

The Public Becomes Personal: From Ernaux's *Passion simple* to *Journal du dehors*

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*For the first time, I took possession of the space
I have been wandering nevertheless for twenty years.
(Annie Ernaux, La vie extérieure: 1993-1999)*

During our interview, contemporary French writer Annie Ernaux stated that she had never reflected upon the ways which her domestic spaces have influenced her writing.¹ Indeed, she associated certain spaces with specific social norms, but she could not comment on the extent to which these spaces influence her writing process. Annie Ernaux's writing, which spans nearly thirty years, includes consistently extensive detailed descriptions of her parents' over-the-shop apartment and her own domestic spaces, past and present. Her texts develop from depictions of physical spaces and the gestures and attitudes these spaces prescribe; they intertwine detailed descriptions of women's movement and interactions in public and private. A close analysis of these descriptions exposes the author's emphasis on the interplay between women and quotidian spaces such as a house, subway, school, supermarket and store. Ernaux's spaces are not neutral. Each bears the markings of a social class and gender. Certain récits, such as *Les armoires vides* (1974), *La place* (1984) and later *La honte* (1997), emphasize working-class and bourgeois domestic living spaces in her native rural town of Yvetot (Normandy). Other texts, such as *Passion simple* (1991), *Journal du*

dehors (1993), and later texts taking place uniquely in the environs of Paris, highlight the narrator's urban mobility and daily interactions with her suburb (Cergy) and the capital. The most radical shift in Ernaux's focus on women and space comes between *Passion simple* and *Journal du dehors*.² This shift leads to an inquiry into her narrators' compatibility with possible versions of the literary figure of the urban female wanderer, the flâneuse, as bourgeois shopper and roaming observer.³

No other of Ernaux's texts depicts the narrators' direct interplay with living space as much as *Passion simple* (*Passion*) in which almost the entire narrative takes place in her suburban home. This text illustrates most clearly women's active appropriation and physical marking of territory, both consciously and unconsciously.⁴ The narrator's interplay with her house exemplifies the ways in which living space remains in constant movement, despite its static appearance, and the extent to which it reflects (or clashes with) the female inhabitant's current vision of self. The domestic, then, exists only through the ways in which its female inhabitants live in and interact with it. This is true for all types of housing (this may be extended to include frequented public spaces as well). The habitat-female inhabitant relationship is reciprocal. As Ernaux's *Les armoires vides* or *La honte* demonstrate, a too small, poorly equipped or dirty space (or clothing) may reflect a negative self-image back on the inhabitant, creating a disparity between her self-image and the image her space projects. The narrator's remodeling, renovating, leaving and even cleaning of her domestic space are illustrative of ways in which female inhabitants modify and adapt to their living spaces. *Passion*'s narrator identifies strongly with her house to the extent that she appears to view it as a second layer of protection (after clothing). Her lodging is a direct reflection of her self-image; it provokes positive, as well as negative, feelings throughout the narrative.⁵ *Passion* is the first of several works to take place solely in environs of Paris. It is also the author's first text to be devoted almost entirely to life in a conventional bourgeois house rather than an apartment, above-the-shop lodging or university residence; the principal background for *Passion* is the author's domestic space, her house in the *ville-nouvelle* of Cergy-Pontoise.

Ernaux's next published work, *Journal du dehors* (*Journal*) shifts

the emphasis from the interplay of the narrator and domestic space, marked by personal memories, to her interaction with public spaces such as the R.E.R., supermarkets and local shopping centers. As her first text to truly concentrate on urban daily life outside the home, *Journal* can be understood as Ernaux's first urban notebook, one which demonstrates her desire to record and preserve the physical markings of a particular moment in public, a writing project later explored in *La vie extérieure: 1993-1999* and *L'événement* (2000).⁶ The narrator surfaces from the depths of a static private sphere in *Passion* into a public of mobility and consumption. Rather than a reflective piece on an intimate past experience, *Journal* gives the sense of immediate writing coming directly from news events, the city and its dwellers. Ernaux's concerns do not, however, change. She displays and comments on differences in the habits, manners, speech and movement of the French working classes and dominating class once again in *Journal*. She reflects on her place and role as recorder within the larger social sphere. The shift from *Passion* to *Journal* appears all the more abrupt because this shift emphasizes the traditional dichotomy of inside / outside and private / public.

Ernaux's *Passion* portrays a narrator in a very different spatial context than in *Journal*. Whereas descriptions of interior space dominate in the former, exterior scenes abound in the latter. While *Passion* depicts the author's intimate relationship with one individual, A., *Journal* records strangers observed at a distance. *Passion* emphasizes domestic space as a stagnant microcosm and *Journal* highlights circulation in an extended and crowded metropolis, emphasizing the passage of time, distance, and physical movement.

In some aspects, views of domestic space in *Passion* do not differ from those found in Ernaux's earlier texts. The narrator is alone. Time is stagnant. Space is sedentary. Immobility and containment characterize consistently Ernaux's version of the bourgeois sphere, from her descriptions of the catholic school and her bourgeois classmate's houses in Y., to domestic spaces during and after her marriage. Bourgeois lodgings take on protective and confining qualities for the female inhabitants (protective in that the inhabitants are afraid of leaving). In *Passion* the fear of leaving home stems from the narrator's angst of missing a telephone call or visit from her lover A. Later in the text, this angst manifests itself in the narra-

tor's fear of effacing physical reminders of their affair; the narrator's limitation of physical space and interactions inside and outside the home compose the first half of the *récit*.

Unlike in most other texts (including *Journal*), a three-step evolution in the narrator's interplay with her interior exists in *Passion*: first, she prepares and anticipates her lover's visit through shopping; then, she rejects daily sites and rituals during and after the end of the affair; finally, she embraces the exterior and re-appropriates spaces uniquely associated with A. In the first stage of *Passion*, the house becomes a self-made prison for the narrator. She reduces noise to a minimum in order to hear the phone ring, avoids using the vacuum or hair dryer and going outside as much as possible (16). She tries to stop the passage of time by holding onto the physical evidence of their relationship: she leaves his cigarette burns in the rug, takes naps after his visit and does not wash until the next day so as to retain his odor: "Naturally, I didn't wash until the next day in order to keep his sperm" (20). Throughout the first half of the text, she treats her body as she does her house, as a museum to A.: she prepares her house and body for his arrival (speaking mostly of the bedroom and kitchen); she buys new dresses, jewelry, lingerie, his favorite drinks and foods: "The only happy moments outside of his presence were those when I would buy new dresses, earrings, stockings" (22). In sum, she attempts to render her house and body physically, symbolically and emotionally marked with his presence.

During the second stage, that of the fear of abandonment, she describes her horror of leaving Paris. Here, the narrator explains her physical pain, which replaces the sexual pleasure of their affair, focusing largely upon her daily rituals during A.'s absence (52-3). She begins by describing her angst in interacting with the exterior. She wishes to die a passive death in her home, in her bedroom, in her bed. Primping and preparing for the outside, once part of her daily routine during her affair, are now difficult tasks. She forces herself to wear her contacts, an action that can be read in two ways: eyeglasses provide a barrier between the person seeing and others; they also protect the eyes. In this context, the mere fact of wearing one's eyeglasses when one normally wears contact lenses could appear as laziness or a habit associated with someone staying home. The narrator must force herself to prepare for the outside world: "I

would force myself to get dressed and to put on my make up correctly, wear my contacts instead of my glasses in spite of the effort this manipulation called for" (52). Her use of "this manipulation" demonstrates the violence and angst with which she associates getting ready to leave the house. In addition, all media, such as television and women's magazines which suggest the outside world, and preparations for another cause anguish; even passing by a lingerie shop brings back memories. Like the narrator's house, public spaces and places only exist in their relation to her affair with A. Connections between a public presence and their affair open the text with a scene of the narrator watching an encrypted sex scene on Canal +.

Her actions to re-appropriate her living space during a period of instability comprise the last, or third, stage of the text. In this stage, which begins on page sixty on the Folio Edition, the narrator marks the temporal change with a blank space and the use of the French *passé composé* followed by a reference to future behavior, rather than past habits, "I started to tell this story as of the month of September . . ." Her primary physical activity comes from domestic tasks: cleaning and gardening. These tasks, absent during her affair with A., provide the fatigue once caused by sexual activity. Her house, associated uniquely with their affair, now destabilizes her. It sends back an image that no longer coincides with her present situation. The narrator's reaction, conscious or unconscious, is to modify her domestic space through a behavior which is divorced from the past situation: she now effaces the accumulation of past evidence. She also introduces the next stage in her 'healing' with the present tense, "Now, it's April, in the mornings, it happens that I wake up without the thought of A. coming right away. The idea of finding joy again in the 'little pleasures of life'—talking with friends, going to the movies, dining well—cause me less horror" (66). This quotation illustrates the shift from enclosed individual space and the private sphere to spaces of collective social activities. Whereas the text begins with the narrator alone in front of the television, later scenes, those in April, tell of a more interactive narrator going to the movies, dining and speaking to friends. It is in the last stage that Ernaux includes her return to the *Passage Cardinet*, where she underwent a back-alley abortion in 1964. Here, the narrator's return to a place within Paris provides closure to two very private experi-

ences, one present and one past, a dereliction “of which the origin was a man” (65). A sense of closure to her affair with A. comes, then, from outside spaces marked by painful memories linked to her life before A. In a sense, one could speak of a double closure. In her later text *L'événement* (2000), she will write in more detail of her return to the exact place where she had undergone the abortion in 1964. This passage in *Passion* is the author's first step away from the domestic and its traditional gender roles. She opens her personal experience to include a reflection on her own writing process and on other women who have possibly lived the same experiences: ‘Am I the only one to go back to the place of an abortion?’ ‘Est-ce qu'il n'y a que moi pour revenir sur les lieux d'un avortement’ (65). The double inclusion, of the presence of others and of the city itself, serves as a definite transition, leading her towards the constant interaction with public space found in *Journal*.

The narrator's reduction of living space and her immobility in *Passion* contrast with her constant mobility in public transportation and sites of consumption in *Journal*. This time, Ernaux moves about entirely outside the home and describes others observed in supermarkets, shopping malls, public transportation and in the streets. Moreover, she first identifies herself, within the larger social sphere, as a professor and an inhabitant of Cergy, rather than simply as a lover of A. The influence and presence of social spheres are reversed: she writes of her personal experiences in public spaces in *Journal*, whereas she highlights the public presence in her bedroom (media) at the beginning of *Passion*. *Journal* differs from Ernaux's earlier texts in that it focuses on the narrator's constant movement in an urban setting whereas her earlier works depicted, more or less in some cases, her sedentary lifestyle at her parents' grocery store-bar in rural Normandy. Unlike previous texts such as *La place*, *Les armoires vides*, and *La honte* which recall her native town of Y., Ernaux explores circulation in the capital and *villes nouvelles* places devoid of childhood memories.

Depictions of her domestic interior are absent. The narrator offers no evidence of memories attached to these new spaces. The only codes are those fashioned by others. Memory of spaces comes uniquely from movement and memorized itineraries. The spaces belong to her just as much as they belong to others. To appropri-

ate spaces, she must memorize itineraries, possess spaces through knowledge and interact with others through the recording of daily rituals. The objective of *Journal* is the reading of cultural signs, ranging from graffiti, billboards, and the written press, to interactions between people.

The title *Journal du dehors* is inherently indicative of the ambiguities of the text itself.⁷ The French term, *Journal*, may be understood in three ways. First, it is the daily newspaper, a chronicle of daily life. In business terms, a *Journal* also refers to an accounting log or receipt register. It defines, thirdly, one's private diary or one's memoirs as in *journal intime*. It is worth mentioning that both types of journal, the newspaper and the memoir, recall the traditionally masculine bourgeois sphere and the conventionally feminine bourgeois or aristocratic spheres, respectively. *Dehors* indicates that the primary sites of the text will take place outside the home. The lack of possessive pronoun, as in *mon journal*, foreshadows the narrator's position as recorder of others' actions. Contrary to *Passion*, neither depictions of the narrator nor her domestic interior exist in *Journal*. She uses and records life outside her suburban house, thus distancing her from her previously unique role as mistress to A.. Here, others' daily habits and mannerisms replace the narrator of *Passion's* detailed preparations for another. She is no longer waiting, she observes while in constant movement. In *Journal*, she is practically anonymous, the "carrier of others' lives / porteuse de la vie des autres" (107).

The author is far from the Paris found in guide books, far from the mythic Paris of debauchery and police novels: "Ernaux's Paris is a city of transitional spaces—the subway and subway stations, trains and train stations, stores. There is no evocation of the beauties of Haussmannian boulevards, no Eiffel Tower, famous monuments or architecture other than the Défense. There are no parks" (Warehime 107). She is far from the stomping grounds of literary flâneurs like Baudelaire, Apollinaire, Aragon and Breton; however, such literary references, especially to Surrealism, on which she wrote her thesis, are ever present. In fact, the reader learns much about the narrator through her choices of subject matter and descriptions of public scenes. Several scenes in *Journal*, as in *Passion*, take place in sites of consumption.

Throughout *Passion*, Ernaux focuses on tasks which could be linked to women's conventional roles within the household such as receiving a guest, preparing the home and body for a guest's arrival, shopping and cleaning. This linking of shopping as a domestic bourgeois ritual for women and women's presence in public is not new to French literature. Many have analyzed the birth of the Parisian shopping districts and the presence of women's roaming the streets of the capital. Theories and criticisms of a possible female urban wanderer, or *flâneuse*, have been numerous (those of Janet Wolff and Elizabeth Wilson being the most convincing). Most arguments consider the socio-historical atmosphere from which such a figure could have emerged, in her role as middle-class Parisian housewife or as whore; many link these women's roaming in public with consumption.

Janet Wolff argues that "[women] could not adopt the non-existent role of a *flâneuse*" for they were consistently linked to their role within the domestic sphere (Wolff 47). Elizabeth Wilson's theory allows for the possibility of a female counterpart to the *flâneur*; even if the term *flâneuse* appears only once in her text. She equates the shopper and the housewife, linking the department store with pleasurable mobility outside of the bourgeois home. She also speaks of movement within the department store in terms of habitation, "a space that women *were* able to inhabit comfortably" and thus understands the shopping venues as "an environment, half-public, half-private."⁸

Women were perhaps not, as Wolff implies, "confin[ed] to an impermeable private space" (Marcus 38). Rather, they were consistently redefined in their roles within the home; their pastimes and chores revolved around their roles as housewives and mothers. Ernaux's narrator in *Passion* shops, not in her role as mother or wife, but in her role as mistress to A. She expresses her desire to shop and please A. through the purchasing of lingerie, his favorite drinks and foods. The narrator functions in her role as urban female wanderer in that she extends her private pleasure into shops and stores while being constantly defined by her roles within the domestic.

Whereas *Passion* emphasizes the narrator's pleasure in shopping for another, *Journal* highlights interactions and observations in the stores. *Passion* centers on the relationship of two people. *Journal* in-

cludes mainly references to others moving about or working within public spaces. In both texts, communication and interaction with the exterior come through the act of purchasing. The narrator of *Passion* presents her relationship with A. though her interaction with him is largely *purveyed* through her relationship with things to buy, to prepare, to clean, and which represent him during his absence. The narrator details the objects bought or the reasons for the purchase (his favorite foods, liquor, lingerie and magazines). A shift occurs from the desire associated with shopping to please another to the pragmatics of commerce or transactions among people. In *Passion*, prices, payment or sales help are absent. In *Journal*, communication is mediated through machines such as cash registers and cash distributors. No direct interaction exists between cashiers and clients. Everything communicates, yet no one communicates without the exchange of merchandise.

Certain of Ernaux's later texts link the leisure activity of shopping with subversion. Her narrators assist in rebellious events either by reacting to someone or by secretly observing another person's actions, such her and her mother's stroll in La Samaritaine department store in "*Je ne suis pas sortie de ma nuit*" (17) or her watching a shoplifter of stockings in Printemps, a scene from her 2000 text *La vie extérieure: 1993-1999* (14). When compared to the numerous consumer sites in Ernaux's later works, these two stand out as traditional bourgeois sites of consumption. Both have been Parisian bourgeois shopping institutions since the nineteenth century. Franprix, Monoprix, and the *centres-commerciaux* (shopping centers) of Cergy-Pontoise are products of the 1970s with a more social-class diversified target clientele. Such examples oppose shopping experiences in *Passion* in which boutiques and shopping itself are an integral part of the narrator's role of mistress and thus, merely reinforce her role within the domestic.

In *Journal*, the narrator's observations and recording of modern-day quotidian rituals allow me to consider her as a seeing and roaming subject and, in some aspects, as a *flâneuse* who comes closer to the *flâneur* by her observing and recording everyday events and individuals. The narrator's lack of destination, goal or specific errands also recalls *flânerie*. Traveling time is more important than arrival time. Observing people and recording the city and its inhab-

itants take precedence over interacting with others. The narrators of *Journal*, *La vie extérieure* and *L'événement* partake in the action of the crowd, yet at a distance. However, the narrator does not wander the streets aimlessly; she is commuting, shopping or waiting in line.

Ernaux addresses, even if only indirectly, the gendering of *flânerie* in *Journal*—a text which recalls the writing projects of Guillaume Apollinaire in *Flâneur des deux rives* (1928), André Breton in *Nadja* (1928) and Louis Aragon in *Le paysan de Paris* (1926). Her extensive passage on Breton's *Nadja* illustrates the contradictions surrounding such as a female figure of *flânerie*. Ernaux writes:

Then, I took the *Boulevard Magenta*, looking for the number 106, *L'Hôtel de Suède*, once known as the *Sphinx Hotel*. The facade was barred, they were demolishing the interior of all the floors. A worker leaned out the window and looked at me laughing and saying something to the others. I was immobile on the opposite sidewalk, my head raised toward the hotel (that they were transforming perhaps into apartments). He thought that I was returning to the place of my memories, of a love or a whore. I come back to the memories of another *Nadja*, that of André Breton, who lived in this hotel in 1927. In the shop window in front of which I had stopped, there are outdated shoes, in just one color, black, slippers, black too. After, I continued down the *Boulevard Magenta*, I turned in the alley of *Ferme-Saint-Lazarre*, deserted. [...] I walked in the foot-steps of *Nadja* in a stupor that gives the impression of living intensively. (J 79-80)

Here, Ernaux identifies the literary figure of *flânerie* with *Nadja* rather than with the poet, Breton, even if references in Ernaux's passage evoke Breton's 1928 narrative. Like the *flâneur*, Ernaux's narrator encompasses the marginality of the writer and wanderer. She identifies with the poet, the recorder of life, rather than the object of desire; this distinguishes her from Breton's *Nadja*. Yet, she states that she "was walking in the footsteps of *Nadja*" and not Breton. Her simultaneous position as a writer and female wander (*Nadja*) reveals characteristics of both the ambiguous woman in public (*la flâneuse*) and the poet (*le flâneur*) and, thus, situates her in an intermediary position between the two literary figures. Like for Apollinaire, Aragon and Breton, Ernaux's writing grows from and draws on the modern city and its inhabitants. Her writing process

demands distance from and intimate interaction with public spaces that, in the end, become familiar places marked by her personal experiences. However close she may come to a more recent version of the wandering poet, Ernaux's presence, as the above passage demonstrates, reflects the ever-present ambiguity of a woman alone in the street.

The passage also highlights to what extent the hotel is marked culturally as a site of women's sexual promiscuity and of temporary repose: "of a love or whore." It recreates the ambiguous status of women in the streets and the presence of prostitution. The history of prostitution in Paris reveals various clues to Nadja's profession. In the narrative, she lives at the Sphinx Hotel, 106 *boulevard Magenta*. In the 1920s, the street number 106 would surely have invoked 106, *rue de la Chapelle*, as one of the most famous addresses of Parisian *maison closes* well known as the brothel of the prostitute, "Casque d'or," made even more famous by Jacques Becker's Renoiresque 1952 film. The name of the hotel also discloses aspects of Nadja's profession. The "Sphinx Hotel" on boulevard Magenta would have brought to mind the well-known brothel, "Le Sphinx," near the Montparnasse train station. The Sphinx reference in *Journal* contrasts the image of the city in Ernaux's writings.

The Sphinx is at the center of the city as labyrinth. As the eater and strangler of men, she is the image of destruction itself. She murders all those who cannot answer her riddle not that of man, but of female sexuality (Wilson 7). The Sphinx is present in Ernaux's version of the city, yet merely as a cultural reference. Ernaux's city is neither a labyrinth nor a difficult and dangerous place. The city can be read, an itinerary planned. The city and its modes of transportation propose an escape from her suburban domesticity: the city liberates; it does not oppress or endanger. Its streets, places and spaces free Ernaux's narrators of class issues related to her parents' café-bar apartment in Normandy. The city distances her from past preoccupations with A. The complete absence of her home may also be read as a calculated move on the part of the author to reject physical spaces marked by memories described in her previous text. Public spaces depicted in *Journal*, thus, function differently than in *Pas-sion*. The parts of Paris, described here, distance the narrator from her physical living space and the domestic chores which this space

prescribes. The hotel is a space associated with transience and not stability. By its very nature, an inexpensive urban hotel opposes the bourgeois domestic and the ideology it propagates. This is one way in which the traditional domestic sphere is replaced by more public or semi-public places. *Journal* also reveals conventional private rituals by highlighting intimate practices taking place in public.

Journal starts with the recording of others' actions rather than a concern of the others' reactions to her behavior in the R.E.R., whereas *La place* explains the narrator's angst and malaise because her son will not sit still in a first-class train compartment after her father's funeral. The first scenes are as follows: an older woman speaks to a younger man, a woman talks to herself; a young man clips his fingernails; and a mother and daughter read a children's book. Each illustrates themes of private rituals performed in public, and a certain intrusion on the part of the narrator. Each displays Ernauxian themes of movement and orientation, shame, the presence of daily private rituals, and the narrator's malaise in observing.

The third scene brings the intimate private space of grooming into public. The passenger on the R.E.R. takes up more space than is normally allotted: "He settled on two seats, legs stretched out sideways" (J 14). He makes himself at home by clipping his nails and putting up his feet and bringing into public one of the most traditionally private habits, grooming. The other passengers pretend not to look; however, Ernaux does. The young man's actions become a personal revolt against the conventions of the dominating social class. Primping and preparing to leave the house, actions associated uniquely with the female narrator in *Passion*, now belong to a stranger. They are noted briefly; they do not induce angst or anticipation in the narrator, as they do in *Passion*. Whereas public actions refer consistently back to domestic space in *Passion*, traditionally private events or behaviors taking place in public become the writer's focus in *Journal*. Ernaux continues:

This evening in the Linandes neighborhood, a woman passed by on a stretcher held by two firemen. She was elevated, almost sitting, calm, gray hair, between fifty and sixty years old. A blanket covered her legs and half of her body. A young girl said to another, 'there was blood on her sheet.' But, there was no sheet on the woman. She crossed Linandes square like this, like a queen in the middle of the people who were going to do their

shopping at Franprix (11).⁹

In some respects, this passage represents the text as a whole. The author exposes habits of the traditional private sphere: sickness, hygiene, and family. She brings sickness out of the bedroom and into the streets. Illness and disability are no longer confined to the interior as in *Les armoires vides*, *La place*, *Une femme* and *Passion*. They are anonymous and part of public spectacle. This passage also depicts the narrator as a more accurate observer than most, giving credit to the entire text; she records others' remarks, then supplies the truth: there was no blood on the sheet.¹⁰ Like the others, the narrator watches. Then, she writes.

Since *Passion simple*, we could say that she has been expanding her scope, although she has recently published several very personal works such as *Se perdre* (2001). She now writes texts that expose individuals, their behaviors and the traces they leave behind. Wanting to understand and write her own experiences, Annie Ernaux has considered herself as the ethnologist of her own life, *l'ethnologue de moi-même* (Jacob 32). Now, we could say she has also become a subjective ethnologist of the people she meets in public.

Journal relies heavily on movement away from traditional domestic space and the rituals that the household propagates. Yet, Ernaux returns consistently to her personal experiences and preoccupations. Her writing, in this sense, remains (auto)biographical; by describing the outside world she describes herself. The outside, in its many forms, is always present in Ernaux's texts. However, *Journal* differs from previous writings in that it emphasizes a reality confronted with the city, the media, crowds, and accidental meetings: her domestic space is entirely absent.¹¹ This scission from domestic spaces marked by memory leads the author into a more overtly socially engaged position. For the first time, Ernaux's focus takes on a more journalistic approach as recorder of daily life. Her name is no longer uniquely associated with literature. Her writings have included recently an intimate text entitled "L'Occupation" in August 2001 and an article on the media's coverage of Pierre Bourdieu's death in February 2002, both appearing in *Le monde*.¹² Ernaux's more recent texts continue this shift from private experiences to public places, from personal memory to public events. After having rendered her

private public, her “public” has now become personalized.¹³

Notes

1 Interview with Annie Ernaux. Cergy. 26 April 1997. All English translations in this text are my own.

2 Domestic spaces depicted in *Passion* and *Journal* refer uniquely to the author’s residence in the Parisian suburb of Cergy-Pontoise, thus the conventional bourgeois house becomes the point of departure. As this article concentrates on *Passion simple* (*Passion*) and *Journal du dehors* (*Journal*), analyses of the working-class homes and working spaces are mentioned briefly. It does not address in which ways these conventional notions of home may be subverted by considerations of the lodgings and *quartier* of the French rural working class; it examines the ways in which Ernaux uses her house, suburb and Paris proper to construct identity, in some ways as Marjari Warehime suggests in “Paris and the Autobiography of a *flâneur*: Patrick Modiano and Annie Ernaux.” *French Forum* 25.1 (January 2000): 97-113.

3 The French term “*flâneur*” has made its way into *The Webster’s Dictionary*, meaning an idle man-about-town. His female counterpart, the *flâneuse*, has yet to be officially accepted as an English term. *The Littré Dictionary* and *The Grand Larousse* define the *flâneuse* merely as “une chaise longue” (1877). *The Robert Dictionary* includes no such definition. Janet Wolff along with Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, Deborah Parsons and Elizabeth Wilson use both terms in italic and accent. Susan Buck-Morss opts for the more anglicized *flâneur*. I have chosen to spell *flâneuse*, with the accent and without italic or underline.

4 My analyses on domestic spaces develop primarily on Gaston Bachelard’s *La poétique de l’espace* (1957), Michel Bonetti’s *Habiter: le bricolage imaginaire de l’espace* (1994), Henri Lefebvre’s *La Production de l’espace* (1974), Jacques Pezeu-Massabuau’s *La Maison, espace social* (1983).

5 This is especially the case for female inhabitants. Despite the fact that women are spending more time in spaces other than their primary residence, and in a more varied amount of spaces, women still identify strongly with their primary residence and their comparative base regarding comfort, decoration, size, socio-economic position. Conventionally any building constructed or renovated to provide a residence for an individual or

group of related individuals constitutes a 'house' in Western cultures. A roof, opaque walls, various openings and, at times, interior walls which divide space for specific daily rituals (bodily functions and leisure activities) make up its generic architectural structure. A 'home,' the *chez soi* in French, denotes the appropriation of one's living quarters as a space marked by memory, emotion and physical evidence coming from its inhabitants. Thus, it is possible that an individual will speak of his or her working space as 'home.'

6 Here, I employ the term urban notebooks to refer to Ernaux's diaries of everyday movement within the urban landscape of Paris and the Parisian *ville nouvelle* of Cergy. The term implies a personal diary of traveling within the city, later edited for publication, rather than drafted memoirs.

7 The English title of *Journal, Exteriors* (1996), places more importance on outside spaces and loses the immediate implications of writings. The author's preface to the English translation explains, in some respects, her writing project concerning spaces, spheres and personal history.

8 Elizabeth Wilson, "The Invisible flâneur," *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 101. See also *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women*. London: Virago Press, 1991.

9 Like Monoprix, Uniprix or Prisunic, Franprix is a *magasin populaire* selling alimentary and non-alimentary items.

10 Reference to blood on sheets and stains can be found in mostly all of Ernaux's texts, most specifically in "Paper Traces of Philippe V." Translated by Tanya Leslie at <http://gyoza.com/Frank.html/09Ernaux.html>

11 Letter to author. September 14, 2000.

12 Ernaux also signed a petition against the Pasqua Law concerning les sans-papiers (those without identity papers) in *Libération*.

13 I would especially like to thank Annie Ernaux for her interview and insightful correspondence over the past years.

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