21
The City Novel

Measuring referential, spatial, linguistic, and temporal distances

Lieven Ameel

Introduction

The world has moved into the urban century, an era in which the majority of the human population resides in cities. The centuries during which the urban condition, in all its myriad forms and varieties, has gradually become the most common mode of existence have also seen the consolidation and expansion of a vast literature of the city, evoking, scrutinizing and shaping city life in its many ramifications. The advance of the city novel as a genre has correlated with fluctuations in the urban condition, as well as in urban tastes. Similarly, the demise of the city as a dominant literary *topos* has been read as the equivalent, in literature, of the failure of the city to provide a focal point for radical aspirations.[1] While a vast amount of research has been conducted on the images and experiences of the city in the literary works of individual authors, and on the literatures of particular cities and literary periods, less progress has been made to articulate what distinguishes city novels from other literary texts. What kinds of generic characteristics are typical for city literature, and what are the consequences of these features for an analysis of the city novel? Given the close correlation between city literature and the interdisciplinary field of urban studies, such an enquiry could also have relevance beyond literary studies, with the potential to broaden our understanding of how city narratives are constructed in the context of education, history, urban planning and policy.

In this chapter, I will argue that the city novel is characterized by a measuring of *distances*: distances in space, of course, but also distances between literary and actual locations; distances protagonists or communities cover, and distances felt by the protagonist(s) when confronted by the depth of personal memories and shared histories. My arguments will be substantiated by an analysis of selected New York novels.

Towards a definition of the city novel genre

Literary urban studies is not lacking in typologies. Several scholars have developed useful two-, three- or fourfold taxonomies with which to examine different kinds of city novels. Peter Keating, in "The Metropolis in Literature", for example, divides literary city representations into two traditions, defined by either a comprehensive or an internalized view.[2] Blanche Gelfant provides a tripartite distinction between the portrait novel, the ecological novel and the synoptic novel.[3] Drawing on Bakhtin's theory of chronotopes, Bart Keunen distinguishes four chronotopes in the modernist city novel: the idyllic, documentary, self-referential and hyperrealist chronotopes.[4] All these taxonomies provide helpful tools for analyzing literary approaches to the city. However, given the vast amount of scholarship written about city literature, it is surprising how little has been said about the genre of the city novel itself. When does a novel cease to be a text merely set in a city, to become a full-fledged city novel?

A recurrent argument posits that the shift takes place when a city appears as a character in its own right.[5] A programmatic example is Diane Wolf Levy's argument that "we could identify 'urban literature' as that where the setting takes precedence over character; where, in fact, the setting rises to the level of protagonist".[6] This can hardly be deemed a very useful definition, however, since the idea of city as protagonist is typically understood as a metaphor rather than as an accurate description of the functional relationships in the storyworld. In the exceptional case where the city-as-protagonist is understood literally, this narrow definition of the city novel has as its consequence that it is applicable only to extremely rare cases of experimental prose.[7]

More to the point is the observation, made by Burton Pike, that in city literature the image of the city is "a presence and not simply a setting".[8] In the preface to one of greatest turn-of-the-twentieth-century city novels, *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892), the Belgian symbolist Georges Rodenbach gives a similar view of the literary city, repeating first the argument of the city-as-character, but then moving on to emphasize the urban environment as an active presence. In his novel, Roden-bach had wanted to present "the city as a guide to action" and the author hoped the photographs included in the novel would aid the reader to "feel the presence and influence of the city".[9] Following Rodenbach, then, what makes a city novel is the degree to which the plot developments are energized by the urban environment itself, and vice versa. In a fine-grained exploration of the city novel as genre, Daniel Acke makes exactly this point, arguing that the crux of the problem of the city novel is "the articulation of the actions and adventures of the characters with the city, which is an articulation that functions in two directions".[10] I follow here Acke's characterization: in the city novel, the city reveals and facilitates the potential of the character, while simultaneously, the character enables the city to

reveal and fulfill its potential.[11] But the relationship is not only between city and character. It also includes the two-directional influence between city and plot, city and language, city and temporal depth. One way to approach these reciprocal relationships between the thematized city and the structural elements in the city novel's storyworld is to think in terms of distances. All literature, of course, is concerned to a degree with describing and thematizing distances. But the characteristics of the city – its simultaneity, diversity and densification – entail that in the city novel, questions of distances will be addressed with a singular urgency. The spatial distances that are evoked, explored and contested in city literature tend to be functions of a wide range of more abstract dissociations: the referential relations between literary and actual locations; the clashes between the urban past, personal memories, and visions of the future; the moral and social confinements negotiated by way of spatial explorations. I will below single out four kinds of distances whose thematization and treatment is characteristic, I argue, for the city novel: referential, spatial, linguistic, and temporal distances.

Measuring referentiality

The mechanical examination of a literary city's relationship with its possible "actual factual" counterpoint may be considered as one of the least interesting questions of literary urban studies. As Virginia Woolf points out in the beginning of the last century, "to insist that it [a writer's city] has any counterpart in the cities of the earth is to rob it of half its charm".[12] Cityworlds, like literary worlds more generally, can be considered as semi-independent coherent constructs, whose relationship to an "original", "real" city is not more than one of the many defining building processes. In the words of Bertrand Westphal, the "literary *place* is a virtual world that interacts in a modular fashion with the world of reference. The degree of correlation between one and the other can vary from zero to infinity".[13] In creating a coherent urban setting, most city novels set in actual factual locations select a number of recognizable built and natural elements, keeping the insertion of new material relatively minimal, and leaving it to the reader to fill in the rest of the scenery to the best of his/her capabilities. The theory of literary worldmaking, pioneered by Marie-Laure Ryan, David Herman, and others, has convincingly shown how such storyworlds are constructed, positing principles such as that of "minimal departure" to account for readers' ability to fill in gaps.[14] It is when what Westphal calls "heterotopic interferences" enter into the narration, distancing actual and the literary city in a manner that draws the reader's attention to the constructedness of the literary cityworld, that things tend to become more interesting.[15]

Changes in the onomastic landscape are some of the cruder, but very effective ways in which referential distancing is achieved. In Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of*

Kavalier & Clay (2000), the protagonists are comic book artists who, in a series of embedded narratives, situate the adventures of their heroes in an imaginary "Empire City" that strongly resembles the New York they inhabit. Rather than veiling a referential relationship, such an invented name draws the reader's attention to it. The use of this well-established moniker for New York City simultaneously enables "Empire City" to be more than what New York could have been (a more heroic place, for once), and much less. Perhaps most crucially, invented toponyms lend to otherwise recognizable environments generic or even universalist traits, and they draw the reader's attention to the fictionality and the constructedness of the storyworld in question. As the plot of Chabon's novel evolves, "Empire City" and the literary New York of the framing narrative increasingly collapse into each other, foregrounding the extent to which the latter resembles the former – and the extent to which the novel itself resembles a prose adaptation of Golden Age comics.

City novels may go to considerable lengths to distance the storyworld from the actual factual world by introducing various degrees of speculativity. The city in Paul Auster's dystopian novel *In the Country of Last Things* (1987) can be linked to the actual factual New York City only by association. Readers are guided to this reference mostly by paratextual elements: blurbs on the back of the volume and the name of the author, who, by the time of appearance, had established a reputation as a depicter of New York City. Some readers and researchers drew the reference to New York without much questioning.[16] But its vague referential status is not marginal to the interpretation of the city in this novel – it is what enables this literary city to be a repository of the twentieth century's many traumatic urban memories, in which Leningrad during the siege, the ghetto of Warsaw, and New York in crisis of the 1980s fuse into each other.

Measuring spatial distances

If the first distancing carried out in the city novel is that between real and fictional cityworlds, the second is the spatial distancing of locations within the imagined geography. The narrated world of a city novel is built upon, and the plot develops by the grace of, descriptions of distances and the manner in which they are assumed and measured, thematized and navigated – the inroads of literary characters, of messages and letters, the flows of capital and ideas; the pull of an imagined or real urban focal point. Such spatial distances are also instructive of more abstract geographies. Franco Moretti has pointed out that the spatial structure of the city in literature "is functional to the intensification of *mobility*: spatial mobility, naturally enough, but mainly *social* mobility".[17] In the city novel, I would add, spatial dynamics are not only energized by implied social distances, but also by a wider range of connotations and meanings.

Constructing and crossing distances amounts to the establishment of a host of borders, moral, social, gender- or ethnicity-based, as well as poetical.[18]

As a node of multiple distances that is being crossed, the arrival of the outside individual into the metropolis attains the special symbolic importance it has in city literature.[19] There is the geographical distance between countryside or provincial town and the urban center; the social divide between the family's world and the individual circle; the temporal distance between the often agrarian or provincial past and the implied urban future. In a novel-of-immigration such as *Call It Sleep* (1934), the arrival of the protagonist David and his mother in New York, on the steamer from Ellis Island, is heavy with the implications of vast geographical distances being crossed. But the distance in space is also a distance in terms of culture, moral framework, and language, and a distance in attire; the last vestige reminiscent of David's background, his outlandish hat, is thrown into the water immediately upon arrival.[20] And the greatest detachment felt in this scene, that between the father, already somewhat at home in New York, and the mother and child, never completely at ease, runs as one of the key tensions throughout the novel.

In the city novel, specific locations can be singled out as thresholds that frame the shock inherent to such multiple distances being crossed. It is here that, to an outsider, the "semiotic crisis" inherent in the shock of arrival is played out: "the discovery that there is a whole new sign-system that needs to be deciphered… a social code yet to be learned".[21] Two crucial thresholds are the railway station and the harbor. The railway station, in Wirth-Nesher's words, constitutes "the city's seam, a place of crossing over, mingling, romance, adventure and intrigue".[22] Arrival in the harbor, not uncommonly accompanied with the vision of the New York skyline, constitutes one of the most iconic locational framings of a story of development, in literary novels – classical examples are the opening scenes from *Call It Sleep* and *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) – as well as in movies: a shorthand for the city itself as well as for the unfolding plot.[23]

The harbor and the railway station function as nodes, but the city contains also an array of less visible lines and borders to be crossed. In Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1928), one of the crucial dividers is "the line" – the border between predominantly black Harlem and the part of the city where African Americans are openly discriminated against. It is a line whose potential exerts an almost continuous influence on the actions and aspirations of the protagonists. Crossing such lines could entail modifying one's behavior, identity, aspirations, and allegiances – one's very identity. In *Nigger Heaven*, the possibility that light-colored African Americans have of "crossing the line" by passing as ethnically white offers a tantalizing, excruciating dilemma to several of the characters.

Not dissimilar to representatives of ethnic minorities, women in city literature are subjected to unwritten codes of behavior that limit their mobility. Negotiating spatial, moral and social boundaries involves the ability of self-transformation of sorts. For a host of female characters

in the literature of New York, crossing distances is framed by way of name changes. When Esther Greenwood, the protagonist in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1971) runs into two strangers who offer to show her the city, she begins her exploration under an assumed name, "Elly Higgin-bottom".[24] It is an act of self-invention she continues later in the novel, when she proceeds to write a novel about her experiences in the city, centered on the protagonist "Elaine".[25] While critics have read this play with personal names in the light of Plath's complex personality, such name change can be considered representative of the masquerading and self-fashioning strategies typical of newcomers to the city, and in particular of upwardly socially mobile women – a notable example is Ellen Thatcher, who goes from being Ellie to Elaine in John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer.*[26]

Measuring language

If anything, the city novel is also a genre that thematizes city language(s) and the ability or inability of characters to recognize, understand and speak these – and the distances created by such linguistic insider- or outsiderness. The journey towards becoming a full member of urban society is frequently described as a journey into or through a specific linguistic realm. A provincial accent has to be shed, new sociolects have to be acquired. An accent can be synonymous with low rent as much as with an Ivy League background, as the (young man from the province) narrator in *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984) makes painstakingly clear.[27] Even when a narrator does not render citizens' accents or the particular vocabulary of the city in any detail, the city novel is almost inevitably informed by the language of the urban condition. Urban life infuses city novels with a distinct vibrancy, from the "distinctive rhythmic movement" in the prose of James Joyce[28] to the jazzy influences in some of the novels of the Harlem Renaissance.

Linguistic proficiency enables characters to cross the threshold from the curb into the street, from the suburban home to the city center. In Jonathan Lethem's *The Fortress of Solitude* (2003), a novel dense with the yearning to belong, it is the language of the block that first sets the protagonist apart from the other children. In the opening pages of this Brooklyn novel, the protagonist Dylan is unable to make sense of the questions the neighbor girl asks – "You got a spaldeen?"; "You know skully?"[29] These are not only words whose semantic meaning is lost on Dylan, but referential points to complex games that constitute the children's territory on the pavement, their stake to the city. Moving into these meanings entails entering into a set of relationships that guide the plot of the novel forward.

Acquiring linguistic proficiency entails gaining the possibility to mold the world in one's own words. The thematization of language – and urban idiom in particular – involves the

foregrounding of the literary city's self-referential characteristics, and the role of the narrator and character in mastering the city in an acquired idiom. A programmatic text in this respect is *Call It Sleep*, in which the protagonist grows away from his central-European roots (and Yiddish) into two languages simultaneously: English and Hebrew. English is vital for David for navigating the city, as becomes painfully clear when he gets lost in the city and is unable to pronounce the name of his home street intelligibly.[30] Hebrew adds a different dimension to David's coming of age. Hana Wirth-Nesher draws attention to the fact that the protagonist's namesake in the scripture is not only a king, but also a singer of psalms. As David grows into language, he begins to master the world around him, and, as Wirth-Nesher points out, "in the closing lines of *Call It Sleep*, David takes on the power of calling itself, of shaping a world of words".[31]

Measuring linguistic insiderness is not only a process between different characters in a novel, but also between reader and narrator. In Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1928), the sense of Harlem as a distinctive urban environment is created by the language in which the characters, streets, and habits of this area are encoded. The footnotes that explain the presumably unfamiliar words to the reader present a Baedecker to the particularities of this community and depict the narrator as its connoisseur, emphasizing the distances the reader will have to cross. Not surprisingly, many of the members of Harlem's community of African Americans did not feel they belonged to the intended audience of the novel.

Measuring time

The most complex and fleeting distances measured and negotiated in the city novel are arguably temporal ones. The spatial dimensions of the literary city are profoundly informed by temporal layers of meaning, and especially so since early modernist and symbolist approaches to the city in literature. It is commonplace to regard the city as a palimpsestic repository of multiple memories not dissimilar to an archeological site.[32] But the future, too, exerts an influence on the events in city novels. Franco Moretti points out that the realist novels of the nineteenth century were innovative in how they created suspense from everyday urban phenomena, tentative futures that energize the plot: the upcoming appearance of an unfavorable theatre review, or the imminent expiration of a promissory note.[33] The interplay between possible futures is acted out between literary characters, but when set in a historical past, the city novel gains further meaning by what the reader knows to be concealed behind the storyworld's temporal horizon. Colum McCann's novel *Let the Great World Spin* (2009), set in 1974 New York, draws a considerable part of its strength from the way in which the events, character development, and spatial environments look forward to the early twenty-

first century, and 9/11, in particular. As the author explicates in the extensive afterword: "The deeper I discovered the *then* of New York, the more profoundly it seemed to be talking toward the *now*."[34]

One of the roles of the city in the city novel is to act as a temporal measure to which a character can connect or from which he/she can be set apart. New York often appears as a quintessentially new and "juvenile" place, the proper backdrop for new beginnings or for the Icarian pursuits of the young, as in the New York of Henry James's "An International Episode" (1878), which strikes the young English visitors by its "general brightness, newness, juvenility".[35] But in a city with numbered streets, an address can also resonate with the old age of a character, as happens in Philip Roth's *Exit Ghost* (2008), where Nathan Zuckerberg ponders his life "at seventy-one" – after a visit to a 71st Street apartment, where he eventually decides to move in for a new shot at life.[36] Such parallel alignments between a character and the city, however, are generally short-lived. More usually, character and city are out of joint, and the relationship is not one of parallelism, but one of distances and mismatches. A typical case is a city's rapid development as juxtaposed against a protagonist slow or stalled progress – or vice versa. Burton Pike argues that authors such as Robert Musil and Charles Baudelaire were pioneers in exploiting such out-of-step relationships, the "syncopated rhythms" between character time and the city's own time, and the diverging velocities in their development.[37]

Character and city both carry their own repository of memories, and the confrontation between the sensitive character and the simultaneously present layers of urban meaning gives rise to that crucial trope in the city novel, the epiphany, the "sudden flare into revelation of an ordinary object or scene", pioneered by James Joyce.[38] In recent New York fiction, Teju Cole's *Open City* is structured as a cascade of inner revelations, as the protagonist Julius probes the city and his personal memories. Weaving traces of the city's past through the narration is not an unusual narrative strategy: in *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984), the presence of earlier inhabitants – "the wooden shoes of the Dutch settlers on these same stones… Algonquin braves stalking game along silent trails" – acts in part as a point of reference to balance the restlessness of the protagonist.[39] In *Open City*, by contrast, signals of the past reveal in their diverse ways the expulsions, dislocations, and repressed violence that underlie the city grid. For Julius, little comfort is to be found in the observation that each "one of those past moments was present now as a trace."[40] The city to him is alive with "early-twentieth-century lynchings" and the genocide of Native Americans, which, as an acquaintance of Julius senses, is "not in the past, it is still with us today; at least, it's still with me."[41] Various temporal layers collate in Julius's experiences: a demonstration of women against sexual violence resonates with memories of racial violence, and at a museum, he experiences he falls "deep into their [the images] world, as if all the time between them and me had somehow vanished".[42] The collapse of temporal distances within a sensitive consciousness has one further consequence,

not untypical of the city novel: it carries also an intimations of apocalypse. A telling example is a sudden torrent of rain at Central Park, which results in "a primeval feeling, as though a world-ending flood were coming on".[43]

Conclusion

In the city novel, the urban environment does not act as a mere setting – it is a presence that exerts its influence on all elements of the narrative. It enables the plot to develop, the protagonist to reach his/her destiny, the language of the novel to take shape. Plot, character, and language in their turn reveal and fulfill the potential of the city. These reciprocal relationships between city and plot, city and character development, city and language, city and temporal depth can be approached in terms of distances: referential, spatial, linguistic and temporal.

Every particular city novel provides a singular mix of what kinds of distances are foregrounded, and on the basis of such emphasis, it would be possible to classify various sub-genres of the city novel, associated with specific historical periods and literary paradigms. In the limited space of this chapter, only the tentative outlines of such a sub-classification can be introduced. The documentarist, realist city novel is arguably most concerned with foregrounding spatial and social distances. Thematizing linguistic and spatial distances can be associated with Gelfant's subgenre of the ecological novel. A strong emphasis on language is also an indication of modernist tendencies in the city novel – in this sense, *Call It Sleep* is an example of a novel that mixes modernist poetics with the thematic concerns of the ethnic neighborhood novel. A concern with the exploration of a city's temporal layers of meaning characterizes the symbolist novel and its heirs – Cole's *Open City* is a case in point. Thematizing referential distancing can be seen as characteristic of the utopian and dystopian city novel.

As the more recent examples discussed in this chapter show, claims about the end of the city novel as significant literary genre have proven premature. During the past few decades, if anything, city literature has been as vigorous as ever. The capitals of the nineteenth and twentieth century have not lost their relevance: whether they are seen in national, European, or post-colonial perspective, London and Paris remain imposing figures in the literary landscape. The classical themes of the city novel, such as the journey of the "Young Man from the Provinces" to the capital, seem far from exhausted.[44] Recent research into peripheral, mid-size and "second" cities have shown that less canonized cities, too, remain or have become foci of the literary imagination, from South Africa to Southern America, from Diyarbakir to Helsinki.[45] In a wide range of dynamic genres, from crime novels (Edinburgh in the novels of

Alexander McCall Smith) to climate-catastrophe fiction (Helsinki in Antti Tuomainen's *The Healer* [2010]) to young adult fiction (Stockholm in Malin Isaksson's fiction[46]), cities continue to feature prominently, often in manners that establish significant links between the urban condition and the plot development itself. If anything, the dislocations and expulsions of the current age add further weight and urgency to the genre of the city novel and the complex way in which it measures, negotiates and questions distances.

Notes

1 Bart Keunen, "The Decline of the City as Modernist Symbol," in *The Urban Condition: Space, Community and Self in the Contemporary Metropolis*, ed. GUST (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999), 359–376; Guy Baeten, "Western Utopianism/Dystopianism and the Political Medicority of Critical Urban Research," *Geografiska Annaler B*, 3/4 (2002): 143–152.

2 Peter Keating, "The Metropolis in Literature," in *Metropolis 1890–1940*, ed. Anthony Sutcliffe (London: Mansell, 1984), 129–145.

3 Blanche Housman Gelfant, *The American City Novel* (Norma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 7–14.

4 Bart Keunen, "The Plurality of Chronotopes in the Modernist City Novel: The Case of Manhattan Transfer," *English Studies* 82/5 (2001): 420–436.

5 Italo Calvino, "The City as Protagonist in Balzac," in *The Literary Machine: Essays*, ed. Italo Calvino (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987), 175–182; Jane Augustine, "From *Topos* to Anthropoid: The City as Character in Twentieth-Century Texts," in *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy, and Film*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (Langhorne: Gordon and Breach, 1993), 73–86; Daniel Acke, "Romain urban realist et romain urbain poétique: éléments pour une typologie," in *Pour une cartographie du romain urbain du XIXème au XXIème siècles*, eds. Christina Horvath and Helle Waahlberg (Toronto: Paratexte, 2008), 245–254.

6 Diane Wolf Levy, "City Signs: Towards a Definition of Urban Literature," *Modern Fiction Studies* 1 (1978): 66.

7 Ibid.

8 Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 8.

9 Georges Rodenbach, *Bruges-la-Morte*, trans. Philip Mosley (Chicago: University of Scranton Press, 1892/2007), 15.

10 Acke, "Pour une cartographie," 245.

11 Ibid., 246.

12 Virginia Woolf, "Literary Geography," in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf Volume I 1904–1912* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1905/1986), 35.

13 Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. Robert T. Tally Jr. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), 101.

14 Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

15 Westphal, *Geocriticism*, 104–108.

16 Graeme Gilloch and Jane Kilby, "Trauma and Memory in the City: From Auster to Austerlitz," in *Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City*, ed. Mark Crinson (London: Routledge, 2005), 8.

17 Franco Moretti, "Homo Palpitans. Balzac's Novels and Urban Personality," in *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms*, ed. Franco Moretti (London: Verso, 1983/2005), 11.

18 Lieven Ameel, "'It's Six A.M., Do You Know Where You Are?' Framing the Urban Experience in Literary Beginnings," in *Literature and the Peripheral City: Literary Explorations*, eds. Lieven Ameel, Jason Finch, and Markku Salmela (London: Palgrave, 2015), 40–55.

19 Keunen, "Decline of the City," 359.

20 Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep* (London: Penguin, 1934/1977), 15.

21 Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 132.

22 Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 39–40.

23 See Richard R. Wohl and Anselm L. Strauss, "Symbolic Representation and the Urban Milieu," *American Journal of Sociology* 63/5 (1958): 523–532.

24 Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971/1988), 9.

25 Ibid., 98.

26 Paula E. Geyh, "From Cities of Things to Cities of Signs: Urban Spaces and Urban Subjects in *Sister Carrie* and *Manhattan Transfer*," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 52/4 (2006): 428.

27 Jay McInerney, *Bright Lights, Big City* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), 15.

28 Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 127–128.

29 Jonathan Lethem, *The Fortress of Solitude* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 5–6.

30 Roth, *Call It Sleep*, 33.

31 Hana Wirth-Nesher, *Call It English: The Languages of Jewish American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 98.

32 Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Translated by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1930/1961), 16–19; John M. Ganim, "Cities of Words: Recent Studies on Urbanism and Literature," *Modern Language Quarterly* 63/3 (2002): 365–382.

33 Moretti, "Homo Palpitans," 111–115.

34 Colum McCann, *Let the Great World Spin* (New York: Random House, 2009), 360. Original emphasis.

35 Henry James, *An International Episode and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1878/1985), 13.

36 Philip Roth, *Exit Ghost* (London: Vintage, 2008), 96.

37 Pike, *Image of the City*, 16–17.

38 M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, "Epiphany," in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, eds. M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham (Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2013), 114.

39 Jay McInerney, *Bright Lights, Big City* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984/1985), 180. See also Ameel, "It's Six A.M.," 53.

40 Teju Cole, *Open City* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011/2012), 54.

41 Ibid., 18, 27.

42 Ibid., 22–23, 39–40.

43 Ibid., 36.

44 See A. K. Chanda, "The Young Man from the Provinces," *Comparative Literature* 33/4 (1981): 321–341.

45 As witnessed by the range of papers presented in the conferences City Peripheries/Peripheral Cities (Helsinki, 2013) and Literary Second Cities (Turku, 2015), organized by the Helsinki Literature and the City Network.

46 See Lydia Wistisen, "From Windowsill to Underpass: Young Women's Spatial Orientation in Swedish Young Adult Literature," in *Literature and the Peripheral City: Literary Explorations*, eds. Lieven Ameel, Jason Finch, and Markku Salmela (London: Palgrave, 2015), 198–214.