumption that the Jeffersons must be white carries over, even as she meets George: "Both y'all live here? . . . I didn't know the Jeffersons had a couple . . . a maid *and* a butler . . . They must be real rich." When George says that he and Louise are the Jeffersons and own the apartment, Diane does a spit-take but still does not believe him: "How can you afford to live in a place like this? You ain't tall enough to be no basketball player. And you too old to be a rock and roll singer." Discarding these exceptional and stereotypical routes to success, Diane assigns George to the equally stereotypical criminal class and guesses he must be a "numbers runner." Finally con-

vinced that the Jeffersons own the apartment and run a respectable business, Diane adopts a humble manner and calls George *Mister* Jefferson. To Louise, she says, "I thought you were a maid like me. It does make a difference."

The difference between the Jeffersons' version of city living and that of other African Americans signals a class difference. Of course, the Jeffersons were not always rich. In the show, their upward mobility is signified not only by their relocating from a single-family home in Queens, but also by George's earlier memory of living in a Harlem tenement. In the pilot episode, George reminisces with Louise about their early days: "Louise, remember the hard times we had when we first got married, living at 126th and Lenox? And there were four families sharing *one* john. Remember?" Running from room to room, he then flushes four toilets, excitedly underscoring his possession of four separate bathrooms in the new apartment. In pointing to their past in a Harlem tenement, George not only signals the stages of his class rise—from sharing a bathroom with four families to having four bathrooms for himself and from renting to owning—but also makes clear that in so doing, he has moved away from a largely black world. In making the transition from tenement to home to a purchased apartment, the Jeffersons underscore the distinction between the tenement as signifier of poverty and the ghetto, and the apartment as signifier of middle-class urbanism. Thus, George's memory of Harlem tenement living, even more than his recent exodus from Queens, reminds viewers of how dramatic and exciting the Jeffersons' move is, at least in terms of representation.

As a point of contrast to *The Jeffersons*, consider a much earlier African American text in a different media, Richard Wright's 1940 novel, *Native Son*. Whereas *The Jeffersons* emphasizes physical and class mobility, *Native Son* portrays black life as physical and social containment. We first meet Bigger Thomas in an overcrowded, rat-infested tenement on Chicago's South Side, where he shares one room and two beds with his mother, sister, and brother. Bigger's world—like so many representations of black experience—is matriarchal, a contrast to George Jefferson's dominance as patriarch. Unlike the Jeffersons, who can move from Harlem to Queens to the Upper East Side, Bigger views himself as trapped by racial segregation: "Goddammit, look! We live here and they live there. We black and they white. They got things and we ain't. They do things and we can't. It's just like living in jail. Half the time I feel like I'm on the outside of the world peeping in through a knothole in the fence . . .

Why they make us live in one corner of the city? Why don't they let us fly planes and run ships?" (R. Wright, 20). Living in poverty and isolated from much white society by living in the ghetto, Bigger nonetheless is aware of the opportunities and amenities available in the white world. He has internalized the discrepancy. "You know where the white folks live?" Bigger asks his friend Gus. Gus gives a geographic answer, "Over across the 'line': over there on Cottage Grove Avenue." But Bigger provides a different response: "Naw: they don't . . . [they live] right down here in my stomach" (21).

Bigger's ideas about the white world come largely from the movies he sees, "where he could dream without effort" (R. Wright, 14). As Kenneth Clark argues in his groundbreaking study from 1960, *Dark Ghetto*, the disconnect between Bigger's dreams at the movies and his reality outside the theater typifies black ghetto life:

The pathologies of the ghetto community perpetuate themselves through cumulative ugliness, deterioration, and isolation and strengthen the Negro's sense of worthlessness, giving testimony to his impotence. Yet the ghetto is not totally isolated. The mass media—radio, television, moving pictures, magazines, and the press—penetrate, indeed, invade the ghetto in continuous and inevitable communication, largely one-way, and project the values and aspirations, the manners and style of the larger white-dominated society. Those who are required to live in congested and rat-infested homes are aware that others are not so dehumanized . . . bombarded by the myths of the American middle class, often believing as literal truth their pictures of luxury and happiness, and yet at the same time confronted by a harsh world of reality where the dreams do not come true or change into nightmares. (12)

Clark's analysis reads almost as a gloss on Wright's novel, as Bigger expresses his frustration with the confinement and limited opportunities available to him in the ghetto, then escapes to the movies. At the movies, he sees first a newsreel showing the wealthy white girl Mary Dalton on vacation, then *Trader Horn* (Van Dyke, 1931), a film in which Nina Trent, "The White Goddess," is killed by savage African natives. While the first shows Bigger a white world adjacent to his own, yet seemingly inaccessible, the latter shows a distorted understanding of black people as savages. However, instead of seeing himself on screen, or even seeing a racist and distorted view of himself, Bigger alters the "pictures of naked black men and women whirling in wild dances" and replaces them "in his own

mind” with “white men and women dressed in white and black clothes, laughing, talking, drinking, dancing” (R. Wright, 33). From these sets of images, Bigger spins a fantasy in which he—coincidentally about to interview for a job as chauffeur with the Dalton family—will meet and marry Mary Dalton (34). However, when Bigger crosses the “line” and goes to the Dalton house, in the wealthy white section of town, his dream is replaced by a nightmare, as he is first humiliated by solicitous white liberals, then kills Mary Dalton in a panic, then advances an absurd plan for ransom, and is finally hunted by police and vigilantes until he goes to trial.

Native Son emphasizes the role environment plays in Bigger’s criminality. The novel attends especially to the confinement of ghetto life. When Bigger is on the run, he hides with his girlfriend, Bessie, in an abandoned condemned tenement, then, after killing Bessie, seeks shelter in an empty flat. However, he cannot find any “For Rent” signs in the Black Belt of Chicago:¹

He knew that empty flats were scarce in the Black Belt . . . The rental agencies had told him that there were not enough houses for Negroes to live in, and that the city was condemning houses in which Negroes lived as being too old and dangerous for habitation . . . And he had heard it said that black people, even though they could not get good jobs, paid twice as much rent as whites for the same kind of flats. (R. Wright, 248)

At the same time that the black area has no housing, Bigger knows that black people are prevented from living in other areas:

How easy it would be for him to hide if he had the whole city in which to move about! They keep us bottled up here like wild animals, he thought. He knew that black people could not go outside of the Black Belt to rent a flat; they had to live on their side of the “line.” No white real estate man would rent a flat to a black man other than in the sections where it had been decided that black people might live. (249)

Ironically, but not surprisingly, Mr. Dalton is Bigger’s landlord, as he owns a controlling share of the building where Bigger’s family lives. Thus, living across the “line” in the wealthy part of town, Dalton participates in the system that relegates blacks to the ghetto, leading to overcrowding and artificially high rents. While Bigger can fantasize about crossing the line, identifying with the images he sees in the movies, those across the line work to prevent his fantasy from becoming a reality.

These two texts, *The Jeffersons* and *Native Son*, from 1975 and 1940 respectively, bracket the cycle of the apartment plot under discussion here. It is tempting to read the texts as showing a historical shift in black experience, since the years intervening between the two texts witnessed the Civil Rights Movement, as well as Black Power and Black Pride Movements, and attendant demands for less segregation, fair housing policies, and more positive African American representation in the media. However, rather than simply indicate a shift in the reality of black experience or its representation, *The Jeffersons* and *Native Son* point to two competing realities and modes of representation. They stand as examples of the tension between a model of class rise and assimilation, on the one hand, and oppression and segregation, on the other. These two sides of the coin, coexistent in mid-twentieth-century America, suggest a deep tension between mobility and containment. This opposition gets played out in representations of black urban domesticity, as a tension between the figure of the apartment and the tenement.

Whose Philosophy of Urbanism?

Within the apartment plot and within African American cinema, until recently, representations of the African American apartment are rare, exceptions to the rule, much like *The Jeffersons* series itself. As Paula Masood suggests, African American characters and films are deeply associated with the urban; however, while certain genres, such as the black-cast musical and blaxploitation, represent the city, they tend to represent public spaces such as nightclubs, bars, streets, and corners, not domestic spaces. When African American film and representations do show domestic urban life, black characters usually live not in apartments per se, but in tenements or projects in the ghetto, especially Harlem.² Black urban life, then, exists outside the usual arena of the apartment plot, which, as I discussed in relation to *Rear Window*, posits residential differentiation as largely a choice between the Upper East and Upper West Sides or Greenwich Village.

A consideration of those films which do represent black apartment life thus brings into focus the whiteness of the apartment plot. As Richard Dyer states in his famous essay “White,” black people tend to be marked as black in representation, with little differentiation among varieties of black experience, whereas white people tend to be accorded “something

more specific" (143) to define their identity (they are represented as Italian Americans, English people, New Yorkers, hicks, etc., rather than *quaint* white). In the apartment plot white people, rather than characterized as white *per se*, are differentiated according to neighborhood, marital status, gender, and taste. Class is downplayed, along with race, as the apartment plot equates whiteness with only a small scale of middle-class existence, ignoring lower-class white experience (as the poverty of bohemianism is not true poverty, but a status "chosen" primarily by young middle-class women). In eliding race and class, the apartment plot enacts a form of containment, maintaining and strengthening residential segregation at the level of representation to present a fantasy of the urban as exclusively a white middle-class space, whether that space exists for bachelors, bohemians, or the bourgeoisie. This practice suggests that the philosophy of urbanism activated within the apartment plot "white-washes" the city to represent urbanism as a privilege accorded whites, isolated from the realities of the city's racial and class dynamics. In this sense, the apartment plot not only participates in a project of imagining the urban in the context of mid-century urban renewal, but enacts a process of urban renewal at the level of representation. As it does so, it also participates in the process James Baldwin identifies as "Negro removal," since urban renewal so often depends upon eliminating black neighborhoods and populations from sight.³

The elision of race in the apartment plot is all the more surprising given the size of the mid-twentieth-century black urban population. From the Great Migration forward, African Americans moved north in ever increasing numbers (Drake and Cayton, 31–98). At the same time, through practices such as redlining (in which mortgage companies put a red line through applications of blacks, thus denying them mortgages) African Americans were prevented from moving into most suburbs and therefore restricted to cities (Fogelson; Drake and Cayton, 174–80; Moore). In 1960, 3 out of every 4 African Americans lived in cities, and 1 out of 2 lived in northern cities. Among those living in the North, 95 percent lived in cities (K. Clark, 22). In the 1960s and 1970s, African American numbers in northern cities rose even higher (Massood, 82). However, when African Americans migrated to northern cities, they were subject to new forms of discrimination and segregation. As James Baldwin writes: "They do not escape Jim Crow: they merely encounter another, not-less-deadly variety. They do not move to Chicago, they move to the South Side; they do not move to New York, they move to Harlem" (76).

The segregation and concentration of black populations in the ghetto have enabled the white population, and white representations of the city, to ignore or avoid black areas. Although black populations are at once highlighted as a causal feature of urban blight and fears of the urban, and hence key to mid-century suburban discourse, they are at the same time segregated from the dominant white urban population in ghettos. The black ghetto has a ghostly presence, as a space that haunts the white imagination but remains invisible to most white people; it is part of the city but relegated to a “unique and distinctive city within the city” (Drake and Cayton, 12), the “inner city.” In Kenneth Clark’s words, “Negroes are compelled to live in concentrated ghettos where there must be a continuous struggle to prevent decadence from winning over the remaining islands of middle-class society” (25). Thus, while the expansion of suburbs in the 1950s and forward is often attributed to “white flight” away from increasingly black cities (see, e.g., Bims, Avila), the apartment plot most often draws attention to the vitality and promise of urban life for white populations, by emphasizing those areas of the city that house primarily white people.

Both Jacobs and Lefebvre attack the “segregationist tendencies of the city” and its “ghettoes” of various ilk (residential ghettos, work ghettos, Jewish and black ghettos, intellectual ghettos, etc.), and Jacobs attends to the problems of slums in American cities. However, neither considers in any deep sense the specifics of the American black urban ghetto and how the experience of living in the ghetto affects the perception of and philosophy of urbanism available to its residents. The black ghetto, however, became focus of a different adjacent set of urban investigations in mid-twentieth-century America. Following on the heels of the important work done by Robert Park and the Chicago School of sociology, a host of social scientists and others in the postwar years redefined *ghetto*, away from its historical use to describe Jewish quarters, to refer more specifically to urban, slum areas inhabited by minority, especially African American, populations. Texts including St. Clair Drake’s and Horace P. Cayton’s important *Black Metropolis*, Clark’s *Dark Ghetto*, James Baldwin’s “Fifth Avenue, Uptown,” Oscar Lewis’s “The Culture of Poverty,” Daniel P. Moynihan’s controversial *The Negro Family*, and Lee Rainwater’s *Behind Ghetto Walls* each, in different ways, offers an assessment of the ghetto as “pathological” in both its objective and subjective dimensions (Massood, 84; K. Clark, 11). These texts, focused on the feelings of entrapment engendered by the ghetto—as well as problems of

drugs, poverty, and the disintegration of the black family—present an alternate view of urbanism. They politicize the philosophy of urbanism by suggesting that the more optimistic variants of porousness, contact, proximity and other values of urbanism are not yet extended to all urban inhabitants (though certainly the ghetto is a porous, dense space) and that segregation produces a uniquely limited urban experience. They bring to light what Oscar Lewis describes as a subculture of poverty, a “way of life,” and an “adaptation and a reaction” to structural inequalities that marginalize and separate ghetto inhabitants from the dominant white society (19, 21).

While mid-century analyses of the ghetto chiefly focused on lower-class African American populations, they attempted to characterize black middle-class relations to and positions within the ghetto, as well. Furthermore, an adjacent set of publications made the black middle class its principal focus. These texts emphasized the separation between white and black culture, but also pointed to possible class divisions within black culture. One of the more prominent publications was E. Franklin Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie*, which appeared in 1957. Frazier controversially decried what he viewed as the “make-believe” world of the black middle class, and suggested that the black middle class had become unmoored from the black community but was not yet assimilated to white society: “The black bourgeoisie is without cultural roots in either the Negro world with which it refuses to identify, or the white world which refuses to permit the black bourgeoisie to share its life” (24). Many people, black and white, in America and Europe, critiqued Frazier’s book, and denied his conclusions (Pattillo-McCoy, 18–19; see also Pattillo). Numerous critics showed that Frazier’s notion of a “black elite” was out of date and out of touch with the realities of activist postwar politics. While noticing class-based residential differentiation within the black community, most sociologists argued that black people, as a whole, were more separate from white people than from each other.⁴ Critics argued that the black middle class, rather than being out of touch with the black community, found alliances and obligations across classes. However, Frazier’s views gained currency—perhaps because his bleak analysis negated the possibility for black nationalist affiliations.

Ebony magazine, which began publication in 1945, came under attack from Frazier, who characterized the publication as promulgating the “make believe” world of the black bourgeoisie through its emphasis on “status seeking” and the “myth” of black-owned businesses. Frazier’s

denigration of *Ebony* spoke to a potential disconnect between the magazine's readership and its middle-class aspirations: "Advertisements for automobiles, watches, clothing and alcoholic beverages urged blacks to adopt more and more of the accoutrements of middle-class living" (Chambers, 63). *Ebony* was the "most read" magazine by African Americans and especially by urban blacks (Berkman, 54). Although its readership was primarily of lower social and economic status (54), *Ebony* reflected black middle-class taste and ambitions.

Thus, *Ebony*, like *Playboy*, functions as a fantasy space for, in this case, African Americans seeking a better life. It invites the black middle class to identify with white society as a means of uplifting the race. The magazine suggests that middle-class status seeking necessarily coexisted with containment, and could function as a form of resistance and as a means of gaining economic and cultural capital that could work to create broader equality and group achievement (Chambers). For instance, in one editorial, "The Negro Status-Seeker," *Ebony* claims that, faced with the vertical barrier of a racial caste system, unable to compete with white society, African Americans might seek to differentiate themselves from each other through status:

If he has developed the flamboyant appetite of the *nouveau* (he has another name for it) *riche*, he may . . . be compensating for that barrier he cannot cross . . . The man in the vertical cage may not be able to control the location of his home, but there are no limitations on the kind of furnishings and number of servants he may put in it, or the swimming pool, guest house, and landscaped ground he may place around it. (96)

In this sense, status seeking functions as a displaced form of residential differentiation. Unable "to control the location of his home," the middle-class African American "stays as far away from the lower class Negro as money and patterns of segregation permit." While suggesting that "petty signs of class and caste are but temporary distractions from the humiliation of racial segregation and discrimination," *Ebony* suggests that as African Americans gain an economic foothold, they will be able to push for economic and political equality.

While *Ebony* can be seen as a magazine promoting a middle-class lifestyle, for the most part it focused on public, not domestic, life. The magazine's departments, under which it listed articles in the table of contents, consisted of a rotating roster of such categories as sports, race, entertainment, business, religion, science, society, foreign, marriage, and

history; and, later in the 1960s, civil rights and youth. Typical articles in the magazine focused on prominent or successful African Americans; history of African Americans; politics; and movements, such as soul, that were seen to express aspects of contemporary black culture. Unlike other lifestyle magazines, *Ebony* paid only scant attention to domestic topics—cooking, child care, and so on—usually relegating coverage to the small women's section at the back of the magazine, next to fashion spreads.

Against Frazier's characterization of the magazine as promoting a "make believe" world, *Ebony* analyzed various aspects of black public life not only to highlight individual black accomplishments, but also to dissect and critique limitations placed upon larger black communities. True, *Ebony* would occasionally feature pictorials on homes of the rich and famous, such as Ella Fitzgerald or Sammy Davis Jr., but it was equally attendant to the issue of housing as a race issue. *Ebony* frequently drew attention to the realities of segregation and containment for black populations. One article, for example, presents the story of a white real estate broker in Florida who lost her license after selling a suburban home to a black middle-class family (Moore). The April 1964 issue includes reports on a massive protest under the title "Rent Strike in Harlem: Fed Up Tenants Declare War on Slumlords and Rats." In a special issue of the magazine dedicated to "the white problem in America," the author Hamilton J. Bims discusses the problem facing black populations due to white flight, residential segregation, and ghetto conditions.

Rather than deny the realities of divisions within the black community, as Frazier had suggested, *Ebony* during this time underscores many of Frazier's points in numerous articles and editorials. One essay, "Hope for Harlem," identifies the movement of middle-class blacks away from Harlem as a huge problem for the neighborhood and its community: "It is bad for the community as it drains off much of our best talent" at a time when revitalization is needed (Morrison, 174). Another article, by Lerone Bennett, argues that activist politics had driven a wedge between not only black and white middle-class populations but also lower-class and middle-class black populations: "The Negro mood has had an explosive impact on the Negro middle class and white liberals. There is a widening gap between Negroes and middle-class liberals. And there is a growing gap between the Negro middle class and the Negro masses" (32). Similarly, in a special issue commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, the writer Whitney Young suggests

that the black middle class had become alienated from masses: “The great problem of the emerging Negro middle class . . . is that it is not identifying with the lower class Negro; the gap between the two groups is not only great but it is growing” (68). Young attributes the gap between lower-class and middle-class African Americans to an abrupt sort of social mobility that pushes any African American with any success up and far away from the lower class:

The American Negro has far less social mobility than the white citizen. In the white community there are more stages in social advancement . . . lower middle class, upper middle class, etc. For the Negro, there is no in-between status; he must jump directly from lower class status to the higher with no way stops or intermediate steps. The Negro in America today all too often faces a choice between being a highly skilled technician or professional, or being a waiter, porter or domestic; between living in a fabulous house in the suburbs or in a tenement in the slums. (68)

Thus, for Young, the in-between status of the black middle class is, ironically, a function of the lack of a true middle for black populations, for gradations within the black community. Whereas Young associates the upper class with a “fabulous” suburban house and the lower class with a “tenement in the slums,” his vision of black life leaves no room for middle-class housing and in particular no space for a middle-class apartment.

In both Frazier and *Ebony*, then, the middle-class African American is rendered an in-between character, who exists between white and black worlds, who models behavior for lower-class black populations but is also seen to be out of touch and contact with those populations, who represents the possibility for assimilation with the white community but also the limitations and exclusions of assimilationist ideologies. In tandem with these views, within the apartment plot, the black middle class is often positioned between white and black worlds, not fully identified with either. The apartment becomes signifier of being middle class, and being middle class engenders mobility between white and black worlds. The middle-class apartment dweller functions as a role model of sorts, a sign of class mobility and assimilation. At the same time, however, the black middle-class apartment dweller, like George Jefferson, is seen as somewhat incongruous—singular and exceptional rather than representative of larger populations. He gains his mobility at the expense of his ties to a black community.

This chapter aims to complicate, critique, and enrich the philosophy of urbanism associated with the apartment plot by examining texts that revolve around the black apartment. Because, however, the meaning and import of the black apartment only come into focus in relation to the black tenement or project, this chapter will consider films that move among different kinds of domestic urban spaces, including tenements as well as apartments, and white as well as black spaces. I will assess some films that can be characterized as apartment plots—including *Claudine* and *Patch of Blue*—and, stretching the definition somewhat to include tenements—*A Raisin in the Sun*, and *The Landlord* (Ashby, 1970). But I will also consider films that are not apartment plots, but that speak to black urban domestic experience through the figure of the apartment, such as *No Way Out* (Mankiewicz, 1950), *Shadows* (Cassavetes, 1960), *For Love of Ivy* (Mann, 1968), *Watermelon Man* (Van Peebles, 1970), and *Shaft* (Parks, 1971).

I am aware that by relegating black-themed films to a separate chapter,⁵ I risk creating a ghetto in the book for “the black chapter,” a potentially token gesture that can be ignored or segmented. In part, my organization reflects the book’s division by tenant—bachelors, single girls, married couples—with a sense that the themes and issues raised by black tenants are unique and cannot be merged easily with these other categories, though clearly they overlap. It seems to me that the films discussed in this chapter are not colorblind but forthrightly about race; and they directly address differences between and among black and white modes of urban living. Therefore, these films do not and cannot speak the same philosophy of urbanism as the white films do. However, they are in conversation with all-white representations of the city and the apartment. Against a one-way model of communication, in which white media images penetrate ghetto life, these films reflect and refract black urban life out to both black and white audiences. They are interventions in urban discourse, much like the sociological theories mentioned above. I want to preserve the sense of difference and rhetorical address, at the same time that I want to show links across the apartment plot. Thus, for example, while the import and meaning of Sidney Poitier’s bachelor apartment in *For Love of Ivy* need to be filtered through class and race discourse and juxtaposed with other representations of black life, the apartment also bears some resemblance to bachelor pads, such as Frank Sinatra’s in *The Tender Trap*, and will enable us to reflect back on the exclusions and limitations of white bachelor discourse.

My goal is not to present an inversion of the apartment plot, its black counterpart, but to locate the black apartment plot as producing a variant on the apartment plot—similar to the variants produced by looking at single girls versus married women, for example, or gay versus straight bachelors—that reveals aspects of the apartment plot that cannot be seen by looking at white-dominated films only. As Michel de Certeau suggests, the city can be seen from different perspectives, by looking from above—as at a map or grid—or from the ground—by walking. While the view from above produces a legible view for the voyeur, the view from below is lived and experienced, rather than viewed from a distance. The possible paths taken through the city are myriad and yet singular: they are both spatial practices and speech acts. Walking, pedestrians appropriate space and give it shape; the walk from point A to point B, and beyond, implies and produces relations among spaces and between people and spaces (de Certeau, 91–98).

Taking de Certeau's notion of walking as a metaphor for different ways of approaching the urban, I suggest that each "tenant" in the apartment plot reveals a different path and shows different relations. Some produce relations between the apartment and the suburbs, some produce erotic relations, some produce relations between apartments, others produce relations between the space of work and home, and so on. The black apartment plot can be seen in this sense as offering "another path" (de Certeau, 96) that produces a different view of the city and the apartment. Apartment films with black characters map the city differently and deliberately: they show relations between parts of the city and between people, but they also emphasize the way in which the city establishes boundaries and restrictions between neighborhoods and peoples, and the way in which neighborhood and housing don't just shape but also limit one's experience of the city.

Whereas white apartment plots enact a form of containment with respect to race and especially blackness, the black apartment plot speaks more directly to a tension between mobility and containment as a feature of black urban living. The black apartment plot, then, portrays the city as not merely divided by neighborhood but with a deep understanding that the specifics of neighborhood and housing type are always already determined by race, class, and status. As John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch suggest in *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*, "Neighborhoods organize life chances in the same sense as do the more familiar

dimensions of class and caste" (19). In their analysis, place is both an indispensable and idiosyncratic commodity. The use of a place—renting an apartment, say, in Greenwich Village, as opposed to living in a Brooklyn or Harlem tenement or housing project—"creates and sustains access" to other places and other use values, including shopping, schools, friends, work, and entertainment (18). Rejecting market-based claims that residents "choose" neighborhoods, Logan and Molotoch argue that neighborhoods shape "life chances . . . which, in turn, shapes those residents' capacities to participate in the surrounding systems of power and privilege" (xi). "Given the wide variety of possible urban experience," Logan and Molotoch understate, "the lives of urban people must come to differ" (103).

While the dominant white apartment plot makes note of differences—between the Village and the Upper East side, say, or between bohemian and bourgeois apartments—it does not draw attention to racial difference, or the way in which neighborhood shapes "life chances." The black apartment plot draws attention to race, as such, and includes white as well as black characters to show the ways in which certain aspects of urban existence are denied to black inhabitants. When black apartments are shown, they generally signify a character's class rise, and escape from the ghetto. Often, those apartments are defined not only in contrast to poor black tenement and project living, but also in relation to various white worlds, including both rich or middle-class white suburban living and poor white tenement living. The black character's ability, or more often inability, to traverse those worlds points to the limits on mobility available to black urban dwellers, as opposed to middle-class whites. Additionally, these films draw attention to class, across racial divides, by showing both middle-class blacks and poor whites.

The apartment plot as a whole situates the apartment as among the rungs on the ladder of life—a place one moves through as one ascends from being single to married or urban to suburban—or shows character movement from one apartment to another as moves up the ladder in terms of class or status. In the black variant, the apartment also signals a movement up, as it were, into the middle class and out of the ghetto; but at the same time, the black apartment always exists in relation to a model of containment in which black mobility is the exception rather than the rule.

The Suburban Lifestyle Is Not a Choice

As I discussed in the last chapter, suburban living is most often discussed as a stage in the life cycle, or a lifestyle, linked in either case to marriage and family. Urban living, by contrast, is associated with single life or, with regards to married people, identified with careerism and cultural sophistication. In most of the texts examined so far, suburban living is represented as a choice, a space that represents a character's acquiescence to mainstream ideals of home and family, or a space one refuses or exits to escape or avoid those ideals.

However, in black-themed films, the suburbs are not a choice; rather, the suburbs are represented as a wholly white space that blocks black access.⁶ This reflects the reality of restrictive covenants and redlining practices in the suburbs that prohibited black people from buying property. Through these practices, white suburbs worked to contain black populations in the city, especially in the ghetto. Films such as *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Watermelon Man*, *The Landlord*, *No Way Out*, *For Love of Ivy*, and *Claudine* contrast black urban spaces with white suburban spaces and explicitly mark the urban/suburban division as a division marked by class and race as poor/rich, black/white. At the same time, these films highlight white suburban culture as white and show white culture as overly rigid, vacuous, and alienated. As Richard Dyer suggests, these films follow a pattern in which the juxtaposition of white and nonwhite populations brings whiteness into focus, where "it is often revealed as emptiness, absence, denial or even a kind of death" (141). The movies represent, then, the suburbs as a site of desire that points to a lack in black culture, but simultaneously they critique the suburbs and show them as lacking.

A Raisin in the Sun offers a particularly stark delineation of the ways in which black life chances are blocked by white suburban communities. Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*, and the film adaptation of it, stems partly from Hansberry's own family experience with restrictive covenants. When the author's father, Carl Hansberry, outmaneuvered the restrictive covenant of the Woodlawn Property Owners Association and bought a house in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, one of the covenant's signatories, Anna Lee, sued. The covenant was initially upheld. However, in *Hansberry v. Lee*, 311 U.S. 32 (1940), the Supreme Court decided on appeal that—in this case, due to a technicality—whites could not bar African Americans from purchasing homes in white neighbor-

hoods (Drake and Cayton, 184–87). As with her family experience, Hansberry's text moves the Younger family out of a black tenement and into a white neighborhood. This move goes against the wishes of the white residents, represented by the Clybourn Park Improvement Association, a protectionist group that tries to buy their home back from them. Arguing that "race prejudice simply doesn't enter into it," Mr. Linder (John Fiedler), of the Clybourn Park Improvement Association, makes clear that like should stay with like and that the Youngers are perceived not as neighbors but as a "community problem."⁷

As with *Native Son*, *A Raisin in the Sun* points to inequities in housing costs between white and black neighborhoods. The main reason Mrs. Younger (Claudia McNeil) buys a home in Clybourn Park is cost. Houses in the white neighborhood are cheaper than "them houses they built for colored people out in them areas." Thus, it takes more money for a black family to purchase a home in the neighborhoods relegated to them, and then neighborhood associations and other discriminatory practices block their access to cheaper housing.⁸

In the film, the fictional white neighborhood Clybourn Park is not strictly speaking a suburban community, but a residential Chicago neighborhood far removed from the city center.⁹ Still, it functions in the text as a suburban ideal. The Youngers arrive in the neighborhood by taxi (driven by a white driver), suggesting that the neighborhood is not easily accessible by public transportation. Shots of the neighborhood portray it as having the quiet family life associated with the suburbs. There are small identical bungalow homes with neatly trimmed yards. We see children playing on the sidewalk, a man mowing his lawn, and mothers walking baby carriages. The neighborhood, more middle class than rich, can be distinguished, on the one hand, from the very posh suburb where Walter Lee Younger (Sidney Poitier) works as a chauffeur and, on the other, from the tenement where the Youngers live, situating it as squarely middle class.

In what comes to be the dominant mode of representing the divide between suburban and urban in black films, the white neighborhood in *A Raisin in the Sun* is contrasted to the tenement through a contrasting light-versus-dark mise-en-scène. In the white neighborhood, we see the sun shining on bright sidewalks, showing the shade from trees. This serves to emphasize the suburban access to nature and contrasts with the dark tenement where there is not enough sunlight for plants to grow. We only see the suburban neighborhood in the daytime, whereas we see



25. Cramped quarters in *A Raisin in the Sun*.

the tenement throughout the day and evening. When we see the interior of the three-bedroom house Mrs. Younger has purchased, it has clean, white painted walls with light streaming through the windows. By contrast, we only see the tenement interior (figure 25); it seems, therefore, to be a closed space, removed from the outside world. It has dark and dirty walls. The tenement has three sets of windows. One, off Walter's bedroom, looks out onto the street, but we never see the view. Instead, our eyes focus on the view from the kitchen window, a view into an airshaft. This window provides no light. Rather than the outdoors, it shows interior walls of the tenement and neighbors hanging clothes. This view emphasizes the enclosed quality of the space. The third set of windows are faux windows that look into the tenement hall—one of these is the top half of the door and the other an internal window, presumably built to allow more airflow between apartments.¹⁰ These windows have frosted glass and a lace design in gold foil, as well as curtains. Thus these windows, too, emphasize the window's function as barrier more than aperture.

Despite being an enclosed space, the tenement affords the Youngers little or no privacy. They share a bathroom with their neighbors and are, presumably, visible to them through the airshaft windows. More-

over, the Youngers have no privacy from one another. The tenement has one small bedroom off the kitchen that the mother and sister, Beneatha (Diana Sands), share, and another room separated from the combined kitchen and living room by pocket doors, where Walter and his wife, Ruth (Ruby Dee), sleep. Walter's son, Travis (Stephen Perry), sleeps on the couch in the living room. The family all share a bureau in the living room. Visitors, such as Beneatha's boyfriends, Asagai (Ivan Dixon) and George Murchison (Louis Gossett Jr.), must be entertained with the family looking on, or with the family hiding in Walter's and Ruth's bedroom during the visit, to bestow the illusion of privacy.

At the same time that *A Raisin in the Sun* shows the limitations imposed on the black family by white communities, it also demonstrates the self-limiting operations of black ghetto communities. Walter Lee dreams of escape from the ghetto and from being part of an underclass. His dreams are both shaped and constrained by the ghetto. When his mother inherits \$10,000 from his father's insurance company, Walter tries to convince the family to let him invest the money in a liquor store. While his mother views the liquor store as representing the ghetto's entrapment of black men in a cycle of drunkenness—a black-owned business that works against the community's life chances—Walter views it as a sure-fire business because people always need alcohol. After Walter steals the \$6,500 left after his mother has made the down payment on the house, his “business partner” flees town with the money, taking his dream and the family's newfound security with him.

The film suggests that the ghetto particularly emasculates and diminishes black men. Inside the ghetto, Walter lives in a matriarchy. The home is run by his mother, and she makes the decision to buy the house in Clybourn Park without consulting the family. However, after Walter has been chastened by his failure, he learns from his experience and takes the reins of the family. He first calls Mr. Linder to accept his offer, but instead chooses to tell Linder that his family will move to the white neighborhood, as “plain and proud people” who wish to assimilate and be good neighbors, not create a revolution. Through taking this stand, Walter becomes “head of this family,” a change in status that all the women in the family, as well as Walter, embrace. In this way, the move to the suburbs not only enables the Youngers as a whole to achieve a class rise, in which they will still be “plain and proud people” and will own a piece of the American dream, but also enables Walter to “come into his manhood,” thus restoring the black family to a patriarchal system.¹¹

A Raisin in the Sun critiques the suburbs from an assimilationist perspective. Whereas an assimilationist model views the white suburbs as a space requiring integration, films more strongly influenced by Black Pride and Black Power Movements strongly suggest that the white suburbs are inauthentic and unappealing. Melvin Van Peebles's *Watermelon Man* critiques the suburbs by having a white suburban man, Jeff Gerber (Godfrey Cambridge), wake one morning to discover he has turned black. Prior to this transformation, the film establishes the suburban community as particularly vapid. We see Jeff engage in absurd rituals of exercise, taking health drinks, and tending to his body but not being embodied, as he has a sexless, passionless marriage with his wife and no real connection to the world. Jeff is a racist and a sexist who abuses everybody he meets with offensive jokes and pointless banter. Jeff's wife, Althea (Estelle Parsons), is frustrated. We see no friends, except suburban neighborhood men who laugh at Jeff each morning as he engages in a daily ritual of running in sneakers alongside the bus, racing with the bus for blocks before catching a ride to downtown Los Angeles from the suburbs. The house is large and decorated with stereotypical bland suburban taste, flowery wallpaper, indiscriminate pictures, mismatched chairs, and TVs everywhere, including the bedroom (on which Jeff and his wife watch race riots, commenting on them from a safe distance).

Watermelon Man, like *A Raisin in the Sun*, represents the workings of restrictive covenants in a white suburban community. When Jeff turns black, he soon realizes that his opportunities and mobility are newly restricted. For instance, when Jeff attempts to race the bus after turning black, people assume that his running indicates criminality, white neighbors scream as he runs by, and he is quickly stopped by police. Similarly, when he attempts to meet an insurance client at the exclusive Yacht Club, the doorman denies his membership, and brutally kicks him out, nearly starting a riot with African American passers-by. Jeff's boss at the insurance agency views his change as an opportunity to sell unnecessary insurance to previously untapped black markets and takes away his white clients, while consigning his sales calls solely to black neighborhoods. When Jeff seeks a new job, he is praised for having a college education and years of experience, and then is led to a job at a garbage dump. Not surprisingly, Jeff's suburban neighbors turn on him. Telling him that he is lowering the value of their homes, they offer him significantly more than his house is worth to get him to move, topping out at \$100,000 for a \$37,000 house. By the end of the film, Jeff is removed entirely from the

white world. His wife and children have moved away to Indianapolis. He runs his own insurance company in a black neighborhood, hangs out nightly at a black strip club, trains with a black militia (where trainees employ the masters tools—mops, brooms—as weapons), and lives in an urban apartment. His apartment is shown through burglar bars, indicating his containment in the ghetto.

A Different World

Watermelon Man can be characterized as a “racial impasse” film in which differences between the races and the status quo of segregation are shown, but no real solution or hope is promulgated.¹² Hal Ashby’s film *The Landlord* similarly augurs the failure of integration, representing the differences between the white and black communities as nearly irreconcilable. Unlike *A Raisin in the Sun* or *Watermelon Man*, each of which examines the limits imposed on black people in the suburbs, *The Landlord* reverses direction and examines the movement of a white suburban man into a black ghetto neighborhood. In the film, Beau Bridges plays Elgar Enders, a spoiled rich white young man who buys a tenement in Brooklyn’s Park Slope neighborhood. Elgar is represented as one of the “beautiful people” who seeks to gentrify the ghetto by emptying it of its black inhabitants. Elgar plans to kick all the tenants out of the four-story tenement and “rehabilitate” the building as a single-family bachelor pad for himself.

Through a dramatic and somewhat bizarre combination of styles, the film portrays Elgar’s two worlds in dramatic opposition. The film inexplicably opens with a shot of Ashby’s on-set wedding, then inserts a flashback of Elgar’s childhood, in which a white teacher asks her all-white class, “Well, children, how do we live?” This flashback, repeated throughout the film, opens up a series of contrasting images between how “we” live, with white and black worlds represented as utter opposites. At the start of the film, we cut between shots of Elgar lounging by the swimming pool in the large backyard of a large white colonial house where he is attended by a black servant, and shots of a black man in the city trying unsuccessfully to hail a cab. These shots are then intercut with shots of, respectively, a gay black hairdresser, Elgar in direct address discussing his purchase of the tenement, and two white men playing racquetball in a bright white racquetball court.

As in *A Raisin in the Sun*, the film's style highlights differences between white and black worlds using a light-versus-dark mise-en-scène. Throughout the film, the white suburban world is shown in intensely overexposed compositions in white and pastels. The suburbs are seen as pristine, with perfectly mowed lawns and clean, shiny, tastefully decorated spaces. By contrast, the black world is seen in underexposed shots of a mise-en-scène predominated by earth tones. The tenement shows signs of wear, as the top floor of the dirty limestone building is shingled and lopsided, and the interiors have cracked plaster and dark chipped wood. Apartment interiors are crowded with knickknacks and photos, as well as signs of work, such as the hairdryers and hair chemicals of an unzoned beauty salon. Tenants have bare bulbs for lights and broken appliances. Along with the visual, music underscores the difference between the two worlds as the ghetto scenes feature nondiegetic soul music, written for the film by Al Kooper of Blood Sweat and Tears and performed by Kooper, Lorraine Ellison, and the Staple Singers. Most of the suburban scenes are played without musical accompaniment, except for the croquet scene, which features classical music.

In addition, the two worlds employ markedly different film techniques. Whereas the ghetto is largely portrayed in a naturalistic style, scenes of the suburbs are highly stylized in an art cinema mode.¹³ Elgar, for instance, speaks in direct address to the camera, flashbacks of his school days enter the diegesis unannounced, and the sound but not the image of the racquetball game reappears at the end of the film (a reversal of the end of Antonioni's *Blowup* [1966]). Along with these techniques, nondiegetic inserts, such as one where Elgar's mother imagines his girlfriend as a savage, accentuate the distance between the white point of view and black reality. The stylization serves to render the white world unnatural. The suburbs are made to seem even more artificial and outmoded through the depiction of various absurd scenarios, such as a formal dinner party in which all the women wear white gowns; a croquet game with all participants dressed in white; a scene in which Elgar's mother Joyce (Lee Grant) takes funk-dance lessons from a gay white instructor; a scene in which Elgar and his sister, Susan (Susan Anspach), get high while their father shoots clay pigeons in the background; and a bizarre costume ball at which one guest (Robert Klein) appears in black-face, as Bill Robinson, escorting Susan, dressed as Shirley Temple (though Elgar's mother later insists she was Little Eva, not Shirley Temple, as if that somehow justifies the costume's inclusion at a party in which guests

are told to dress as dead American heroes). As Penelope Gilliat argues, the film “gives ease and style to liberal fantasies of shame” (“The Current Cinema: Oh, Harry,” 110).

The Landlord toys with the possibility that Elgar will gain understanding of the black community, but shows white liberalism to be a false hope. In this the film plays off but departs from the stereotypical white media fantasy in which white characters—represented as lacking—are authenticated and given life (passion, sexuality, religion, emotion) through their association with blackness (Dyer; Gabbard). Here, the white characters enjoy a temporary authenticity but cannot ultimately cross over or bridge the gap between the races.

When Elgar first arrives, he seems incongruous. He arrives in a cream-colored Volkswagen Bug wearing a white suit with pink shirt and tie, carrying a potted pink rhododendron. He is met by a group of black men—tenants and friends—who gather on the stoop, some in African dashikis. They chase Elgar down the block, while some ghetto kids strip his car. However, as Elgar meets the tenants, he achieves some cooperation. Rather than remove his tenants, Elgar befriends them. He improves their apartments slightly, bringing in new toilets, for instance. Nonetheless, he proceeds with his plans for eviction and renovation, and when he moves into one of the apartments he whitewashes it.

In a key scene showing the limits of Elgar's transformation, he attends a rent party, where he pays five dollars against everyone else's two dollars. The rent party signifies the attention given in the black apartment plots to issues of poverty and functions to mark cultural difference between ghetto life and white apartment life. In addition, the rent party also marks the threshold of Elgar's understanding and ability to join the black community. At the party, Elgar is accepted by the women, who dance and flirt with him. However, the men adopt a more diffident pose. At one point, Elgar's efforts at “passing” in the black community are questioned. In a Brechtian sequence in which unnamed guests speak directly to the camera and Elgar answers from an indeterminate bright white space, Elgar's interest in black culture is recognized as a “fad,” his liberalism is identified with the history of white exploitation of black women: “You Ofays screaming about miscegenation and you've watered down every race you've ever hated!” Following this, Elgar indeed seduces one of the tenants, a married woman named Franny (Diana Sands), who accidentally takes aspirin instead of birth control and becomes pregnant with his child. The pregnancy only serves to divide Elgar from the black

tenants. Franny's husband, Copee (Louis Gossett Jr.), attacks Elgar but is paralyzed by hatred and goes into shock. When Franny has the baby, she asks Elgar to have it adopted as white, so he can "grow up casual like his daddy." Unable to reconcile with the tenants, Elgar gives the tenement building to Franny and Copee. He flees Brooklyn, taking the baby away, and brings it to his mixed race girlfriend, Lanie (Marki Bey) who lives somewhere in Manhattan.

In the context of the film, white characters can dip into black culture at will. Not only Elgar but his mother gain temporary authenticity from the tenement. Joyce Enders comes to the tenement in a black chauffeured car. She meets Marge (Pearl Bailey), a tenant. Like her son, Joyce is visibly incongruous. She wears a beige suit, pearls, and white gloves. Marge, by contrast, wears a paisley dress, head wrap, and, in a parody of Joyce's pearls, multiple strands of beads. Hanging out with Marge, waiting for Elgar to come home, Joyce, who says she has "taken up re-embodiment," loosens up. She gets drunk on "hot liquor," and eats ham hocks and greens, breaking her usual opposition to lunch ("It's my own diet"). She literally takes her gloves off and becomes unbuttoned. By the end of the scene, she is lying flat on her back on the floor while Marge reads her palm. Before stumbling outside to the car, she stuffs ham hocks in her chic purse.

Like Elgar, however, Joyce's experience in the tenement fails to transform her. She reverts immediately to her racist and uptight ways. When she returns to the tenement, she sees that Marge has taken the fabric she promised to sew into curtains for Elgar and has used it to make clothing for all the tenement's tenants instead (in a play on *Gone with the Wind* and *The Sound of Music*, in which ingenious white women make clothing out of curtains). Joyce has no sympathy for Elgar's new lifestyle: "I want this entire poverty program you're on dropped." And she cuts herself off from any future friendship with Marge: "You tell that Marge upstairs I want my charger plate back . . . That's my drapery material. She's outfitted the entire plantation in it!" In addition to referring to the Brooklyn building as a plantation, Joyce has a momentary fantasy that reveals her inability to think of blackness outside stereotypes of slavery: When she discovers that Elgar has fathered Franny's baby, she immediately pictures herself as a white southern belle, dressed all in white with a parasol, singing to a large group of dark-skinned "pickaninnies."

In contrast to Elgar and Joyce, who can temporarily inhabit black spaces, black characters are not afforded the same mobility. The only

black characters in the suburbs are servants. Because she is of mixed race, however, Lanie has some mobility. Lanie represents the potential fluidity of race and racial division. Elgar meets her in the club where she is a dancer. Because she is light skinned, he initially views her as white. However, her race is mixed and changeable. She is the child of an Irish mother and black father, who split her years between them after they divorced: "So in the summer I was white and in the winter I was black." Elgar's interest in Lanie seems to depend upon her being light skinned, and, therefore, more conventionally beautiful and more palatable to him than Franny, with whom he only has a sexual fling. Yet Lanie is black enough to appeal to his white liberal idea of himself. He tells his mother he is in love with a "Negro girl" and brings Lanie to the costume ball, where he seems frustrated that nobody sees her *as* black. When he brings the baby to her, it seems less the beginning of a new merger between the races than another erasure of black culture and white exploitation of black women. Rather than a new model for identity, Lanie highlights the gap between the races. At her work, she is accused of being "high yeller," too white to mix with black women. At the same time, as the only "black" character in *The Landlord* who does not live in the ghetto, Lanie reveals the privilege of her "whiteness." She functions as a mobile character who can move between black and white spaces because she is both black and white, yet neither.

In Between Black and White

In *The Landlord*, Lanie's status as an in-between character—neither fully white nor black—signals her indeterminate racial identity. However, as I suggested earlier in this chapter, Lanie's indeterminacy is also typical in mid-century representations of the black middle class. Like *The Landlord*, *Shadows* positions the light-skinned black person as both indeterminate and invisible. In the film, Lelia (Lelia Goldoni) shares an apartment with her brothers, Ben (Ben Carruthers) and Hugh (Hugh Hurd). Hugh is dark skinned, but Ben and Lelia are both light skinned. Their race would be unclear were it not for their relationship to Hugh. All three siblings move in a mixed race milieu, though Ben and Lelia are both seen in primarily white worlds. Hugh, a singer, spends most of his time with his manager, Rupert (Rupert Crosse), who is dark like him, but Hugh works for a white man, Jack (Jack Ackerman), and performs as a singer

in a white girlie club. Ben's friends Dennis (Dennis Sallas) and Tom (Tom Reese) are both white. Lelia, similarly, dates a white man, David (David Pokitillow), and circulates in his world of white literati.

Race is partially invoked through the film's use of a jazz score by Charles Mingus, but this score signals the film's art house aspirations and especially its ties to the French New Wave as much, or more, than to the African American origin of the music. Race is not mentioned in the film at all until Lelia meets and falls in love with a white man, Tony (Anthony Ray). After losing her virginity to Tony at his apartment, Lelia allows him to accompany her home to her apartment, where he hopes to repair her feelings of alienation following the traumatic encounter. They sit together on the couch while Ben, Dennis, and Tom horse around and eventually leave to pick up girls. Then, listening to a record of the song "Beautiful" (sung by Hugh Hurd), Lelia and Tony dance and kiss. A dramatic cut takes us to a close-up of a black finger on the door buzzer. Lelia opens the door and lets Hugh in, introducing him to Tony as her brother. Tony's face registers his surprise and disgust. For the first time, he realizes that Lelia is black.

Shadows points to the possibility for colorblind friendship between the races, but also suggests the ways in which white culture seeks to frame blackness, to make it legible and, thus, contained. Tony's failure to see Lelia's blackness stems partly from her light color, and partly from meeting her through David at a party with all white guests. However, her invisibility to him can also be attributed to the indeterminacy of her apartment as black middle-class. In other words, Tony does not read Lelia as black, because her apartment does not fit stereotypical models of what a black home should look like. Judging from location shooting, her apartment is somewhere on the Upper West Side, not Harlem. The apartment's décor marks the characters as bohemians and artists—it is slightly cramped with exposed brick walls that are somewhat chipped, and it is filled with books, drawings, and records. One wall is dominated by a large poster of Libby Holman, the somewhat scandalous bisexual torch singer and actress. A French impressionist poster hangs in the bathroom. Nothing in the apartment explicitly signals an African American identity. When Tony visits the apartment, he sees white guests; through their presence, he misreads the light-skinned sister and brother as white. The next day, however, the apartment "becomes" black as Hugh has a party with almost all black guests, except for David. Now, the blackness of the space makes Ben, rather than Tony, uncomfortable—his recogni-

tion of his own blackness signaled by dramatic close-ups of guests — and sends him out into the world where he seeks his white friends, mumbling “Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow and everywhere that Mary went that lamb was sure to go.” By contrast, Lelia finds herself at film’s end on a date with a black man, another David (David Jones), at a black dance, but her future is uncertain.

Gordon Parks’s film, *Shaft*, offers a different kind of in-between status for its black hero. The film deliberately maps the city and places viewers clearly within its geography, often by showing the main character, Shaft (Richard Roundtree), walking the city (Kronengold, 82). Although the Isaac Hayes song “Soulsville” identifies the place where the “black man” lives as a “slum” or “Soulsville,” Shaft does not live there. He lives in Greenwich Village, which not only signifies bohemianism and sexual freedom, but also represents a kind of melting pot, where people from different (racial, class, ethnic, sexual, regional) backgrounds can come together as misfits and create a new identity. In the Village, we see Shaft chat comfortably with a white hippie and a gay white bartender, then sleep with a white bohemian girl. The Village positions Shaft away from “Uptown,” where virtually all the other black characters in the film, rich and poor, live and work. It also provides him a haven away from Midtown, where he works as a detective and which links him to the white police. Certainly, Shaft identifies with the black world. Early in the film, when a blind newsstand owner tells him some men were looking for him, Shaft asks whether they were “Harlem guys like me.” This suggests that Harlem is not so much a place but an identity. As he himself is no longer a “Harlem guy,” his question translates as “Were they black like me?” At the same time, however, black characters perceive him as being connected to the white world. The crime lord Bumpy Jonas (Moses Gunn) says that he wants to hire Shaft to find his kidnapped daughter because Shaft has “one foot in Whitey’s straw.” When Shaft enters a meeting of black nationals led by Ben Buford (Christopher St. John), Buford and his men view him as a potential spy for the white police rather than as a former friend and sympathizer. Shaft’s in-between status enables him to move freely between the various white and black groups in the film — including the white police and mafia and the black criminals and militants — yet prevents him from being fully identified with any of them (Kronengold, 91).

Shaft is not the only middle-class black character in the film. As Charles Kronengold notes, “The film makes a point of showing, gener-

ally, great variety among the living conditions of black Americans, and, more specifically, well-kept apartments in badly maintained buildings” (95). Both Shaft’s girlfriend and another female friend, who shelters both Buford and Shaft when they are hurt, live in large and attractive apartments. Their apartments are both seemingly in Harlem. Shaft’s apartment, however, places him “across the line,” more in the white world than the black. The apartment’s décor fits squarely into the *Playboy* imaginary. It is decorated in orange and brown earth tones, with leather couch, exposed brick, interior staircase, and modern art, plus various signifiers of a sophisticated playboy lifestyle: books, a tennis racket, and reel-to-reel tape recorder. Crucially, his apartment has white visitors—first, the anonymous white girl he picks up at the bar across the street, then the policeman Vic Androzzi (Charles Cioffi). However, no black character traverses his residential space. Like the white characters in *The Landlord*, Shaft can dip in and out of black culture at will. He enters various black spaces, such as the black shoeshine store, black women’s apartments, Buford’s meeting, and Bumpy’s office. He also enters white spaces, such as the white police station and the mafia hideaway. His mobility gives him status but also makes him a lone hero, a Shane for the urban setting.

“Hero for an Integrationist Age”

More than any other actor, Sidney Poitier comes to typify the in-between status of the black middle-class hero. In Donald Bogle’s famous and influential commentary on Poitier, in *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, he calls him a “hero for an integrationist age” (175–83). For Bogle, it is precisely Poitier’s in-between status that makes him amenable to both white and black audiences: “For the mass white audience, Sidney Poitier was a black man who had met their standards . . . Poitier was also acceptable for black audiences. He was the paragon of middle-class values and virtues. Black America was still trying to meet white standards and ape white manners, and he became a hero for their cause . . . most important, he did not carry any ghetto cultural baggage with him” (175–76). In Bogle’s analysis, Poitier’s star image in the fifties and sixties is effectively deracinated—he is associated with white manners and mores in his representation of middle-class respectability; he is stripped of any overtly black character-

istics, not only the stereotypical associations with rhythm and sexuality, but more importantly associations with the ghetto. From Bogle's vantage point, the quintessential Poitier film would be *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (Kramer, 1967), where Poitier portrays the well-educated, well-spoken fiancé of a white girl and is found to be unwelcome but not out of place in a white middle-class suburban home.

It is not the case that Poitier is never shown living in the ghetto. In *Blackboard Jungle* (Brooks, 1955), Poitier plays a slum delinquent. And of course in *A Raisin in the Sun*, he lives in a tenement in the black ghetto and is classified as poor. His character, Walter Lee Younger, however, is removed from the drugs and criminality usually associated with the ghetto and is positioned for a status change as he is about to move into the suburbs. As Bogle suggests, Poitier represents the hope for assimilation. Elsewhere, Poitier often represents the lone black figure in a white film. He is thus cut off not only from "ghetto cultural baggage," but also from any connection to black communities of any kind.

Bogle's analysis of Poitier suggests that his appeal to white audiences lies both in his "aping white manners" and in his representation of a kind of Uncle Tom figure, who shows his strength of character and "class" by helping and often educating white people. Key moments for this argument would be the end of *The Defiant Ones* (Kramer, 1958) in which Poitier's character, Noah, sacrifices his own escape plan to help a wounded John "Joker" (Tony Curtis) as both are being hunted by police; along with narratives in which Poitier lives out of his car while supporting helpless white nuns (*Lilies of the Field* [Nelson, 1963]), or aids racist white southerners to solve a murder (*In the Heat of the Night* [Jewison, 1967]), or educates mixed race British teens from the London slums to become refined ladies and gentleman (*To Sir With Love* [Clavell, 1967]).

What's missing from Bogle's analysis—and from most accounts of Poitier as an "integrationist"—is a recognition of the white class dynamic at play in many Poitier films. As Kenneth Clark has argued, "America does not like to admit—seldom does admit—that it is divided by social and economic classes. . . . This fantasy has persisted in large measure because of the presence of Negroes, without whom low-income and low-status whites would see they themselves have been relegated to the lower rungs of the ladder; and that for many the ladder is not a ladder at all: the presence of the Negro obscures the facts" (41). Poitier, in effect, reverses the model proposed by Clark, in which "the presence of the Negro" obscures class, allowing low-income and low-status whites to affiliate as

white with middle-class or upper-class whites rather than notice distances between them based on wealth and status. To a large degree, Poitier's credential as "paragon of middle-class values and virtues" depends upon his being juxtaposed with and contrasted to poor white people. In Poitier's films, the presence of low-income and low-status whites functions to elevate Poitier's character, because his manners and mores are shown to be superior to lower-class whites and thus closer to those of the white middle to upper classes. In a sense, Poitier's middle-class status requires shoring up from lower-class whites, including both rural "white trash" (*In the Heat of the Night*, *The Defiant Ones*) and urban white slum dwellers (*No Way Out*, *To Sir With Love*, and *A Patch of Blue*).

If the class of white people has been obscured in the analysis of Poitier's image in particular, or black film generally, it relates to Dyer's point that in the presence of blackness, whiteness comes into focus *as* whiteness. According to this thinking, the *class* of white people might dominate awareness in a text that does not attend as closely to their *color*, yet *color* stands out and *class* is obscured in a text that attends to race. However, by attending to the class differentiation among white people in black apartment films, we can see not only how the black middle class is figured through and against white classes; we can also see more clearly the class dynamic of the apartment plot as a whole. We can see, in other words, the way in which the apartment plot presents superficial distinctions among neighborhoods and lifestyles that mask deeper affiliations at the level of both race and class. Just as the apartment plot presents a philosophy of urbanism that obscures and segregates the black city, it also obscures and segregates knowledge of white poverty and white slums.

This class dynamic plays out in *No Way Out*, a film that can be characterized as a Hollywood "problem picture" but that crosses into film noir. The film situates the black middle-class character in between various white and black worlds. In the film, Sidney Poitier plays Dr. Luther Brooks, a young resident at a hospital who is wrongly accused of murdering a patient by the patient's racist brother, Ray Biddle (Richard Widmark). Brooks is supported in his battle to prove he didn't kill by his white mentor at the hospital, Dr. Dan Wharton (Stephen McNally).

In *No Way Out*, the suburbs are linked to white liberalism. Wharton, marked as a liberal who seeks to hire more African American doctors, lives in a sprawling suburban home, despite having no family. Rather than a wife, Wharton relies on his African American cook and house-



26. “Niggatown” in *No Way Out*.

keeper, Gladys (Amanda Randolph), with whom he has a friendly but somewhat paternalistic relationship. Wharton’s single status is striking, but rather than presented as dysfunctional, it seemingly connotes his being a selfless figure, too busy with his work as a doctor to have a family, or much of a life. His choice to live in the suburbs—as a work-obsessed single man—is unquestioned and unexplained. In the context of the film, however, Wharton’s suburban home marks his race and status.

The difference between Wharton’s home and Brooks’s home is striking. Wharton lives alone in a huge two-story house with a yard; Brooks shares an apartment with his wife, mother, brother, and sister-in-law in an urban neighborhood the film calls “Niggatown.” Wharton’s neighborhood is all white, Brooks’s all black. Wharton’s neighborhood is quiet and unpopulated. In Brooks’s neighborhood, by contrast, kids play by the fire hydrant; numerous people pass by, strolling and shopping; and people crowd outside buildings, standing and talking (figure 26). Although Wharton accompanies Brooks to his home, and the two men work together in the same space, Brooks only goes to Wharton’s home once. On that occasion, he is lured there by Ray Biddle who plans to

kill him and assumes that Brook's presence in the white suburban house will cast a suspicious light on him so that the murder will look like self-defense.

Despite being perceived as too black by Biddle, Brooks is not fully identified with the rest of the neighborhood in "Niggatown." His profession separates him from other black characters. Unlike Brooks, the other black men who work at the hospital have menial jobs as elevator operators and janitors. His domesticity also separates him. Brooks is seen in relationship to his wife, mother, brother, and sister-in-law and in domestic scenes at his apartment—resting in his wife's arms after work, sharing dinner with his family. By comparison, the rest of the inhabitants of the neighborhood are only seen as a mob of lone men, first gathered in a neighborhood saloon to plan an attack on the white racist community, then shown attacking them in a junkyard.

Brooks is distinguished not only from the black underclass who riot, but also from the film's poor white characters. On one side are the racist Biddles, and the men who support their racist view, people from Beaver Canal, a white slum. On the other side is Edie Johnson, formerly Mrs. John Biddle (Linda Darnell), a former Beaver Canal resident, who, like Brooks, has an in-between class status. Edie does not live in Beaver Canal anymore and had divorced Biddle a few years prior to his death. By her own account, though, she has not gone very far: "Yeah, I've come up in the world. I used to live in a sewer. Now I live in a swamp. How do those babes do it in the movies? By now I ought to be married to the governor and paying blackmail so he don't find out I lived in Beaver Canal." Edie's in-between status leads her to first aid the racists from Beaver Canal as they plan an attack on the black community in retaliation for Biddle's "murder." Then, however, she becomes sickened by their violence and decides to help Brooks, by requesting an autopsy that proves his innocence. Edie's interaction with Wharton and, more particularly, his maid Gladys seems to spur her change of heart.

Topography and place are crucial to understanding *No Way Out*. Edie lives in a white slum a few blocks from Beaver Canal in a tenement. In terms of class, her room represents the opposite end of the spectrum from Wharton's home: its presence in the film helps mark Brooks even more clearly as middle class. Edie's home consists of a small room with a round table and chairs, a bureau, and a small cot. It has a hot plate and a radio, but no sink or stove. Like the black tenements in other films, her building affords no privacy. As soon as Brooks and Wharton enter the

building, a white neighbor woman hanging out the front window runs inside to gossip about Brooks's presence to neighbors using the unused dumbwaiter as a makeshift telephone. By the time the two men arrive upstairs, all the neighbors on Edie's floor are standing in the hall watching. Edie suggests that prying eyes are hardly necessary, as residents can hear each other easily through the thin walls. Moreover, the diegetic off-screen sound of neighbors permeates the scene, underlining her point.

In contrast to Edie's apartment (figure 27.1), Brooks's apartment is quite large (figure 27.2). It has three bedrooms, affording the two couples and mother each a separate space. It has a large, well-stocked kitchen, where we see Luther's mother (Maude Simmons) and sister-in-law, Cora (Ruby Dee), baking a surprise apple cake for Luther. The living room is nicely furnished and has a fireplace over which hangs a picture of, presumably, Luther's father. As in Edie's tenement, sound permeates the apartment, but here, rather than gossip and noise, we hear the sounds of a child practicing his instrument, playing a classic lullaby.

The tagline for *No Way Out*—"Is it a question . . . or an answer?"—indicates that there may or may not be a "way out." Though both Edie and Luther are in-between figures, it is unclear if either one can move up and escape their in-between status. At the end of the film, both Edie and Luther are in Wharton's house waiting for the police, with a demented and wounded Ray Biddle. The framing indicates the uncertainty of Edie's future, as she stands in the doorway looking out. She is left on the threshold between worlds, neither in Beaver Canal nor "the governor's mansion." Despite Biddle's attack on Brooks, Brooks is tending Biddle's wounds. Cleared of criminal charges, Brooks's potential career as a doctor seems assured, and his willingness to help Biddle would indicate his ongoing capacity to work within a white world. However, the film noir ending leaves a more bitter taste, as Brooks's last words are "Don't cry, white boy, you're going to live." Moving up and away from the poor black community, Brooks seems nonetheless to be stalled within the discourse of race and racial division, and unable to be fully integrated into the white world.

In *A Patch of Blue*, a similar dynamic contrasts the Poitier figure with a poor white tenement family. This film, though, also raises the possibility for a romance between Poitier and the white girl. The impossibility of their union reveals the limits of "integration," not only in terms of racial integration but across class lines. It also reveals the limits of the apartment plot, as it sets up the expectation for a romance by engendering a



27.1 and 27.2. Edie's tenement, top, versus Brooks's apartment, bottom, in *No Way Out*.

mistaken identity plot across two apartments—or an apartment and a tenement—but hedges those expectations against racial and class divisions.

Poitier's character in *A Patch of Blue*, Gordon Ralfe, is not just a paragon of middle-class virtues and refinement, but of Christian charity. In this case, the bar for white behavior, over which Poitier leaps easily, is set very low. The white family in the film are not just low-income people,



28. Selina's tenement in *A Patch of Blue*.

but of extremely low status and morals. Lowlifes, actually. Shelley Winters, that paragon of low-class values, plays Rose-Ann D'Arcy, a prostitute who lives with her father, Ole Pa (Wallace Ford), and her blind daughter, Selina (Elizabeth Hartman), in a one-room tenement. The room has dirty wallpaper and filthy appliances. A bare bulb hangs on the wall. There are three small cots, a tiny triangle of table, and a tub in the kitchen (figure 28). More than just poor, the D'Arcy family are vulgar and abusive. Ole Pa and Rose-Ann trade insults, calling each other "blubber belly," "beer belly," and "fatso." Both of them drink, brawl, and argue. Rose-Ann is particularly abusive toward Selina. She hits her, forces her to do all the cooking and cleaning, and doesn't allow her to leave the house, obliging her, instead, to stay home stringing beads for money. Selina is not only exposed to her mother's many "friends," but is "done over" by one of them in a brutal rape scene. A flashback shows that Rose-Ann blinded Selina when she was five years old, accidentally hitting her with a bottle of acid in an altercation with her husband who'd come home from the army and discovered Rose-Ann with another man.

When Gordon meets Selina, he introduces her to middle-class values and opportunities. The film reverses the usual pairing of light and dark *mise-en-scènes* to represent white and black worlds: it associates Gordon with light—not only sunlight and a light *mise-en-scène* but the light of education and illumination. Selina convinces Rose-Ann to let her string

beads in the park, with Ole Pa or the bead seller escorting her there. Sitting in the sunlight at the park, Selina freaks out when a caterpillar crawls down her back. Gordon appears and “rescues” her. They strike up a friendship, motivated on his part by a strong sense of pity. He works at night at a newspaper and spends part of each day in the park. Thus, he and Selina spend mostly daylight hours together. As they get to know each other, Gordon learns of her deprived life and shameful past. He calls her life “a dark age story.” He is appalled at Selina’s lack of education. He teaches her correct grammar—“You sound like the radio,” she observes. He brings her sunglasses to hide her scars. He introduces her to fresh juice and fruit, as well as grocery shopping and restaurants. He teaches her how to count steps to navigate city streets by herself. He introduces her to Braille and teaches her how to dial a phone. He even teaches her how to pronounce her name, the articulated Se-LI-na, as opposed to the slurred SLEE-na she hears at home.

Crucially, Gordon brings Selina to his apartment. To her, it is a high-class paradise. “You sure you’re not rich?” she asks. Gordon’s apartment building has an elevator—Selina’s first—and carpeting in the hallways. She’s amazed. Inside, his apartment is air-conditioned and has a lot of natural light. A clean and tasteful two-bedroom apartment—with a modest kitchen and large bathroom, decorated with modern art—he shares it with his brother, Mark (Ivan Dixon), an intern at a hospital. At his apartment, Gordon and Selina share meals—Selina never has conversation with meals at home—and he teaches her new foods (cottage cheese and peaches) and new skills (how to operate a phonograph).

The plot hinges on a mistaken identity—because Selina is blind, she does not realize that Gordon is black. She falls in love with him and tries to seduce him. He very nearly falls, but restrains himself, realizing that the differences between them, especially their race, cannot be overcome. (He carries a talisman of a failed white/black romance from his grandmother, a music box that Selina admires.) The interrupted romance functions, in part, to keep the film away from the dangerous waters of miscegenation and contain Poitier’s interaction with the white world. At the same time, it adheres to a general rule of thumb for Poitier’s characters in the 1950s and 1960s—that they are not viewed as overtly sexual. At the same time, the failed romance reminds us of the frequent gendering of the white slum in Poitier’s films. Here, as in *No Way Out* and *To Sir With Love*, the Poitier character has the most impact on female slum dwellers. This positions the poor white woman as potentially mobile,

like Poitier, but as dependent upon black masculinity to lift her out of the gutter.

In the context of the film, two different positions are put forward promoting a separation between the races. On one side is the racist attitude of Selina's mother, who calls Gordon "nigga," consequently alerting Selina to his race. On the other side is Gordon's brother, Mark, who adopts a black nationalist posture. When Gordon says he plans to send Selina to school, Mark replies, "Let whitey educate his own women. They've never given us anything but a hard time." Gordon adopts a middle ground. He acknowledges Mark's position but says they'll never agree "on race and politics." He believes he cannot date Selina but can work with her on a "personal" basis.

A key scene in the film differentiates average white people from either separatist position, and allows Gordon's view to govern the spectator's view. When Gordon gets word that Rose-Ann plans to move Selina away to work as a prostitute, he meets her in the park, as a first step toward sending her away to a blind boarding school. Rose-Ann and Ole Pa arrive to confront him. Selina runs away and falls over some bushes. As Gordon picks her up, she thrashes in his arms, looking potentially, to an observer, like she is struggling against him. Then Rose-Ann approaches and Gordon slaps her hand. As Rose-Ann screams to the crowd of white people that have gathered, "Did you see that? He struck me," Gordon and Selina walk away. Whereas another film might have the white crowd misread the situation and blame Gordon, here the white crowd looks at Gordon and looks at Rose-Ann and makes its choice, understanding intuitively his superiority to her. The crowd disperses, allowing Selina to escape from her "white trash" family. In the end Gordon's family distinguishes Rose-Ann's racism from the white middle class and allows Gordon to share their middle-class assimilationist views against the nationalism of his brother, Mark.

If these other films position Poitier as a figure of assimilation and Uncle Tomism, *For Love of Ivy*, based on a story by Poitier—his only writing credit—can be seen as a critique of his role as white enabler. At the same time, the film offers a rare romance plot for Poitier with an African American woman. Their romance plays off tropes of both the "taming" the bachelor scenario and the "great reprieve" for single girls, but situates them in a black milieu and in relation to the white suburbs.

In the film, Ivy Moore (Abbey Lincoln) is an African American maid for a white family on Long Island. Ivy has been with the family, the

Austins, for nine years, since they brought her up from Florida, apparently “finding” her on vacation. She lives in a room off the kitchen. Now twenty-seven, Ivy gives notice, saying she wants to move to the city to get her high school diploma and then go to secretarial school. When pressed as to why she can’t attend school on Long Island, Ivy makes clear, “There’s nothing here for me.” She compares her situation to that of her employer, Doris (Nan Martin), who has a family and a career at the family-run department store: “I look ahead and don’t see any of that . . . What if another nine years go by . . . and I still have nothing? In the city, I’ll have a chance.” Assuming that what Ivy wants is a man, the Austin children—Tim (Beau Bridges in another spoiled ne’er-do-well role) and Gena (Lauri Peters)—scheme to find her a boyfriend. Tim enlists the help of Jack Parks (Poitier), an African American who runs a trucking business and has a contract with the department store. Jack refuses, but is cornered in an “accidental” meeting with Ivy and relents.

As in other films, the white suburbs are portrayed as cartoonishly artificial and alienated. Tim lives in the family guesthouse, too alienated from his father to live in the main house, too spoiled to move out on his own. He communicates with the family via intercom. Tim and Gena are portrayed as phony liberals. At a dinner they arrange between Jack and Ivy, they make Ivy extremely uncomfortable by pretending she is an equal at the table while she is cooking, serving, and cleaning up. Jack sees through them and scares them by pretending to give them drugs. The parents are paternalistic toward Ivy, but their claims of “family” ring false. When Ivy first gives notice, Doris offers her a vacation in Florida to see her family. When Ivy refuses, Doris asks her if she’d like to go to Africa instead. Doris, especially, is shown as hopelessly dependent upon Ivy. She doesn’t know where the sheets are kept, and when she tries to make dinner on Ivy’s night off she nearly has a nervous breakdown.

In contrast to the white suburban world, the black world is represented as more complex and multilayered. In this film, there is no ghetto. But there is also no noble middle class, unhitched from black culture. Instead, we have Ivy, who is uneducated and suburban, but bright. Her desire to move into the city is partly about gaining experience and crafting a new identity, like the typical single girl discussed earlier; but this requires that she exit an all-white world and find a black community. Jack is also complex. He is “classy,” but his social status is hard to pin down. His trucking business gives him a legitimate middle-class front. However, the company is a cover for a casino that operates in the truck

at night. Both of these businesses — the legitimate trucking company and the illicit casino — serve white customers and are intricate performances for whites. Jack's costume indicates the levels of performance in his identity as he wears coveralls each evening when the truck first pulls out, but then takes them off to reveal a tuxedo when he assumes his place in the casino. While the casino aligns Jack with criminality, it is not the stereotypical criminality of the ghetto. In fact, Jack will not let black people into the casino as customers, explaining to Ivy "We don't take from blood." Instead, the casino is owned and operated by blacks with all black employees and "takes" from rich white people.

Jack is a sophisticated bachelor. On his second date with Ivy, he takes her to a Japanese restaurant and a groovy bar filled with white hippies, with a much lauded theatrical installation of a real family living on stage. He dresses well and has his own limousine and driver. His apartment reflects his sophistication. It has a large round living room with a built-in TV and reel-to-reel, a large aquarium, brown velvet sofa and maroon velvet chairs, a large ottoman, glass table, wood shutters, white shag carpet, and African art. His bedroom is large and filled with books. However, the first time Ivy sees his bachelor pad, it is incongruously filled with children and decorated with children's drawings (see plate 20). Like many bachelor pads, it is a live-work space; but, in this case, that means that his apartment is in a building owned by the company, where other employees live and where the kids stay when their parents, the male and female workers, are out on the truck. Thus, this apartment produces, simultaneously, a playboy figure trying to avoid commitment, similar to the playboys discussed in chapter 2, and an alternative model of family that supports and sustains a community.

Jack is eventually "tamed" by Ivy, and his taming leads them both to become part of an urban, black middle class. After his first two dates with Ivy, Jack refuses to go further in the ruse, but Tim threatens to reveal the true nature of Jack's business and Jack continues. Eventually, Jack falls in love with Ivy. Ivy, however, discovers the plot and their romance is threatened. Jack discovers that he does not need the role of white enabler. He tells Mr. Austin (Carroll O'Connor), "Yes, that's right. I played your miserable game because I thought I needed you." He decides to give up his contract with the department store, give up the illegal half of his business, and become a legitimate businessman. At the same time, he wins back Ivy and moves her into the city, saying "I don't know where this is going to take us, but, for openers, it's got to take us to

New York.” Thus, *For Love of Ivy* disavows dependence on white people, and claims a space for the black middle class that is neither segregated in the ghetto nor isolated from the black community.

“Mr. Welfare Man”

For Love of Ivy is a relatively rare black romance in this period. It can be usefully compared to another romance, *Claudine*. Whereas *For Love of Ivy* shows black characters extricating themselves from obligations to the white world to produce a class rise, as Jack will focus on legitimate business and Ivy will presumably get her education, *Claudine* shows black urban living and black romance alike contained and oppressed by external institutions, especially the welfare system. It emphasizes the way in which life chances are curtailed by large institutional forces, rather than by white or black individuals.

In *Claudine*, the main character, played by Diahann Carroll, meets Rupert “Roop” (James Earl Jones) in the white suburbs in Westchester County, where she works as a maid and he as a garbage man. The suburban milieu functions as a kind of shorthand here. It shows that both Claudine and Roop work for white people and that the white people have no understanding of, or interest in, their lives. It further establishes that they must leave their community to work. The opening credits of the film show Claudine walking down a Harlem street with six children, three on either side of her, spanning the sidewalk. The children peel away one by one with a kiss, leaving Claudine to board her bus for work. Then we see Claudine’s long commute by bus to a wealthy suburb, where she and other black maids travel on the back of the bus to a pristine tree-lined roundabout, each exiting toward a different point of the suburban circle. The suburban setting then generates the chance meeting between Claudine and Roop, as they do not meet in the city, where they live, but in the suburbs where both work. However, the film departs from the suburban setting and focuses on their romance, in an apartment plot situated in their respective Harlem apartments. As an apartment plot, the film deploys themes of porousness, proximity, density, and contact; but it filters those themes through poverty and racism.

The two main characters in *Claudine* each inhabit apartments, not tenements, but those apartments are located in Harlem and are not middle-class apartments so much as the apartments of the working poor. Her

apartment at 139 Edgecomb Avenue is in an attractive four-story limestone six-flat. She lives on the second floor in a railroad flat with living room, bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom. The space is clean and tidy, but crowded. Six kids and Claudine all share the space, with beds jammed in the bedroom, a room between the kitchen and living room with no door. The apartment has a TV and stereo, and a few appliances. Characters have no privacy.

The bathroom, especially, highlights the crowdedness, as characters fight to get into the bathroom or spy on each other while in the bathroom. This attention to the bathroom runs through the black apartment films—in *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Shadows*, as here, characters compete for bathroom time; in *Watermelon Man*, as soon as Jeff turns black he begins to spend all his time in the bathroom, trying various potions to become white again, ultimately sleeping there; and in *A Patch of Blue*, when Mark comes home to shower, the film emphasizes the placement of the bathroom, requiring passage through Gordon's bedroom. The use of the bathroom in these films points to its absence in white apartment films and underscores the different conception of privacy available in different urban conditions.

Roop's apartment reflects his bachelor status but also his poverty. He lives in a large building with a large entryway. His building is inhabited by numerous prostitutes, all of whom know him by name—a more realistic twist of the bachelor pad fantasy of free and easy access to women in apartments. Roop's unkempt bachelor quarters consists of two adjoining rooms with no wall between, a small kitchen, and a bathroom. Roop has a TV in the center of his living room—again, a prominent prop in black apartment films but largely absent from the white apartment films I've discussed. Along with such bachelor touches as a zebra pattern chair, throw pillows, and daybed in the living area, Roop has African woodcuts and a Black Panther poster of a raised fist that invokes a black nationalist critique. Roop's apartment also has a mouse—one he knows well and has named Millhouse (see plates 21.1 and 21.2).

The excitement of their meeting, when both are away from home, soon meets the reality of their living conditions and attendant pressures on their relationship. On their first date, Roop arrives in a Chevy Impala convertible, looking sharp in a sports coat, tie, and hat. When he arrives, Claudine is not yet back from work. Since her children will not let him enter, he waits outside in the car, dozing in the front seat. When Claudine arrives, she explains that the lady she works for forced her to

stay late. She tries to beg off the date, but Roop persists. Inside Claudine's apartment, Roop encounters a chaotic scene, as the kids fight over the bathroom and criticize Roop as yet another man whom they fear will hurt their mother or get her pregnant. As the apartment has no more hot water, Roop suggests that Claudine bathe at his house. Taking a dress and shoes, she departs with him, leaving the oldest daughter to babysit. At Roop's place, he prepares for a romantic evening. He puts on a record (from the score by Curtis Mayfield and Gladys Knight and the Pips), lights candles, and makes a drink from a minibar. But Claudine, exhausted from her long day at work, falls asleep in the tub. Instead of the planned romantic dinner at a restaurant, they share a bucket of fast-food chicken. Claudine and Roop have sex later that first night, but their love-making is interrupted numerous times by phone calls from Claudine's children and the sound of Millhouse, the mouse, getting caught by a trap.

Claudine is an unusual apartment plot in that both characters in the romance have kids. The presence of children as well as members of an extended family, of course, pervades the black apartment plot and is a key difference between white and black variants. Without access to the suburbs and suburban ideals, black familism is, of necessity, urban. Here, however, the children are less symbolic of family values than markers of the disintegration of the black family in the ghetto. Only thirty-six, Claudine has had two marriages and two "almost marriages." Roop, too, has kids—two boys in Ohio with his first wife, and a girl in Louisville with his second wife's mother. Both Claudine and Roop recognize that they fit white stereotypes of the black family—the "lazy woman" just having kids to milk the welfare system and the black male who abandons his family. However, they, and the film, dismantle those stereotypes by pointing to the ways in which white government institutions create and perpetuate many of the problems the black family faces. Claudine says she is married to "Mr. Welfare," and astutely critiques a system that will only give her money to support her kids if (1) she does not work (thus forcing her to practice deceit when she works or be accused of being lazy if she does not) and (2) does not marry (thus forcing her to remain a single mother). Claudine views her life chances as curtailed: "Shitty neighborhood and the shitty school and the shitty world. No matter what I do." Roop also critiques the system that keeps him away from his kids. Roop is served for "willful neglect" of his kids. He pays support out of his salary as a garbage man, but "they" say it is not enough and garnish

his wages. Unable to afford his rent on such meager pay, Roop considers running away to a new city with a new identity, suggesting that the father's abandonment of his kids is caused, in part, by unfair practices.

Not only Claudine's and Roop's roles as parents but also their relationship to one another is boxed in by the welfare system. At the outset, their relationship is subject to surveillance. Most nights, Claudine asks Roop to drive her home so that nosy neighbors won't report their romance to the welfare people, because if there is a man in her life Claudine risks losing benefits. In addition, Claudine must conceal any gifts from Roop because they will be counted as "income." This includes items he takes off the garbage truck as well as beer he brings to her house for dinner. Not only do neighbors report gossip about Claudine, but a social worker routinely visits her house unannounced, to check up on her. These circumstances emphasize how vulnerable Claudine is to institutional forces and how porousness takes on a menacing Big Brother quality under welfare. When the social worker visits, Claudine and her children must practice deception. They hide appliances, such as a toaster and coffee pot, and roll up the rugs. On one visit, they even try to conceal Roop by hiding him in the bathroom. More than anything, Claudine and Roop are subject to the arcane bureaucracy of the welfare system. When they decide to get married, they visit the welfare office to find out the rules. They discover that welfare promotes living together over marriage. If Roop moves in but does not marry Claudine, he will be listed as a nonrecipient and she will lose her welfare but still get money for her kids. If they marry, however, she loses benefits and he takes responsibility for her kids. If he loses his job, he is required to go on welfare. Thus, their best bet is for Roop to move in but conceal that fact.

Ultimately, the romance plot wins out and Claudine and Roop get married, despite his ongoing monetary and legal troubles with his first family, and despite the welfare laws. Their wedding ceremony, however, is permeated by institutional forces. Scenes of the wedding are intercut with scenes of Claudine's eldest son, Charles (Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs) leading a protest demanding more jobs for black youth. As police try to break up the protest, a chase ensues. Inevitably, the simultaneous scenes of the wedding and the chase come together. Charles runs into the back of the apartment, interrupting the wedding. A fight starts among police and members of the wedding party. Then, the whole wedding party spills out into the street. Claudine and Roop get arrested, and they along with all of Claudine's kids pile into a paddy wagon. The last shot of the film

reproduces the first shot, with a difference, as Claudine and Roop walk down the street with all six kids, three on each side, alongside them. The film then points toward a happy ending, with a restored family in Claudine's apartment, but does not let us forget the constraints and limitations placed on their happiness.

Conclusion

If black urban life exists outside the usual arena of the apartment plot, mid-century representations of black urban life nonetheless complicate and enrich the philosophy or urbanism engendered by the apartment plot. In emphasizing the ways in which neighborhood and housing shape "life chances," the films discussed here not only point to the limitations and exclusions of ghetto living, but also remind us that all residences—and their representations—are imbricated by discourses of race and class and speak from within systems of power and privilege. As space and place sustain use-values such as shopping, schools, friends, and work, they also produce and sustain a philosophy of urbanism—what it means to live in the city, what one desires from the city, and how the city shapes one's identity and relationships.

More than just being determined by neighborhood or domicile, these films remind us that our identities do not transcend space and place. In other words, a white man in a tenement does not face the same limitations as a black man in the same tenement, and a black man in a middle-class apartment in a white middle-class neighborhood will not have an identical experience to a white middle-class man in the same neighborhood. Similarly, as previous chapters have suggested, a single white male will not have the same experience as a single white female or a married woman. It is worth repeating the succinct statement from Logan and Molotch: "Given the wide variety of possible urban experience, the lives of urban people must come to differ" (103).

The black apartment plot underscores differences between black urban life and white urban life, and black urban and white suburban life, and draws attention to class differences among white populations as well. At the same time, these films have numerous points in common with other apartment plots, and share generic themes and forms. These themes and forms are, however, filtered through discourses of race and class. Certainly, they represent the apartment as distinct in kind from the suburban

home. But rather than a question of lifestyle, they pitch the debate about urban versus suburban lifestyle as one of race and exclusionary practices. These films stitch the ideals of proximity, porousness, and permeability to discourses of poverty and racism, revealing their underside. Similarly, they put pressure on the notion of public privacy by emphasizing the lack of true privacy in ghetto settings and the social costs of privacy in the middle-class apartment. These films engage in moments of spontaneity and improvisation, but nonetheless emphasize the pull of fate over contingency.

While the black apartments shown here trouble the philosophy of urbanism somewhat, they do not abandon it. These films explore urban living, its form, and its possibilities. By attending to the ways in which black urban populations have been systematically denied access to the “life chances” afforded white middle-class urban populations, these films present a critique of the status quo. They insist on what Lefebvre terms “the right to the city” as a possibility that should be available to all. This means not just access to different neighborhoods, but access to an ideal of the urban, to a use-value and not just products of urbanization (all those TVs and stereos). In portraying black urban life as contained, they remind us of the ways in which the urban often fails to live up to its ideals. But this critique animates an urban ideal and pitches the urban as something to be imagined, accomplished, and won. *The Jeffersons*, then, stands for a watershed in black representation not just by showing a class rise, but by infusing the urban with a sense of the possible.



EPILOGUE

A New Philosophy for a New Century

If, as I have suggested, the apartment plot reflects and refracts a philosophy of urbanism, that philosophy is not a singular entity but an ongoing conversation consisting of multiple iterations, revisions, and reframings. Space and place produce and sustain a philosophy of urbanism, but space and place are inflected by time and history, as well as imbricated in discourses of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Over time, the philosophy of urbanism will absorb new participants and new topics, while others are discharged. Correspondingly, the meaning and value of porousness, privacy, simultaneity, and other terms associated with the urban will shift over time and in different contexts.

This project examines the apartment plot in the postwar period, stopping at 1975. It considers the way in which the apartment plot produces a philosophy of American urbanism suited to the mid-century context. Rather than a monolithic view of urbanism, I have tried to map the ways in which overlapping but not identical ideals of urbanism are produced for different identities, marked by gender, sexuality, class, and race. At the same time, I have been charting changes in the historical context for urbanism, noting changing ideas about what constitutes a good city, changes in the political and architectural landscape that fulfill or prompt those new ideas, and changes in the perceived relationship between the suburbs and the city. These changes are marked by such historical interventions as the GI Bill and urban renewal, and ideological changes such as an increased emphasis on family. The philosophy of urbanism that I examine captures a transitional phase when the city is being reimagined.

This philosophy comes into contact with other burgeoning ethics and ideals—such as policies of containment, singles culture, black nationalism, and the Civil Rights Movement, second-wave feminism, and gay and lesbian subcultures—that impact and underpin the philosophy of urbanism.

Thus, the apartment plot as genre continues, but its meaning alters somewhat over time. Or, rather, some meanings come to the fore while others recede. The year 1975 marks a transitional moment in perceptions of the city, leading toward more alarmist views of the urban. Despite the success of the famous “I Love New York” campaign launched in 1977, representations of the city have tended from the late seventies forward to emphasize crime, poverty, filth, and the inherent dangers of the city. While the popular press reported on garbage strikes, teacher strikes, murder rates, drug use, “wilding,” and more signs of urban decay, films such as *New Jack City* (Van Peebles, 1991) and *Jungle Fever* (Lee, 1991) represented the drug trade and the attendant crime and squalor associated with the urban world of crack houses.

Not surprisingly, as more alarmist views of the city came to dominate public perception, the apartment plot developed an increasingly dystopic strain. Films such as *Apartment Zero* (Donovan, 1989), *Single White Female* (Schroeder, 1992), *Sliver* (Noyce, 1993), and *Dark Water* (Salles, 2003) take up the more sinister view of the city already present in *Wait Until Dark* and *Rosemary's Baby*. These films emphasize the inherent danger of urban living by representing the downside of contact and density, including not only infringement of privacy but also physical peril and dangers that threaten one's safety and life. In these films, the apartment's inherent porousness is made to seem menacing, whether the danger is posed by creepy and psychotic roommates (*Apartment Zero*, *Single White Female*), by neighbors and landlords (*Sliver*), or even by the evil ghost of previous tenants (*Dark Water*).

Still, in the latter half of the century, the apartment plot did not become fully entrenched in dystopic views of the city. Television programs such as *Seinfeld* and *Friends* (along with *Will and Grace*, *Frasier*, *Sex and the City*, and others) mobilized fantasies of urban living for a new generation of viewers. In these shows, barely employed slackers manage to inhabit large and decent apartments in good neighborhoods, and still have cash left for frequent meals at diners and espresso drinks at coffee bars. More importantly, these shows reanimate a utopian version of urban localism via the figure of the apartment. As Sanders and Jacobs suggest, urban

dwellers need smaller spaces—blocks, buildings, neighborhoods—to mediate between themselves and the large potentially alienating city (Jacobs, 121; Sanders, 197). This produces degrees of localism and affiliations within the larger structure of the city.

In *Seinfeld* and *Friends*, rather than geographic smallness, the characters' circle of friends revolves around an apartment, and this serves to produce smallness within the city. This smallness mediates the characters' relationship to the larger city—every event is filtered through their reactions and knowledge. The grouping also serves to insulate characters from the harsh realities of the city—to produce an island of sorts that enables them to live without acknowledging, in any deep way, the more dystopic aspects of city living, including the still unequal life chances and racial segregation that shape their own urban experience. While the characters in *Seinfeld* and *Friends* change jobs, meet new friends, and date new people, they never lose touch with one another, and they never expand their world significantly beyond their small circle; they create a fantasy of smallness in the big city, a sense of friendship as engendering a subdivision of sorts, mediating between the single city dweller and the large city. This network insulates the friends from most unwanted entanglements.

Therefore, in *Seinfeld* not only do Kramer (Michael Richards) and Jerry (Jerry Seinfeld) live across the hall from one another, allowing Kramer's frequent drop-ins to Jerry's apartment, but Elaine (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) and George (Jason Alexander), who live elsewhere—George at some points as far away as Queens—also manage to easily and frequently traverse the city to meet up in Jerry's apartment or down the block at Monk's Coffee Shop. *Seinfeld* plays off the fantasy that urban living will provide contact with strangers, and thus characters date frequently and broadly, meeting people in such places as the gym, the ATM machine, stores, and car dealerships; but, at the end of the series, none of the characters has a stable relationship outside their circle.

Similarly, in *Friends*, high school friends Monica (Courteney Cox Arquette) and Rachel (Jennifer Aniston) share quarters just across the hall from Chandler (Matthew Perry) and Joey (Matt LeBlanc), best friends of Monica's brother Ross (David Schwimmer). While Phoebe (Lisa Kudrow) and Ross live elsewhere, they nonetheless frequently stop by either apartment or meet up in the Central Perk coffee shop downstairs. Here, the fantasy of neighborhood is even stronger than in *Seinfeld*, as characters seem almost incapable of moving on without moving in together.

When Joey gains success as an actor and moves out of the apartment he shares with Chandler, Chandler's new roommate turns out to be a psychotic reminiscent of *Single White Female*, and Chandler and Joey reunite because neither can bear to live alone. When Chandler moves in with Monica, thus displacing Rachel, Rachel rotates among the apartments of Phoebe, Ross, and Joey. Whereas *Seinfeld* emphasizes the potential alienation of over-thirty singles living in the city, *Friends* adopts a *Wizard of Oz*-like belief that in romance, "there's no place like home": Monica marries Chandler, her brother's best friend from college while, after numerous breakups, Ross and Rachel, who knew each other in high school, finally have a child together and marry. After proposing to Rachel, with whom he fell in love while they were roommates, Joey is left alone at the end of the series. (His character leaves New York, moving on briefly to his own TV series set in Hollywood, not coincidentally an apartment plot, *Joey* [2004]). Only Phoebe manages to marry outside the circle.

These shows signal not only a revised—more controlled and guarded—sense of urban contact and encounter and a limited porousness, but also underscore ideological changes in the culture. While it still seems difficult to imagine conventional white familism in the apartment plot—most family sitcoms, such as *Everybody Loves Raymond* (1996) and *The King of Queens* (1998) for example, situate their characters in single-family homes—there is more room for unconventional families, as in the father/son/brother triangles of *Frasier* and *Two and a Half Men*. In addition, more recent apartment plots focus on explicitly gay characters, as in *Will and Grace*. And black middle-class apartments figure prominently in shows such as *The King of Queens* and *Girlfriends* (2000). The emergent singles culture that I describe in mid-twentieth-century America is now fully entrenched. But there are key changes. In *Seinfeld* and *Friends*, while there are bachelors, there are no bachelor pads. The male characters date but lack the confidence, and sexism, of their mid-century playboy counterparts. The single women in *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, *Frasier*, and *Sex and the City* no longer face the mid-century pressure to marry or the erasure of a "reprieve" from suburban marriage, and they are not castigated as spinsters. But aside from Samantha (Kim Cattrall) from *Sex and the City*, they are not Helen Gurley Brown's swinging singles either. Instead, they are postfeminist figures caught between their desire for independence and their desire for marriage. It is not surprising, perhaps, that the neo-apartment plot in *Down with Love* (see chapter 2) treats the playful erotics of the mid-century apartment plot as the stuff of par-

ody, lampooning what it (mis)perceives as the innocence of the romantic apartment plot.

While these recent apartment plots point to crucial changes in the philosophy of urbanism and its cultural context, no doubt the most significant change in the philosophy of urbanism between the mid-twentieth century and now relates to globalization.¹ Globalization comprises an enormous nexus of changes and effects in the world, including changes and effects in industry, economics, politics, information, technology, culture, language, ecology, society, and the law, among others. In part when we talk about globalization, we are talking about the colonizing influence of American capitalism and the sense that—as every city comes to be dominated by McDonald's and KFC, and more and more people speak English, and every shopper can access the same brands online—the specificity of urban cultures diminishes to a global generic. In this respect, globalization relates to the shrinking of the globe enabled by the attenuation or eradication of government-enforced restrictions on exchange between borders. Along with this, globalization entails immigration and movement of peoples from place to place. Rather than a melting pot, the new global city is viewed as a multicultural hodgepodge of cultures that may mix and mingle but do not blend or fully assimilate. On the one hand, this increased diversity fuels a new American urbanism, with many white families avoiding or exiting the suburbs in order to gain access to—and expose their children to—more diverse cultures. On the other hand, this increased diversification—and the attendant Americanization of other cultures—raises fears about the effects of immigration on jobs, the economy, schools, and more, as well as fears and frustrations related to outsourcing and offshoring of jobs.

Globalization relates to the increased urbanization of the world. Urbanization goes hand in hand with immigration as people move from rural areas to urban areas, within countries or across national borders. Urbanization also relates to the spread of urban culture (tastes, commodities, music, films, and more) through the amazing globalizing force of the Internet, and the increased massification that is a correlate of globalization. This urbanization links disparate cities across the globe and also nonurban areas. As the barriers between different urban centers have broken down under globalization, the barriers between urban and nonurban areas have also diminished. If mid-century theorists noticed urban sprawl, the intervening decades have only accelerated the process, at least in the United States, as rampant housing development and commercial

culture have spread to huge swaths of previously undeveloped or rural lands.

More than anything else in the United States, the historic events of September 11, 2001, amassed conflicting ideas and effects of globalization. The events of 9/11 were not only an attack on America but also, crucially, an attack on the image and effects of economic and political globalization, in the World Trade Center and Pentagon, by a global network of Sunni Islamist terrorists, Al-Qaeda. Inside America, the attack raised fears and prejudices about the role of legal and illegal foreign immigrants on American soil. It also raised awareness of the rich cultural diversity that such legal and illegal immigrants had brought to America, highlighting a broad multicultural and multiracial Muslim population. The events of 9/11 produced a global response of sympathy, which trailed eventually to both an international coalition of armies fighting in Iraq and international condemnation of the war in Iraq. The American government launched its diffuse global “War on Terror” and two ground wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that came to be seen, by many, as instances of American exceptionalism and colonialist policies of domination. Blame for the attacks and for the wars both led to questions about the effectiveness of global information networks and information technologies, as well as to increased use of such government networks and technologies to survey more areas of foreign and domestic life, and travel and interactions between foreign and domestic persons, corporations, and governments.

This complex web of events also reframed the view of the city, and especially of New York. The attack on the World Trade Center, in particular, reminded people of how porous and vulnerable the city could be, leading to increased national, international, and local security measures. At the same time, the attacks produced a newfound pride in New York, as symbol of America—a pride in its people, its firefighters and policemen, and its resilience. This in turn created a sense of community mediating between the very local—specific firehouses that went to the rescue at the World Trade Center, and individual victims—and the large city, between the city and the nation, and between the nation and the world.

Numerous films have attempted to deal with the events of 9/11, including Oliver Stone’s *World Trade Center* (2006)—about two Port Authority officers who became trapped in the rubble when the towers fell—and Paul Greengrass’s *United 93* (2006), a real-time exploration of the events on the hijacked flight that crashed in Pennsylvania when

passengers foiled the terrorists' plan. For my purposes here, in thinking about how the events of 9/11 shape contemporary views of the urban, two recent films, *Ghost Town* (Koepp, 2008) and *The Visitor* (McCarthy, 2008), conjure the long-term effects of 9/11 through the apartment plot. In considering these films, I do not intend to reduce 9/11, or globalization or urbanization, to an apartment plot but to suggest ways in which the apartment plot negotiates these issues and produces a philosophy of urbanism that is influenced by those events and issues.

Ghost Town features Ricky Gervais as Bertram Pincus, a grumpy and alienated dentist, who technically dies for seven minutes during a routine medical procedure. When he comes back to life, he develops the ability to see ghosts walking city streets. In many ways, the film is a comedic reworking of *The Sixth Sense* (Shyamalan, 1999). As the ghosts discover his skill, they begin to hound him, entering his apartment, his office, restaurants and more, begging him to contact their loved ones. *Ghost Town* has components of the erotic apartment plot, as one of the ghosts, Frank Herlihy (Greg Kinnear), asks Pincus to intervene in his wife's life, to prevent her from marrying someone else. Herlihy's wife, Gwen (Téa Leoni), coincidentally lives in the same apartment building as Pincus. While Gwen has tried in the past to be friendly to Pincus, he has rudely ignored her. However, once they finally meet, a romance blossoms between the two, and eventually Pincus's love for Gwen and his contact with the ghosts become mutually transformative and enable him to open himself up to human contact and relationships.

Ghost Town never explicitly invokes 9/11; none of the dead people who haunt Pincus seem to have been killed then. Nonetheless, a film that envisions New York City as filled with ghosts conjures the memory of 9/11 and its aftermath, when the city was filled with images and reminders of loved ones on flyers and other memorials. In addition, all the ghosts in the film have "unfinished business." None of them die from chronic disease or long-term illness: all their deaths are the result of sudden shocking accidents, determined by coincidence or fate, the wrong place at the wrong time—a man run over by a bus, a freak accident on a construction site, and so on.² In each case, they ask Pincus to finish their business, which amounts to telling their story. In one case, construction workers want to tell their foreman that it was not his fault they died. In another, a man locates his son's favorite cuddly toy which went missing when he died. A mother retrieves a note she left her daughter that slipped under a rug. These stories are like the stories the *New York Times* featured

in its “Portraits of Grief”—over 1,800 brief, informal sketches of individuals who died in the attacks, published between 15 September 2001 and 31 December 2001 (continuing occasionally after that as information about victims continued to be found) that put a face on the tragedy and gave each individual victim his or her story. While many of the sketches celebrated the individuals’ achievements or described their personalities, as many described the poignant “unfinished business” of the victims—like Colleen Barkow, who oversaw the construction of her dream house in the Poconos but did not make it to the move-in date of 1 October (*New York Times*, 9 November 2001), or Nichola Thorpea, who had purchased a new Michael Jackson record but had not yet listened to it (*New York Times*, 9 March 2003).

In *Ghost Town*, the victims produce contacts between Pincus and living people. In addition to meeting Gwen, Pincus learns that an Upper East Side female patient of his, whom he has dismissed as a tedious self-absorbed chatterbox, is the widow of the man who locates his son’s cuddly. His newfound understanding makes him sympathetic to her, and opens him to contact with others. In this sense, the ghosts revive the ideals of the urban for Pincus, providing the impetus for contact, encounter, and acquaintanceship. Then, by virtue of rediscovering the utopian promise of the city, Pincus becomes less alienated and more human, enriching the city by his presence. As a reworking of 9/11, *Ghost Town* manages to suggest that the work of mourning is ongoing, and reminds us to honor the dead by telling their stories. It also revives the sense of community and empathy engendered by the attacks.

Whereas *Ghost Town* approaches 9/11 through a consideration of the impact of such large human loss on a specific locality, *The Visitor* focuses on issues of globalization and immigration, particularly the closing of borders that followed on the heels of 9/11. In *The Visitor*, Walter Vale (Richard Jenkins) is a professor of economics at Connecticut College who has become somewhat disaffected since his wife’s death. Forced by his department chair to deliver a paper at a conference—despite explaining that his coauthorship of the paper is a sham—Walter heads to New York, where he has had an apartment for twenty-five years but where he has not visited since his wife’s death, some indeterminate amount of time past. When he arrives at his Greenwich Village apartment, Walter finds two tenants, Tarek (Haaz Sleiman) and Zainab (Danai Gurira), Muslims from Syria and Senegal respectively, who have been living there unbeknownst to him for two months. They explain that someone named Ivan

told them they could rent the apartment and, apologizing, they leave. Walter invites them back to the apartment until they can find their own lodging. Over the next few days, as Walter attends a conference on global policy and development, he develops a tentative friendship with Tarek, who teaches him to play the African drum. However, after Tarek takes Walter to a drum circle in Central Park, Tarek is wrongfully arrested at a subway stop, then sent to a detention center in Queens. Only then does Walter learn that both Tarek and Zainab are illegal immigrants. Once Tarek is arrested, Zainab moves out with friends, but Tarek's mother comes to visit from Michigan and stays in the apartment with Walter. She and Walter nearly have a romance, but she returns to Syria when Tarek is deported. Walter remains in the city, quitting his job and continuing to play the drum.

The Visitor represents New York as a *mélange* of nationalities and races. Tarek and Zainab form a multinational couple; Zainab sells jewelry at a market peopled with immigrants from many nations; Tarek plays in a multicultural jazz combo, as well as in diverse drum circles that attract diverse multiracial crowds; Tarek and Walter share *shawarma* for lunch; and Walter offers Zainab Chinese takeout for dinner. At the same time, the film shows the tensions and frictions among races and nationalities—including the cultural block of a rich white female shopper who buys jewelry from Zainab and equates Senegal with Cape Town, and the unsympathetic workers at the detention center, as well as Zainab's own suspicion and hostility toward Walter, even as Tarek warms to him.

The Visitor shows the complexity of urbanism in a global post 9/11 context. On the one hand, Walter's trip to New York, and his transformation from being a disaffected bored college teacher to a renewed bohemian urbanite, depends upon the value of both globalization and porousness—the fact that the immigrants Tarek and Zainab have somehow found their way into his apartment. His chance encounter with them emphasizes the utopian promise of contingency and encounter in an urban space. However, the film also emphasizes the downside of urbanism and the limits of globalism. Tarek becomes susceptible to surveillance regimes that pick him out of a crowd because his skin is dark and his voice accented. His chance meeting with Walter leads to a chance encounter with the police that sets him on a doomed path to deportation. Tarek's story shows the limitations of porousness as national security interests require the enforcement of border control and containment. He is first pushed out of the center city to a nearly anonymous marginalized building in Queens,

then returned to Syria, despite having sought political asylum after his father, a journalist, was killed there. Because Tarek is shown to be a law-abiding citizen who contributes to the city's culture through his music and his openness to encounter and contingency—through what Lefebvre would term his *usage* of the city—we view his forcible removal from the city and from the nation as a violation of his rights and of his “right to the city.”

As with the African American films discussed in the last chapter, *The Visitor* shows the limitations of the apartment plot by introducing the possibility of an apartment romance but then showing the boundaries that preclude its possibility. First, Tarek and Zainab form a multicultural multinational couple inside Walter's apartment. His arrival causes some tension between them and reveals how tenuous their arrangement is. Then, when Tarek is arrested, Zainab cannot even visit him without being arrested herself. At the same time, Walter meets Tarek's mother, Mouna (Hiam Abbass). They share a few dinners; he takes her for a romantic evening at a Broadway play, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and they spend the night together. However, when Tarek is deported, she decides to follow him to Syria, risking her own safety, and the romance is blocked.

Taken together, *Ghost Town* and *The Visitor* point to the fluidity of the apartment plot, its ability to absorb and reframe new ideas about the city while still mobilizing themes of porousness, encounter, contingency, density, spontaneity, play, simultaneity, improvisation. These films bring to the fore issues that inform and shape contemporary ideas about the urban, while still holding onto an ideal philosophy of urbanism, and the right to the city.

Not only the apartment plot but the apartment itself has undergone changes in the last half century. While most accounts of the housing bust and economic crisis have focused on mortgages for suburban single-family homes and “McMansions,” a less often discussed but no less important boom and bust occurred in urban high-rise development. The boom moment of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first mirrored, in many ways, the dual building booms of the fifties, when both suburban housing and urban development exploded. Interestingly, in this most recent urban-building boom, apartment building witnessed a return to the luxury and amenities associated with late nineteenth-century apartments, and apartments became again the homes of the rich, whether empty nesters returning to the city or the young products of the

technology and financial booms. At the same time, housing projects increasingly began to go by the wayside; as they were being demolished, they were being replaced by middle-class condo buildings and town homes that signaled gentrification, while former residents of housing projects were often pushed to the suburbs.

Today, as I look out my window onto the skyline of Chicago, enormous building cranes dot the landscape, each one a reminder of “unfinished business.” Each crane represents a building in process. These buildings, initiated during the housing boom, now await financing and occupancy, both of which are uncertain. The cranes mark a moment of transition when the city is faced with its possible deterioration into another kind of “ghost town,” filled with unfinished and abandoned buildings that signal urban blight; or possibly a moment of opportunity, in which the apartment, that quintessential urban habitat, is reinvented as part of a new efficient eco-economy.

In this context, Jane Jacobs becomes relevant all over again. Her ideas underpin much of the New Urbanism, an urban design movement begun in the late 1980s (Katz). The New Urbanism reanimates many of Jacobs’s ideas about density, diversity, community, porousness, and public life. It places renewed emphasis on density and proximity, with mixed-use buildings offering residential and commercial interests side by side. Against a suburban/urban division between home and work, proponents of the New Urbanism advocate the need for placing housing and jobs in proximity to one another, in the same areas as schools, playgrounds, and shopping. The movement aims to combine different kinds of housing—apartments, town homes, condos—within easy access of each other, to encourage the diversity of mixed age, mixed race, and mixed class communities. In order to ensure the “ballet of the good city sidewalk,” New Urbanism promotes narrow streets, designed to encourage pedestrian traffic. Adding to Jacobs’s ideas, the movement emphasizes green politics as part of what has come to be called “sustainable urbanism” (Farr). New Urbanism activates a new green understanding of the urban by encouraging cities that promote walking, bicycling, or public transportation over driving, and the more eco-friendly efficiencies of apartments over greenhouse-gas-guzzling houses. The New Urbanism, then, offers a philosophy of urbanism that expands upon Jacobs’s and reasserts Lefebvre’s “right to the city.” Now, however, the “right to the city” needs to accommodate the “right” to nature and become a sustainable philosophy for a new century.

NOTES

Introduction: A Philosophy of Urbanism

1. Dates for films are release dates. For TV shows, I list the first year of broadcast, and for plays, the year of the first run, unless specifically noting revivals. For novels and other books, I list the original publication date. In terms of authorship, I list film directors, book and play authors, and musical composers.

2. M. Keith Booker uses the term “the long fifties” to cover the years 1946 to 1964, arguing that in terms of periodization it makes sense to link these peak Cold War years. Of course, these are also the peak years of the baby boom that begins during the Second World War and lasts until 1964.

3. My description of the apartment, as opposed to other rental properties, is indebted to Cromley, especially where she discusses changes in legal and everyday language to describe and differentiate apartments (5–6, 72, 91).

4. These vocal suites are akin to the turn-of-the-century genre of the “descriptive specialty.” Jonathan Sterne cites descriptive specialties as precursors to the connotative realism of cinematic audio arts: “Somewhere between a contrived re-creation of an actual event and a vaudeville sketch, descriptive specialties offered their listeners ‘tone pictures’ of different places and events” (243–44). Jenkins’s *Manhattan Tower* offers a virtual soundtrack with music, dialogue and effects, describing a pair of lovers’ two-day encounter in New York. Another prominent vocal suite is Mel Tormé’s *California Suite* (1949, 1957).

5. The list of Broadway plays here is especially select. In a search for Broadway plays set in apartments produced between 1945 and 1975, I found 118 titles. See the Internet Broadway Database at <http://www.ibdb.com>.

6. In Altman’s formulation, genre functions like a language. The semantics consist of the *mise-en-scène*, characters, visual style, and music, or the specific “lexical choices” that make up the film and are typical of the genre. The syntax is the grammar, or patterns of formation of those things; in other

words, the narrative meaning or ideology. Thus, the semantics of the western would consist of cowboys, saloons, horses, Native Americans, guns, hold-ups, etc., whereas its syntax relates to broad themes of wilderness versus civilization. Of course, once a semantics and syntax are established, there is room for variation: Dennis Potter's postmodern TV musical *The Singing Detective* situates its singing and dancing inside a hospital or, rather, inside an immobilized patient's head.

7. Of course, many others have complicated our understanding of the nineteenth century by looking at the role of women's fiction, women's magazines, and urban female life, especially shopping. Of particular relevance for film theory, see Friedberg.

8. In his discussion of Cold War theater, Bruce McConachie approaches the concept of containment from a different angle. Using George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's cognitive philosophy, McConachie argues that "containment" operates in theater of the period as a "cognitive metaphor," or figure, involving "necessary relations among an inside, an outside, and a boundary between them" (10). He argues that the metaphor of containment organizes much dominant culture and, thus, produces essentialist either/or thinking, and a reliance on Othering.

9. Even so, a special issue of *House Beautiful* in August 1965 focused on "The Lure of the City" (Logan; Welch).

10. Searching the *New Yorker* database from 1945 to 1975 using the keyword *apartment*, I uncovered more than 2,000 short stories, cartoons, covers, reviews, and news items.

11. See Plunz for a detailed history of New York housing from 1850 to the present.

12. Nezar AlSayyad approaches a similar understanding of cinema and urbanism. He argues that urbanism cannot be understood outside its filmic representation. In *Cinematic Urbanism*, AlSayyad focuses on the city as emblem of modernity and postmodernity. Thus, he emphasizes the experiential quality of the city in terms of surveillance, mechanization, crowds, and other features of modernity. He does not discuss domestic urbanism. His view of the "reel" city, unlike mine, is largely dystopian: "The films I discuss here either reveal the dystopic potential of modernist utopias, or present a post-modernist fragmentation" (15).

13. I am uncertain as to whether Lefebvre knew Jacobs's work when he wrote *Right to the City*, but two years later, in *The Urban Revolution* Lefebvre cites Jacobs when he discusses the importance of the street.

14. James Naremore disagrees with Dimendberg's understanding of nostalgia in noir. Whereas Dimendberg views the nostalgia as historical, part of a broad social transformation, Naremore views it as more individualized. He writes, "The sense of pastness in Hollywood's dark cinema of the 1940s and

1950s usually has more to do with personal than historical time. *Noir* protagonists . . . don't feel the loss of an older society; they suffer instead from dark memories." (274).

Chapter 1: A Primer in Urbanism

1. David Coon argues that this is a private space, made public only by Jeff's voyeurism. His argument relies on a distinction between front and back, as a public/private distinction. But he acknowledges that this back area is shared space, occupying a liminal space between public and private.

2. Emphasizing the film's political context, Robert Corber also notes the ways in which the film has its voyeuristic cake and eats it, too. But Corber's analysis links the film to the politics of Cold War consensus. He argues that the film "conflates voyeurism with the surveillance practices of the national security state in order to show that voyeuristic pleasure had become corrupt" but that the film "seems to want to reclaim voyeurism as a private form of erotic pleasure" (100). Ultimately, however, Corber views the film as participating in the logic of containment, especially with respect to ideals of family and female sexuality.

3. In an unpublished essay, "Hitchcock's Courtyard," David Boyd makes a different but related point. Arguing within a psychological epistemological framework, Boyd views the courtyard as a transitional space mediating between Jeff's mind, or Self, and the world.

4. For Logan and Molotch, residential differentiation is less a matter of choice than of "a shared interest in overlapping use values," "a shared experience of an agglomeration of complementary benefits." These benefits are often "encapsulated in a shared ethnicity" (108–9). Thus, the symbolic meaning attached to real estate, which underpins residential differentiation, has ethnicity at its core.

5. Is it any accident, in this sense, that the Composer is played by Ross Bagdasarian, a.k.a. Dave Seville? As the creator of the Chipmunks, his career consisted of assuming false identities, based on the dissociation of voice from body, first in recordings, later in animated cartoons.

6. Not infrequently, landlords and handymen in the apartment plot abuse their privileges, entering tenants' apartments with the master key. This is especially true in TV apartment plots. Consider Schneider in *One Day at a Time*, Phyllis in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, or Ethel in *I Love Lucy*.

7. In his mapping of Hitchcock's motifs, Michael Walker notes the importance of windows in Hitchcock, and especially his use of windows for entry in films such as *Young and Innocent*, *Rebecca*, and *Murder!* However, he claims that these entries are all sexualized and all involve men entering ladies windows.

He can't fully account for *Rear Window* insofar as it shows a woman entering a man's window, and finding danger there (M. Walker, 158–63).

Chapter 2: "We Like Our Apartment"

1. This push in the 1950s for men to take on the role of decorator and to view home decoration as a stage for one's personality is not without precedent. From the 1890s forward, as Deborah Cohen argues, "the idea of 'personality' was fundamentally intertwined with the domestic interior" (xii). Cohen notes that in the mid-nineteenth century, British men, both married and single, were intimately occupied with the details of furnishing the home and "until at least the 1880s, the business of furnishing was almost entirely a man's world" (90). However, men relinquished that role as the separation between work and home increased, as suburbanization led men to spend more time away from home, as the male aesthete became associated with homosexuality during Oscar Wilde's trial, and as early feminists fought for control of the home as part of marital property rights.

2. *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*, from 1861, the standard domestic and cooking manual well into the twentieth century, clearly identifies hosting as woman's responsibility:

Having thus discoursed of parties of pleasure, it will be an interesting change to return to the more domestic business of the house, although all the details we have been giving of dinner-parties, balls, and the like, appertain to the department of the mistress. Without a knowledge of the etiquette to be observed on these occasions, a mistress would be unable to enjoy and appreciate those friendly pleasant meetings which give, as it were, a fillip to life, and make the quiet happy home of an English gentlewoman appear the more delightful and enjoyable. (Beeton, 27)

3. Chef Lou Rand Hogan's *The Gay Cookbook* from 1965 explicitly hails the queer consumer as host and cook. Offering "the complete compendium of campy cuisine and menus for men . . . or what have you," it is characterized as "a nonsensical cook book for the androgynous (don't bother to look it up, Maude. It means 'limp-wristed')" (viii).

4. In many of these cartoons, no matter which cartoonist, the name Shirley marks the easy girl. For instance, in another cartoon, a girl answers the phone and says "I'm afraid you have the wrong number, sir. This is Shirley Ford, 275 Central Park West, Apartment 4C" (*Playboy* April 1957:33). Conversely, *Marjorie Morningstar* (Rapper, 1958) has Gene Kelly's character, Noel Airman, define "a Shirley" as a girl who withholds sex to trap a man into marriage.

5. *Bachelor in Paradise* offers the reverse fantasy. As Bob Hope's bache-

lor moves into a suburban development, he is mobbed by bored and lonely housewives. *Bachelor Flat* offers a variation in which American women swarm the bachelor's beach house, irresistibly propelled toward his British accent and seeming sophistication.

6. For example, in another Rock&Doris comedy, *Lover Come Back*, Doris Day's character, Carol Templeton, has an exchange with an illustrator at her ad agency. Discussing a drawing of a kitchen, Carol remarks, "Whoever would want a lavender floor in the kitchen?" Leonard (Chet Stratton), the illustrator, retorts, "I have a lavender floor!" Carol calms his hurt feelings by telling him that "not everybody is as artistic as you," thus employing a common euphemism for gay—"artistic"—to mark the lavender taste.

7. "The Odd Couple" (vocal) featured on *the Mad, Mad World of Soundtracks*, vol. 2, Boutique Records, 2001; originally issued on *The Odd Couple* LP, Dot Records, 1968.

Chapter 3: The Great Reprieve

1. Lehman and Luhr assert that this ending predicts a future of middle-class domesticity for Holly and Paul. I think the film is more open-ended about their future possibilities. In the novel, of course, the narrator (Paul in the film) is more clearly marked as gay, and Holly heads to Rio then Buenos Aires. The narrator is prompted to write about her after hearing reports that she has been traveling in Africa with two men.

2. In the *Sex and the City* TV series (1998), for instance, Holly Golightly is frequently referenced as an icon of chic romance, a willful but very common misremembering of the narrative that extracts the image of Audrey Hepburn in Givenchy standing outside Tiffany's from the bleaker aspects of the narrative.

3. Julie Abraham argues not only that cities are subcultural but, in their imagining, intrinsically queer. Examining the "cross-identifications of homosexuality with the city and of the city with homosexuality," she states: "My fundamental assertion is that homosexuals became, over the course of the past two centuries simultaneously model citizens of the modern city and avatars of the urban; that is, models of the city itself" (xvii–xix).

4. Looking back in 1980, Jane Davison, Dideon's former classmate at Smith, describes her single life as an editor at *Mademoiselle* in the 1950s as "New York years of stop-time" and her apartments as "halfway houses, transitional between my mother's and my own" (J. Davison and L. Davison, 197).

5. Charles Abrams's book, *The City Is the Frontier*, similarly worries that urban opportunities for meeting members of the opposite sex have become fewer. This view contrasts sharply with views expressed in most articles and books

on single women, which suggest that meeting men is easy in the city, not only at bars and nightclub, but at bookstores, museums, parks, at work, or in apartment buildings.

6. While the film version of *The Best of Everything* (Negulesco, 1959) provides a rich example of the narrative of “the great reprieve,” the film is more attentive to the *mise-en-scène* of the office and its attendant sites—bars, lunchrooms—than the apartment *per se*. Nonetheless, much of my argument about the novel would apply to the film.

7. Lee Wallace places the apartment as a post-Stonewall chronotype of lesbian spatial identity. In her analysis, the apartment “assists the possibility of an out lesbian life that is not limited to a subcultural or institutional environment”—as are the pre-Stonewall backdrops of bar, prison, schoolroom, and college—“but avails itself of the peculiarly hybridized nature of multiple-dwelling space” (11). According to Wallace, the lesbian apartment plot only emerged in film after the 1960s. *The Girls in 3-B* points to its earlier existence in fiction.

8. The serial nature of the comic strip *Apartment 3-G* extends the period of female community. The strip began in 1961 and continues today, with different artists and slightly updated styles and plots. In the strip, Tommie Thomson, a nurse, Margo Magee, a secretary, and Lu Ann Wright, a teacher, share an apartment. Though the character of Lu Ann was married in the 1960s and replaced by a character named Beth, she returned after her husband, an Air Force pilot, was killed in Vietnam.

In a different vein, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* situates Mary Richards (Mary Tyler Moore) in a female community via a Minneapolis apartment building. Rhoda Morgenstern (Valerie Harper) lives upstairs from Mary in a bohemian studio, and Phyllis (Cloris Leachman) lives downstairs with her daughter and never-seen husband, Lars. In the first episode of the series, Phyllis arranges for Mary to get the larger studio apartment, which Rhoda wants, thus permanently casting Rhoda as the more bohemian of the friends. After four years, the spinoff *Rhoda* takes Rhoda home to New York City, where she marries then divorces Joe Gerard (David Groh). The next year, Phyllis also leaves the show, in a spinoff that has her move “home” to San Francisco after being widowed. Eventually, Mary moves to a new, larger career-girl apartment, but her life is defined increasingly by her work. When the show ends after seven years, and the tv station where she works shuts down, she is still single.

9. According to her autobiography, Jane Fonda slept in Bree’s bed on the New York sound stage and chose most of the decorations herself: “I decided that Bree read, not Dostoyevsky, perhaps, but romance novels, how-to books, and the astrological then best-seller, *Sun Signs*. I decided Bree would have a cat, a loner like herself. I remembered an actress from Lee Strasberg’s private classes who would be called down to Washington from time to time to

pleasure President Kennedy, so I decided Bree had done this and put a signed photo of Kennedy on the fridge” (Fonda, 252).

Chapter 4: The Suburbs in the City

1. This case is most famous for leading to passage of the Miranda Rights law, as the wrong man, the African American George Whitmore Jr., was arrested and held without being properly questioned.

2. Rosemary’s surname also connects her to the domestic novel via Jane Austen’s Emma Woodhouse.

Chapter 5: Movin’ On Up

Epigraphs: “Movin’ On Up,” written by Jeff Barry and Janet DuBois, performed by Janet DuBois and Oren Waters. “Soulsville,” written and performed by Isaac Hayes.

1. Drake’s and Cayton’s *Black Metropolis* provides a sociological account of Chicago’s South Side Black Belt in the late 1930s. Their work is based on research conducted by the Works Progress Administration. In accord with Wright, they state that “during the last twenty years the Negro’s demand for housing has always exceeded the supply. The rental value of residential property in the Black Belt is thus abnormally high” (206).

2. *The Jeffersons’* media contemporaries, *Cooley High* (Schultz, 1975) and *Good Times* (1974), both set in Chicago projects, serve to highlight *The Jeffersons’* status as an exception to the rule. The CD compilation *In the Naked City* (2008 Ace Records, compiled by Nick Patrick and Tony Rounce) points to a sub-genre of soul music dedicated to life in Harlem generally, the tenement in particular. Songs include Dee Clark’s “In My Apartment,” Clyde McPhatter’s “Second Window, Second Floor,” Audrey Freeman’s “Three Rooms,” Jackie Shane’s “In My Tenement,” Little Eva’s “Uptown,” Eric Williams’s “That Old Neighborhood,” and Jerry Butler’s “I Don’t Want to Hear It Anymore.”

3. Baldwin made this comment on *The Negro and the American Promise*, a TV program produced by Henry Morgenthau III. It first aired in 1963 on the Boston Public Television Station WGBH. The show features three interviews: James Baldwin, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X. I am indebted to Kenneth Slack for this information.

4. More recently, *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City*, Mary Pattillo’s analysis of a black middle-class neighborhood in Chicago, suggests that the black middle class exists in proximity to and interacts with lower-class black communities. But, she argues, the black middle class has

not achieved parity with the white middle class and remains largely separate from it.

5. Black film is a fraught category, and there is considerable debate as to whether “black film” includes all black-themed films, films with mostly black personnel behind the scenes, films with black actors, or films that are all-black in their cast, crew and topic. For my purposes, those films included as black apartment plots are those in which a black character’s living quarters are key to the narrative. Many of the films have white directors, writers, and personnel. Most of the films have white, as well as black, characters.

6. In his book on suburban Los Angeles, Eric Avila charts “the formation of a new ‘white’ identity,” via suburban development. He suggests that, “as *black* became increasingly synonymous with *urban*,” “public policy and private practices enforced a spatial distinction between ‘black’ cities and ‘white’ suburbs” or, borrowing from George Clinton, “chocolate cities and vanilla suburbs” (5).

7. According to the DVD booklet, shooting on location in Chicago proved problematic as the film mirrored the text’s “community problem.” According to the producer, David Susskind, “We ran into some bigotry in scouting locations. Houses that we wanted to use became unavailable when the owners learned what the film was about . . . We shot one sequence in a white neighborhood, and then heard the woman who lives there was receiving threatening phone calls. Since she was seven-months pregnant, we pulled out.”

8. For a real-world account of these practices in action, see Moore.

9. The house is given the address 4930 Clybourn. In Chicago, addresses are always marked as North or South or East or West, on a grid, with the zero point at the city center in the Loop. Each block is counted in hundreds. Roughly eight blocks complete a mile. Clybourn, one of the city’s few diagonal streets, runs Northwest–Southeast on a diagonal between 3200 North Belmont and 1200 North Division. Here, the address, an impossibility, doesn’t specify if this is a North Side or South Side address. From Hansberry’s own experience, we can assume it is meant to be on the South Side. The 4900 block of Clybourn would be 49 blocks, or a little over 6 miles, from the city center, just on the edge of the Hyde Park neighborhood. In Hyde Park, between Forty-sixth and Sixty-third, Cottage Grove Avenue divided white middle-class neighborhoods and the University of Chicago from the Black Belt. See Drake and Cayton, esp. the map on 10.

10. At the Tenement Museum in New York’s Lower East Side, visitors discover that tenements often had internal windows separating the kitchen and bedroom, or living room, as well as windows into the airshaft, to allow air-flow in summer. Rather than just cut holes in the walls, landlords built proper windows, presumably so that they could close the windows and block cold air in winter. These windows were often decorated with curtains and made to look like windows to the outside.

11. An article in *Ebony* from 1966 explicitly argues the link between assimilation and the restoration of patriarchy. See Lincoln.

12. I take the term *racial impasse* from Christopher Sieving, who uses the term to cover late 1960s and early 1970s black-themed films that do not fit into either the Hollywood “problem picture,” in which race is a problem to be solved by white liberalism, or later blaxploitation films, which adopt a black nationalist stance. In the racial impasse film, relations between black and whites are seen to be “damaged beyond repair . . . bogged down in a stalemate.”

13. Sieving discusses the film’s style as partly the result of its complicated production history. Adapted from a novel by African American writer Kristin Hunter, the property was purchased by Norman Jewison, who intended to direct. He hired the white writer Erich Segal to write a treatment but rejected his draft and hired an African American, Bill Gunn. When Jewison stepped down as director and hired Hal Ashby, he and Ashby revised Gunn’s script considerably, partially in accordance with the studio and the ratings board.

Epilogue: A New Philosophy for a New Century

1. My thinking on globalization is informed by T. Friedman, Stiglitz, and Lechner and Boli.

2. These are key differences between *Ghost Town* and *The Sixth Sense*. While both are films about living beings who “see dead people,” the former gives a sense of the city as filled with the walking dead, whereas the latter emphasizes the young boy’s “gift” as uniquely giving him access to the ghosts. *Ghost Town* emphasizes the ghosts’ “unfinished business” and the unexpectedness of their deaths, whereas *The Sixth Sense* allows for a broader range of deaths, including deaths of old people from chronic illness. Further, at a basic level, a story about ghosts in New York reads differently before and after 9/11.

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*Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Wojcik, Pamela Robertson, 1964–
The apartment plot : urban living in American
film and popular culture, 1945 to 1975 /
Pamela Robertson Wojcik.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8223-4752-1 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-0-8223-4773-6 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. City and town life in motion pictures.
2. Apartments in motion pictures.
3. Motion pictures—United States—
History—20th century. I. Title.

PN1995.9.C513W65 2010

791.43'658209732—dc22 2010017238