SUBURBAN STUFF AND REALISM

GED POPE

In his wide–ranging survey of urban writing, *The City in Literature*, Richard Lehan argues for a complex interweaving of city and book. Lehan notes a commonality; by 'superimposing urban upon literary modes the city and its literature share textuality' (8). Moving through a city (variously illustrated by Baudelaire and Benjamin's well–known figure of the *flaneur*, or Michel de Certeau's 'tactical' city walker) resembles moving through a book. Likewise, texts share city–like 'spatial' features, narrative modes and metaphors of linearity, continuity, sequentiality, and repetition. Common to both our reading and experience of cities, then, are acts of signification and meaning–making. Reading and finding the way around a city rely on the existence of a signifying structure, on a system of signs. Signs, of course, are those entities that point to an elsewhere, to the existence of something beyond the sign itself. The sign's function is simply, as C.S. Peirce reminds us, 'something that stands for something else in some capacity for someone' (qtd. in Cobley 11). To be more precise, then, both cities and writing are signifying *surfaces*. This is a surface that is more than materially itself (as, the signifiers of a text would appear to a non–proficient reader, or the connotations of, say, Tate Modern would be to an ill–informed tourist) but, rather, a plane that points to the existence of an underneath. Cities and texts stand for another reality. Just as texts are decoded, with meanings pointing to an elsewhere, to an 'underneath' of signification, so Lehan argues, an urban encounter 'suggests that beneath the surface of the modern city are forces at work' (Lehan 8).

City writing frequently foregrounds surface/depth figures, the processes of signification itself, the way individuals seek to establish meaning from visible signs. In this sense, themes of urban writing share the concerns of urban existence, especially in the vast and bewildering newly populous European capitals of the mid–nineteenth century; the drive to see and find out, to know where we are, orientate oneself in a disconcerting and complex place. Thus, according to Lehan, the 'rise of the city is inseparable from various kinds of literary movements'. The shape of fiction is bound up with the shape of cities. Lehan gives examples, such as 'comic realism, naturalism, modernism and postmodernism' (Lehan 3). The writing here repeats the experience of the place; we look for signs that can lead us somewhere.

My aim here, however, is to move away from the urban centre, and to focus instead on the fiction generated in response to the new mass *suburbs* of the later nineteenth century. Indeed I want to suggest that the common figures of *urban* writing, finding one's way by reading surface clues, such as analysed by Lehan, does not function in *suburban* locations. In suburban writing the surfaces do not speak. This illegibility of suburban terrain can be seen most clearly, I would argue, in comic novels based on the discomfiture of suburban clerks from the last two decades of the nineteenth century, particularly George and Weedon Grossmith's comic novel *Diary of a Nobody* (1888) and Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* (1889).

Michael Wood defines the shared concerns and practices of the urban and the literary (the search for meaningful clues) more explicitly in terms of literary realism. Wood makes clear the link between cities and texts as structures of surface indicators and submerged meaning. Realism, Wood argues, invokes a 'theory of readable surfaces' (Wood 4). Discussing Balzac's attempt to describe a Parisian boarding house by noting the external visible details of its Landlady, Wood argues that literary realism's power resides precisely in 'a selection of details to show what lies beyond the details' (4). Realism in this sense, then, produces a profusion of material signs certainly, but also, before that, is predicated on the assumption that a reliable signifying system exists. Objects have to been seen as signs before they can be read. First come the signs, then 'a theory of the readability of those signs' (Wood 4). This is not, it should be made clear, the crude reduction of individual to environment, the one read off from the other. The noted details of external marks 'does not say that Mme Vauquer is the product of her environment', Wood argues, but rather it is the case that the quoting of defining characteristics 'asserts a correspondence between place and person and invites us to think of one in terms of the other (Wood 5). Surface details position an individual in a particular environment; one is imbricated in the other. Wood's own metaphor for this informing correspondence is telling. The surfaces in realist fiction, he continues, 'communicate with the depths the way a trap–door communicates with a cellar or a space beneath a stage' (8). Surfaces in such fiction are not just solidly material, regardless of the detailed 'realistic' treatment they may receive. They are in fact doors, hinged sections that dramatically drop us to a different plane. There is also a hint here of the magical, a sense that reality is actually staged.

In fact urban writing is rich with differing kinds of trap–doors that connect different levels of reality. Peter Brooker offers us a handy list of such figures that are not all specifically linguistic. These include

metaphors of the 'city as labyrinth'; that is as a seeming complex and bewildering puzzle, yet with a definable underlying shape, a centre. The city can also be figured as myth, where everyday surface events correspond to submerged patterns of cultural meaning. Or else, Booker adds, the city is figured as a 'site of disorder and alienated consciousness', one that mirrors the fractured self of the Freud–influenced Modernist artist (Brooker 4). Here, the city appears bafflingly fragmented, but yet retains an underlying unity based on the unifying consciousness of the observing, shaping, creative artist. Finally, another recently popular mode of urban figuring is the city as palimpsest; that is, metropolis as continually re–written text retaining the partly erased signs of previous writing. While nothing is clearly seen, nothing is ever entirely lost either. A contemporary variation of this palimpsestic mode, the notion that many spaces may occupy one site, made popular in writing by Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd, W.G. Sebald, and others, is what Roger Luckhurst terms a 'Gothicized apprehension of London' (528). This is an attempt to uncover 'London's psychic topography: traumatic memory recovered on the ground of the city's buried history' (528).

Moving to the suburban–set fiction, however, as I have already said, the link between observable surface indicator and deeper submerged truth gets broken. Roger Webster simply argues that in suburban narratives 'there is no depth from which archaeology might exhume artefacts' (2). There is a perception that suburban space is flat and extended rather than texturally 'thick' and rich in possible meanings. Rather than having a deep structure of signs (or trap–doors) pointing or leading somewhere else, the suburb is frequently presented as flat and infinitely extended. This experience of extent rather than depth is a recurrent theme in much suburban–set fiction, particularly from the period of the suburb's explosive growth in the decades before and after 1900. We have the common trope of suburban–set Victorian/ Edwardian writing, the writerly impression of the suburb from a rapidly moving vehicle. The quickly and cheaply–built mass working– and lower–middle class suburb was expanding quickly and appeared to be shapeless, monotonous and unreadable. In H.G. Wells's *Tono Bungay* (1909), for example, George Pondevero, travelling into London by 'South Eastern Railway', observes: 'beyond Chiselhurst the growing multitude of villas'. He travels 'through multiplying houses and diminishing interspaces of market garden and wide reeking swamps of dingy little homes, more of them, and more and more' to a point 'where the congestion of houses intensifies and piled up...and I marvelled at the boundless world of dingy people' (Wells, *Tono Bungay* 73). Ford Madox Ford, also entrained in south London for his 1903 survey *The Soul of*

London, notes 'the 'small houses, like the ranks of an infinite number of regiments' and observes a miscellany of 'old villas, new houses, new shops'. Crucially, it makes no sense: 'They are all mixed together, it is not possible to get any zones to "synchronise"' (Ford 38, 42).

In suburban narratives, the flattened, horizonless surfaces of such an extended environment—rather than being a generator of context and meaning, a clue to individual identity—are often viewed, negatively, as inimical to the development of any such individuality. Here, there is no articulatory mechanism, no relation between surface and depths, no trap–door linking the seen with the unknown. In fact there is a collapse of all such surface/depth productive space. Rather, a simple homology is offered. Place and individual are identical; flat, repetitive and dull. The individual *is* the landscape. This is what John Carey has in mind when, as part of his critique of Modernist artists' often extreme suburban cultural phobias, he observes that the word 'suburban' is here 'distinctive in combining topographical with intellectual disdain' (Carey 25). This is also what Lynne Hapgood identifies as 'the co–identity of suburban house and suburban dweller' ('New Suburbanites', 43).

Rather than surfaces that speak, as in the realist tradition, in suburban fiction surfaces tend to remain just surfaces, inertly material. Another kind of emphasis on the mute surfaces of the everyday is clear in the two main comic texts under consideration in this essay; these novels both present detailed domestic reality where the individual suburbanite is swamped by the sheer amount of richly evoked household material *stuff*. The surface becomes material surplus. The suburban zone—more exactly its heart, the suburban home, frequently considered the natural realm of material goods—features prominently the produce of the expanding consumer revolution; its heavy furnishings, stuffed interiors, heavy decorations, its gewgaws and baubles, leisure items and toys, latest inventions and gadgets. On the one hand the suburbanite is frequently aligned in much suburban fiction with this new suburban landscape of available household goods, identical to its trivial, bland uniformity. On the other hand surfaces here tend to become knots of material goods, items that multiply and expand, edging the individual himself (and usually the domestic male is most frequently featured, for reasons we shall explore) from any easy accommodation with the domestic realm.

In the Grossmith's *Diary of a Nobody* the material world, the immediate physical environment of the house and its contents, through abundance and pressing ubiquity, squeezes the individual out of any comfortable habitation. The house–proud Pooters can barely move in their house for stuff, their household furnishings actually cushioning

them from any relation to environment. The Pooter's North London villa is densely stuffed with (typical, if already dated) furnishings: stuffed birds, knick–knacks and mementoes, elaborately framed pictures, wall mounted plaster–cast stag's heads, richly decorated shelves, and piled–up mantelpieces. Similarly, Jerome's suburban sailors in *Three Men and a Boat*, supposedly on holiday to temporarily escape from precisely this over–laden everyday reality, simply reduplicate the conditions of home by taking with them an exhaustive mass of domestic consumer articles. They 'load up the boat until it is in danger of swamping' with a 'store of worthless things' (Jerome 19). Just like the Pooters the holiday–makers are identified with, and weighed down by, sheer materiality. This material abundance consists, of course, of consumer products. 'There seemed a good deal of luggage' rues J., 'and Harris and I began to feel rather ashamed of it' (37). Even as J. is pronouncing against excess weight—'It's lumber man—all lumber'—he and his colleagues are packing the boat with a vast amount of extraneous material consumer goods, including rugs, lamps and basins (19). The abundance of material seems to exhaust any meaningful taxonomy, with bags, rugs, umbrellas and melons clumped together haphazardly. This indiscriminate chaos of things, with nothing in its rightful place, is echoed in the disgusting 'stew' the three men cook up, which extravagantly breaks all notions of culinary protocols, even containing bits of rubbish, inorganic matter and a dead rat.

In suburban fiction, then, everyday surfaces, rather than furnishing the reader with clues to truer hidden realities, crowd out any sight of the 'deeper' individual. The accepted links between material fact and truths concerning the self, the basis of literary realism, are severed. This disconnection between self and an increasingly commodified world is made explicit in George Gissing's 1889 suburban–set novel *In the Year of the Jubilee*. Here, the relation between self and material objects is recast in the burgeoning commodity culture. The novel portrays, much to Gissing's distaste, the main features of a nascent consumer society: fashion, popular journalism, advertising, Hire Purchase and credit facilities, market research, department store shopping, risky entrepreneurialism, and, above all, consumer *goods* deployed as index of taste and social status. Gissing here critiques the degraded culture operating in the suburbs, mostly created for (and sometimes by) women, which seeks to concretise and exchange abstracts such as aesthetic taste or refinement. Gissing's critique is that the glut of material comestibles—and their packaging, promotion, selling and display—are in fact used in the service of imaginary, intangible and unearned qualities. As a result Camberwell here is distressingly unreadable, full of

duplicitous and illegible surfaces. Objects and people are not what they seem, everyone pretends, cheats, lies: '"wherever you look now–a–days there's sham and rottenness"' reckons the father of the 'suburban heroine' Nancy Lord (Gissing 25). Here domestic surfaces and individual details, in the shape of the abundant commodity, are manipulated to produce a distorted picture of reality rather than offer clues to interiority. In this suburb nobody really knows anything for sure.

Material surfaces in suburban fiction, we could argue, become mere objects; inert matter overwhelms the individual's relation to environment and provides no real clue to deeper truths. Indeed, in Gissing's suburb, objects become commodities, gain imaginary qualities and relate only to matters of taste. We can go further than seeing suburban material culture as just commodification, however, and can argue that the unreadable surfaces of suburban fiction do not so much become mere objects (even, in Gissing's view, objects with quasi–magical powers) but rather, that here, objects become *things*. I am referring to things in a specialised way here; to a 'Thingness' that attests to a materiality gone wrong.

This peculiar figuring of material surfaces as things in much suburban fiction can be usefully discussed, I want to argue, using 'Thing Theory', outlined by Bill Brown in a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* (Fall, 2001). Brown traces the specific history of 'things' through the work of Walter Benjamin, the Surrealists and Bruno Latour, and defines them as those everyday items that do not enjoy a secure ontological status. Things here are objects gone bad, objects that will not stay in their place. Crucially for my argument, Brown argues that the inert objects of the world lose their transparent innocence and assert a troublesome, wayward presence as thing, precisely when objects go *wrong*. 'We confront the "thingness" of objects', Brown argues, 'when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy' (Brown 4). This is the exact moment when neutral background objects lose their innocence and become troublesome things. In this sense objects–as–things seem to have an inherent inner power, a force that Jane Bennett calls 'Thing–power', drawing on recent thinking by Gilles Deleuze and Latour. This is the notion that 'so–called inanimate things have a life of their own, that deep within them is an inexplicable vitality or energy, a moment of independence and resistance to us' (Bennett 349). More specifically, for our purposes here, we can emphasise the element of *resistance*, the notion that things enjoy independence, actively blocking human agency.

In Brown's terms, then, the hapless suburbanite, terrorised by unruly domestic things, testifies to the presence of *things* rather than of just *objects*. Suburban fiction tends to be full of things, rather than the

surfaces of objects. We can see that all the stuff, the abundant objects of the suburban domestic realm, particularly those newly available items of mass consumer culture, are presented in fiction as troublesome things. More than the abundance and bewildering mix of material stuff, late nineteenth–century suburban fiction presents objects as shockingly wayward and malicious. Inert domestic *materiel* develops a distinct separate being. Objects turned things seem to come alive; they break, fail, get lost, escape human control altogether, and even go on to develop a kind of malicious autonomy.

In *Diary of a Nobody* things will not be just objects; they are animated by a malicious inner force. There are numerous examples here of the subversive war of things against the hapless individual. The novel's opening pages itemise troublesome objects. Pooter's very first diary entry catalogues a perversely wayward household material reality; 'there is no key to our bedroom door…the bells must be seen to. The parlour bell is broken…which is ridiculous' (Grossmith 4). The garden wall is cracked. A put–upon deliveryman leaves the house, angrily slamming the door 'which nearly broke the fanlight' (5). The material world is just not amenable to Pooter's pottering. Pictures will not hang, items get lost, break or malfunction and cannot be repaired. Nothing in Pooter's tended garden will grow. The food delivered to the house is terrible, and not what they asked for. Above all, inanimate objects seem determined to escape human control and to act malevolently. Early on we meet the Pooter's malfunctioning foot scraper that has a seemingly malicious intent. An early visitor 'fell over the scraper as he went out' (4). The Curate, we are told, 'caught his foot on the scraper and tore the bottom of his trousers' (6). The butcher 'cut his foot over the scraper' and threatens litigation (8).

This sense of things avenging themselves on the individual also extends to Pooter's unhappy social venturing. A frequent drinker and diner, Pooter is frequently lost, late or simply misunderstands what he has let himself in for. Invited to one prestigious Grand Ball, he is suddenly presented with a huge bill; the penniless and humiliated Pooters are then forced to walk home miles in the rain. Social occasions, where stress is placed on trying to maintain a dignified image, a sense of belonging, are always accompanied by physical mishaps. Trying to impress at the theatre, Pooter's cheap clip–on tie falls from a private box into the audience below, where it is inadvertently ground into the dirt by oblivious patrons. On another formal occasion at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, a wayward anti–macassar is snagged to his coattails for the entire evening.

In *The Diary of a Nobody* things predominate and material surfaces, those that may speak of an individual's true self, are actively disguised. In addition to being crammed, the Pooter's home presents layers of superfluous, muffling decoration. Surfaces are all covered up, dense with further layers of decorative objects: cushions, doilies, drapes, layers of muslin. The Pooter's mantelpiece, for instance, is covered in drapes and has 'little toy spiders, frogs and beetles scattered all over it' (Grossmith 105). Edges and planes, such as the mantelpiece, are further wrapped in other coverings. Numerous other items are unnecessarily overlaid with fabrics. Surfaces here are submerged beneath other surfaces. This smothering material excess, the thickening and layering of surfaces, is nicely illustrated when Pooter becomes an enthusiastic and indiscriminate user of enamel paint—'new, Pinkford's enamel paint' to be precise (ibid 31). In an effort to improve domestic reality around him, Pooter simply paints every surface in sight a uniform black or red, regardless of function. Thus he paints a fence, and then a washstand, the spines of books, a coalscuttle, and, eventually, a bath. Pooter's desire to uniformly recover every surface attests strongly to his desire for control, for management of surroundings. The resurfacing is everything here, not the individual form of objects. Pooter's attempt at domestic management, to deal with teeming things, is to try and give everything an identical surface. This is comically undone when Pooter, taking a hot bath and believing himself 'bleeding to death' like 'a second Marat', realises the enamel painting has come away and now coats his own skin. Here Pooter himself is also resurfaced.

It is actually the body itself where 'thingness' is most urgently experienced. The titular 'Nobody' thus has 'no–body', no meaningful, visible, substantial self, but is also, paradoxically, too much body. The body of the Nobody is presented as a malfunctioning, wayward 'thing', beyond the control of the individual. Not only does Pooter have to contend with a multiplicity of material things, and these things' active resistance to human will, but Pooter is also supremely physically incapable of coping with such an onslaught. Above all, Pooter is profoundly incompetent, incapable of controlling or ordering his own corporal self. Pooter, of course, believes himself to be a handyman, one who seeks to establish control over this wayward tendency of the domestic world to break, to go wrong, to attack. 'There is always something to be done' Pooter breezily states early in the novel, 'a tin–tack here, a Venetian blind to put straight' (Grossmith 4). He is really, of course, an early version of that standard suburban figure, the useless DIYer, the bodger, the unhandyman. The will of the DIYer here meets a wayward materiality, a thingness—and loses. Pooter is embroiled in

many facets of the practical running of the home he doesn't like to leave; decorating, minor repairs, dealing with wayward tradesmen and unreliable domestics. All of which he does extremely badly. The material world is not amenable to his interventions, any more than the social one. Nothing in the garden will grow. The domestic zone here is malignant and totally beyond the control of the flailing suburbanite. A typical Pooter diary entry bluntly states: 'April 11th: Today was a day of petty annoyances' (9).

The suburbanite's clumsy incompetence in the struggle with the revolt of material surfaces is partly caused by the body itself, this being merely another recalcitrant material object. As Bill Brown notes, quoting Merleau–Ponty, there are events 'outside the scene of phenomenological attention' where the '"body is a thing among things"' (Brown 4). In this relentless battle between things and individuals, the body itself mutinies from the self and ends up siding with the enemy, with things. The body is yet another rebellious, alien thing. In the world of suburban fiction the body becomes, paradoxically, more thing–like than the material objects it seeks to master, which in turn appear full of animated personality. There appears to be a terrible slippage here from subject to object; the self more thing–like, the thing more like a self.

The body is presented as thing, as alien and malicious matter, most forcefully at the moment of the accident. The accident is that horrible moment where the body itself is revealed as thing, as external nature; a matter of brute, uncomprehending pain. The malice of the inanimate world, and Pooter's abject defencelessness, is underlined in the novel by the frequency of bizarre accidents. Pooter of course has many, many accidents. He trips, slips, loses things, drops things, knocks things over, gets knocked over, gets punched in the back of the head (though, this may *not* be accidental), even gets assaulted by a toddler (this is probably not a complete accident). Leaving the house one morning, Pooter recounts how ' I left with a hurried kiss—a little too hurried, perhaps, for my upper lip came in contact with Carrie's teeth and slightly cut it. It was quite painful for an hour afterwards' (Grossmith 8).

Another way in which suburban fiction regards the body as thing, testifying to a materiality gone awry, is in the presentation of the self as physically wrong in some way. Suburbanites in popular suburban fiction are physically abject. They are unattractive, overweight, short, ageing, toothless, balding, reliant on dodgy prosthetics. They are also poor physical specimens; weak, unathletic, tired and, as we have seen, physically uncoordinated. Pooter himself, as we can see from Weedon Grossmith's illustrations for the novel, is imagined as stiff, awkward, slope–shouldered, pigeon–chested and gangly. And not only Pooter. A

doted–upon toddler who assaults Pooter is thus described; 'I do not think I have *seen* a much uglier child myself. That is *my* opinion' (Grossmith 24). This abject body, the body as thing, is also evident elsewhere in suburban fiction, especially in its presentation of the suburbanite as a picture of unhealth. Pooter's diary records a lengthy complaint of colds, pains, nausea, dyspepsia, numbness, headaches and, famously, frequent hangovers. H.G. Wells' eponymous Mr Polly is a slave to indigestion (the perfect suburban complaint; the outside unassimilated by the body), and Forster's weedy, empty husk Leonard Bast in *Howards End* is crumpled to death by a falling bookcase. The body of the suburban Nobody as alien thing is apparent in suburban fiction where males are presented as being in the wrong body entirely. These clerks are often presented as being inappropriately feminised. Because of their domesticity and close allegiance to the everyday they fail to meet traditional masculine ideals. Their domestic incompetence suggests a deficit of traditional authentic masculine ('heroic') experience; the stoical management of the experienced body–in–the–world including building, hunting, making habitations, providing via the competent male body. Shan Bullock's eponymous suburban clerk, Robert Thorne, is taunted by his father: 'Haven't I told you better. Haven't I taught you what a man owes to himself is to strive after manhood. A clerk, with a clerk's narrow little soul—is that your idea of a man?' (Bullock 7). These 'Nobodies' are also often infantilised, filling dull days with an unending series of childish games, minor scrapes and petty squabbles.

The encounters with thingness experienced by Pooter and these others, their disconnection from an accommodating environment, are echoed by similar struggles in Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*. Jerome's lower–working class clerkly suburbanites are adrift on a boating trip in posh, upper middle–class riverside locales. Again, like *Diary of a Nobody*, the reality of the suburban individual is presented here by way of comic encounters with material stuff, with large amounts of obstreperous consumer items. They too are submerged (almost literally) and horribly provoked by the masses of malicious equipment they take with them. They take a large amount of domestic consumer articles: 'piles of plates and cups, and kettles, and bottles, and jars, and pies, and stoves, and cakes, and tomatoes, etc.' (30). Jerome's characters are, like Pooter, London suburban clerks and, also like Pooter, striving to be at home in a new environment, in this case the leisure zone of the upper Thames. The men are in fact attempting to duplicate their fixed, comfortable, suburban domesticity, complete with a glut of wayward *materiel*, on a temporary moving craft, a 'homely home'. The boat is

'converted into a sort of little house…beautifully cosy, though a trifle stuffy' (Jerome 20).

Yet of course, as with the Pooters, this excess of stuff does not make the environment homely or even habitable. Rather than a leisure–filled escape from onerous everyday work, the holiday itself becomes very much like work. The novel's comic reversal here is that when actually employed as clerks the three men are expert shirkers, while here, on holiday, on the river, the adept skivers have to work extremely hard to overcome 'the natural cussedness of things' and the 'natural obstinacy of all things in this world' (Jerome 87, 142). Leisure is portrayed here as an onerous appendage of work. Again the dominant motif is that things do not function as they are supposed to. The stuff they take with them 'turns' and becomes the enemy. In one extended set–piece that supreme item of mechanised civilisation, a tin of pineapple chunks, proves maddeningly resistant to being opened. The petty and malign resistance of things is accurately captured in the sailors' experience of boiling a kettle. The 'only way to get a kettle to boil', they reckon, is to 'get away and pretend you were not going to have any tea at all'. The minute the kettle 'sees that you are waiting for and are anxious, it will never sing' (81). Like the Pooters the thingness of habitat is made severe by the thingness of the sailors' own embodied reality; they lack the skills to make their environment habitable and meaningful.

These impenetrable and treacherous things of domesticity, rather than suggesting ways in which the individual may be situated in a given habitat, have precisely the opposite effect; they attest to the unhomeliness and unbelonging at the core of late nineteenth–century suburban existence. These unreadable surfaces, rather than offering context or belonging, work to underline rejection and displacement. The home—promoted in much suburban fiction of the period as the familiar, secure, private realm distanced from the urban—is not at all homely here. The river, west of London, had already been partly suburbanised by the rapid growth of upper–middle class riverside villas, weekend homes and expensive leisure activities. It even became 'the busiest suburb of London', as Henry James suggests in *English Hours* (25). Now with Jerome's boisterous clerks, the lower–middle class clerical suburbanites have arrived on the scene, with paid holidays, expendable income, and above all, like Pooter's irreverent office juniors and chippy delivery boys, with abundant attitude. The suburban sailors know they do not belong here, in these prime locales of a dominant construction of Englishness, at Runnymede, Henley, Oxford. Admittedly the three men are no ingratiating Pooters, desperate to know the codes for social acceptance and belonging. Rather these hearty suburbanites provoke

terrible clashes as they make their presence demonstrably clear (loud blazers, noisy horseplay, strident slang) and have run–ins with a series of minor officials, established gentry and scandalised locals.

This search for home also motivates Pooter. In *Diary of a Nobody* Pooter argues: 'What's the good of a home, if you are never in it? "Home, Sweet Home", that's my motto. I'm always in of an evening' (Grossmith 4). Pooter is always home and yet the house causes Pooter untold grief. He is not *at home* there, just as he is not at home in his own skin. It is not the ideal domestic refuge from urban public life. Pooter is in fact always out of place; he does not comfortably belong in his new environment, at social functions and middle–class gatherings and pursuits. Others in the novel realise Pooter's pompous and desperate *arrivism*, and torment him for it.

The suburb does not make sense for Pooter. Famously his is an inability to see—others or himself. The failure of the quickly–built, mass–produced metropolitan suburb to be read attests, I will conclude, to something having gone very wrong with 'sense'. By this I mean both with experiencing and fully inhabiting the world, with engaging the world through the body, and with what we can know about that world. The world is rendered as thing, as is the instrument of knowledge, the body. The body here is not the medium through which the external world is apprehended, as it is in the phenomenological tradition, but is merely extraneous thing. This failed homeliness, the absurdly hopeless *husbandry* of so many suburban characters attests to a crisis of forms of *knowledge.* In the unreadable suburb *nobody knows anything*; lives are private, domestic, individuals have uncertain provenance and ambivalent social status.

If literary realism, primarily in the form of the urban narrative, bases its efficacy on an unbroken connection between surface and depths, as Michael Wood argues, then suburban narratives underline an illegibility instead. Urban realism attempts to position the individual in a particular site by suggesting that the environment is meaningful, alive or alert to human habitation. Cityscapes, no matter how confusing or complex, always contain reassuring depths, contain contextualising cues. Suburban writing on the other hand emphasises only desperate unbelonging. Surfaces in suburban fiction become things and do not speak of submerged depths, but rather deflect and reject. Bill Brown argues that we look *through* objects precisely 'to see what they disclose about history, society, nature or culture' (Brown, 6). Objects show us something. Things on the other hand do not permit such a seeing; the 'window is dirty'. What is important here about things is that they cannot

be made to sign, that is, they deny the possibility of referentiality. They do not point anywhere; they do not allow us to see.

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Suburban, formerly known as Sub Urban, (BAWSAQ: SUB) is a clothing store that appears in Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, Grand Theft Auto IV, and Grand Theft Auto V. In Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, unlocked after "Nines and AKs", Sub Urban is one of three clothing stores initially made available in the game (alongside Binco and ProLaps). Presumably marketing to those interested in modern urbanwear, the store's interior is decorated in a gritty urban theme, and even features a stage, which use is Urban Realism â€" Subway Intro 19654033 Videohive â€" Free Download After Effects Templates. After Effects Version CC 2015, CC 2014, CC, CS6 | No plugins | 1920Ã—1080 | 1.1 Gb. Urban Realistic Subway Intro. Inspiring unique energetic motivation opener! With real people and real world! All media is added onto 3D tracked objects and adapted to the scene to look realistic and unique. Very fast text and image replacement. For tv entertainment production, travel vlog, uplifting motivation, music clip or social documentary videos. Animation Project Features. Any edited and replaced text, logo or picture Realism (SG 1778) by Rhys Fulber, released 17 May 2017 1. Effigy 2. Reload 3. Minsk Maschinen 4. Abstraction Sonic Groove Records presents a new masterpiece entitled â€œRealismâ€ by artist Rhys Fulber, his career as a waveform alchemist and sonic innovator began with the band Front Line Assembly, a project he helped both instigate and shared an imaginative vision with fellow pioneer Bill Leeb who is otherwise known for his work with early Skinny Puppy. The sound of Front Line Assembly assisted in the evolution and definition of the Industrial/EBM genre.