

m is a fold of pink flannel

May 2017

When Jane in Lynne Reid Banks's novel *The L-Shaped Room* (1960) moves into the room at the top of the run down house in Fulham, she knocks on a partition wall to test its thickness, and is startled to find that someone knocks back. High up on one of the room's inner walls is a window, and in that window are a pair of eyes. This, she soon realises, is private space that isn't private. Initially perturbed, Jane comes to take pleasure in her porous room and new found proximity to other people. Over the course of the book, the room is transformed – its brown wallpaper ripped off and plaster repainted, the bed de-bugged and its floor covered by rugs – but Lynne Reid Banks makes it clear that it is the room, the house and its inhabitants that brings about a greater change in Jane.

In an essay in her recent debut collection, the Canadian writer Durga Chew-Bose describes interior spaces as 'sacred' – places where women 'imagine furniture mounted on ceilings, or marvel at the weight of curtains and fabricate for fun what lies behind them.' Her words make me think of a childhood game we played with mirrors: looking into a mirror held horizontally before us we would make our way – cautiously, carefully – around the house, picking a route through the light-fittings that now sprouted, alert and tulip-like, from the white expanse of the 'floor'. In another of Chew-Bose's essays, a woman walking through a city is turned on by the sight of pink curtains billowing in the breeze. The gentle suction and release of the curtains, and the idea that on sunny days the walls of the room that they conceal would be bathed in pink, is arousing. 'Walls Blushing. Inside looking like insides', she thinks.

One of the appealing things about synaesthesia is the idea that shared things – words, numbers – might be felt and perceived with intimate specificity, and that in locating and defining this specificity we might see – briefly – the world as others see it. For Vladimir Nabokov, individual letters and sounds carried colour, texture, density and shape. One of his most frequently used words is *mauve*, a word that he would have experienced as a 'fold of pink flannel' (m), followed by the 'rose-quartz' of the v.

During a recent trip to a foreign city – the first I've taken alone – I came across a present made by Marcel Duchamp for his wife, Teeny, on the occasion of their marriage. Duchamp named the object – a small brass and pink plastic coupling – *Wedge of Chastity*. This item, made in 1954, was one of four erotic objects Duchamp made around the same time. When the couple travelled, the object – whose gummy lower layer, made of pink dental wax, sat snugly with the brass – would travel with them. Long after leaving the museum, the item stayed with me. My first reaction had been indignation – that idea, chastity! – then I found it compelling. Sexy and unsexy, quotidian and rare. Later, I read that chastity belts, which appear frequently in medieval imagery and text, were never more than mythical or satirical objects. It was the Victorians, influenced by their own sexual mores, who read them as real. In 1996, a 'medieval' chastity belt on display in the British Museum was removed after it was discovered to be a fake – an 18th or 19th century 'replica'.

In the same city, I watched as a man on a motorbike at some traffic lights watched two women. After a few minutes of this staring, the man manoeuvred himself across an empty lane of traffic and came to a stop in front of their car, where, still looking back at them, he gyrated against his seat. When the lights turned green the women set off, looking for a moment as if they intended to ram the bike, before making a sharp left turn. I and other people on the pavement who had stopped as this took place caught one another's eyes and laughed: in disbelief at the man's behaviour, in relief that the women had shaken him off, and in awkward acknowledgement of having being

joined – momentarily – in the act of looking. Or perhaps more than that: in something that felt like an act of witnessing.

Walking through another city – Venice – earlier this year, I looked into a window of a hospital, bright in the gloaming. Inside, there was water, almost level with the street I was standing on, and moored on it, a boat. The night before we arrived in the city there had been a Spring Tide, an *aqua alta*. The water had risen high enough to cover the square in front of Saint Mark's, and when it retreated, left the inner walls of the entrance to our flat slick with water. Arriving at the flat slightly earlier than expected, I heard footsteps on stone steps somewhere inside, and my name called through the walls.

Living alone can make objects, spaces and sounds take on different meanings. Jen Fain, the protagonist of Renata Adler's *Speedboat* (1976), who lives alone-but-not-alone in a well-populated tenement in New York, notices small blue triangles – 'different everyday, isoseles' – on the edges of her feet. Fearing Leukaemia, she watches and waits. Finally, she discovers the cause: each day when she takes her rubbish out into the hall, the door to her apartment skims over the tops of her feet. 'That was all – triangular bruises.' She takes a celebrational nap.

Like Adler, Banks acknowledges that houses and interiors are places of attack that can morph and change and impact upon physical and emotional states. Returning to her boarding house in the fog, Jane loses her way, and is forced to walk down the road that she hopes is her own 'like a ghost, from lamp to lamp'. Once inside the house, the tall flights of stairs up to her attic take on a surreal height and become unsurmountable. She takes to crawling. This new perspective – an intimate one, not usually experienced past childhood – snaps the world back into place.

That change in perspective – both figurative and literal – caused by moving from the vertical to the horizontal is the subject of an essay by Virginia Woolf. In 'On Being Ill' (1926), Woolf describes 'lying recumbent' and gazing up at the sky during a period of illness. In this unfamiliar daytime position she becomes captivated by the constant movement of the clouds: 'this incessant making up of shapes and casting them down ... this ... ringing up and down of curtains of light and shade, this interminable experiment with gold shafts and blue shadows ... with making rock ramparts and wafting them away.' What a tragedy that nobody pays it attention, she thinks: 'One should not let this gigantic cinema play perpetually to an empty house'.

At the age of seven a friend and I would use cushions bought for her mum's NCT classes to construct rooms within rooms in her parents' house. Sometimes, rather than build with the cushions, we would pile them up. From the top of that pile, the room seemed different, and so did we. Around the same age, perhaps a little younger, a favourite fantasy of mine was to imagine that the bed I lay in had been transported to my classroom at school. I found the idea of being horizontal, fully awake but with my eyes closed, within a public space part comforting, part thrilling. Children's literature is full of such transformations that take place at night, slipping between worlds like Mickey in *In The Night Kitchen*.

Gobie Douma, a Dutch schoolteacher and photographer who bought her first camera during the Nazi occupation, had to learn – like other photographers at the time – to shoot through windows, from underneath coats, or from behind the body of a friend. Although she also documented holidays in Friesland – boat trips, or foraging in woods for beech nuts – the majority of her photographs were taken indoors or within the house's outer reaches. Douma's photographs show friends and family asleep in makeshift beds, engaged in household chores, or posing for photographs in gardens or on front steps. There is a photograph by Douma taken in 1942, in which one of these restricted and clandestine viewpoints is more than usually apparent. From a first-floor window, Douma has taken a

photograph of her parents walking away from her down the street. Down she looks on them, as they look up at her, their feet striding forwards as their heads turn back. The image is both intimate and artful, apparently spontaneous and yet meticulously composed.

Jean Rhys is a writer more attuned to interior spaces, and the effect of them on their inhabitants, than any other I have read. *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) opens with a description of one of the many cheap Parisian hotel rooms that the protagonist visits throughout the course of the book. Spaces talk to Rhys's Sophia as they do to Jane: 'The park in the mist that morning had reproached me subtly for my situation', Jane states, while her 'little office' greets her daily with 'Shalom'. In *Good Morning, Midnight* the city outside Sophia's hotel room is mapped by places that she has wept, or made a scene. Lying sleepless in her bed, or in the shared bathroom on the ground floor, she listens to the noises of the house around her: to the child downstairs, and to the man at the front desk enquiring after a room for his lover.

In *Smile Please* (1979), the unfinished autobiography she began shortly before she died, Rhys describes a brief stay in the attic room of a boarding house in Fulham, uncannily similar to Jane's. It was in that room that Rhys first began to write, walking up and down the room as she did so, and weeping so loudly that she disturbed the neighbours below. The personal account of an unhappy love affair that Rhys wrote in that room became the basis of her first book, *Quartet* (1928). Although Jane in *The L-Shaped Room* occupies the same spaces and situations as Rhys and many of the women in her novels – a boarding house; cheap cafes; double-decker buses whose destination is Chelsea, The World's End – she never falls fully through the cracks: instead, Banks has the house and its inhabitants catch her.

There is an artful vulnerability in the way that each of these writers and artists navigate lived experience in their work, or make their lives the sole subject of it. In doing so, they create a space for themselves that – like Jane's room – is part public, part private, and about both observing and being observed. In *Too Much and Not the Mood*, Chew-Bose writes winningly about one particular example of public-private space: the porch. For her, these architectural add-ons, inside-outside wraparound spaces, are both generous and generative: places for honest conversations, from which we look out at the world, together.

Lucy Biddle, 2017.

Tethered

I walk every day at the same time for around an hour.
Mostly I see dog walkers, joggers and mothers pushing prams
each, I've noticed are tethered to something;
a lead, a pram with a strap,
earphones, a backpack.

While walking I find myself thinking not of the exposed tree roots
or the shifting skies

but of intimate interior spaces;
the pile of dishes in the sink,
a table strewn with papers and apple cores and dinosaurs,
an L-shaped room.

My nosey little vice is peering into windows
often the basement flats of other peoples homes,
and wondering how they keep their orchids alive.
Imagining what it is to be in
that life framed in those photographs
arranged on the polished baby grand.

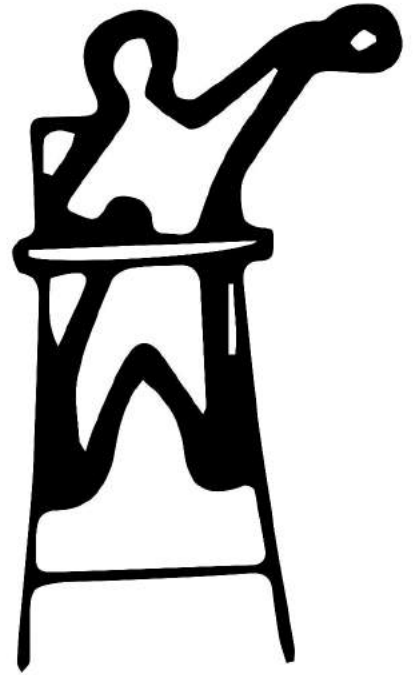
I always thought walking was a liberation from domestic space—
of those great flâneurs who flitted between streets
being seen and seeing.

Walking in that philosophical manner with the head tilted, just so.
Nature, Architecture, Urban design, The Human Condition,
all crystallised in the faceless crowd.

But like those others on my walk I too, am tethered
by last nights greasy strands of spaghetti that lie waiting
limp and coiled in the sinkhole.

I almost never encounter another me
no solitary women without apparent purpose - to jog or shop or mother
I look for her, in the streets, parks, back-lanes and renegade desire-lines
but I never see her
and wonder if I did..would she see me too?
would I smile the way I oddly do
to dogs separated from their owners,
as we pass one and other by?

With each step, the shake-down takes me deeper to
that quiet root inside
to think deeply about sinks and skulls and those greasy antennae
growing in abeyance back at home.



Sometimes, to ease the monotony of washing dishes
I think of sinks abandoned:—
those piles of dusty plates with decaying debris
from the cobwebbed Xanadu
or Calamity Jane's neglected cabin
before her womans' work was done

and somewhere in that arid space of frozen time
I locate a little joy
in the feel of my pink hands guddling in the hot sloppy suds
and in the purposeful sounds of rummaging, rinsing and draining.

Coiled and redundant I leave the spaghetti with those suds
and I go for a walk, to get away, be away
and disentangle from those strands.

I tilt my head, try to fall into a *thinking* step
and my mind returns to those great flâneurs
of Benjamin, De Quincey and Baudelaire

and wonder if ever they thought
of the spaghetti strands in their sinks,
waiting back at home.

Rhona Warwick Paterson, 2017.



(Ad) Mission Statement

"This is the entrance, this is where you go in." Crouching down the boys peered into the misshapen hollow that over hundreds of years had fashioned itself at the base of the tree. Both boys were silent for the moment, engrossed in a pile of decaying autumn leaves. They were both hunkered down so neatly and compact, the way young children do; their bottoms barely off the ground, their arms crossed and resting on their knees in order to maintain the balance they needed to keep them upright.

"This is the gateway to the centre of the earth. If you dare to enter, this is where you'll find the rivers of melting lava, waterfalls bubbling over with molten liquid and geysers of steaming foam. You need armour to go in there you know, to protect you from the heat. Do you know that's why snails have shells? Look there's one now – he's about to go in."

For two boys whose unpredictable attention span was often shorter than the time it took for me to finish a sentence, here they were being willingly entertained by an old tree.

'There's another world in there mum – and the only way you can get in is to close your eyes and jump.'

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As a mother of two very young boys I certainly entered into 'another' world when they entered into mine. I struggle to recall now what I thought this world would be like. I think it might be some of the things I had thought, but realise more often than not it's all been somewhat of a surprise. Quite instantaneously on their arrival, they have reshaped and brought a new order to the way in which I live my life.

The most significant effects of having children for me have been the restrictions it has placed upon my time and my movement. I never have enough time, even when it feels like I'm living in slow motion (which it often can do) I feel constantly indebted to it. Spontaneity has gone adrift; routine has become the daily staple directing my every move. Likewise these moves have been taken out of my charge, they're not particularly graceful moves, nor do they extend over much distance. The great outdoors has become more difficult to navigate as I move en masse and movement often comes with a distinct purpose – be that an appointment, a chore, for their amusement, fresh air or (hopefully) a daytime nap. I've a shorter expanse that I can comfortably tour coupled with the shortening of a lot more things too, notably my attention, patience and energy. Whilst their world is only just beginning to open there is an element of mine that is shrinking.

In order to adapt to their needs, to their size and to their pace of life I have found I often enter a space where their worlds melt into mine. I slip between two states of being – one that is real and one that is imagined; one that is mine, and one that is theirs.

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"Lets do a mission!"

"Let's all be superheroes on a mission to defeat the super-villains. We need to make sure we're ready for them. Do we have everything we need? We need to take our force field shield and electro-magnetic ray gun."...check.

"Don't forget your cape and night vision goggles."...check.

"We'll need our laser shooters."...check.

"We all need to use our super speed and super strength if we're to save the world!"

"Watch out they're ahead of us. Lets get them!"

My mission.

Nappies. Wet wipes. Nappy bags. Bottle. *Laser Shooters*. Teething ring. Purse. Tissues. Plasters. Change of clothes x 2. Keys. Mid-morning snack. Lunch. Late-afternoon snack. *Force field shield*. Hat (if it's cold). Hat (if the sun shines). Wellies (if it rains). Jacket (with hood). *Electromagnetic ray gun*. Gloves. Comforter. Phone. Sunglasses. Sun cream. Shopping list. Shopping bag. Distractions (book, cuddly toy, toy cars). Rucksack. Entertainment (ball, frisbee, bubbles). *Night vision goggles*. Transport – bike or scooter? Helmet. Baby carrier. Pram. Blanket. Post. *Cape*. More snacks!

I rarely (for now) have the pleasure of taking a leisurely stroll with only my own thoughts intact.

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Entering into their imaginations and sharing their powers for acute observation has become my personal life-hack for navigating space, of ensuring we get from A-B with minimal fuss and on time. Our movements become imaginary journeys – for me a necessitation, for them a fascination. My own observations (which before their arrival were attuned to almost everything) are devoted to them now – I see for and through them.

“To a three or four year old ‘landscape’ is not backdrop or wallpaper, it is a medium, teeming with opportunity and volatile in its textures. Time is fluid and loopy, not made of increment and interval. Time can flow slow enough that a mess of green moss on the leg of a tree can be explored for an age, and fast enough that to run over leaves is to take off and fly.”ⁱ

This fluidity in time that Macfarlane speaks of can be hard to negotiate at times but if I'm totally honest I'm probably slightly jealous that I can't occupy it myself – my time has become less fluid in its subservience to them. Their acts and pleasures are irregular, unpredictable and often mysterious; their demands mostly contradictory, and always on the move - they are made up of all the characteristics I feel I've lost.

Children are able to inhabit time and space in a way that adults simply cannot – they are essentially the 'real' flâneurs of this world. Their innocent inquisitiveness and naïve knowledge allows them to engage their body in the landscape without any real questioning or concern of others; they can be and act inappropriately, take risks and react to impulsive urges.

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Fashioning the same elegant squats, the boys peer down the drain. They each grab the nearest loose object they can find, a stone and a small piece of bark and drop them through the grates one after the other.

“Sssshhh listen!” They avidly wait to see if they can hear them reach the bottom.

“What do you imagine lives down there?”

“There'll be rats for sure and mice and probably some frogs and lots of creepy crawlies - mutant sewer spiders, blood sucking flies and hundreds of indestructible cockroaches - ugh.”

“What do you think they do all day down there?”

“Go swimming! This is like the best waterslide ever – it goes on and on and on and on, all the way to the sea.”

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Both have a notable interest in drains. They can be entertained with one for a good fifteen minutes. It's an attraction that extends indoors as well as out. They will always forfeit a small chill and a shivering body in order to lie in wait until the pocket-sized whirlpool comes to life in a bath's final moments when its contents run dry.

The great thing about drains outside is, like cats eyes, yellow lines and garden walls (short enough to walk upon) - there is always another one ahead of you. They are the landscapes regular repeat motifs that in different ways are providing us with a framework for living and moving. I use them as a tool for making progress in the right direction, they demarcate a journey for us, or rather ‘an adventure’. Once you begin to understand the urges of children and the behaviours that forge the connections in their brains you can start to use them to your advantage.



When I’m at my most anxious, apathetic and exhausted, revisiting once again the same footsteps of yesterday, last week and last month. When I can see a tempest about to arise in one of them and I’m all out of answers it’s difficult not to agree with Simone de Beauvoir’s reflections that I have put myself in the service of the species. Though I’m reminded of her thoughts in an article written by Alicia Ostriker in ‘A Wild Surmise: Motherhood and Poetry’ where she is gratefully offering a counter narrative;

"The advantage of motherhood for a woman artist is that it puts her in immediate and inescapable contract with the sources of life, death, beauty, growth, corruption. If she is a theoretician it teaches her things she could not learn otherwise; if she is a moralist it engages her in serious and useful work; if she is a romantic it constitutes an adventure which cannot be duplicated by any other, and which is guaranteed to supply her with experiences of utter joy and utter misery; if she is a classicist it will nicely illustrate the vanity of human wishes." ⁱⁱ

Already as the boys get older I can see that this time will pass, and I remind myself it’s important to remember that creative and cathartic thought can still be found amongst the chaos and routine, it has just taken me time to understand that.

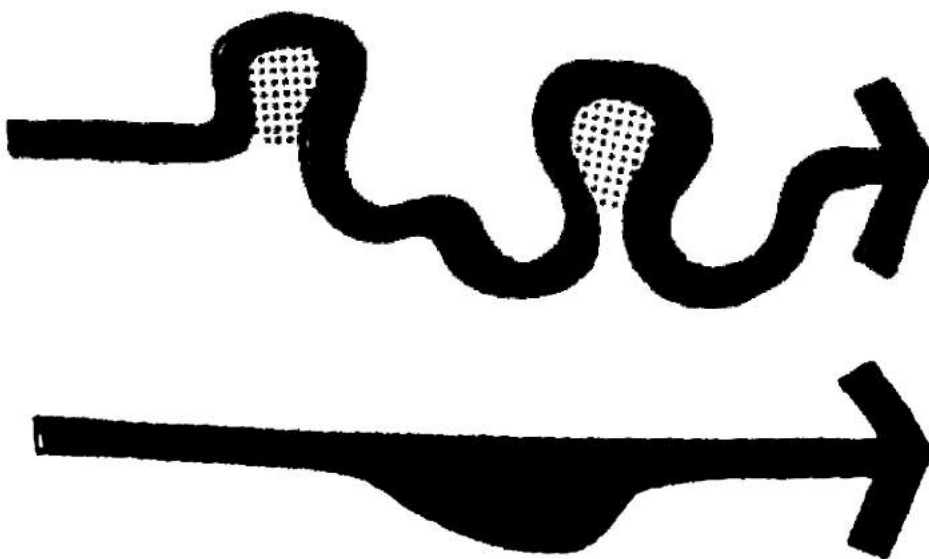
Louise Briggs, 2017.

i Robert Macfarlane, ‘Childish’, in *Landmarks*, 2015.
ii Alicia Ostriker, ‘A Wild Surmise: Motherhood and Poetry’, in Moyra Davey ed., *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood*, Seven Stories Press, New York, 2001.

The Flâneuse & the Thinking Sink

It's raining and a woman, (Flâneuse 1) is searching the pockets of her cagoule for any misplaced cash for a taxi. She is soaked through and rushing to get home to pick up her daughter and have a Skype meeting. Rooting around she finds no misplaced fivers but instead A's snotty tissue. She recalls to mind the description of a historic painting of the Tuileries in Paris where a woman is depicted pressing a tissue to her child's face. It was an image of family life in the public sphere, quite at odds to the formal representation of mother and child common in the 1600s. The picture she remembers was in a book called *The Invisible Flâneuse?*¹ discussing narratives of women's experience of the city. The book - she thinks - as hailing a taxi, was asking how this figure of the flâneur - the male-born city wanderer, has suppressed histories of women's engagement with the city. Looking out the taxi window she watches the city flash by. Smiling, she thinks - no time for wandering.

Another woman, (Flâneuse 2) is trying to finish work. There are still 5 unread emails but it is approaching 7.30pm and her commute across the city takes at least one hour. She counts to five 1,2,3,4,5 and forcefully closes her laptop. As she does so she sees the book *Making Space: Women and the Man Made Environment*² and places it into her rucksack. The art space she works at is empty, and she goes through the rigmarole of locking up. She's aware her phone Skype app might be ringing - she is late, but tries to rush so she can have a chat once out of the building. In doing so she forgets to alarm one of the doors and has to run back upstairs to double check it is locked. She recalls an image from the book in her bag which illustrates how women and children move when traversing the city. Drawings of wavy lines illustrate a mother and child's inefficient travel from A to B, or as the book describes, 'meandering path patterns for women and children imply a lack of purpose.'³ What must her movements at work look like? Always back and forth, certainly a lot of 'wavy lines', but definitely, never without purpose. Smiling, she thinks...just like the women and children in that book!



Flâneuse 2: Sorry I am late, I'm just locking up! (Picking up bags).

Flâneuse 1: Don't worry I'm late as well, just home. I'm stood at the kitchen sink (standing on one leg). I seem to always navigate to this spot - especially when I need to think through something. It becomes my thinking place. I stand here looking out the window and if I'm not doing something at the sink, I usually have a cup of coffee at my side...seems to be quite a productive position for thoughtful wanderings (laughing).

Flâneuse 2: (Laughing). I know exactly what you mean - (putting headphones in ears), in my house there isn't a window behind the sink and it really frustrates me - it's the spot where you want to gaze out and contemplate whilst your hands are at work, peeling vegetables or washing up. In Sweden they often have sinks that are part of one whole prefabricated steel sideboard. Super practical but when they built the flat I rent now, they obviously forgot the importance of the window behind the workspace!

Flâneuse 1: (Wiping rain water from forehead). I've been thinking a lot about the process of prefabrication. Both of domestic objects as well as larger scale building elements. Last week I visited a precast concrete factory. They mostly produce prefabricated building facades to clean up or standardised 'out of date buildings' in the city. It is interesting to think of how the building's face changes with these clad exteriors, whilst of course their structure remains fully intact. The facades are readymades that standardise our urban landscape, a bit like the IKEA kitchen cabinet when you are trying to redress your kitchen. What do you think it means to dress your home in readymade materials? (Passing her hand over pink curtains that line the kitchen window). Does that mean you are just conforming to what someone else has sculpted or can we incorporate them into our lives to become purposeful and even changed?

Flâneuse 2: (Scratches eye). It's a good question. Sweden is full of prefabrication. Apparently 84% of housing is prefabricated. It has been particularly used in social housing as a quick and cost effective way of generating a lot of housing stock (even if it still isn't enough!) I actually live in the first prefabricated house in Stockholm. (Adjusts bag). I often think of the symmetry of each of the apartments, but the actual irreconcilable difference is in how they are used, lived in and look.



Flâneuse 1: (Yawns). Yes, it is interesting to think of how use transforms something. I've been watching a lot of Youtube videos of life-hacks, where people take something that is industrially prefabricated and fairly affordable, and repurpose it for something else. There is this great video of someone making a camping stove from an IKEA cutlery holder.

Flâneuse 2: (Yawns). So may be the life-hack has the potential to rework something that is inherited? Is that one way of rethinking the concept of prefabrication and its industrial sameness?

Flâneuse 1: (Yawns again). May be, I'm also thinking about the art collective Claire Fontaine's discussion on the readymade as another way of thinking about prefabrication in contemporary art practice. Their argument expands the idea of the readymade to not only refer to an object but the reproduction of the individual artist as well. As they say, 'we won't refer here to the mechanical reproducibility of the artwork but to the reproducibility of artists.'⁴ So subjectivities, our personalities are industrially produced, like the IKEA cutlery holder. Depending on our gender, race and class we are given a prefabricated mould, like the kitchen sink. How to deviate from the designed role society has already fabricated for us, and hack or breakdown the readymade we unknowingly slip into? (wipes the yellow surface of the sink).

(Phone connection is lost briefly)

Flâneuse 2 stops briefly under a simple shelter outside the subway entrance to find her travel card. The shelter's metal roof offers only a brief covering to the city's commuters and is curved mimicking the inside of the tunnel she will soon descend into. Flâneuse 1 continues to look out the window. On the road behind her flat she sees an Eddie Stobart Lorry carrying a prefabricated house. The house is so large an escort car drives ahead and behind the wide load.

Flâneuse 1: You there?

Flâneuse 2: Hi, (passes through barrier) sorry...I'm just heading into the subway now so the connection might cut out again. Did you know the Stockholm subway is claimed to be the longest art work in the world? It's 110 kilometres long and has over 90 stations with different public works in each. When they created the network they kept the rawness of the construction by cladding the blasted stone with a plaster facade to maintain the effect of travelling down into a cave. (Steps off escalator). My favourite work in it is by the feminist artist Siri Derkert who wanted to highlight women's contribution to culture. It feels that Derkert wanted to challenge that 'women play almost no part in making decisions about or in creating the (urban) environment'.⁵

Flâneuse 1: I suppose the fact it is called a man-made environment, is a good reminder of this!

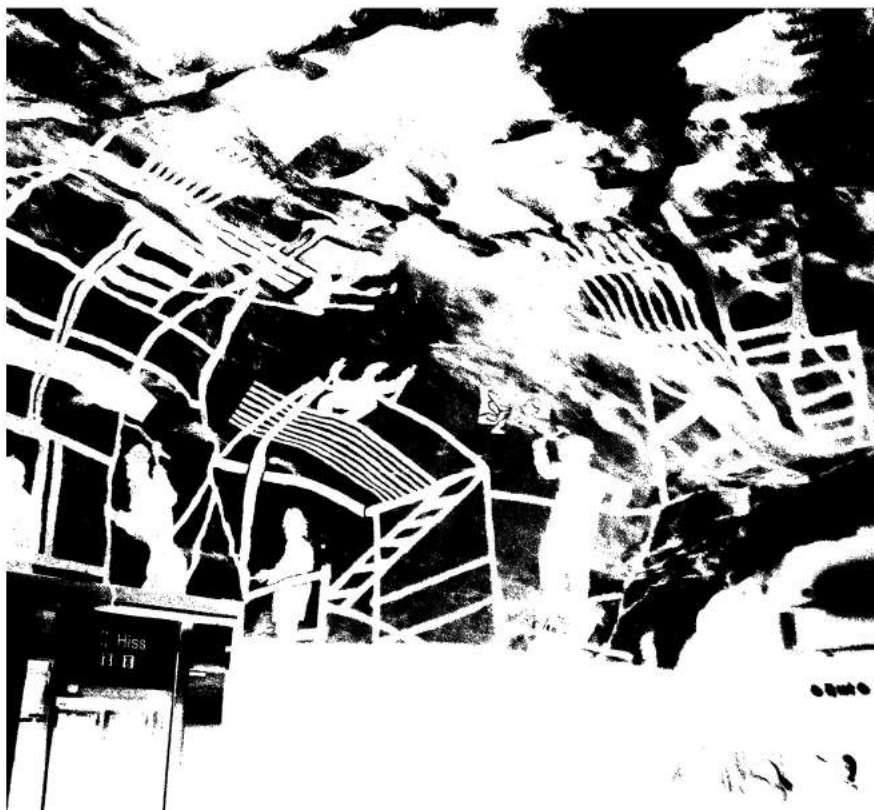
Flâneuse 2: Indeed! (Walking onto train). I remember seeing a video of her producing her work for one of the stations. Rather than building atop or hanging something readymade in the tunnel she attacked it with a concrete drill and hanging off a ladder bore into the existing surface of the concrete, drawing lyrical messages of heroines and figures of key women throughout history.

Flâneuse 1: I suppose if she were to make a mistake she could obliterate the surface and her drawings as well? (Walks over to fridge). It recalls to mind people wishing to alter the structure of bicycles by drilling into their frame to make them lighter. It's called drillium, but you have to have a balance so you don't weaken the whole structure and injure yourself....

Flâneuse 2: True, in Siri's case she is transforming the aesthetic, the facade of the station, but not affecting the structure; whereas the bike is about altering the make up of the bike. (Stands up so an elderly woman can take a seat). When thinking about women and the city, there is always this play between wanting to completely change a structure, that has been made under the logic of patriarchy and capitalism, and considering the implications and fallout from a whole scale collapse.

(Phone cuts out as the train heads deeper underground.)

Flâneuse 1 enters the bedroom she is in the process of redecorating. She is tired. Facebook is open on the computer and a commentary from a newsclip on the upcoming election plays on loop. The bedroom was once their living room, but they are transforming the space so they can make room for their daughter. In the corner is a cot. It is a Bauhaus design supported by 2 metal rings, so it can rock back and forth. It has never been used. It was too precarious to leave a baby in. Objects scatter the floor: books, shoes, a computer charger, an icecube tray. Still wearing headphones she climbs onto the bed and picks up the text she was reading the night before. It is a print-out of a Claire Fontaine essay. She looks at the words she has underlined; 'weapon, battlefield, compromise.' On the bed is a hole punch from yesterday's filing. She takes it and carefully punches a perfect hole in the corner of the text as she waits for the Skype to reconnect their conversation. Flâneuse 2 is changing trains at the central station where the artwork by Per Olof Ultvedt, Signe Persson-Melin and Anders Österlin can be seen. Silhouettes of workers adorn the inside of the tunnel directing commuters across the city. She is scouring her Facebook feed as she walks, following links to articles on the election. It has been hard to think about anything else and constant news watching has been inhibiting her ability to multi-task and write. She is midway through watching a media clip when her phone's Skype app opens.



Flâneuse 1: How's the commute going?

Flâneuse 2: Fine. I'm just tired. (Steps to one side to let a rushing commuter overtake). I'm walking past some renovation on the underground here, looks like they are building a new entrance to the Central Station. Have you been following what has been happening with the Tube renovation with you? The one with the amazing Paolozzi tiles?

Flâneuse 1: Yes! (Continues to hole-punch paper). They had to renovate the entrance way to accommodate the mass volume of commuters, so those iconic mosaic arches that fed you down the escalators are no longer there.



Flâneuse 2: (Checking subway noticeboard). I always loved the way he negotiated that space, he made you feel like you were descending into a machine, a series of industrial pipes, and images of watch straps reminded you of a new age of work, late commuters would check the time as they would fly down beneath the city. I think he described his designs as art for the 'every-man'.

Flâneuse 1: So workers and those using the city were only men then?! (Laughing).

Flâneuse 2: (Laughing). True! I remember how he discussed that an individual had the 'right to recognise their place in the city' he felt art could assert that somehow. (Follows flow of commuters up the escalator). But what's happened to his work then?

Flâneuse 1: Well, the haste at which TFL (Transport for London) renovations began, meant that the archway was hurriedly hacked away at; (a much more aggressive process than the one Siri Derkert was doing), and rather than maintaining the structure, Paolozzi's whole work was obliterated. (Clicks to another newsclip on her Facebook feed). They argued it was too tricky to successfully remove and restore it. Now these chunks of debris, the chipped tiles and bits of concrete, have been gifted to Edinburgh University, currently they are lying in an archive waiting for something to happen to them.

Flâneuse 2: They might be waiting a long time! Concrete is going to outlive everything in our environment. Fossils of art and urbanisation! ⁶

(Puts bag on floor while she waits for her train). I have this image in my mind of Siri Derkert drilling at the facade of the underground and then a builder in high-vis bashing Paolozzi's underground facade to bits. When a structure and it's facade is taken to obliteration like that, it feels both spectacular and devastating.

Flâneuse 1: Yes the public were up in arms about it - to remove something so many Londoners felt was part of the city, a facade, an image, they identified with (coughs).

Flâneuse 2: (Begins to tear up an old receipt). The process of demolition or obliteration feels important when considering how the city and its architecture evolves and reproduces itself. I remember this text about the Italian feminist Carla Lonzi which describes the depth of feminist critique she must engender in order to destroy societal patriarchal structures. For Lonzi the ideology of patriarchy goes so deep, it is within her very body and in order to challenge it, she must be in battle with herself.

Flâneuse 1: (Pauses as she listens to see if A is crying). So rather than drilling against the facade like Siri Derkert or repurposing the prefabricated object like the life-hack it is about obliterating the structure completely, akin to the Paolozzi take down?

Flâneuse 2: Exactly, although there is something somehow macho about the imagined destruction, that has a total disregard and care for what the structure supports beyond itself...the lives and experiences that are beyond its imagination. (Places debris of receipt in bag). In the text it describes Lonzi's 'thinking can therefore be a weapon that spares nothing - including the author - and whose unsettling power remains intact and contagious today.' ⁷

Flâneuse 1: (Lies back on bed). It sounds like what she is provoking is a self ruin, a destruction of the part of ourselves that is complicit with existing controlling structures. But just as can be seen with Paolozzi, a demolition, can initiate the emotional and physical obliteration of the parts of you or the thing you might wish to hold on to.

Flâneuse 2: Yes. (Boards train) The writers reflect on this when they say that Lonzi's own 'personal life wasn't immune to this contraction.' (Raising voice to hear). But at what moment does the contradiction (shouting), the contradiction, between our desires and the limitations of our everyday life become too much...?

(Connection drops as the train heads across the city).

Flâneuse 1 sits up to find the text on Carla Lonzi she had held in her hand has been obliterated by her subconscious intuitions. The punched holes cover the bed like confetti. Coming out of the station Flâneuse 2's path home is disrupted by the building of a new housing block. The path carved for city walkers meanders around the prefabricated parts. She walks past lines of concrete facades with window holes punched out, a stack of symmetrical fridges, a series of inner walls with door frames intact. These prefabricated parts force her to take a slower route home. She thinks about the uniformity of the parts, but is quickly drawn to imagine the new flats, lived in by residents. She sees fridges used for storing rolls of photographic film; balconies turned into greenhouses; bedrooms turned into feminist libraries; and the kitchen with its thinking sinks.

- 1 Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough eds., *The Invisible Flâneuse?*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2008.
- 2 Matrix, *Making Space: Women and the Man Made Environment*, Pluto Press, London, 1984.
- 3 Matrix, *Making Space: Women and the Man Made Environment*, Pluto Press, London, 1984, p.48.
- 4 Claire Fontaine, "We Are All Clitoridian Women: Notes on Carla Lonzi's Legacy", e-flux journal, issue 47, September 2013.
- 5 Matrix, *Making Space: Women and the Man Made Environment*, Pluto Press, London, 1984.
- 6 Mark Williams, Jan Zalasiewicz, Alan Haywood and Michael Ellis eds., "The Anthropocene: a new epoch of geological time?", in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, London, March 2011.
- 7 Claire Fontaine, "We Are All Clitoridian Women: Notes on Carla Lonzi's Legacy", e-flux journal, issue 47, September 2013.

Illustrations in order of appearance

- 1 - Meandering path patterns for women and children imply lack of purpose, *An Introduction to Housing Layout* 1978, in Matrix, *Making Space: Women and the Man Made Environment*, Pluto Press, London, 1984, p.48.
- 2 - Photograph of construction site in Stockholm by Jenny Richards 2017.
- 3 - Photograph of artwork by Per Olof Ultvedt, Signe Persson-Melin and Anders Österlin on Stockholm underground by Tessa Lynch 2014.
- 4 - Photograph of Eduardo Paolozzi tile fragments by Tessa Lynch at Edinburgh college of Art 2017.
- 5 - "Considerable Variations" in Swedish Kitchens, in Sonja Vidén, *The Million Programme Era: Development of Standards and Functions*.

