



GEOCRITICISM AND SPATIAL LITERARY STUDIES

Drafty Houses in Forster, Eliot and Woolf

Spatiality and Cultural Politics

Ria Banerjee

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Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Drafty Houses took well over a decade to write, and any acknowledgments start for me with that passage of time. The oldest parts of this book are the few sentences that remain from a conference paper I prepared in 2011 for the annual meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society of North America (as it was then named). Because I wanted to go to Paris and my school offered some funds for graduate student conference travel, I turned a term paper on Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* into a proposal that somehow scraped into the conference and seemed worth pursuing once I returned. The rest of this project accrued painfully, at times swelling to include six or more authors and more than once getting thrown out entirely. My first round of thanks are to my first, most patient, and closest readers—Megan Behrent, Sarah Hoiland, and María Julia Rossi—who reviewed innumerable iterations of these ideas until this volume finally clicked into place. Thank you, Wednesday Fun Club. As Woolf realized when she tried to write a dedication to her sister, the usual words feel somehow incommensurate with the energy and affection that you have so continuously extended to me. Like her, I went looking for a phrase and found none to stand beside your names.

I first heard about conscientious citational practices around 2012 when putting together my dissertation proposal. The idea of reviewing the names in my “Works Cited” pages and on my bookshelves felt vaguely suspect at the time and I marvel now at how oblivious I was then to the larger forces shaping my corner of academia. Nevertheless, I surveyed my papers and realized with some surprise how few women and non-European writers and critics I had been assigned to study. I liked the title of a Woolf

novel I had not yet read, *Jacob's Room*, and once again without much foresight or planning made a decision that changed the course of my scholarly life. The Woolf of *Jacob's Room* was a revelation to me, and over the next few years I unsystematically but compulsively devoured her novels and essays. Thanks to Woolf's repeated surveys of her own bookshelves, I slowly came to understand reading as a locus for feminist praxis. In tandem, pedagogic professional development taught me more about the importance of diversified course syllabi and intentional citations that ultimately lead to better writing and stronger teaching. Working on *Jacob's Room* happily brought me to the International Virginia Woolf Society and the generosity of strangers who have now become treasured friends. Casey Andrews, Ashley Foster, and Sejal Sutaria—thank you. It is a privilege to write with you and learn from you. I am never as delighted about a phone call as when it's one of ours.

My surprise at my own good fortune continues. That first trip to Paris introduced me to the Eliot Society and the society's Fathman Young Scholar Award took me back. The members of the Society have welcomed me to work with them in an almost storybook version of a scholarly society. David Chinitz, a warm friend and guide throughout, thank you for taking my wildest claims seriously and making time to discuss them until they are better. Anthony Cuda, whose ebullience carries us all, I cannot say thanks enough for the many ways you have welcomed me (and my students) into the scholarly communities that you sustain. Julia Daniel—critic, friend, and editor extraordinaire—thank you for sorting out a draft of my essay when I couldn't see what it needed. And, Frances Dickey, who read a little stub of a conference paper and invited me to turn it into an essay that helped me finish this book, my thanks to you go far beyond that one favor. I cannot wait until we are all in St. Louis again gathered around your dining table, keeping Jane up too late. Such a list of virtues belies the cheeky delight that informs any meeting of these scholars, first among them John Morgenstern, who is a highlight of my conference circuit and a generous reader and editor of my writing. I learn from Patrick Query each time we meet, and his lecture on how to read Eliot in light of current political and climate crises remains a personal highlight. My thanks to Vincent Sherry for many years of encouragement and friendly conversations about modernism, decadence, and professing. Jayme Stayer, thank you for the biting wit, clarity, and scholarly sympathy that you share with us. Finally, my heartfelt thanks to John Whittier-Ferguson, for teaching

me so much about scholarship, editing, and writing while we worked together on the society newsletter, *Time Present*. I am also grateful to John for a thorough and generous review of *Drafty Houses* and his endorsement.

I entered the City University of New York as a new college graduate whose primary aim was to escape the suburbs of Pennsylvania and move to the biggest city nearby. We are warned repeatedly not to love institutions, but it is difficult to not trace much of my adult life back to CUNY—my scholarship, work, students, intimate friends, and partner are all connected to the university that buoys us up and sometimes crashes down upon us. This book has been supported by several internal grants and awards, including PSC-CUNY awards, the Faculty Fellowship Publication Program, and a sabbatical year that allowed me time to finish writing. At Guttman Community College, I am grateful to my colleagues for being such vocally interdisciplinary and justice-minded scholars and teachers. I do not think *Drafty Houses* would have been the same book if I worked somewhere else for the last nine years of its writing. The book certainly might never have been finished without Nicola Blake, who has appeared at crucial junctures of my life since my mid-twenties with help, a plan, or an idea for me. Nicola tells us often to be audacious, and it is my privilege to learn from and mirror her as best I can.

Continuing the theme of institutions, I must thank the CUNY Graduate Center's ILL librarians and the New York Public Library (NYPL)'s scholarly research librarians whose friendly efficiency allow me to work despite limited research facilities. The months I spent as research scholar in the NYPL's Shoichi Noma Room have been some of my happiest. The National Endowment for the Humanities supported a much-needed summer of research leave. Palgrave Macmillan gave this book a home, and my thanks to Marika Lysandrou for initial conversations and Molly Beck for her steady editorial guidance and patience as I asked, probably for the tenth time, to switch the book's title or fiddle with some part of it. Thank you to my copyeditor Sivaranjani Siva and everyone on the production team at Palgrave Macmillan. Thanks as well to Robert T. Tally, Jr., for telling me a decade ago that sometimes it takes that long to write a book, and for welcoming this one into the Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies series once it was finally done. Last, and by no means least, my grateful thanks to Anne Fernald for her external review of the manuscript. This is only the latest example of Anne's generosity as editor, and each time I

have had the luxury of working with her I come away a better writer and thinker.

I make my home in modernist studies and the example and kindnesses of scholars from the Modernist Studies Association kept me writing despite so many signs from the universe that I might be better off gardening. They include: Erica Delsandro and Lauren Rosenblum, whose MSA seminar on modernist monuments helped me put together an initial draft of my conclusion chapter. Thank you Laurel Harris for your acute comments in that seminar, which I wrote down verbatim. Pardis Dabashi and Alix Beeston's MSA seminar on the modernist scene helped me think about Eliot's plays in a fresh way and was exactly the nudge I needed to finish a final draft of this book. Benjamin Hagen, Shilo McGiff, Amy Smith, and Drew Shannon, your Woolf Salon quite literally got me through the worst of the pandemic and I am so grateful. Janine Utell has always shared her expertise without hesitation and helped me with valuable advice about writing while on sabbatical. Jean Mills let a junior colleague sit in on her graduate seminar on modernism and peace; Jean, you taught me about an entirely new side of modernist thought that I would have missed otherwise. And Mark Hussey, thank you for many years of friendship and for letting me try out my arguments about Woolf and spatiality on you in moments when I felt completely stalled.

When I think about the human hours that go into each book, essay, even blurb that we write, my mind reels. Some of my earliest and most cherished teachers are no longer here, and I write in memory of and with thanks to Michael Tratner, my first mentor in modernist studies, who was somewhat taken aback that a first-year student at Bryn Mawr College would know what "prolepsis" meant, and the same to Nonda Chatterjee, who made sure that all her students at the Calcutta International School knew how to use literary terms correctly. I think fondly and often of David Greetham as exemplar and of Eddie Epstein, who sang Joyce to us with such goodwill and depth of knowledge. This book is not only the result of my time for the last many years but is inscribed by the countless hours that academic mentors and friends, and my family, have given to it. I rely on my parents with the full weight of my professional highs and lows, never really considering the extent of what that means. To my mother, thank you for everything but particularly for the hours that you have listened to me talk about Woolf and all the others. Sitting down with you to read is what started me on this path and keeps me reading still. To my father, thank you

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“*Quis hic locus*”: Spatial Critical Theory in Modernist London

OPEN WINDOWS AND THE WRITER ON OR ABOUT 1914

On September 8, 1914, Tom Eliot wrote two almost identical letters to his brother Henry and his friend Eleanor Hinkley about recently arriving in Bloomsbury: “Here I am in Shady Bloomsbury, the noisiest place in the world, a neighbourhood at present given over to artists, musicians, hack-writers, Americans, Russians, French, Belgians, Italians, Spaniards, and Japanese; formerly Germans also.... A delightfully seedy part of town, with some interesting people in it.”¹ Bloomsbury felt to him like a global microcosm, and Eliot’s description in both letters is different from the artsy middle-class English Bloomsbury of Virginia Woolf’s circle, just a few blocks away from his Russell Square digs. Eliot barely knew anyone in London yet, and this is a picture of the 25-year-old poet at his most socially disconnected, with all his ambitions and an unfinished dissertation hanging over him. Yet he sounds jubilant in the letters to his brother and Eleanor, repeating jokes he had made to a neighbor, telling them he was learning French and “acquiring a war vocabulary.”² He had secured room and board after returning in a hurry from Germany (where he had hoped to take summer courses) when England joined the war on August 4, 1914, which at this moment he understood mainly as an inconvenience and disappointment. The realities of war would sink in slowly over the next few years; in 1914, Eliot’s Bloomsbury jangles and throbs. “The noise

hereabouts is like hell turned upside down. Hot weather, all windows open, many babies, pianos, street piano accordions, singers, hummers, whistlers.” He hears gongs for dinner at seven o’clock, paper boys with the late editions at ten and eleven p.m., women singing popular songs for pennies, maids chatting—these impressions go through him like the summer breeze that everyone hopes will float in the open windows. “I find it quite possible to work in this atmosphere,” he reassures his brother. “The noises of a city so large as London don’t distract one much; they become attached to the city and depersonalise themselves”³ Eliot uses “depersonalization” to great effect in his essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919), suggesting that art approaches “the condition of science” when the poet is able to turn private experiences into something bigger that draws on existing literary tradition and adds to it.⁴ His casual use of the term in 1914, saying to his brother that the noises coming through the window become a kind of hum of the city in his ear, indicates it to be a word he used frequently to describe the affective link between a poet, place, and other people—a triangular relationship that informs every argument in this book.

Drafty Houses argues that spatial imaginations were central to E. M. Forster, T. S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf, whose writings show a sustained engagement with real and imagined places as sites of countercultural politics. These writers routinely used architectural images in diaries, essays, novels, poems, and plays to express their dissatisfaction with the glorification of war, nationalist mourning rituals, the erosion of religious and linguistic traditions, and rigidly gendered practices in domestic and public life, to name a few recurring issues. Forster’s wartime and postwar publications, Eliot’s poetic dramas, and Woolf’s novels and short stories, as well as their vast archives of letters and diaries, reflect experiences of post-First World War modernity *as* intimate spatial dislocation. Their real houses were subsumed into their personal symbolic systems and resonate with fictional icons like the villa Howards End from Forster’s 1910 novel of the same name and Jacob Flanders’s rented rooms in Woolf’s 1922 *Jacob’s Room*, offering spatial critiques of interwar remembrance and the glorification of violence. The image of Eliot as a very young poet in Bloomsbury captures the essence of how I understand these modernists—as establishmentarian figures for readers today, familiar to us from innumerable course syllabi and academic discussions, but individuals who continued to position themselves during their lifetime as interlopers and outsiders in the literary establishment that they now represent. Even in the

1950s, when he wields considerable influence as the poetry editor at Faber & Faber and has won the 1948 Nobel Prize for Literature, Eliot would characterize himself as an anti-authoritarian and disruptive commentator whose stage plays recommend that audiences exit or discard conventional urban modernity. Woolf appeared to Eliot in the 1920s as the center of literary London, but throughout her career she saw herself as an outsider to the boys' club that grew out of Oxbridge and dominated Anglophone letters. Forster, often closely associated with an anti-urban, nostalgic view of traditional Englishness, always considered himself an offbeat writer with politically dissident loyalties that allied him with the have-nots over the haves, with Indians, Egyptians, and other anticolonials rather than middle-class British imperial culture. Young Eliot listening with delight to the depersonalized sounds of an interconnected world through his window in Bloomsbury captures the mood in which I approach these icons of British modernism in this book.

A drafty house should be a bad thing, but drawing on an essay by Woolf where she defines the qualities of good literature, it is the titular image of this study. Writing in 1919, Woolf berates novels by H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett in favor of a fragment of Joyce's *Ulysses*, saying: "[The popular writer] can make a book so well constructed and solid in its craftsmanship that it is difficult for the most exacting of critics to see through what chink or crevice decay can creep in. There is not so much as a draught between the frames of the windows, or a crack in the boards. And yet—if life should refuse to live there?"⁵ Windows that don't close all the way, holes in the walls where dust and vermin can creep in—Woolf's image of the ideal novel would not please an architect perhaps, but the metaphor calls for authors to insert material realities into the stuff of fiction, noticing in rival authors a different approach to narrative even as she performs style experiments of her own. My project began as an attempt to define what Woolf's drafty house of fiction looks like, and what formal changes make a novel like *Jacob's Room* (1922) less "solid" in its craftsmanship and thereby somehow more real and immediate. As I have found, one wind-blown house quickly leads to the next, from Woolf's novel to Forster's *Howards End* (1910), to Eliot's "Gerontion" (1920), and on and on through their writing, to Forster's description of apartments in Egypt and India, Eliot's London drawing rooms, and Woolf's innovative school for nontraditional women students. Repeatedly, buildings that are stuffy indicate social or political conservatism and provide opportunities for each author's preferred prescriptions to reform extant English society and

culture. In defining herself as an anti-establishmentarian critic and writer, Woolf is not above praising Joyce to score points against the bestselling authors of her time. Her symbol for a better novel and better literary tastes is of a house that needs to breathe. This book looks at how each author's work expands to be airier, and the ways they experiment with narrative style to allow life to live within.

Forster, Eliot, and Woolf's fictions repeatedly question the benefits of living in insulated and closed-off houses and use a variety of ways to open up imagined buildings. Thinking architecturally, Forster recommends renovations to the English villa to create an "open-air drawing-room," and Eliot says that churches ought to be renovated over time by parishioners, reflecting their changing tastes as a living canvas for the community.⁶ Woolf, of them the most involved with actually renovating and changing her living spaces, designing and adding bathroom, bedroom, and writing shed to Monk's House for instance, uses an architect's sensibility most frequently. Her writing is peppered with rooms that can lock and libraries that stay open, towers that lean, and garden chapels that are open-air memorials. The stimulus to imagine buildings differently seems to urge each author into thinking geographically as well, and *Drafty Houses* equally considers imagined and metaphysical elsewheres that each author links suggestively to London places. Forster's afterlife as a place where men can love each other, Eliot's alternatives to London in colonial North Africa or Central America, Woolf's South American forests—these are not perfectly equitable spaces where every kind of human may live freely, but they are sustained attempts to imagine such a condition. Where the author's imagination as a literary geographer lapses, the critic may step in to reevaluate the importance of spatial thinking to their fiction and philosophy. Hence, I argue that spatial symbols in their works that emphasize connectivity between indoors and out, England and elsewhere, are integral to the philosophies that each author was most closely associated with: Forster's liberal humanism, Eliot's conservative Christianity, and Woolf's pacifist feminism.

Looking at how each understood places in real life and how they depict spaces in prose or poetry, I show that modernist literary geography hinges on their antiwar remappings of space, anticolonial resistances they coded into descriptions of English places, and the importance that each ascribed to peace, which forms the bedrock of their imaginative journeys beyond the metropolis. In each chapter, I consider moments when the author fails ideologically—for instance, when Forster finds himself mouthing

imperialist stereotypes about Egyptians, Eliot employs racist tropes about non-European places, or Woolf fails to understand women unlike herself in terms of class, race, or language. Certainly, the large body of work that each produced between 1919 and 1945 (approximately; Eliot’s final drawing-room drama was staged in 1958) contain moments that require critics to confront the question of why contemporary audiences should continue to read and teach modernism or engage with modernist studies. At such points, I recall Eliot in 1914 sitting by the open Bloomsbury window. He exults in how multicultural the heart of London really is. He leaves his windows open wide to encourage the exchange of air and ideas. In *Drafty Houses*, I return to this sense of each author at key moments, registering their inaccuracies but also consistently taking up their invitations to roam within textual spaces. In the following chapters, I discuss how these doyens of British modernist literature turned away in different ways from postwar London, a city they found marked not only by war, but in its aftermath, by memorials, plaques, and other sites of cultural remembrance that were used to declare patriotic pieties and the glories of British victory. They did not all three respond to war memorials or public mourning rituals in the same way, but each resisted this form of propaganda and remained conscious that Englishness could not be insulated from ongoing imperial violence abroad. In response to what they found troubling in their city, they imagined fictional elsewhere as alternatives to elite 1920s London milieux. Attending to these, I suggest throughout this book that we twenty-first-century readers should use the opportunities provided by literary geography to wander and speculate. We thus may find places where these modernist works are anticolonial enough, and progressive enough, for our own needs as readers.

In a 1924 letter, Eliot repeats Woolf’s architectural analogy about the writer’s task, saying, “I have always been very sensible of ... the necessity, so to speak, of building one’s own house before one can start the business of living.”⁷ The real and representational conveniently overlap in his words. Eliot really did have to build his own house, or at least rent a series of flats across town where he could live and write; at the same time, he, like Woolf and Forster, was acutely aware of himself as a stylist working within and changing literary and poetic traditions. Each writer’s ambition to renovate English letters coincided with their criticisms of contemporary society. They believed to varying extents that literature and national culture were closely linked and that changing one would affect the other. I mimic this move critically, at times calling for reevaluations that run against

prevalent understandings of each of these well-known figures. If we consider not only Eliot's most conservative statements about culture and religion but also his spatial experiments in plays like *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) or *The Cocktail Party* (1949), how does this change our sense of the poet? For one, I argue that this turns the historical pageant or drawing-room play into a drafty textual space, allowing readers to find new egresses into old material. Forster's heavily ironic descriptions of English and Indian places not only remind readers of his overt anticolonialism but also register his discomfort with his place within the imperial system. Woolf explicitly and the others implicitly connect traditionalism as a monolithic social form with devastating war. In reaction to a closed and stultifying tradition, her frequent use of deictics like "here," "there," and "now" in prose collapses the distance between the author and reader. However unlike we may be, her language invites us into the same spaces she occupies and from where she narrates. By switching critical registers within each chapter from literary history to speculative theorization, this book encourages readings of modernist texts and authors that is itself wind-blown, at least a little rash (to borrow another term from Woolf), and focused on answering the latent disciplinary question raised above. Perhaps most crucially, interrogating their spatial politics during the period between the two world wars allows us to view these authors and British modernism as more porous and globally minded, reflecting the reality of London's interconnected social and material worlds but not exclusively centered there. Hence, I make the case for why we should continue to read and teach these novels, plays, poems and thereby occupy the literary spaces they invoke.

ARCHIVES OF RESISTANCE: LITERARY AND REAL SPACES OF IMPERIALISM

For each author in different moments, real and literary spaces work as archives of memory and emotion that counter dominant talking points in popular culture related to war celebrations and public mourning rituals. Woolf uses descriptions of houses and London streets to offer feminist and antiwar arguments, and Eliot sees church spaces as sites where the ambitions of politicians and businessmen are immaterial. Forster has the most complex reaction to war experience in the 1920s, in part because he was the only one of them to do war work as a Red Cross official in Alexandria,

Egypt. In response to the overdetermined narratives of postwar national resurgence that interrupt the cityscape in the form of memorials and yearly processions, they express a preference for inchoate spaces that question ideas of victory, progress, and nationalism. Their evocations of space contrast with the initial postwar mood of 1920s London, which dealt in certainties about what places said. London’s new war memorials were sites that proclaimed heroism and necessary sacrifice for the nation. In the immediate postwar years, a mass of posthumous publications of soldiers’ writing also appeared, taking over print culture and proclaiming all the war dead as glorious neo-Elizabethan poets, insightful diarists, and other superlatives with which the three modernists of this study unsurprisingly did not agree. They found their literary aesthetics and politics in conflict with such declarative, statist symbolism and in reaction, invested their efforts in creative explorations that broadly refused such certitudes. In fact, Forster was so annoyed with the mass of publications that celebrated war, particularly the poet laureate Robert Bridges’s *The Spirit of Man* (1916), that he began work on his own antiwar anthology in 1917.⁸ He also began at least two other memoirs of the war in separate notebooks but never finished either. I discuss these documents at length in this chapter, suggesting that their unfinished nature is crucial to their conceptual role as an ongoing protest of airtight narratives of war heroism and bravery. Parallel to the war, Forster also had his first sexual experiences in Egypt and fell in love with a young Muslim migrant to Alexandria, Mohamed El-Adl. The spatial restrictions on their movements and Forster’s first experience of cross-class sexual friendship with El-Adl inflect his already strong anticolonial politics with a new sense of his own privileged and implicated position as an Englishman.

I suggest that Forster’s archive, which contains the unfinished wartime journals and a long memoir letter to El-Adl among other documents, is a space of authentic memorialization that rejects what he considered the spurious remembrance of postwar public rituals. The archival space resists heroizing El-Adl or the war and records the process of forgetting the beloved over a long period of mourning. Analogous to each other, Forster’s archive, Eliot’s unnarrated space of feeling from his drawing-room dramas, and Woolf’s drafty rooms from *Jacob’s Room* and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) serve as key symbolic sites from where they resist the pieties of modern urban life. The archive of El-Adl as memorial space affirms and nuances Forster’s sense of the importance of humanism as a way toward a more peaceful world. In Eliot, the spaces of feeling evoked

by poetic drama represent modes of living in faith outside the bounds of violent secular modernity. And Woolf describes the war almost entirely through a description of the Ramsay house in the *Time Passes* section of *To the Lighthouse*, narrating how the building loses its natural defenses against the outside, allowing in wind, sand, bugs, and ghosts before the charwomen arrive to repair the damage. Their emphasis on expressing antiwar, anticolonial sentiments through spatial metaphors widens the perspectival appeal of their works.

These authors remained privileged people even if they were not superbly rich or influential by the standards of upper-middle-class English society in the first half of the twentieth century. However, their use of spatial metaphors has the important advantage of opening their works for readers unlike themselves. Newer readers may see broader applicability to a scene from Forster's *A Passage to India* in which Dr. Aziz muses that "there cannot be a mother-land without new homes," applying Aziz's thought about Indian independence beyond the limits of Forster's novel.⁹ In *Murder in the Cathedral*, when Eliot's Thomas Becket commands his bishops, "Unbar the doors! throw open the doors! / I will not have... / The sanctuary, turned into a fortress," a reader may surpass Eliot's religious motives and employ his sense of spiritual urgency against other imperatives of kings and politicians to which we are subject.¹⁰ In *Three Guineas* (1938), Woolf imagines an open and airy school for women that would be the opposite of the masculinist, violent institutions of education, law, and the government that warp men's consciousnesses.¹¹ We do not have to be the same as them to want similar spaces for ourselves, and I suggest throughout *Drafty Houses* that modernist spatial studies creates room for a variety of resistant readings even in works that appear to be so widely known that they contain few surprises. Rather, as Woolf suggests with her favorite volumes of the Elizabethan writer Richard Hakluyt, a book is like a lumber room of ideas, a place where old or unused pieces are stored until needed. Throughout *Drafty Houses*, I follow Woolf to understand reading critically as a mode of going lumbering, looking for elements of literary aesthetics and history that we may use to extend our own thinking about past and present worlds.

Here I use the term "modernism" to denote a loose grouping of authors like Forster, Eliot, and Woolf writing at approximately the same time in response to rapid changes in twentieth-century urban life. Susan Stanford Friedman reminds us that "as an umbrella term, modernity has a complex and contradictory relationship to its seeming

opposite—‘tradition’ or ‘history,’” and “we need to look for the interplay of modernity and tradition within each location.”¹² Friedman’s interest is in comparative global modernisms located beyond Anglo-European urban centers, and even though *Drafty Houses* is anchored primarily to London and England, I show how each writer punctures, aerates, and otherwise insists on bringing the consciousness of globality into places that seem quintessentially and singularly English. Forster’s Alexandrine experiences change his evocation of London or India thereafter. Eliot’s failure to diagnose Europe’s cultural and political problems in the late 1920s leads to his use in the late 1930s of the “exit scene” as a trope that gestures toward a larger world of material and spiritual possibilities. Woolf uses the affective experiences of boredom and banality to resist the lures of posh London houses; to anticipate a phrase I use in Chap. 3, the consciousness of Lahore impinges upon London in her novels and disrupts the triumphant notes of patriotic sacrifice, war heroism, and overt masculinity that she detects in English culture. Per Friedman’s terms, I move “from singularities to pluralities of space and time, from exclusivist formulations of modernity and modernism to ones based in global linkages, and from nominal modes of definition to relational ones.”¹³ Actual and symbolic spaces of collection like the archive or the lumber room are crucial to my interest in opening imperial spaces to postcolonial modernist analyses.

To understand early twentieth-century European modernity in tandem with imperialism should be a critical commonplace. And yet, the architectural theorist Gwendolyn Wright notes, “We usually forget that modernism came into being in a world framed by colonialism, where visions for improvement and innovation overlapped with and often caused brutal destruction.”¹⁴ In her 2002 manifesto, she challenges architects and readers: “Can we produce histories and visions of the future attuned to local knowledges and universal hopes?”¹⁵ Wright’s terms here recall Eliot’s, who also tried to find a balance between the local and universal and found no environment as suitable for this as the Anglican Church. Wright reminds us that in colonial modernity “the physical environment became a strategy for enforcing common values while maintaining difference within a conjoint modern world.”¹⁶ Again her formulation resonates with Forster, Eliot, and Woolf’s senses of the imperial city as a site for overlapping violences that stretch out in ripples through the local population and across the world. In response, these writers remap the postwar city, calling attention to certain sites in street scenes while omitting to mention others; or, by entering places where they are welcome and interrogating their

reception there. In the following chapters I show some paths through the spaces of their fiction for a postcolonial, twenty-first-century reader, but *Drafty Houses* is informed by Wright's warning: "But who can presume to know the essence of a culture, a place, or its people? To identify an essence is to deny history, cultural complexity, and the unpredictability of change."¹⁷ One way to encapsulate the project of this book is to say that it highlights the unpredictability of modernist literary spaces to emphasize possibilities of interpretive change.

The wildly popular PBS period drama *Downton Abbey* (2010–2015) has been on my mind as I wrote this book. Set between 1912 and 1926, the show's timeline parallels that of the works I discuss, and it has an obsessive interest in a single house although it uses few if any modernist representational techniques. *Downton Abbey* is something like the pop culture alter ego of this research project, centered fetishistically within the yellow stone walls of the fictional Abbey and addressing some of the same concerns that emerge in Forster, Eliot, and Woolf's writing over the 1920s. Whole seasons of the show are dedicated to war heroism and thrilling depictions of upper-class enlisters who overcome every challenge as perfect icons of British manhood—unlike Woolf's Jacob who never returns from war, or North Pargiter from *The Years* (1937) who struggles with shell shock beneath his veneer of everyday banality. The show's interest in British "upstairs-downstairs" culture between classes emphasizes harmony and employer support for the family's maids, cooks, and butlers, belying modernist authors' sense of the private house and public locations like museums and churches as sites of heated class- and gender-based struggles in the postwar period. Downton Village seems serene and removed from the 1920s, a period in British history when imagined communities were being reimaged through national mourning rituals, at art shows and museum exhibitions, in the interiors and streets of London as much as in remoter locations. The British Empire is a distant monolith in the show, reflecting Whitehall's sense of renewed control over the colonies in the 1920s even as independence movements across the globe became increasingly strident. Colonial extraction seems hardly oppressive at all when it is expressed in the diegesis of the show as luxurious fabrics, furniture, and decorations that are in every frame of every episode. At parties similar to the ones that conclude Woolf's novels *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *The Years*, jewels mined in South Africa or pearls from Sri Lanka gleam from wrists and necks of the women, and paisley patterned fabrics from India peek out of men's suit pockets. In one scene, a gramophone is rolled out

and an enormous Kashmiri carpet put away so that young people can dance to the Black American ragtime tunes beloved by Eliot. *Downton Abbey* is entirely sympathetic to its aristocratic characters in their large, isolated, and well-insulated manor. But watching it, I find myself thinking like Forster’s Margaret Schlegel when she visits a swanky London apartment she does not like: “Such a house admitted loot.”¹⁸ The TV show is soaked in Raj nostalgia and clings to ideas about patriotism, secularism, and conservative white feminism one hundred years after modernists like Forster, Eliot, and Woolf tried to find ways out of elitist indoctrination. Being a book that understands modernism as critical renovations of modern social forms, *Drafty Houses* is a kind of anti-*Downton Abbey*.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS IN MODERNIST SPATIAL STUDIES

This introductory chapter takes its title from Eliot’s poem “Marina” (1930), which begins with a Latin epigraph: “*Quis hic locus, quae / regio, quae mundi plaga?*” typically translated as, “What place is this, what / region, what area of the world?”¹⁹ Eliot weaves memories of his own childhood summers in Boston through this retelling of a scene of recognition by Pericles of his daughter Marina from a play now attributed to Shakespeare. Eliot’s version foregrounds the sea, shores, and granite islands of his experience, and the watery scene of recognition in “Marina” turns into a sublime meditation on the modern human condition that edges beyond the parameters of parenthood or filiation. The poem relies for effect on turning an everyday place—Gloucester, Massachusetts, where “The Dry Salvages” (1941) is also set—into a “depersonalized” location requiring attentive questioning of its symbolic resonances. The poet’s childhood memory of place is turned into an exercise in seeing strangeness within the familiar, a poem that insists on asking anew what region, what area of the world, we are in. The seascape as third poetic node between father and daughter leads readers away from rooted particulars of early twentieth-century New England culture, and through multiple layers of literary references, prepares for a recognition that is also a departure from familiar ways to think and act. Each of the chapters that follow describes scenes of defamiliarization similar to this one. *Drafty Houses* engages with several strands of modernist criticism through discussions of such scenes where the author wanders in their writing, revisiting places to estrange and reinvent them so that they lose their mundane familiarity and become again sites for analytic recognition.