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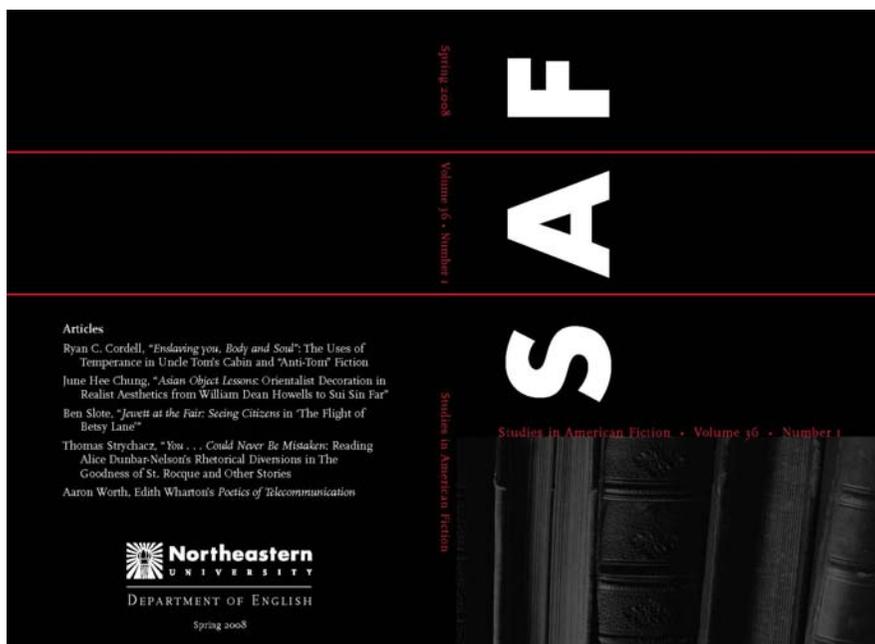
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Keith Wilhite, *John Cheever's Shady Hill, Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Suburbs*

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JOHN CHEEVER'S SHADY HILL, OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE SUBURBS

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There's been too much criticism of the middle-class way of life. Life can be as good and rich there as anyplace else. I am not out to be a social critic, however, nor a defender of suburbia. It goes without saying that the people in my stories and the things that happen to them could take place anywhere.

—John Cheever, *Saturday Review* (1958)

First published in the July 18, 1964, issue of *The New Yorker*, “The Swimmer” remains John Cheever’s most distinctive short story. Neddy Merrill’s famous journey across the swimming pools of affluent suburban homes wends through Sunday afternoon parties where caterers serve the gin ice-cold and everyone confesses they “*drank too much*” last night.¹ Merrill embarks on his cross-country swim from the Westerhazy’s pool. Acoustically, the name Westerhazy tunes the reader’s ear for a bit of wordplay, the distinctive surname enfolding both Westchester and the haziness of inebriation and memory. As Merrill surveys the suburb “with a cartographer’s eye” (*Stories*, 603), the narrator notes, “The only maps and charts he had to go by were remembered or imaginary but these were clear enough” (*Stories*, 604). Cheever introduces a dialectic relationship between physical spaces and their representations, and this interplay between the physical and the cartographic, the real and the imagined, ripples through the narrative. As the reader discovers early on, Merrill reads spaces and contexts rather poorly. He acknowledges the falling leaves, the smell of wood smoke in the air, and the early darkness, yet he clings to the idea that it is midsummer. He misinterprets comments about his financial and familial misfortunes, oscillating between denial and repression. The home he returns to in Bullet Park—dark, abandoned, and in disrepair—promises, perhaps, to break the spell: “He shouted, pounded on the door, tried to force it with his shoulder, and then, looking in at the windows, saw that the place was empty” (*Stories*, 612). The structure’s physicality disrupts Merrill’s imagined cartography. Lashing out against the house, Merrill confronts the divide between conceptual and physical spaces as a voyeur at his own window.

“The Swimmer” typifies the ambiguous position Cheever occupied in relation to the suburbs and the “middle-class way of life” and offers a useful entrée into his “suburban oeuvre.” As suggested in the 1958 interview in the *Saturday Review* marking the publication of *The Housebreaker of Shady Hill and Other Stories*, Cheever positioned himself somewhere between criticism and defense of suburbia.² The perfect embodiment of this middle position is the image of Merrill peering in his window, essentially trespassing on his own property. Yet this image and, indeed, Merrill’s entire journey also belie the notion that what occurs in a Cheever story could “take place anywhere.” While archetypal literary themes may be endlessly portable, the private spaces of suburbia create an equivocal geography peculiar to the human trespasses and the tenuous nature of middle-class life in Cheever’s suburban stories.

In “The Swimmer,” this relationship between trespass and equivocal spaces becomes apparent at the crucial mid-point of the story when Merrill’s journey is interrupted by a roadway and a public swimming pool. Merrill’s cross-country swim makes visible the premium placed on privacy in the physical and social spaces of suburbia, but most of the scholarly commentary on this story tends to downplay the suburban setting in favor of the narrative’s allusive and symbolic nature. Scholars have provocatively interpreted the transitional uses of color as an indicator to Merrill’s decline; water imagery and the return to the womb; biblical allusions to the Fall of Adam; classical allusions to Odysseus, Narcissus, and the Grail legend; literary parallels with Dante’s *Inferno*, Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, and Washington Irving’s “Rip Van Winkle”; and historical references to Ponce de Leon’s failed quest to discover the fountain of youth.³ Each of these readings contributes to our understanding of “The Swimmer,” but an overriding attention to intertextuality risks obscuring the very specific relationship within the text between Merrill and his suburban surroundings.

The roadway appears in the story after a line break, underscoring its intrusive, interruptive function within the narrative. Significantly, the narrator uses the imagined presence of the reader to signal the geographic shift presented by this physical barrier.

Had you gone for a Sunday afternoon ride that day you might have seen him, close to naked, standing on the shoulders of route 424, waiting for a chance to cross. You might have wondered if he was the victim of foul play, had his car broken down, or was he merely a fool. Standing barefoot in the deposits of the highway—beer cans, rags, and blowout patches—exposed to all kinds of ridicule, he seemed pitiful. (*Stories*, 607)

The roadway and the modern inevitability of automobile traffic disrupt Merrill's pastoral progress and the idyllic vision of his "cartographer's eye," but this particular disruption also calls attention to the reading event.⁴ The narrator's second-person address signals the suburb's function as a mediating space both within the story and between the reader and the text. Cheever turns the thru way into a scene of reading, placing the reader within the cars zooming past, calling attention to the way suburban geography marks Merrill as a displaced figure in the scene. The roadway, in effect, cannot accommodate his presence.

On the other side of Route 424, Merrill encounters the further impediment of the public pool where lifeguards harass him for being in the water without an "identification disk," and he must quickly scurry away through "the hurricane fence" (*Stories*, 608). Having successfully crossed that border, Merrill finds himself back on familiar territory, yet now the sense of his being out-of-place is more overtly described as transgressive. "He called hullo, hullo, to warn the Hallorans of his approach, to palliate his invasion of their privacy" (*Stories*, 608). To be sure, Merrill has been invading people's privacy for most of the story—a point subtly indicated earlier with a reference to the Levys' "PRIVATE PROPERTY sign" (*Stories*, 605). But the roadway and the public pool more fully expose the transgressive nature of Merrill's progress, deconstructing the opposition implied by "public" and "private" in the story. Merrill's intrusive presence in supposedly public spaces—the roadway and the public pool—reframes his "contribution to modern geography" (*Stories*, 603) as a transgressive act. Merrill trespasses wherever he goes.

Starting from this reading of "The Swimmer," this essay focuses on Cheever's *The Housebreaker of Shady Hill*. Paying particular attention to the title story of the collection and "The Country Husband," I argue that transgression as a physical and social inevitability in suburbia unites Cheever's Shady Hill stories. This unity is more than thematic. While other writers in the 1950s—such as the satirist John Keats, novelists Louis Bromfield and Sloan Wilson, and social critics David Riesman and William H. Whyte—variously detailed the depravity of suburban culture in order to expose its dangerous banality, Cheever looks on the trespasses of suburban life with a more sympathetic eye.⁵ More than simply offsetting familiar postwar critiques of suburbia, Cheever discovers in transgression an ambiguous mode of agency that complements the equivocal geographies his characters inhabit and that Cheever himself celebrates.

The Shady Hill stories present an ideal occasion within Cheever's

exceptional career to explore his relationship to suburban spaces and to understand how he transforms his characters' transgressions into acts that embrace the fiction of suburban community. According to Scott Donaldson, "With the publication of *Shady Hill* in September 1958, [Cheever] became fixed in the public mind as a chronicler of suburban life."⁶ The shift from the predominantly urban stories collected in *The Enormous Radio* (1953) to the *Shady Hill* stories that appeared in *The New Yorker* from 1953 to 1957 marks the collection as a transitional moment in Cheever's writing. The public perception of Cheever as a "chronicler of suburban life" remains an important element of his reputation and, in many ways, this perception encourages us to read for a sense of unity in Cheever's suburban tales. For Donaldson, the *Shady Hill* stories are connected by "the faintly ironic, far from judgmental, tone of the storyteller" and the way in which the characters "conspire in the pretense that everything is perfectly all right."⁷ Robert A. Morace attributes the unified nature of Cheever's fiction to the sense that his characters "all face the same problem: how to live in a world that, in spite of all of its middle-class comforts and assurances, suddenly appears inhospitable, even dangerous, a world that appears to be growing more and more incoherent and 'preposterous' everyday."⁸

These observations triangulate the ambivalence of Cheever's narrator, the illusory nature of the suburban ideal, and the fragile structures of middle-class life. All three concepts are central to the historical context of Cheever's *Shady Hill*, and I build on these ideas by delving beneath them, offering a more foundational claim about the role suburban spaces play in Cheever's fiction. Through their indiscretions and trespasses, Cheever's suburbanites reaffirm their tenuous positions within the equivocal spaces of suburbia's private geographies. The *Shady Hill* stories do not set out to expose the menace lurking behind the suburban façade, nor do they engage in the "veneer stripping" that Catherine Jurca convincingly argues "has been a mainstay of the suburban novel since the twenties."⁹ But neither are the stories intentional or unwitting defenses of suburbia. In *Shady Hill*, Cheever offers a sympathetic portrait of the transgressions that sustain a suburban community. *Shady Hill*'s ambiguous spaces and ambivalent trespassers invite us to reassess transgression as fundamental to Cheever's embrace of suburbia as a literary site within which to explore our essential human frailty. In *Shady Hill*, transgression makes the suburb "suburban."

Johnny Hake, the narrator of "The Housebreaker of Shady Hill"

and one of American literature's most likable intruders, seems a perfect fit for M. P. Baumgartner's profile of a successful suburban burglar: "It would appear that the most successful burglars are those who manage to blend in among the respectable citizens."¹⁰ Hake's comfortable middle-class lifestyle in Shady Hill is threatened when he loses his job, and he turns to burglarizing his neighbors in order to maintain his place within the community. More than just our introduction to Shady Hill, "Housebreaker" establishes the tone for the entire collection. Hake's trespasses seem inevitably linked to the middle-class, suburban spaces he and his family occupy and, in each of the stories, Shady Hill's social and physical geographies play a formative role in the nature of the transgressions committed and the narratives' ambiguous resolutions.

A resident of suburbia, Cheever himself was no stranger to the suburbs' uncertain geographies. Scott Donaldson records that, while living in Westchester during the 1950s, "Cheever was arrested for vagrancy as he walked in his working clothes—a rather sloppy outfit of old sport shirt and torn jeans—down to his office in the station plaza." An incident that surely influenced the ending of "Housebreaker," Cheever's apparently anomalous stroll challenged the sumptuary codes for acceptable behavior: "What was a man doing, in old clothes and on foot, in the middle of the day in this commuting exurb?"¹¹ This brush with suburban trespassing epitomized Cheever's ambivalent relationship with his new surroundings. As Donaldson writes, "Cheever's attraction to the world of the rich was accompanied by his realization that he did not belong there. . . . He was within and without, dancing in the ballroom and staring in from the windows like a child."¹² In the essay "Moving Out," Cheever acknowledges that his move to Westchester resulted from just such an untenable position: "We were not poor enough for subsidized housing and not anything like rich enough for the new buildings that were going up around us."¹³ Cheever gives an insider's view of the mass middle-class exodus from New York City in the late 1940s and 1950s, citing the new direction in housing development as central to this suburban migration: "the rich of the city were getting richer and the friable middle ground where we stood was vanishing" ("Moving," 108). Cheever relays a now-familiar story of urban gentrification, replacing more modest housing with "the glass towers of a new class" ("Moving," 108).

In one real and physical sense, then, the suburbs provided Cheever and his family a place to live in comfort with room to grow; yet he cannot resist describing his move out of the city as an exile into hostile terrain: "My God, the suburbs! They encircled the city's bound-

aries like enemy territory and we thought of them as a loss of privacy, a cesspool of conformity and a life of indescribable dreariness in some split-level village where the place name appeared in *The New York Times* only when some bored housewife blew off her head with a shotgun” (“Moving,” 108). Over time, he reconciled himself to both the reality of suburban living and the perception of suburbia, and his fictional representations maintain the tension between the two. At the end of “Moving Out,” Cheever declares, “The truth is that I’m crazy about the suburbs and I don’t care who knows it” (“Moving,” 111). The dreariness, conformity, loss of privacy and occasional murder in Shady Hill come at the reader with what Donaldson calls a “duality of outlook”: Cheever’s ability to recognize both the absurdity and the allure of suburban desires.¹⁴ Cheever writes from both sides of the window, occupying an equivocal space that mirrors the uncertainty of the suburban spaces he represents. In Shady Hill, transgressions maintain the duality of suburban living that Cheever ultimately embraces.

The ambivalence of Cheever’s stories also complements the broader cultural indecisiveness regarding suburban development in the postwar era. The Shady Hill stories appeared at a time of historical change in the way developers built suburban communities and in the way people were thinking and writing about the suburbs. Cheever inflects his older, Westchester-esque community of Shady Hill with then-contemporary concerns about mass-produced suburban neighborhoods and the postwar emphasis on home ownership and class status. This may not be so surprising since Westchester itself experienced its own version of postwar economic anxiety. According to Alex Shoumatoff, “[f]rom about 1880 to 1940, a few people lived in a degree of material splendor that will never be known in Westchester again.” Yet even the exclusive enclaves could not withstand the impending wave of historical transformation: “in the end the outside world caught up with it. The days of big houses ended with the Second World War.”¹⁵ A 1960 article in *Cosmopolitan* corroborates this assessment, pointing to Westchester County as an example of suburbia’s “illusion of wealth.”¹⁶

As many scholars have noted, what distinguished the postwar era of suburban construction from the developments of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century was the role of the federal government.¹⁷ The U.S. Housing (Wagner-Steagall) Act of 1937 marked the entrance of the federal government into the construction of low-cost public housing. During the 1930s, the Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration worked hand-in-hand to trans-

form the suburban home into the normal expectation of the white middle-class, condoning racial discrimination through prejudicial loan practices while abandoning the city to its own residential and financial ills. The Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 continued this trend, further eliminating affordable urban housing and exacerbating racial inequality while shifting federal subsidies to private developers.¹⁸ As Delores Hayden argues, this federal intervention contributed to the unsettling of the terms “public” and “private”: “In the vast new suburbs built in the late 1940s and 1950s, definitions of public and private were reshaped, as loans guaranteed by the federal government poured into private real estate development firms.”¹⁹

One of the greatest beneficiaries of this federally-funded windfall was the firm Levitt and Sons.²⁰ As Cheever was writing his *Shady Hill* stories, the Levittown model of mass-produced suburban development was permanently transforming the residential geography of the United States. The three Levittowns constructed between 1947 and 1958 helped to naturalize the relationship between the single-family suburban home and middle-class status. According to Barbara M. Kelly, despite the fact the original Levittown was constructed for veterans and families with working-class incomes, “the Levittown myth” always assigned a middle-class status to the families, signaling the link between home ownership and middle-class standing.²¹ Considering that the “friable middle ground” was clearly on Cheever’s mind, it is difficult not to read this postwar fortification of class identity alongside *Shady Hill*. Apart from the racial segregation that still plagues America’s metropolitan regions, the most enduring effect of federal policies and programs was the redefining of middle-class status and value around the single-family, privately owned, suburban home. As Kelly argues, “[t]he postwar low-cost housing funded by the federal government succeeded, not by violating the existing social customs of the residents, but rather by reinforcing and expanding the prevailing cultural norms of the middle class.”²² While the values of privacy, property, and home ownership were in no way unique to the postwar era—these virtues had been extolled since colonial times, in Jefferson’s call for a country of yeomen farmers, and in the connection between voting rights and property—the government’s role in planning and development placed the suburban home at the center of debates about national identity following World War II.

The currency of this historical moment is evident in the critical response to *Shady Hill*. Literary discourse questioned whether the suburbs provide a suitable setting for serious literature, and Cheever’s failure to lambaste his fictional suburbanites figured prominently in

contemporary reviews. Scott Donaldson notes that “*The Housebreaker of Shady Hill* generated some of the worst reviews of [Cheever’s] life and soon disappeared from the bookstores.”²³ Even ostensibly complimentary responses were written with undercurrents of condescension. Referring to Cheever as the “Dante of the cocktail hour,” Richard Gilman of *The Commonweal* praised the epic, moral, and literary quality of Cheever’s fiction while disparaging the subject matter. In the *Saturday Review*, Granville Hicks delighted in Cheever’s Shady Hill stories, but he did so despite their suburban setting: “If, then, Cheever’s stories are rich and exciting, the explanation lies not in his material but in what he is able to make of it.” Writing for the *Partisan Review*, Irving Howe took issue with Cheever for not adopting the corrosive perspective of a social critic: “Cheever really knows a great deal about suburban life; but he cheats. He systematically refuses to face the meaning of the material he has himself brought to awareness and then suppressed. A toothless Thurber, he connives in the cowardice of contemporary life.”²⁴

The sense of urgency and threat implicit in Howe’s criticism of *Shady Hill* strikes a chord with the prevailing critiques of suburban conformity and middle-class mediocrity taking shape in the 1950s. But to fault Cheever’s stories for their lack of social criticism seems as critically unhelpful as present-day efforts merely to uncover the very same social critiques of suburbia Cheever’s reviewers could not find.²⁵ The ambivalence Cheever brings to his suburban representations and his social trespassers offers something far more telling than a reiteration of the popular critical discourse about suburban alienation and superficiality. Cheever’s hesitancy to pass judgment complements the ambiguity of the spaces and behaviors within his fictional suburb. One never quite knows where one is in Shady Hill. Residents can never quite discern which spaces are truly private spaces, what lines exist to be crossed, or which actions violate a suburban preoccupation with not knowing the world beyond the confines of their neighborhoods.

Looking back on his father’s writing and his family’s move from New York City to Westchester County, Benjamin Cheever writes:

Estates are private. Nobody is allowed on an estate. But if you do get there, then you can do exactly what you want. You’ve already broken one rule, and so the rest don’t matter.

And if there are traditions in Westchester, one of those most dearly beloved is that *estates are public.* The rich land-owners are generous, or absent, or both. The trespassers are fearless.²⁶

This tension between the private and public nature of Westchester

estates pervades Cheever's Shady Hill stories. As a literary work, *Shady Hill* can productively occupy the middle ground between critique and defense because of the uncertain nature of the suburban spaces the stories represent. The postwar explosion of suburban development, its permanent alteration of United States geography, and the way the private and public aspects of suburban culture crept into mid-century political and sociological debates made suburbia the perfect locale for Cheever's nuanced exploration of triumphant human fallibility. Donaldson casts Cheever as a kind of Neddy Merrill: both a voyeur and a participant in the spectacle, a trespasser at his own window. While an apt metaphor for his authorial position, it is also a pointed image of the entire suburban community Cheever represents in *Shady Hill*. Benjamin Cheever's provocative claim that once "[y]ou've already broken one rule . . . the rest don't matter" suggests something more than the self-perpetuating nature of transgressive behavior. There is something untenable and unreal about the world of Shady Hill, as if to be there were already a violation of some rule. Like the interlopers on private estates, John Cheever's trespassers are also "fearless." They all have a tenuous hold on the "friable middle ground" of postwar suburbia, and they trespass boldly as a way of staking their claims to that uncertainty.

In "The Housebreaker of Shady Hill," Johnny Hake seems, if not content, at least at home with such uncertainties. "We have a nice house with a garden and a place outside for cooking meat," he says, "and on summer nights, sitting there with the kids and looking into the front of Christina's dress as she bends over to salt the steaks, or just gazing at the lights in Heaven, I am as thrilled as I am thrilled by more hardy and dangerous pursuits, and I guess this is what is meant by the pain and sweetness of life."²⁷ Hake depicts with something near admiration the familiar icons of suburbia—house, garden, patio, grilled steaks—and adds a touching vignette of intra-marital voyeurism before trailing off into equivocation. The "I guess" creates a sense of critical distance, leaving the reader to wonder precisely what Hake must "guess" about: the scene itself or the meaning of the phrase.²⁸ Yet the most intriguing aspect of Hake's introduction is the reciprocal voyeurism Cheever creates between Hake and the reader. "My name is Johnny Hake," he announces in the first line of the story. "I'm thirty-six years old, stand five feet eleven in my socks, weigh one hundred and forty-two pounds stripped, and am, so to speak, naked at the moment and talking into the dark" (*Shady Hill*, 3). We find ourselves

thrust into a confrontational engagement with a man who, at least figuratively speaking, stands before us naked, preparing us for further revelations of intimate detail. From the first line of the story, the reader is intentionally constructed as a voyeur. The “*banlieue* called Shady Hill” (*Shady Hill*, 3) emerges as part of a shared voyeuristic urge—between the reader and the text, and between Hake and the garden patio, the front of Christina’s dress, and the stars above. And, as if to prepare the reader, Hake casually connects this voyeuristic space to the uncertain thrill of “dangerous pursuits.”

Within the story, such pursuits take on an air of inevitability. Worried about the loss of his job and his dwindling funds, Hake becomes obsessed with the thought of money: “I have yearned for some women—turned green, in fact—but it seemed to me that I had never yearned for anyone the way I yearned that night for money” (*Shady Hill*, 10). He goes for a walk and almost immediately finds himself at the Warburtons’ home where he and Christina had attended a dinner party earlier in the evening. Just as suddenly, Hake finds himself inside the house, up the stairs, and in the master bedroom stealing Carl Warburton’s wallet. Cheever takes the reader from Hake’s bedroom to the inside of the Warburtons’ home in under half-a-paragraph. The short narrative space stylistically underscores both the unpremeditated nature of the act and how seamlessly a walk turns into an act of trespass. The sense of inevitability surrounding Hake’s stroll into burglary speaks directly to the physical and social nature of suburban space. The Warburtons’ party and Hake’s leisurely walk through neighborhood gardens and lawns affirm M. P. Baumgartner’s contention that “[s]ocial life is encapsulated for the most part within private homes and yards” and that street life in suburbia seems almost nonexistent “because there are no destinations along most roads except private homes.”²⁹ The subtle detail that “[t]he floor of [the Warburtons’] front hall is black-and-white marble from the old Ritz” (*Shady Hill*, 7) brilliantly marks the ambiguous convergence of private and social spaces in suburbia. In the cycle of *Shady Hill* stories, social life does not seem to exist apart from the private realm and, as Cheever himself had learned, to walk in suburbia is to be always on the verge of trespass.

Following the break-in, Hake becomes hypersensitive to a discourse of theft. Newspaper reports about burglary lead to physical agitation, and the very mention of the word “steal” brings about facial ticks and nausea. Enumerating his past transgressions, he notes, “It was only ‘steal’ and all its allied nouns, verbs, and adverbs that had the power to tyrannize over my nervous system, as if I had evolved, unconsciously, some doctrine wherein the act of theft took precedence

over all the other sins in the Decalogue and was a sign of moral death" (*Shady Hill*, 17–18). The crime Hake commits makes him more aware of a pervasive sense of trespass. The morning after the burglary, he compares his own "moral death" with the view of Shady Hill from his bathroom window. "Had I looked, the next morning, from my bathroom window into the evil-smelling ruin of some great city," he reports, "the shock of recalling what I had done might not have been so violent, but the moral bottom had dropped out of my world without changing a mote of sunlight" (*Shady Hill*, 12). A standard city-suburb dichotomy forms the center of Hake's reflection on morality—a facile binarism that Cheever deconstructs throughout his stories and one that begins to fray at the edges even before Hake concludes. What begins as a contrast between city and suburb moves to the more specific contrast between his morality and Shady Hill and ends with an eerie image of undisturbed sameness. The burglary has altered precisely nothing within the order of Shady Hill, moral or otherwise, not even "a mote of sunlight."

Hake's "violent" reaction to the burglary may be more properly understood as his initial reaction to the already transgressive nature of the suburbs. A sense of danger creeps everywhere in Shady Hill: in the newspaper headlines, in Sheila Warburton's fear about the "terrible slum" (*Shady Hill*, 7) her husband must walk through on the way to the train station, and in the pervasive anxiety implied by the roaming police car at the end of the story. "I was convinced that the corruption had begun" (*Shady Hill*, 10), Hake says after extinguishing his cigarette on the night of the burglary. Though contemplating his pulmonary health, the pronouncement implies something beyond that discrete fear. "Housebreaker" is the reader's introduction into the corruption that runs through the *Shady Hill* collection—into the adultery, drunkenness, burglary, occasional violence, and other trespasses that constitute the social fabric of Cheever's suburb. Hake's theft of Warburton's wallet is not an anomaly to the moral order of Shady Hill but an element in that order. His success as a burglar may depend upon his ability to blend in, but the story suggests something slightly different. The burglary itself allows Hake to blend into Shady Hill, providing him with the money he needs to sustain his place within the suburb.

In a last-minute development that borders on an instance of *deus ex machina*, Hake gets his job back and receives an advance on his salary. Arriving as it does toward the end of the narrative, this turn of good fortune promises a sense of resolution that the story's final set-piece effectively unravels. Once again flush with cash, Hake surrepti-

tiously returns the money he stole from the Warburtons. As he walks home, a police car pulls alongside him and an officer asks, "What are you doing out at this time of night, Mr. Hake?" He replies that he is out walking the dog—"There was no dog in sight, but they didn't look"—and proceeds home, "whistling merrily in the dark" (*Shady Hill*, 30). Here, at last, having already come to terms with his crime and repaid his debt, Hake finds someone to confirm his earlier belief that he had somehow violated the "moral" order of Shady Hill, but his violation has nothing to do with the burglary and everything to do with the social spaces of suburbia. As Baumgartner notes, "What distinguishes [suspicious persons] from others is that they are out of place—in locations where strangers of any kind are uncommon or where people with their particular social characteristics are rarely seen."³⁰ Clearly, Hake is not a stranger—the officer addresses him by name—but his presence on the sidewalk does mark him as "out of place." In equivocal spaces—like suburban sidewalks—that seem neither fully private nor fully public, all "social characteristics" create the potential for suspicion. Shady Hill's roving police car signals a pervasive insecurity about suburbia's private geographies, necessitating surveillance tactics that elide the distinction between insiders and outsiders. The morning after Hake steals Warburton's wallet, he suffers a crisis of conscience: "I had criminally entered the house of a friend and broken all the unwritten laws that held the community together" (*Shady Hill*, 13). Exactly the opposite turns out to be true. The burglary serves as a temporary reparative for the community by maintaining Hake's place within it. In the end, the closest he comes to any discernable aberrant behavior is walking home after dark.³¹

"Housebreaker" ends on the sidewalk, replacing Hake's benign backyard voyeurism in the opening paragraph with a network of surveillance that obscures more deeply-embedded trespasses. Leaving us on the sidewalk, the first story in *Shady Hill* draws our attention to the way public and social spaces intersect with, and undermine, the physical and ideological privileging of the private realm in suburbia. Like the roadway in "The Swimmer," the sidewalk makes the reader overtly aware of the story's suburban topography. Cheever achieves similar effects throughout the collection by juxtaposing the private home with the social spaces of Shady Hill. In "O Youth and Beauty!," for example, Cheever writes that Cash Bentley and his wife, Louise, "belonged to the country club, although they could not afford it, but in the case of the Bentleys nobody ever pointed this out, and Cash was

one of the best-liked men in Shady Hill" (*Shady Hill*, 34). Though the reference is brief, the country club signifies how homes function within Shady Hill. In a 1930s study of leisure in Westchester County, a member of an exclusive country club offered the following assessment: "Our club . . . takes the place of a country home for some of our members. We do not want anyone in it whom we would not invite to our own homes."³² The Bentleys' country club membership asserts their claim to a place within the social spaces of Shady Hill's private homes. By living beyond their means, however, bowing to the social codes of belonging, they also allow their neighbors to ignore the decline within their midst. In the end, Cash's demise plays out as a parable of the difference, economic or otherwise, the private geographies of suburbia seek to exclude. Just moments after "cutting out of the current copy of *Life* those scenes of mayhem, disaster, and violent death that she felt might corrupt the children" (*Shady Hill*, 46), Louise shoots Cash as he drunkenly hurdles their sofa. After some confusion about the safety switch, "[t]he pistol went off and Louise got him in midair. She shot him dead" (*Shady Hill*, 46). The final two sentences construct Louise as both a passive and active participant in Cash's death. The rhetorical ambiguity surrounding her transgression extends the uncertainty of the Bentleys' social and economic status, but the ending also exposes how the lack of distinction between social and private life tends toward the elimination of difference—here, literally, the elimination of Cash.³³

The train station, the threshold Cheever's commuters cross daily on their way to and from the city, serves as the most prevalent space of social interaction outside Shady Hill's private homes. "The Sorrows of Gin" ends indecisively with Mr. Lawton driving to the train station to retrieve his daughter who is fleeing the gin-soaked, paranoid space of the Lawton home. In "Just Tell Me Who It Was," Will Pym strikes Henry Bulstrode—with whom he suspects his much younger wife is having an affair—on the platform before boarding the train, but the likelihood that this will dispel his suspicions about his wife seems dubious. The train station figures most prominently in "The Five-forty-eight," the darkest story in the *Shady Hill* collection. Miss Dent tracks Blake from his office in the city onto the train bound for Shady Hill where she confronts him with the debilitating mental anguish she has suffered in the wake of their one-night affair. When they arrive in Shady Hill, Miss Dent escorts Blake at gunpoint away from the train platform where she makes him prostrate himself in the dirt. She decides not to fire the gun, and her decision to walk away seems premised on the physical surroundings. Cheever chips away at the

suburban representation with standard “urban” details: an abandoned building, a rat picking through a discarded paper bag, the suddenly industrial and commercial area adjacent to the station. “‘I’ve never been here before,’ [Miss Dent] said. ‘I thought it would look different. I didn’t think it would look so shabby’” (*Shady Hill*, 132). Her delusions about Blake and her revenge fantasy depended upon a specific idea of Shady Hill. Not unlike the way the home challenges Merrill’s imagined cartography in “The Swimmer,” the physical reality surrounding the platform disrupts Miss Dent’s delusion. But in this instance, Cheever pushes the contrast even further. The home Blake returns to after Miss Dent leaves has internalized the sense of disrepair and the uncanny surroundings at the commuter platform. Blake has recently imposed a two-week-long silent treatment—which he has thoughtfully marked on the calendar—in retribution for his wife’s failure to prepare dinner, and the narrator reveals that “it had been eight or ten years since she had been able to touch him with her entreaties” (*Shady Hill*, 121–22).

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the Shady Hill train station is always so menacing. In what many critics consider the finest story in the *Shady Hill* collection, “The Country Husband,” Francis Weed discovers a sense of newfound confidence on the commuter platform in a moment of fortuitous voyeurism. As Francis waits for his train to the city, another train passes by and, through the window of a sleeper-car compartment, he sees “an unclothed woman of exceptional beauty, combing her golden hair. She passed like an apparition through Shady Hill, combing and combing her hair, and Francis followed her with his eyes until she was out of sight” (*Shady Hill*, 64). Francis was already feeling buoyed by the brief embrace he shared with the babysitter, Anne Murchison, the previous night. When a neighbor, Mrs. Wrightson, sidles alongside him and begins complaining about her living room curtains, Francis feels sufficiently emboldened to offer his own advice on interior design: “Paint [your windows] black on the inside, and shut up” (*Shady Hill*, 64). Though this verbal indiscretion will lead to a quarrel between Francis and his wife, Julia, for the moment he indulges the “bracing sensation of independence” (*Shady Hill*, 65) and nurses his illicit fantasies about the babysitter. But the perception is fleeting and uncertain, an embodiment of the in-between space of the commuter station on which it occurs. His sense of independence quickly dissolves, encumbered by moral doubt and social restraint: “Francis thought of the strenuousness of containing his physicalness within the patterns he had chosen” (*Shady Hill*, 66).

If "The Housebreaker of Shady Hill" sets the tone for the Shady Hill stories, then the collection reaches its early apex in "The Country Husband," the third of the collection's eight stories. The story begins with the near-tragedy of a plane crash in a heavy rainstorm outside of Philadelphia. Though a survivor of the emergency landing, Francis cannot inspire any interest in his story, not even among his own family. Upon his return home, various fights and disagreements break out among the children and between Francis and Julia, and these petty arguments soon blossom into full-blown mayhem, recalling the "atmosphere of intense and misplaced domesticity" (*Shady Hill*, 50) inside the flailing plane. No one in the family can quite fathom Francis's description of the landing. His oldest daughter, Helen, "doesn't understand about the plane crash, because there wasn't a drop of rain in Shady Hill" (*Shady Hill*, 54). The world outside their suburb remains more than an unknown quantity; in this case, it cannot possibly exist.

"The Country Husband" distinguishes itself as the most intricate story in the *Shady Hill* collection, giving the reader the widest perspective on Shady Hill's plenitude. As Vladimir Nabokov noted, the story "is really a miniature novel beautifully traced, so that the impression of there being a little too many things happening in it is completely redeemed by the satisfying coherence of its thematic underlacings."³⁴ If "The Country Husband" does not exhibit the same tightly-wound narrative coherence of Cheever's other suburban stories, it nevertheless becomes the most emblematic story in the collection because of its capacity for keeping the reader intensely attuned to the equivocal spaces of its suburban geography. The end of the story opens out from the backyards of Shady Hill into an almost mythic world "where kings in golden suits ride elephants over the mountains" (*Shady Hill*, 83). Yet despite the epic overtones of the conclusion, Francis and his neighbors remain tethered to the tenuous social and economic spaces of Shady Hill: "The village hangs, morally and economically, from a thread; but it hangs by its thread in the evening light" (*Shady Hill*, 82).³⁵

Two minor characters in "The Country Husband" contribute significantly to Shady Hill's transgressive social fabric, as well as to the story's sense of fullness. Gertrude Flannery and Jupiter, a little girl and a black retriever respectively, trespass their way through their neighbors' yards and houses. After dinner on the night of the crash landing, Francis stepped outside into his garden for a cigarette and "listened to the evening sounds of Shady Hill" (*Shady Hill*, 55). He hears Mr. Nixon yelling at the squirrels, the distinctive rhythm of people playing tennis at the Babcocks', the sound of someone cutting

grass, and Donald Goslin's pitiful rendition of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata." The Weeds' garden serves as the site for the auditory intersection of multiple private lives. In a manner that the other stories do not quite match, "The Country Husband" exposes the overlapping and intrusive spaces of Shady Hill's geography. And, as if on cue, Jupiter intrudes upon the scene, "crash[ing] through the tomato vines with the remains of a felt hat in his mouth" (*Shady Hill*, 56). Though described as "an anomaly" (*Shady Hill*, 56), Jupiter's intrusions and thefts expose the unacknowledged trespasses occurring throughout Shady Hill. "Jupiter's days were numbered," the narrator suggests. "The Wrightsons' German gardener or the Farquarsons' cook would soon poison him. Even old Mr. Nixon might put some arsenic in the garbage that Jupiter loved" (*Shady Hill*, 56). Yet despite this list of potential assassins, it is Jupiter at the end of the story who triumphantly "prances through the tomato vines" (*Shady Hill*, 83). Like everyone else in Shady Hill, he treads a precarious line. Jupiter's trespasses continually tempt fate, but he always eludes capture.

While no one has threatened to poison her, young Gertrude Flannery shares several character traits with Jupiter, not the least of which is how the neighbors regard her: "Gertrude was a stray" (*Shady Hill*, 67). Though she hails from a perfectly respectable family, Gertrude has transformed herself into a suburban vagrant:

Opening your front door in the morning, you would find Gertrude sitting on your stoop. Going into the bathroom to shave, you would find Gertrude using the toilet. Looking into your son's crib, you would find it empty, and, looking further, you would find that Gertrude had pushed him in his baby carriage into the next village. She was helpful, pervasive, honest, hungry, and loyal. She never went home of her own choice. (*Shady Hill*, 67)

Though specter-like in her intrusions and spatial transpositions, Gertrude, like Jupiter, benevolently embodies Shady Hill's ubiquitous and often invisible trespasses. While Gertrude and Jupiter represent a form of existential homelessness attributed to the geographic "nowhere" of suburbia, it seems more apt to read them as the most at-home of Shady Hill's transgressive inhabitants.³⁶ The entire suburb belongs to Gertrude and Jupiter in a way not openly available to the other residents of Shady Hill. Though an astute reader of Cheever's fiction, Scott Donaldson misses the point when he claims that "Gertrude Flannery, like Jupiter, knows no boundaries and is hence an anomaly in Shady Hill," as does Lawrence Jay Dessner when he includes Gertrude among those characters excluded from "[t]he story's suppos-

edly unifying and unified structure.”³⁷ Gertrude and Jupiter exist as cathartic sites in Shady Hill, taking on the neighbors’ empathic displacements of their own transgressions.

By rescuing Gertrude and Jupiter from their apparently minor roles and stray narrative lines, the reader gains a more complete view of Shady Hill and, certainly, a more comprehensive perspective than Francis Weed’s somewhat benighted vision of the neighborhood. Admittedly, Francis does have a partial sense of the suburb’s equivocal nature, which he correctly links to Shady Hill’s entrenched ahistoricism. While at the Farquarsons’ dinner party, he recognizes the maid from his tour of duty in Europe during World War II. The woman had been publicly chastised for having “lived with the German commandant during the Occupation” (*Shady Hill*, 58).³⁸ Unlike most of the stories in the collection, “The Country Husband” includes explicit references to World War II and Europe. The Farquarsons’ maid temporarily interrupts the ahistoricism of Shady Hill’s private geographies. Francis’s awareness of the historical reality the maid represents, coupled with his own limited perspective on the transgressions occurring throughout the suburb, introduces the tension between the external world and Shady Hill’s denial of global history and geography.

A better understanding of this tension in “The Country Husband” emerges in light of Cheever’s “Italy stories.” Cheever and his family spent the year 1956 in Italy, a location that served as the setting for “The Bella Lingua,” “The Duchess,” “Boy in Rome,” “World of Apples” and, in part, “Another Story.” The latter describes the disastrous attempts of Prince Marcantonio Parlapiano to adjust to life in the suburb of Bullet Park. Displaced from the family castle in Verona and perennially short of money, the Prince marries Grace Osborn, an American working for the Consulate in Milan. Once in the United States, the Prince has trouble speaking English and dressing in an American style, and he never quite grasps the customs of the cocktail hour. One night, the narrator’s wife overhears a conversation concerning the Prince’s marital trouble and concludes that her own life has been squandered. “I have the most terrible feeling of waste,” she tells her husband. “I know it isn’t your fault, but I’ve really given too much of myself to you and the children” (*Stories*, 628). Like the Farquarsons’ maid, the Prince represents an “old world” intrusion that threatens to disrupt the suburb. Here, the Prince’s inability to adapt to life in Bullet Park initiates the more familiar suburban predicament of the unsatisfactory marriage. Of Cheever’s “Italy stories,” John L. Brown claims that “Rome indeed, behind a facade of a millenary culture, can be just as sad and sinister, evil and tawdry as Shady Hill

behind its facade of a plasticized well-being.”³⁹ Robert G. Collins makes a similar point, arguing that the Italian stories “are only a variation on the stories in which the protagonist is painfully separated from the world in which he exists, although it is supposedly the one native to him.”⁴⁰

These readings suggest an intriguing symmetry in Cheever’s work that, nevertheless, cannot quite explain why Francis is unable to assimilate the old world and the new in “The Country Husband.” Cheever writes: “The people in the Farquarsons’ living room seemed united in their tacit claim that there had been no past, no war—that there was no danger or trouble in the world. In the recorded history of human arrangements, this extraordinary meeting would have fallen into place, but the atmosphere of Shady Hill made the memory unseemly and impolite” (*Shady Hill*, 59). The maid’s presence momentarily confronts Francis with the untenable reality of Shady Hill’s ahistorical geography, but he just as quickly dismisses the intrusion. It is, in fact, after this very dinner party that Weed drives the babysitter home, roughly embraces her in the car, and kisses her at the doorstep to her house. Such transgressions are never out of place in Shady Hill; only being caught at them is unseemly. In short, this is the problem with the Farquarsons’ maid. Her transgressions were brought to light—literally in Europe and again, figuratively, through Francis’s recognition of her. The “atmosphere of Shady Hill” cannot admit the historical or spatial context of such a story because the trespassers of Shady Hill remain largely undetected. In Shady Hill, transgressions operate beneath the surface.

Retelling the story about the Farquarsons’ maid would, indeed, constitute a social faux pas precisely because the idea of Shady Hill depends upon the willed ignorance of “danger or trouble in the world.” (Remember Louise Bentley removing photos of death and violence from *Life*.) “Looking back over the recent history of Shady Hill for some precedent,” the narrator reports, “[Francis] found there was none. There was no turpitude; there had not been a divorce since he lived there; there had not even been a breath of scandal. Things seemed arranged with more propriety even than in the Kingdom of Heaven” (*Shady Hill*, 66). Whether or not anyone has breathed a word about it, Shady Hill has turpitude to spare, and though divorce may be equally unheard of, the cycle of Shady Hill stories suggests that marriages remain intact, as will the Weeds’, because husbands and wives fear some greater social, sexual, domestic, or economic deprivation. The encounter with the Farquarsons’ maid only raises questions about what types of transgressions Shady Hill allows for, even relies upon. The reader

of *Shady Hill* knows what Francis seems unable to recognize: he could likely get away with whatever he is contemplating.

The repressed awareness of the world beyond Shady Hill in “The Country Husband” suggests a far more pervasive geographic and historical project at work in America’s suburbs. According to Susan Schulten, the World War II era witnessed a unique alignment between advancements in cartography and America’s involvement in global conflict. Detailing sales and production figures for maps and atlases, Schulten recounts an unprecedented nationwide preoccupation with mapping and alternative approaches to geographic representation during the Second World War: “alongside the proliferation of new and unusual maps in the 1940s we find endless discussions of the concepts of geography and mapping . . . ; in fact, during the 1940s there existed in the popular media a familiarity with maps that would have been inconceivable prior to the war.”⁴¹ In response to these new interests and developments in geographic perspective, Rand McNally issued the *Cosmopolitan Atlas* “on October 22, 1949, and in just over a month nearly all copies of the first edition had been sold, not to schools and libraries but to individuals.”⁴² By denying the world beyond Shady Hill, Cheever’s suburbanites promote an ideology directly opposed to this “cosmopolitan atlas.” The *banlieue* of Shady Hill is anything but a *banlieue*; there is nothing cosmopolitan about it. Trying to escape her own history, the Farquarsons’ maid finds a safe harbor in the geographically isolationist, ahistorical decorum of Shady Hill.

In the final analysis, Shady Hill embraces its own ahistoricity by becoming quasi-fictional even to its own residents. Clayton Thomas, a young man from the neighborhood whose father had been killed in the war—another reminder of the past Shady Hill tries to displace—tells Francis that “what seems to me to be really wrong with Shady Hill is that it doesn’t have any future” (*Shady Hill*, 72). Between the repressed past and the non-existent future, Shady Hill lingers in an ahistoric present, becoming a kind of unreal dreamscape for Francis. Thinking he had seen Anne Murchison pass him on the train, he follows her only to realize he had been mistaken. The experience undermines his distinction between fantasy and reality: “for if he couldn’t tell one person from another, what evidence was there that his life with Julia and the children had as much reality as his dream of iniquity in Paris or the litter, the grass smell, and the cave-shaped trees in Lovers’ Lane” (*Shady Hill*, 78). This case of mistaken identity works upon Francis in the same way the territory around the train station does upon Miss Dent or the Merrill house upon Neddy in “The Swimmer.” Through such uncertain confrontations between perception and

reality, and at the intersections between imagined cartographies and physical landscapes, Cheever grounds the reader in the unreality and ambiguity of life in postwar suburbia.

At the end of “The Country Husband” the narrator reports that “Francis is happy” (*Shady Hill*, 82). On the advice of his psychiatrist, he is engaged in therapeutic woodwork, building a coffee table for the house. Robert A. Hipkiss claims that the ending of the story “leaves its protagonist in a fragile equipoise that is remarkable for the concatenation of desires, inhibitions, fancies and facts that have inevitably placed him there.”⁴³ True enough, but this “fragile equipoise” does not exactly make Francis Weed unique among Shady Hill’s residents. As Lynne Waldeland suggests, Cheever often, if precariously, “reintegrates” his alienated characters with the larger society. Waldeland finds a useful connection between Weed and Hester Prynne in this regard: “in the end, Hawthorne and Cheever reintegrate their protagonists into their societies because, in fact, neither author really believes that there is any other arena for human fulfillment than that of human society.”⁴⁴ The comparison between Hawthorne and Cheever certainly resonates with this discussion of transgression, highlighting a literary heritage that Samuel Coale believes links Cheever to Hawthorne’s American romance.⁴⁵ The parallel between Francis and Hester, however, does not quite hold up. The Farquarsons’ maid is the true, unacknowledged Hester Prynne in the midst of Shady Hill, while Weed wrings his hands—or whittles wood—like a suburban Dimmesdale.⁴⁶ At the end of “The Country Husband,” the real question concerns the nature of the suburban society into which Cheever reintegrates his characters.

In the closing moments of the story, the narrator leaves Francis behind in the cellar with his wood. Julia cuts roses in the garden and hears an encore presentation of the sounds that filled Shady Hill earlier in the story: Mr. Nixon yelling at thieving squirrels, the lugubrious strains of Donald Goslin’s “Moonlight Sonata” and, instead of Francis calling out to Jupiter, the voice of Mrs. Masterson imploring the recalcitrant Gertrude to go home. The most significant additions to this capacious suburban scene, however, are the naked Babcocks in amorous pursuit of one another on their terrace—significant because the narrator makes it clear that only the reader “sees” them. Cheever writes, “A door on the Babcocks’ terrace flies open, and out comes Mrs. Babcock without any clothes on, pursued by her naked husband. (Their children are away at boarding school, and their terrace is screened by a hedge)” (*Shady Hill*, 83). Only after this does the reader

learn that Julia is in the garden. She calls to a sad looking cat, sadistically dressed in a doll's outfit, and then onto the scene bounds the triumphant Jupiter, slipper in mouth.

In the two garden scenes, the reader acts as the common denominator in the intersection of private lives and private spaces, and here Cheever makes that clear by positioning the reader as the most transgressive figure of all. We are the ones who glimpse the frolicking Babcocks behind their protective hedge. Perhaps in a way that only Jupiter or Gertrude could understand, our transgressive gesture at the end of "The Country Husband" allows us to claim our place within the suburb of Shady Hill. Yet, like so many other transgressions in Shady Hill, our intrusion is reparative as well. Through the hedge, we glimpse what Cheever noted about the "middle-class way of life": "Life can be as good and rich there as anyplace else." Alongside Gertrude and Jupiter, the Babcocks are Cheever's antidote to the perceived ills of suburban culture.

Notes

I thank Tom Lutz, Barbara Eckstein, and Kathleen Diffley for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

¹ John Cheever, *The Stories of John Cheever* (1978; New York: Vintage, 2000), 603. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

² John Cheever, interview with Rollene Waterman, *Saturday Review*, Sept. 13, 1958, 33.

³ Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet catalog most of these allusions and structural patterns in "'The Swimmer': Cheever's Building-roman," *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 26, no. 1 (1996), 5–6. Blythe and Sweet certainly lead the way in identifying the story's allusive contexts. See Blythe and Sweet, "The Ironic Return to the Womb in Cheever's 'The Swimmer,'" *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 22, no. 1 (1992), 8–9; "Neddy Merrill: Cheever's Failed Adam," *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 22, no. 4 (1992), 10–11; "Neddy Merrill: Cheever's Contemporary Narcissus," *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 26, no. 5 (1996), 7–9; "An Historical Allusion in Cheever's 'The Swimmer,'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 26 (1989), 557–59; "Man-Made vs. Natural Cycles: What Really Happens in 'The Swimmer,'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 27 (1990), 415–18; and "Cheever's Dark Knight of the Soul: The Failed Quest of Neddy Merrill," *Studies in Short Fiction* 29 (1992), 347–52. On parallels with Rip van Winkle, see Robert M. Slabey, "John Cheever: The 'Swimming' of America," *Critical Essays on John Cheever*, ed. R. G. Collins (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982), 180–91. On the role of color imagery, see Nora Calhoun Graves, "The Symptomatic Colors in John Cheever's 'The Swimmer,'" *Critical Essays on*

John Cheever, 191–93. For a reading of structural and thematic parallels with Dante's *Inferno*, see Stanley J. Kozikowski, "Dammed in a Fair Life: Cheever's 'The Swimmer,'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 30 (1993), 367–75.

⁴ As Scott Donaldson has pointed out, "The symbols which stand for . . . heedless progress in Cheever's fiction are almost invariably associated with transportation, a theme which links his concern with modern suburbia to a concern with modernity in general." See Donaldson, "The Machines in Cheever's Garden," *Critical Essays on John Cheever*, 142.

⁵ John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957); Louis Bromfield, *Mr. Smith* (New York: Harper, 1951); Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955); David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1950); and William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956).

⁶ Scott Donaldson, "Cheever's *Shady Hill*: A Suburban Sequence," *Modern American Short Story Sequences: Composite Fictions and Fictive Communities*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 135.

⁷ Donaldson, "Cheever's *Shady Hill*," 137.

⁸ Robert A. Morace, "From Parallels to Paradise: The Lyrical Structure of Cheever's Fiction," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 35 (1989), 509.

⁹ Catherine Jurca, *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century American Novel* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 161.

¹⁰ M. P. Baumgartner, *The Moral Order of a Suburb* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), 104.

¹¹ Scott Donaldson, *John Cheever: a Biography* (New York: Random House, 1988), 131–32.

¹² Donaldson, *John Cheever*, 130.

¹³ John Cheever, "Moving Out," *Esquire* July 1960, rpt., June 1983, 108. Hereafter cited parenthetically as "Moving."

¹⁴ Donaldson, *John Cheever*, 132.

¹⁵ Alex Schoumatoff, *Westchester: Portrait of a County* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1979), 121, 124.

¹⁶ See T. F. James, "Crack-ups in the Suburbs," *Cosmopolitan*, Oct. 1960, 64.

¹⁷ On the role of the federal government in urban and suburban planning, see Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985) and Delores Hayden, *Building Suburbia*:

Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820–2000 (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003).

¹⁸ See Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 268–75. Discussing the shift in terminology from “slum clearance and redevelopment” in the Housing Act of 1949 to “urban renewal” in 1954 (271), Hirsch writes: “The charges so often leveled at the federal effort—that it neglected the poor; that it was actually anti-poor because of its demolition of low-rent housing and inadequate relocation procedures; that it simply subsidized those who needed aid least; and that it was transformed into a program of ‘Negro clearance’—were hardly evidence of a plan gone awry. These were not ‘perversions’ of the enabling legislation, they were the direct consequences of it” (273).

¹⁹ Hayden, 129.

²⁰ Hayden notes that Levitt and Sons received “hundreds of millions of dollars of FHA-insured financing” (135).

²¹ See Barbara M. Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993), 153–54.

²² Kelly, 45.

²³ Donaldson, “Cheever’s *Shady Hill*,” 133.

²⁴ Richard Gilman, “Dante of Suburbia,” *The Commonweal*, Dec. 19, 1958, 320; Granville Hicks, “Cheever and Others,” *Saturday Review*, Sept. 13, 1958, 33; Irving Howe, “Realities and Fictions,” *Partisan Review* 26 (Winter 1959), 130–31. All qtd. in *The Critical Response to John Cheever*, ed. Francis J. Bosha (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 29–33.

²⁵ Robert Beuka’s *SuburbiaNation: Reading Suburban Landscape in Twentieth-Century American Fiction and Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) provides a good example of this contemporary effort. Though Beuka insightfully notes the “elusive sense of physical place” and the importance of “class prerogative” (83), he ultimately reads *Shady Hill* as “a superficial, alienating environment” (88), claiming that Cheever’s stories offer “a corrective revision of the fantasy of suburbia promoted by real estate developers and television executives” (76).

²⁶ Benjamin Cheever, “Paradise Lost,” *New York*, July 28, 1997, 23, 61, my emphasis.

²⁷ John Cheever, *The Housebreaker of Shady Hill and Other Stories* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 3. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Shady Hill*.

²⁸ Timothy Aubry analyzes the ambiguity of this passage and the ironic distance of Cheever’s narrators in “John Cheever and the Management of Middlebrow Misery,” *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 3 (Fall 2003), 64–83; see especially 67–69.

²⁹ Baumgartner, 10, 102.

³⁰ Baumgartner, 115–16.

³¹ Aubry claims that “Shady Hill is so invested in the appearance of normalcy that its residents and its police officers are literally unable to see exhibitions of aberration” (69). The police officers may fail to see the absence of the dog, but they do indeed “see exhibitions of aberration” in Hake’s very presence on the sidewalk. As a pedestrian in Shady Hill, Hake is a priori an aberrant subject.

³² See George A. Lundberg, Mirra Komarovsky, and Mary Alice McNerny, *Leisure: A Suburban Study* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1934), 161–62.

³³ See Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961). She argues that ambiguous distinctions between public and private spaces in suburban-style communities lead to “differing degrees of extended private life” (64). According to Jacobs, this extension of the private realm appeals to, and tends toward, homogenous populations and contributes to residential segregation and racial discrimination.

³⁴ Qtd. in Donaldson, *John Cheever*, 141.

³⁵ Lawrence Jay Dessner reads “kings in golden suits” (*Shady Hill*, 83) as an allusion within the story to “Hannibal crossing the Alps” (*Shady Hill*, 69), and he claims Francis “leaves the story not only as a survivor of potential disasters, but as a king and a great military hero.” See Dessner, “Gender and Structure in John Cheever’s ‘The Country Husband,’” *Studies in Short Fiction* 31 (1994), 67. The interpretation seems doubtful considering Francis’s pseudo-psychological woodwork therapy and his virtual displacement from the final scene of the story. Robert A. Morace’s reading of this and other such passages in Cheever’s work is more persuasive: “The lyrical ending soars above the confinements and frustrations of the protagonists’ lives, yet the loftiness of the language and the seeming inappropriateness of the vision to the rest of the story make the lyricism suspect” (511).

³⁶ James Howard Kunstler has offered the most thorough, and excoriating, account of this suburban “nowhere” in his *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America’s Man-Made Landscape* (New York: Touchstone, 1993).

³⁷ Donaldson, “Cheever’s *Shady Hill*,” 147; Dessner, 65.

³⁸ Francis’s memory of this public castigation is based on an incident Cheever had witnessed while in the Army. See John L. Brown, “Cheever’s Expatriates,” *Critical Essays on John Cheever*, 251.

³⁹ Brown, 257.

⁴⁰ Robert G. Collins, “From Subject to Object and Back Again: Individual Identity in John Cheever’s Fiction,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 28 (1982), 4.

⁴¹ Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America, 1880–1950* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2001), 226.

⁴² Schulten, 229.

⁴³ Robert A. Hipkiss, "The Country Husband: A Model Cheever Achievement," *Studies in Short Fiction* 27 (1990), 584.

⁴⁴ Lynne Waldeland, "Isolation and Integration: John Cheever's 'The Country Husband,'" *Ball State University Forum* 27, no. 1 (1986), 11.

⁴⁵ See Samuel Coale, "Cheever and Hawthorne: The American Romancer's Art," *Critical Essays on John Cheever*, 208.

⁴⁶ On the idea of the suburban Dimmesdale, see Donald J. Greiner, *Adultery in the American Novel: Updike, James, and Hawthorne* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1985), 108.

