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WAR AND SPACE IN ENGLISH FICTION, 1940-1950

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This thesis argues that a preoccupation with space is a characteristic feature of English fiction in the years following the outbreak of the Second World War and, more specifically, that the war's events caused this heightened interest in the spatial. Writing from the 1940s exhibits an anxious perplexity in its spatial descriptions which reveals an underlying philosophical uncertainty; cultural assumptions about spatial categories were destabilised by the war and this transformation left its mark on literature. Writers in London during the war were among civilians shocked by new sensory assaults and dramatic changes to the urban landscape. These material facts exerted pressures on the collective imagination and a major part of the literary response was an urgently-renewed interest in the problematics of space.

The primary literary focus here is on Elizabeth Bowen and Henry Green, though work by other writers including Graham Greene, Mervyn Peake and William Sansom is also discussed. I draw on the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to illustrate the challenge phenomenological thinking posed to prevailing cultural conceptions of space in this period and to suggest how the war directed writers' attention to the role that embodied perception plays in composing spaces.

I also examine how technological change, particularly development of the V2 rocket, shook established spatial thinking and I discuss how conceptual categories such as adjacence, linearity and sequence were further disrupted by the political divisions of post-war Europe. Documentary and diary sources are used to support literary evidence.

English fiction changed abruptly and significantly in the 1940s because of a fresh spatial understanding emerging from the war which shaped the culture of the Cold War and the space race. This change demands reassessment of a decade often dismissed in literary history as a dull interlude between temporally-dominated high modernism and a postmodern 'turn to the spatial.'

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INTRODUCTION

English fiction written during and immediately after the Second World War reveals a fascination with both the psychic and physical involvement in the spatial; how humans perceive the spatial world and the part our bodies play in its construction. This interest in the spatial shows itself in the way that writers linger attentively over the arrangements of objects and landscapes and in the frequency and intensity with which they seek to describe the nature of experience of these spaces. These preoccupations, taken togther, suggest that literature of the 1940s exhibits an inquisitiveness about the nature of space which is implicitly, though rarely overtly, philosophic. Literary descriptons of the spatial in this period conceal an interrogation of its epistemological and ontological assumptions and this tendency reveals a general and more abstract anxiety about space in the years following the outbreak of the Second World War. The war changed the way people thought about space and, in literature, this generated an urgently renewed interest in ways of describing spatial manifestations and experience. Of course, all literature examines the nature of the spatial to some degree because it narrates events as taking place in space and time. The claim made here is that fiction arising from the war years in England treats space with a characteristic intensity and sense of perplexity.

Occasionally critics have noted this tendency, if only in passing. For example D.J. Taylor, in *After the War* (1994), notes both the emphasis and the uncertainty attached to the spatial: 'Many war novels give the impression that they take place in a void where all is dislocation and uncertainty. Time and the immediate past telescope into unquantifiable space.'[1] In his introduction to the 2000 Vintage Classics edition of Henry Green's *Loving,* Sebastian Faulks notes that the setting is one where 'ownership of space is important and disputed.'[2] Sara Wasson, in *Urban Gothic of the Second World War* (2010), suggests that urban wartime fiction meets two key definitions of a gothic aesthetic, one of which is 'a preoccupation with certain

relationships to space'[3] while Leo Mellor detects in Blitz writing an 'attentiveness toward the materiality of spaces that could be, and were, transformed with sudden and utter violence.'[4] Where critics have sometimes registered the peculiarities of the literary treatment of space in this era, it is usually in the margins of their pursuit of other questions. To notice something is not the same as explaining it: there has been no sustained and general attempt to ask why so much literature of the 1940s seems so fascinated with space and what period-specific conditions might have engendered this fascination. There are several reasons why these questions may have been overlooked and to begin I will briefly examine three of them.

The first is the problem of literary periodisation. So much of our understanding of twentieth-century literature, and art more broadly, is shaped by discussion of modernism and postmodernism that it can be hard to propose other significant moments in cultural history, especially if those moments fall between these categories. Both terms are fiercely debated and interrogated but arguments about if, and when, modernism gave way to postmodernism tend to subsume literary developments within one or other of those monolithic epochs. Even the term 'late-modernism' - sometimes used to embrace 1940s writing - reinforces the primacy of the parent movement even as it nuances it. An allied problem in understanding the literature of the war years is that those years, roughly mid-century, are often seen as as a natural divide between the period of high modernist experiment and what came after, but not as significant or interesting in themselves. Thus it has not always been easy to maintain a focus on literary developments in the 1940s, and the decade's significance is often undervalued. As Patrick Deer, quoting Malcolm Bradbury, puts it: 'Despite ample evidence to the contrary, literary critics continue to regard the 1940s as a period of "relative artistic silence", a buffer zone between literary modernism and the angry neo-realism of the 1950s.'[5]

These issues of periodisation become even more vexed when we consider the understanding of space. Modernism is understood as broad cultural and intellectual change as well as artistic

revolution. Theorists have incorporated developing concepts of space and time in their account of modernism as a movement. The very title of Stephen Kern's brilliant and influential *The Culture of Time and Space*, *1880-1918* (1983), firmly fixes the years in which 'a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space'[6] in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, terminating at the end of the First World War. In terms of the spatial, Kern's central conclusion is that this was the period when conceptions of space as inert and empty were replaced by an understanding of what he calls 'positive-negative space' – one which is 'active and full.'[7] Artistically, he argues, this new understanding of space is exemplified in the fiction of Proust, in the cubist painting of Braque and Picasso and the sculpture of Archipenko, all art produced during the First World War or in the few years either side. In contrast with Kern, the theorist of postmodernism Fredric Jameson diagnoses a fundamental shift in spatial understanding taking place in the late 1960s and 1970s as an effect of late capitalism. For Jameson, the emergence of a spatial dominant is the primary quality of postmodernism and the very thing which divides it from a modernist aesthetic. Modernists, he argues, were entirely subservient to the idea of time 'whose empy coordinates they tried to conjure into the magical substance of an element, a veritable experiential stream.'[8] The postmodern age, by contrast, entails 'a culture increasingly dominated by space and spatial logic'[9]. Either way, both literature and spatial theory are firmly periodised. To follow Kern or Jameson is to choose either the modernist or postmodernist account of changes in the conception of space and to be steered away from the mid-twentieth century and the Second World War as a period of potential significance in the literary treatment of space.

A second reason why interest in the spatial in the 1940s has remained largely unexamined may simply be that space is such a slippery and elusive concept. Attempts to interpret fictional depictions of space, and to make claims about how those manifestations change from one literary period to another, benefit from a rigorous and consistent model of what space is and

how we might know it. Is space physical or ideal, absolute or relational? Does it exist independently or do we subjectively construct it? Is it grasped as a function of time or as its own continuum? There are no definitive answers to these questions but in all intellectual activity it matters which conceptual model of space we choose to work with or our thinking may lead us only into contradiction. This tendency is observed by several theorists, not least Einstein who wrote in 1916 that the term had become so loose as to be meaningless: 'We entirely shun the vague word "space" of which, we must honestly acknowledge, we cannot form the slightest conception.'[10] In his introduction to *The Production of Space* (1974), Henri Lefebvre attacks Western philosophical and mathematical traditions for allowing unquestioned conceptions of 'mental space' to become so powerful and so general as to subsume the actual space of nature and society.

> No limits at all have been set on the generalization of the concept of mental space: no clear account of it is ever given and, depending on the author one happens to be reading, it may connote logical coherence, practical consistency, self-regulation and the relations of the parts to the whole, the engendering of like by like in a set of places, the logic of container versus contents, and so on. We are forever hearing about the space of this and/or the space of that: about literary space, ideological spaces, the space of the dream, psychoanalytic topologies, and so on and so forth.[11]

Lefebvre's argument is not that we should necessarily deny the usefulness of conceiving space as ideal but rather that it is a model which has spread unchecked across different types of critical inquiry without always being rigorously or consistently defined and understood. The understanding of space as ideal – as an intuition of a world outside the mind and a necessary field on which objects and actions are plotted – is expressed as early as Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) where he concludes that: 'Space is nothing other than merely the form of all appearances of outer sense...the form of all appearances can be given in the mind prior to all actual perceptions, thus *a priori*'.[12] For Kant space is objectively real since it is an endowed mental faculty on which each of us assembles an intuition of the external world, though that assembly of the world is entirely subjective and cannot know any independent material reality.

Thus Kantian space is neither an absolute form such as that envisaged by Newton, a real and objective space which could exist independently of any thinking subject, nor a relational form in which space exists by virtue of a relation between a perceiver and a perceived object – the representation of real things. Lefebvre's primary point is not that Kant is necessarily wrong, but that his account of pure mental space - intended as an explanation of how an external world is objectively apprehended - has been uncritically extended from the objective *mode* to the subjective *content* of experience. Attempts to understand space are therfore corrupted by the false application of the epistemological certainties of mathematics and logic to interpretive practices, to things such as psychoanalysis and literature for example. In the process, Lefebvre believes, we lose any meaningful and unitary sense of space altogether and are left only with an almost infinite mulitiplicity of pseudo-scientific 'spaces' which tell us nothing about space as we inhabit it socially.

Lefebvre's critique of the history of spatial theory demonstrates how different concepts of space may not just compete but also interfere with, and obscure, each other. Attempts to read space in literature therefore meet a two-fold problem. First, which understanding of space does a writer seem to propound and work with? Second, in proposing cultural shifts in the way that space is conceived in different eras, and the way that literature is one of the artistic forms which demonstrates that cultural shift, how can one be sure that comparisons across epochs or across disciplines are based on comparable criteria? The complexities of these questions suggest why it may be daunting to attempt an analysis of space in literature in any era and especially across the borders of well-established periodisation.

A third reason why the spatial oddities of 1940s literature may have been often overlooked is the variety of other themes arising from the war which have absorbed critical attention. Discussions of English fiction in this era have tended to cluster around broad themes of nationhood, personal identity, narrative, memory and trauma. Critics have found these topics

urgent and richly productive, but the very liveliness of these discussions may have focused attention on those broad themes to the exclusion of other aspects of 1940s' writing. The war may also have influenced the selection of critical modes used to examine the period. For example, critics have shown a recurrent interest in interrogating the narrative of national political unity employed by governments and others between 1939 and 1945. Several studies have examined war-time writing to show that any supposed consensus was partial or illusory, pointing to the ways in which literature demonstrates resistance to, and exclusions from, such a unifying narrative.[13] These analyses will inevitably draw on highly-political modes of criticism, such as feminist, marxist or post-colonial, to reveal the gaps in a story of national unity which literature exposes. Similarly, psychoanalytic criticism has been widely used to interpret war-time writing. Literary responses to war, including the intensified experiences of fear, death and mourning, naturally lend themselves to interpretations in which the mind's unconscious processing of these experiences is taken as the writing's primary motive force. As we shall see, it has become relatively common for literary responses to the event of the Second World War to be explained in Freudian terms; for example, as involving acts of repression to protect oneself from the return of the past, including the horror of the First World War.[14] Fundamental psychoanalytic concepts such as identity, selfhood, trauma and memory are inevitably bound up with the events of the war, and they naturally suggest a psychoanalytic approach to war literature.

Critics have been absorbed with a range of typical war themes and this preoccupation has encouraged particular ways of reading the fiction of this period. In particular, critics have tended to seek a metaphorical significance in the events of a text rather than examining how the author describes those events. In sum, critics evince an interest in interpretation rather than a close attention to presentation. This approach has had profound effects with regard to the spatial in fiction, focussing attention on ascribing a secondary meaning to the manifestations of space rather than on a close observation of how those spaces are arranged, perceived and

presented within a literary text. Space becomes of interest for what it might reveal about the workings of the unconscious or about a socio-political understanding of the world rather than as signifcant *in itself*. Critical practice, as it were, leaps over the immediate depiction of space as it hurries to read the spatial to discover what import it may have for other thematic concerns. A good example is found in the various critical interpretations of this passage from Elizabeth Bowen's novel *The Heat of the Day* (1949), set in London during the years 1942-1944. Stella Rodney, who lives in a borrowed flat, furnished mainly with possessions that are not hers, is visited by her son on leave from the army. In this unfamiliar space, a simple tray of tea cups is enough to cause mutual bafflement:

> In a minute she passed him the tray of cups and said: 'Will you take this into the other room?'
>
> 'Where shall I put it?'
>
> 'Anywhere you like.'
>
> 'Yes, Mother, yes,' said Roderick patiently, 'but there must be some place where it always goes?'
>
> 'Anywhere,' she repeated, not understanding.
>
> He sighed. In this flat, rooms had no names; there being only two, whichever you were not in was "the other room". Proceeding into what he saw as the drawing-room, Roderick, grasping the tray, stood looking around again.
>
> Somewhere between these chairs and tables must run the spoor of habit, could one but pick it up. [...] Roderick, for the moment, was confounded by there being no one right place to put down a tray. [...] He gave up, placed the tray on the floor and himself on the edge of the sofa, which was to be his bed. [15]

The spaces of the two interchangeable rooms effectively flow across each other, making both orientation and habit impossible. This spatial puzzle (a word which itself occurs in the text at this point)[16] is emphasised by a further reference to Roderick's sofa, which he imagines as spatially unmoored: 'Though this particular sofa backed on a wall and stood on a carpet, it was without environment; it might have been some derelict piece of furniture exposed on a pavement after an air-raid or washed up by a flood on some unknown shore.'[17]

Several recent Bowen scholars explore these passages from *The Heat of the Day,* including Maud Ellmann, Mark Rawlinson and Sara Wasson, and have followed the tendency to interpret them metaphorically. For Rawlinson, the configuration of space is inextricably tied to personal identity so that 'domestic interiors are a figure for personal autonomy'. While war-time writing can variously present buildings as protective and enlarging or, at other times, limiting, Rawlinson reduces their significance to what they tell us about the construction of persona and identity. In *The Heat of the Day*, he concludes: 'Domestic spaces, instead of reinforcing the boundaries of selfhood are the novel's index of the deformation of personality.'[18] For Wasson, these moments with Roderick in Stella's flat exemplify the way that the novel's interiors are frozen in time; they are part of what she diagnoses as an 'infected zone' in Bowen's war-time fiction where the past 'contaminates the present'. Stella and Roderick are suspended in a present without personal meaning – echoed by the sofa without environment – because their psychic connection with the past has been severed. According to Wasson, under this 'violence to linear time, objects are emptied of their past instead of being embodiments of memory...the strain of wartime is inimical to the capacity to invest the environment with personal meaning.'[19] Ellmann also reads *Heat of the Day* as part of Bowen's tendency, through her fiction, to tie identity to possessions: 'Who is Stella without her furniture? Does her identity belong to her belongings? Marooned in the "effects" of other people, does she remain herself or turn into another person?'[20] However, Ellmann also sees identity as just one of the things under threat of demolition by war in the novel: '*The Heat of the Day* examines how the bonds of passion, kinship, history, custom, class, heredity, and nationality are torn apart by the destruction of buildings and furniture.'[21]

These various readings of the spatial description in the novel are united by their treatment of space as symbolic. The manifestations of space are never significant *in themselves* but instead are seen as indicative of psychic turmoil or questions of self-definition. Space itself is not viewed as a primary cause of unease or anxiety but as a means by which fiction can

imaginatively present those anxieties which grow from other roots. Where Ellmann, for example, does identify a theme of *The Heat of the Day* as its 'porousness of architectural and psychic space' she immediately ties this to the 'the failure to keep secrets in, intruders out.'[22] None of this is to dismiss the validity of these readings. However, it does suggest that an alternative possibility is being excluded: if a preoccupation with the spatial in fiction can be discerned in writing of the war and immediate post-war, then it must be worth considering whether this is driven by a collective change in the perception and conceptualisation of the spatial in this era. And if such a cause can be identified, is it simply a later phase of that long-term shift in spatial understanding identified by Kern as part of the modernist age? Or did the specific experiences of the Second World War wreak their own change in how space is understood?

To try and answer these questions it is necessary to adopt a more philosophical approach to reading space in 1940s fiction in order to closely examine how this difficult concept is apprehended, imagined and depicted. By inferring the epistemological and ontological assumptions which underlie the presentation of space in literary works of the period we may be able to identify what they have in common and to compare their treatment of space with that in works from other decades and eras. This approach entails paying close and sustained attention to the presentation of space in fiction through its manifestation in perceptual qualities such as form, perspective, distance, linearity, position and motion. Other qualities, less immediately apparent as constitutive of our conception of the spatial, will also repay study at times – sound, texture, interpolation and weight for example. In short, by concentrating on the way space is described in fiction of this period, we may come to see how it is understood. Rather than immediately seeking the metaphorical or symbolic uses to which space may be put by literature, this is a method which concentrates first on the ways it is presented and seems to operate. This method defers an immediate interpretative 'reading' of space in order to examine more closely the details of spatial perception. If a characteristic way of apprehending

space shows itself in the literature of a given period, or in the work of a particular author, could this not also plausibly be used to help explain the imaginative turns taken by that fiction – its metaphors and tropes? Yet the tendency of criticism has been the reverse, to see the literary presentation of space as determined by conscious reflection and unconscious psychic pressures – by deep structures of imagination and reflection rather than by a more direct rendering of perception. To reject this prevailing approach does not imply a judgement on other modes of criticism, the psychoanalytic included. But we should acknowledge that a limited range of critical methods have tended to dominate contemporary analysis of war-time fiction. Expanding this range to include other methods will provide new insight into 1940s' literature and address the unquestioned prevalence of certain types of criticism in reading literature of this period.

It is important to acknowledge that literature can of course never be either entirely descriptive or entirely metaphoric. Whether we believe language mediates a real world of objects or indeed constitutes the world, there is no simple correspondence between words and things. Even the most apparently plain textual depiction of objects and events is shaped by conscious and unconscious processes which operate on both the author and the reader and criticism naturally wants to investigate these processes. However, since there exists a perceptual world (whether real or ideal) in which things are arranged, it is also possible for literary criticism, like philosophy, to pay attention to how that spatial world is present in narrative and authorial perception, and further, to examine how external change may alter the way the perception of spaces is represented. In other words, we can attempt to understand literature not only by making judgements about what is meant by the things it describes but by paying attention to our experience of what Edmund Husserl called 'the things themselves'[23] and how they are fictively described.

This approach then is phenomenological, and draws on the philosophical method of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty among others. While there are great differences between the three, these thinkers are united in a concentration on the immediate content of perception separated from any associated notions of judgement, causation, value and meaning. Before the mind explains, interprets or analyses there is a fundamental layer of perception which can be studied if one succeeds in 'bracketing' it from those secondary processes – the operation known, after Husserl, as the phenomenological reduction. The differing literary styles encountered in 1940s fiction may suggest association with particular versions of phenomenology: for example, William Sansom's scrutinising appraisal of his fireman narrators' perceptions in the Blitz is reminiscent of Husserl's concept of adumbration, with vision a succession of single-faceted views from which a whole is intuited. Henry Green's later style which, as we shall see, comes to eschew interiority almost entirely in favour of the external view of characters, suggests an affinity with Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the centrality of the body in composing space.

Both Sansom and Green were London firefighters during the war and were among many writers whose war-time jobs put them in the civilian front-line as the city came under attack: Stephen Spender, like Green and Sansom, was a fireman while Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene and John Strachey all worked as air-raid wardens. It is easy to see how from these perspectives, some of the specific experiences of World War II might have encouraged a turn to the phenomenological. This was the first British war in which civilians as well as combatants were widely exposed to attack. Bombing of cities by conventional means, by pilotless V1 planes and by V2 supersonic rockets, assaulted the senses in new ways. Bombs brought deafening blasts, prolonged whistling and ominously interruptive patches of silence. Fires produced sheets of flame, palls of smoke and powerful smells. Defensive measures meant cascades of water, gigantic searchlights crossing the sky and a blackout which stifled some parts of perception but augmented and skewed others. Naturally all these events drew human

attention to the underlying nature of their new experience, not only to its content but also to its perceptual structures and operations. So in speech, diary or interview civilians found themselves assessing their process of perception; considering how these new events struck them. For example, a witness of V2 attacks recalled the tension they engendered in terms reminiscent of Husserl's analysis of listening to sounds, and the perceptual structure of protention:

> One didn't know what was happening until it had happened; and so life became a 24-hour-per-24-hour stint of realizing that 'It can happen now, this instant; but it didn't so let's forget it.' And then it happens a mile away and you start all over again. After a while you think you've forgotten it, but in fact you're subconsciously waiting for it all the time.[24]

This experience exemplifies the phenomenologists' claim that our perception is not made up of a series of complete instants in which everything is noticed and 'captured'; rather, perception describes a field in which past events and future possibilities are also present. As Merleau-Ponty sums it up:

> Husserl uses the terms protensions and retentions for the intentionalities which anchor me to an environment. They do not run from a central I, but from my perceptual field itself, so to speak, which draws along in its wake its own horizon of intentions, and bites into the future with its protensions. I do not pass through a series of instances of now...which, placed end to end, make a line. With the arrival of every moment, its predecessor undergoes a change. Time is not a line but a network of intentionalities.[25]

Protention, in this case the anticipation of a V2 strike, is part of our perceptual structure; the example shows how the Second World War could bring writers and other Londoners to share the insights of phenomenological philosophy.

The events of the war helped to fix literary attention afresh on the nature of perception then, and this process was naturally often involved with the material of the city itself. The destruction of brick and stone also shook habitual structures of consciousness, challenging

routine cognitive assembly of the world. Descriptions of war-time London registered not simply the damage done to the city but the ways in which the city was phenomenally present as a result – the ways in which it presented itself afresh in perception. For example, in her story 'Our City' from the collection *I am Lazarus* (1945) Anna Kavan writes:

> I stare out of the window from which it looks as if some destructive colossus had been stamping upon our city, trampling down whole blocks and boroughs with his gigantic jack-boots. Acres and acres of flattened rubble spread out spacious and so simplified that the eye is baffled and it's impossible to tell which objects are near and which are remote. It's not possible to say where the cheek of the earth starts to curve, nor where the unsuppressed bright river loops over the bulge, down to the oceans and the archipelagos on the underside of the world. The few buildings which remain intact in this vicinity stand about self-consciously amidst the harmonious demolition. They look singularly uncomfortable and as if they had taken fright at their own conspicuousness: one can see that they do not quite recognise themselves in such embarrassing circumstances. They stand there at a loss, wishing to retire into the decent collective security which they dimly remember as being their proper place: or else to lose definition by amalgamating with the undetailed collapse all around them.[26]

The damage leaves the eye 'baffled' because it removes the habitual perceptual structures of perspective and orientation. While the device of personifying the surviving buildings as embarrassed and uncomfortable is weakly metaphoric, its effect is less to make a reader see the buildings as subjects but rather to focus attention on the awkwardness of their presentation in perception. Kavan shows the unfamiliar starkness of these buildings which are thrust upon the attention once torn from their habitual background. In their newly-revealed 'conspicuousness' and 'definition', the buildings force themselves on our notice, strange and fresh, in a way they never could through the 'decent collective security' of dulled and routine perception.

War then disrupts our habitual apprehension of the world in such a way that we may seize phenomenal being; an existence, as Heidegger has it, which is thus 'illuminated'[27] for us. For Heidegger it is precisely this experience of awkwardness, when we find something missing, unusable or not 'ready-to-hand', which is the key to rediscovering the world's phenomena. In

Being and Time (1927), Heidegger argues that Dasein discovers the nature of existence, a state of 'being-in-the-world', through the practice of circumspection which is a totalising assembly of Dasein's purposive interactions with the world and their mutual contexts. In Heidegger's famous example, the actions a hammer enables and the uses we make of it can reveal our existential reality; the hammer becomes not simply an object, but a mode of our encounter with the world.[28] Perversely, damaged or unusable equipment brings the nature of the world to our notice because it is imperfectly aligned or deployed. Since our existence is involved in what Heidegger considers a totality of assignments – the purposes to which we put things – then the world announces itself by the disturbance of an assignment, such as the flattening of buildings by which we have been used to orient ourselves or the sudden absence of a place to put a tray of teacups. As Heidegger writes:

> When something at hand is missing, whose everyday presence was so much a matter of course that we never even paid attention to it, this constitutes a *breach* in the context of references discovered in circumspection. Circumspection comes up with emptiness and now sees for the first time what the missing thing was at hand *for* and at hand *with*. Once again the surrounding world makes itself known. [29]

As Anna Kavan's description of a war-torn city demonstrates, literature can enact this process of re-discovery through attention to the strange and disruptive ways in which new spatial relations are thrust forward in consciousness. In fiction, the perceptual capture of a city breached by bombs and rockets, blocked with rubble and craters darkened by blackout, or made dazzling under unfamiliar moonlight is a process which begins to reveal spatiality afresh, inviting writers to confront and assimilate a different understanding of space. Thus we can begin to see why post-war literature appears so preoccupied with, and so disturbed by, space.

In literature this sense of disturbance was not limited to description of the events of war, nor did it end with the war. After 1945, the disturbance was a sustained influence on British writers who carried the conceptual and imaginative shocks of the war through the rest of the decade. This was not a simple matter of thematic emphasis or foregrounding, of presenting,

for example, the psychological responses of characters to bombardment or describing damaged buildings. Indeed the actual events of war may be peripheral in many 1940s novels, as in Henry Green's *Loving* (1945) or even absent, as in Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan* (1946). Nor was this process of absorbing the perceptual and conceptual effects of the war's phenomena into fiction necessarily self-reflexive. A philosophical impulse to understand a world changed by the experience of war can be found in this period by examining literary descriptions of the world, not by seeking overt philosophical discussion in these texts. The physical events of the war exerted new pressures on the imagination and the literary response can be detected in the disruption of once-routine moments, such as the placement of a tray of teacups.

This heightened literary interest in how the world is present to us has parallels with the philosophical practice of phenomenology and, like phenomenology, passed through stages of development during the twentieth century. While Heidegger followed Husserl in prioritising the study of the content of perceptual experience he withdrew from assumptions of a perceiving subject and perceptual world to an understanding of 'being-in-the-world', a unitary, constitutive state in which Dasein discerns its actions, intentions and relations in a way which is 'pre-ontological'; that is to say, prior to any philosophical assumptions about the nature of existence. Without this phenomenological approach, Heidegger argues, ontological method is naïve and superficial since it discerns appearance not true phenomena: '*Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible.*'[30] Ontological self-reflexivity is found in all philosophic inquiry but there is a specific urgency about it in a period of war. This growing appetite to interrogate what exists, it will be argued here, is a developing trend in literature in the 1940s. Pre-war modernist writers were of course also greatly interested in describing how phenomena appeared in the subjective consciousness of their characters but, arguably, the formal experiment of high modernist writing included the continued assumption that phenomena always refer to a material world of solid objects. Perceptual experience is shown

to be occluded, individual and mysterious but faith persists in a real world beyond the veil. In *The Waves* (1931) for instance, Woolf punctuates the combined impressionistic flow of interior monologues from her characters with 'inter-chapters' of natural scenic description which, apparently in deliberate contrast, suggest a starkly clear and unmediated world: 'The sun fell in sharp wedges inside the room. Whatever the light touched became dowered with a fanatical existence...a knife looked like a dagger of ice.'[31] The impression then is of fiction which treats phenomena as illusory, as the second-order receptions of a Cartesian mind permanently attempting to connect to a material world. This assumption would be at odds with Heidegger's view that phenomenology *is* ontology and that a distinction between subject and object worlds is false; it also distinguishes pre-war modernism from much writing of the 1940s where, as we shall see, faith in the fictional ability to propose any ontology beyond its own limits begins to dissolve rapidly. In the 1940s, writers showed a growing trend to see their fiction as a self-contained world rather than referring to an external reality. The subjectivity captured in writing could be seen as another expression of the phenomenal and so, following Heidegger, as ontology itself rather than the mediated description of an objective world. In this period, writing increasingly seemed to contain an acknowledgement of its own fictionality. If so, this tendency would associate 1940s writing with a quality more often ascribed to postmodern fiction. It must be admitted though, that these distinctions are complex and contested. For example, critiques of later phenomenologist philosophy include the charge that it tacitly preserves the subject-object distinction it proposes to abolish, while studies such as Tyrus Miller's *Late Modernism* argue that by the 1930s some literature had already begun to describe a 'deauthenticated' world in which the oppositions preserved in high modernism, including the subject-object distinction, were already waning.[32] Even so, it is clear the Second World War had a profound further effect on fiction: both literature and phenomenology continued to develop. Philosophical assumptions about the correspondence between consciousness and the world which it 'intends' became more precarious.

In 1945 Maurice Merleau-Ponty published *The Phenomenology of Perception*, which built on Heidegger's formulation of 'being-in-the-world' to examine the determinate relationship between what perceives and what is perceived. Yet Merleau-Ponty's unique insight is that the human body is the crucial component in an understanding of worldly being. This knowledge is latent in our bodies' ever-present orientation towards an external world. Both perception and physical reflex are modes of this condition of worldly being, expressing its nature through pre-conscious operations, revealing the inhabited world by means of what they grasp, attempt and perform: 'Prior to stimuli and sensory content, we must recognise a kind of inner diaphragm which determines, infinitely more than they do, what our reflexes and perceptions will be able to aim at in the world, the area of our possible operations, the scope of our life.'[33] In its insistence on the human body as essentially constitutive of space, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy entailed a further weakening of spatial epistemologies which had imagined it as a vacant container, for objects and human figures alike.

It was in this context that fiction increasingly began to describe space intermingled with the world's substances rather than as its container. Space was interwoven with, and mutually constitutive of, our environment of objects and experiences. This is not to say that space becomes a 'thing', as a teacup or a brick wall is a 'thing', but that the establishment of our perceptual world is a dynamically spatial process rather than the apprehension of things already 'there' in a spatial field. This suggests to imaginative practices, like writing, that spatial conditions are not fixed, predictable or measurable; space is both moulded and moulding, variously irruptive and interpenetrative, glimpsed at times as yawning void and at others as microscopic speck. To speak of a total grasp of space would be nonsensical but in the 1940s, fiction came to see involvement with space, rather than location *in* space, as equally essential in the presentation of characters, architecture or landscape. In this way, some writers came to share the insights of phenomenological philosophers who argued that our existing language of spatiality was inadequate. For Merleau-Ponty this meant that: 'We must therefore avoid

saying that our body is *in* space…it inhabits space.'[34] Heidegger distinguished an existential spatiality of Dasein, part of its state of 'being-in-the-world', from the simpler condition of 'in-the-world' which belongs to objects. With this understanding, he suggests, we avoid 'the naïve opinion that human being is initially a spiritual thing which is then subsequently placed "in" a space.'[35]

The following chapters will examine in more detail some of the phenomenal qualities of space described by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty and the extent to which 1940s fiction often gives these literary form. This is not to suggest that writers were directly influenced by reading the philosophers' work. Neither *Being and Time* nor *The Phenomenology of Perception* were translated into English until 1962 and there is no evidence that English authors had read them in the original. However, it is noteworthy that Merleau-Ponty's work was reviewed in the London literary press as early as March 1946[36] suggesting a cultural climate of interest in these ideas that bridged philosophy and literature. Phenomenology is a philosophy that seeks to *describe* rather than explain; similarly writers of the 1940s showed an interest in spatial description which drew attention to the composition and oddities of space and can be read as an iterative interrogation. Literary descriptions of space in this period do not rest on any assumed model of the spatial, but push at its definitions. In this regard, writing of the 1940s express doubt about space and this doubt is what Merleau-Ponty sees as essential to challenge statements about the world which are simultaneously 'self-evident' and questionable:

> The consistency of a thing perceived, of a geometrical relationship or of an idea, is arrived at only provided that I give up trying by every means to make it more explicit, and instead allow myself to come to rest in it. Once launched, and committed to a certain set of thoughts, Euclidean space for example, or the conditions governing the existence of a certain society, I discover evident truths; but these are not unchallengeable, since perhaps this space or this society are not the only possible.[37]

Description has a more radical power than explanation then for Merleau-Ponty, and this insight is one that might apply as usefully to literary writing as it is does to phenomenological philosophy.

Two writers, Elizabeth Bowen and Henry Green, are given particular attention here. Bowen is key for several reasons: the range of her writing about London in numerous short stories and her wartime novel *The Heat of the Day*; the partly-submerged but almost ever-present interest which her fiction takes in the array of landscapes, localities and interiors and their inter-relation with humans; the meditative engagement of her letters and non-fiction with questions of space and the pronounced alteration to her world-view which the war appears to have made. These qualities are all the more noticeable in a writer who was also prolific before 1939.

Henry Green, in both *Concluding* (1948) and *Loving* (1945), presents settings which are striking in their curious mixture of the specificity of places and the more abstract qualities of a primordial spatial awareness which seem to underlie them. The concreteness of Kinalty Castle (*Loving)* and The Institute *(Concluding)* exists in tension with a more dimly-discerned spatial background against which these buildings are highlighted. As if these places are crystals secreted from a solution, they take solid form only from the element in which they float and the effect is to emphasise the precariousness of their construction but also to draw attention to the constitutive possibilities of space, including the operation of a world where movements, actions and alignments are in the weave of a spatial fabric and not plotted on a pre-existing field. In these texts we come to see the footsteps of the characters, the echoes of their voices or their physical postures as revelatory of the space with which they are involved. In the process, the texts acknowledge flaws in the superficial 'spatial logic' of their physical settings and implicitly critique a process of spatial description which presupposes a space that can exist before its inhabitants. As in phenomenological thought, before the conceptual activities of metaphysics – before even the categorisation of subject and object – the world is established

and grasped in the moment of its activity. As for Bowen, Green's writing was changed by the war. In particular, he gradually moved to an entirely exterior presentation of character: the physical disposition of human figures becomes central to his work and reminds us of the centrality of the body in Merleau-Ponty's thought.

The socio-political management of space was also a significant public theme in post-war Britain. Reconstruction plans began to spring from the drawing board long before the war was over. The most substantial of these was the Abercrombie plan, a term which actually encompasses three distinct but complementary plans produced by town planner Patrick Abercrombie during the 1930s and 1940s, culminating in the 1944 *Greater London Plan*. Abercrombie proposed an exhaustive and centrally-managed redrawing of the space of London and its surroundings, based on a pattern of four concentric rings. For the first time, planning specified how much space each type of community should contain by recommending 'ideal' population densities and allocations of land in categories such as housing, industry and open space.[38] The report warned that: 'Every inch of available or existing open space needs to be safeguarded'[39] and this admonition echoes the intense anxiety about spatial control and allocation which can be read in Henry Green's fiction and, more widely, in writing of the 1940s.

The technology of warfare also had powerful effects on spatial understanding. Not only did the Second World War help to abolish the idea of the battlefield as the sole theatre of war since civilians came under bombardment in large numbers for the first time, it also saw the introduction of paradigmatically new weapons in the form of the Nazi V1 and V2 missiles. The first was a pilotless flying bomb; the second a supersonic rocket which reached outer space en route to its target. Their effects were psychic as well as physical. Britons were disturbed by the apparently arbitrary nature of attack by weapons with no visible human agency and recorded the psychological tensions they experienced in anticipating them. V2s in particular engendered a cognitive dissonance which destabilised familiar conceptual arrangements of space and time.

Faster than sound, their arrival was heard only after they had already struck. Arriving instantly, unseen and unannounced, V2s carried the air of an attack from another universe, from a hyperspace touching this world at all points and none. The rockets seemed to leap over spatial categories of distance, adjacence and linearity. The effects of these strange new weapons is apparent in personal memoirs, diaries and interviews and even in scientific documents but their transformative effects on the spatial imagination also left their marks on literature, including Bowen's and Green's, long after the war ended. One of those effects was to shift our conceptual ground from a world understood through an inexorable spatial logic of contiguity, sequence and adjacence. In its place a world began to appear in which points and places may be joined by similarity or qualitative connections and can be arranged accordingly. This was a world, to use a contemporary idiom, beginning to switch from analogue to digital.

To suggest a movement in this direction during the years immediately after the war is to make a new attempt at periodization. It also implies that the significance of the 1940s has been overlooked and this may seem strange given the increased interest in war writing over recent years. Studies in the last twenty years include Adam Piette's *Imagination at War* (1995), Mark Rawlinson's *British Writing of the Second World War* (1999), Marina MacKay's *Modernism and World War II* (2007), Patrick Deer's *Culture in Camouflage* (2009), Kristine Miller's *British Literature of the Blitz* (2009) and Leo Mellor's *Reading the Ruins* (2011) as well as the 2001 collection *The Fiction of the 1940s*, edited by Rod Mengham and N.H. Reeve. For all the advances made in the understanding of what happened to British literature during the war years, these studies tend to limit themselves by taking 1945 as the finishing point of their investigation (although an exception is usually made for *The Heat of the Day* which is set in the war years and was substantially written during them, although not published until 1949). The years 1939-1945 offer a natural frame for a study, yet to adopt that frame excludes the possibility that the experience of war wrought deep and longer-term changes in fiction which also showed themselves in the years immediately after the end of the conflict and possibly in

writing which does not take the war as either theme or background. In April 1949 George

Orwell wrote to a friend, arguing that the literary impact of the war years would be delayed:

> The other thing is that you are always attacking novelists for not writing about the contemporary scene. But can you think of a novel that ever was written about the strictly contemporary scene? It is very unlikely that any novel…would ever be set back less than three years at least. If you tried in 1949, to write a novel about 1949, it would simply be "reportage" and probably would seem out of date and silly before you could get it into print…The reason is not only that one can't see the events of the moment in perspective, but also that a novel has to be lived with for years before it can be written down, otherwise the working-out of detail, which takes an immense time and can only be done at odd moments, can't happen…You may remember that nearly all the worthwhile books about the 1914 war appeared five, ten or even more years after it was over, which was when one might have expected them. I think books about the late war are about due to appear now.[40]

Orwell's analysis supports an approach which pays attention to writing published between

1945 and 1950 and which sees the war years not as a homogenous experience but recognises

their distinct phases. For all the inevitable attention on the Blitz, we should remember that

these sustained bombing raids largely came to an end in early 1941 and that in the remaining

four years of war people were preoccupied as much with issues such as national

reconstruction, V-weapons and the political division of Europe. In this regard, Leo Mellor's

study stands out for its broader reading of the significance of the war years in British culture,

pursuing its investigating into the bombsites (both literal and metaphorical) left behind by war

into the years and decades after the end of conflict.

If studies of Second World War literature sometimes appear too narrowly framed to

encapsulate the war's effects on fiction, almost the opposite case could be made for studies of

Bowen and Green. Since both wrote prolifically long before and after the war decade, critical

studies have ranged over an output of more than 30 years. These career-long studies naturally

seek to follow threads of continuity and development over a novelist's creative span; the

evolving style and themes by which a writer might be defined, their biographical trajectory and

lifelong philosophy. These studies may therefore be less attuned to any change in direction

attributable to the war and its cultural consequences. Hermione Lee, for example, suggests that the war's effect on Bowen was to confirm her belief in the dangers of a wilful Romantic individualism which left people 'dislocated, dispossessed and denatured.'[41] Lee argues this dangerous impulse contravened Bowen's lifelong championing of a form of classical impersonal self-restraint. On this account, the war didn't change Bowen's writing, it simply illuminated a worldview which stretched, intact, across her literary career. In the search for consistency, coherence and continuity over decades, studies of single authors risk overlooking discontinuities and changes in direction during a writing career. Furthermore, none of the individual studies of Green and Bowen, for all their variety, have taken a sustained interest in the presentation of space in their fiction: nor have the more general studies of fiction in the 1940s. An attempt to meet these absences is the first aim of this project.

Chapter One concentrates on Bowen's Blitz novel *The Heat of the Day* and on her short stories from this period, examining how they describe the spaces of war-time London. The more documentary-style stories of William Sansom are also briefly discussed, to show how the experience of bombing and blackout drew literature toward a phenomenological registration of events. This shift is mirrored in Bowen's writing. In particular, the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, with its insistence on embodiment as a necessary constituent of the world's perceptual structure, is used to inform an understanding of space as charged, fluid, resonant, unstable and provisional. This chapter also consider the effects of physical change to London, including the removal of iron railings, on its citizens' perceptual hold of their city – using Kevin Lynch's theory of a city's 'imageability'.[42]

Chapter Two looks at the development and deployment of the V1 and V2 weapons to understand their psychological effects on Britain. These effects are revealed not just in fiction but also in the diaries and accounts of ordinary Britons, including those in the Mass Observation archive. This chapter suggests the weapons not only frightened and unsettled

people in new ways but also posed an imaginative challenge to accustomed ways of thinking about space, including the suggestion of an aurally-constituted space which was disturbing in its looseness. Paul Virilio's theory of a military space of 'dromocracy' – an idea bound up with speed, movement and an erasure of Euclidean geometry - is also discussed here, especially as it emerged from Virilio's own experience of the aftermath of the Second World War.

Chapter Three concentrates on Henry Green's novels *Loving* and *Concluding*. It considers the struggles for control and demarcation of space, themes of both novels, and the extent to which these were symptomatic of events in the 1940s. This chapter illustrates how Green increasingly preferred an exterior view of character. This chapter also investigates the extent to which Green acknowledges the artificiality of his settings. Gaps and flaws in spatial 'logic' here carry both philosophical and political implications, suggesting that movement and action of characters, in Lefebvrian terms, undermine authoritarian models of space. The chapter also draws on Merleau-Ponty's posthumous work, proposing his idea of a universal flesh as a parallel to the loosening grasp on space which Green's fiction exhibits.

Chapter Four suggests that traditional conceptions of space were tested by the unprecedented geo-political shapes and formations thrown up by World War II. Examples such as the defeated city of Vienna, divided into four zones of occupation by Britain France, Russia and the US with a common centre, meant that abstract ideas such as barriers and divisions took on an altered significance, marking out from one another not just contiguous spaces but spaces of qualitative difference, zones of occupation, neutrality, independence or safety. This chapter suggests our understanding of space began to be transformed during the 1940s as fixed assumptions of space operating on principles of adjacence, linearity and sequence came into question; a challenge later articulated by Michel Foucault. Both Graham Greene's novella *The Third Man*, set in post-war Vienna, and Bowen's vision of a London 'enislanded' are central to this chapter, which also proposes similarities between the literary re-creation of maps and

urban spaces during the 1940s and the psychogeographic practice of Situationists in 1950s Paris, as well as Iain Sinclair's writing on contemporary London.

Finally, **the conclusion** attempts to understand what a shift in spatial thinking during the 1940s might mean for the historical understanding of literature. It argues that since this shift was driven by the specific experiences of World War II it cannot be seen simply as an extension of a modernist revolution in the understanding of space and time, as theorised by Stephen Kern. The decade's writing exemplifies a cultural turn to the spatial, even though this movement has more usually been associated with the postmodern era by theorists including Fredric Jameson. Rejecting both these periodisations, the conclusion turns instead to the theory of Geocriticsm developed by Betrand Westphal to propose 1945 as a crucial turning point, though not an end point, in the cultural understanding of space and the development of literature. The concluding argument is that, because of the Second World War, the 1940s was a literary decade which did not merely bridge two eras or continue an earlier one, but which set down the foundations of the contemporary age.

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[1] D.J.Taylor, *After the War* (London: Flamingo, 1994), p. 8

[2] Henry Green, *Loving* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. vi

[3] Sara Wasson, *Urban Gothic of the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 24

[4] Leo Mellor, *Reading the Ruins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 56

[5] Patrick Deer, *Culture in Camouflage*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 2. The secondary quote is from Malcolm Bradbury, 'Closing Time in the Gardens' in *No Not Bloomsbury* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1987), p. 69

[6] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 1

[7] Kern, p. 152

[8] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 364

[9] Jameson, p. 25

[10] Albert Einstein, *Relativity,* translated by Robert W Lawson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 18

[11] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), p. 3

[12] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen.W.Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 177

[13] See for example: Mark Rawlinson, *British Writing of the Second World War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999); Patrick Deer, *Culture in Camouflage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Adam Piette, *Imagination at War* (London: Papermac, 1995)

[14] One example is Neil Corcoran's study of Elizabeth Bowen's writing: *Elizabeth Bowen: the enforced return* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

[15] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 51-52

[16] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 52

[17] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 55

[18] Rawlinson, p. 103

[19] Wasson, p. 123

[20] Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 146

[21] Ellmann, p. 146

[22] Ellmann, p. 153

[23] Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 168

[24] Norman Longmate, *Hitler's Rockets* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p. 226

[25] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 483-484

[26] Anna Kavan, 'Our City' in *I Am Lazarus*, (London: Peter Owen, 1945), p. 138

[27] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), p. 72

[28] Heidegger, p. 69

[29] Heidegger, p. 74

[30] Heidegger, p. 33

[31] Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (London; Granada, 1983), p. 74

[32] Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 62

[33] Merleau-Ponty, p. 92

[34] Merleau-Ponty, p. 161

[35] Heidegger, p. 57

[36] Denis Hawkins, 'Phenomenology', *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 March 1946, p. 106

[37] Merleau-Ponty, p. 461

[38] Patrick Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan* (London: HMSO, 1944), p. 17. The bulk of Chapter Eight of the report is concerned with the ideal of amount of space to devote to particular uses.

[39] Abercrombie, p. 97

[40] George Orwell, 'Letter to T.R. Fyvel' 15 April 1949, 'In Front of Your Nose', ed. by Ian Amos and Sonia Orwell, *The Collected Letters, Essays and Journalism of George Orwell*, 4 vols (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), iv, p. 497

[41] *The Mulberry Tree: writings of Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Hermione Lee (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 4

[42] Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960)

CHAPTER ONE

This Memory of the Air

Introduction

When the bombing of London began in 1940 it was not quite what people had imagined. Prophecies of the destructive power that bombers could unleash on a city had grown to terrifying proportions between the First and Second World Wars. By 1937 the British government was projecting 1.8 million casualties in just the first two months of the looming conflict with Germany and expecting that millions would flee the cities in panic.[1] Several novels of the 1930s made this anticipated, ferocious bombardment their theme[2] and even fiction in which war was not an overt presence contained premonitions of the blitz as hostilities drew nearer. In Elizabeth Bowen's *The Death of the Heart* (1938), protagonist Portia draws stability from the 'imperturbable' objects in her room, the destruction of which by a 'dropped bomb' would be 'dreadful to the spirit.'[3] In Henry Green's *Party Going* (1939), a nameless bystander remarks of the thick crowd on Victoria station: 'What targets for a bomb.'[4] Green, who had joined the Auxiliary Fire Service, seemed to signal the peak of this crescendo of unease by publishing his autobiography *Pack My Bag* in 1940 because, he said, he felt sure he would be killed in the coming war.[5] These fears were visually expressed in the film *Things to Come* (1936) with a screenplay by H.G. Wells, based on his novel *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933). The film showed entire cityscapes destroyed by bombing in a war which Wells had imagined breaking out in 1940.[6] Yet when the real bombing of Britain began it was, for all the suffering and horror it caused, not nearly as catastrophic as had been imagined: just over 60,000 people were killed – almost half of them in London.[7] This was a heavy toll, but not the apocalypse that had been feared; there was no general collapse of morale, no mass graves and no abandoned cities.

Just as the form of warfare did not follow the course predicted in peacetime, so fiction often took unanticipated directions. While the war gave rise to a substantial 'Blitz literature', there was also writing which captured less dramatic aspects of the conflict, such as the long stretches of fire-station boredom recorded in Henry Green's *Caught* (1943) or the painful and absurd social manoeuvring in the Home Counties boarding house of Patrick Hamilton's *Slaves of Solitude* (1947). Then there was work which was not *about* the war at all, but on which the war had clearly left its mark, such as the intense fantasy of Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan* (1946). If these novels seem surprisingly idiosyncratic, oblique or domestic against the background of the great global event of the Second World War, contemporary criticism has much to say about why this might be so. In *Imagination at War* (1995) Adam Piette suggests that grandiose public narratives about the war baffled the private imagination and forced it into retreat so that 'the ordinary imagination during wartime was left perplexed, caught up in the uncontainable movements of violent, global history.'[8] For Piette, any attempts to discover a genuine collective British experience of the Second World War were inevitably compromised by an invasive and domineering state wanting to dictate its own version of events:

> These public stories turn out to be hopelessly charged with broken, complex and dark feeling once read at the raw level of the mind living through them. They show how a militarized culture does not merely incidentally invade the private imagination, but actually covets it as its own, wishes to transform it for its own uses, to make it its creature…this is an essential fact about wartime culture.[9]

This emphasis on the private and individual response to the experience of war may certainly help to explain the choices taken by writers during the 1940s. But it could also have the effect of directing our attention away from features common to their work and therefore away from the impact of the war on a *collective* literary imagination. Piette hints at a collective impulse to imagine the war but concludes that this was frustrated by authoritarian control.

This chapter argues that the impact of the war on the city produced new perceptions of physical forms which in turn exerted pressures on the mind. Those pressures are expressed in literature of the 1940s produced by writers who witnessed the bombing of London and the transformation of the city during the war. In particular, writing during this period shows a changing understanding of space which manifests itself in an anxious attentiveness to spatial description and a renewed interest in how to picture human figures in their spatial environment. While writers inevitably tried to document the shocks of the Blitz, the literary response to the Second World War in London goes far beyond this reportage and includes a philosophical reassessment of the spatial. The wrecked buildings of London prompted more than an attempt to process the violence of the event and more than the contemplation of ruins. Destruction forced writers to think about how space is composed in perception and about the ways in which we participate in the creation of spaces. The materiality of war-time London and the psychic act of constructing space collided in fascinating ways in 1940s literature. This has not always been appreciated, partly because of a narrower focus on 'Blitz literature' and partly because of a dominant interest in the public narrative of the war, rather than its broader philosophical implications. The interest in the spatial that we can discern in the writing of, among others, Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, William Sansom and Henry Green, suggests that the war shaped collective, as well as private, imaginings which influenced the course of fiction in the 1940s.

This chapter focuses on the writing of Elizabeth Bowen in order to trace in more detail how this renewed interest in the spatial sprang from the reshaping of London during the conflict. It examines how her fiction responded not only to bombing but also to other material changes on the capital during the war, including the removal of its iron railings and the early stages of post-war planning. It suggests that her writing is representative of a collective anxiety about space produced by the war and that this is seen both at the level of the cityscape and in the micro-spaces of domestic interiors. Bowen's fiction from the 1940s treats space as unstable,

and interpenetrative with 'solid' forms so that conceptual boundaries like the distinction between inside and outside are loosened and the issue of shape assumes a greater significance. Her descriptions of spaces in this period are contrasted here with her pre-war writing, to offer further evidence of the war as transformative of spatial thought. Yet it is argued here that, perhaps counter-intuitively, Bowen ultimately came to find solace in seeing space and solid objects as mutually interpenetrative. Her pre-war faith in the permanent solidity of objects was dissolved, but this proved not to be as terrible as feared because it also revealed a vision of spaces as never wholly emptied. The space of a destroyed house, like that of Louie Lewis's parents in *The Heat of the Day* or, post-war, of Bowen's own ancestral home in Ireland (demolished in the 1960s), retains some presence of its previous occupation rather than becoming a pure void. The smashing of houses and furniture by bombs also destroyed Bowen's pre-war faith in their permanence; yet she discovered the psychological effects of this were not quite as 'dreadful' to the spirit as her character Portia had imagined. If once-inhabited space is never entirely emptied, Bowen's writing seems to accept, the converse is also true. A place of apparent emptiness may already be marked for its future occupation. As Britain emerged from the war with a public agenda for redevelopment and rebuilding, Bowen's spatial vision encompassed a landscape already tinged with emergent forms. The war had changed the way she thought about space, just as it had begun to change the country's spaces.

Parallels between Merleau-Ponty's philosophy and the way that Bowen and other writers reimagined space as a result of the war are also helpful here. Merleau-Ponty's claim that space is established in the mutual dependence of the body and the world provides a contemporary philosophical counterpoint to 1940s developments in literature, including the growing tendency to picture human figures intermingled with spaces previously thought of as 'external'. Moreover, the phenomenologists' model of a world already *there*, available to perception prior to reflection, finds a literary expression in much war-time writing. The sensory shocks and interruptions of bombing and blackout encouraged literary description at the

primary level – expressing spaces in primordial forms of shapes, shadows, flames and smoke

and, in the process, drawing a reader's attention to the most fundamental structures of

perception, before the accumulations of interpretation and metaphor. This attention that

writers paid to the materiality of the Second World War in London, and its philosophical

implications, are often overlooked. Urban phenomenology was a war-time practice of those

who noticed their city anew because of the conflict, and this novelty shaped British fiction not

only in the war years, but throughout the 1940s.

Interiors

Bowen was one of many writers on London's civilian 'front line' during the Blitz because of her

work as an air raid warden. These authors were well-placed to record the physical

transformation of London under bombing, seeing the city anew through demolished walls,

sheets of flame, blacked out street or miasmas of smoke. One way their writing registered this

transformation was as a mutability of elements of the landscape, an exchange and

interpenetration of substantial forms such as brick and iron with insubstantial fire, smoke or

water, a confusion of the weighty and the weightless. For example, in Sansom's short story

'The Witness', a fireman sitting astride a wall is glimpsed as 'floating' in the mist[10]; in Henry

Green's 'Mr Jonas' a figure is similarly glimpsed who 'seemed…to be sitting on a taut sheet of

steam';[11] in Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, Stella hands a dressing-gown through 'walls of

steam'.[12] In another Sansom story, 'The Wall', the firemen see 'ton upon ton of red brick

hovering in the air'[13] while in 'Fireman Flower' the eponymous subject perceives how:

> From the elements a new world had been moulded. Iron, fire, brick, smoke and
> water from the huge hydrants were patterned into a new choreography that
> enlivened fiercely the blood and the spirit.[14]

In Blitz literature, brick and iron start to flicker and move like fire, smoke and water. As we shall see, this perceived equivalence between solid and fluid was one of the reasons for new depictions of the spatial which emerged in post-war writing, yet this causal connection has been overlooked even though critical interest in Second World War writing has grown greatly in the last twenty years.

More noted in the studies of Blitz writing has been the presentation of a city which becomes animated; walls bulge, buildings groan and creak. In Sansom's 'Fireman Flower' the road appears to flow backward beneath the wheels of fire engines and a warehouse, seen through dancing smoke and shadows, is alive with movement: 'Occasionally platforms appeared and sometimes an iron balcony with its attendant staircase jutted out suddenly from one place in the wall – only to disappear again as if on a secret errand.'[15] In *British Writing of the Second World War* (1999), Mark Rawlinson reads this prevalence of houses that are 'literally animated' in Blitz stories such as Sansom's as part of a process of substitution of buildings for bodies. Rawlinson sees depictions of the city's destruction in war-time writing as shaped by an impulse to avoid looking at damaged human bodies; writers prefer a view of the inanimate made animate as a substitute for human injury and death: 'The urban fabric is foregrounded at the expense of human figures.'[16] In Sansom's story 'Building Alive' (published in the 1948 collection *Something Terrible, Something Lovely*) for example, the narrator describes the firemen's alertness to, and focus on, the stresses and creaking of the skeleton of a bombed house in which they are working, only for a neighbouring house to collapse, killing the rescue party inside. Rawlinson suggests this is typical of the way that Blitz writing will not look directly at corpses: 'The ironic miracle of survival casts aside contemplation of the dead: the spectacle of the material phenomenon, the life of the inanimate, deflects the narrator's thoughts.'[17] He traces this tendency to evade the direct view of the human body in favour of an architectural trope back to pre-war fiction such as Green's *Party Going*, where the crowd on Victoria Station is glimpsed as a collection of derelict buildings.[18] But Rawlinson's study also identifies other

recurring tropes used to describe war-damaged London, such as the comparison with classical ruins from Rome, Greece, Egypt or Troy which imbues the wreckage of London with the symbolic and comforting status of heroic resistance.[19] This reading of World War II literature is one of repeated 'substitutions of London's fabric for its people'[20], of a sliding between 'the human and the architectonic, figure and background.'[21]

Rawlinson's approach is typical of a critical tendency to read landscapes and interiors of war-time London for their metaphoric significance rather than closely examining their description. The critic's attention bypasses the materiality of spatial arrangements in its search for a second-order meaning, the substitution of metaphor. Here, Rawlinson interprets Sansom's description of bombed buildings as displacement of damaged human bodies; in the passage from *The Heat of the Day* examined in the introduction, Bowen's emphasis on the layout of Stella's London flat is read by various critics[22] as indicative of issues of personal identity, not as an example of literary interest in the composition of spaces. This critical search for metaphor can not only obscure the potential significance of individual passages, it has also directed us away from the collective fascination with space exhibited by so many writers who lived through the London Blitz. We cannot, of course, entirely disentangle metaphor from material - there is no such thing as purely descriptive writing. But nor does a process of substitution completely overwrite the significance of the first inscription. We will want to examine what Rawlinson, above, calls the 'spectacle of the material phenomenon' in literature, as well as what it might conceal or encode.

The powerful sense of spatial disturbance in 1940s fiction suggests an ontological reassessment is at work. Writers subject the whole city, the street and the domestic interior, to a spatial interrogation whose intensity suggest philosophic inquiry into even the most quotidian settings. In *The Heat of the Day* Bowen dwells repeatedly on the micro spaces of rooms, tables, chairs, trays and carpets and the spatial oddities and arrangements which they

present. Roderick's problem, seen in the introduction, is where to put a tea tray in a flat where the rooms are indeterminate and in which space is therefore not fixed or ordered by habit. This concern is echoed at several other points in the novel where the narration lingers over apparently trivial parts of interior landscapes, with the effect of defamiliarising them and their domestic routines. When Roderick visits Cousin Nettie at Wistaria Lodge, she is observed 'looking critically at the space between the chair and the sofa'[23] and this is followed by the maid delivering tea 'which she placed in exactly the vacuum at which Cousin Nettie had stared.'[24] The spatial arrangement of objects and people and the gaps between, assume a heightened significance in which normal proportions of distance and relations become elastic. When Harrison first visits Stella in her flat for example, his quizzical visual assessment of the scene is bound up with the novel's recurrent treatment of these small spaces as important and problematic: 'He, having settled with the door, looked at the carpet, at the distance of carpet between them, as though thinking out a succession of moves in chess. Under a slight, if anything humble, frown, his downcast eyes zigzagged from chair to table, from table to stool; step by step he came forward behind his look.'[25] At a later meeting in the same flat, Harrison sits: 'planted well forward in his armchair – which…was a stranded outpost some way away down the carpet.'[26] Stella and Robert dine at a restaurant where their 'table seemed to stand on their own carpet'[27], in which Robert 'turned his head to look into one of the dusky distances of the restaurant'[28] and where we see him 'leaning back from the table as though to get the whole thing into farewell perspective.'[29] Similarly, when Roderick leaves Nettie at Wistaria Lodge: 'From the threshold he looked back: down the length of the room she sent him a last glance.'[30] There is a repeated skewing of perspective and proportion in the novel's interior scenes – rooms take on unfamiliar sizes and arrangements, attention is fixed on odd or apparently trivial spatial detail, distances open and close disconcertingly.

At times it is easy to see how this spatial description may prompt interpretations which are metaphoric: emphasising the physical distance between two figures, for example, is a familiar

device for suggesting a gap of understanding or sympathy between them. *The Heat of the Day*, with its themes of questionable identity, suspicion and betrayal, perhaps encourages this interpretation. However, a metaphoric reading neither overwrites nor obscures a primary spatial impression produced by the text, the sense of an environment in which space is a preoccupation and a problem, in which space seems to have been fundamentally disturbed and must be understood anew.

This curious sense of interior space is reinforced by the way Bowen uses the words vacuum and void repeatedly in the novel. Sometimes their use is part of direct spatial description – as in the example, given above, of the vacant space filled by Nettie's tea tray or when rationing leaves the inside of a greengrocer's shop a 'longstanding void'[31] – at others it is part of a mental rather than physical landscape. Roderick's daydreaming fills 'pockets of vacuum underlying routine'[32], the atmosphere of war-time London is one in which 'vacuum as to future was offset by vacuum as to past'[33], Louie, we are told, 'had for some time stood in a vacuum'[34] and her housemate Connie: 'less spotted the vacuum in her friend than was drawn to it: she was a constitutional rusher in to fill.'[35] Beyond their immediate context of psychic or personal emptiness, the repetition of the words suggests also the significance of the spatial concept they convey for Bowen in her assembly of London's war-time landscape. It might be objected that to suggest as much is to misunderstand Bowen's intentions since, in her postscript to the short story collection *The Demon Lover* (1945), she writes explicitly about how the ghostly presences in so many of the stories rally to 'fill the vacuum for the uncertain "I"[36] and that the word vacuum in her war-time writing therefore signifies exactly the crisis of identity to which so many critics have pointed. The spatial oddities of the texts, on this reading, are nothing more than indicative metaphors of this fragmenting 'I' and houses, possessions, walls, and furniture are the substances marshalled in the text to register (and perhaps to resist) this destruction of personal identity.

This is a view however which seems not to take into account the interpenetrative nature of space in *The Heat of the Day*. In the same postscript, Bowen writes clearly about how, for her, spatial change to the bombed city has a direct effect on psychic and imaginative states: 'The violent destruction of solid things, the explosion of the illusion that prestige, power and permanence attach to bulk and weight, left all of us, equally, heady and disembodied. Walls went down; and we felt, if not knew, each other. We all lived in a state of lucid abnormality.'[37] While she is explicit about the loosening of self-identity in the war ('Sometimes I hardly knew where I stopped and someone else began'[38]), Bowen then, sees a causal link between physical destruction and this 'heady and disembodied' state, between demolished walls and precarious personal definitions - the link between them is one of connection, not of substitution. This causal link suggests that spatial figurations in her war-time writing, and especially the peculiar domestic interiors, can be construed not only as metaphors for the strain on human identity but as part of a process of spatial change which is produced by the war and which is bound up with the war's effects on thought and imagination. In *The Heat of the Day*, a character who stands 'in a vacuum' has been assailed both physically and mentally by the new spaces of war. Space in Bowen's war-time writing appears as mobile, interpenetrative and invasive. Rooms, buildings, streets and people are re-made by morphological space, leaving them at times expanded and at others reduced to vacuum. The puzzling unpredictability of space is often disruptive and unsettling, confusing distinctions between inside and outside or even between humans and their environment. This 'porousness of architectural and psychic space', to use Ellmann's phrase,[39] also confuses the weighty and the weightless, the substantial and insubstantial, echoing the intermingling of brick and steam or iron and water in so much Blitz writing. When writers, including Bowen, described physical and mental spaces in equivalent terms they were not just proposing the first as a metaphor for the second, they were registering the transformed spaces of war-time London in forms that loosened assumed distinctions between different kinds of space. Ellmann notes this 'porousness' but reads it as a

transformation of metaphor rather than a more general shift in the way that writers apprehended space.

The interpenetration of airy and solid forms that the war suggested to writers also involved the human figure. At the same time that Merleau-Ponty, in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)*,* argued our conception of space is dependent on our bodily participation, Bowen's writing began to show a similar insight. When Stella's son Roderick makes his first visit in *The Heat of the Day* to Mount Morris, the Irish house he has inherited, he is unable to sleep as he feels the spaces and shapes of the estate flowing through him:

> But he had come in full of the outdoors, which welled up in him when, having put out the lamp, he laid down his head…Forms, having made themselves known through no particular sense, forms whose existence he was not to doubt again, loomed and dwelled within him. He had felt all round him heights weighed down upon by night, mysterious declivities, the breath through the unmoving air of moving water…The invisible openness of the fields gave out not less stillness than the fern-rotted hollows; he had come to the humid stoniness of the garden wall, steadied himself on the unequal metalling of the cart track, put his hands on gates, struck out a twang from wire, established by touch the vital differing unhumanity of rocks, corrugated iron, tree trunks. He had from all points turned and returned to trace the elusive river-glimmer below him. Dark ate the outlines of the house as it ate the outlines of the hills and drank from the broken distances of the valley. The air had been night itself, re-imprinted by every one of his movements upon his face and hands – and still, now that he was indoors and gone to bed, impregnating every part of his body it had not sensibly touched. He could not sleep during this memory of the air.[40]

The mingling of weighty and airy ('heights weighed down upon by night'), the interpenetration of Roderick and the environment which is 'impregnating' him, the disrupted perspective of 'broken distances', the apparently contrary juxtaposition of animate and inanimate terms ('vital…unhumanity' and 'unmoving…moving') are among the ways in which spatial properties are set free to flow through the text. The effect the estate has on Roderick could also be read as his unconscious quivering at the discovery of an Irish heritage he has not known until now. But the passage returns to the particular circumstances of the conflict in which Roderick, a

soldier, is involved: 'He had not till tonight envisaged not coming back from war'[41], and so ties this unusual apprehension of space back to similar forms experienced in war-torn London. The spatial disturbance that Roderick experiences, 'this memory of the air', is explicitly linked to the war and so reinforces the sense that it is material events in London which have shaped Bowen's spatial imagination in this passage.

It is instructive to compare this description with an excerpt from Bowen's pre-war novel *The Last September* (1929*)*, in which the Irish landscape is also glimpsed as a kind of spatial loosening that overwhelms Lois and Gerald: 'Out of the distance everywhere, pointless and unrelated space came like water between them, slipping and widening. They receded from one another into the vacancy.'[42] While this passage also imagines an invasive space, it is noticeable how the vagueness of its terms, words such as "everywhere', 'pointless', 'unrelated' and 'vacancy', give the impression of something so vast and formless as to be entirely unanchored. There is no sense here of the interpenetration of inside and outside, of figure and environment, no textural feeling of space imbued with weight, sensation and impression such as Roderick's experiences at Mount Morris. This inrush of space in *The Last September* feels rather like a tidal wave breaking over the figures before it – it receives no frame or reference-point from objects which it penetrates or becomes commingled with – and does not irrupt into new places or new forms like the spatial mobility of Bowen's war writing where rooms, houses, and people can be reconfigured by a new dynamic of space. In the political context of *The Last September*, the significance of this passage lies in the way it shows the Anglo-Irish Lois and the English soldier Gerald at a loss in the alien and threatening outside of rebellious Ireland which is pressing in on the big houses and garrisons of a regime whose days are numbered. However the passage also carries the feel of a definitively modernist vision of 'pure space', the infinite horizons of, for example, *The Waves*.[43] This is a space which, in some accounts of modernism, annihilates the individual subject, dissolving the individual in the endless threatening nullity of 'outside'.

There are moments in *The Heat of the Day* where this conception of space seems to persist,
especially when Roderick visits Cousin Nettie at Wistaria Lodge – a genteel asylum where she
has taken refuge from the outside world. Nettie's efforts to shut out the exterior include the
way she sits, with her back to the window. This vista is behind her: 'A distance of fields, woods
and diluted November sky did indeed stretch without any other feature: sky and earth at last
exhaustedly met – there was no impact, no mystery, no horizon, simply a nothing more.'[44]
Nettie's deliberate position, facing inwards and excluding external stimuli, appears to suit her
very well: 'Here was nothing to trouble her but the possibility of being within reach: seated on
the sofa with her back to what she had ascertained to be nothing, Cousin Nettie was well
placed.'[45] Some critics read Nettie's strange position as a form of willed paralysis, a resistant
immobility against the tide of events. For Ellmann, she represents: 'the end of history, the
terminus of narrative'[46] while Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, in *Elizabeth Bowen and the
Dissolution of the Novel (*1995) argue that she 'provokes a powerful and affirmative
destabilisation, of those assumptions of self and meaning, of society and order.'[47] Such
readings place less emphasis on the spatiality of Nettie's position in favour of what she might
represent in terms of narrative, history or politics. The outside on which she has turned her
back is, in these terms, primarily a signifier of 'events', the temporal world of proceedings from
which Nettie is seen as trying to insulate herself. Once again the significance of interior spaces
in *The Heat of the Day,* the prevalence of rooms that are sometimes yawning and sometimes
claustrophobic like Cousin Nettie's, is understood in non-spatial terms – the spaces themselves
being treated metaphorically or emblematically.

In any case, a closer focus on the spatial presentation of Nettie's situation seems to reveal
something less clear than a modernist vision of a pure and infinite 'outside' from which she is
sheltering. There are in fact pockets of the outside, of fluid and unfixed space, invading the
room here, from the 'vacuum' where the tea tray is placed to the pictures which have the
suggestion of floating in air, because 'their unweightiness – for they were all

unframed…permitted of their being strung on wool from different projections about the room'[48]. Nor is Nettie's refusal to face outwards, absolute. She reveals to Roderick that it was his father who left his mother and not the contrary, which is the version of events that has become generally accepted. This is an important development in the novel's plot because it reveals Stella's willingness to bear social opprobrium when the fault lies with her lover. This trait becomes crucial after the death of the traitor Robert Kelway. At his inquest, Stella gives evidence in a way that allows herself to be characterised as his casual partner rather than long-term lover and so to direct attention away from his spying for the enemy, a fact of which she has gradually become aware. Nettie's revelation not only drives the narrative, but it immediately prompts a suggestive turn toward the outside:

> 'I never,' Roderick said, with a heaviness only just modified by his youth, 'knew what you've just told me.'
>
> Cousin Nettie, putting her cup down, glanced over her shoulder out of the window: had it occurred to her that the outlook might have changed?'[49]

A back turned to the window, it becomes clear, will not isolate Nettie from the world's events, the text's narrative, or from the interpenetrative flow of space which characterises *The Heat of the Day*. The war is the cause of this invasion of Wistaria Lodge, this seeping in of the outside world into the artificial enclosure which Cousin Nettie and her keeper Mrs Tringsby have tried to maintain. Mrs Tringsby is dismayed when Roderick appears for his visit in uniform and asks him: 'You won't, you won't on any account…talk to poor Mrs Morris about the war will you?' Mrs Tringsby also explains that 'Here we are so careful not to have dreadful thoughts; we quite live, you see, in a world of our own.'[50] These attempts to make Nettie's room airtight are already failing and the war, the text makes clear, will soon render them futile:

> Inside this closed window was such a silence as the world would probably never hear again – for when the war did stop there would be something more: drills right through the earth, planes all through the sky, voices keyed up and up. The air would sound; the summer-humming forest would be torn.[51]

The exterior which will not be kept indefinitely at bay is figured not as an infinite destroying emptiness but as material and aural invasion – a vibrating, textured, sensory space that riddles people, buildings, even the very earth and sky. Bowen's war fiction certainly contains dangerous and unstable pockets of vacuum and indeterminate space but their location is neither limited nor predictable, and there is an ever-present possibility of interpolation of the spatial with the material. This is, as Shafquat Towheed describes it: 'a fiction that tends at once to both claustrophobia and agoraphobia, to both stasis and constant flux.'[52] The unpredictability of spaces whose forms have been, as it were, unlocked by the war is the source of a disquiet which can become phobic in literature's confrontation of this new spatial insight. The anxiety over space seen in so much writing of the 1940s is a development prompted by the war and is the result of a transforming cultural understanding of the spatial.

Merleau-Ponty's radical account of space was a philosophical expression of this transformation. Crucially for Merleau-Ponty, the subject (a being both psychic and physical) is involved in a determinate relationship with the world. Our bodies are both oriented towards the external world and active constituents of it, a condition Merleau-Ponty, following Heidegger, calls 'Being in the world.' For Merleau-Ponty space and movement have their primary existence only as expressions of lived experience and not as abstract (or scientific) concepts. Examining Kant's theory of space not as a Newtonian container but as a mental category which allows the plotting of object so that space is 'not the setting... in which things are arranged but the means whereby the position of things becomes possible',[53] Merleau-Ponty proceeds to ask how spatial experience is present in perception. The process by which space and movement can be perceived, he argues, is not one of familiar sensation: movement is not, for example, a relative phenomenon observed from the position of two objects. Merleau-Ponty instead argues that we hold a primordial understanding of the spatial by means of a pre-personal version of ourselves, 'another subject beneath me for whom a world exists before I am here and who marks out my place in it.'[54] The spatial faculty is furnished not by

sensation, by a mapping of the objects around us and our relation to them, but by a recognition of our orientation to the world, a spatial horizon which is always there and so provides a pre-reflective, non-positing grasp of phenomena to which the subject is spatially anchored. When Roderick imagines himself intermingled with the fields and woods of his Irish estate, when Cousin Nettie perceives that the world beyond her window cannot be kept at bay and indeed that she and her room are already woven into its spaces, it is because the spatiality of their situation is revealed by their purposive orientation to the world. To approach Bowen's writing in this way is to read the spatial disposition of the characters not as symbolic but as a physical fact which determines how, through the prism of Bowen's imagination, the characters themselves perceive the world. The spaces of the novel thus become indivisible from its plot and characters, and each plays a part in constructing the other, in a literary equivalent to the phenomenologists' 'being in the world.' Bowen's post-war writing shows subjects constituting their spatial world through enactment, not moving in a pre-determined space. This presents not only a parallel with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, but also a significant difference from her pre-war writing, such as the passage from *The Last September* quoted above.

This transformed understanding of space in the 1940s is incompatible with a modernist conception of an annihilating infinite void which threatens to dissolve the subject. Space, for Merleau-Ponty, exists only in conjunction with the subject and is defined by the intentional possibilities of 'being in the world'. Nullity offers no perceptual field and cannot be conceptually grasped; it cannot be called into being in the same universe as the subject who is a pre-requisite for spatial existence. In these terms, the void surrounding the subject could only ever be a metaphor, a purely psychic concept dressed in the clothing of spatial terminology. Merleau-Ponty perceives that: 'We must…avoid saying that our body is *in* space or *in* time, it *inhabits* space and time,'[55] emphasising his belief that the only meaningful descriptions of spatial relations are those which involve both the anchored body and its connections with the world on which it operates. Critical readings of space in Bowen's writing

from this period which adopt a primarily metaphorical interpretation are likely to overlook the significance she gives, after the outbreak of war, to the embodied subject.

This sense of embodiment as crucial to the perceptual assembly of spaces is noticeable in more documentary writing about the war, such as Graham Greene's descriptions of a bombed building. While Greene first registers simple shock at a building 'neatly sliced in half', he goes on to suggest that it is the physical situation of the observer and the newly-established positional relation with the space of the building which makes the scene truly arresting: 'In the bathroom the geyser looked odd and twisted seen from the wrong side, and the kitchen impossibly crowded with furniture until one realized one had been given a kind of mouse-eye view from behind the stove and the dresser – all the space where people used to move about with toast and tea-pots, was out of sight.'[56] The scene is established both by a projection of the observer to a physical position 'behind the stove and the dresser' and by an understanding of what we saw in the introduction, a Husserlian 'adumbration' of the view, the presentation of a particular facet rather than a composite whole.

In the London Blitz, the destruction of buildings prompted numerous literary descriptions of the sudden confusion between interior and exterior, of rooms torn open to the sky and people exposed in a manner that could be tragic, grotesque or absurd. In the opening paragraph of Greene's *Ministry of Fear*, for example, the presence of war is recognised by 'the untidy gaps between the Bloomsbury houses – a flat fireplace halfway up a wall'[57] and the arrival of a bomb prompts the reflection that blast can have the effect of 'landing you naked in the street or exposing you in your bed or on your lavatory seat to the neighbours' gaze.'[58] Cyril Connolly partially absorbed this strangeness of view into the London landscape of 'the streets around this office, where the exposed green of fourth-floor bathrooms shines against the blue winter sky.'[59] Similarly, in his autobiography, scientist R.V Jones recounts how a visiting French professor attracted a crowd of street-level spectators when, finding most of his bedroom

demolished in a raid, he returned to bed on the remaining ledge of floor.[60] Rawlinson suggests that descriptions like these were so common that they quickly became worn by convention and were an apologetic compensation for the 'imagination's surrender' before the enormity of the violence that writing could not encompass, a 'figurative and conceptual containment of war's destructiveness.'[61] It is certainly easy to see how scenes like these could lend themselves to familiar narratives of heroic resistance or of *sang-froid* under bombardment, but a convention can nevertheless indicate an idea that has taken imaginative root. The spatial dislocation produced daily in the bombed city, including the interpenetration of interior and exterior spaces, left imaginative traces in fiction which outlasted immediate representations of the Blitz. The visual strangeness of bombed buildings lay not only in absurd juxtaposition or grotesque alignments but also in the enforced contemplation of the erasure of a conceptual boundary, the distinction between inside and outside. Virginia Woolf, after visiting the ruin of her house in London's Tavistock Square, wrote in her diary for 20 October, 1940: 'I cd just see a piece of my studio wall standing: otherwise rubble where I wrote so many books. Open air where we sat so many nights, gave so many parties.'[62] Bombing loosened Londoners' conceptual certainty about the division between interior and exterior.

Exteriors

Architects had begun trying to abolish the distinction between internal and external space well before the start of World War II, designing buildings which tried to capture a sense of the permeation of their interior by the space of 'outside'. This effect was enabled by technical advances including steel-framed buildings and pre-stressed concrete.[63] In the first two decades of the twentieth century painting saw a perspectival revolution with the space of cubism, which visualised flattened planes of interpenetrative material and refused the possibility of a single encompassing perspective. The architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, in *Space, Time*

and Architecture (1941), argued that the cubists had re-established contact with the space of

modern life and provided the key principles for contemporary plastic arts, including

architecture. However Giedion traces the re-conceptualisation of space back to the 19th

century when, he argues, the three-dimensional space of Euclidean geometry began to be

overturned by developments in mathematics and technology. A new understanding of space,

evinced by cubism, can be seen in structures as early as the Eiffel Tower, built in 1889:

> The essence of space is it is conceived today in its many-sidedness, the infinite
> potentiality for relations within it. Exhaustive description of an area from one point
> of reference is, accordingly, impossible: its character changes with the point from
> which it is viewed. In order to grasp the true nature of space the observer must
> project himself through it. The stairways in the upper levels of the Eiffel Tower are
> among the earliest architectural expression of the continuous interpretation of outer
> and inner space.[64]

In this context, the mingling of inner and outer space glimpsed in war-damaged London could

be seen simply as the coincidental reinforcement of an aesthetic tendency already at work; the

effects of war echoing changes in aesthetic practice. However there is a sense in which the

spatial transformation of the war on the city goes further, because it is registered not only at

the level of the individual room or building but also at the level of the street, the district and

even of the whole city.

In 1963 Giedion re-published *Space, Time and Architecture* with a new introduction. In it, he

identified three phases of architecture over the centuries in which an initial appreciation of

space generated by the interplay between spatial 'volumes' (seen for instance in the

construction of the Parthenon or the pyramids) had given way to an understanding of space as

hollowed-out from its surroundings, of architecture purely as interior space. But this was

superseded, following the optical revolutions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

by a new phase of architectural understanding which combined elements of the first two

phases yet introduced the transformative quality of movement in space.[65] This development,

Giedion suggests, allowed a conception of architectural space which bursts the division

between interior and exterior and envisages solid forms shaping space as well as being

hollowed out by it:

> Forms are not restricted to their corporeal limits, forms emanate and model space. Today, we are again becoming aware that shapes, surfaces and planes serve not only to model interior space. They operate just as strongly, far beyond the confines of their actual measured dimensions as constituent elements of volumes standing freely in the open [...] Today we again realize that volumes affect space just as an enclosure gives shape to an interior space.[66]

This refreshed understanding of 'planned relations of volumes in space'[67], Giedion suggested,

was seen in Le Corbusier's 1945 plans for the city centre of Saint Dié and the Unité

d'Habitation in Marseille, where he demonstrated his mastery of the flows of space and his

delight in 'the play of light through space perforations'[68]. This was a step beyond the 'capture'

of interpenetrative space in individual buildings. When the built landscape is perceived to

mould exterior space, spatial effects are registered at the level of street, district or town and

not only within the hollowed out space of individual buildings.

This architectonic tendency, registering spatial operation against the expected outline of cities,

is characteristic of much 1940s fiction. It is often directly attributable to war's violent

remodelling of the urban scene. Bombed gaps in normally continuous rows of buildings, vast

piles of rubble, blocked streets and ripped-open facades - all of these new shapes and forms,

exerted their own influence on peoples' apprehension of the space of their city. In registering

bomb damage, people noticed not only the shattered object but also its effect in remoulding

the surrounding space of the cityscape.

London itself took on a different spatial character because of the war, and the impression of

this is unmistakeable in Bowen's writing. The opening scene of *The Heat of the Day*, for

example, is set in Regent's Park's open-air theatre, a designation which in itself stretches

familiar notions of inside and outside. The theatre is a place where light, darkness, music and

people are presented as spatial flows, seeping in and out of the permeable setting. This setting

is 'walled' by thickets and trees but some of the orchestra music can 'escape' from the theatre in a way which is 'disturbing'. Chairs 'filled up slowly' while the evening is an 'incoming tide'. While late sunlight filters into the theatre, there is a suggestion of exchange, of darkness filtering out: 'this hollow which was the source of music was found also to be the source of dusk.'[69] This specifically war-time landscape at the centre of London is suggested as a metonymic of the entire city because it exemplifies the porous spaces of war-time London. The space of this 'tarnished bosky theatre'[70] gradually assumes an all-encompassing reality for the city's mixed, representative population gathered within it: 'What first was a mirage strengthened into a universe for the shabby Londoners and the exiled foreigners sitting in this worn glade.'[71] By the end of this passage, the linguistic overlaps between 'tarnished…shabby…worn', have helped form an equivalence between the theatre, its audience and the city itself. The adjective 'tarnished' clearly belongs to the theatre and 'shabby' to the Londoners but the possession of the third of the similar adjectives is less clear: the 'worn glade' might be taken to refer to London itself as much as the theatre. As with Roderick at Mount Morris, space and the human figure are interpenetrative, so that: 'Pairs of lovers…were glad to enter this element not themselves' and 'elderly people…fearlessly exposed their years to the dusk.'[72] There is a deliberate ambiguity about both of these sentences; the 'element' that lovers are glad to enter which is not themselves can be construed as love itself. Similarly, it might be that the fearlessness shown by the elderly is simply disregard of the health risks of being out in chillier evening air. Yet the alternative reading of both sentences is also clear, namely that a spatial interpenetration between humans and their environment is at work in war-time London. Bowen's writing equates the various spatial flows in and out of the theatre – the incursion and excursion of people, music, darkness and air – presenting them as equally and mutually constitutive of the city's space. In this sustained set-piece opening to the novel, Bowen's establishes not only atmosphere but

also a spatial context of porousness in which familiar spatial boundaries and categories are loosened or erased by the war.

First published in *Horizon* in 1941, Bowen's short story 'In the Square' also shows the architectonic effect that a space formerly thought of as enclosed can exert on the cityscape as a whole. The story presents the urban landscape of a residential London square in which both the material fabric of its houses, and the social lives within and around them, have been twisted or demolished by the war. This transformative damage can be registered in a cognitive hierarchy, beginning with the destruction of the geometry of the square itself. Bombing has blown away three houses, creating a gap through which light pours, illuminating the damage to individual houses but also performing strange operations of colour and shade and testing normal oppositions of inside/outside:

> The sun, now too low to enter normally, was able to enter brilliantly at a point where three of the houses had been bombed away; two or three of the many trees, dark with summer, caught on their tops the illicit gold. Each side of the breach, exposed wallpapers were exaggerated into viridians, yellows and corals that they had probably never been. Elsewhere, the painted front doors under the balconies and at the tops of steps not whitened for some time stood out in the deadness of colour with light off it. Most of the glassless windows were shuttered or boarded up, but some framed hollow inside dark.[73]

The house in which the story largely takes place is itself a dislocated place where: 'One got a feeling of functional anarchy, of loose plumbing, of fittings shocked from their place.'[74] And it is overpopulated, with Magdela the owner, her husband's mistress, her nephew, a pair of basement-dwelling caretakers and their policeman son. Each of them has their own allotted space in the house - the drawing-room is Magdela's, the back dining-room Gina's - but the effect of this is to make the rooms dead, inoperative and unanchored. The drawing-room, for instance:

> Had never had any other aspect, and it had no aspect at all tonight. The chairs remained so many and their pattern was now so completely without focus that, had Magdela not sat down where she did sit, he would not have known in which direction to turn.[75]

The room feels newly unfamiliar and it is only Magdela's physical action of sitting which provides a directional vector. As in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, space is discovered through the body's orientation to the world.

Even for its occupants, there is an imprecision about the space in the house, with the names of rooms often forgotten or suspended: Gina returns to 'the room that was hers to sit in', Magdela vaguely knows that the policeman 'sometimes sleeps somewhere at the top of the house' and says that 'the house seems to belong to everyone now.'[76] The imprecision is heightened when Gina opens up the archways between front and back dining rooms (recalling the two inter-penetrative rooms of Stella's flat in *Heat of the Day*) to admit 'the perspective of useless dining-room, the light fading from it through the bombed gap.'[77] The flow of light, air, and space through the 'dazzling breach' is mesmeric for the visitor Rupert: ' "How curious that light is" he said, looking across at the gap.'[78]

The overall effect of the story is to suggest that its spatial oddities all originate from the bombed gap in the corner of the square. The gap is the source of dislocation and imprecision, of a sensory strangeness which can be both heightening and deadening, and of a fluidity of light, air and sound. Like Le Corbusier's manipulation of perforation in space, the war has wrought a transformation on London's architectonic form which reshapes the apprehension of the space with which that form is involved. While the story presents the square as hushed, deadened and ghostly, it also implies its inhabitants are beginning to digest its newly-moulded relation to London's spaces – either cautiously venturing out of their breached enclave or attempting to assimilate a new outlook. Magdela's nephew Bennet, like a stone-age explorer 'going out to hunt food, kept close along under the fronts of the houses, with a primitive secretiveness. He made for the north outlet of the square…and at last in the distance heard the sound of a bus.'[79] Gina, scribbling a note, writes: '*Since I came here one thing and another*

seems to have altered my point of view.'[80] The story ends with Magdela asking Rupert, as he stares at the light through the gap: 'Do tell me how things strike you…Do you think we shall all see a great change?'[81] Cryptic though her question is, it gathers together both the cognitive and conceptual uncertainty which the story has unfolded.

The bomb damage to the square, the hole it knocks in this corner of London's architecture and the flows of light and space which ensue, is not the only source of spatial unease here. There is also the geometric destruction of the outline of the square, the breaching of its perfect shape. The sensory effects of the breach disorient the characters through the play of light and the effects of sound, air and perspective. They are also disturbed, the text suggests, by the newly-incomplete shape. This incompleteness is conveyed not only by the use of the terms 'breach' and 'gap' to describe the damage but also by the parade of objects that are jarred or missing – the 'fittings shocked from their place', the 'occasional blanks' of missing furniture, glasses that tinkle when 'moved…inexpertly.'[82] Bennet describes the houses of the square as 'cracked' and asks 'You think this place will ever patch up?'[83] There is even a hint of the idea of repair of the damaged portion when he says, preparing to leave the square: 'I expect I'll pick up something at a Corner House'[84]. Like the four sides of a square, the story has four characters but Bennet's departure means it ends with three of them in place, just as it began before Rupert's arrival.

Maud Ellmann points out that the idea of an incomplete square was almost an *a priori* concept for Elizabeth Bowen because her Irish family home, Bowen's Court, was intended to be a perfect square but was left unfinished at one corner when building funds ran out.[85] The incomplete square, the gnomon that Joyce dwells on in *Dubliners*,[86] prompts various metaphorical interpretations, Ellmann suggests, from a sense of less-than-whole nationality of the Anglo-Irish to psycho-analytic readings of a shadowy third presence in lovers' pairings. The image of a missing corner recurs in 'Ivy Gripped the Steps' (1945) where a florist's 'had received a direct hit: the entire corner was gone.'[87] However, Bowen's was not the only literary

voice unsettled by the damage done to London's squares in the Blitz. Virginia Woolf made one of her periodic war-time returns to London from the Sussex countryside on 15 January 1941 and was similarly discomfited by the shattering of their geometric form. She wrote in her diary: 'So by tube to the Temple; & there wandered in the desolate ruins of my old squares: gashed; dismantled; the old red bricks all white powder, something like a builder's yard…all that completeness ravished and demolished'[88]. Woolf, who had properties in both Tavistock and Mecklenburgh squares during the war, mourns the loss of the squares' 'completeness' at least as much as the damage itself.

This distress at the breaking of squares may have been an atavistic response to the despoiling of a pure form and perhaps, in Bowen's case, a reflex to the visual reminder of the incompleteness of Bowen's Court and the psychic significance it carried for her. However London's squares also have a socio-political history intertwined with their geometry. From the earliest theorising about a city's ideal shape, the concept of geometric order has been understood as an expression also of political order. Lewis Mumford, in *The City in History*, suggests the urge to control and order the space of the city developed in the Baroque age, into the mathematical management of its perspectives, with foreground and horizon as two axes joined by a third axis of movement which repeated the perspectival laws of classical painting but was also consonant with the political consolidation of territory. This spatial vision led to the city of the grand vista, of facades and pavements receding gradually to a view of endless perspective.[89] The evolution of the London square, which began in the eighteenth century, combined geometric order with both visual openness and ideas of privacy. Mumford argues that squares, which were predominantly home to newly wealthy professional and mercantile classes, allowed people of the same rank to live together but in a place of architectural conformity which blanketed over differences of religion or ideology. The gardens which quickly developed at the centre of the squares (a space originally used as parking places for carriages) played a crucial role, becoming the common outlook of the square's residents, places which

combined: 'visual openness and social privacy. Class barriers now formed an invisible ha-ha.'[90]

Thus squares and the precisely-shaped gardens in their midst exercised a more subtle and

malleable form of social regimentation through their patterns repeated across the city: 'The

open space a simple geometric figure, crescent, circle, oval, square, bounded by a rail that

enclosed the greenery: a street on the periphery for access.'[91] (The removal of railings in the

war, as we shall see, also had powerful imaginative effects). Other cities have squares and

crescents too but the completeness of these geometric forms have a particular significance for

the social and architectonic structure of London. The architect Steen Rasmussen noted that

'the London square is very different from the grand continental squares of the Baroque period'

because the continental version is subordinate to a grand architectural composition, an

intended monumental effect, whereas London squares are seen as discrete and individual :

> The English square, or crescent...is a restricted whole as complete as the courtyard of
> a convent. They form fine geometrical figures in the town plan, they are regular and
> completely uniform on all sides, and a series of such squares may be linked together
> in any order.[92]

A breach in the geometric integrity of a London square then would, on this account, have a

particularly disturbing effect on its inhabitants, as seen both in Woolf's distress (quoted above)

at the rupture of London's squares and in the spatial unease that pervades Bowen's 'In the

Square'. For Bowen, who lived beside the John Nash-designed circles around Regent's Park, as

for Woolf in her Bloomsbury squares, bomb-damage also entailed anxiety at a loosening of

social order. This is apparent in the newly class-mixed household of 'In the Square', in the

invasion of the square's central garden by ghostly lovers and by the suggestion that they may

also permeate the damaged and boarded houses – despite Gina's objection that 'They're

property.'[93] But this social anxiety is bound up with imaginative spatial forms, and specifically,

with the particular effects on the perception of space produced by the war and with the

fracture of geometric shape.

The idea of shape seemed to exert a powerful influence on Bowen's thinking in the 1940s. She muses explicitly about it in a letter to V.S. Pritchett, published in 1948 as part of the three-way correspondence *Why Do I Write?* In it, she suggests:

> Shape is possibly the important thing…The idea of the possibility of shape is not only magnetic, it's salutary. Shapelessness, lack of meaning, and being without direction is most people's nightmare, once they begin to think – and more and more people are beginning to think, clearly…Isn't the average thinker simply trying to trace out some pattern around himself? Or, to come on, detect, uncover a master-pattern in which he has his place?…And couldn't it be that the wish, the demand for shape is more than individual, that it's a mass thing…[94]

The precise meaning of this passage is hard to grasp. Terms like shape, pattern and direction are capable of various interpretations; Bowen could be referring to social shape and moral direction as the things the reading public are attracted to rather than mathematical, aesthetic or cognitive pattern. However it's precisely the inchoate form of Bowen's thought here, 'Shape, relation, direction…I can't explore this further…I'm only on the edge of a hazy idea…'[95] which suggests an attempt to appraise an emerging concept, something gradually coalescing from the purely abstract. There is a fascinating tension in 1940s writing which tries to express these abstract concerns in the concrete figurations of a war-torn city.

The same fascination with shape is at work in Sansom's story 'The Wall' which describes the buckle and sudden collapse of the side of a building on a crew of firemen. In many ways this is a recognisably common blitz description of a solid form loosened and scattered by bombing – emphasising the contrast between solidity and weightlessness with 'ton upon ton of red brick hovering in the air above us'.[96] On the other hand, these visions of animation and collapse are counterbalanced by a text which is astonishingly laden with words that signify shape and concrete spatial form. In a story that is just over three pages long, we encounter: maze, stage-set, half, sides, middle, diamond, negative (in the photographic sense), yards, rectangles,

symmetry, spacing, oblong, formation, thick, squared, frame, solid, flatly, inverted, pathway, line, ray, static, contour, footlong, rings, supports, wheel, shape and horizontal. In the penultimate two paragraphs of the story, as the wall does finally collapse on the firemen, these spatial terms are suddenly suspended – disappearing from the text just as the solid wall gives way like a breaking wave. One of the firemen is killed but the narrator and his nearest colleague miraculously survive because they are framed in the oblong space of a window as the wall hits the ground they are standing on. In the story's final sentence, the spatial words suddenly return: 'We had been framed by one of those symmetrical, oblong window spaces'[97] – a resumption which echoes the wall's crash. Where Giedion described observers having to project themselves into the spaces of the Eiffel Tower, the war actively framed humans in the spaces of their city, forcing a contemplation of its forms and shapes. If Sansom's story can be interpreted as an attempt to impose the meaning of shape on formlessness it also involves detailed and novel scrutiny of the inter-relation between human figures and urban landscape.

Getting the phenomena right

Sansom's interest in this scene however has an internal, as well as external, focus. His writing is not limited to describing the action but also interrogates the psychological process involved in capturing it. His interest amounts to a literary investigation of the phenomenon, a parallel to the philosophical work being continued in this period by Merleau-Ponty among others. As John Russell puts it: 'Sansom's are stories that get the phenomena right – they exist for that purpose.'[98] In 'The Wall' Sansom scrutinises the scene with a cognitive and psychological interest which is almost clinical: 'In that simple second my brain digested every detail of the scene. New eyes opened at the sides of my head so that, from within, I photographed a hemispherical panorama'[99]. The multiple shapes of the burning warehouse and the wider city become not just objects in view but also frames and filters of perception: moonlight reaches

the firemen through 'declivities in the skyline', the falling wall gradually occludes light which is 'squeezed to a thin line' and the orange-red of flames appears to 'bulge from the black frame-work' of the wall.[100] The effect of the writing here is to suggest a perceptual field in which neither objects nor sensations are grasped in qualitative isolation but, rather, one in which they operate in combination, to collectively establish a cognitive whole: flames, light, darkness and smoke, and the spatial forms they assume are as constitutive as brick wall. There is a sense in which all the things that the narrator notices about the scene do not add up to our total potential knowledge of it, and that more lurks just beyond the margin of current perception. Rawlinson's analysis of this passage is acute in that he points to a separation of the authorial subject, dividing it between a self that notes the detail of the scene and another which stands back from it. However Rawlinson's explanation for this separation is that the portion of the narrative subject which stands aloof from this description of the Blitz is doing so in acknowledgement of the impossibility of describing the bombing. It is possible neither to describe its violent power nor find a position commanding enough to allow a totalizing view. Thus, Rawlinson argues, authors in the Second World War are driven to metaphor since they cannot adequately describe what is seen. A short story like 'The Wall' which adopts forms of documentary or reportage in an attempt to capture events will, on Rawlinson's account, be limited to recording only 'marginal detail'.

In fact, what we seem to find in the separation of Sansom's narrative voice is hierarchy rather than rupture. That part which apprehends the detail of the burning warehouse – the symmetry of oblong windows or the play of moonlight on alleyways for instance – is involved with the other part which registers a deeper, immanent significance in the scene through the operation of what Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls a 'non-positing consciousness.'[101] This consciousness is a function of perception which does not grasp objects in their detail but nevertheless presents the world to us, which understands its fundamental construction in a way that is intuitively and intersubjectively accessible. This is a pre-reflective consciousness which organises the world

for us and constantly creates it in our perception as a coherent field before we apply further

interpretive arrangements such as judgement and concepts, which Merleau-Ponty considers

second-order knowledge of the world. Sansom's story displays exactly this sense of barely-

conscious capture of the world, of the significance of the event grasped by a primary faculty

rather than by deliberative sifting of the scene's details:

> ...although at this time the entire hemispherical scene appeared static, an imminence of movement could be sensed throughout – presumably because the scene was actually moving. Even the speed of the shutter which closed the photograph on my mind was powerless to exclude this motion from a deeper consciousness. The picture appeared static to the limited surface senses, the eyes and the material brain, but beyond that there was hidden movement. [102]

The 'hidden movement' is grasped in a total capture of a perceptual field which seizes both

objects standing out from their background but also a sense of the qualities in the background

behind them – seen, as it were, out of the corner of the eye. Sansom's distinction between a

'deeper consciousness' which seizes this movement and the 'surface senses' which are more

limited, echoes the description of a 'barely-noticed organising function or motive in the

process of perception' which Merleau-Ponty outlines in *The Phenomenology of Perception*

(1945):

> ...the perception of our own body and the perception of external things provide an example of non-positing consciousness, that is, of consciousness not in possession of fully determinate objects, that of a logic lived through which cannot account for itself, and that of an immanent meaning which is not clear to itself and becomes fully aware of itself only through experiencing certain natural signs. [103]

We are equipped with an organising faculty which, though we are not normally aware of its

operation, perceives the world's structure - which assembles a field to be surveyed and allows

us to pick out figures from background, objects from their horizon.

Following Merleau-Ponty's argument, the 'hidden movement' discerned by Sansom's subject in 'The Wall' suggests that a primordial sense of the spatial has been seized amid the bombardment of London. Sansom, like Bowen, does not limit war writing to a description of its immediate sensory effects or to a displacement of events into a metaphoric realm. Between those two modes, writers seemed to discover a significant way of re-imagining the spatial through their scrutiny of the architectonics of war-time London, the effects of the bombardment on both the subject and the city, and the impulse to a conceptual structure needed to grasp these transformations. The spatial substance of war-time London was perceived, not as a container of objects or sensory horizon, but as a textured field of perceptual experience, a material bound up with subject and object alike, mutually tethered and defining. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: 'We have been forced to recognize that spatial perception is a structural phenomenon and is comprehensible only within a perceptual field which contributes in its entirety to motivating the spatial perception by suggesting to the subject a possible anchorage.'[104]

Attempting to read fiction of the war this way remains problematic because it raises the question of how a literary subject would access this primordial perceptual sense which normally remains hidden from us. There is therefore a necessarily mysterious quality in the way a fictional imagination seems to grope its way towards a concept of the world similar to that described by Merleau-Ponty, as seen in phrases like 'deeper consciousness' and 'hidden movement' used by Sansom for example. We find it again in Bowen's struggle to describe the particular compulsions and pressures of writing about the war, where stories 'were flying particles of something enormous and inchoate that had been going on. They were sparks from experience – an experience not necessarily my own.'[105] Bowen's image of sparks echoes Merleau-Ponty's own metaphor for the shower of phenomena which are present in our perception but which we do not normally notice unless we can somehow step back to find a different angle or perspective on our experience: 'Reflection does not withdraw from the

world towards the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical'[106]. Viewed against the background of Bowen's attraction to shape, of the textured and interpenetrative space of her war fiction and of the perceptual oddities by which space is registered in it, it seems plausible that the peculiarities of writing about the war which she attempts to explain in this postscript to *The Demon Lover* were driven as much by issues of perception and cognition as by those of identity and society.

However we can point to more than just a coincidence of language to suggest how and why some war-time writing appears to share Merleau-Ponty's insight of a world whose phenomena can be glimpsed if only we can suspend our habitual conscious processes. Two things make it hard for us to achieve this suspension and to grasp experience as it really is; first the sheer familiarity of our perceptual world and, second, our stubborn conceptual framework, the conditioned assumption that the universe is made of determinate objects *out there* in space perceived by a disembodied subject. The second of these limitations, Merleau-Ponty argued in a radio broadcast of 1948, was being undermined by the middle of the twentieth century by the achievements of painting, poetry, philosophy and psychology. The painter Cézanne and his followers, for example, by employing colour, shape and extension as mutually constitutive parts of the perceived world rather than as separate categories: 'have refused to follow the law of geometrical perspective…because they have sought to recapture and reproduce before our very eyes the birth of the landscape. They have…striven to recapture the feel of perceptual experience itself.'[107] The recapture of the phenomena of experience as it is lived was no happy accident but the result of intentional application, a cultural shift well in evidence by the time of the war and a clear influence on the period's writing. Stephen Kern, in *The Culture of Time and Space*, gives an even more detailed account of this cultural shift, analysing artistic innovation

with scientific, mathematical and technological revolutions to show how the collective

understanding of space had been transformed from the early part of the twentieth century:

> The traditional view that space was an inert void in which objects existed gave way to
> a new view of it as active and full. A multitude of discoveries and inventions,
> buildings and urban plans, paintings and sculptures, novels and dramas, philosophical
> and psychological theories, attested to the constituent function of space.[108]

Kern calls this new arrangement positive-negative space, indicating that the background has

become no less significant than the object, that everything inside the frame of, say, a cubist

painting, is important in constituting the whole. Sculpture was the most potent medium for

exemplifying this new conception, with artists like Boccioni and Archipenko creating figures

which framed space as part of the created whole so that the work embodied the collision of

'empty' and 'full' space.

However while Merleau-Ponty's and Kern's descriptions of an upheaval in the cultural

understanding of space have many similarities, such as the deliberate overturning of

perspectival laws and the conceptual death of space as infinite container, they also show

significant differences. In asserting the existence of positive-negative space, Kern, as he

admits,[109] risks erasing the figure-background distinction which is precisely what Merleau-

Ponty relies on in his account of how the perceptual field is established. A cubist painting

contains everything (including space) inside its frame – with the distinction between

background and foreground abolished, all of its elements strike us with equal perceptual force.

For Merleau-Ponty the background, faintly perceived, is not only still there but is crucial to our

ability to pick out an object, indeed to our very capacity to pick out objects at all. Since the

background can 'run under' objects, it can be hidden from our conscious view, not noticed

,and yet still perceived by our pre-conscious and intuitive sense of the world. Space need not

be framed or composed in the view to be experienced by an embodied subject who, like the

narrator of 'The Wall', may grasp the phenomenal world obliquely and with a sense of

mystery. One could turn to either Kern's or Merleau-Ponty's narrative to show how the Second

World War was preceded by a period of dramatic change in the way that space was conceived.

However Merleau-Ponty's account of the world and experience seems to accord more closely

with the way they were imagined by certain writers in World War II who grasped at this

occluded perceptual structure.

The sheer familiarity of the perceptual world was the other factor restraining access to the

phenomenal field of pre-conscious experience and was also under assault in bombed London.

Flame and blackout, chasms of space and wreaths of smoke, presented an unfamiliar

perceptual backcloth on which thoughts were assembled and against which objects were

identified. In 'The Blitz', Constance Fitzgibbon recorded the descriptions of a man who saw

that: 'Night by night…London was vanishing…The familiar London of streets rapidly

disappeared and one became used to a nightmare new landscape consisting of sand dunes

from burst sandbags, and heaps of rubble where houses had been.'[110] The specificity of objects

gave way to descriptions couched in the terms of their constituent and indeterminate

substances. This blurring effect is mirrored in a scene from Humphrey Jennings' film *A Diary for

Timothy* (1945) where three small boys walk down a bombed street between huge piles of

rubble on either side.[111] What strikes the eye is not only the difference in scale as the boys are

dwarfed by the heaps of bricks, but also the shapelessness of the mounds. The very

indeterminacy of the objects, as big as buildings but without form, is arresting.

Image from *A Diary for Timothy* (1945) directed by Humphrey Jennings

As in this shot, authors sometimes foregrounded the unfamiliar strangeness of shapes and outlines produced by war. Much attention has been paid to the narrative and rhetorical strategies or failures of war-time fiction, but sometimes this emphasis on narrative strategy can mask the descriptive impulse of authors and their attempts to just present rather than to explain.

For instance, Henry Green's novel *Caught* (1943) concludes with an anti-climactic account by the fireman protagonist Richard Roe of his first great action, struggling to contain a blaze on London's docks. The drama of the events he is recounting to his sister-in-law is undercut by interruption, in parenthesis, of another voice which denies and qualifies Roe's account:

> 'We were right on top of the blaze. It was acres of timber storage alight about two hundred yards in front…like a huge wood fire on a flat hearth, only a thousand times bigger.'
>
> (It had not been like that at all. What he had seen was a broken, torn-up dark mosaic aglow with rose where square after square of timber had been burned down to embers, while beyond the distant yellow flames toyed joyfully with the next black stacks which softly merged into the pink of that night.) [112]

Critical analysis of this passage tends to ascribe Roe's narratorial failure either to flaws in his psychological persona or to the stilling, by a propagandist state, of authentic stories of the people at war. Adam Piette suggests the latter, arguing that the Blitz is an indescribable event, a fact that is tacitly acknowledged by the odd parenthetic interruption of Green's text. This indescribability explains what Piette sees as the inadequacy of the writing at this point; Piette variously dismisses it as lazy, clumsy and 'irritatingly imprecise.'[113] Yet it can be argued that this very imprecision is the effect Green wants the text to convey here, counter-posing the less distinct outlines of the 'torn-up, dark mosaic' and the rest of the section in parenthesis, with the concreteness of the preceding sentence with its precise measurement of 'two hundred yards' and its stark simile of 'like a huge fire on a flat hearth'. Perhaps the reason that 'It had not been like that at all' was that the unfamiliarity of this position forced a different order of perception on the subject, one in which vaguer outlines of phenomena, the glowing colours, flames and non-objectified shapes of squares and stacks, replaced a presentation of the scene already ordered by a conceptualising consciousness, what Merleau-Ponty calls 'intellectualism'. In *Caught*, as in much other war-time fiction, the struggle simply to describe what is perceived, to capture the phenomena, seems more urgent than any attempt to explain what it means.

The space of hallucination

In Bowen's case, a critical focus on her presentation of the strange phenomena of war offers an alternative way of understanding the phantasmagoric and hallucinatory in her fiction. In the story 'Mysterious Kor' for example, Pepita's imagination transforms a blacked-out London under dazzling moonlight into the fabulous city of H Rider Haggard's novel *She*, while *The Heat of the Day* similarly changes streets and buildings into strange or unearthly shapes (London is glimpsed more than once as a wood for example). Visions of a ghostly city and population are

repetitive themes and a supernatural presence becomes explicit in the stories 'The Demon Lover', 'Green Holly' and 'The Cheery Soul'. The recurrence of this hallucinatory, other-worldly vision in Bowen's fiction has unsurprisingly lent itself to multiple psycho-analytic readings of the texts. Sara Wasson, for instance, in *Urban Gothic of the Second World War* (2010), argues that the conditions of the Blitz made literal many of the tropes of Gothic fiction; people were buried alive, dark streets were filled with the howling of 'banshee' sirens, bodies were dismembered.[114] In Bowen's case, she suggests, this reworking of the Gothic tendency is expressed in the form of uncanny houses, places which are the site of a Freudian repression or return and also a Lacanian disruption of an illusion of wholeness - in this instance, the constructed unity of national togetherness. Neil Corcoran similarly reads the avenging return of the ghostly fiancée in 'The Demon Lover' as the eruption, into both home and country, of what has previously been repressed, including the memory of the First World War.[115] Phyllis Lassner argues that Bowen mixes hallucinatory visions with naturalistic detail in a way that helps to achieve the multiple conceptual dissolutions that her fiction exhibits.[116]

In all of these accounts, the cognitive dislocation of the war, the strange sensory effects of darkness, moonlight, smoke, ruins, flashes and screams, is understood primarily as a prompt for the imagination to veer into fantasy worlds, projecting another non-material existence over the physical fact of war-time London. Yet suggestions that strange phenomena trigger the imagination of an alternate world overlook the way these sensory phenomena are grasped as themselves constructive of the experience of space. For in a multi-sensory space which an embodied subject inhabits (rather than merely occupies), to register a sensation is part of the process of constructing space. No one sense can entirely possess space according to Merleau-Ponty; all of them work to form a unitary space although there may be individual worlds for each sense within the larger whole, worlds which are visual, acoustic, tactile etc. Space is transformed according to which of the senses is primarily employed in its assembly. For example the space of a concert hall is changed if one listens to a concert with eyes closed, as

the music seems to come from a 'larger' space. As Merleau-Ponty describes this aural experience: 'It brings a new dimension stealing through visible space, and in this it surges forward, just as, in victims of hallucination the clear space of things perceived is mysteriously duplicated by a "dark space" in which other presences are possible.'[117] In this subjective, embodied assembly of space, its many textures are endowed by the perceptual process which permits the registration of sensory detail, the bestowing of attention. In literature, multi-sensory descriptions of landscape or urban environments are similarly capable of suggesting space as textured and malleable—heterogonous rather than isomorphic.

In *The Heat of the Day*, it seems that space is simultaneously seen, felt, weighed, smelled and heard. The war-time city, its interpenetrative exteriors and interiors, objects and conditions, is constantly remade by its embodied subject-inhabitants. A lengthy description of Stella and Harrison experiencing rain falling on the blacked-out city exemplifies this polysensory spatial construction:

> She heard him run the blind up, throw up the sash as far as it would go: an outdoor breath swelled the curtains, sifting round them damply into the room. She raised her head to listen, but heard no rain – heard nothing: the silence could not have been more complete if Harrison had walked straight on out of the window.
>
> She got up and went after him through the curtains. Rain was to be seen glinting in the light she let through behind her; behind the fine fall was the sighing darkness...
>
> Assuaging blankness out of the open window began to enter her through the eyes. The embrasure felt like a balcony, one stood projected, high up, into the unseen unsounding sentient world of rain. Nothing more than an intimation was in the dark air; the fall's softness vicariously was to be felt on the roofs around, in the streets below. Only by the smell of refreshed stone was one to know that this rain fell on a city.
>
> ...The total dark of the city became tonight as unprecautionary, natural as that of rocks, woods and hills on which elsewhere rain fell. The peacefulness of this outcome of the late evening's tense massed warlike clouds was the one thing astonishing: now in effect the war became as unmeaning as the quarrel; two persons speechlessly at a window became as anonymous as the city they overlooked...
>
> The darkness by force of being so long looked into resolved itself into particles, some lighter; air and solids just lifted apart; rooflines took on an uncertain form. But inside here, in the embrasure, between the window-frame and the curtains, both persons still stayed blotted out: it was at an unestablishable distance from Stella that Harrison

said: 'Yes, I should say this had settled in wet.' She got the impression he had put his hand outdoors that that had been the act which had made him speak.'[118]

The 'depersonalised' figures stand exposed before the city-space in a way that emphasises their positional orientation to it ('one stood projected, high up') and the spatial modification made by their bodily actions (she lifting her head, he putting out his hand and, earlier, imagined walking through the window). The passage emphasises the variety of senses involved in presenting the city – vision, sound, touch and smell – but does not lapse into a vague synaesthesia; each is distinctly operative in establishing the perceptual whole. The two subjects are partly subsumed into the field before them ('blotted out' and separated by 'unestablishable distance'), suggesting their anchored involvement with this space but also draw forth its forms through their perceptual attention such as the darkness resolved into particles. In Merleau-Ponty's terminology, perception and reflex come out to meet the world in which they are situated. The final sentence, in which Harrison appears almost to touch the cityscape outside, fixes the impression of constitutive action, the construction of perceptual space as anterior to consciousness or speech so that Stella sees it as 'the act which had made him speak.'

Silence, darkness and emptiness are glimpsed here as somehow part of this spatial construction – not as nullity or absence but as substance.[119] Silence is 'complete', the 'total, dark' of the city is 'unprecautionary, natural' and the repetition of un-forms, as in 'unseen, unsounding sentient rain' has the perverse effect of establishing presence. It has been widely noted that in her 1940s fiction Bowen adopts strange syntax in which sentences are often inverted to carry an oddly-stressed or doubled negative form, for example: 'Now the clock had struck: no step could not be his'[120] This repeated formal device reinforces the sense in her fiction of negative or apparently empty terms being substantially present. This tendency reveals a philosophical interest in the construction and ontology of space. The presence of

apparent nullity is the obverse concomitant of space which is always provisional in that it is constantly remade in relation with a perceptual subject. As Hermione Lee observes, 'Permanence is always at risk in her novels and stories.'[121] Bowen herself seems to allude to this hard-won, if provisional, process of ontological creation as the defining act of a writer: 'I don't think any of us feel ourselves to be unrelatable to *something*. We envisage, we are not passive, and we are not contributing to anarchy: that may be the most to be claimed for us.'[122]

In examining the effects of the Second World War on fiction then, it makes more sense to see the unusual sensory stimuli of war-time as, primarily, a disturbance of the perceptual grasp of the world and its spaces. Only as a secondary process did the strange sensations of the Blitz trigger imaginative states, such as the Gothic, supernatural or hallucinatory. Even where characters resort to imaginative escape, as Pepita does in the illusory city of Kor, the process of fictional construction, of re-imagination, is mimetically enacted in the story through the naturalistic description of London under moonlight which precedes, not once but twice, Pepita's imaginative claiming of this scene. It may be possible, as Pepita observes, to blow 'whole places into existence'[123] but they will be built from the substances of the war-moulded city. Here again Bowen's writing seems to enact the bodily and perceptual assembly of space theorised by Merleau-Ponty in the same decade.

London's disappearing railings

The structure of the city, its physical environment and spatial organisation, can also provide the conceptual scaffold for the imagination, the frame of reference for individual thought. Sometimes, apparently trivial changes appeared to have far-reaching effects on the imagination - for example in the case of London's disappearing railings. Following a national campaign for scrap metal, railings were often removed from parks, squares and private houses so that their iron could be used in the manufacture of munitions. In many cases, public

enthusiasm for this removal of railings was high – not only for the help it would give to the war effort but also because railings were often seen as uncared for and unsightly. By the summer of 1942, *The Times* reported, more than 114,000 tons of iron had been collected in London this way.[124] However the newspaper's letters page also saw a vigorous debate about the issue throughout the war, which involved public figures including Evelyn Waugh, Giles Gilbert Scott, Osbert Sitwell and Lady Oxford. In part, the controversy was about aesthetics and heritage. While there was a general acceptance that the railings should be used, there were also pleas, from the Georgian Society for example, that the best examples should be left intact. Waugh, perhaps characteristically, drew attention to the historic values with which they were associated: 'The railings which adorned the homes of all classes were symbols of independence and privacy valued in an age which rated liberty above equality.'[125] Architect Gilbert Scott organised an exhibition, 'Railings for Scrap', to clarify discussion about what should go and what should be saved. However objectors also expressed a sense that the topographic coherence of London would be impaired by the loss of some railings. *The Times* quoted one who cited 'the heavy Nash railings of Park Crescent…as a clear case in which removal would be vandalism, since they are an essential link between the architecture and the town-planning lay-out'[126]. As the railings came down, the controversy developed a political edge that centred on London's squares and debate about whether the space they had formerly enclosed was public or private. 'I have often felt indignant', wrote one Londoner, 'when the well-to-do in the great squares have left their houses in August for Scotland, the country or abroad to see the small, humble children on holiday playing in the surrounding hard wood-paved streets'.[127] A spate of letter writers agreed, arguing that the opening up of the squares to all-comers, by removal of the railings, was a democratic use of privileged and often empty enclaves. The contrary view came from some residents of the squares who complained not only of trampled grass and pilfered flowers but also about the effect on property values and the cost of maintaining what had become a common resource.[128]

The social and spatial anxiety that the removal of the railings engendered also left its mark in the fiction of the 1940s, and especially that of Elizabeth Bowen. As a resident of Clarence Terrace on the borders of Regent's Park, Bowen herself saw the railings separating her house from the street and from the public park taken up during the war.[129] The anticipation of this war-time commonplace arises in the story 'In the Square'. When Bowen's character Bennet asks: 'I say, I thought they were taking the railings away from the squares; I thought the iron was some good', the prospect is associated both with the incursion of the ghostly couples glimpsed gathering in the dusk but also with a sense of the incompleteness of the square and the question of whether it will 'patch up'. Bennet's conclusion, 'anybody can have it as far as I'm concerned', ties his feeling of apathetic abandonment to the anticipated loss of the railings, a shrug over what could be the final loosening of both the square's social and geometric structures.[130] A prophetic unease is played out in other stories in which the railings have gone, disorienting and discomfiting some of Bowen's characters. Their absence in a blacked-out London street scene, including 'a corner with no railing', leaves Clara utterly lost in her own district and – like the couples of 'In the Square' – insubstantial in the 'solid darkness' so that 'she seemed to pass like a ghost through an endless wall'[131]. The absent railings are an imaginative component of the interpenetrative spaces which Bowen's fiction repeatedly produces; their loss removing a perceptual marker which previously guided movement through that space. Even when railings are present in a scene, they can be part of this defamiliarised, interpenetrative landscape, as in 'The Demon Lover' where the 'unfamiliar queerness' of the street scene includes 'a cat [which] wove itself in and out of railings.'[132] In the story 'I Hear You Say So', which is set in Regent's Park a week after V.E Day, two characters reflect on the significance of the park's new physical shape – specifically its loss of railings – produced by the war. For one of them, a grandmother who is not named but whose grandson has been killed in the war, the loss of the railings is suggestive of social anarchy brewing outside the privileged London home to which she has returned:

> The old woman…had come back to London and was brokenhearted at everything outside the reopened windows of her house. The beautiful spearheaded railings of the park were gone; every place was invaded and desecrated; Roland had left no child in Ursula's body. 'I shall be glad to go,' said the old woman. 'Look at the shameless people rolling on the grass. Is it for this we have given Roland?'[133]

The woman's class-rooted distaste at the occupants of the park expresses a more general fear of the shape of post-war society. Her conservative impulse is bound up with the regret that her grandson has left no heir to compensate for his sacrifice. The loss of the 'beautiful' railings then, recalls correspondents to *The Times* who identified trampled grass and purloined flowers as symptoms of a frightening social upheaval, one marked by the loss of social and aesthetic tradition. Spaces of London are 'invaded and desecrated' both literally and figuratively.

Yet the same story views the vanished railings from another perspective, that of a man who is not named and does not speak but who is described as 'obsessed-looking, aimless' and 'neurotic' as he patrols the park, where his 'movements gave rise to the idea that there was something or somebody hidden there.'[134] Glimpsed indirectly from the flare of his match as he lights a cigarette or a flash of reflected light in his glasses, the man is an indeterminate physical presence described through his cognitive and psychic processes. He is a questioning and scrutinising subject of the park's environment and conditions: hearing a nightingale's song, for example, he 'stood staring about him, trying to calculate its effect on other people.' It is through his mediation that we register benches 'extinguished into darkness', in which intense silences are 'disturbing to the neurotic man'. It is in this mode – almost as an assistant narrator - that the man muses on the disappeared railings: 'Ever since railings had been taken away, he had not ceased to brood on what must be the consequences, nor had he ceased frequenting the night parks'[135]. It is as if Bowen has conjured the collective unease of war-time London over its vanished ironwork into the shape of this unnamed everyman with his explicitly disturbed mind. The omission of a definite article in the phrase 'ever since railings had been

taken away', reinforces this sense of generality, as does the plural form of 'night parks', by which his mind absorbs the absence of all railings and all parks. Unlike Roland's grandmother, for whom the railings represented primarily a bulwark against a changing social order, here their loss seems to generate a more organic sense of dislocation, a disturbance in the collective conceptualisation of the city's space. In each case though, the text combines the imaginative and the visual sense of loss; the visual through the concreteness of the 'beautiful, spear-headed railings' and, in the unnamed man's case, through his accumulative perceptual construction of the park. The look of the entire city, its collective image, had been disturbed by war and this affected the mind. *The Times* made this point specific in an article printed just four days after V.E Day, which considered the post-war state of London: 'Of many minor changes, one which strikes the imagination hardly less than the eye is the disappearance of railings from the characteristic London squares and the parks'[136]. If the change was 'minor' when set against the capital's toll of death and destruction, it was profound in terms of the picture of the city collectively held by its inhabitants.

A theory developed by the geographer Kevin Lynch may explain how the loss of railings could have this effect. Lynch argues that a city gives rise to public images of itself, a shared perceived environment, which transcends individual differences in perception. In *The Image of the City*, Lynch writes that humans have to retain 'a generalized mental picture of the exterior physical world' to avoid getting lost in it, and that this ability is a primal function not unlike that employed by migratory birds to understand the journeys they make through their environment. A city is too vast to be wholly perceived in any one moment, and for each individual, the sequences in which it is apprehended will be broken, interrupted or unfinished according to everyday circumstance. Therefore the general mental picture of the urban environment which each of us can retain is vitally important: 'The need to recognize and pattern our surroundings is so crucial, and has such long roots in the past, that this image has wide practical and emotional importance to the individual'[137]. Our understanding of a legibly

ordered environment, captured in this image, provides us with a meaningful frame of reference for the spaces and places we inhabit. However this quality of imageability, as Lynch terms it, is not only one that strikes the individual but also provides a consensual understanding of the city's environment. 'A vivid and integrated physical setting, capable of producing a sharp image, plays a social role as well. It can furnish the raw material for the symbols and collective memories of group communication.'[138] Lynch believes the image of the city operates both perceptually and conceptually; it situates our understanding of not only the city's physical spaces but also their psychic interpretation, including symbolic effects. In the case of London's railings for example (as noted by *The Times* and expressed in Bowen's fiction) their removal not only changed the look of the city but also altered the image by which it was conceptually grasped. In the process, this removal had an enormous impact upon the imagination of the city's inhabitants. A physical object or area can be understood in the same way by many people if it has 'that quality which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer'[139]. This quality of imageability, according to Lynch, consists of three components: identity, structure and meaning, with the latter including the possibility of the social meaning (as well as the perceptible qualities) of a feature, space or district. Applying this model to the example of railings around a park, the object's identity comes from the recognition of railings as a distinct entity. The structure comes from the understanding of railings' spatial relation to the observer (as a separation of street from park or private square) and the meaning from the understanding of their function in restricting access to and/or enclosing a designated leisure space. A social meaning may also be bound up with this, for example in the idea of garden squares as a place of privileged retreat and, by extension, as a symbol of social order and division.

Lynch divides the city's physical forms into five categories: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. Railings would seem to qualify as edges in his taxonomy. A district in a city may acquire and hold a distinctive character though the involvement of three or four particular

features. Homogeneity, for example through the continuity of building materials, design or lighting, can also help to create a stable image, as can a city's integration of clear and simple geometric forms such as squares since 'forms of this nature are much more easily incorporated in the image'[140]. Lynch's method then, suggests many ways in which stable images of London may have been disrupted by the war. In one sense this destabilisation was the result of physical damage or alteration - the jarring effect of ripped-open buildings, interrupted facades, blocked streets and missing railings. But it was also effected by the many unfamiliar conditions produced by blackout, including pitch darkness, dazzling moonlight and unearthly colours. A sense of the city's wholeness was threatened by the breaking of geometric forms. The spatial shocks had further conceptual implications, including the social anxiety which stemmed from the erasure of certain physical boundaries. Bowen's war-time fiction often expresses this spatial unease through characters' attempts to grip the solid form, both literally and metaphorically. The railing, or handrail, is often the focus in these moments of uncertainty. In *The Heat of the Day*, Louie seeks out Stella in the West End street which she has only previously seen by night. Unable to get her bearings, the street presents her with a dizzying perspective of planes and distances and an incoherent jumble of architecture which combine to frustrate her:

> But to enter Weymouth Street was to quail at the unspeakingness of its expensive length. She had had no notion that Mrs Rodney lived so far from her; and, worse, it was impossible to be certain at the foot of which of those flights of steps they had said good-bye…The chattering variation of the architecture, from house to house, itself seemed to cheat and mock her – she looked at Dutch-type gables, bronze-grilled doors, leaded casement, gothic, projecting bays, balconies, discrepantly high parapets, outwitted…One unity, this morning, the empty Sunday street had up and down its length – the sunless toneless reverberation, from planes of distance, of the victory bells.[141]

Louie's confusion is partly explained by the social gap that exists between her and the residents of this part of W1, but also by the elastic spatial properties of its 'expensive length'

and 'planes of distance' and by the 'chattering' bricolage of its architecture which, on Lynch's

account, defies attempts to capture a cohesive image. Louie's response to this indeterminate

and ungraspable space is to reach for a familiar solid form:

> She stood face up, one hand instinctively grasping one of the spearheads of railings
> topping an area, as though to bridge, for ever, in some memory of the body's, the
> sound and scene. But then instantaneously she was struck, pierced, driven forward
> into a stumbling run by anguish – an anguish striking out of the air.[142]

The psychic solidity that the railings appear to offer cannot re-establish Louie's sense of

equilibrium against the invasive spatial flow with which she is 'pierced' and which strikes 'out

of the air'. It is clear that iron railings, in Bowen's stories, are imagined as a source of potential

stability in a spatially fluid world. Their loss is a cause of further anxiety.

The same counter-pose of railing and space occurs in 'Ivy Gripped the Steps' where the young

Gavin also grasps at a handrail in a manoeuvre which suggests his physical and mental

desperation to conquer a sudden chasm of unbridgeable space. Climbing a zig-zag path from

the sea-side to the promenade, he looks up to see Mrs Nicholson, the woman with whom he

has become childishly infatuated:

> …he looked up, to see Mrs Nicholson's face above him against the blue…he had the
> experience of seeing straight up into eyes that did not see him. Her look was pitched
> into space: she was not only not seeing him, she was seeing nothing…
>
> Gavin, gripping the handrail, bracing his spine against it, leaned out backwards over
> the handrail into the void, in the hopes of intercepting her line of
> view…Despair…gripped him and gripped his limbs as he took the rest of the path…He
> clawed his way up the rail which, which shook in its socket.[143]

Like Louie, Gavin reaches for the object understood to offer a solid purchase in a dizzying and

distressing spatial scene where he is unable to grasp or manipulate the details of planes and

distance presented to him. The handrail, quivering in its socket, emphasises the precarious grip

achieved on spaces which, in Bowen's war-time world, are always shifting and provisional.

'One cannot say that the space is empty'

While this provisionality makes spaces hard for the imagination to grasp, it also makes them hard to empty. The destruction of buildings and objects does not make the clean cut that Bowen was apt to imagine before the war. Does demolition or eradication leave emptiness behind it or is that space marked with a trace of its former occupant, a lingering presence? It was a question of great interest to Bowen, not least when her family home, Bowen's Court, was unexpectedly demolished by its new owner in 1960. For Bowen, the event did not mean total erasure: 'One cannot say that the space is empty. More, it is as it was – with no house there. How did this happen?'[144] An object's absence in its former space is registered in an echo of the way that its presence in that same space would be. The frame which enclosed and bound the object cannot be dissolved. In the final pages of *The Heat of the Day*, Louie revisits the site of the bombed seaside bungalow where her parents died to find exactly this sense of marked space. The impression is of a house with suggested qualities of warmth and life clinging to it: 'The thin air which had taken the house's place was, now that she stood and breathed it in, after all full of today and sunshine; the ridges left by the foundations feathered and stirred with grass in light and shadow.'[145] Buildings destroyed in the war could retain not only an imaginative but a perceptual presence, as though of an after-image on the retina. For Elizabeth Bowen this possibility may even have offered some consolation for the assault of the war on her earlier assumptions about the material nature of space and place. Read together, her fiction, letters and the non-fictional *Bowen's Court*, show how the war changed not only the way she thought about spatial forms but also the weight she attached to them as guarantors of psychological equilibrium. Bowen began the war believing in the enduring solidity of the palpable, such as the 'imperturbable' objects of furniture whose imagined loss in the 1938 *The Death of the Heart* is disastrous. By the end of the conflict Bowen had lost her

faith in the material resistance of physical objects, yet she found this adjustment less destabilising than was imagined.

On 5 January 1941, a few days after the huge air raid of December 29 and 30, 1940 which became known as the Second Fire of London, Bowen wrote to Virginia Woolf: 'All my life I have said, "Whatever happens there will always be tables and chairs" – and what a mistake.'[146] In the same letter, she told Woolf how she was just completing *Bowen's Court*, the history of her family home, but that the final chapter seemed to 'rewrite retrospectively all the rest of the book.'[147] Bowen had written the first two chapters before the outbreak of war in 1939 in which she expressed her characteristic pre-war vision of the Big House as a house-island, a solid, defined object in a sea of infinite and featureless space. The open road near the house is 'no longer the road to somewhere, simply *a road*, something dazzling, abstract and taut. Here under the beat of air and light, you see the plastic emptiness of the fields around it, and hear nothing but the humming telegraph wires'[148]. Like its fictional counterpart Danielstown in *The Last September*, Bowen's Court is surrounded by a potentially obliterating vacancy, a vast exterior charged with threat. However by the time Bowen came to the final chapter in 1941, as she suggested to Woolf, her vision had been transformed into one in which the often uninhabited house and space were intertwined in such a way that they left their traces on one another: 'It may be said that Bowen's Court met and conquered the challenge of emptiness – but on the house the conquered has left its mark: it is to these first phases of emptiness that I trace the start of the house's *own* strong life'[149]. It was a change of view effected in part by events in London, where air-raids shattered Bowen's childhood view of England as inviolate, the 'image of immunity'. So powerful had the hold of this idea been on her, wrote Bowen, that 'now, when I hear bombs fall on England, or see rubble that used to be a safe house, something inside me says "Even here?"'[150] Yet just as the nation had fearfully over-prepared for bombing between the wars, so Bowen's apprehension about attacks on the country and material destruction seemed to exceed the reality of life at war. The 'heady' atmosphere of

London that she diagnosed in her postscript to *The Demon Lover* manifestly left her intellectually exhilarated rather than traumatised. This feeling was partly explained by the equanimity with which she found destruction could be faced. Even the loss of one's home was bearable: Bowen and her husband were forced to leave Clarence Terrace in 1944 when it was damaged by V1 attacks.[151] Seen as involved with space, rather than isolated in it, buildings and objects are understood as neither completely solid nor permanent nor entirely erased by destruction since they leave their traces in a world which is perpetually reassembled.

From the distance of 1960, when Bowen wrote the afterword to *Bowen's Court* which could not accept the house as entirely vanished, she alluded to this conceptual change wrought by the war while justifying the apparent solipsism of writing a family history:

> Inevitably, the ideas and emotions that were present in my initial plan of this book were challenged and sharpened by the succeeding war years in which the writing was on. I was writing (as though it were everlasting) about a home during a time when all homes were threatened and hundreds and thousands of them were being wiped out. I was taking the attachment of people to places as being generic to human life, at a time when the attachment was to be dreaded as a possible source of too much pain.[152]

This passage could be read as weak justification for a privileged woman's focus on her own history during a time of world crisis and suffering and, perhaps, as conservative fixation on heritage and property as a reflex response to upheaval. And perhaps that is how the project began. However it is also possible to see *Bowen's Court* as capturing a change in conceptual understanding brought about by the war – a work in which Bowen's focus on her own home helped her to understand and assimilate an altering perception of spaces and places.

The provisionality of space means that destruction, for example of Bowen's Court or of Louie's family home, is not perceived as total. But it also allowed writers to imagine a reverse process, a view of space in which objects were waiting to take form; a premonition, for example, of a vacant landscape to be filled with buildings. In *The Heat of the Day*, Stella and Roderick cross

just such a landscape which is literally earmarked for building, but also – the text suggests –

conceptually designated for replacement:

> The path obliquely ran across exhausted grassland offered for building: the offer
> remained open; the board was down – that there was to be building here you could
> never doubt. This that met the eye was the merest ghostly lingering of a landscape
> gone by now if it had not been for the war. The recalcitrant swell of earth which had
> cracked the path would present not more than a moment's difficulty to the sinkers of
> foundations, however shallow.'[153]

This is a novel where buildings, objects and people can all flicker in and out of perception and

in which the 'ghostly' theme is produced not only by an affinity for the supernatural but by the

cognitive processes of its subjects.

This passage perhaps alludes to post-war reconstruction which was in full swing as the novel

was published in February 1949 after substantial post-war re-writing. The reference to

'shallow' foundations perhaps hints at Bowen's instinctive political distaste for a rebuilding

process which was going on under the direction of a socialist government elected in 1945.[154]

An understanding of the inevitability of this project is however apparent throughout the text,

for example in Cousin Nettie's knowledge of the charged atmosphere of 'drills' and 'planes'

which will follow the war. Shafquat Towheed argues that in Bowen's fiction the bombed gaps

of London need not be empty because they can be filled by 'explosive space' which is

imaginatively conjured into being, as in 'Mysterious Kor'. Spaces can be areas of plenitude as

well as absence. Towheed suggests that this imaginative possibility was partly a response to

the restrictions on space that the war imposed: 'Increasingly, wartime London luxuriated in

unusable public space, while usable public, and more importantly private, space seemed to be

in perpetual diminuendo.'[155] While Towheed's diagnosis emphasises the role of pure

imagination at the expense of the role played by perceptual registration in remoulding

wartime spaces, he suggests an effective way of analysing the ways that fiction approached

the post-war reconstruction. The future shape of the city and the landscape was an imaginative project equally open to writers and to town planners.

Critical interpretation of Bowen's writing in the 1940s has only partially explained the urgency and complexity of her spatial imagination. Critics have accounted for the ways in which space was imaginatively coloured by the past - 'thickened by past presence' as Towheed describes it, an 'infected zone' in Wasson's terms – but have largely overlooked how the particular experience of war-time London changed Bowen's description of spaces and the philosophical assumptions underlying her writing. Bomb damage and other material changes to the city drew her attention, like Sansom's, to the ways that perception assembles space. And her authorial vision of human bodies woven into their spatial environment offered a contemporary literary counterpart to Merleau-Ponty's philosophical breakthrough. Bowen was one of the writers who reconsidered the nature of the spatial because of the Second World War. She found spaces to be complex, unstable and provisional and these discoveries transformed her writing; imbuing it with both philosophic anxiety and imaginative exhilaration.

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[1] Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1978), p. 22-26

[2] These include *Invasion From the Air* (1934) by Frank McIlraith and Roy Connolly which portrayed a savage European air war fought over 11 days. The Times reviewer noted its 'scenes of vivid horror'. 'New Novels', *The Times* , 6 July 1934, p9. Others included Neil Bell's *The Gas War of 1940* (1931) and Nevil Shute's *What Happened to the Corbetts* (1939).

[3] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), p. 191

[4] Henry Green, *Loving, Living, Party Going* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 483

[5] Henry Green, *Pack My Bag* (London: Hogarth, 1952), p. 5

[6] *Things to Come,* dir. by William Cameron Menzies (London Film Productions, 1936). The film was produced by Alexander Korda.

[7] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 42

[8] Adam Piette, *Imagination at War* (London: Papermac, 1995), p. 3

[9] Piette, p. 5

[10] William Sansom, 'The Witness', in *Fireman Flower* (London: Hogarth, 1944), p. 82

[11] Henry Green, 'Mr Jonas', in Matthew Yorke, ed. , *Surviving: the uncollected writings of Henry Green* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), p. 87

[12] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 47

[13] *Fireman Flower*, p. 110

[14] *Fireman Flower*, p. 155

[15] Fireman Flower, p. 129

[16] Mark Rawlinson, *British Writing of the Second World War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), p. 68

[17] Rawlinson, p. 99

[18] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 497

[19] Rawlinson, p. 82

[20] Rawlinson, p. 87

[21] Rawlinson, p. 75

[22] These critics include Mark Rawlinson, Maud Ellmann and Sara Wasson

[23] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 210

[24] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 212

[25] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 26

[26] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 130

[27] *The Heat the Day*, p. 193

[28] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 198

[29] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 199

[30] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 217

[31] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 73

[32] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 50

[33] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 95

[34] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 322

[35] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 149

[36] *The Mulberry Tree: writings of Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Hermione Lee (London:Vintage, 1999), p. 98

[37] *The Mulberry Tree*, p. 95

[38] *The Mulberry Tree*, p. 95

[39] Maud Ellmann, *The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 153

[40] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 311-312

[41] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 312

[42] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1948), p. 88

[43] Just one example comes from Bernard's final monologue in *The Waves*: 'No fin breaks the waste of this immeasurable sea...I am the swathed figure in the hairdresser's shop taking up only so much space.' Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (London: Granada, 1983), p. 192

[44] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 206

[45] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 215

[46] Ellmann, p. 155

[47] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1995), p. 83

[48] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 210

[49] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 214

[50] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 204

[51] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 215

[52] Shafquat Towheed, 'Territory, Space Modenity: Elizabeth Bowen's "The Demon Lover and Other Stories" ', in Susan Osborn (ed.), *Elizabeth Bowen: new critical perspectives* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2009), p. 114

[53] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. by Colin Smith (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2002), p. 284

[54] *Phenomenoloy of Perception*, p. 296

[55] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 161

[56] Graham Greene, 'At Home', in *The War Decade*, compiled by Andrew Sinclair (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), p. 68

[57] Graham Greene, *The Ministry of Fear* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 11

[58] *The Ministry of Fear*, p. 28

[59] *The Selected Works of Cyril Connolly: Volume One: The Modern Movement,* ed. by Matthew Connolly, 2 vols (Basingstoke: Picador, 2002), i, p. 331

[60] R.V Jones, *Most Secret War* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p. 263

[61] Rawlinson, p. 96

[62] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf,* 5 vols, ed. by Anne Oliver Bell (London: Hogarth, 1984), v, p. 331

[63] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 155

[64] Siegfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 431-432

[65] Giedion, p. xlviii

[66] Giedion, p. xl-xli

[67] Giedion, p. xlvi

[68] Giedion, p. 238

[69] *The Heat of the Day*, p7

[70] *The Heat of the Day*, p7

[71] *The Heat of the Day*, p8

[72] *The Heat of the Day*, p8

[73] Elizabeth Bowen, 'In the Square', in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 609

[74] *Collected Stories*, p. 610

[75] *Collected Stories*, p. 610

[76] *Collected Stories*, p. 612-613

[77] *Collected Stories*, p. 613

[78] *Collected Stories*, p. 615

[79] *Collected Stories*, p. 615

[80] *Collected Stories*, p. 614

[81] *Collected Stories*, p. 615

[82] *Collected Stories*, p. 610

[83] *Collected Stories*, p. 614

[84] *Collected Stories*, p. 611

[85] Ellmann, p. 46

[86] In the first paragraph of the opening story 'The Sisters' for example: 'It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word gnomon in Euclid.' James Joyce, 'The Sisters', in *Dubliners,* Project Gutenberg <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2814/2814-h/2814-h.htm> [accessed 10 August 2015]

[87] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Ivy Gripped the Steps', in *Collected Stories*, p. 709

[88] *Diary of Virginia Woolf*, v, p. 353

[89] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961), p. 364

[90] Mumford, p. 395-396

[91] Mumford, p. 398

[92] Steen Rasmussen, *London: the unique city* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1960), p.167-68

[93] *Collected Stories*, p. 614

[94] Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene and V.S. Pritchett, *Why Do I Write?* (London: Percival Marshall, 1948), p. 24-25

[95] *Why Do I Write?,* p. 25

[96] *Fireman Flower*, p. 110

[97] *Fireman Flower,* p. 111

[98] John Russell, 'Limbo States: The Short Stories of Henry Green', *Twentieth Century Literature* 29 (1983), 447-454 (p. 450)

[99] *Fireman Flower*, p. 109

[100] *Fireman Flower*, p. 110-111

[101] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 57

[102] *Fireman Flower*, p. 111

[103] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 49

[104] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 327

[105] *The Mulberry Tree*, p. 95

[106] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xv

[107] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, trans. by Oliver Davies (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 53-54

[108] Kern, p. 152-153

[109] 'There is some exaggeration in the claim that the negativities are of equal importance with the subjects of art.' Kern, p. 176

[110] Constance Fitzgibbon, 'The Blitz' in *The War Decade,* p. 73

[111] *A Diary for Timothy*, dir. by Humphrey Jennings, (Film First, 1945)

[112] Henry Green, *Caught* (London: Harvill, 2001), p. 181

[113] Piette, p. 70

[114] Sara Wasson, *Urban Gothic of the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 4

[115] Neil Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

[116] Phyllis Lassner, *Elizabeth Bowen* (Savage: Barnes and Noble books, 1989), p. 123

[117] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 258

[118] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 139-140

[119] Similar presentations of space experienced through touch or feelings of pressure during the blackout are found in James Hanley's blitz novel *No Direction* (1943).

[120] *The Heat of the Day*, p23

[121] Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 17

[122] *Why Do I Write?*, p. 58

[123] *Collected Stories*, p. 730

[124] 'Removal of Railings in London', *The Times*, 14 August 1942, p. 8

[125] 'Victorian Taste', *The Times*, 3 March 1942, p. 5

[126] 'Nash Railings in London', *The Times*, 14 October, 1940, p. 6

[127] 'The London Squares', *The Times*, 1 May 1940, p. 9

[128] A correspondent to *The Times* wrote: 'It is…manifestly inequitable that a few private citizens should be called upon to finance the upkeep of a public garden.' 'London Squares', *The Times*, 5 September 1942, p. 5

[129] Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: a biography* (New York: Knopf, 1978), p. 163

[130] *Collected Stories*, p. 614

[131] *Collected Stories*, p. 632

[132] *Collected Stories*, p. 661

[133] 'I Hear You Say So', *Collected Stories*, p. 756-757

[134] *Collected Stories*, p. 753-754

[135] *Collected Stories*, p. 754-755

[136] 'Unconquered Soul of London', *The Times*, 12 May 1945, p. 5

[137] Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), p. 4

[138] Lynch, p. 4

[139] Lynch, p. 44

[140] Lynch, p. 105

[141] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 292

[142] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 292

[143] *Collected Stories*, p. 694

[144] Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court* (London: Longmans, 1962), p. 458

[145] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 329

[146] *Mulberry Tree*, p. 216-217

[147] *Mulberry Tree*, p. 217

[148] *Bowen's Court*, p. 14

[149] *Bowen's Court*, p. 403

[150] *Bowen's Court*, p. 418

[151] Glendinning, p. 159

[152] *Bowen's Court*, p. 454

[153] *The Heat of the Day*, p. 295-296

[154] In a letter of 24 September, 1945, Bowen wrote of her affinity for the Conservative leader Churchill and distaste for 'middle-class Labour wets'. Lee, p. 207

[155] Towheed, p. 129

CHAPTER TWO

The rocket's leap

We have invaded space with our rocket and for the first time - mark this well - have used space as a bridge between two points on the earth...To land, sea and air may now be added infinite space as a medium of future intercontinental traffic. This 3rd day of October 1942 is the first of a new era in transportation, that of space travel.
General Walter Dornberger[1]

Introduction

Our conception of space is influenced by new technologies. In _The Culture of Time and Space_, Stephen Kern argues that, for example, the bicycle, the motor car, the x-ray machine, the telephone and the aeroplane all changed spatial understanding in the late late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[2] Sometimes the effect of technological development is incremental; for instance, a motor car is faster than a horse. Other advances, such as the x-ray machine, appear paradigmatically new by revealing a wholly fresh view of the world.

Such a leap was made during the Second World War with the invention of the V2 rocket in Germany. It was a weapon which came too late to alter the outcome of the conflict but which fundamentally challenged the existing imagination of its witnesses and demanded new ways of thinking about space. Four times faster than the speed of sound, touching the edge of outer space and virtually undetectable by the human eye once launched, the V2 was so startling as to suggest novel spatial concepts and undermine existing ones. The rocket was not only a technological development but entailed a conceptual leap which foresaw a weapon that need not be restricted to battlefield or even airspace and which combined explosive and its method of delivery. Moreover, the V2 could not be seen, heard or intercepted before impact and, as a result, appeared to connect two points on earth without travelling between them. These qualities suggested the fantastic, the sublime or the divine, and would prove to be powerful influences on artistic representation. The rocket was habitually figured as a supernatural

presence, a higher being of malign intent and awe-inspiring power. Writing in 1947, William Sansom, described the sight of a rocket exploding high up in the atmosphere over London: 'At night, a rocket-burst occuring far-up, without warning, would paint an abrupt orange moon in the high black sky; again silently, suddenly arriving and exploding and quickly fading, as though up in the night an evil orange eye had winked at man's frailty.'[3] The mysterious trajectories of the V2 unleashed the imaginative powers of fear, awe at the vast spaces across which it ranged, and cognitive dissonance produced by its silent and sudden manifestations.

It has often been assumed that despite the rocket's technical and imaginative leap, its impact on British culture and literature in the 1940s was relatively minor. Literary narratives of the war in particular focussed on conventional bombing, especially the intensities of the Blitz, to the exclusion of the V2 and its cousin, the pilotless flying bomb the V1, both of which were only used in the last year of the war. On this view, it is not until Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* in 1973 that the V2 receives significant literary attention. As Amy Bell says:

> While the V-1 and V-2 raids appear in personal records, they are not part of the popular memorialization of war the way that the blitz was and is. Their absence suggests the difficulty in reconciling these weapons with the images of civilian togetherness and steadfastness, which were the hallmarks of popular views of the blitz.[4]

Bell anatomises the fear felt by Britons under attack from V-weapons but concludes that descriptions of these experiences were restricted to private journals and diaries; the psychological impact of the weapons is barely inscribed in Britain's official or cultural records of the war. In fact, this chapter will argue, the effect of V-weapons, especially V2s, on writing and culture from the 1940s is much more profound than has been recognised. It is true that their presence in 1940s writing is often submerged and sometimes disguised, but the effort to understand the weapons, to visualise them and to account for their psychological and sensory effects, left clear traces in thought and literature in these years.

The most significant of these traces were new intimations of space prompted by the rocket's startling and mysterious appearance to contemporary witnesses. The V2 disturbed everyday understanding of the spatial because of its unusual sensory effects, including its near-invisibility in flight and the gap between impact and noise that was a feature of a weapon travelling many times faster than sound. Witnesses of the V2 were troubled by the difficulty in identifying its trajectory and in fixing their own position relative to the rocket. This dissonance is apparent both in contemporary civilian accounts, including reports from Mass Observation reproduced here for the first time, and in literature of the 1940s. In *Back* (1946), Henry Green captures the essence of the new weapon in a warning the landlady Mrs Frazier gives her lodger Charley:

> "Enjoy this while you have the opportunity," she said, "take what pleasure and comfort you can, because who is there to tell what may befall. When these new bombs he's sending over, turn in the air overhead, and come at you there's not a sound to be had. One minute sitting in the light, and the next in pitch darkness with the ceiling down, that is if you're lucky, and haven't the roof and all on top…And you don't catch a sound when they crash, everyone that's had one, and come out alive, speaks to that."[5]

Mrs Frazier's warning sums up the strangeness of the V2, particularly its lack of sound and also the fatalism that this lack of warning could encourage. Yet it is also notable that the weapon is not named. As we shall see, this absence was typical of contemporary accounts of the rocket and helps explain why the weapon's cultural significance has been understated.

Fictional treatment of the V2 in the 1940s also includes a more-or-less direct representation of the weapons in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where they appear thinly-disguised as 'rocket-bombs.' Elsewhere in literature of the 1940s, this chapter argues, the presence of the rocket is shown more obliquely: an examination of the mysterious sounds which permeate Henry Green's *Concluding* (1948) shows how these closely mimic the sonic pattern experienced by Londoners during V2 attacks and similarly disrupt spatial perception. In the challenges it posed

to an everyday understanding of the spatial through its unusual sensory effects, the V2 amplified a tendency already established by the war to present a variety of spaces that were *implied* rather than fully *given*. This chapter proposes the idea of implicit space both in relation to 1940s fiction, where characters often experience space through aural or tactile means rather than through the visual, and with reference to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy from the same decade. As Merleau-Ponty suggests in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), limited or disturbed sensation can give rise to a hierarchy of spatial worlds, each of which possesses the particularity of an individual sense but not a full and composite clarity. In support of this idea, a reading of contemporary sound theory is offered here to show how and why sound produces a less determinate sense of space than both vision and touch. In sum, the occluded space suggested by the strange sounds of the invisible V2 is understood in this chapter as one example of how the war drove literature to represent the spatial in ways that echo Merleau-Ponty's thinking.

The cultural traces of the V2 are also found in supposedly non-literary writing from the 1940s. Official accounts and scientific documents were often forced to adopt a style and language more usual in myth or fantasy in their attempts to convey the nature of the weapon and its power. In part these accounts seemed to echo a public tendency to ascribe supernatural qualities to a weapon which posed an unseen but ever-present threat akin to a divine thunderbolt. The pressure on the language used in official commentary also reflected how British scientists and intelligence officers gradually groped their way to understanding the scientific and military reality of the weapons developed in great secrecy by the Germans, and the accompanying imaginative demands for the public and literary authors alike. Secrecy continued to shroud the V2s even after they started striking London in September 1944; the British government censored any reference to them for more than two months to avoid revealing their effect to the enemy.[6] By the time this prohibition was lifted, the war in Europe had almost run its course; the last V2 was fired in April 1945 and a month later Germany

surrendered.[7] Public discourse about the rockets was thus confined to a brief period sandwiched between a ban on discussing them and the end of hostilities. These factors help to explain why, although we can detect a nascent understanding of the power and implications of the rocket in writing of the 1940s, that understanding is often tentative or encoded. Literary references to the V2 in this period are scarce and often disguised.

What began as a European story quickly became an American narrative too. At the end of the war the Nazi scientists behind the V2 were prized assets, with US and Russian governments eager to use them in developing their own ballistic missile programmes.[8] Soon many of the captured German engineers and technicians were in the US working on rocket tests at the White Sands range in the New Mexico desert. The first V2 launched from the site was test-fired into space in 1946[9] and by 1947 a rocket was being launched every two weeks.[10] If narratives of the war itself only include the V2 as a late appendix, the public drama of its appearance was just beginning. Between 1946 and 1950, US scientists brought back more than 1,000 pictures of earth from space by attaching cameras to the rockets. These pictures appeared in newspapers and magazines, while newsreel footage of the experiments was broadcast by the end of the decade.[11] Public understanding of the rocket grew throughout the 1940s as it began its transformation from military weapon to the means of manned space flight in the following two decades. It was against this background that Thomas Pynchon (born in 1937) conceived *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), a novel he began to develop in the early 1960s and which was influenced by his time as an engineer on a missile project for Boeing from 1960-1962.[12] The novel's meticulous re-imagining of war-time Britain underlines how it can be seen as a text with its roots in the prevaling culture and ideas of the war years as well as their material details, and not simply an exercise in postmodern pastiche. Similarly, Pynchon's novel is preoccupied with the trans-continental evolution of the V2 from German weapon to American space programme, which exemplifies how the long shadow of the Second World War fell across the Cold War and the space race.

Reading *Gravity's Rainbow* against war-time accounts of V-weapons suggests some themes which run in a continuous thread from the 1940s to the 1970s. One of these is a literary tendency to present these weapons as generating their own type of space, a realm apart. For example, Elizabeth Bowen's description of domestic interiors muted and whitened when temporary calico windows replaced glass shattered in V1 attacks is explored here to suggest a strong literary resemblance to Pynchon's visions of a rocket suspended in its own frozen space. Another connection across the three decades between the war and publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* is the understanding that V-weapons entailed a new type of war. The extreme speed and range of the V2 transformed ideas of where the battlefield lay and who was in the firing line, opening up what theorist Paul Virilio calls 'dromocracy', the desire to dominate a military space through lightning speed and ever-present threat. Added to this intensified speed and danger was the impersonality of attack by remote-controlled weapons, whereby the view of the enemy became more opaque. These fearful possibilities grew during the Cold War that lies between the 1940s and publication of Pynchon's novel, but they did not begin there. Even as the Second World War was ending, visions of a continuous, inter-continental war enabled by the new missiles were given a first literary articulation.

The arrival of V-weapons

Both the V2 and its contemporary the V1 were radically different from conventional forms of bombing and when they were launched at London in the last year of the war they subjected citizens to unsettling new experiences. The weapons were developed separately by German military scientists on the Baltic island of Usedom. The V1 was a project of the German air force, the *Luftwaffe*; the V2 was developed by the army. The V in their names stands for *Vergeltungswaffe* or 'revenge weapon', and reflected not only Nazi hopes that they would be decisive in turning the course of the war, but also the rhetoric in which the Nazi leadership

dressed them, as a revenge for Allied bombing of Germany.[13] Although both weapons were developed in great secrecy, Hitler and other commanders gave speeches during the earlier years of the war hinting at powerful secret weapons to come.[14] The potential psychological power of the weapons was thus invoked long before they were launched. In fact they came too late to influence the war's outcome and some historians claim they may even have hindered the German cause by using vast resources which would have been more effectively used to manafacture conventional weapons. Michael Neufeld describes the V 2 as 'probably the greatest technological achievement of World War II - and its most conspicuous waste of advanced scientific and engineering resources.'[15] And yet, the weapons triggered cultural resonances that were significant and long-lasting.

June 1944: the V1

Often known to the British as doodlebugs or buzz bombs, V1s started falling on London in June 1944. These were pilotless, petrol-driven, bombs whose engines cut out over their target area at which point they plunged to earth and exploded[16]. The buzzing sound of their approaching engines, followed by an ominous silence before explosion, was unique. After the almost continuous bombardment of the Blitz during late 1940 and early 1941, Londoners had adjusted to life in which air raids were not much more than an itermittent danger. So the arrival of V1s in the summer of 1944, had a deeply dispiriting effect on the population. Writing in *Horizon* in September that year, Cyril Connolly said:

> They have made London more dirty, more unsociable, more plague-stricken than ever. The civilians who remain grow more and more hunted and disagreeable, like toads each sweating and palpitating under his particular stone. Social life is non-existent, and those few and petty amenities which are the salt of civilian life – friendship, manners, conversation, mutual esteem – seem now extinct for ever. Never in the whole war has the lot of the civilian been more abject, or his status so low.[17]

Connolly's picture is certainly at odds with descriptions of a cheerful mutual defiance which were sometimes used of Londoners sheltering from conventional bombs in the Blitz. His use of 'dirty', 'hunted' and 'sweating', conveys not only the tensions of these months but also also a sense of revulsion at the 'abject' state in which citizens found themselves.

This lack of visible human agency behind the weapons could give rise to fantastic or supernatural visions. In his non-fictional account, *The Blitz: Westminster in War* (1947), William Sansom pictured a metal humanoid at the helm of the V1s:

> It was difficult to imagine a machine flying by itself: it was easier to picture a kind of grim steel automatic pilot cast in the shape of a man, flying straight, freeing the last control with a sightless jerk of his arm. Such nightmares came easily to a people removed from centuries of superstition by only a few years. The new things were supernatural.[18]

The alternative to constructing a fantastic explanation for V-weapons was to accept the random and arbitrary pattern of where the bombs would fall. This randomness was disquieting for Londoners because it meant accepting that every bomb could be making directly for *you*, hunting you out. Conventional bombs dropped from a piloted aircraft could often be seen to have particular targets such as docks, armament factories or railway yards. No such obvious purpose could be ascribed to the remotely-controlled V-weapons, and the result was that they appeared to possess an agency of their own, giving rise to the unsettling supposition that they were aiming themselves at particular targets. As Sansom noted:

> This was the first time in their lives that people had been faced with a purely arbitrary fate. Hitherto, every bombardment might be thought to have a target, a direction: and there had always been contrary devices to deflect the attack. But here in these first days (and this feeling was to develop further with the Long-Range Rocket) the sound of a flying bomb approached like a straight line, so that everybody in the half-circle of its fanning-forward sound attached the bomb to themselves and knew that without any particular reason it could drop at any time and at any place. It could drop anywhere. It was absolutely reasonless, the first purely fatal agent that had come to man for centuries tempting him to cross his fingers again, bringing a rebirth of superstition.[19]

Both Sansom and Connelly saw the psychological pressures of remotely-controlled attacks reducing Londoners to abject states. These states could be both bestial, as in Connelly's image of toads sweating under stones, and helpless, as in Sansom's suggestion of citizens reverting to superstition in the face of a 'purely fatal agent'. The superstitious response involves the construction of a supernatural power, perhaps demon or god, in order to detect a purpose in the randomness of the missiles.

In Mervyn Peake's narrative poem *The Rhyme of the Flying Bomb* (written 1947, published 1962), the association between religion and the missile is drawn tighter still. The poem moves to a climax in a London church where a sailor and mystical baby seek refuge but hear death flying inexorably towards them in the form of a flying bomb, heralded by warning sirens:

> But as he spoke the wailing broke
> Out louder and more loud,
> From town to town the banshee cried
> Out of the morning cloud
>
> From town to town the sirens passed
> The news of death's approach
> Until the warm air leapt like waves
> Within the ruined church
>
> And then a sudden silence fell
> Upon the House of God
> And, in the silence…presently…
> A ticking sound was heard
>
> And louder louder, momently
> Until the ticking was
> The stuttering of a far machine
> Intent upon its course[20]

The inexorable purpose of the flying bomb culminates in an explosion which brings a religious ecstasy to the ensuing death of the sailor: at the poem's end the baby lies 'coiled in the womb again.'[21] Both the poem, and Peake's own drawings published with it, figure the distinctive tail fins of the flying bomb as the Christian Cross which they resemble. Not only does the flying bomb become a 'diving cross', its wreckage points heavenward: 'And the tail of the flying

Bomb/Stuck out of the floor to point the place/That it had journeyed from.'[22] In one sense, Peake's work draws on a centuries-old poetic tradition of mystical, religious intensity, but it also clearly describes the physical and aural specifics of the V1 and the way that it was experienced by Londoners, including their impulse to connect the bombs with the deific.

As Sansom describes, these pyschological effects of abjection on the populace were to intensify with the arrival of the V2.[23] These effects experienced by Londoners in 1944 and 1945 also become key themes in literary treatments of the rocket, especially in *Gravity's Rainbow* where both the pull toward superstition and its counter-impulse, to impose a rational meaning on the pattern of attacks, are prominent. Tyrone Slothrop's paranoia convinces him that the V2 is aimed at him personally while scientists seek a rational explanation for the rocket's pattern: Pynchon's novel allows both possibilities. These disturbing experiences find an earlier literary expression in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* where the impersonality and implacibility of the V1 attacks on London have a tormenting effect on Louie Lewis in the days after the new hope of the D-Day landings of June 1944. The passage resonates with the mingled sense of tension, paranoia and disgust already seen in Connolly's *Horizon* piece:

> The lucid outgoing vision...lasted ten days more, till the Secret Weapon started: then it was shameful how fear wrenched thoughts home –droning *things*, mindlessly making for you, day and night, tore the calico of London, raising obscene dust out of the sullen bottom mind. There was no normal hour...On and off, on and off sounded the sirens in the nightmare sunlessness.[24]

The automatism of these 'droning *things*' summon a world of horror to Louie's mind, disturbing her unconscious and putting her squarely in the imagined path of their attack. She is one of those citizens who imagine the bombs coming for her in person. Louie is illegitimately pregnant by another man while her husband is fighting overseas, and the sense of disgust the V1s trigger in her is mixed with her personal guilt at her the social taboo she has broken. Yet the reference to the torn 'calico of London' and Bowen's selection of the collective term 'the sullen bottom mind' (not, 'her sullen bottom mind') makes it clear that the psychic effects of

the V-weapons are communally experienced across the city. Peversely, everyone thinks they alone are being hunted.

Bowen's reference to calico suggests it as the fabric of a collective London psyche which is torn apart by the V1s. In part this psychological tearing is aligned with the paranoia of those who perceive themselves hunted. Yet Bowen's use of calico here is just one of a series of references to the material in her war-time writing and these reveal that the significance it carried for her was wider still – including a particularly spatial significance. Calico, a form of rough unbleached cotton, was used as an emergency replacement for windows during the war, stretched across frames where the glass had been blown out by bombing. The quality this translucent but opaque fabric brought to domestic interiors had a poweful effect on Bowen, which she captured in the essay 'Calico Windows' (1944), written in the summer of the first V1 attacks on London.

> Calico windows are something new – in a summer bare of fashions, "crazes", or toys. They pitch home life in a hitherto unknown mood. In the theatrical sense, they rank as "effects" of the first order. They cast on your ceiling, if you have a ceiling left, a blind white light, at once dull and dazzling, so that your waking thought every morning continues to be, "Why, it must have snowed!" They lighten and darken slowly: inside calico windows it might be any time of year, any time of day. Through their panes you hear, with unexpected directness, steps, voices and the orchestration of traffic from the unseen outside world. (Talkers outside a calico window should be discreet.) Glass lets in light and keeps out sound; calico keeps out (most) light and lets sound in. The inside of your house, stripped of rugs, cushions and curtains, reverberates.[25]

Calico transforms both light and sound inside the house. The new whiteness of the interior, 'at once dull and dazzling' is both brighter and dimmer in Bowen's perception so that the transformation confuses as well as impresses. Similarly the hints of personification in the phrase 'blind white light' and in the calico keeping out light and allowing in sound, suggests non-human presence in this scene, as well as the observer's own sensory descriptions. Bowen displays a writer's relish for this strange new world, but it is the ambiguity of the spectacle, as well as its newness, which fascinates.

The context of this piece is that a V1 had landed directly opposite Bowen's London home on the edge of Regent's Park, and 'blew [it] hollow inside, wrecking every room.'[26] In her essay, Bowen associates the workmen who arrive to patch up the street's houses with the flying bombs themselves:

> This cotton and cardboard 1944 summer house, inside the shell of the old home, is fascinating. With what magic rapidity was it improvised and tacked together by the kind workmen. The blast of the buzz bomb marked the end of the former phase. As though just hatched, or dropped from the skies, these swarmed in their dozens in your street. Soon they had disappeared, without trouble, inside the blasted-open front doors – yours having its share…They were at it almost before you knew they were there – smashing out what was left of glass, smashing down what was left of plaster, wrenching out sagging frames and disjointed doors.[27]

There is humour of course in this description of the repairs, yet Bowen again blurs the boundaries between the different agencies at work in this scene. The workmen, like the bombs, have 'dropped from the skies' and replicate the effect of the V1 in smashing glass and plaster, ripping out doors and windows. They are both destroyers and repairers as they tack together a new material world from the old one. This suggestion of a god-like power of creation soon becomes explicit:

> The whole scene was one of rhythm and, soon, of order. Watching the bold creation shape itself you exclaimed: "Of course, of course!" The light new window-frames, primitive as a child's drawing, which have been constructed out on the pavement, are now fitted into the old windows. The outside world disappears. The workmen's faces are the first you see in this to-be-familiar calico light. You have now been tied up, sealed up, in a tense white parcel. The workmen see it is good. They go.[28]

This is a creation-scene which mimics the book of Genesis as the workmen call into being a new light and 'see it is good'. They seal the observer into an enclosed new world that is its own separate space. Through the figure of the workmen, the association between divinity and the V1s has been completed and, in the original continuum of the white space which they have generated, the threat of the bombs recedes under the protection of a deific omnipotence: 'The workmen, godlike, proceeded towards the next stage….Only just pausing, they listened

patronisingly to other buzz bombs passing across the sky: you knew nothing more could happen while they were with you.'[29] This ascription of divine power to the new weapons was to become even more pronounced in the case of the V2, as was the tendency to figure it in its own spatial continuum and, as we shall see, the assocation of the weapon with a kind of originary whiteness, a 'blind white light, at once dull and dazzling', as Bowen saw it in the summer of 1944.[30]

Calico then was a substance which came to represent several different, and sometimes contradictory, ideas in Bowen's writing after the assault from V1s: it stood for a collective London psyche that was shredded by the weapons, but also as the enclosure of a new sensory space because of the effect calico windows had on light and sound. Bowen came to picture this sealed-off muffled space as something generated by the flying-bombs themselves, in turn implicating them with the divine. This process allowed her at times to imagine them as beneficent and, oddly, as protective; at other times, as for Louie in *The Heat of the Day*, as inexorable and murderous, triggering shame and disgust.

September 1944: the V2

In September 1944 the first V2s were launched at Britain from Holland.[31] V2s were giant rockets which climbed to 60 miles – touching the edge of outer space – before arcing down on their targets. The effects of the 14-ton rocket were dreadful. A direct hit on a Woolworth's store in Deptford, South London on 25 November 1944 killed 160 people and in total 2,754 Britons died in V2 attacks during the eight months of their operation until April 1945.[32] There was an even heavier toll in Germany: as many as 80,000 slave workers were forced to work in appalling conditions in the underground factories which the Nazi regime set up to manafacture the rockets around the town of Nordhausen; at least 10,000 are thought to have died there.[33] The British victims were overwhelmingly Londoners as German forces aimed most

V2s at a central point on the south bank of the River Thames near Tower Bridge, a fact not known to British experts until after the war. The difficulty in controlling the rocket's flights meant their strikes were spread across London and its surroudings; the more wayward missiles fell as far afield as Berkshire.[34]

If the apparent randomness of both doodlebugs and rockets produced the same reaction in Londoners, there were other, destabilising, psychological effects which were specific to the V2. For one thing, because V2s were supersonic, they struck without warning: they travelled too fast to be seen in flight and were heard only after impact. There was no chance to prepare for attack, or even to hear your impending doom, as there was with the descending whistle of conventional bombs dropped by plane or with the cutting out of a V1 engine as its audible signal it was about to descend. A summary report by Mass Observation of interviews with civilians conducted in January and February 1945 confirmed what literary accounts had reported, that the instant, unannounced strike of the V2 was the biggest fear for many:

> To some this lack of preparation for what may, at any moment, be instanteneous death is more terrifying than anything they have had to endure during the German air attacks on this country. Others, relieved that it is no longer possible to seek shelter, accept the situation fatalistically.[35]

In the first category was a 45-year-old man who told interviewers:

> We've had several in the night and now some people are in such a state of fear that they're afraid to go to bed, the women are afraid to go out shopping – they're frightened out of their lives. They'd give a lot to have the good old days of the sirens back again.'[36]

This nostalgia for earlier forms of attack was echoed by a man of 66 who said:

> I think the rockets are the worst of the whole lot – they don't give you the chance of a rat. V-1 did give you a chance – you heard it coming and you could duck – but this one's just cold-blooded murder.[37]

The suddenness of a V2 attack then meant a new quantum of fear; they were more frightening than the weapons that preceded them and contemporary accounts show this was a shock to Londoners who imagined they had been toughened by previous exposure to bombs and doodlebugs. As Amy Bell puts it:

> The V-2 rockets were considered by many to be the most fearful weapons of the war. Like the V-1s, the V-2s could and did come at any time of day or night…by the time Londoners heard the V-2s explode, they were either dead or it had missed them. The constant fear created a feeling of helplessness in civilians, all the more so since the V-1s and the V-2s were designed as weapons of harassment and revenge, having no conventional military purpose.[38]

Bell's remarks illustrate how the V2s caused not just fear on a greater scale, but also fear of a different quality.

A policeman in Margery Allingham's crime novel *The Tiger in the Smoke* (1952) recounts how the lack of warning of V2 attacks instilled tension across London:

> 'Remember V2s? The whole city waiting. Silent. People on edge. More waiting. Waiting for hours. Nothing. Nothing to show. Then, strike a light! Suddenly, no warning, no whistle, wallop! End of the ruddy world! Just a damned great hole and afterwards half the street coming down very slowly, like a woman fainting.'[39]

Allingham's work revolves around the pursuit of a brutal killer and she uses the constant tension engendered by the V2 to heighten the fearful anticipation of a fog-bound and crime-ridden London which determines the novel's atmosphere. In this passage, the eight staccato sentences of between one and four words which lead up to the moment of impact seem to measure off anxious heart-beats or the ticking of a clock. The passage of time does not mean the threat has receded, but only that impact has not occurred in the second just passed, yet may take place in the second to come. This different quality of fear engendered by the constancy of the V2 threat is summarised by the London witness quoted in the introduction who recalled telling himself: 'It can happen now, this instant; but since it hasn't, perhaps it will when we've counted twenty, but it didn't so let's forget it.'[40] Like Allingham's truncated

sentences, the counting to twenty is a hopeless attempt to dismiss the threat of the rocket by noting its non-appearance, as if to banish its very contingency. The psychological pressure of a V2 was formed not just from the apparent randomness of its attack (a quality shared with the V1) but also by the temporal passage of its absence, and the continuous possibility of its presence. This witness's inability to banish the V2 from the mind demonstrates the extraordinary power of the weapon in the control its idea could exert over thought. In *Chance and the Modern British Novel*, Julia Jordan argues that the contingency of events in war were a crucial shaping influence on the attitude to chance in twentieth-century fiction and the literary attraction to ideas of hazard, uncertainty, chaos and anxiety. This suggestive quality, she suggests, was especially true of V-weapons:

> This closeness was perhaps made especially acute by the technological facts of the new bombs that Londoners, from the first moments of the war were told to expect: the "pilotless" missiles – whose very name suggests a wild, agency-less randomness, impossible to forecast – became a terrifying totem of the unpredictability of death.[41]

Fear of death is more acute for the randomness of its arrival.

In the case of the V2 specifically, its instantaneous impact, its invisibility, and its association with the supernatural all suggested a weapon that somehow arrived from another world. A weapon striking in a flash, unseen and unannounced, seemed to have no earthly spatio-temporal moorings: no starting point, no journey, no duration. The V2 simply seemed to blink into existence. More even than with the V1, there was a feeling that the weapons came from another world, from a fantastic realm. This feeling is summed up in the account from a man who was a 15-year-old schoolboy at the time of the attacks. He recalled: 'The V-2s were a bit like being under sniper fire for six months at a stretch [...] The V-1s were old-fashioned, melodrama, the V-2s were a threatening horror from outer space, abstract, unreal.'[42] The inherent strangeness of being under attack by V-weapons is given fictional treatment in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) where the 'rocket bombs' striking London are

recognisably inspired by war-time V2s. Winston Smith, wandering into a 'proles' district near St

Pancras, is caught up in a missile attack.

> Suddenly the whole street was in commotion. There were yells of warning from all
> sides. People were shooting into doorways like rabbits. A young woman leapt out of a
> dooway a little ahead of Winston, grabbed up a tiny child playing in a puddle, whipped
> her apron round it and leapt back again, all in one movement. At the same instant, a
> man in a concertina-like black suit, who had emerged from a side alley, ran towards
> Winston, pointing excitedly to the sky.
>
> 'Steamer!' he yelled. 'Look out, guv'nor! Bang over 'ead! Lay down quick!'
>
> 'Steamer' was a nickname which, for some reason, the proles applied to rocket bombs.
> Winston promptly flung himself on his face. The proles were nearly always right when
> they gave you a warning of this kind. They seemed to possess some kind of instinct
> which told them several seconds in advance when a rocket was coming, although the
> rockets supposedly travelled faster than sound. Winston clasped his forearms above
> his head. There was a roar that seemed to make the pavement heave; a shower of light
> objects pattered onto his back. When he stood up he found that he was covered with
> fragments of glass from the nearest window.[43]

Here the unearthly nature of the weapon, the possibility that it appears from another world or

dimension, is suggested by the 'instinct' that the proles possess to anticipate the supersonic

rocket. No rational or sensory apparatus will predict the weapon's strike – only an inexplicable

sixth sense. For Orwell's fictional purposes the proles of Oceania are glimpsed by Winston

Smith as almost another species with whom he vainly attempts to establish meaningful

communication. In this light, the supposition that they possess an innate ability to feel the

weapon's approach sets them apart from Winston and his fellow party members and de-

humanises them. Contemporary accounts of V2 attacks sometimes mentioned pets stiffening

or fleeing in alarm before a rocket strike,[44] and Orwell's ascription of a similar bestial instinct

to the proles not only aligns them with a different, lesser species, as beasts, but also taps a

suspicion latent in war-time Britain that the weapons were almost supernatural in the way in

which they appeared to drop through a portal from an alternate universe.

The V2s then were not just a physical threat to the people they were fired at, they were also

an imaginative challenge. Both literary and non-literary writing of the 1940s are areas in which

we see a response to this challenge. Orwell's fictionalised version of the V2 is one example, where the weapon's strange newness is incorporated into a developing vision of the future. At the outset, before the technology behind the rocket was widely understood in Britain, fantastic explanations may have been more likely. Yet even when it was known how the V2 operated, its flight remained a difficult concept. To imagine travel from northern Holland to South London via outer space is a reasonably demanding concept even today, in the age of space travel, global satellites and inter-contintental missiles. How much more so must it have been in the 1940s?

The rocket's 'Romantic' scientists

The inventors of the rocket themselves had to make imaginative leaps, as well as technical ones, in order to develop it. They needed new categories of range and speed and especially a new concept of transit that went beyond the existing 'limit' of the earth's atmosphere . While the rocket conformed to the same principles of ballistics as conventional artillery shells in describing an arc from firing point to target, it achieved a much greater range and speed by being able to touch the edge of outer space. Scientists had first to imagine the possibility of sending the rocket into space before considering how it could be done. They built on a romantic impulse towards the possibility of space travel that took hold of many Germans in the 1920s and which lay behind the weapon's development. In 1923 Proferssor Hermann Oberth published a paper entitled 'The Rocket into Interplanetary Space'[45] which contributed to the founding of the Society for Space Travel in 1927. An early member was Werner Von Braun who was to become chief engineer on the V2 project (and after the war of America's Saturn V space launch). In 1929 German mass interest in space travel was further stimulated by the Fritz Lang film *Frau Im Mond* (Woman in the Moon) which credited Oberth as scientific

consultant and which included an imaginative montage of space flight, a rocket blasting off from Earth and streaking fierily through the sky like a comet.[46]

The conceptual advance inherent in the V2 is explicit in the accounts of the scientists and engineers who developed it and who felt irresistbly drawn to the task. General Walter Dornberger, the German army officer who headed the project, describes their motivation as an excitement at bursting through physical and conceptual boundaries. What drove them was not just a desire for technical mastery but a reaching out of the imagination towards sublime categories of infinity. For example, he writes that:

> Our aim from the beginning was to reach the infinite open spaces, and for this we needed speeds hitherto undreamed of. Range and velocity were the great landmarks that guided our thoughts and actions.[47]

Dornberger also characterises his chief engineer's talent as imaginative as much as technical: 'Von Braun's imagination knew no bounds…He dreamed of revelled in anything that was big, powerful, immeasurable and far in the future.'[48] And when the Nazi leader Goering failed to share his enthusiam for the project, Dornberger ascribed this resistance to lack of conceptual vision: 'His mind, in other respects so highly imaginative, was unable to pass beyond the earth's atmosphere.'[49] It is of course possible to read this celebration of the imaginative capture of the sublime as the scientists' attempt to justify a pursuit of pure or even divinely-inspired knowledge while avoiding any consideration of the lethal goal of their work. But even if this is true, there is no doubt that the conceptual jumps they made in developing the weapon demanded a matching leap on the part of those watching in Britain and trying to understand what the Germans were developing. Despite Nazi hints at the existence of a secret weapon, the V2 was developed in extreme secrecy and its nature remained mysterious to British minds. A conceptual and intellectual puzzle lay before them and when it was solved, the solution was expressed in language that sounded more literary than scientific in its

descriptions of the sublime categories of speed, range and space that had also thrilled its inventors.

Working in military intelligence, British scientist R.V. Jones was the first in the country to grasp the nature of the weapon being built in Germany. He achieved this partly by meticulous combing of intelligence files and reconnaisance photography, but also by making the imaginative leap needed to match that of the Nazi scientists. Jones came to understand not only what they were building but also the impulse behind their work, an impulse that was romantic as well as military. Jones saw that the essential appeal of the weapon for its developers lay not only in its destructive effects or in its innovation but also in the awe - part admiring and part fearful - that its power elicited, even among potential victims. This insight was key to his revelation of the nature of the secret weapon, set out in a 30,000 word report to the Cabinet. Particularly striking is an appendix to the report in which he addresses the question of why the Germans have built the rocket, using language which is fantastic or even biblical rather than soberly scientific:

> A rational approach brought us nearest the truth regarding the technique of the Rocket. When, however, we try to understand the policy behind it we are forced to abandon rationality, and intead to enter a fantasy where romance has replaced economy.
>
> Why then have they made the Rocket?
>
> The anwer is simple: no weapon yet produced has a comparable romantic appeal. Here is a 13-ton missile which traces out a flaming ascent to heights hitherto beyond the reach of man and hurls itself 200 miles across the stratosphere at unparalleled speed to descend – with luck – on a defenceless target. One of the greatest realizations of human power is the ability to destroy at a distance, and the Nazeus [sic] would call down his thunderbolts on all who displease him. Perhaps we may be permitted to express a slight envy of his ability, if not to destroy his victims, at least to raise one of the biggest scares in history by the inverted romance with which those victims regard the Rocket.[50]

The divine, the mythic, the sublime and the fantastic are all present here in Jones' theatrical and perhaps tongue-in-cheek prose. Phrases like 'flaming ascent' and 'thunderbolts' are

redolent of ancient mythology and the weapons of Zeus; the strange use of 'Nazeus' looks like

a deliberate and half-humorous attempt to work in the name of the king of the Greek gods.

The capitalised use of 'Rocket' adds to the suggestion of a divinely-bestowed mythic weapon

and the evident excitement at human reach extending to new highs and distances feels like

admiration for a Promethean-style enterprise. Jones himself invokes the word 'romance' here

as the key to understanding the appeal of the V2 project, and this passage is steeped in

Romantic ideals and terminology. The emphasis is on human attainment that is inspired by,

and mimics, the divine; the suggestion of a passion that ineluctably pulls us toward this goal;

the imagery of flames and hurtling speed. All of these intensities are suggestive of a high

nineteenth-century Romanticism and appear extraordinary in the context of an analytical and

scientific report to the war cabinet. Yet Jones's invocation of the divine would prove consistent

with the experience of citizens once they came under attack from V-weapons.

Or perhaps Jones' intention here is partly comedic, and he wants to produce a pastiche of

overwrought language in the appendix as a counterweight to the technical density of the rest

of the document. And perhaps it is intended as a sly dig at the enemy; the self-conscious

construction of a phrase like 'the Nazeus' might be seen as mockery of a pompous and

specifically Germanic or Wagnerian style of romanticism which celebrates heroes and gods

together in its myths. On the other hand, to strive for comedy on such a grave subject and in

an address to such a powerful audience would appear to be striking entirely the wrong note.

The fear of the V2 expressed by Londoners is redolent of a fear of being struck down by the

thunderbolts of a vengeful god. Rather than striving for comedy, Jones's words seem to

acknowledge that the achievement of the Nazi scientists is a demonstration of power that

engenders awe, as well as displaying technical accomplishment. The language employed by

scientists is not of course neutrally descriptive, but a discourse charged with intent; a

technology cannot emerge without a collective, cultural, impulse to will it into being. In the

introduction to her book *Rocket States*, which examines the techno-cultural emergence of

nuclear missiles in the USA, Fabienne Collignon writes of how the 'unconscious desires, compulsions and pathologies' of many people are an inevitable, if latent, material in the genesis of new technologies: 'These early stages formulate an operational practice that, once launched, disappears in flight to become an absent presence – an inhabitation.'[51] In the case of the V2, what lay behind the weapon's development may have been not only German excitement about space travel but a more submerged political and cultural intent, which may have been mirrored in London. When British scientists eagerly adopted the language of celestial thunderbolts, this perhaps revealed both simple admiration for the technical accomplishment and suggested their dreams and desires may not have been so different from those of the enemy.

Jones also had a specific and pragmatic reason for stressing the romantic appeal of the rocket over its 'economy'. His explanation of what the Germans were developing with their V2 project was resisted by Lord Cherwell, Churchill's chief scientific adviser, who repeatedly dismissed his warnings.[52] Crucially, Cherwell's refusal to take the threat seriously was based on a rigidly utilitarian weighing of the cost and difficulty of developing the weapon for the Germans against its likely destructive effects. Cherwell's judgement was based on purely economic considerations and did not account for the imaginative impulse bound up with the weapon's development, an impulse fully understood by Jones. Against this sceptical background, Jones's colourful rhetoric could be understood as a studied attempt to convince his audience by employing both the linguistic and the conceptual assumptions of the enemy in order to lay bare their purpose.

Secrecy and censorship

As well as stretching conventional scientific language in new directions, the arrival of V2s strained the imaginations of Londoners. Contemporary accounts from the Mass Observation

suggest the psychological effects of the attacks were hardest on those prone to invent possible explanations for the un-named weapon. One 30-year-old woman from London, reacting to the strikes of the mysterious new weapon, said: 'I know there's a few people are in a terrible state all the time – they let their imaginations run away with them – that's the trouble'[53] while another witness, a man of 45, agreed that: 'It's people that can't control their imaginations that's suffering most.'[54] This imagination was stimulated by the official secrecy in which the V2 was shrouded. Hitler and other Nazi leaders had hinted over several months, and with deliberate obscurity, at the developement of a secret weapon of revenge while British intelligence had made strenuous efforts to understand what these might be. Once the Germans began firing the missiles at Britain in September that year, the government in London imposed a complete ban on naming, identifying or discussing them.[55] This censorship was partly to conceal the success of the British intelligence work that had revealed their nature, and partly to deprive the Germans of information about how effective the V2 attacks were proving. Of course the destruction they caused and the sonic booms they made could hardly be hidden, but the weapon itself remained unseen, quite unlike the sub-sonic pilotless V1s which were already a familiar sight in the sky. Diarist George Beardmore, summed up the absence of information in an entry from 20 September, 1944:

> No word yet from any source about the mysterious bangs we have been hearing, not preceded by the familiar droning in the sky. A crater appeared at Kingsbury in my absence, also a terrific mid-air explosion last Saturday which...shook the building.'[56]

The official and misleading explanation often given for V2 attacks was gas explosions, leading to the popular joke among ordinary people that Britain was under attack from 'flying gas-mains.'[57] The news blackout on V2s was lifted in November after just over two months,[58] but in the early weeks of attack the official prohibition on discussing them led to a frenzy of speculation in which the lack of authorised information left imaginations to run free. As a 40-year-old woman recorded in Mass Observation stated:

> Talk, talk, talk. I never heard so much talk, neither in the blitz nor over the buzz-bombs. People have just talked themselves into fits, they don't know which way up they are. All I know is, we've got something Friday and we've got something Sunday and they've tried to put it about that it's a broken gas main but of course it isn't [...] We ought to be very careful what we say or we'll be getting into trouble. [59]

To the fear of attack was added not only the unease of an unknown and unseen weapon but also the fear of breaching official secrecy and 'getting into trouble.' Once again, V2s unsettled people far more than might have been warranted by their relatively minor effect on the outcome of the war.

Even when the official ban on discussing the rocket attacks was lifted at the end of 1944, the V2s remained curiously absent from the view because their extreme speed made them effectively invisible. This meant that V2s remained unenvisaged, and were known instead through their secondary manifestations. The rockets left craters in the ground, gave out sonic booms as they re-entered the earth's atmosphere and produced vapour trails that could occasionally be made out from long distances as they climbed into the sky from their launch sites.[60] This invisibility fuelled the the impulse to ascribe a pattern to their attacks and to indulge in plotting and calculating the 'meaning' of these secondary phenomena. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon extends tropes of fantasy and paranoia surrounding the rocket to the point that its secondary manifestations are as effective a way of revealing its essence as any other. The novel conspires with the possibilty that there may indeed be an intentional pattern behind the V2s strikes and that – in this fantastic world – it is conceivable that the rocket attacks are exactly co-terminus with the points around London at which Tyrone Slothrop's sexual encounters have taken place. Slothrop's paranoid conviction that the V2 is aimed at him personally takes hold not just of him but of the text, which countenances the possiblity that his belief is correct.

In keeping with these psychological effects, even an officially sanctioned propaganda film, Humphrey Jennings' *Diary for Timothy* (1945), does not flinch from presenting the unsettling

nature of the V2. In a scene in a cafe, a man wearing the uniform of a heavy rescue worker asks rhetorically: 'How long does it take?' as he explains to the others at his table how the V2 works. Though he lists the ballistic performance of the weapon (fired at an angle of 45 degrees, climbing 60 miles in height, hitting speeds of 3,000 mph), the V2 is never named, but rather referred to as 'one of those gadgets.' The film then cuts to an on-stage performance of *Hamlet* in the moments where Hamlet is addressing Yorick's skull, before suddenly cutting back to the scene of a London bombing where the same rescue worker is seen leading a party of men digging in the rubble of a house. The overall effect is a typically oblique presentation of a V2 – consistent with the general war-time experience – in which, though its terrible power is witnessed, it is neither named nor seen so that a pervading sense of unease is made still more powerful through their absence.[61]

Scene from *Diary for Timothy*, directed by Humphrey Jennings (Film First, 1945)

Diarists and authors of contemporary documentary accounts of V2s had been forced in 1944 to employ oblique descriptions of the rockets because of official secrecy and a lack of understanding of the weapons. This obliquity seemed to establish a cultural trend in which V2s were rarely figured directly, even after the limits on doing so had been lifted. Jennings' film

could have referred to the rockets by name but preferred instead to preserve the half-veiled presence by which people had come to know them. Literature of the 1940s also seemed to register the V2s and their disturbing, unsettling effects but presented these in indirect ways. Orwell's transposition of the weapon to the futuristic rocket bombs is one example; other fiction, as we shall see, incorporated aspects of the V2's puzzling sound and semi-visible transit at moments of unease and sensory occlusion. This unease involved a spatial effect produced by the strange pattern of sounds made by the supersonic rockets. Here lay not only the potential to unsettle civilians and stretch their nerves to their limits but also a source of cognitive dissonance powerful enough to leave its traces in thought and writing beyond the end of the war.

'One large frightened ear': the sound and space of V-weapons

Whether pointlessly in the case of the V2 or calculatingly in the case of the V1, listening out for V-weapons generated a condition of painful alert, an extreme mental tautness which made relaxation, and often sleep, impossible. The war-time diary of Vivienne Hall makes the point:

> Day and night these flying bombs come…droning across the skies, sometimes hourly, sometimes at 10 minute intervals, sometimes several at once, in fact there is no knowing which of the systems is being used so you just have to listen and hope for the best! That's all we do, we are just one large frightened ear—each sound of traffic, each purr of an engine stops conversation whilst we sort out the sounds and decide whether to take cover or not. . . It is purely and simply a frightful onslaught upon the civilian to see how long the nerves will stand the sleepless vigil.[62]

In the case of the V2s, which could be heard after impact but not seen, an added source of unease was the separation of their sounds from any discernable cause. The severing of the aural from its physical origin implies a greater hidden threat. As Steven Connor suggests: 'Any sound that has been detached from its source, whether by concealment, technological mediation or by amplification, will carry a sense of unseen power, power that is the greater for being unseen.'[63] This concealed power and menace, combined with an edgy alertness to

sound, lurks at the margins of Roy Fuller's poem, 'During A Bombardment by V-weapons' (1944) where the attacks give rise to a vigilant tension in which a heightened aural sense transfers threat from weapons outside to trivial domestic noises:

> The little noises of the house;
> Dripping between the slates and ceiling;
> From the electric fire's cooling,
> Tickings; the dry feet of a mouse;
>
> These at the ending of a war
> Have the power to alarm me more
> Than the ridiculous detonations
> Outside the gently coughing curtains.[64]

In the third stanza, the menace implied by the noises takes shape: 'Now all the permanent and real/ Furies are settling in upstairs.' The hidden power of sound also signifies the incursion of another realm: namely the supernatural/mythological one suggested by Fuller's vision of the Furies. The unearthly quality of a weapon can appear again in the context of its aural impact. As Connor puts it:

> Our noise is never wholly ours. There is always something inhuman about sound. We cannot rid ourselves of the suspicion that sound constitutes a world apart from us, a living world.[65]

Visions of the V2 as a weapon from another realm were reinforced by its sonic manifestation and the decoupling of that sound from visual data.

The noise made by the rockets was complex. Since they were supersonic, impact would occur first, followed by the sound of the explosion of the warhead and then, a few seconds later, by a rushing, rumbling sound in the air which was the noise of the rocket's flight catching up.[66] In addition, there was usually a second bang caused by the sonic boom of the missile's re-entry into the lower atmosphere. This double bang was one of the characterstic features that Londoners learned to associate with the rockets. Sansom described the chain of sounds as follows: 'A double thunder-clap, followed by the noise of a remote and aerial express train.'[67]

But there was no inevitable pattern to this noise; many people close to an impact heard no explosion at all but felt, and saw, the earth shaking silently. Then again, there was often a hallucinatory quality to the sound of explosions. Some were heard 20 or 30 miles away while others, which sounded distant, turned out to have been no more than a mile or two away. By November 1944, George Beardmore was recording other people's attempts to puzzle out the pattern of the V2s sounds in his diary:

> Theories run around the office about the reason for the quick double bang, which incidentally seems more terrifying than the fly-bomb's [The V1] drone-and-thump. One explanation is that the first bang is caused by the initial impact with the ground (or building) and the second bang by the thing's explosion. Or the Doppler effect may be responsible. Depending on where you are in relation to the rocket – in front, immediately under or behind – you hear a scream in mid-air, before, during or after the explosions. It often happens that you first hear the explosion and then the scream of its passage, decreasing to a wail.[68]

These attempts to describe the rocket's sounds and effects always involved a spatial projection; an effort to explain the noises heard by trying to establish one's position in relation to it. This impulse differed from the experience of hearing conventional bombs or the engine of a V1 because in those cases the essence of the sound, its characteristic quality, was always the same no matter where on the ground the listener was situated. The falling whistle of bombs, the noise of an explosion and the buzzing of a doodlebug were distinctively present regardless of your location. They may have sounded relatively near or far, but the sound itself would not alter its overall quality. For the V2 this was not true as a difference in position could mean a different composition of sound, as Beardmore notes with the mid-air 'scream' appearing to happen 'before, during or after' the noise of an explosion depending on your location relative to the rocket's flight. Not only was this inherently disorienting in itself, but the unpredictability of the V2's sonic effects often baffled any attempt to fix one's own position. As Beardmore noted on 28 Janury 1945: 'Four mornings in succession they have woken us up. Not bangs so much as prodigious muffled explosions which resound in all quarters at once.'[69] The phrase 'all quarters at once' testifies to the general presence across the London sky of a

sound which cannot be pinned down to a precise location. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Slothrop experiences the same spatial confusion when he hears a V2 for the first time:

> It was Friday evening, last September, just off work, heading for the Bond Street Underground station [...] suddenly in the sky, miles behind his back and up the river *memento-mori* a sharp crack and heavy explosion, rolling right behind, almost like a clap of thunder. But not quite. Seconds later, this time, from in front of him, it happened again: loud and clear, all over the city. Bracketed. Not a buzzbomb, not that Luftwaffe. 'Not thunder either' he puzzled out loud.[70]

The listener on the ground is 'bracketed' by the V2 – that is, surrounded by a noise 'all over the city'. This is a sound too large, too strange and too perplexing to be easily processed. Its intimations of something unearthly were unsettling to the imagination while its disruption of the normal sequence of incoming sound-impact sound-reverberation that characterised the Blitz years posed a challenge to the assumptions involved in cognitive process. Added to this was the impossibility of establishing a fixed spatial relation to the V2 either visually because it was effectively invisible, or aurally because its sonic effects baffled any reliable calculation of relative positions. To be bracketed suggests both to be to hemmed in by something and to be reduced to secondary importance. Bracketing is also what phenomenologists do in the act of description, excluding anything that falls outside their focus.

This aural confusion, and an echo of the double bang made by the V2, seems to re-surface in Henry Green's 1948 novel *Concluding*, which opens with the discovery that two schoolgirls have disappeared in the fog-bound grounds of the school. Mysterious and unsettling calls heard throughout the novel may be understood as the cries of searchers out looking for the two vanished girls. But Green's novel not only leaves the sounds unexplained, it offers varied and conflicting accounts of the source, number and location of these noises. The cries are first heard in the early morning by two characters, the woodcutter Adams and elderly scientist Rock, but are interpreted differently. Adams hears first a call and its echo, then what he describes as two calls with no echo. Rock's belief is that a call only echoes when it's uttered by

someone facing the school building, which throws back the sound, while Adams maintains that it is the trees which cause the echo.[71] Shortly afterwards, the sound is different again: 'Then the cry came a third time, much clearer, so that even Mr Rock heard, and the double echo. "Mar-ee," a girl's voice shrilled, then a moment later the house volleyed back "Ma-ree, ma-ree," but in so far deeper a note that it might have been a man calling.'[72] At the end of the novel, in the darkness of evening, Rock again hears the cries three times, on this occasion in company with his grand-daughter. But the composition of the sounds, and their location, are more mysterious than ever:

> Upon which the cry came a second time. "Mar...eee." The house received this, drove it forth louder, as before, and twice.
>
> "Could someone be calling from the Institute?" he asked in his deafness.
>
> When she paid no heed, he sharply demanded, "Well, is it?"
>
> "Oh I don't know, you know," she answered in a preoccupied low voice. "I expect that's only some of their girls out amongst the tree trunks."
>
> "But it came from behind," he objected.
>
> "The echo did," she replied.[73]

The mysterious noises, like those from the V2 as heard in war-time London, are spatially disorienting because it is impossible to fix one's position in relation to the sound. By the end of *Concluding*, neither Mary's disappearance nor the source and position of the strange sounds associated with it, have been explained. I will further examine these sounds from *Concluding* in chapter three to understand in more detail their significance for Green's spatial vision. It is already clear however that the psychological impact of the V2 is another example of how the events of the Second World War confused and complicated literary representations of space.

Sound is intrinsically more likely than other senses to confuse us about the nature and content of our spatial experience. In a 2009 essay 'Sounds and Space', Matthew Nudds explains aural perception by breaking the process of hearing into three cognitive stages. These are: first,

sensory detection as the ears pick up disturbance in the air; second, the grouping of 'frequency components' that appear to come from the same source and, third, the assigning of a group of a components to a sound source - the recognition of certain sounds.[74] A problem is that spatial properties only appear to play a very weak role in the grouping of frequency components. For example, music played from two stereo speakers will appear to come from a point between them; the sound is not located at its source. Nudds says this phenomenon suggests that 'sounds do not have any intrinsic spatial signicance and do not have any spatial structure'.[75] Therefore any spatial properties of sound are assigned at the third stage – that of subjective recognition: 'The initial interpretation of the location of a sound source will therefore be in a head – or body-centred frame of reference – one that represents the location of the source of a sound relative to the perceiver's head or body.'[76] The impossibility of identifying a relation between the source of a sound and the hearer's body – as was so often the case with V2s – therefore undermines the prospects of establishing a spatial continuum. In such a case, sound comes from anywhere, not somewhere. This is different from the spatial perception established in vision, it can be argued, because vision perceives not only objects but the spaces between them; we visually establish the gaps separating things as well as the things themselves. This particularity is not the case with either touch or hearing where 'the space that separates the experienced location is not itself an object of the experience. In neither case are we aware of the region of space that separates these places.'[77] On this account, sound tells us nothing about the nature, or even the existence, of space.

And yet, Nudds suggests:

> There is a sense in which our auditory or tactile experiences do provide us with an awareness of space. Although we only touch the rim of a glass at five points, we are aware of the rim as circular and so as occupying the space in between the points we touch; although we hear the location of two objects relative to one another, we are aware of them as separated in space and so aware of the space in between where we hear them to be.[78]

In other words, even if we cannot fix or locate sounds in a spatial continuum, we can be aware of the fact of their dispersal and therefore the implication of the space that lies between them. Just as five fingers touching the rim of a glass allow a subject to infer the glass's circularity, so hearing the double bang and screaming of a V2 allowed witnesses to infer a spatial continuum in which it operated, even though they could not see, anticipate, locate or (initially at least) understand the weapon. The space that was sensed as a result of this cognitive process was less determinate than would have been the case from the visual tracking of a sub-sonic weapon because visual perception includes not just the registration of the shape, location and extension of objects but also something of the nature of the space surrounding them, whether it is empty or occupied. As Nudds put it: 'Visual experience is an experience of space as well as objects in space.'[79] There is therefore a hierarchy of sensory information about space. Below visual is tactile sense which can convey the circularity of the glass's rim but has nothing to say about what lies in the space beyond. Sound, though it can suggest patches of space between noises, cannot even suggest whether they are empty or occupied and is the least determinate of the three senses:

> Auditory experience does not tell us anything about regions of space other than those where we experience sound sources to be. If we experience the source of a sound to be over on our right and another source to be over on our left, then we are aware of their being separated by a region of space and our experience represents the spatial relation between them. But our experience does not tell anything about that space: in particular it does not tell us whether there is anything in the places in between the places we hear the sources to be. It does not represent those locations as either occupied or empty.[80]

It should be noted that it is not necessary to accurately locate the sources of sound in order to sense the space between them. An intimation of space, albeit faint, comes from the perception of discrete sound sources, even if that perception were to be mistaken or illusory. So, for example, Henry Green uses the perplexing echoes in *Concluding* to suggest the novel's spaces, but this spatial intuition is necessarily tentative; an implication of space rather than a

determination. The literary use of sound therefore tends to describe spaces which are more vaguely perceived.

The implied spaces of the Second World War

This notion of *implied space* is crucial to an understanding of how literature began to process the spatial differently as a result of the Second World War. It helps to explains how, with the lights dimmed by war and the visual sense limited, a less precisely-grasped and more indeterminate sense of space began to manifest itself in fiction during the 1940s. The wartime civilian environment was one in which many normal visual sources were restricted, for example by blackout; restrictions on travel; the deliberate removal of signposts; and a prohibition on making maps. While habitual sources of visual orientation were limited, other new sights made familiar landscapes strange, such as searchlights crossing the sky, giant barrage balloons floating above the rooftops and demolished buildings. In this context, where vision was both limited and skewed from its norms, information supplied by other senses could assume a greater importance and have a more powerful effect.

For example, in James Hanley's Blitz novel *No Direction* for the occupants of a house in London blacked out by air raids, spaces are sensed not through vision but though tactile and aural means. Touch, including feelings of pressure, imply spaces that cannot be seen. As Hanley writes: 'Slowly, unsurely, getting the feel of this sea, feet apprehending voids, where no voids were. She put her hands to her hat, she wondered if it was straight…darkness obliterated shape but she had the feel of it.'[81] Spatial properties of distance, depth and dimension are intimated in new and strange ways so that even in a small bomb shelter a character can feel 'lost in a vastness, even a darkness eight feet by nine could give a feeling of endlessness, of nothing but height, depths.'[82] The deprivation of vision allows different, and looser, ways of implying space. Similarly In Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, as we saw in chapter one, the

weighty and airy become mixed in puzzling combinations under cover of darkness: 'He had felt all round him heights weighed down upon by night, mysterious declivities, the breath through the unmoving air of moving water.'[83] When senses rely on sound, the grasp on space is loosened still further. In Hanley's novel, a sound from the river disrupts the surety of touch which a character has been using to navigate the darkness: 'beginning to grope, as though she were a stranger here, as though this sea of darkness were wilderness, the feel, the sure touch of it going. A sound could do all this.'[84]

In war-time fiction, space was particularly likely to be implied by sonic sources. In this excerpt from 'The Prisoners', a short story by Alun Lewis published in the 1942 collection *The Last Inspection*, the sounds, pressures and vibrations of an air raid appear to mix the bodies of a group of soldiers with the night air:

> Later, five or ten minutes, and the first distant tremor touched their ears. Then slowly, beautifully, the air began throbbing, growing wider and deeper, a vibrant dynamic throb that touched their veins and bodies where they lay in their scruffy blankets, touched them like a drop of brandy, sensitising and liberating their imprisoned bodies so that they were part of the throbbing air, the pulsing night, the feeling slender searchlights, the vast dangerous purposes and counter-purposes of the war.[85]

In Lewis's fictional world, what begins at the soldiers' ears has the effect of dispersing them in space, illustrating how the war's sound and vibrations could drive a new contemplation of the spatial in literature from 1940 onwards by linking the aural cues of air raids to a projection of the hearer's body in space. The peculiar and powerful aural effects of the V2 intensified this tendency: as in the example of the strange echoes from *Concluding*, sounds confuse and disrupt narrative explanation and present a dimmer spatial world. Literature shaped by the war bears out Nudds' proposition of a hierarchy of the senses ranked by their ability to present spatial information. Vision is replaced by touch and touch by sound, with each becoming less determinate than the last. The result is an experience of space which grows ever more implicit and less determinate as its forms appear more varied.

It has been claimed that the greater awareness of sound and concomitant reduction in attention to vision in war-time literature represents a faltering in modernist desire for visual clarity. Rex Ferguson claims that modernist writers felt driven to capture the visual excitement of the metropolis but that this aim became problematic when they attempted to articulate the war-time blackout and the primarily aural experience of being bombed. Ferguson argues:

> The fact that reality was there to be *seen* before being touched or smelled reveals the visual dominance of the modernist aesthetic. [...] The modern city was primarily visible, just as the modernist writer's primary objective was to make his reader *see*. But if black-out was a mode of being that reduced the individual's ability to see, then did it also reduce the writer's ability to represent a *vision*? Certainly, literary representation is faced with a problem when asked to depict a predominantly aural experience.[86]

In support of his argument, Ferguson draws on Raymond Chapman's work *The Treatment of Sounds in Language and Literature* to further suggest that writing about sound is inherently problematic. Chapman concedes that the resources of language allow writers to describe most sounds with 'fair linguistic accuracy,'[87] but he draws a distinction between description and *depiction*, which is understood as the real goal of literature. As Ferguson puts it: 'Literature wants to make its reader see, even when what is being depicted is a noise rather than a sight.'[88] War-time writing then runs into a problem inherent in the very nature of literature, that a drift towards the aural entails a form of collapse into non-specificity. For Chapman, the problem is unavoidable: 'The difficulties which a writer encounters in representing auditory experience are proportionate to his desire to move from approximation to precision.'[89] Even if this is true, it does not diminish the significance of the growing attention that literature gives to the spatial during the 1940s. Rather, as the representation of spatial experience becomes more problematic, the issue of space becomes a more urgent preoccupation *because of*, and not in spite of, writers' increased difficulty in capturing it. To borrow Chapman's terms, if aural or tactile *description* make the real business of writing - *depiction* - more difficult, that only heightens our interest in why and how writers moved in this direction.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty suggests that rather than one unified space which is composed for us by the combination of our senses, it is logical to think of different versions of space opened by an individual sense. He offers as example tactile space, visual space and acoustic space, each of which offers its own circumscribed spatial world. Each is an approach to the same spatial world, but is its own particular variety of spatial experience:

> Sensation [is] one of our surfaces of contact with being, a structure of consciousness, and in place of one single space…we have…a particular manner of being in space and, in a sense, of making space. It is neither contradictory nor impossible that each sense should constitute a small world within the larger one.[90]

A particular set of sensory experience, such as a strange pattern of sounds or an unfamiliar apparition, can therefore suggest its own novel and self-sufficient space. The particular sensory conditions of war-time Britain and the oddities they produced seem to have made literary presentations of the spatial stranger and more varied than they would have been in less disturbed times. The sensory strangeness of the V2 for its witnesses then was an extreme, but not unique, example of the war's tendency to evoke new spaces in their imagination.

Towards hyperspace

The V2 suggested more indeterminate spaces as the result of its strange sensory effects then, but it also renewed conceptual challenges to familiar notions of Euclidean space. The rocket's apparent power to materialise anywhere in an instant seemed to destabilise existing spatial categories such as linearity, adjacence and distance as well as the temporalities of duration. In its challenge to these habitual ways of thinking about space, the V2 recalled the idea of hyperspace which had first been theorised in the nineteenth century by mathematicians including Rieman as part of their explosion of Euclidean geometry.[91] The concept of

hyperspace came to involve the idea of parallel dimensions touching all points of our universe and so providing an infinite number of portals into this world while remaining wholly invisible and inacessible from it. We have already seen intimations of this strange realm in several accounts of the V2 as an unearthly or supernatural entity, from the witness quoted above who described it as 'a threatening horror from outer space, abstract, unreal', to Orwell's suggestion of an 'instinct' among the proles allowing them to detect imminent attack.

The vision of the V2 as a weapon from another world which had begun to suggest itself to Londoners in the 1940s is developed in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Pynchon's work also suggests the rocket at times as a thing of mythic or quasi-religious significance:

> ...a host of other souls feeling themselves, even now, Rocketlike, driving out towards the stone-blue lights of the Vacuum under a Control they cannot quite name...the illumination out here is surprisingly mild, mild as heavenly robes, a feeling of population and invisible force, fragments of 'voices', glimpses *into another order of being*...[92]

Pynchon's language here carries clear overtones of a traditional description of a Christian afterlife and to that extent echoes the impulse of Londoners in the 1940s to see a god-like presence behind the weapon. Yet the italicised phrase '*another order of being*' could be read not just as pure religious terminology but also as that of ontological philosophy or theoretical physics. In Pynchon's heteroglossic novel, this kind of multiple interpretation is always invited. The Christian presentation of the rocket is one variant; at other times the V2 is presented as a kind of Platonic ideal, an entity whose perfect integrity and apartness sets it in conceptual and philosophic counterpoint with the contingency of objects and events seen by the characters at ground-level:

> Moving now towards the kind of light where at last the apple is apple-coloured. The knife cuts through the apple like a knife cutting an apple. Everything is where it is, no clearer than usual, but certainly more present.[93]

Here the rocket leads to a realm where objects are held in self-identical stasis, where an apple appears perfectly apple-like as in its Platonic ideal form. Like the Christian afterlife, like the infinite spaces dream of by rocket engineers in the 1920s and 1930s, this is a form of the sublime with which the rocket is repeatedly associated and which can be religious, philosophic or techno-theoretical. Ultimately *Gravity's Rainbow* presents the rocket as purely spatial, discovering an infinity that appears to correspond with the notion of a universe of endless hyperspace: 'The moving vehicle is frozen, in space, to become architecture, and timeless. It was never launched. It wil never fall.'[94] Whether religious, philosophical or physical in its references, Pynchon's text presents the V2 as generative of an alternate world, a space which is not our space. We are reminded of Bowen's calico-wrapped world after the V1 where, 'sealed up, in a tense white parcel', an entirely separate space is generated by the new weapon. Indeed, as Collignon shows, whiteness is itself an absolute in *Gravity's Rainbow*, a toxic sublimity towards which the rocket gradually moves over the novel's course. The climactic firing of rocket 00000 is also the achievement of what Pynchon calls 'the pure light of the zero,'[95] a whiteness that bleaches out all colour and is both both complete dark and absolute light (reminiscent of a light 'at once dull and dazzling' as Bowen, quoted above, saw it). As Collignon puts it: 'Whiteness haunts the book, forming its end point.'[96] The entropic regression of *Gravity's Rainbow* associates perfect blankness with the rocket's ultimate stasis.

Pynchon's vision of a missile half-glimpsed and suspended in endless space bears comparison with an odd moment in the closing moments of Green's *Concluding* where, in the darkness, Mr Rock throws away a slipper that has been tied around the neck of his pig as a schoolgirl prank:

> He hurled the shoe away. Once it was no longer in moonlight it disappeared, the thing might have flown. He did not, of course, hear it fall.[97]

This strange, disappearing projectile appears to take flight in the darkness, just as it vanishes from vision and hearing. There are two possible reasons why Mr Rock might not hear it fall to

earth; one is his partial deafness which is referred to throughout the novel. The second, more fantastic explanation, would be that the slipper never does fall but flies instead, like Pynchon's rocket, into a permanent hyperspace. The authorial, emphatic phrase 'of course', could support either interpretation. It should also be noted that this curious passage occurs just after Rock and his daughter hear the echoing cries of "Mar-ee" for the final time in the novel and so connects the slipper incident with the baffling sounds which seem to repeat the sonic pattern of the V2. This episode also coincides with Mr Rock's goose taking flight for the only time in its life, an event which leaves the old man 'fear[ing] a collision.'[98] These closing sections of the novel are characterised by Green's typical obliquity but it does not seem fanciful to suggest that the presence of the V2 continues to lurk in these pages. After 1944, both documentary and fiction seem to carry the seed of a mysterious and unsettling idea: our space is not the space of the rocket.

Lightning speed, endless war

Even those who didn't share this vision of a hyperspatial continuum could have their assumptions about the nature of space tested by the V2. For the theorist Paul Virilio, the lightning-quick manifestation of a supersonic weapon represents the ultimate triumph of the war-maker over what he terms 'military space.' Virilio's argument is that the achievement of extreme speed, of instant war, means the conquering of distance and therefore the effective abolition of familiar martial spatial categories such as battlefield, front, battlelines or zones of occupation. This spatial victory is achieved by technological development: 'If the reduction of obstacles and distance has always been the central problem of military space, we have reached today the rupture point: the distinction between vehicle and projectile has ceased.'[99] Unlike bombs dropped from a plane or shells fired from a field-gun, V-weapons were, to adopt Virilio's formula, both the weapon and its delivery system, and therefore constituted not just a

milestone in military technology, but a departure from existing ways of thinking about spatial forms. They helped to prompt the imagination towards the discovery of 'an original continuum that has only a distant link to geographical reality,'[100] another formulation that hints at the notion of hyperspace. It should be acknowledged that Virilio does not explicity refer to V-weapons (or any other weapon) as he develops this argument in *Bunker Archaeology*, a work inspired by the remnants of World War II German defensive constructions along the French coast. But an emphasis on the signficance of ballistics and rocketry is found throughout his work, as are the events of the Second World War as an illustration of his theory of a new military space and power which renders old fortifications redundant.[101] In this era, Virilio argues, the space of the battlefield, the besieged city, the neutral zone, the occupied territory is simply abolished by the rule of speed, which he calls 'dromocracy'. The front line is no longer defined by national borders, fortifications or coastline. Instead it ranges across space as a 'war isobar.'[102] In one sense, the implications of this discovery of extreme speed are political and military as the possible strategic meaning of cities or lands begin to drain away. The example Virilio gives is from World War II:

> For the dromocrat of total war, the once-so-coveted city is already no longer in the city. Warsaw, archaically declared an 'open city' is destroyed in September by air raids.[103]

For the soldier, this new order of space revolutionises the practice of war because retreat or flight become useless: his only hope is to enter into the process of technological speed, to engage in the acceleration:

> Salvation is no longer in flight; safety is in 'running towards your Death,' in 'killing your Death'. Safety is in assault simply because the new ballistic vehicles make flight useless; they go faster and farther than the soldier, they catch up with him an pass him. The man on the battlefield has no safety, it seems, other than in a suicidal entrance into the very trajectory of the speed of the engines.[104]

However 'dromocracy' also has powerful effects for civilians not directly involved in the processes of war because it exerts powerful pressures on their conceptual grasp of space. Not only does it seem to overthrow spatial ideas such as the notion of a place of safety or the distance between incoming missile and intended victim (with its concomitant possibility of escape), Virilio's thesis is that the stubbornly familiar framework of Euclidean geometry was undermined during the war. His wandering among the massive concrete fortifications left by the Nazis along the 'Alantic Wall' on France's coast led him to see them as archaic failed bulwarks against a new spatial world. Where the old spatial world was composed of smoothly continuous planes, adjacent and simple-to-demarcate terrains and predictable angular relations, Virilio argued that a new conceptual grasp of space was emerging which revealed it as composed of a 'carpet of trajectories.'[105] Increasingly, the world was seen not in Newtonian terms of fixed objects, gaps between them and a surrounding envelope of space, but in terms of forces of continuous movement whose very trajectories were revelatory of the nature of existence. On Virilio's account, the advent of high-speed weapons such as the supersonic rocket was a driver of a new spatial understanding.

A further challenge to habitual spatial thinking lay in the simultaneous possibility of space as empty *and* substantial which the rocket suggested. This idea is captured in Dornberger's boast of having 'invaded space' and 'used space as a bridge between two points on the earth'. Space, in the age of the V2, could be thought of as both vacuum and substance, abstract and concrete. The immense range of the V2, at least 170 miles, far exceeded anything that even the longest-range artillery could achieve. This meant that large tracts of Southern and Eastern England were in range of rockets fired from launch sites built in occupied Holland and France. Enemy planes had been attacking Britain since 1939 but now there was a direct connection, the intimation of a physical linkage, a cause and effect, between what happened on the ground in mainland Europe and on the ground in England. Connecting the two places was the arc of the rocket, a trajectory which, as we have seen, was mysterious through a combination

of supersonic flight and initial official secrecy about the weapon but which could be inferred

and calculated once the principles of the V2 were understood. This arc then had a semi-

physical reality which was occasionally visually reinforced for English witnesses who on clear

days could sometimes see the vapour trails of V2s launching more than 100 miles away across

the North Sea. Dornberger's reference to space as a bridge reinforces this image of the rocket,

like a pair of compasses, joining two distant points. In one sense the intervening arc has the

physical reality of a bridge, but the image also contains the abstraction of space. Because the

rockets touched the edge of outer space at the zenith of their arc, the conjunction of two

points on the ground could also be understood as involving the V2's passage through another

dimension, a disappearance and re-appearance in our world and therefore a non-linear

progress from point A to point B.

The tendendency of 1940s fiction to depict space and solid material as mutually

interpenetrative, for example in the wartime and post-war writing of Elizabeth Bowen as we

saw in chapter one, is echoed by the possibility of both space and substance that exists in the

V2's trajectory. A passage from Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* seems to echo Virilio

in suggesting that space can yield up new sightings of movements or sequences, that latent

energies within space may force themselves on our notice:

> On the one hand…space contains opacities, bodies and objects, centres of efferent
> actions and effervescent energies, hidden – even impenetrable – places, areas of
> viscosity, and black holes. On the other, it offers sequences sets of objects,
> concatenations of bodies – so much so, in fact, that anyone can at any time discover
> new ones, forever slipping from the non-visible realm into the visible, from opacity into
> transparency.[106]

To half-glimpse the arc of the rocket, whether by seeing its vapour trail, using the imagination

to conceive of its physics or by absorbing the mythic rhetoric of politicians and scientists, was

to perform a balancing act between the abstract and concrete, between reality and

supposition. In this sense the trajectory of the rocket could be thought of as a latent potential,

a possibility of the laws of phyics which hovered between the opacity of theory and the clarity of existence. In Lefebvre's terms, the V2 slipped partially but not completely into the visual realm as it described its arc; an arc that was, as Dornberger phrased it, both space and bridge.

To see the rocket as a mysterious yet natural phenomenon encouraged a tendency to remove human agency from calculations altogether. This was a trend observed by George Orwell who noted the growing likelihood that people would come to think of war as as an inevitable but non-rational event. Writing in *Tribune* in December 1944 when the official ban on identifying V2s had just been lifted, Orwell used terms that anticipated his imagining of the endless global wars raging between Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

> Personally I am no lover of the V2, especially at this moment when the house still seems to be rocking from a recent explosion, but what depresses me about these things is the way they set people talking about the next war. Every time one goes off I hear gloomy references to "next time" and the reflection "I suppose they'll be able to shoot them across the Atlantic by that time." But if you ask who will be fighting when this universally expected war breaks out, you get no clear answer. It is just war in the abstract – the notion that human beings could ever behave sanely having apparently faded out of many people's memories.[107]

As well as expanding the probable scope of the rockets across thousands of miles of non-visible space, Orwell's vision of 'war in the abstract' has parallels with Virilio's suggestion of conflict that is driven by technological development and a generalised system of political/military control rather than by individual human agency. Another contemporary analyst, in an article with the ominous sub-title 'This Time and Next', wrote:

> The idea of discharging destructive rockets to a distant portion of the world by merely pressing a button may still sound in some ears fantastic. But it is in the realm of fact. Is it too much to hope that there can be one law and one controlling authority in a world any part of which can be laid waste by the pressure of a single finger?[108]

The V2 had brought with it the fear of endless, global, impersonal war.

The last V2 was fired at London in March 1945 just before launch sites were overrun by Allied troops.[109] The weapon's relatively short life in the context of the war as a whole was indeed matched by its limited place in official narratives of the conflict, partly because it came too late to have any decisive effect on the outcome, partly because of the official secrecy which shrouded so much of its deployment and partly because more momentous events, from the D-Day landings to the Allied victory in Europe, neatly framed the period of its operation. But its story was just beginning; from the 1940s onward the rocket has undoubtedly left traces on culture and fiction of the post-war years and especially on the imagination and presentation of space. As Joseph Nechvatal puts it: 'Something in the spatial consciousness of society was altered following the war'[110] and, following Virilio, he sees the development of the V2 as crucial to this transformation. The presence of the V2 has often been sensed and presented in oblique ways, but it has exerted a significant destabilising psychic force because of the pressure it brought to bear on habitual assumptions about the way the world is arranged. In literature, disruption of this kind is as likely to fuel creativity as it is to render an artist impotent. Post-war writing wrestled with new descriptions of space because of the imaginative demands of a newly supersonic world shot through with half-glimpsed and unpredictable trajectories.

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[1] Walter Dornberger, *V2* (London: Scientific Book Club, 1952), p. 29

[2] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003)

[3] William Sansom, *Westminster in War* (London: Faber, 1947), p. 199

[4] Amy Bell, 'Landscapes of Fear', *The Journal of British Studies*, 48 (2009), 153-175 (p. 163)

[5] Henry Green, *Back* (London: Hogarth,1951), p. 31

[6] Norman Longmate, *Hitler's Rockets* (London: Hutchinson, 1985*),* p. 170

[7] Longmate, p. 374

[8] See for example, Frank H Winter, *Rockets into Space* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 55

[9] Watson Davis, 'V-2 Rocket Test', *Science News-Letter*, Vol 49 No 20 (18 May 1946), p. 307 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3922896> [accessed 6 June 2015]

[10] 'Successful V-2 Rocket has automatic pilot', *Science News-Letter*, Vol 51 No 5 (1 February 1947), p.68 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25172095> [accessed 6 June 2015]

[11] Tony Reichhardt, 'First Photo from Space', *Air and Space* (Washington: Smithsonian Magazine, 2006) <http://www.airspacemag.com/space/the-first-photo-from-space-13721411/?no-ist> [accessed 31 May 2015]

[12] Joshua Comyn, 'V2 to Bomarc: Reading Gravity's Rainbow in Context', *Orbit* Vol 2:2 http://doi.org/10.7766/orbit.v2.2.62 [accessed 4 July 2015]

[13] 'Enemy's New Device', *The Times,* 27 June 1944, p. 4

[14] 'Hitler on his rape of Poland', *The Times*, 20 September 1939, p. 8. See also, Longmate, p. 38, and p. 43

[15] Michael J Neufeld, 'Hitler, the V2 and the battle for priority', *The Journal of Military History*, 57 (1993) 511-538, (p. 538) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2943990> [accessed 6 June 2015]

[16] Martin Gilbert, *Second World War* (London: Fontana, 1990), p. 539

[17] Cyril Connolly, 'Letter from a Civilian', *Horizon*, 10 (1944), 150-153 (p. 152)

[18] *Westminster in War,* p. 189

[19] *Westminster in War*, p. 189

[20] Mervyn Peake, *The Rhyme of the Flying Bomb* (Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smythe, 1973), p. 31-32

[21] Peake, p. 42

[22] Peake, p. 41-42

[23] Sansom himself refers to a 'random, reasonless rocket' in the 1944 short story 'Fireman Flower'. William Sansom, 'Fireman Flower', in *Fireman Flower* (London: Hogarth, 1944, p.162

[24] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 328

[25] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Calico Windows', in Allan Hepburn (ed.), *People, Places, Things: Essays by Elizabeth Bowen* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 182-183

[26] Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: a biography* (New York, Knopf, 1978), p. 159

[27] *People, Places, Things*, p. 183

[28] *People, Places, Things*, p. 184

[29] *People, Places, Things*, p. 183

[30] Many of the themes of 'Calico Windows', and often the same language, are re-introduced by Bowen in the short story 'Happy Autumn Fields' published in November 1944. Elizabeth Bowen, 'Happy Autumn Fields', in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 676 and p. 683

[31] Longmate, p. 160

[32] Longmate, p. 382

[33] Report of War Crimes Investigation Team 6822, U. S. Army, reproduced by the Avalon Project (New Haven: Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale University, 2008) <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/2222-ps.asp> [accessed 31 May 2015]

[34] Longmate, p. 254. East Anglia, as well as London, was specifically targeted.

[35] Mass Observation, File Report 2207 (1945)

[36] Mass Observation, File Report 121F (1945)

[37] Mass Observation, File Report 121G (1945)

[38] Bell, p. 163

[39] Margery Allingham, *The Tiger in the Smoke*, (London: Hogarth, 1987), p. 37

[40] Longmate, p. 226

[41] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 53

[42] Longmate, p. 227

[43] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2000), p. 96-97

[44] Longmate, p. 168

[45] Dornberger, p. 28

[46] *Frau Im Mond*, Dir. Fritz Lang (Kino International, 1929) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MVga1D6rRQ> [accessed 26 May 2015]

[47] Dornberger, p. 137

[48] Dornberger, p. 137

[49] Dornberger, p. 73

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[51] Fabienne Collignon, *Rocket States* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 2

[52] Longmate, p. 377

[53] Mass Observation, File Report 121F (1945)

[54] Mass Observation, File Report 121F (1945)

[55] Martin Gilbert, *Second World War* (London: Fontana, 1990), p. 589

[56] George Beardmore, *Civilians at War* (London: John Murray, 1984), p. 179

[57] *Westminster in War*, p. 187

[58] *The Second Great War: a standard history,* ed. by John Hammerton, 9 vols, (London: Waverley, 1947), viii, p. 3439

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[61] *Diary for Timothy*, dir. Humphrey Jennings (Film First,1945)

[62] Vivienne Hall, diary 19-23 June, 1944 quoted in Bell, p. 164

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[64] Roy Fuller, *New and Collected Poems* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1985), p. 91

[65] Connor

[66] Longmate, p. 232-233

[67] *Westminster in War*, p. 197

[68] Beardmore, p. 183

[69] Beardmore, p. 187

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[72] *Concluding*, p. 10-11

[73] *Concluding*, p. 246

[74] Matthew Nudds, 'Sounds and Space', in *Sounds and Perception*, ed. by Matthew Nudds and Casey O'Callaghan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 73-79

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[76] Nudds, p. 83

[77] Nudds p. 84

[78] Nudds, p. 85

[79] Nudds, p. 87

[80] Nudds, p. 89

[81] James Hanley, *No Direction* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1946), p. 56-57

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[85] Alun Lewis, *Collected Stories*, ed. Cary Archard (Bridgend: Seren Books, 1991), p. 161-162

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[88] Ferguson, p. 105

[89] Chapman, p. 14

[90] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 257

[91] See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 132-133

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[93] Pynchon, p. 758

[94] Pynchon, p. 301

[95] Pynchon, p. 159

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[97] *Concluding*, p. 254

[98] *Concluding*, p250-252

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[100] *Bunker Archaeology,* p. 18

[101] For example, see: Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, trans. by Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986), p. 22-24

[102] *Speed and Politics,* p. 24

[103] *Speed and Politics*, p. 24

[104] *Speed and Politics*, p. 22

[105] *Bunker Archaeology*, p. 18

[106] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 183

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110 Joseph Nechvatal, 'La Beauté Tragique: Mapping the Militarization of Spatial Cultural Consciousness', in *Leonardo,* 34 (2001) 27-29 (p. 28) < http://www.jstor.org/stable/1576978 >[accessed 20 June, 2015]

CHAPTER THREE

Interwoven with Incredulity

The 1940s were a time of intense literary activity for Henry Green. In the 10 years leading up to the start of the Second World War he had published just two novels, *Living* (1929) and *Party Going* (1939), but in the decade that followed he produced four novels, several short stories and an autobiography.[1] The events of the war, and especially the time Green spent as a fireman, are crucial in explaining not only this burst of literary activity but also the new directions in which he took his writing. These new paths included a progression away from interiority in his presentation of human life. By the time of *Loving* (1945), Green had abandoned attempts to convey the thoughts of his characters in favour of purely external description. This change not only meant a turn away from one of literary modernism's most favoured devices, it also helped Green to pursue his growing interest in the problematics of space. His concentration on the physicality of characters - their positioning, movement and bodily behaviour – offered a method of examining the strange spatial relationships and manifestations which the war had thrust upon his notice. This literary investigation of space had parallels with the contemporary work of philosophers, especially Merleau-Ponty who saw physical action as a method of 'gearing' to the world, of finding one's spatial bearing within it. The anxiety about space seen in *Loving* and *Concluding* (1948*)* is in part a fictional response to this problem of orientation. Green was also concerned by issues of distance and perspective, considered in detail by Martin Heidegger, and with the socio-political control of space which was to be a major theme for Henri Lefebvre. Both *Loving* and *Concluding* also echo Merleau-Ponty's later thinking in which doubt of, and faith in, the perceptual world are inevitable responses to our partaking in its mysterious wholeness, what Merleau-Ponty calls a 'universal flesh'[2] in which the distinction between subject and object collapses completely. Differences in

spatial experience are not mere subjectivity but iterations of the same thing, variations of a world whose existence is not to be doubted even though we doubt each perceptual version of it. Like Merleau-Ponty, Green discovered faith in a primordial spatial world but presented experience of that world as 'interwoven with incredulity.'[3]

Green's increased literary output during the 1940s is partly attributable to the war in the obvious sense that all the novels, except *Concluding*, have a war-time setting and that his autobiography, *Pack My Bag* (1940) was written, according to Green himself, because he expected to be killed in the conflict.[4] The pressure of events offered new settings and scenarios to document. However it is also highly plausible to see the war's events as providing Green with a fresh imaginative impulse, fuelling his creativity and driving his writing in new directions. Critics have noticed the way the war changed not only how often he wrote and what he wrote about, but also altered his style and the ideas that seemed to preoccupy him. Bruce Bassoff notes that 'the war had an enormous and lasting effect on him'[5] and Laura Doan, in an essay which examines the post-war work of Green and the visual artist Francis Bacon, argues that both used the displacements of war as creative stimulus.[6] These critics see Green's work as transformed and enhanced by the experience of the Second World War so that the fiction he published throughout the 1940s is qualitatively different to the pre-war output. And Green himself noted the impetus the war brought to fiction, writing that: 'These times are an absolute gift to the writer. Everything is breaking up. A seed can lodge in any crack or fissure.'[7]

An obvious transformative experience was Green's time serving as a London fireman in the Auxiliary Fire Service. This job provides the setting for his 1943 novel *Caught* but also inspired him to begin a long piece of non-fiction to be called *London and Fire* which he worked on during the 1950s. The book was never finished and only an opening fragment was published, in *The London Magazine* in 1960.[8] But Green's plans for the work in his own papers reveal some of the particular dynamics of life in the fire service which stirred his literary imagination:

> It will be concerned almost entirely with the men and women of the three Fire Stations in which I served throughout the war. These people came from all classes and from many parts of Britain. Waiters, manservants, shop assistants, stock exchange clerks, petty thieves masquerading as building workers and professional London Fire Brigade men living cheek by jowl, sometimes in great danger, more often waiting in acute boredom and nearly all them more than thirty years of age − all this created a situation which led to every kind of human relationship, unlikely friendships, and obvious jealousies.[9]

In part this enthusiasm suggests a writer motivated by some now familiar war-time themes: of unaccustomed class mixing, of workers forced into new occupations and of amateurs taking on the roles of professionals. However the plan for the book also reveals Green's interest in the physicality of the 'situation.' Green is fascinated by the geographical displacement of the population which results in the 'cheek by jowl' living arrangements and the ways in which these physical arrangements, as much as the fact of new occupations, produces the new abundance of 'human relationship, unlikely friendships, and obvious jealousies.' Green's account of his first months in the fire service is built around a description of a fire station's architecture and layout: its 'Gothic…design' with 'pinnacles towards the roof' and 'a tower rising high above all', and its yard and training platforms, its sliding doors and brass poles.[10] His interest here is less in aesthetic impressions and more in functional significance: each part of the station helps explain the firefighter's role and duties. This focus on the physical arrangements of the station also extends to the positions of its staff, with details given of various locations: the superintendent's quarters on the fourth floor; the ground floor with the fire engines; the watchroom attendant's glass-box office and the regular firefighters' first floor mess room.[11] Green's introduction to the business of fire-fighting then is to lay out the station for us, and the positions of people within it, as explanatory of the roles they must perform and the relationships that ensue. So having learned that it is a 'minor crime' for a firefighter to react too slowly when the bells 'go down', we're shown how action converges from these different locations:

> It was the [watchroom attendant] who put the station bells down. And it was in response to these that the firemen doing out the Super's flat up on the fourth had to hurry down the poles to be last on whatever he was 'riding' before with a roar and a crash of gears they were out and off.[12]

Green's exposition of command, duties and responsibilities, just some types of the 'human relationship' in a fire station setting which he cited as the motive for the book, springs from the physical description of the station rather than one of the other narrative modes, such as dialogue or a more obtrusive form of authorial recall, which he might have selected.

The interest the writing takes in physicality is further displayed by its attention to the arrangement of human figures, to their posture, bearing, carriage and demeanour, and which highlights a corresponding lack of weight given to speech or thought. This emphasis on physicality is overt in the text; overriding the dialogue of the firefighters described by Green. Speech is presented in opposition to action and physical bearing, almost as though conversation and physicality are mutually exclusive. The best example comes with the figure of Fireman Brent, introduced, presumably satirically, as: 'Handsome, speechless, incomparably brave.'[13] A description of Brent tying knots encapsulates perfectly Green's literary technique of making physical demeanour work as explanation and revelation:

> A line is a length of rope in these circles, and knots are taught in great variety, they date back to the days of sail. Because Brent was never ready with his tongue he was given 'Knots and lines' to teach. For a whole hour I have known him silently demonstrate the elegant knot with which, if well drilled, one should shorten any line that has slack in it. Over and over again he got it wrong, undid the knot without a word, only to start once more, expressionless, mute, enormously dignified. Imperturbable, beautiful as Apollo.

A textual apparition of almost pure physicality, Brent's aversion to speech is repeatedly emphasised. Other regular firefighters are similarly presented through location and action; speech is effaced:

> They came out of their mess room once on a "smell of smoke". I had never seem them together before. Not so much huge as squat and broad with spade-like faces,

> they ran wordless up and down stairs dashing off sideways to sniff like steam engines at empty fireplaces. False alarm.[14]

Not only are these men plainly described as 'wordless' amid their rushing and dashing, the two-word final sentence further implies their laconic nature. It does not appear that the aristocratic Green is patronising these working-class men by drawing attention to their speechlessness; his writing is full of admiration for the bravery and assurance of their physical action. More significantly, the writing presents physicality as explanation and revelation of the nature of fire-station life, the very substance from which character and relationships will be distilled. As such, when Green himself is glimpsed in postures of physical action, it subtly signals his assimilation into the service. Over a few pages he moves from observer (of Brent and others) to an actor in the same milieu, and is seen 'running like a hare on the ground floor, I was only just on the ladders as the LFB came swooping down their poles…dead exhausted, I almost fell off the pump when we got…back home…like all who have just been in action, I just got my head down and slept for fifteen hours.'[15] If not an equal of the regular firemen by the end of this introductory fragment, Green is at least inhabiting the same textual world where physical action conveys roles and relationships more effectively than speech or reflection. This piece, then, holds a triple significance in understanding the development of Green's writing after the outbreak of war: taking physical qualities as the key to what we might know, or infer, about other fictional characters (and by extension, about other people more generally); showing how Green moved to erase almost all suggestions of interiority from his depiction of people; and, underlining his growing unease with conspicuous authorial intrusion in his writing.[16]

This contrast between pre-war and post-war Green can be seen in a comparison of the two following passages, both of which describe moments of confrontation or negotiation between an employer and employee. The first is from *Living* (1929) and the second from *Loving* (1945):

That day Mr Dupret sat alone with Bridges in his office. He was very calm, he hated all of them now in a bored way.

'Mr Bridges,' said he 'we've got to have what the French call a little explanation.'

The Froggies, Mr Bridges said in mind, nerves on edge, the Froggies what have they got to do with it damn 'em.

'The point is this, I'm head of the business now and everything must go through me. You see it's only fair, all the money that's put into it is mine.'

'Of course it's yours,' said Mr Bridges 'and…'

'No, let me do the talking. The point is that my father with all the whole lot of interests he had hadn't the time to go into everything. Well I'm not on any boards, this is practically the only concern I'm in, and I want you and Walters to get out of the habit of doing things above my head and without my knowing it.'

'What d'you mean? I…'

I mean this, that you and Walters for better or worse, and quite naturally, pretty well ran this business on your own before my father died. But it's different now, I want to take a hand in it.'

'If that's all you know about your father my lad…'

'God damn it Bridges will you listen to what I say? The point is this, from now on I'm going to run the whole show myself, or rather it's going to be run through me. Take the question of the men being put on short time. I didn't hear a word about it. Well in future I am going to hear. I'm not saying that it shouldn't have been done but it's only fair I should be told.'

'I think we'd better talk another time. I can see you're in a temper now…'

'No we're going to talk now. The point is this, when I say we're going to talk we're going to talk, from now on.'

'Well you ain't going to make me talk,' Mr Bridges said and walked out.[17]

The second passage, from *Loving*, is as follows:

In the morning room two days later Raunce stood before Mrs Tennant and showed part of his back to Violet her daughter-in-law.

'Might I speak to you for a moment Madam?'

'Yes Arthur, what is it?'

'I'm sure I would not want to cause any inconvenience but I desire to give in my notice.'

She could not see Violet because he was in the way. So she glared at the last button but one of his waistcoat, on a level with her daughter-in-law's head behind him. He had been standing with arms loose at his sides and now a hand came uncertainly to find if he was done up and having found dropped back.

'What Arthur?' she asked. She seemed exasperated. 'Just when I'm like this when this has happened to Eldon?'

'The place won't be the same without him Madam.'

'Surely that's not a reason. Well never mind. I daresay not but I simply can't run to another butler.'

'No Madam.'

'Things are not what they used to be you know. It's the war. And then there's taxation and everything. You must understand that.'

'I'm sure I have always tried to give every satisfaction Madam,' he replied.

At this she picked up a newspaper. She put it down again. She got to her feet. She walked over to one of six tall french windows with gothic arches. 'Violet,' she said, 'I

can't imagine what Michael thinks he is about with the grass court darling. Even from where I am I can see plantains like the tops of palm trees.'
Her daughter-in-law's silence seemed to imply that all effort was to butt one's head against wire netting. Charley stood firm. Mrs T, turned. With her back to the light he could not see her mouth and nose.
'Very well then,' she announced, 'I suppose we shall have to call you Raunce.'
'Thank you Madam.'[18]

In 1929, Green permitted his writing to flicker between speech and thought, presenting not only dialogue but a character's internal commentary ('Mr Bridges said in mind') and assertions about his or her state of mind ('nerves on edge', 'he was very calm, he hated all of them now'). The text claims interior and exterior human life as, at times, equally accessible. Furthermore, the narrative impetus of the passage from *Living* derives from this interplay between thought and speech. The dialogue, with Dupret's long over-assertive sentences and his repeated interruption of Bridges, is the enactment of the two men's incompatible states of mind. The text tells us what they think, then shows us how verbal expression of those thoughts leads to an almost inevitable conclusion. Besides the scant information that they first 'sat alone' and that Bridges 'walked out' at the end, there is no locative or physical detail in this excerpt. By contrast, there is almost no 'telling' in the passage from 1945, only 'showing'. Direct allusions to the interior life of characters have been erased from the writing and, correspondingly, there is a striking attention to their physical deployment, stance, posture, demeanour and movement. This attention is applied to both individuals, as with Mrs Tennant's fiddling with a newspaper and walking to the window, and to their collective arrangement, such as the significance of Raunce standing before Mrs Tennant but with his back to Violet. Here the narrative outcome of the scene - Raunce forcing himself into the position of butler - is confirmed in speech ('"Very well then," she announced') but it is the conclusion of a process of negotiation and deliberation which has been rendered in almost purely physical terms. Raunce 'stood before' Mrs Tennant to present his case, isolated her by blocking her view of her Violet, and he succeeds because he 'stood firm' when she tried to change the subject, a prevarication

signalled physically by her toying with the newspaper and walking to the window. While these physical dynamics are overwhelmingly the signs of narrative progression, suggestions of interior life do not of course vanish entirely from the text. Mrs Tennant 'seemed exasperated', she 'glared' at the button on Raunce's waistcoat. Her distracted movement about the room is inferred as her buying the time to think; all these things suggest mental process even if they do not make those machinations explicit. However, this suggestion is always made from a visual and exterior perspective, from the viewpoint of an observer imputing mental states to a physical act or demeanour. Even when a thought is implied, as with the significance of Violet's silence on the subject of the tennis court, it is tied to a physical action, as, for instance, the futile butting of one's head against netting. The overall effect is suggestive of behaviourism, the psychological school which claims that the proper study of the psychologist is not of the mind but of behaviour. In its most extreme form, behaviourism views all animals as sealed boxes whose interior mechanisms are unknowable so that only the stimuli that act on them and the behaviour they exhibit in response can be meaningfully observed. [19] Green's writing in *Loving* approaches a literary version of this method, with its suggestion of human actors observed in a way that strips away, as unreliable evidence, their implied thoughts. In this excerpt, for instance, Mrs Tennant appears literally effaced with her mouth and nose appearing to vanish in the light.

Indeed, speech itself should be seen as a form of gesture rather than the expression of a prior thought according to Merleau-Ponty's analysis in *Phenomenology of Perception*. We should reject the idea that thoughts are 'clothed' in speech and recognise that thought and speech are mutually implicated. Otherwise, to believe that thought precedes speech we must assume that we first need to visualise a word internally before proceeding to its utterance, that a two-stage process is essential. In which case, why would it be easier to instantly speak a word than to first summon it visually? In fact, Merleau-Ponty argues, words are part of my linguistic world which I can reach for through a bodily process that equips me to locate and utter them,

to bring them forth in acoustic form. Words are not simply the apparition of thought but involve their own linguistic concept which can make them a transferable currency from one person to another, achieving a linguistic facticity. So, Merleau-Ponty reminds us, some people can read a piece of text without understanding it but yet endow it with appropriate expression. 'This is because the spoken or written words carry a top coating of meaning which sticks to them and which present the thought as a style, an affective value, a piece of existential mimicry, rather than as a conceptual statement.'[20] Speech then is a type of performance which draws not on internal truths, but on a syntax and reference which are jointly discovered in the world; speech articulates a chain of meanings which can be brought forth from the stock of previous linguistic performances:

> The spoken word is a genuine gesture, and it contains its meaning in the same way as the gesture contains its. This is what makes communication possible. In order that I may understand the words of another person it is clear that his syntax and vocabulary must be 'already known' to me. But...what I communicate with primarily is not 'representations' or thought, but a speaking subject, with a certain style of being and with the 'world' which he directs his aim.[21]

Speech then is another form of bodily orientation to the world, like adopting a certain posture or making an expressive gesture. What we tend to call thought is an unperformed internal version of language, spoken to ourselves but not brought forth. Our experience need not prompt speech or any other form of expression, but where it does the body becomes the utterance of that expression; speech does not emanate from a detached Cartesian subject. The equivalence thus drawn between speaking and acting suggests an even tighter rationale for a literary mode of exteriority; dialogue and physical description are naturally linked, and the demonstration of this connection is one of the effects that Green achieves in the passage from *Loving* quoted above.

Green's abandonment of interiority was a gradual process. We have seen how *Living* (1929) recounts what Mr Bridges 'said in mind'; *Party Going* (1939) similarly exhibits mental process:

> At first all these two nannies noticed was that Miss Fellowes had gone up to the counter and they did not doubt but what she was ordering tea. They were not surprised when she was not served as they themselves had been kept waiting. But as they watched her they soon saw that thin-lipped flush which, with their experience, told them that for Miss Fellowes all this was getting past all bearing.

The passage continues with repeated updates on how the nannies react to what they are watching ('they knew what it meant...what shocked them most...they were sorry to see.')[22] While the direct access to interior monologue of *Living* is replaced by reported mental activity, interiority remained an essential component of Green's fiction in the immediate pre-war period. However, a further change occurred in Green's *oeuvre* during the 1940s. *Caught* (1943) retains scattered allusions to the thoughts of characters but these thoughts, whether directly or indirectly presented, are no longer treated as unproblematic evidence of interior states. The narration increasingly interposes an additional layer of interpretation, a doubt, between the existence of characters' thoughts and their meaning. The characters, and by extension the writing itself, subject what looks like straightforward mental process to a kind of suspicious scrutiny. Thoughts are not to be read or re-presented without complication and so their unreliability weakens the role of mental states both in defining characters and shaping narrative. And the corollary of this suspicion is that physical states begin to assume a greater significance in both these aspects of the novel's construction. The fireman Roe, meeting two women for the first time in his heavy, dirty uniform, approaches a tentative and almost existential new definition of himself that is dictated by his physical circumstance:

> He felt his hands, which were gorged with blood, swollen with work. He made out to himself that they had grown enormous, that the fingers hung at the thighs like strings of raw pork faggots, filthy as he was who had not been able to change his heavy sweat-charged clothes [...] He now knew, as far as he was concerned, that there was more to this war and his part in it than the latest change in his way of life. In his dirt, his tiredness, the way the light hurt his eyes and he could not look, in all these he thought he recognised that he was now a labourer, he thought he had grasped the fact that, from now on, dressed like this and that was why roadmen called him mate, he was one of the thousand million that toiled and spun.[23]

What is striking here is not just the emphasis on Roe's corporeal situation but also the contrast between the affirmation of physical detail and the lack of conviction attached to mental process. Roe's inner state is always half-veiled, always provisional and presented with qualification ('he made out to himself', 'He now knew, as far as he was concerned...', 'he thought he recognised...he thought he had grasped') so that any allusion to mental process is imbricated with a sense of distrust. This mistrust is reinforced later in the novel when Pye is described as 'following his own thoughts...the will of the wisps.'[24] As with Green himself when glimpsed in the opening fragment of *London and Fire*, the physical circumstance of life as a war-time fireman becomes the primary constituent of Roe's textual existence, relegating his inner life to the status of unreliable apparition. The erasure of thought (or, perhaps more accurately, of internal speech) in Green's writing is a process of gradual diminution from *Living* to *Party Going* and, accelerated by his experience of the war, from *Caught* to *Loving*, where the thoughts of characters vanish almost completely from sight.[25]

Green's gradual abandonment of interiority represents a break with one of modernist fiction's most popular devices, the 'stream of consciousness' or interior monologue employed widely in the early twentieth century by Richardson, Joyce, Woolf and many other writers. But other modernists had already championed the exterior view. Wyndham Lewis, in *Men Without Art* (1934), compared the 'Great Within' favoured by those 'tellers-from-the-inside' to his own preference for external presentation. Lewis claimed his method belonged to 'the "classical" manner of apprehending', which he contrasted with a European romantic outlook that had its roots in Hellenism and a naturalist, pictorial aesthetic. For Lewis, this tendency could lead only to barbarism, decadence and 'inveterate humanism'. Instead he championed the 'masculine formalism of the Egyptians or the Chinese' which eschewed the emotional in favour of an approach that was bold and purely visual: 'Dogmatically, then, I am for the Great Without, for the method of *external* approach – for the wisdom of the eye rather than that of the ear.'[26] His preference for a satiric and alienating external view put Lewis at odds with many of his

contemporaries for whom the delineation of interior, emotional states was the very purpose of literature.

On the face of it, Green's adoption of the exterior mode aligns him with Lewis' alternate strain of modernism and a literary presentation that favours seeing over listening. Yet it quickly becomes apparent that Lewis's proposed division between internal and external modes is simply inadequate to account for the complexity of fiction, including his own. An obvious objection would be that even if writers avoid internal monologue, as Lewis would wish, a substantial part of novelistic fiction is taken up with dialogue, which is both external and 'of the ear.' And, as we have seen with reference to Green and to Merleau-Ponty, speech can be interleaved with bodily action, understood as part of a wider physical utterance which combines both the visual and the aural in one act. In Green's novels of the 1940s, speech becomes not a direct revelation of the inner process of characters, but something better understood as another form of behaviour from which we might read their motivations. Dialogue provides no more or less of a clue to the interior life of a subject than their physical movement: Green avoids the 'inveterate humanism' feared by Lewis by offering his readers the option to apply a behaviourist psychological reading to his fiction.

The confusion in Lewis's analysis seems to arise from two facts: that his approach assumes an equivalence between the plastic arts and literature, and that it rests on aesthetics alone rather than a broader philosophy. In *Tarr* (1918), the eponymous character articulates what seems to be Lewis's core aesthetic belief with reference to sculpture:

> The lines and masses of the statue are its soul. No restless, quick flame-like ego is imagined for the *inside* of it. It has no inside. This is another condition of art; *to have no inside*, nothing you cannot see.[27]

Yet as Andrzej Gasiorek has pointed out, the novel itself seems to belie this prescription because it exhibits not only an aesthetic emphasis on corporeality but also a deep interest in

the psychology of its characters. The result is a tension in the novel between an external

presentation of characters' actions and the intensity of internal motivation which is suggested

as driving those actions. As Gasiorek puts it: '*Tarr* persistently runs aesthetics and psychology

together'[28] without an awareness on Lewis's part of the Cartesian dualism which the novel

seems to uphold. This mingling is exemplified in the scene of fight between two characters

which describes their bodies as if they are jolted into action by an internal eruption of power:

> The will broke out frantically from the midst of bandages and a bulk of suddenly accruing fury. Soltyk tore at *himself* first, writhing upright, a statue's bronze softening, suddenly, with blood...His blood, one heavy mass, hurtled about in him, up and down like a sturgeon in a narrow tank. [...] His hands were electrified. Will was at last dashed all over him, an Arctic douche. The hands flew at Kreisler's throat.[29]

Here we find both psychological intensity which erupts into combat and the apparently

disconnected corporeality with which that combat is described. Gasiorek identifies 'a self-

division within both characters, their respective body parts functioning independently of their

owners' minds. Soltyk's will commits violence against himself before the caged torso can be

freed from conscious restraints.'[30] In other words, Lewis does precisely what he says art should

not; his novel imagines a 'flame-like ego' on the inside even though he attempts to describe its

effects from a primarily external view. This method contrasts with Green's mode of writing in

Loving where he never supplies motivation for his characters' actions; motivation is only

inferred from those actions. We could say that Lewis' characters appear as puppets, animated

by the tensions of their own visible strings, where Green's characters are more like the sealed

boxes of behaviourist psychology, where only stimulus and response are presented to our

view. The comparison with Lewis reveals that Green's move away from interiority sets him

apart not only from the 'Great Within' strain of modernism, but also from Lewis's variant in

which emphasis on the external is a predominantly aesthetic view, and one often at odds with

a work's underlying philosophical assumptions. In short, by the end of the war, Green's

method is unlike any that of any modernist writer.

In *Loving*, the emphasis on physical disposition and demeanour has profound implications not just for the mode of presenting character but also for the novel's spatial framing. The interest in the situation of those characters in their environment suggests not only a coherence in Green's literary approach but also parallels with the work of phenomenological philosophers for whom situatedness is essential to ontology.[31] In Kinalty Castle, the characters' movement and positions are plotted with a meticulousness that is almost obsessive. Journeys through the building's passages, staircases, grounds and outbuildings are given a descriptive weight which forces itself on our notice. At times it seems as if every step is measured, every movement plotted and the opening or closing of every door logged. From the very first scene, in which Raunce and his assistant Albert drink stolen whisky, Green is hyper-attentive to the disposition of human figures in their spatial environment. The two characters conceal themselves in the corner made by a door opened back against the pantry wall and our notice is drawn both to this detail and to how position determines vision:

> Raunce stuck his head out while Bert, farther in because he was smallest, could do no more than peek the other way along a back passage, his eyes on a level with one of the door hinges. Bert saw no one. But Charley eyed Edith, one of two under-housemaids.[32]

There is also a starkness by which the door's unaccustomed open position is registered in discrete, staccato sentences: 'That door hung wide once more…The door stayed gaping open…She stood averted watching that door which stayed swung back…'[33] Raunce and Albert use the door to make a specific form of space which Green meticulously describes and calls to the reader's notice.

Throughout *Loving*, movement through the castle's spaces is thrust to the foreground via a precision and recurrent attention. The revelation of the castle's geography is made through a process of constitutive action rather than by a more removed form of narrative description, as in the following four quotations:

He went out, shutting the mahogany door without a sound. After twenty trained paces he closed a green baize door behind him.[34]

Secondly:

He shut the great door after. He almost swung his arms, he might have been said to step out for the thirty yards he had to go along that soft passage to the green baize door.[35]

Again:

And they came out through this pantry into the long high stone passage with a vaulted ceiling which led to the kitchen and their servants' hall.[36]

And again:

Agatha walked stiffly through the back premises towards Mrs Tennant's bedroom…but unusual sounds of activity in the pantry made her choose to go through this on the way upstairs.[37]

The space inhabited by the occupants of Kinalty Castle is primarily enacted; laid out in ways bound up with movement and physical demeanour, whether the measured tread along a corridor, the stiffness of a housekeeper's gait or concealment behind an open door. A character's journey through this castle seems to unfurl the house's spaces with it, as though the corridor is unrolling just ahead of the butler's paces. This effect not only focusses attention on human physicality but also suggests that motion is constitutive of space. We can see in detail how the clean lines of physical action unfold a space when Raunce, newly established as butler, purloins the notebooks from the room of his recently dead predecessor:

He slipped inside like an eel into its drainpipe. He closed the door so that Bert could not see. Within all was immeasurable stillness with the mass of daffodils on the bed. He stood face averted then hurried smooth and his quietest to the roll-top desk. He held his breath. He had the top left-hand drawer open. He breathed again. Then Bert whistled.

Raunce snatched at those red and black notebooks. He had them. He put them away in a hip pocket. They fitted. 'Close that drawer,' he said aloud. He did this. He fairly

> scrambled out again. He shut the door after, leaving all immeasurably still within. He stood with his back to it, taking out a handkerchief, and looked about.
>
> He saw Edith. She was just inside the pantry where Bert watched him open mouthed. Raunce eyed her very sharp. He seemed to appraise the dark eyes she sported which were warm and yet caught the light like plums dipped in cold water. He stayed absolutely quiet.[38]

In several different ways this passage seems to fuse movement and environment so that the action revealed also suggests the contemporaneous revelation of the space that action establishes. The smoothness of Raunce's incursion (suggested by the eel metaphor and the direct use of 'hurried smooth') introduces an idea of frictionless motion in an environment for which that movement is naturally adapted, and is reinforced by the possessive form of 'its drainpipe'. Similarly the closing of the door to exclude the onlooker adds to a sense that Raunce's eel-like possession of the space beyond it is natural and his alone. Inside the room, the smoothness of activity is further evoked by the way that thought, speech and act merge into one externally-rendered sequence of action. By virtue of Raunce standing 'face averted', we see his recoil from the lingering presence of the man who has just died in the room (figured indirectly through the mass of daffodils on the bed), but as this psychic process is presented by external means, in the manner so typical of *Loving*, it is easily welded into the chain of physical action. Similarly, the gap between speech and action is virtually erased by Raunce acting on his own verbal command: '"Close that drawer" he said aloud. He did this'. A further smoothing of the action is effected with the narrative skipping past links in the causal chain. We don't see Raunce open the drawer, rather he instantly 'had the...drawer open'. All of these effects contribute to an impression of seamless action which isn't filtered through any authorial comment or mediation. Adding to this impression, the passage also gives out hints of the animate and inanimate colluding in the action as suggested by the transitive/intransitive ambiguity of 'they fitted' when the notebooks go into Raunce's pocket, and by the echo of movement in the fact of the desk being a 'roll-top'. The repetition of 'immeasurable stillness...immeasurably still' also creates a sense of agency in the room, as though it conspires

in Raunce's need for quiet, as well as suggesting something of its spatial essence. While the short sentences which convey Raunce's hurry could have seemed abrupt, interrupting the textual flow, in fact they are moulded into a sequence where they provide continuity from the preceding phrase and resolution via partial repetition, as in: 'He snatched at those red and black notebooks. He had them' and 'He held his breath…He breathed again.' There is then a kind of sinuous unfolding of this scene in which different elements of its presentation are acquired at the same level of perceptual hierarchy. A flattening of the conventionally-observed sequential priorities of thought, speech and action, a fusing of movement and environment, and a smoothing over of potentially interruptive detail combine with the text's wholly exterior approach to human figures to present a scene in which movements and the spaces they bring to life appear to be presented to our notice by the same means and at the same time. Movement enacts space, brings it to our attention through the physical circumstances and actions of the characters in *Loving*. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: 'Space has its basis in our facticity.' At its core, this excerpt from *Loving* amounts to a scene of clarity without depth; the actions it encompasses and the view it presents are just what they seem to be, a self-sufficient sequence of events which lays bare the surface of physical existence without interpretation. This idea is captured in the final image of Edith's eyes 'like plums dipped in cold water' catching the light from what they see and reflecting back its surfaces.

Physical action and space, then, are intertwined in *Loving*. As Michael Vinaver, the French translator of the novel puts it, space in *Loving* is 'not a static collection of material objects, it is a system of possibilities of action.'[39] This insight suggests a further literary correspondence with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, where embodiment is a necessary and simultaneous condition of perception, including spatial perception. However, since the characteristic mode of access to subjects in *Loving* is from the outside, how can Green engage fully with the processes of perception? Can his approach be as complex as those seen in chapter one, including Samson's reflective first-person narrator in 'The Wall' or Bowen's use of free indirect

discourse in her construction of a London phenomenally established by the joint presences of Stella and Harrison?

In fact, Green's preference for exteriority in *Loving* aligns the novel less with Merleau-Ponty's general discussion of the process of perception and more with his particular engagement with the question of how a subject's body establishes a 'spatial level' in the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, the world contains no pre-ordained structure of direction, no necessary sense, for instance, of what is 'up' or 'down.' To validate this claim he cites experiments conducted by George Stratton in the 1890s where subjects who wore special glasses inverting their view of the world soon came to accept the 'upside-down' as the natural order of things.[40] Merleau-Ponty argues that, rather than finding an intrinsic set of directions in the world, the body is 'geared onto the world' in every physical circumstance by an adoption of preferred planes and alignment, by motile potential and by possible scenes of action, so that 'a pact is concluded which gives me the enjoyment of space and gives to things their direct power over my body.'[41] The adoption of a spatial level is not the discovery of something fixed and unchanging about space, but a temporary expedient by which to navigate, though ultimately for Merleau-Ponty it rests on a pre-personal facility to grasp the world. This accommodation with the perceptual world then can explain the particular circumstances of physical comportment and action. Viewed this way, the attentive lingering over the deportment, movement and corporeal disposition of characters in *Loving* could be read as the author's understanding of the role they play in making visible the spaces they inhabit. The repetitious journeys Green traces through Kinalty Castle are partly the half-conscious demarcation of personal space by the characters but also textual signs of a philosophical engagement with space which is displayed in those physical acts even though neither the narrator's nor the characters' thoughts are on view. Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty, space is inferred from observation of this type, not grasped in reflection, as it is for Kant, for whom space is an intuition and not a concept:

> Space has its basis in our facticity. It is neither an object, nor an act of unification on the subject's part…it can, by its magic, confer its own spatial particularizations upon the landscape without ever appearing itself.[42]

The fact that *Loving*, and *Concluding* (1948) seem to embody this understanding of the peculiar variables of space has important consequences for the nature of their fictionality, as we shall see. Green's implicit acknowledgement of this variability also helps explain his apparent anxious fascination with spatial questions in these novels.

The characters in *Loving* compete to mark out their space. The servants' rooms – pantry, kitchen, housekeeper's room, nursery, and scullery – are domains to be protected and defended from incursions by other staff. The word 'kingdom' recurs throughout the book in relation to these rooms; the servants make conspicuous efforts to mark out and retain a space of their own. After his elevation to butler, Raunce takes over the bedroom of his predecessor and his chair at the head of the dining table. This is a disquieting act of mobility which intensifies the specifically spatial anxiety felt among the servants. The cook Mrs Welch, shows her dismay at Raunce's new role in a conversation with Miss Burch:

> 'I won't 'ave 'im in my kitchen.
> 'Oh, you're fortunate, you've a place you can call your own.'[43]

A few pages later, the same women have a similar conversation:

> 'I never let that man into my kitchen.'
> 'You're one of the lucky ones Mrs Welch. You've a place you can call your own.'
> 'Ah,' this woman answered, 'but run over by two-legged mice.'[44]

Miss Burch returns to the subject again, this time with Miss Swift, the children's nurse:

> 'I won't have Arthur in my nursery.'
> 'Mrs Welch won't let him enter her kitchen. But then you've both a place you can call your own. Not like me with no more than a door opening into the sink and a bit of a cupboard in all this mansion.'[45]

This preoccupation with space has its roots in the experiences of World War II. The squabbles over territory among the servants may appear petty, even comic, but they also constitute a version in miniature of a broader fear of incursion and territorial loss. The castle is in neutral Ireland, and fear of a German invasion is a recurrent topic of discussion among the servants. At the same time the mostly English staff dread being attacked by the IRA men they imagine lurking just outside Kinalty's doors. Against this background, an insecurity about domestic space seems to echo a still more substantial fear. The war intensified the experience, or at least the perception, of crowding. Familiar spaces could feel crowded because an increasingly mobile population which at times included evacuees, refugees and foreign troops, was displaced into unfamiliar locations and often forced into unfamiliar proximity. Even though hundreds of thousands of men were overseas, pressures were felt on Britain's train networks in boarding houses, cafes, underground stations and bomb shelters. Green's own experience of 'cheek by jowl' fire station living is one such example, while Patrick Hamilton, in *The Slaves of Solitude* (1947), wrote that:

> In the war everywhere was crowded all the time. The war seemed to have conjured into being, from nowhere, magically, a huge population of its own – one which flooded into and filled every channel and crevice of the country – the towns, the villages, the streets, the trains, the buses, the shops, the houses, the inns, the restaurants, the movies.[46]

Richard Overy notes an official report from 1941 which found the disruption from bombing meant that 'it was impossible to get a hotel room anywhere within 70 miles of London.'[47] This crowding was so pervasive that its effects can be felt in Kinalty Castle where it reinforces the desire to preserve private space from the 'two-legged mice' of which Mrs Welch has a horror.

Associated with the population's mobility was an unaccustomed mixing of social classes. Green's plan for *London and Fire* took the new social reality of 'people from all classes' in the fire service as an essential theme and *Loving* displays a similar interest in the dissolution of social boundaries, as well as disquiet at its effects. When Mrs Tennant leaves the castle for a

long stay in England, the servants begin to occupy their masters' quarters with Raunce and

Edith lounging in the library and Edith and Kate dancing in the ballroom. Mrs Welch's nephew

Albert joins the above-stairs children (a mingling which horrifies some of the staff) and, on her

return, Mrs Tennant threatens to sack the drunken Mrs Welch 'even if I have to cook for you

all myself.'[48] Hanging over the novel is a sense of transgressive permeability, of which the

movement between different castle quarters is part.

Homelessness, or the prospect of it, is another shadow cast by the war across the pages of

Loving, intensifying the novel's palpable spatial anxiety. Homelessness was an inevitable

consequence of mass bombing: historian Tom Harrisson says that 4 million British homes were

damaged in the war, of which 220,000 were completely destroyed.[49] One in five London

households was made homeless, at least temporarily.[50] Angus Calder suggests that during the

entire course of the war there were 60 million changes of address in a civilian population of

just 38 million.[51] Undertaking a survey of 100 British families in the immediate aftermath of

the war, The *Sunday Pictorial* reported that 43 of the 100 were actively looking for a new

home.[52] Amid the raw statistics, the fear of homelessness preoccupied many people long after

the war's end. As Harrisson puts it: 'Homelessness was nearly as much as state of mind as of

fact.'[53] Something of this state of mind persists in *Loving*, where Raunce and Edith's search for

a marital home is still unfulfilled at the novel's end:

> "Oh our little 'ouse," she sobbed […]
>
> "There's other places," he tried to appease her. "We'll find you a lovely home," he
> ended, and fell silent.[54]

Like the need the servants feel to defend part of the castle as their own domain, the unmet

desire for a home stokes a sense of spatial unease running through the book.

In the later work *Concluding*, the threat of homelessness becomes central to the plot, such as

it is. Elderly scientist Mr Rock is threatened with eviction from his cottage in the grounds of the

Institute, a girls' school run by the state to provide the bureaucrats of the future. Miss Baker's and Miss Edge's determination to seize the cottage is matched by Rock's determination to stay. The name Rock signifies, among other things, both his obduracy and the obstacle he presents to them. Rock himself raises the spectre of homelessness in a conversation with another tenant, the woodcutter Adams:

> "Why when the State took over from the owner, and founded this Institute to train State Servants, it was even in the Directive that I was to stay in my little place...There's gratitude," he added after a moment, "Throw him out in the street."
>
> "That's the way things are," Adams agreed, glad to let the matter drop.
>
> "But are you safe man?" Mr Rock demanded.
>
> "Houses are that short there's no one safe," Adams replied.[55]

The conversation disturbs Adams so much that he raises the housing issue himself later when one of the teachers approaches him about an entirely different subject:

> Mr Rock's hints had preyed on his mind. He was beside himself. "It wouldn't be about my cottage, now would it, ma'am?" he demanded. "There's no question, is there? For I've a nephew over to me directly, with the girl he married in church. Can't find a place of their own anyhow. It's cruel this housing shortage."[56]

While *Concluding* is set in an unspecified year in the future, the imprint of the war and the socio-political concerns of the time, such as the pressure on homes, are clearly visible, as they are in *Loving*.

Green's critics sometimes overlook these quotidian realities. They register the fascination with the spatial which runs through both novels, but assume that space is used as a pure literary device to illuminate other concerns, rather than something urgently present in these texts because of the cultural climate of the war and its aftermath. Once again, as with the various critical analyses of space in Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* examined in the introduction, the presumption is that the spatial should be read for its metaphorical import; any possible

historical significance in the ways a text presents or describes space tends to be overridden by this critical impulse. For example, Michael North argues that: '*Loving* and *Concluding* belong together not just because both novels are organized around the metaphor of physical space but because both novels use that metaphor to illustrate the relationship between the interior life of the individual and the exterior, public world.'[57] If North recognises the crucial role of spatial disposition and physical action in the novels, he sees it always as standing for something entirely non-physical. In *Loving*, for instance, he suggests: 'the geography of the house is not just a metaphor for the self, it *is* the self.'[58] Indeed he links Kinalty Castle with the Irish home Mount Morris in *The Heat of the Day* as being both 'double enclaves' - apart from the war by virtue both of geographic separation and from a sense of being outside the passage of time. In one sense this seems a curious conclusion when the events of World War II are so clearly at hand in both novels; from Albert the pantry boy joining the RAF to the fears of German invasion which beset both Irish households, from the theme of homelessness in *Loving* to the fact that Roderick inherits Mount Morris as a British soldier. Yet to call these houses enclaves is also perhaps to hint at something not entirely solid or present about their appearance, to cast doubt on their integration into any socio-material context and, in the case of Kinalty at least, the word 'enclave' is suggestive of a half-submerged sense of unreality, an impermanence and dysfunctionality which clings to the castle. North's premise is that Green belonged to a generation of '1930s' writers trapped in intra-war social impotence. He sees Kinalty as one of the 'imitators' of Brideshead, part of an attempt to create a myth of the great house outside time, since cultivated indifference to events was the greatest aspiration of these writers. On these terms, the house can indeed only be the metaphor that North perceives it to be.

However there is another way of accounting for the odd textual weightlessness that appears to attach itself to Kinalty. This account does not presuppose the castle as mythic or its spaces as metaphoric but pays close attention to its spatial construction and operation in the novel. It is

possible to start from the premise that *Loving* involves the attempted description of a house that is 'real' (in the sense of imaginatively convincing), but that the castle's spatial coherence is undermined by gaps and flaws in the logic of the geography and landscape of Kinalty which the text throws up. Such a reading would scrutinise the spatial description in *Loving* for signs of these incoherencies and ask what they might suggest about the underlying philosophical terrain. On what understanding or intimations of the spatial do the landscapes of *Loving* appear to stand? How and where do these foundational assumptions reveal themselves and to what extent are they validated or queried by the unfolding text? It might be objected that Green himself puts the solidity of Kinalty Castle under question from the outset and in the most glaring way with the novel's self-consciously fairy-tale opening: 'Once upon a day...'[59]. But while this rhetorical device instantly draws attention to the fictional process, it does not of course follow that the ontology or epistemology of *Loving* will conform to those of the fairy tale. We don't expect the novel's characters to encounter dragons or discover cloud kingdoms even if the language of fairy-tale is sometimes used as framing or reference.

Human figures seem to delineate or mark out the space of *Loving*, revealing it through their footsteps, their posture or territorial behaviour. The starkness of this enactment is one of the things which give it the oblique power of revealing space, through the gearing to the world of physical action which Merleau-Ponty suggests establishes a 'spatial level.' Movement in *Loving* appears as part of the 'system of possibilities' that Michael Vinaver detects in the novel's spatial composition. Patterns of movement do not constitute a closed system; the possibility of a new direction that exceeds a compositional frame remains ever-present.

The exterior mode which Green adopts in *Loving* and his attention to paths of action in the novel therefore also seem to involve a way of bringing spatial qualities to the fore. Through the movements of its characters, the castle and its landscapes are present not just as scenic backcloth but as a sometimes charged or animated environment which carries its own

phenomenal weight. The force with which spaces can intrude on the reader's notice does not

of course make them simple to read; quite the opposite. To register space as part of an

automatic and uncomplicated corollary of physical action would quickly make it habitual and

so render it invisible. It is at moments when space becomes a problem or puzzle that it is most

likely to force itself on our notice. So it is in *Loving*, where the flaws or discontinuities in the

landscape of the castle, as well as the anxieties of its occupants, may thrust the spatial

forward.

One way in which attention is repeatedly drawn to the spatial is through a violent skewing of

perspective. Mrs Tennant and her daughter-in-law Violet are on a walk through the grounds

when, mid-conversation, they are confronted by the sudden nearness of the folly of a ruined

temple they are approaching. The abruptness with which this proximity is presented suggests a

sudden closing of distance as an active quality of the space they move through:

> "You poor dear," Mrs Jack said. "Why look," she went on, "there it is already." And
> there it was close, on a low hill, surrounded by cypresses amongst which grew a palm
> tree, the marble pillars lying beside jagged cement topped walls against a blue sky
> with blue clouds. "D'you think we have to go right up this time?" she asked.
>
> "I don't think we need to-day, do you?" her mother-in-law replied. Calling to the
> dogs, they turned for home. They began a talk about underclothes.[60]

The women's surprise at the unexpected proximity of the temple is echoed in the tone of the

prose, with the phrase 'and there it was' acting as a chime of verification for Mrs Jack's startled

discovery rather than the redundant detail it might appear on first reading. The elastic quality

of this space gives distance an unpredictability which intrudes on the text as well as on the

notice of the two women. This intrusion means that an apparently mundane remark about not

needing to walk all the way to the temple acquires a more significant textual resonance; what

is implied is a secondary and more portentous meaning than simply cutting the walk short.

This scene is spatially puzzling because it plots the movement of characters through landscape

but leaves the precise interaction between movement and space mysterious. If distances can

lengthen and recede, which appears to be the case as the temple suddenly rears up at the women, then movement will not be a geometric closing of a gap in Newtonian space but something variable and unknown. The question 'Do…we have to go right up this time?' carries undertones of philosophic inquiry; what does it take to close the gap? That movement and space have a mutual ground is apparent here, but the issue of how they shape one another is, at best, only dimly discerned. Perversely, the banality of the context of this passage, framed by a conversation about underclothes, accentuates the contrast between the superficiality of the conversation and the underlying import of the physical and psychic action it describes. What looks on first inspection like a trivial episode exemplifies the way in which *Loving's* spaces are subtly made to seem problematic and unstable throughout the novel.

A closer examination of the text shows that this moment at the temple is not isolated or entirely without context. In fact the skewing of perspective that is so vital for this scene is echoed in many smaller asides both before and after. At the meeting with Raunce where she is forced to elevate him to butler (quoted earlier), Mrs Tennant breaks off to notice that the tennis court contains 'plantains like the tops of palm trees,' a foreshadowing of the palm tree mentioned at the temple and a perspectival sliding between the small and the large. Edith later takes in a similar view from the castle where the narrative, if not Edith herself, registers confusions of scale and distance:

> Edith stood slack at one of the high windows and did not seem to see those bluebells already coming up between wind-stunted beeches which grew out of the Grove onto that part of the lawn till their tops were level with her eyes.[61]

Logic tells us it is the beech trees whose tops must be level with Edith's eyes but the writing deliberately confuses as to the subject of this sentence, leaving the impression that it might equally be the bluebells which have grown to the height of a house. At other points too, parts of the house or of the general landscape appear in curious proportions or distances. Edith disappears from view in a 'high endless corridor';[62] Mrs Welch remarks 'Oh these long spaces'

as she closes the door between kitchen and scullery;[63] lying on the ground, Albert seems to see 'all Ireland flat on a level with his clouded eyes.'[64] Throughout *Loving* there is a subtle but persistent distortion of perspective and distance which complicates the spaces of Kinalty Castle and its grounds. One of the novel's best-known images is the reflection of Kate and Edith's waltz in the glass of a chandelier where we see: 'two girls, minute in purple, dancing multiplied to eternity in those trembling pears of glass.'[65] This image combines the ideas of perspectival distortion and of a 'trembling' instability inherent in space. Green holds up spatial distortions to the view in *Loving*, in a literary parallel to the work of phenomenologists including Martin Heidegger.

In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger examines the qualities of distance in his discussion of what he sees as a primordial spatiality of being. He argues that objects have no intrinsic relations of remoteness from one another, but that remoteness is a characteristic which is only discovered in the pure act of being, Dasein. Distance does not exist until it is brought forth by Dasein and exists only in relation to Dasein; objects are not distant from one another but only from Dasein itself. Distance in the world is discovered by the act of de-severance, an active and transitive process in which Dasein registers its separation and remoteness from other entities in the world. Remoteness is grasped not through measurement but through circumspection, the act of seizing things in the world, of bringing them close through the absorbed immersion of being-in-the-world.[66] In other words, distance and remoteness are not qualities which inhere in the world's objects; they are called forth by pure being as it registers its separation from them. And this operation means that distance is not fixed or measurable in its appearance to pure being but may vary. Distance is a duration which can appear shorter or longer at different times, whatever the objective measurement between two points. Heidegger points out that even if we know the precise distance of a journey in miles or kilometres we are apt to register it as 'a stone's throw' or 'a good walk.'[67] The same thing can seem nearer or further on different days, just as the ruined temple suddenly appears to Mrs

Tennant and Violet in *Loving* even though it's the regular destination of their walk. The act of de-severance which bestows distance on objects makes the spatial world phenomenally present to us:

> Dasein does not traverse, like an objectively present corporeal thing, a stretch of space, it does not "eat up kilometers"; nearing and de-distancing are always a heedful being towards what is approached and de-distanced. An "objectively" long path can be shorter than an "objectively" much shorter path which is perhaps an "onerous one" and strikes one as infinitely long. *When it "strikes" one thus, however, the actual world is first truly at hand*. The objective distance of objectively present things do not coincide with the remoteness and nearness of what is at hand within the world.[68]

For Heidegger, to focus on the measurement of distance is to conceal the primordial spatiality of being; to pay attention to the phenomenal presence of objects and their apparent distance is to discover the authentic nature of the spatial world and its significance for us, even if those spaces appear illogical or unscientific. In these terms, the peculiarities of perspective that appear throughout *Loving* suggest not just a puzzlement about space but also a deeper interest in the phenomenal capture of the world and its spatial arrangement. Green's tendency to expose gaps and flaws in superficial or scientific spatial logic reveals an intent to probe at what phenomenology sees as a primordial awareness of space. This intent is also suggested by the way *Loving* creates a sense of imprecision about the measurable spatial world. Distances and scales are often given in terms so vague and unspecific that they bring a jarring redundancy to the prose. For example: '*A great distance* beneath she saw Mrs Tennant and her daughter-in-law starting for a walk';[69] ' "What's come over you?" Miss Swift asked, coming to a halt *some distance* up the passage';[70] 'She flung it *a short distance*';[71] 'They walked on with *a space* between.'[72] (My emphasis in each case). What matters for perception is not the actual distance between things but the phenomenal distance; that is, the extent to which they appear to be either close or far in our worldly circumspection.

At times then, distance will appear to be of no consequence in our existence, as suggested by Green's prose in these examples where a deliberate vagueness has the effect of calling attention to the lack of significance in the spatial information being given. Yet at other times, as with the sudden and startling appearance of the temple, the nature of distance forces itself on the attention and becomes phenomenally present with surprising power which reveals the primordially spatial dimension of being. The things that seem closest may not be the least distant. For instance, a person wearing glasses and gazing through them at a picture on the wall will perceive the picture as nearer-to-hand than the glasses only a centimetre or two from the eyes. For Heidegger both vision and hearing are senses that can assess distance because they can record the process of de-severance that establishes Dasein's spatial relations in the world. But where this de-severance goes unnoticed and unrecorded, space is not intuited, but retreats into a metrical and unremarkable world whose vital 'aroundness' disappears, becoming a mere realm of extended things. This is the flatter spatial quality which the prose of *Loving* often seems to evoke through the vagueness and indeterminacy of its spatial descriptions; a greyed-out world that recedes in the notice by contrast with moments of striking intuition of space. We see this flatness in lines of description such as 'The back premises of this grey Castle were on a vast scale'[73] and 'He walked off into grey dust-sheeted twilight'.[74] We find this indeterminacy too in the studiedly non-informative use of phrases such as: 'Any number of doors set in the Castle's long high walls'[75] and: 'To his left was a range of high windows muted by white blinds.'[76] Kinalty's fabric - its arrangement of walls, rooms and landscapes - is often subdued to the point where the castle's spaces seem to bear only a distant relevance to the more vivid human action unfolding within them.

The flatness of this realm, its ordering by the logic of objects and a 'scientific' materiality of space, is emphasised by the repeated appearance of comically ornate furniture and decoration. As examples, Edith steadies herself on the stairs by 'holding the black hand of a life-sized negro boy in cast iron in a great red turban and in gold-painted clothes'; while Mrs

Tennant is seen seated on 'an antique Gothic imitation of a hammock slung between four black marble columns and cunningly fashioned out of gold wire.'[77] In their detail and over-rich description, these objects stand in contrast to the subdued indeterminacy of the castle's fabric. Yet, rather than negating them, they suggest a habitual artificiality that saturates the castle's spaces. Kinalty never seems to feel wholly real or wholly fixed; its outlines are insubstantial, its objects overwrought and unconvincing. When spaces come alive in *Loving* it is when they are imbued with phenomenal presence by the movement of characters.

The sense of spatial unreality that adheres to the castle is exemplified by the map of the district that hangs in one of its rooms and which is connected to a pointer operated by an external weathervane. As Raunce discovers, the map offers no practical spatial guidance to anyone trying to fix their position:

> Raunce did not yet know how the thing worked. He stood and pondered and asked himself aloud where he could say he was going fix the replacements if she asked him…This map was peculiar. For instance Kinalty Church was represented by a miniature painting of its tower and steeple while the Castle, which was set right in the centre, was a fair sized caricature in exaggerated Gothic. There were no names against places.[78]

Raunce's perplexity at the mechanics of the device suggests a wider confusion about how to decipher the landscape from the map. Once again we see a perspectival distortion; in this case, between the 'miniature' church and the 'fair-sized…exaggerated' castle. The artificiality of the castle's place at the centre of the map adds to its air of unreality, while the lack of any names or sense of scale makes it impossible to judge distance or position. The word 'fix' is at the heart of Raunce's uncertainty, denoting not only that he is incapable of saying where he will fix the broken pointer on the map but also suggesting the impossibility of fixing one's position using the map as a guide. The map is impossible to decode; it has almost no mimetic reality and heightens the impression of Kinalty and its grounds as a territory where the capture of space by metrical or schematic means will yield only pallid insubstantiality, an apprehension of the

spatial world which feels unconvincing in contrast with the primordial awareness of space which underlies it. In textual terms, descriptive passages whose overt purpose is to delineate the spatial arrangement of house or grounds are compromised by a weakness that tends to reveal the inadequacy of that description, and betrays flaws in its attempts at coherence. When the text displays spatial arrangements by phrases such as 'any number of doors', or when it slides between yawning differences in scale, it confounds its own attempts at spatial illustration, just like the map that troubles Raunce so much. Kinalty's estate simply doesn't hang together geographically. Nor does it fit into the surrounding Irish countryside; what looks superficially like continuous, rational space can appear fractured and discontinuous. This fragmentation is conveyed not only by the general imprecision that arises from a tendency to vague and partial spatial description but also in asides which allude to the topography of a country estate in terms that seem to pry the castle loose from its surroundings.

Reference is made to the castle's ha-ha. A familiar feature of landscaped great houses, a ha-ha is a ditch with a sunken wall designed to constitute a boundary without interrupting the view. Thus a ha-ha is intended to have a *trompe l'oeil* effect, suggesting continuous, unbroken ground by concealing its presence. Both times the ha-ha is mentioned in *Loving*, it is associated with awkward episodes. The first is the arrival of pony-and-trap driver Michael whose brother has short-changed Mrs Tennant in selling her gravel for the 'rutted drive where this turned inward across the ha-ha.'[79] The second is the visit of the comic/sinister insurance man Mike Mathewson,[80] whose search for Mrs Tennant's lost ring sends the servants into tumult, not least because of his company's acronym - IRA. Though the ha-ha is intended by its architect to present a smooth and uninterrupted landscape, in *Loving* it is mentioned at moments when it is being crossed by unwelcome Irish visitors; Green emphasises its appearance as a boundary or frontier rather than a unifying feature. The ha-ha suggests a rupture between the castle grounds and the Irish landscape which is reinforced by a description of the estate's lodge gate as 'cut in the ruined wall which shut this demesne from tumble-down country outside.'[81] The

inhabitants' fear of invasion, and Mrs Tennant's assertion that 'we're practically in enemy country here,'[82] accentuate the idea of separation between English household and Irish surroundings, but this division also has a topographical dimension with the land being cut in two. Perceptions or assumptions of a continuous landscape prove mistaken; a map which attempts to situate the castle in this landscape is unusable. These artificial means of trying to survey and capture formations contrast with the startling present-ness of spatial relations which make themselves known at moments when physical movement in the world and genuine 'circumspection' are combined to enact space; moments such as Edith and Kate's waltz, the walk to the temple or Raunce's purloining of the notebooks. Spaces are thus revealed because of - not in spite of - their unorthodox proportions, their irruptive quality and their illogic. Torn from their 'everyday' context, they animate the text of *Loving* at key moments and destabilise organising perspectives.

To revisit the scene where Edith and Kate dance in the ballroom, it is significant that they are 'heedless' not only of the watching Raunce, but of anything beyond the 'wheeling' pattern of their movement. Utterly absorbed in their spatial enactment, the two women are oblivious to any scrutiny or spatiality beyond the pattern in which they are involved. The text transmutes and expands this sense of heedless absorption so that it animates the entire scene as a totality, not only by the infinite reflection of their figures in the chandeliers but also by assigning activity to inanimate objects so that they appear to take part in the dance; chandeliers 'swept one after the other almost to…the floor', while daylight 'sparkle[s]' and pears of glass are 'trembling.' The pattern of the dance is further repeated by 'again and again red velvet panelled walls', and the animated vibrancy of the scene contrasts with the dim, dust-sheeted rooms through which Raunce has made his way to the ballroom in the moments immediately before he discovers the dancers. In this moment the narration shares Edith and Kate's discovery of the 'aroundness' of the world, their involvement in its spatial arrangement. These revelatory moments are made possible by an occasional and temporary release from the

constraints of habitual perception, an ephemerality underlined by Edith who answers 'It's over now' when Raunce, having turned off the music, invites them to re-start the dance.[83]

What *Loving* seems to reveal in moments like these is a spatial knowledge achieved through the physical performance of its characters, by enactments which take place amid a temporary suspension of the normal organising principles of perceptual logic so that different perspectives and different patterns can be discerned. The patterning that marks out spaces is always traced by physical movement and not by visual survey. A dance can do what a map cannot, composing a form from which the spatial world can be grasped rather than attempting a metrical analogue whose incoherence will inevitably be exposed. As we have seen, Green increasingly preferred an exterior view of his characters as his writing developed over the decades. The mode he arrived at in the later 1940s, in *Loving* and *Concluding*, seems particularly suited to a philosophic engagement with spatial issues which underlie these works. Green seems to have found the exterior view, allowing him to trace patterns of movement, particularly effective in delineating spaces.

The motif of the wheeling dance seen in *Loving* recurs in *Concluding* where the climactic event of Founder's Day, in which the novel's entire action takes place, is a formal dance for the students of the Institute. Here the pattern of the dance dissolves and reforms as girls join and leave the circling movement:

> The original partners began to break up, to step back over the wax mirror floor out of one another's arms, moving sideways by such as would not be parted yet, each to tap a second favourite on a bare, quiet shoulder. Then the girl so chosen would give a little start …as she circled and circling yet, would dip into these fresh limbs which moved already in the dance…past established whirling partners until she found another who was loved and yet alone.[84]

Descriptions of the music that drives the dance are couched in images of water, specifically a 'water wheel turned by rustling rush of leaf thick water.'[85] Both the imagery of the dance and of water revolve in a circular movement. Rod Mengham points out that the patterns of circling,

wheeling and spiralling which characterise the waltz constitute an 'open, self-perpetuating form'[86] which becomes a central motif of the novel. Extended descriptions of sinuous waves of starlings in flight which occur at both dawn and dusk during *Concluding* echo the descriptions of the dance; the spiral pattern they share is further evoked by the text's comparison of the starlings to a 'vast black seashell,'[87] a shape coiled on itself. Mengham's penetrating analysis of the connections, both imagistic and philosophic, between the patterns of dance, starlings and seashells sees the significance of the spiral shape as both self-renewing and 'prochronistic', meaning that its form records the history of its growth: 'It is in other words the shape of historization.'[88] This 'transordinal' concept – one which cuts between different epistemic hierarchies – is typical of the way that *Concluding* leaps between different horizontal levels of order in the world. Repetition of motifs like the spiral, through metaphor and simile, allows Green to establish vertical connections through the hierarchies constructed by the bureaucratic, managerial world embodied in the Institute. Correspondence is established between the dance, the starlings, and the image of a shell which, for Mengham, hardens these disparate impressions and concepts into a collective 'return to the inanimate';[89] or the exhibition of a death instinct that he sees as the ultimate logic of *Concluding.*[90]

By this account, even the establishment of transordinal relations, those which cut across different categories of experience, cannot avert *Concluding* from ending in spatial collapse. Hierarchical differences including those between subject and object, human and natural worlds, animate and inanimate, are absorbed into a homogenous continuum, the world of a universal flesh identified by Merleau-Ponty in the *Visible and the Invisible* (1964). For Mengham, the spiral becomes a vortex which pulls together its differentiated substances and dissolves them. Ultimately what survives this process seems to be only a single 'vertical' law; the very idea of temporality. For *Concluding,* Mengham suggests, moves through entropy and towards extinction; it is the enactment of dying:

> The text…has no probable outcomes, no resolution of its mysteries…the language of explanation is always dying in *Concluding*: dying, it allows this sort of a novel to synchronize with the temporality of the universal flesh; it produces an idiom of temporality.[91]

This reading subordinates the novel's spatial constructions to a theory of temporal significance. While Mengham draws correspondences between recurring spatial forms, he sees those correspondences subsumed by a greater transordinal movement: the action of time over a world of decaying universal flesh.

This reading may be encouraged by the way in which the whirl of the dance seems to set the entire fabric of the Institute in motion, loosening the sensory grasp on the building as something anchored in space:

> The whole edifice began to turn, even wooden pins which held the panelling noiselessly revolved to the greater, ever greater sound. Thus [they were] so giddy they were fit to tumble down.[92]

Mengham's diagnosis of a universal flesh implicated in the same undifferentiating dance is persuasive; with all matter unvariegated and 'revolving on a wave' like the flock of starlings, a distinction between different kinds of space almost vanishes from view and what is left are vaguer senses of form and movement. The spiral motif that runs through *Concluding* weakens the novel's grasp of the spaces it attempts to describe.

However, there are good reasons to challenge Mengham's conclusion that only a temporal significance survives. An alternative reading of *Concluding* would draw a distinction between place and space, suggesting that while the former might be collapsed in the vortex, the latter survives its effects. The sense of the spatial in *Concluding* has firmer foundations than might first appear, even though the setting of the Institute appears insubstantial. If the building itself appears entirely unanchored by the end of the novel, a set of spatial relations still seem to obtain in this world. Spatial operations and qualities – movement, direction, differentiation,

distance and orientation – remain intact at the novel's end, even if they are sometimes troublingly difficult to interpret. For example, the return of cat, pig and goose to Rock's cottage in the final pages suggests the restoration of a spatial order rather than its dissolution.

An alternative reading of Merleau-Ponty's notion of a universal flesh is also possible. Mengham seems to interpret this idea as homogeneity; he argues that in *Concluding* all categories of matter are collapsed into an undifferentiated whole, a universal flesh in which all distinctions have vanished to leave only the operation of time. And it is true that in the posthumously-published *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty posits a transcendent subjectivity which is absorbed into the world, becoming part of what-it-is-not. This enigmatic idea rests on the principle that the flesh of the body is both seeing and seen, touching and touched; equivalent with the flesh of the world of which it is part:

> My body is made of the same flesh as the world (it is perceived), and moreover…this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world reflects it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world…they are in a relation of transgression or of overlapping.[93]

However this equivalence need not imply homogeneity in what is perceived. For in *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty also upholds the idea of perceptual faith; a condition of perceiving the world which encompasses both belief and doubt in the way it appears to us. Our certainty in the phenomena presented to us as one possible aspect on the world is 'beyond proofs.' We do not doubt that the world is that which supplies these phenomena, yet this assurance is bound up with a continuous doubt as to what version of the world is present in our perception. In Merleau-Ponty's memorable phrase, our openness upon the world is 'interwoven with incredulity.'[94] We understand that our perception assembles only one of the world's possible versions. Fragile perceptions or phantasms are not false, they are all variants of the same attempt at grasping the world, or 'progressive approximations'[95] of that world. If they are revealed as illusory that does not negate these perceptions but supersedes them with

another version. Beyond this endless process of iteration lies the universal flesh which is intimated but never perceived, which remains invisible. Although the perceiving flesh is part of this universal it also separates itself from it in this act of perception because of a process of reversibility which Merleau-Ponty calls chiasmic. Though part of the same spatial continuum, the flesh of the body cannot glimpse the invisible even though it is joined with it. As philosophers Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor explain:

> Because the flesh … [separates] itself into two parts – because it *is* this "dehiscence" – it cannot see itself seeing, touch itself touching….The invisible of the flesh is like the soul of the other into which I can never see, onto which I can never hold, and, most important, which I can never know…Yet, since the soul has been incarnate, I can still feel it, feel with it, feel into it…and believe.[96]

So a lack of connection between the perceptible layers of matter in *Concluding* need not imply a collapse into sameness: the varying manifestations of a spatial world in the novel accord with the account of perception producing multiple iterations of the world which is set out in *The Visible and the Invisible*. Even though the perceiver is ultimately part of the universal flesh of the world, that bond remains invisible. *Concluding* is an example of the continuous process of perceptual faith, combining incredulity at every manifestation of the world with the belief that each is an approximation of the same entity.

The looser grasp on spaces which seems evident in *Concluding* and *Loving* could be read as the outcome of Henry Green's growing openness to multiple iterations of the same terrain within a single novel. His preference for delineating spaces by tracking the movement of characters rather than through a more direct authorial description supports this reading; each character unfurls their own version of the spatial world. These multiple adumbrations are reinforced by the perceptual oddities present in the novels, such as the perspectival distortions in *Loving* and the mysterious sound and echoes of *Concluding*. Our attention is drawn to the varying spatial perception of different characters so that we also come to see Green's fictional worlds as 'interwoven with incredulity.'

The impression of unreality which attaches itself to the places of *Loving* grows even stronger with the depiction of *Concluding's* Institute. The insistent capitalisation of Institute in the text, and of all the associated terms of its bureaucracy – State, Directive, Commission, Department, Supervisor etc. – carry not just the stamp of an authoritarian regime but also the trace of over-emphasis that hints at self-doubt. When this officious capitalisation is extended to geographic terms - such as Town and Place - the effect becomes ludicrous rather than impressive. For example when the two principals return to the Institute from a trip to London (or rather to Town, to attend their Commissions), the tone becomes comic:

> Not long after...Baker and Edge were driven back into the Park in their little red State tourer, which hummed up the main Drive at twenty miles an hour. A cloud of white dust attended it, was always at a respectful distance, following behind. "I love this Great Place," Miss Edge shouted to her companion as though the lady were as deaf as Mr Rock, then put her face out of one side.'[97]

Amid the overtly humorous touch of the 'respectful' plume of dust, the unnecessary capitals attached to Drive and Great Place resonate with a pomposity which renders them absurd rather than menacing. While this irony mocks the principals' inflated pride in their domain it also calls attention to their linguistic over-emphasis: in a sense the institute exists as an Institute, the place as a Great Place, through acts of will foregrounded in the text. The over-naming of the house and its grounds by the principals is revealed as a deliberate strategy to build up its presence.

These linguistic acts are but a part of what *Concluding* suggests is an actual process of conjuring the Institute into being through authoritarian force of will. The text suggests that the physical form of the building is summoned and maintained by the principals, that it exists because they have created it from thin air. This act of creation is implied as Miss Edge, from a window, watches daylight breaking over the grounds:

> But Miss Edge could not at once leave the scene spread out afresh. Because, with the coming of light, the mist was rolling back, even below her third Terrace, all the way

to her ring of beechwoods planted in line with the crescent of her House; although off to the left, where beech trees and azaleas came down over water, her Lake still held its still fog folded in a shroud. "I love this great Place," she announced.[98]

The shapes in the unfurling landscape (ring, line, crescent), the repeated possessive form ('her Terrace', 'her House', 'her Lake'), the emphatic capital letters and the curious precision of the 'third' terrace and the woods mimicking the line of the house; all these combine to suggest the artifice in the landscape, the control that is exerted over it by the occupants of the house and the possibility that its existence is dependent on authoritarian decree. In effect, the landscape is rising from the morning mist, from insubstantiality to form, only because it has been constructed by the powers of Miss Edge and the State she serves. The idea that substances here are floating free to be caught and corralled is suggested at the opening of the early morning scene when 'she also caught a glimpse of matter whisk across behind, then dart back to hide.'[99] This fragment of 'matter' is a bat, but the word first attached to its appearance implies a scrap of primary material which has evaded capture and placement in the compositional whole. These hints of the Institute as an artificial presence imposed upon natural space later become explicit when Miss Edge tells Rock:

> You know it is not long since that Baker and I were privileged by the State to create the Institute out of a void. Believe me, Mr Rock, it was a vacuum indeed when we first came. But already our old girls would be distressed to hear of change in any shape.[100]

The impulse to control through artifice is also revealed in the description of the two women's study, or 'Sanctum' as the text names it, where an original seventeenth century design has been overlaid with a mass of detail that baffles the eye and jars against its background:

> The panelling was remarkable in that it boasted a dado designed to continue the black and white tiled floor in perspective, as though to lower the ceiling. But Miss Edge had found marble tiles too cold to her toes, had had the stone covered in parquet blocks on which were spread State imitation Chinese Kidderminster rugs. As a result, this receding vista of white and black lozenges set from the rugs to four feet up the walls in precise and radiating perspective, seemed altogether out of place next British dragons in green and yellow; while the gay panelling above, shallow

carved, was genuine, the work of a master, giving Cupid over and over in a thousand poses, a shock, a sad surprise in such a room.[101]

This room has been overlaid by its new owners in ways calculated to change not just its atmosphere but its very dimensions, by seeming to lower the ceiling and control the perspective. When Merode is later questioned in this room about her mysterious overnight disappearance, the black and white squares of the dado seem to come to life before her. This is a disorientating and 'frightening' movement where 'the black square would begin to swell when the whole stretch was beginning to billow, as if the painted pavement was carried out on canvas which had started to heave under a rhythmically controlled impulse actuated from behind.'[102] In a premonition of the dance that will set the whole Institute in motion later that day, the 'rhythmically' heaving fabric of the room – the room that is the centre of the Institute's authority – takes on a terrifying and oppressive instability. The spatial composition of the Institute is shown to be the outcome of a process of design and control, but even as this process has the desired effects it reveals the artificiality of its own spaces.

This inherent doubt over the solidity of spatial construction again suggests parallels between Green's fiction and Merleau-Ponty's philosophy; drawing attention to the subjectivity of perception which is a key component of phenomenology, and particularly to the vision contained in *The Visible and the Invisible* of multiple iterations of the world which overlay one another, as the rugs overlay marble and as tiles conflict with panelling in Green's description of the Sanctum. An implicit critique of fictional art is also present here; literary description being another mode of iterating the world and so equivalent to the attempts to control space to which Baker and Edge resort. This idea raises questions about the extent to which Green is complicit in these issues of authority and control in *Concluding* and his stance towards the State's attempts to impose the Institute: is his view essentially comic, satirical of a new post-war managerial order, or steeped in self-doubt at fiction's ability to capture the multiple adumbrations of the spatial world?

Marius Hentea suggests Green's engagement with these questions is formal rather than overtly political, including a decentring of narrative authority in *Concluding* as a deliberate means of breaking up omniscient realism. Hentea argues that a fear of authority runs through the novel but the source of that fear is never really present so that there is no controlling agency in *Concluding* except the abstract and largely absent state: 'The power behind it all never surfaces, giving the entire novel the appearance of a confidence trick in which everyone is complicit, everyone thinking themselves in control but in fact being a plaything for others.' [103] This is an explanation which captures the political uncertainty of the authorial tone which runs through *Concluding* but doesn't consider the novel's philosophical, specifically ontological, engagement with spaces and places.

Where *Loving* contains hints of the unreality of its own places, *Concluding* leaves no doubt that the Institute is an unsustainable spatial construction, maintained only through acts of power and will. The textual undermining of this place is the converse of Edge's act of assertion in creating it 'from a void.' *Concluding* undoes what she claims to have achieved. The intense engagement with these questions of control of space gives the narrative a knowledge of the fictionality of its own places which is even stronger than in *Loving*. While Edith and Kate's waltz suggests an instability behind spatial surfaces, the complicity of Kinalty Castle in their dance appears comparatively benign, but in *Concluding* the dance has a destructive resonance, a wheeling which sets the Institute in motion and simultaneously reveals the intent to dominate and control which is bound up with its apparition. Kinalty is ultimately unconvincing as a place because its rooms and landscapes pale in comparison with a primordial sense of space which can be discovered through human movement; the Institute is ultimately unconvincing because it is an artificial spatial construction created by malign and self-regarding political intent. This control is only partial, and does not succeed in overlaying a primary sense of space which persists in *Concluding*, as in *Loving*. Yet the organisational logic which this control imposes on the Institute's inhabitants, if not on the text, is powerful.

The tension generated by an 'appropriated' space aimed at dominating the natural space which underlies it is at the heart of Henri Lefebvre's theories of social space set out in *The Production of Space* (1974). Lefebvre saw natural space fast disappearing before the ravages of humans, persisting as background but being progressively lost to the view and to thought. As society produces its own manifestations of space these inevitably encode its own socio-political rules and arrangements. So, in *Concluding*, the Institute, incarnates an authoritarian spatial control which Rock's continued presence in his cottage resists. The ultimate end of this will to spatial power, according to Lefebvre, is the establishment of an entirely abstract space, one which presents itself as logical and 'normal' in that it regulates the practices of life so completely that alternative forms of spatial practice become inconceivable:

> As a body of constraints, stipulations and rules to be followed, social space acquires a normative and repressive efficacy - linked instrumentally to its objectality - that makes the efficacy of mere ideologies and representations pale in comparison.
>
> [...]
>
> Spatial practice regulates life – it does not create it. Space has no power 'in itself', nor does space as such determine spatial contradictions. These are contradictions of society – contradictions between one thing and another within society, as for example between the forces and relations of production – that simply emerge in space, at the level of space, and so engender the contradictions of space.[104]

Lefebvre's dystopian view of a politically regulated space that entirely blankets over the world's natural spaces is not actualised in *Concluding*; as we shall see, the persistence of the natural world is one of the things that resists the political control of space. However the impulse toward such an order is one of the novel's undercurrents, a latent theme which signifies a preoccupation with space.

The regulation of space was a prime political concern in 1940s Britain. Public discourse about building, landscape and living conditions rose to a crescendo during the decade because of the urgency of post-war reconstruction and a perceived need to plan urban and suburban growth which had proceeded unchecked in the pre-war years. The magazine *Picture Post* published a

special edition entitled 'A Plan for Britain' as early as January 1941, when the country was still

under bombardment,[105] establishing the tone for the years of debate and policy which

followed. In 1944 the planner Patrick Abercrombie delivered his *Greater London Plan*, which

set out a strategy to manage the city and its environs for decades ahead. At the heart of the

strategy was a presumption about the allotment of space; in a section entitled 'Assumptions',

the author described one of the precise problems to wrestle with as the 'fixing of densities of

people to provide satisfactory conditions for health and work.'[106] Abercrombie's solution was

to divide London and its surroundings into four concentric rings, the inner city core, the

suburbs, a protective green belt and an outer country ring where new towns were to be built.

A maximum net density of 100 people per acre was set down, with an optimum density set for

each of these rings; for example 50 in the suburban ring.[107] And the plan recommended that to

reduce density in central London, more than 1 million people would need to be 'decentralised'

out of the city to new towns.[108] Separate plans were also drawn up for other heavily-bombed

towns, including Plymouth, Bristol, Southampton and Hull. Not only did planning become a

national obsession in this era but for the first time it began to metrically regulate the

designation of land for building, while the process of planning was enshrined in a centralised

system. Meanwhile a general political move towards nationalisation, secured by Labour's

victory at the 1945 general election, meant that a regime of state delivery became the norm.[109]

The echoes of this planning debate and its bureaucratic implementation are audible in

Concluding where the rigidities of the state apparatus dictate what physical forms the Institute

can take. Foiled by Rock's occupation of the cottage they crave, Baker and Edge discuss

applying for a licence to build a new one from the 'Secretariat of New Buildings'[110] and study

the small print of the Directive which sets out the rules that apply to the contested cottage.

Similarly, a government letter instructs the principals to set up a pig farm at the Institute, and

Liz and Sebastian's romance is coloured by the knowledge that if they marry the State will

move him to another post. It may be that Green's primary intention is to satirise the future of

a nationalised Britain in *Concluding* (which is set in an unspecified future year) and the frequent absurdities of the Institute are essentially comic. However the growth of state control and the themes of spatial contest and instability in the novel are sufficiently intertwined to suggest that Green's anxious absorption with space in *Concluding* is informed by the immediate political issues of its time.

Yet space in *Concluding* is not entirely yielded to political control. Resistance comes not just in the form of Mr Rock but also in the persistence of a natural or primordial space which, to use Lefebvrian terms, has not been blanketed over by the artificialities of the abstract space of the Institute. In part this natural space is affirmed by Rock's animals, his goose, pig and cat. Their primordial spatial knowledge is made explicit from the first pages of the novel and is filtered back through a secondary human apprehension of the same space. So the blanketing fog which opens the novel obscures the visual world (already dim anyway to the elderly Mr Rock) but is no barrier to Ted, the goose:

> "Old and deaf, half blind" Mr Rock said about himself, the air raw in his throat. Nevertheless he saw how plain how Ted was not ringed in by fog. For the goose posed staring, head to one side, with a single eye, straight past the house, up into the fog bank which had made all daylight deaf beneath, and beyond which, at some clear heights, Mr Rock knew now there must be a flight of birds fast winging, - Ted knows where, he thought.[111]

The clarity of the goose's perception is shared at one remove by the half-blind and deaf old man so that he receives an intimation of clearly-delineated space beyond the fog and the birds flying there.

Similarly, it is hinted, the mystery of the disappearing girls Mary and Merode (compared by Miss Marchbanks to flown birds) is known to Alice, the Persian cat, of whom Moira asks: 'What mightn't Alice be able to tell?'[112] Rock takes Daisy to search the lakeshore for the missing Mary, on the premise that 'Daisy would be his eyes'.[113] All three animals are re-gathered in the darkness at the novel's conclusion, settling Mr Rock's disquiet at what he cannot see and at

the mystery the novel has left unsolved. Just as they can see through the fog and in dazzling daylight, so the animals are at home in the blackness. In these final pages, Rock perceives Daisy 'keeping to black shade', hears a hiss from an unseen Ted inside her kennel and is alerted to the return of a Alice by a yowl in the darkness outside his door. By proxy, the obscured spaces of *Concluding* are made visible because of the three animals that surround Rock. Each of the novel's three sections has its own blinding quality - first fog, then dazzling sunlight and finally darkness laced with transforming moonlight - and each of these is negotiated through attachment to the animals. Natural spaces described at both the beginning and the end of *Concluding* can be seen as surviving the authoritarian impulse of the State. Equally, the various animal and human apprehensions of the spatial world set out in the novel could be seen, following Merleau-Ponty, to be iterations of the invisible world of universal flesh in which everything, including the distinction between subject and object, is ultimately subsumed. On either account, Green seems drawn to investigate spatial strangeness, but also to show significant faith in a primordial spatial ontology, and this faith appears crucial to his art.

This primal space in the dimly delineated grounds of the Institute is intimated by sound as much as by vision, and in equally disturbing imprecision. Beyond the artificiality of the house and its landscape as constructed from the principals' Sanctum lies a more nebulous but resonant space which is revealed through the mysterious calls and echoes that punctuate *Concluding* (as we saw in chapter two, where I suggested the echoes were reminiscent of sounds made by the V2 rocket). Rationally understood as the sounds of searchers for the missing Mary and Merode, or of the girls themselves lost in the woods, these sounds have an inexplicable reverberation that seems to set the entire spatial environment trembling. These sounds unsettle their witnesses not only by what they might portend but also by the doubts they bring to perceptions of depth, direction and source. Thus they direct attention to the qualities of space even as they problematise the process of their perception. These cries have the tendency of suspending any perceptual faith in the ostensible space of the Institute, its

constructed and rationalised forms, while carrying the intimation of a primordial spatial sense

that lies behind it. From the first appearance of these cries, as Rock and the woodcutter Adams

are making their way through the fogbound wood, the number and intensity of the sounds are

uncertain with each witness catching different versions of them. Adams hears first a call and its

echo, then what he describes as two calls with no echo. Rock's belief is that a call only echoes

when it's uttered by someone facing the house, which throws back the sound, while Adams

maintains that it is the trees which cause the echo.[114] Shortly afterwards, the sound is different

again:

> Then the cry came a third time, much clearer, so that even Mr Rock heard, and the double echo. "Ma-ree," a girl's voice shrilled, then a moment later the house volleyed back "Ma-ree, ma-ree," but in so far deeper a note that it might have been a man calling.'[115]

At this moment Rock is plunged into reflection, asking himself if his grand-daughter Elizabeth's

romance with the economics teacher Birt could have been arranged by Baker and Edge to

drive her mad and so get him out of his cottage. His vision of Elizabeth is 'straitjacketed even,

muffled in a padded room';[116] and ties the sound to the machinations of the Institute, even as

the primal cries are still reverberating through the woods. For the noise startles and unsettles

Edge in the house too even though Baker does not hear it.[117] Later Baker hears an echoed cry

which comes from Rock calling his goose, but again there is a nervous uncertainty of its source:

> Because he faced the great house, the echo volleyed back at him, "Ted, Ted."
>
> "Good heavens, what was that?...It was a man, wasn't it?" Miss Baker quavered, to be reassured.'[118]

The cries then unsettle the inhabitants of the park, as well as confusing their spatial senses.

However the significance each hearer attributes to the noises, as well as the presumed

connection they have with the girls' disappearance - which is the closest *Concluding* comes to

a plot - gives the sounds a portentousness that outweighs the collective visual qualia of the

text. Despites its mystery, the sound is the guiding beacon that lies at the book's fog-bound heart. As Bassoff acutely remarks: 'If once we found the source of the echo in *Concluding*, the spell of the book would be lost.'[119] While the animals can register spatial information visually, the humans' only reliable evidence is aural; given that the landscapes are either obscured by nature or constructed from the Institute's controlling perspective. The echo is like a sonar system suggesting an approximate bearing, a gearing to the spatial world, to use Merleau-Ponty's formulation. A memory of the sound V2s made over war-time London may have inspired the aural structure of the echoes in *Concluding* as suggested in chapter two. But, even if this suggestion is persuasive, it does not lessen the mystery of the noises in the novel; like the rocket and like Merleau-Ponty's idea of a universal flesh, these sounds intimate an originary dimension beyond the horizons of quotidian perception.

In a sense the persistence of this spatial capture, however tentative, is the thread that gives *Concluding* its continuity; enduring from first page to last. The novel's narrative is entirely stalled: what happened to Mary is never revealed; we do not discover if Rock is to receive his expected honour, and the struggle over his cottage is unresolved. A day passes with nothing decided. However the action of the novel is negotiating a course through this day without becoming lost in its mysteries as Mary has. Mr Rock's day is an individual's iteration of a largely unknowable world within a daily, personal frame. For Bassoff: 'The form of the book is a series of ripples from a central disturbance which remains obscure though intimated.'[120] This disturbance lies somewhere in the spatial composition of the world delineated by *Concluding*, and the negotiation of the tremors from this disturbance is the progression which the novel charts.

Ultimately, Green's fiction of the 1940s is able to accommodate the spatial puzzles which he is repeatedly drawn to describe: sliding perspectives; the contrast between vague spatial description and clarity of space traced by human action; terrain revealed as artificially

constructed and an instability which gathers up both animate and inanimate matter in its motion. Green's means of assimilating these forces is intertwined with the development of his writing after the war as it moved further away from familiar modernist practices. His progressive shift to a wholly exterior view of characters began to loosen the distinction between subject and object, while the incorporation of multiple versions of a spatial world in his novels replaced the desire for epistemological 'grip', which seemed to drive many modernist writers, with a perceptual faith in a primordial spatial ontology. Like Merleau-Ponty, Green came to accept a looser grasp on the world, one that allows for multiple perceptions to present 'progressive approximations' of what exists, yet will not be able to fully reveal that invisible world nor its bond with the perceiver. The illusions of perception are not invalid or 'mistaken', they are but one iteration of the world; so spatial confusions like those on which Green's fiction dwells can be contained in his fiction, rather than reducing it to incoherence.

What is lost in abandoning epistemological surety is any validity in the idea of place. The settings of both *Concluding* and *Loving* are revealed as artificial; they are unreal places which the act of perceptual faith and its multiple perspectives on the world are unable to make solid. One of the consequences of the preoccupation with space that distinguishes both *Concluding* and *Loving* is that they acknowledge the fictionality of their own settings and, by extension, of all settings. When Green has the butler Raunce write to his mother in 'Peterboro', Yorks'[121] he is signposting this fact with a weak but self-aware joke; there is nowhere in Yorkshire called Peterborough (though it is a town in Cambridgeshire) and so the writing foregrounds its abandonment of the pretence that it is representing real places. What looks like a trivial aside is emphasised by the way that Raunce first writes these letters in pencil and then goes over them in ink, as if aware of the insubstantiality of this address. This knowledge is also reflected in the inadequate map of the castle and, in *Concluding*, of the absurdities of the labelling of the Great Place which the Institute aspires to be. The impression, then, is of two novels which show a crumbling belief in the fictional power to delineate places, but also affirm the writer's

ability to capture some of the complexities of human experience of space. Though Green's

literary approach to the perceptual world is one 'interwoven with incredulity', its doubts about

the precision of what can be described are tempered by a faith in the value of the attempt.

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[1] The novels are *Caught* (1943), *Loving* (1945), *Back* (1946) and *Concluding* (1948). The autobiography is *Pack My Bag* (1940). Short stories were published singly in various magazines during the 1940s and subsequently collected in *Surviving: the uncollected writings of Henry Green* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992)

[2] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* ed. by Claude Lefort, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 137

[3] *The Visible and the Invisible,* p. 28

[4] Henry Green, *Pack my Bag* (London: Hogarth, 1952), p. 5

[5] Bruce Bassoff, *Towards Loving* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1975), p. 3

[6] Laura L Doan, 'Recuperating the Postwar Moment', in *Troops versus Tropes; war and literature,* ed. by Evelyn J Hinze (Winnipeg: Mosaic, 1990), p. 113

[7] Rosamond Lehman, 'An Absolute Gift'*, Times Literary Supplement*, 6 August 1954, p 508

[8] The full article, 'Before the Great Fire', with its previous publication details, is reprinted in *Surviving*, p. 260-279

[9] *Surviving*, p. 260

[10] *Surviving*, p. 269-271

[11] *Surviving*, p. 271-272

[12] *Surviving*, p. 271

[13] *Surviving*, p. 272

[14] *Surviving*, p. 274

[15] *Surviving*, p. 277-278

[16] Green told an interviewer: 'If you're trying to write something which has a life of its own…of course the author must keep completely out of the picture.' 'The Art of Fiction', in *Surviving*, p. 244

[17] Henry Green, *Loving, Living, Party Going* (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 323-324

[18] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 22-23

[19] 'Psychology, traditionally conceived as the science of mind, became conceived as the science of behaviour, where behaviour was understood to include only the 'observable' activities of an organism, or, in the version B. F. Skinner dubbed 'radical behaviourism', where behaviour was conceived of expansively so that 'private events' like thinking, feeling, and so on, although not directly observable were taken to be kinds of behaviour subject to the same laws as more public, conspicuous behaviour.' Ted Honderich ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) Online edition <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780199264797.001.0001/acref-9780199264797-e-231?rskey=wG3gcQ&result=6 >[accessed 9 May 2015]

[20] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 212

[21] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 213

[22] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p.393

[23] Henry Green, *Caught* (London: Harvill, 2001), p. 49

[24] *Caught*, p. 152

[25] The critic James Wood recounts a feeling of shock on first reading Walter Allen's comment that Green characters are described entirely 'from the outside.' Woods suggests that, while this is true, it barely obtrudes on the reader who retains access to the inner life of Green's characters; their mysteries are no less opaque than the indeterminacy of the outside world often seen in his fiction. Wood's argument overlooks both the starkness of the emphasis on exteriority in *Loving* and the gradual development of

Green's style to 1945. James Wood, 'A Plausible Magic', *The Times Literary Supplement,* 6 January 2006; p. 12

[26] Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art* (London: Cassell, 1934), p. 126-128

[27] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr* (London: The Egoist, 1918), p. 295

[28] Andrzej Gasiorek, 'Wyndham Lewis: Tarr', in *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, eds. David Bradshaw and Kevin J.H. Dettmar (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 406

[29] *Tarr*, p. 267-268

[30] Gasiorek, p. 404

[31] Noted , for example in: Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* (London: Verso, 1989), p.133

[32] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 19

[33] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 19

[34] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 21

[35] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 23

[36] *Loving Living, Party Going*, p. 25

[37] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 70

[38] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 24

[39] Quoted in Anthony Quinton, 'A French View of Loving', *London Magazine* 6 (1959) 26-30

[40] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 285-287

[25] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 292

[42] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 296

[43] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 69

[44] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 99

[45] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p114

[46] Patrick Hamilton, *The Slaves of Solitude* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 6

[47] Richard Overy, *The Bombing War - Europe 1939-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 143

[48] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 164

[49] Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 312

[50] Harrisson, p. 98

[51] Angus Calder, *The People's War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), p. 315-316

[52] Quoted in David Kynaston, *A World to Build* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), p. 122

[53] Harrisson, p. 125

[54] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 198

[55] Henry Green, *Concluding* (London: Hogarth, 1950), p. 10

[56] *Concluding* p52

[57] Michael North, *Henry Green and the writing of his generation* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1984) p167

[58] North, p142

[59] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p1

[60] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p37

[61] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p83

[62] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p25

[63] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p54

[64] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p122

[65] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p65

[66] Heidegger's primary discussion of spatiality in *Being and Time* is the section headed 'The Aroundness of the Surrounding World and the Spatiality of Dasein.' Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press. 2010), p. 99-110

[67] Heidegger, p. 103

[68] Heidegger, p. 103-104

[69] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 34

[70] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 84

[71] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 35

[72] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 87

[73] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 55

[74] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 111

[75] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 107

[76] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 64

[77] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 106, p. 182

[78] *Loving, Living, Party Going* p. 9

[79] *Loving, Living, Party Going* p. 39

[80] *Loving, Living, Party Going* p. 125

[81] *Loving, Living, Party Going* p. 38

[82] *Loving, Living, Party Going* p. 169

[83] *Loving, Living, Party Going* p. 64-65

[84] *Concluding,* p. 198

[85] *Concluding*, p. 199

[86] Rod Mengham, *The Idiom of the Time* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 148

[87] *Concluding,* p. 19

[88] Mengham, p. 195

[89] Mengham, p. 197

[90] Mengham observes that the working title of *Concluding* was *Dying*.

[91] Mengham, p. 205

[92] *Concluding*, p. 199-200

[93] *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 248

[94] *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 28

[95] *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 41

[96] Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor, 'The Value of Flesh: Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy and the Modernism/Postmodernism Debate', in Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (eds.), *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 11

[97] *Concluding*, p. 75

[98] *Concluding*, p. 15

[99] *Concluding*, p. 12

[100] *Concluding*, p. 210-211

[101] *Concluding*, p. 11-12

[102] *Concluding*, p. 69-70

[103] Marius Hentea, *Henry Green at the limits of Modernism* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press 2014), p. 93

[104] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 358

[105] Kynaston, p. 20

[106] Patrick Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan* (London: HMSO, 1944), p. 4

[107] Abercrombie, p. 17

[108] Abercrombie, p. 5

[109] See for example, Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Pan, 2008), p. 67-70

[110] *Concluding*, p. 18

[111] *Concluding*, p. 92

[112] *Concluding*, p. 50

[113] *Concluding*, p. 147

[114] *Concluding*, p. 7-8

[115] *Concluding*, p. 10-11

[116] *Concluding*, p. 11

[117] *Concluding*, p. 16

[118] *Concluding*, p. 150

[119] Bassoff, p. 125

[120] Bassoff, p. 78

[121] *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p. 42

CHAPTER FOUR

Across the zones: the new shapes of post-war Europe

When British forces arrived at the borders of Austria in the spring of 1945 they looked their Russian allies in the face for the first time. The Russians had overthrown Austria's remaining Nazi forces to take charge of a country shattered by war and were now ready to share its post-war rule with the other victorious powers. This co-operation was not to be easy though. There were stark ideological divides between the Soviets and the Western powers; even at the moment of joint victory over Germany there were evident cultural and physical boundaries between the Allies which presaged the Cold War. The translator Masha Williams, who was in the first British party allowed into Russian-controlled Austria, describes the division in the opening line of her memoir: 'The barrier was between us, forbidding entry to the Soviet zone. We glared across at each other.'[1] The establishment of these new post-war zones meant new fences, new bureaucracy and new maps. It also demanded new thinking: not only about how to negotiate the novel political geography but also how to order and arrange these spaces conceptually. The abruptness of the break in a landscape or territory formerly thought of as homogenous challenged habitual notions of spatial continuity, sequence and linearity. This emerging challenge can be seen in some literary accounts from the 1940s, especially Graham Greene's novella _The Third Man_, set in post-war Vienna and written in 1948. The innovative spatial view which Greene takes here contrasts with his pre-war urban description in _Brighton Rock_ (1938). New spatial thinking can also be seen in some Blitz literature where the bomb damage and blockages of London suggested an interruption in prevailing assumptions about the arrangement of space. A striking example of this interruption lies in Elizabeth Bowen's descriptions of the effects of bombing in London, which produce a vision of the city as an archipelago of disconnected districts. Tracing this literary attention to a newly-problematic post-war spatiality invites comparisons with theoretical and literary thinking about space from

later decades: it is a type of thinking which diagnoses space as the overriding concern of the times and which is often characterised as postmodern.

Speaking in 1967, Michel Foucault for instance was quite certain that a newly spatial age had arrived, one in which space 'appears to form the horizon of our concerns, our theory, our systems' and which contrasted with the 'glaciations' of the 19th century and its 'great obsessions' with history, with time.[2] Foucault is imprecise about when the transition from temporally-dominated ways of thinking about the world to a contemporary 'epoch of space' occurred, but his argument here in 'Des Espaces Autres' sets out a historic development in the conceptions of space; from the medieval, to the renaissance, to the modern. In the Middle Ages, he argues, rigid cosmological theory assigned to terrestrial places a natural ground and stability, encouraging a medieval way of thinking about space as 'emplacement'. In the seventeenth century this sense of fixity was undone by the scientific work of Galileo which suggested an infinite and open space in which emplacement was no more than a place or object's temporary stasis, a point in its movement. According to Foucault, the renaissance idea of extension came to replace the medieval concept of localized emplacement. But this concept was in turn displaced by a contemporary spatial understanding built on the idea of 'the site'; this was a model of space in which places are connected *relationally* to one another. On this understanding, spaces can be linked to one another by similarities and common elements of which adjacence - geographic proximity - is only one possible bond. Spaces that are physically remote from one another may still be similar, and therefore related in our understanding, if they share identical qualities or elements. Foucault suggests that we may perceive apparently disparate spaces as marked with the same codes, operating by the same mechanics and containing the same patterns of data, so that we imagine them as spatially-linked. He concludes: 'Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites.' Another way to summarise Foucault's argument might be to say that he proposes that the concept of contiguity, of physical adjacency, has been superseded by that of propinquity,

which contains both the idea of proximity but also of kinship, of relationship by virtue of

similarity.[3] To think about spaces in this way is to construct a conceptual model, thus

exceeding the self-imposed limits of phenomenologists who restrict themselves to studying

the immediate content of perception. However, as we shall see, phenomenology can offer an

account of how we notice the difference between spaces through attunement to them.

Therefore phenomenology usefully explains the workings of Foucault's conceptual model of

spatial organisation, even though it might deny the validity of such a model. Foucault himself

praises the contribution of phenomenologists, including Gaston Bachelard's work on poetics,

in *Des Espaces Autres*.[4]

The bulk of Foucault's essay is concerned with his discussion of heterotopias, a particular form

of linked spaces which carry a universal and atemporal resonance. Much scholarly discussion

of *Des Espaces Autres* focuses on this idea. This concept is controversial and has been

challenged by, among others, Marxists including Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey. Their

objection, as we shall see in more detail, is that Foucault makes the mistake of attempting to

think about theoretical spaces in abstraction from their historical context.[5] Foucault speaks of

particular instances of heterotopia - for example, of cemeteries, gardens, brothels and boats -

whose socio-political meanings change with their time and may disappear altogether *as*

heterotopias. However, his argument is that all times and societies have their heterotopias, so

that heterotopias are a universal fact. It is this insistence on an essential and trans-historical

ordering of space to which Marxist critics have objected. In short, Foucault's diagnosis of a

spatial age is problematic and cannot be uncritically taken as the key to interpreting a new

interest in spatial configurations which we see in writing of the 1940s. However, nor is it

necessary to either accept or discard the notion of heterotopia in order to explore possible

connections between the literature of this period and Foucault's thinking. Indeed, the

attention both Foucault's supporters and sceptics have given to the concept of heterotopia

may have masked these possible connections: an interest in the linkages between scattered

spaces proposed by Foucault means there has been less examination of the converse implication of his argument, namely of proximate spaces or places which come to be conceived as disjunct because of marked difference between them. Via Foucault, we may think of neighbouring territories, city districts or even streets as entirely separated from one other by virtue of their characteristics, qualities or the rules by which they operate, even though they are only a short distance apart.

It is perhaps reasonable to assume that the mental divisions we make between different parts of a city can arise at almost any point in its history. For example, when slums and wealthy areas exist side by side the contrast between them is what strikes us most forcefully when we think of them together; in other words, the fact of their geographic nearness only accentuates their qualitative difference. Thinking of either area in isolation we are more likely to group each one with similar districts, with other pockets of wealth or deprivation. But even if this process of grouping places by similarity comes naturally, it is surely intensified by the drama of war and its aftermath. Newly urgent categories of similarity and dissimilarity are thrown up by conflict: suddenly it becomes vital to know if a territory is occupied or unoccupied; bombed or untouched; neutral or aligned; supplied or starving. These new conceptual categories tend to supplant or at least overlay the old ones; in wartime it's usually more immediately practical to think of an area as either bomb-damaged or intact than to categorise it by its social demographic. In short, Foucault's proposition of spatial thinking increasingly determined by relations and qualities rather than simple nearness, seems especially apt for periods of conflict Yet this affinity does not seem to have been widely explored either by Foucault scholars in general or by literary critics in particular. Some criticism examines war writing specifically in relation to Foucault's model of heterotopias. An example, that informs what follows here, is Shafquat Towheeds's essay on the spaces of Bowen's fiction set in the Second World War.[6] But what has remained unexplored are the possible connections between 1940s writing and the

fundamental proposition of Foucault's essay: namely, that a newly-spatial age dawns when we think of spaces connected not by nearness but by similarity.

The Second World War threw up several striking new examples of territories newly-divided and marked by different rules and qualities. Prominent among these were Germany and Austria which, after Allied victory, were internally partitioned by the victorious powers. In 1945 both countries were divided into four zones of occupation, one each controlled by the US, Britain, France and Russia. This model of four-part division was replicated in their capital cities, Berlin and Vienna. In the case of Vienna, an added complication was that the central part of the city, the *Innere Stadt*, was under shared control with each of the four allies taking charge of its International Patrol in a process of monthly rotation.[7]

One effect of these new geo-political divisions was to stymie and complicate everyday life with a new system that either regulated or completely checked movement across territory which had previously been a navigable whole. New borders and boundaries meant not only re-thinking the everyday practicalities of journeys but also undertaking a conceptual re-assembly of once-familiar territories in order to assimilate the new spatial rules on which they now ran. The normal assumption that the easiest way to travel from one point to another is to follow a straight line between them no longer applied in occupied Austria after 1945. As the historian Giles MacDonogh relates, closeness in space was no longer the automatic first principle of transit:

> The Allied Zones were self-contained units and it was not easy to move from one to the other, and well-nigh impossible to get from the Western Allies to the Soviet Zone. Schärf [an Austrian politician] maintained that it was easier to go from the Marchfeld, north east of Vienna, to Brno in Czechoslovakia than it was to reach Salzburg in the American Zone. From Salzburg, it was a simple business travelling to Munich, but much harder to make it to Vienna. To some extent this was intentional: Stalin desired a buffer zone to this satellite states in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and wanted to keep the Western Allies away.[8]

The political control that Russia sought to exert over the newly-occupied spaces of Europe was inevitably mirrored in London and Washington where strenuous efforts were made to secure power and influence in divided Austria. Churchill sent a telegram to President Truman in June 1945 which laid out his worries about a Soviet domination of Vienna:

> Here is the capital of Austria which by agreement is to be divided, like the country itself, into four zones; but no one has any power there except the Russians…if we gave give way in this matter, we must regard Austria as in the Sovietized half of Europe.[9]

The anxiety about a loss of control over partitioned cities and countries meant that the new internal barriers became increasingly important to the allies. Both physical barriers like roadblocks or checkpoints, and bureaucratic ones such as passes or permits, helped each power reinforce their grip on the territory they occupied and to restrict passage through it for others. This was a practice which contributed to a view that post-war Europe was more divided than ever and that optimism about new technology freeing the traveller to roam without check had been unwarranted. George Orwell, writing in *Tribune* in October 1945, saw the atomic bomb as the latest in a string of technologies which would serve to freeze geo-political control in territorial forms that could not be traversed or challenged by their residents:

> We were once told that the aeroplane had 'abolished frontiers'; actually it is only since the aeroplane became a serious weapon that frontiers have become definitely impassable. The radio was once expected to promote international understanding and co-operation; it has turned out to be a means of insulating one nation from another. The atomic bomb may complete the process by robbing the exploited classes and peoples of all power to revolt, and at the same time putting the possessors of the bomb on a basis of military equality.[10]

Orwell's vision, which shaped his novel *1984,* is of sealed-off, non-communicative empires which are secure in their power and whose borders are fixed. These certainties grant only restriction and not comfort to the people living under them. While the terrible power of weaponry is one determinant of this status quo, Orwell also draws explicitly on the thesis of James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* (1941), which presents soldiers as just one

profession among a new class of technocrats – executives, bureaucrats, managers – who will parcel out the world not on existing ideological lines but in order to concentrate power and control in their own hands. In this new order, the obstacles of bureaucracy - of passports, curfews, zones of control, permits - are as significant as weaponry in partitioning spaces and dividing peoples.

The particularities of the geo-politics of post-war Vienna are laid out in detail in the opening lines of Greene's *The Third Man*, with the narrator Colonel Calloway emphasising the importance of the city's political administration for the narrative

> If you are to understand this strange, rather sad story you must have an impression at least of the background – the smashed dreary city of Vienna divided up in zones among the Four Powers; the Russian, the British, the Americans, the French zones, regions marked only by notice boards, and in the centre of the city, surrounded by the Ring with its heavy public buildings and its prancing statuary, the Innere Stadt under the control of all Four Powers.[11]

As well as the emphatic weight Greene bestows on the function of official administration with its capitalised phrases and its 'heavy' public buildings, this passage also suggests the arbitrary newness of some of forms created by that administration; of regions marked 'only' by signs rather than by more substantial barriers. The novella was a preliminary treatment for the film of *The Third Man*, in which the introductory voice-over is accompanied by four rapid, close-up shots of one of the notices at the border to each of the allied zones.[12] The power of decree and the exercise of political jurisdiction separate the newly-divided portions of the city from one another as much as military forces or physical barriers and this means that the adjacent zones of Vienna are distinguished by different regimes, cultures and rules. These operative differences mean that even if physical transit between them is possible, a conceptual or imaginative readjustment will be needed in the new sector. Physically adjacent but politically and culturally disjunct, the allied zones of Vienna appear to conform to Foucault's notion of spaces whose bonds are relational as much as topographic. In Vienna, the different political regimes overlaid by the Allies on the city have the effect of separating its spaces from one

another in the imagination so that a journey from one to the other, even if it is allowed,

suggests entering a different realm.

Noticeboard at entrance to the Russian zone from *The Third Man (©Studiocanal)*

This curious effect is an important feature of *The Third Man*. In part it is a reflection of the

city's unfamiliar strangeness, which is accentuated by the fact that the central character, Rollo

Martins, is a new arrival in Vienna and so is seeing the city with fresh eyes, as in this taxi

journey:

> He drove straight out of town into the suburb (British zone) where the Central
> Cemetery lay. One passed through the Russian zone to reach it, and took a short cut
> through the American zone, which you couldn't mistake because of the ice-cream
> parlours in every street.[13]

Mundane objects like ice-cream parlours can denote the characteristic quality of a zone. This

process of differentiation extends to the cemetery when Martins arrives there:

> Even this cemetery was zoned between the Powers: the Russian zone was marked by
> huge tasteless statues of armed men, the French by rows of anonymous wooden
> crosses and a torn, tired tricolour flag.'[14]

Martin's noting of the visual marks of a divided city immediately follows Calloway's narratorial introduction to the political geography of post-war Vienna. This passage suggests qualitative distinctions between the zones whose cartography has already sketched by the introduction.

The differences between the zones however are not just of scenic importance, they are essential to the plot of *The Third Man*. Once Martins discovers that his friend Harry Lime is not dead and buried, he comes to understand that Lime has taken refuge in the Russian zone, a place which operates by different rules and where Lime is beyond the reach of British influence. As Calloway warns Martins: 'Remember, Lime may not want you to leave the Russian zone when once you are there, and I can't protect you there.'[15] While Martins is equipped with a *laissez-passer*, a paper that permits him to move through the zones of all four powers, other characters are restricted. Lime can only appear officially in the Russian zone; his former lover Anna Schmidt must avoid the Russian zone because she is Hungarian with a faked Austrian identity and so is wanted by the Russians once Lime betrays her. Similarly Kurtz, one of Lime's co-conspirators, tells Martins: "I'm unlucky enough to be in the Russian zone – so don't visit me very late. Things sometimes happen round our way.'[16] Movement between these two places and their differing military-political jurisdictions comes to be couched in language which foreshadows that of the Cold War and transit across the iron curtain; Calloway talks of persuading Lime to 'come over' from the Russian zone and of Lime's desire to have Anna 'taken over'[17] to the Russian zone. Journeys which may be physically no more than a short walk through the city come to assume the significance of an irrevocable switch between sectors of power that are increasingly sealed off from one another. The contiguity of zones is no guarantee of their propinquity.

Vienna's embodiment of the growing political divisions among the Allies was something that Greene studied first hand during two research trips he made to the city in 1948; alone in February and then, in June, with the film's director Carol Reed and his crew.[18] They were trips

that yielded not only atmospheric and topographic detail for *The Third Man*, but also an insight

into the often fraught and fearful relations which had developed with the division of the city

and the power struggles that were played out across its zones. British intelligence reports from

1948, held in the National Archives, are rife with accounts of Russian kidnappings from the

zones controlled by other Allied powers. The fortnightly summary report for the period to 13th

February 1948 records that: 'A number of kidnappings accredited to the Russians have been

investigated during the period under review'[19] and the corresponding summary for late May

and early June speaks of a re-occurrence of kidnappings in the Russian fourth *Bezirk* [district].

Particular cases included that of Else Pfeffler, a cook kidnapped by Russians in the American

sector on 19 April but freed by the Americans the same day. The woman had originally worked

for a Russian officer when her Silesian homeland had been captured from the Germans but,

fearing repatriation to Russian territory, had taken a different job as a maid in the American

sector. British intelligence also reported how the four-power International Patrol, while under

British command in June, had been interfered with by the Russians which halted it outside

their central headquarters and dragged out a civilian prisoner.[20] Both these specific incidents

are echoed in the novella version of *The Third Man* by the case of Anna Schmidt who is

desperate to conceal her Hungarian origins because she fears repatriation to what has become

Soviet-controlled territory. When the Russians attempt to kidnap Anna, it is by driving the jeep

of the International Patrol to the Russian sector and they are stopped only when Calloway

intervenes at a roadblock. Greene's novella reflects the fear dogging many citizens of post-war

Vienna and the momentous consequences that could occur from finding oneself in the wrong

zone of the city. By September 1949, the American High Commissioner claimed, more than 800

Austrian citizens had been either kidnapped or arrested without charge by the Russians.[21]

Being in the 'wrong' zone could be fatal.

The subterfuges which characters in *The Third Man* undertake to avoid capture, restriction or

questioning accentuate the differences between the zones and the sense that they are

different spaces, despite their physical adjacence. The city's inhabitants take on a different form or significance depending on the zone from which they are viewed. Lime is dead in the British sector, alive in the Russian. Anna is Hungarian in the Russian Sector but Austrian in the other Allied zones. Kurtz wears a toupee when he first meets Martins in the Inner City, but at their second meeting in the Russian zone Martins discovers that Kurtz has a full head of hair and sees the toupee hanging on a hook.[22] This transformation is presaged in the early scene in the multi-zonal Central Cemetery where snow disguises the funereal statues: 'a toupée of snow slipped silently over an angelic face, a saint wore a heavy white moustache and a shako of snow tipped at a drunken angle over the bust of a superior civil servant.'[23] The relational bond between different places is weakened when one zone operates on different rules to another, whether because of political control or shifts in appearance. As a result, adjoining neighbourhoods can cease to appear as part of the same space. The strangeness of an adjoining zone is emphasised when Martins crosses by foot in to the Russian sector for the first time.

> Sunday had laid its false peace over Vienna; the wind had dropped and no snow had fallen for twenty-four hours…Walking over the canal by the makeshift military bridge, Martins was aware of the emptiness of the afternoon…A notice board told him that he was entering the Russian zone, but there were no signs of occupation. You saw more Russian soldier in the Inner City than here.
>
> [...]
>
> It was extraordinarily quiet over here on the other side of the canal, and a melodramatic journalist had painted a picture of silent terror, but the truth was simply the wider streets, the greater shell damage, the fewer people – and Sunday afternoon. There was nothing to fear, but all the same in this huge empty street where all the time you heard your own feet moving, it was difficult not to look behind.[24]

The eeriness of the Russian zone is primarily conveyed in spatial terms, a combination of description, analogy and metaphor. The strangeness of the 'huge, empty street' is conflated with the emptiness of the afternoon so that a temporal definition is assigned a spatial quality. Similarly, the day of the week performs a spatial operation in laying its 'false peace' over the

city, a phrase suggesting the falsity of the city's undivided wholeness as well as its illusory calm. This overlay will not succeed in hiding the differentiated zones that lie beneath. Emphasising the separation between these zones is the 'makeshift' nature of the bridge that crosses the canal between them and the weight assigned to the phrase 'over here on the other side of the canal.' Martins' journey into the Russian zone takes him to a place not only under different political control but one which appears qualitatively different and whose very space feels different from that of other parts of the city. The signs which mark off different zones of Vienna encourage this tendency to view their city's spaces separately because they signal its internal boundaries just as effectively as a fence or a roadblock would. Yet they also have a suggestive power which, perversely, is the greater because they pose no physical obstacle to movement between the zones. As both a literal and semiotic sign, a noticeboard contains the potential to demarcate spaces by calling attention to their differential qualities. They remind the observer that spaces can be separated not only by physical means but also by their operational nature. In Foucault's terms, the zone of a city may be a 'site' which is identified by the 'marked or coded elements inside a set...arranged according to single or to multiple classifications.'[25] A noticeboard tells Martins he is entering the Russian zone and is a prompt for his awareness of that zone's difference, which comes not from the presence of soldiers but from a feeling of having entered a new and distinct space.

But if different spaces have different qualities, how do we apprehend these qualitative variations? A phenomenological answer would be that this is not a result of pure observation or measurement, or any other quasi-scientific process, but rather of receptivity to the world in its primordial wholeness; a pre-reflective seizing of a spatial environment. Yet phenomenology has many branches, and different accounts of the qualities of space. As we have seen, in his earlier work Merleau-Ponty made human corporeality the pivot of the explanation, suggesting that a physical intentionality towards the world and its sensations enabled an apprehension of spatial conditions. Others have argued that this insistence on the corporeal preserves, at least

implicitly, a subject-object distinction which is absent from a truly pre-reflective state. In other words, that making a distinction between subject and object is a conceptual act. It is possible instead to examine spatial experience by a phenomenological method which retains the idea of qualitatively heterogeneous spaces without making the body the essential component of these manifestations. For example, the idea of attuned space is adopted by Elisabeth Ströker as that space which is 'expressive' and marked for each individual with phenomenal qualities of its own. Attuned space is distinguished from both the space of action and the space of intuition; together these three modes of corporeity make up the 'lived space' which, for the phenomenologist, comprises spatial ontology. In her book *Investigations in Philosophy of Space* (1965), Ströker distinguishes between the 'corporeal phenomenon given in immediate presence and corporeity as determined in specific methodologies.'[26] The former is more like Merleau-Ponty's registration of the body's ever-present connective role in spatial apprehension, while the latter allows a structure by which different modes of corporeal comportment will enable different types of spatial experience. Merleau-Ponty's earlier theory sees each act of the body, each reaching out, as an intentionality which constitutes a spatial world for us in conjunction with the external matter with which the body is involved. But Ströker argues that corporeity need not be taken as a phenomenon itself. It can instead be understood as a comportment to the world which is '*indifferent to any regional distinctions between the psychic and the physical, the inner and the outer.*'[27] Attunement, the first of the three modes of comportment she identifies, is one which grasps space in its 'expressive fullness': it is neither perception nor cognition but rather 'a way of being moved and affected.'[28] The lived experience of space then is not dependent simply on observation, nor measurement, nor physical intentionality, nor a conceptual assembly of spatial order; it encompasses a primordial sense of the spatial which includes an atmospheric fullness that precedes cognitive process.

> Expressive understanding is a unique mode of orientation towards the world: expressive understanding has its own sense-context and, and it must be taken in this uniqueness and interrogated with respect to its space.
>
> This does not contradict the notion that "spaces" may appear to be different. The transition from one to the other, from the space within a church, to the "animated" street, does not imply a dissolution of the atmospheric space as such, but rather merely a change of the expressive content. The difference between such "spaces" is itself a positive determination of the attuned space as such. [29]

This philosophical analysis of how space is manifested is one that offers parallels with a specifically literary approach to the spatial. Since literature, like all art forms, can be expressive, it has the potential to suggest spatial forms in terms of atmosphere, feeling and mood as well as describing them through the more supposedly empirical mediations of physical sensation.

In the passage quoted earlier, the depiction of the Russian zone of Vienna is one which imbues the space with a feeling or atmosphere as much as visual quality or sense of scale. Martins' entering the Russian zone can be understood as an attunement (to use Ströker's term) to one of Vienna's different spaces and this approach to reading the qualitative differences between spaces which World War II literature often presents seems a productive one. As an approach to the spatial which appears particularly appropriate for literature, this concept of attunement also has close affinities with Gaston Bachelard's theory of literary images which carry a primal, pre-reflective power and which can animate spaces with affective force. As Bachelard writes in his introduction to *The Poetics of Space* (1958): 'Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor.' [30] If *The Third Man* and other works of this period show a tendency to discover expressively-full spaces, this suggests a literary affinity not only with a phenomenological account of space as given by philosophers, but also with Bachelard's attempt to show that poetics draw on the same well of understanding in presenting the spatial in literature. Greene's novella, as we shall see, ascribes to the literary imagination (embodied by Rollo

Martins) a particular ability of personal attunement to Vienna's spaces that is lacking in

Colonel Calloway who treats the cities spaces, like Bachelard's 'surveyor' as rational,

measurable and intersubjectively accessible.

In *The Third Man*, Vienna supplies its own metonym of the city's divided spaces in the form of

the fairground wheel in the Prater park. The 'Great Wheel',[31] looming over the city, is seen to

segment space between its iron struts by echoing the zonal divisions marked out on the

ground. Amid the desolation of war-torn Vienna, the wheel's skeletal presence is not only

metaphoric of human remains but is also suggested as the city's underlying mechanism, the

surviving part which reveals the city's workings. This association is drawn in the novella's

second paragraph, where Calloway's introduction describes the wheel revealed beneath the

receding detritus of war:

> The Danube was a grey flat muddy river a long way off across the Second Bezirk, the
> Russian zone where the Prater lay smashed and desolate and full of weeds, only the
> Great Wheel revolving slowly over the foundations of merry-go-rounds like
> abandoned millstones, the rusting iron of smashed tanks which nobody had cleared
> away, the frost-nipped weeds where the snow was thin.[32]

When Martins himself visits the wheel for his meeting with the 'resurrected' Lime, the wheel's

potential to stand as a metonym for the whole city becomes even clearer. Martins is described

as 'walking up and down to keep warm, inside the enclosure of the Great Wheel'[33] as if his

journeys through the city's zones and their spoke-like divisions are also contained in this

deliberately indeterminate image. The previous motifs of skeletal remains and circular objects,

seen in Calloway's comparison of merry-go-rounds with abandoned millstones, are repeated:

'The smashed Prater with its bones sticking crudely through the snow was nearly empty. One

stall sold thin flat cakes like cartwheels.'[34] Descriptions and imaginations of Vienna in *The Third*

Man are repeatedly bound up with the structural image of a wheel; both on a vertical axis, as

with the Prater wheel itself, but also on a horizontal or topographic axis, as with the flat cakes,

the merry-go-rounds or in an earlier scene in the Central Cemetery where rows of graves seem

to echo the circular motion of the Prater wheel:

> Each avenue, numbered and lettered, stretched out like the spokes of an enormous
> wheel, they drove for a half-mile towards the west, and then turned and drove a half-
> mile north, turned south.[35]

As Charles Drazin notes, Vienna's topography offers another horizontal counterpart to the

Prater wheel in the shape of the grand circular road at its heart: 'Like some vast ground plan of

itself, [the wheel] found its echo in the Ringstrasse, the majestic boulevard that encircled the

city.'[36] Greene's novella then embraces both the idea of a wheel which cuts vertically through

space, framing the skies and the horizons with its ironwork, but also the sense of a wheel laid

flat, the spokes of which divide and delineate territory. In this form the wheel is an overlay, a

grid which partitions the sections of a previously unitary geographic whole into 'sites' which

may be locked-off from another in spite of their physical contiguity.

As a geometric device for representing the political geography of post-war Austria, this

structural motif of a divisive wheel is entirely consonant with contemporary observers'

attempts to describe the country's new reality. Alan Pryce-Jones, a pre-war resident of Austria

who returned there in uniform as an intelligence officer after the war, laid out his impressions

in 'A Letter from Vienna' published in *Horizon* magazine in 1946. His account stressed the

strangeness of the country, which sprang from its new spatial divisions:

> It is only when you have been in Vienna for a day or two that you will realise how
> abnormal everything is. This is because there are at present eight separate states
> inside the country. Each of the occupied zones is a separate state, each of the
> occupying armies is a separate state with its own language, its own social code, its
> own national objectives, its own organizations for finance, maintenance and supply.
> Somewhere in the background there is a ninth state, Austria, the chief function of
> which is to be talked about at meetings.[37]

The humorous final note does not entirely disguise the sense that a theoretically unified

territory which has been overlaid with a new political geography becomes malleable to the

imagination. Now 'in the background', Austria is more of a concept to be haggled over than a

de facto reality; the nation is noticed less than the newly-forged lattice of eight separate states

which has been laid over its terrain. Yet this background, this more liminal underlying space,

does not entirely recede from notice. In *The Third Man*, it seems to persist at least as a

conceptual presence of the type suggested by Pryce-Jones, something for the imagination to

pursue.

With the writer Martins as his central character, Greene introduces the idea of the

imagination, and often a specifically literary imagination, resisting the organising parameters

of the wheel. The persistence of a background derives at least in part from the possibility of an

imaginative summoning of another space, an alternate version of the city or the country. This

subtle theme is hinted at in Calloway's introduction where, immediately after describing the

'Great Wheel', and immediately before explaining the city's occupied zones, he says of Vienna:

'I haven't enough imagination to picture it as it had once been.'[38] Calloway's confessed lack of

imagination is entirely appropriate to his role as the reliable, factual narrator of *The Third Man*,

the voice who introduces us to the post-war reality of Vienna and recounts for the reader what

happened to Martins when he comes to the city. Calloway performs a revelatory role for

Martins, opening his eyes to the reality of Lime's character and the crimes of racketeering and

murder Lime has committed. An officer and a policeman in the pre-war world, Calloway is an

assembler of material facts who eschews the imaginative or speculative. As he says:

> 'I have reconstructed the affair as best I can from my own files and from what Matins
> told me. It is as accurate as I can make it – I have tried not to invent a line of
> dialogue.'[39]

This devotion to the evidential contrasts with Martins' tendency, as a writer and as a stranger

to the city, to reconstruct not from the files but from his imagination. It is this ability which

leads him to uncover the truth; that Lime is not dead and is himself the third man seen

carrying a corpse from a car accident. At the same time Martins' imaginative tendency is also

repeatedly seen to redraw the spaces of Vienna, to construct views and scenes unconstrained by the city's post-war zonal structure. For example, when Anna recounts the circumstances of Lime's 'death' to him, Martins experiences a vision which is attributed to his literary profession:

> Martins suddenly saw in that odd chamber of the mind that constructs such pictures, instantaneously, irrationally, a desert place, a body on the ground, a group of birds gathered. Perhaps it was a scene from one of his own books, not yet written, forming at the gate of consciousness.'[40]

A similar episode comes in a dream Martins has soon after learning of Lime's death:

> Within a minute he had left Vienna far behind him and was walking through a dense wood, ankle-deep in snow. An owl hooted, and he suddenly felt lonely and scared. He had an appointment to meet Harry under a particular tree, but in a wood so dense how could he recognize any one tree from the rest? Then he saw a figure and ran towards it: it whistled a familiar tune and his heart lifted with the relief and joy at not after all being alone.[41]

Greene is not assigning any privileged intellectual position to Martins because of this literary imaginative power. The story stresses that Martins is a hack writer of cheap Westerns and the most humorous moments of both novella and film come when he is mistaken for another, more esteemed, writer. Calloway's file-combing methods of reconstructing scenes and events are presented as at least equally effective in uncovering the conspiracy that has taken place. However, Martins' capacity for re-imagining topography assumes a significance beyond the explication of the plot. It signals his growing attunement (to use Ströker's term) to the spaces of Vienna, his mediation enabling more of the spatial atmospheres of the world of *The Third Man* to be revealed. Where Calloway is our reliable narrator of facts and events, Martins' discovery of the city reveals its spatial possibilities, including not only the pattern of the zones and their different spatial qualities but also the persistence of a discernible background beneath the newly-overlaid structure.

The fullest realisation of Martins' developing spatial vision arises in the pivotal scene where he and Lime take a turn on the Prater wheel. From this vantage both the structural division of the city and Vienna's more organic topography come into view for the first time:

> Very slowly on one side of them the city sank; very slowly on the other the great cross-girders of the Wheel rose into sight. As the horizon slid away the Danube became visible, and the piers of the Reichsbrücke lifted above the houses.[42]

Martins remains inside the machinery of the wheel but for the first time glimpses the city as a complete entity. The disorienting perspectives here suggest that the city's spaces may not be contained by geometric organisation. The viewpoint, and the spatial unease it engenders, are shared with Lime. Martins contemplates the possibility of pushing his friend through the window of the car, while Lime himself has a presentiment of falling from the wheel:

> Harry took a look at the toy landscape below and came away from the door. "I never feel quite safe in these things," he said. He felt the back of the door with his hand, as though he were afraid that it might fly open and launch him into that iron-ribbed space.[43]

The suggestion of a fatal porosity in the 'iron-ribbed space', the chance of falling through the city's lattice, is reinforced by Martins in another characteristic moment of imagination:

> The car swung to a standstill at the highest point of the curve and Harry turned his back and gazed out of the window. Martins thought: One good shove and I could break the glass, and he pictured the body falling, falling through the iron struts, a piece of carrion dropping among the flies.[44]

In *The Third Man* the wheel is metonymic of zonally-divided Vienna and it regularly circumscribes the city, dividing it into its constituent sectors. At times Martins' spatial vision is controlled by this organisational motif, as with his discovery of the radial spokes of the cemetery, or during a drinking spree where 'his mind revolved in circles.'[45] Yet once at the centre of the wheel itself, it is suggested that he becomes able to envision spaces in ways that exceed the structure's confines, and Martins shares with Lime a sense of space beyond the wheel's frame, one not corralled by the contiguities of the city's new zonal structure. It is not

coincidental that this knowledge parallels Martins' unpicking of the mystery of Lime's 'death', and his ability to use the city's sewers to appear or disappear in any of the zones, seemingly at will. Lime's secret is partly spatial, and the panoramas that Martins and Lime share at the top of the Prater wheel show that Martins is coming to share Lime's knowledge of how Vienna's spaces really operate. Their joint contemplation of the sunset from the top of the wheel's arc seals this shared perspective:

> The car had reached the top of the Wheel and hung there motionless, while the stain of the sunset ran in streaks over the wrinkled papery sky beyond the black girders.[46]

This pivotal encounter in the wheel is also heavy with ethical and Biblical resonance, but in the context of the whole novella, the gaze into what lies beyond the girders bears a spatial, as well as a religious, interpretation.

The final spatial revelation of Vienna in *The Third Man* comes with the climactic descent into the sewer system. As Calloway explains to Martins: 'If you know your way about you can emerge again almost anywhere in the city through a manhole or a kiosk.'[47] To discover the sewers is also to uncover another way of traversing the city's space, bypassing Vienna's zonal system. Touching all points of the city, and none, the sewer provides an alternative spatial model which dissolves the conceptual hold of contiguity, linearity and adjacence. The structure of zones above ground is not binding here; is it superseded by a network which can intersect with any point of a spatial field. Moving from A to C need not entail passing through B and the suddenness of Lime's appearances and disappearances illustrate this in a way that is reminiscent of the disconcerting and instantaneous appearance of the V2 rocket. Both cases carry the intimation of an invisible and underlying spatial continuum which obviates the need for transit across the visible landscape, instead permitting location to be fixed in a split-second. With this possibility, the bonds of physical proximity between places are loosened: this relaxation enhances the tendency to see spaces as connected by similarity or qualitative

relation rather than by nearness. The sewer perhaps supplies an apt metaphor for 'the skein' which Foucault speaks of as the network by which we assemble places in fresh arrangements in a newly-spatial age:

> We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less like that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.[48]

Foucault's grand narrative of a newly-emerged spatial dominant in twentieth-century thought may be contested. Even so, his insight of a world experienced as a network which orders places by its own connective logic, rather than one which is arrayed in a classical spatial field of sequence and contiguity, finds a literary exposition in Greene's Vienna.

It is instructive to compare the spatial model for the city of *The Third Man* with one from Greene's pre-war fiction. Greene's Vienna appears as a network of sites, bound to or separated from one another by qualitative similarities or differences, and this allows not only the possibility that geographically scattered parts of the city may seem to belong together by virtue of their conceptual or imaginative similarities but also that the mind may come to place parts of Vienna alongside those of entirely different cities. When Martins goes drinking in Vienna, the specificity of the city dissolves amid the generic décor and names of the bars, the international range of customers and the recollection of his own sexual history in other cities:

> He chose the Oriental...that dreary smoky little night club that stands behind a sham Eastern façade. The same semi-nude photographs on the stairs, the same half-drunk Americans at the bar, the same bad wine and extraordinary gins – he might have been in any third-rate night haunt in any other shabby capital of a shabby Europe.
>
> [...]
>
> Martins moved on: at Maxim's a few couples were dancing rather gloomily, and at a place called Chez Victor the heating had failed and people sat in overcoats drinking cocktails...His mind reverted to the girl in Dublin and the one in Amsterdam.

By contrast, the town in the pre-war *Brighton Rock* (1938) combines a cartographic and descriptive specificity with an almost total separation from all other spaces: it is as if the town

has been snipped out of the map so that no other places beyond its borders can exist. Brighton

and its environs are repeatedly described as though a nullity of infinite space is what lies

beyond their borders. For example:

> Peacehaven itself dwindled out against the downs: half-made streets turned into
> grass tracks. They walked down between the bungalows to the cliff edge. There was
> nobody about: one of the bungalows had broken windows, in another the blinds
> were down for a death. "It makes me giddy," Rose said, "looking down."[49]

This cliff-top setting between the sea and the downs (to which *Brighton Rock* returns for its

climactic scene) is the very edge of the map; nothing lies beyond it. The horizons are faint,

indeterminate and even unearthly, and this eerie insubstantiality is repeatedly suggested in

descriptions of the sea which 'reflected on the dark sky' has a 'phosphorent glow.'[50] The sea's

edge is compared to sky signs, as if constituting a form of mysterious messaging at the margins

of the perceived world:

> It was almost dark along the beach: the edge of sea shone like a line of writing in
> whitewash: big sprawling letters. They meant nothing at this distance.[51]

This spatial combination, the specificity of the places of Brighton and the emptiness beyond its

borders, is also part of the revelation of Pinkie's psychology and religious instinct. His horror at

the grossness of everyday life comes to the fore on a visit to Rose's family home in Nelson

Place, the same slum part of town where he grew up. His disgusted recognition of the place

and its material squalor reveals the precision with which he can reconstruct these streets as if

a map-maker: '"Oh, I've passed through," he said airily, but he could have drawn its plan as

accurately as a surveyor'.[52] His visit to Rose's filthy home means, in part, a return to confront

the formative specifics of his own spatial environment, and his recognition that they are united

by having sprung from the same place on the map, an understanding emphasised by their

physical comportment as they 'lay on the chalk bank side by side with a common geography.'[53]

Pinkie's return to Nelson Place ends with his yearning to escape from this geography, to

dissolve his horrors of quotidian squalors in the nullity of the space beyond Brighton's mapped borders:

> The children played among the ruins of Paradise Piece, and a wind blew from the sea across the site of his home. A dim desire for annihilation stretched in him: the vast superiority of vacancy.[54]

Like Calloway in *The Third Man*, Pinkie is explicitly introduced by Greene as lacking in imagination[55] and while this lack strengthens his personal ruthlessness it is a deficiency which has the effect in the novel of helping to cut off Brighton from any surrounding context. Limited by Pinkie's horizons, Brighton runs out at the limits of the knowable material world and is a narrow strip of land tethered only by a railway line so that it appears as: 'A few thousand acres of houses, a narrow peninsula of electrified track running to London, 2 or 3 railway stations with their buffets & buns.'[56] While Vienna's spaces stand in operational relations to one another and to spaces beyond the city, *Brighton Rock* tends to present a discrete and free-standing town whose literary construction embodies shared cartographic certainties and agreed horizons. Here contiguity and propinquity are one and the same; Brighton's space is fixed by the concord of its inhabitants. There is no viewpoint that corresponds to that from the wheel of Vienna which takes in the network of zonal divisions and allows spaces to be assembled by the degree and quality of their relatedness to one another.

The difference in the way Greene presents these two urban spaces however is attributable to the change between Greene's pre and post-war outlook, not to intrinsic differences between Britain and Austria. In fact, the spatial understanding displayed in Greene's imagination of post-war Vienna is bound up with domestic British experience: the literary reconstruction of Vienna is not of a purely alien place but carries significant traces from war-time London. As Lara Feigel notes, Greene projected many aspects of blitzed London onto the city of Vienna in *The Third Man*. In both the novella and film versions:

> Post-war Vienna provided a continuation of wartime London. Indeed, recaptured in the stark black and white of *The Third Man's film noir* cinematography, Vienna acquires many of the visual characteristics of London in the Blitz with its surreal juxtapositions, picturesque ruins and dark, torchlit streets, where the surviving facades of grand buildings tower above messy piles of rubble.[57]

There is more to it than this however. Not only are the aesthetics of *The Third Man* recognisably influenced by London, the story's imaginative genesis also lay there. The idea of a story about a man who glimpses a 'dead' friend on the street was scribbled down on an envelope by Greene in 1947, with London's Strand as the place where this strange sighting occurred. Greene continued to develop the plot in his head and it was only when the film producer Alexander Korda told him that he wanted to make a thriller set amid the racketeering of post-war Vienna that Greene proposed transferring his 'dead-man risen' plot to the Austrian capital.[58] So while Greene's subsequent research trips to Vienna introduced him to the city's unique atmosphere and political geography, the residues of war-torn London are also a significant presence in *The Third Man*. This overlap suggests the connections between the two cities drawn in literature and film during this period may be more than simply stylistic or aesthetic; these connections indicate how the war had driven people to think of cities and their constituent parts in different ways.

There is strong evidence to suggest that the elements of blitzed London projected onto the city of *The Third Man* included not only imagery and atmospheric effect but also more structural changes in ways of conceiving a city and the relation between its districts. In part, this was of course an effect of the de-familiarisation caused by bomb damage. The shattering of buildings and streets produced visual shocks and strange juxtapositions and these have now become familiar staples of war-time photography, film and literature. But bomb damage also confuses the powers of recognition and navigation of a city's inhabitants. A journey that was previously made almost automatically is blocked or diverted by piles of rubble or holes in the ground, which forces a rethinking of the city's topography in planning how to get from A to B. The

effect of bombing is not just to produce an aesthetic strangeness or a practical difficulty but also a process of mental re-ordering and recalibration. This confusion was a common experience for Londoners who could no longer find their way through the city after heavy bombing:

> Workers wandered through streets they thought they knew, took routes they could have sworn they would have been able to follow blindfold, they had taken them so many times before, but found themselves disorientated and lost, the cityscape cruelly disfigured and confusing. [59]

To make a journey from one part of the city to another could now necessitate some advance planning since the normal connective tissue of roads or public transport could not always be relied on. One effect of this severing of connections was to encourage a sense of separation between different districts of the city, with sometimes even next-door neighbours appearing remote or isolated.

In her essay 'London, 1940', Elizabeth Bowen described the growth of this feeling from the vantage point of an Autumn morning after a raid in central London which has left Oxford Street impassable because of shattered glass. The street is cordoned off and local residents are marooned: 'Roped away from the rest of London we seem to be on an island – when shall we be taken off?'[60] As the essay develops, it reveals a patchwork of the city's districts, separated, distinct and only partially communicative with one another as a result of bombing.

> Transport stoppages, roped-off districts, cut-off communications and 'dirty' nights now make her a city of villages – almost of village communes. Marylebone is my village. Friends who live outside it I think about but seldom see: they are sunk in the life of their own villages. We all have new friends: our neighbours. In Marylebone, shopping just before the black-out or making for home before the bombers begin to fill up the sky, we say 'Well good luck!' to each other. And every morning after the storm we go out to talk to each other. News comes filtering through from the other villages. They say St Johns Wood had it worse than we did. Camden Town on the other hand, got off light. Chelsea, it seems, was hot again. They say they brought 'one' down on Paddington Green. Has anyone been over to Piccadilly? A man from Hampstead was here a minute ago, he said…Mrs X is a Pimlico woman; she's quite upset. Anyone know how it was in Kilburn? Somebody had a letter from Finsbury Park. [61]

The effects of bombing on London's cartographic cohesion sees its constituent parts scattered into an archipelago of neighbourhoods whose residents have only a tentative sense of events in any other part of the city. The essay was actually published in 1950, ten years after the events it describes, but its insight of the city as a patchwork of independent islands recapitulates a vision at work throughout Bowen's fiction of the 1940s. Indeed the term 'enislanded', which sums up this spatial isolation, becomes a key and recurrent word throughout Bowen's writing about the war. In *The Heat of the Day*, the result of air raids is precisely the cordoned-off separation evoked in the later essay 'London, 1940'. Not only does the novel present the city in its innumerable sub-partitions, it also translates the physical blockages of streets and traffic into the water-imagery of dams and channels, so reinforcing the trope of urban districts as islands:

> All through London, the roping-off of dangerous tracts of street made islands of exalted if stricken silence, and people crowded against the ropes to admire the sunny emptiness on the other side. The diversion of traffic out of blocked main thoroughfares into byways, the unstopping phantasmagoric streaming of lorries, buses, vans, drays, taxis past modest windows and quiet doorways set up an overpowering sense of London's organic power – somewhere here was a source from which heavy motion boiled, surged and, not to be damned up, forced for itself new channels.[62]

The magnetic strangeness of the 'sunny emptiness' on the other side of the rope's border further emphasises the city's new divisions; suddenly the adjacent space takes on a quality which marks it as entirely different, even though the physical separation between the two zones is no more than a rope cordon. Greene also recognised this imaginative scattering of London's spaces. In *The Ministry of Fear* the narration observes that: 'London was no longer one great city, it was a collection of small towns.'[63] The qualitative differences between these 'towns', rather than closeness or distance, are what separate them:

> He caught a number 19 bus from Piccadilly. After the ruins of St James's church, one passed at that early date into peaceful country. Knightsbridge and Sloane Street were

not at war, but Chelsea was and Battersea was in the front line. It was an odd front line that twisted like the track of a hurricane and left patches of peace.[64]

London as a whole could also be seen as a place separate from the rest of the country. In a study of the effects of the Blitz, the psychiatrist Melitta Schmideberg referred to a woman whose return to London felt to her like visiting another country: 'When she first came back she used to enquire what other people did, how they felt and reacted, like someone trying to learn the habits in a foreign country. Going from London to 'safe' or 'comparatively safe' areas was in fact like going to a foreign country with an entirely different mentality.'[65]

From passages like these, we can trace some of the imaginative parallels between the Vienna of *The Third Man* and literary depiction of war-time London. While Vienna's politically-determined zonal structure was a striking new arrangement of space, it also resonated with an existing literary apprehension of London as a place whose topographic coherence had been loosened by the war and whose 'enislanded' districts seemed disconnected and often qualitatively different from one another. Just as Martins' excursion into Vienna's Russian zone feels like a foray into a different and newly-estranged type of space, so the curious emptiness of a London street on the other side of a cordon made it seem so distinct from its neighbouring 'island' as to erase the familiar bonds of spatial contiguity. A further connection between the two cities lies in Greene's descriptions of Vienna's sewer system. This is, as Calloway tells it: 'A strange world unknown to most of us...a cavernous land of waterfalls and rushing rivers, where tides ebb and flow as in the world above.'[66] This attention to the dynamics of water and the shifts in its courses is redolent of the language used by Bowen in evoking London after a bombing raid (quoted above), where 'heavy motion boiled, surged and, not to be damned up, forced for itself new channels.' The archipelago of blitzed London is figured as shaped by fluid dynamics just as the detritus of Vienna is seen whirled around in its sewer and the equivalence Greene draws here between subterranean and surface tides draws this comparison to the notice in an observation of 1940s fiction. Inside the sewer, the intimation of links with London

becomes even more explicit: the main sewer is 'half as wide as the Thames', a British soldier tells Martins ' "The sewer police know...this place just as I know the Tottenham Court Road" ' and the two of them discuss London pubs they both frequent.[67] Greene transplanted his story of Harry Lime from London to Vienna, but London does not entirely recede from view. In the film of *The Third Man* the suggested correspondence between the two cities becomes explicit in one scene where a London bus is clearly visible from the back window of a car travelling through Vienna. This anomaly is usually attributed to a production error involving stock footage used in the back-projection to simulate the view from the car window. However film critic Michael Boyce suggests that, rather than a mistake, it may instead be a deliberate device by director Carol Reed, 'a more overt nod to London', to conflate the two cities so that: 'the Vienna of *The Third Man* stands in for post-war London.'[68] We can see that in the imagination of the two cities in this era there is a shared spatial context which appears to have sprung from more than one British artist's experience of the war.

Corroboration of Londoners' growing tendency to see their city, post-Blitz, as a scattered network of neighbourhoods rather than a contiguous whole can also be found in scientific work of the period. Psychiatrist Melitta Schmideberg noted a spatial effect in the way people came to focus more on their immediate locale during the war:

> Life took on a more medieval colouring. At dusk some of the big streets looked almost live a village street: at night they were dark and deserted. One became district and even street conscious. What happened in one's own street was of vital importance, while other districts seemed very remote.[69]

A further obstacle to a cartographically-coherent view was the disappearance, from 1940-1944, of the A-Z guide to London's streets which had been produced for the first time in the 1930s. Phyllis Beardsall's pioneering guide was felt to be potentially too useful to the enemy and was withdrawn. Finding the way from one district to another; already more difficult because of the destruction and blockages of the Blitz, was made even harder by the absence of

a street plan. Noting both Schmideberg's study and the suspension of the A-Z, Shafquat

Towheed argues that they were part of a 'spatial dislocation' of Londoners during the Blitz

which variously produced feelings of fear, anxiety or even euphoria. Bowen's literary

presentation of the archipelago of London is therefore evidence of a conceptual re-ordering of

spaces which Towheed analyses in Foucauldian terms:

> Bowen's fictional terrain is both utopia and heterotopia, both nowhere and
> everywhere, and, like London during the Blitz, is composed of archipelagic patches
> both separated and connected by the explosive spaces blasted between them.[70]

Towheed notes that Foucault himself describes 'archipelago' as the sole notion of space that is

truly geographic; unlike terms such as 'territory', 'soil', or 'domain', it is not inevitably

intertwined with non-spatial concepts of politics, law, nationality or property. But his attempt

to read Bowen's fiction in Foucault's terms is not without problems, especially in his adoption

here of Foucault's distinction between utopia and heterotopia: while Towheed identifies the

'explosive' power that the reworking of London's physical spaces brought to Bowen's fiction, it

is not straightforward to see how this imaginative effect could produce new heterotopias, at

least not on Foucault's account. For Foucault, heterotopias are socio-political realities that

exist in every culture, both connected to every other part of the city and yet standing apart;

one example being the sanctified space of a cemetery. The phantasmagoric quality of much of

Bowen's war-time writing seems rather to accord with what Foucault describes as 'a space

thoroughly imbued with qualities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well.'[71] This type of

space, Foucault argues, has been understood thanks to the work of phenomenologists such as

Gaston Bachelard which has dispelled the notion of space as homogenous and empty. But

Foucault goes on to differentiate between this 'primarily…internal space' and the 'external

space' in which heterotopias are to be analysed. In other words, it is hard to see how Bowen's

fictional response to spatial effects of the war could in itself produce new forms of heterotopia

which Foucault identifies as spaces shaped by long cultural and historical processes rather than through literary invention.

It may be that Towheed's intention is to identify a broader development of spatial theory in which Foucault's work is subsumed. The suggestion may be that literature after the war incorporates an understanding of the socio-political idea of heterotopias twenty years before they were first identified in Foucault's lecture. To argue that heterotopia was an idea in gestation before Foucault would not of course protect it from critical attack. Critiques from materialist social scientists including Lefebvre and Harvey have found fault with Foucault's philosophical models of space. Lefebvre finds that Foucault fails to distinguish between theoretical and social space, 'the space of the philosophers and the space of people who deal with material things',[72] while Harvey suggests that Foucault remains imprisoned in a Kantian notion of absolute space where:

> The particularity of positioning is marked by contingency fragmentation and uniqueness [which] contrasts radically with the universality that attaches to the concept of a unidirectional time that points us teleologically towards some destiny.[73]

Foucault is therefore bound to a spatial ordering which has no historical or social context; instead, Harvey argues: 'space must be viewed dialectically as simultaneously absolute, relative and relational',[74] and this is especially true of Foucault's concept of heterotopias. By these Marxist accounts, applying the idea of heterotopia - whether in Foucault or in 1940s fiction - is as invalid in explaining how spatial changes are registered in post-war culture, as it would be in any circumstance.

However it is not necessary to accept Foucault's theory of heterotopias to propose a connection between his account of space and the one seen in 1940s fiction. Strictly speaking, we do not have to account for Foucauldian heterotopias to accept that writing by Bowen and Greene, among others, presented adjacent spaces as often glaringly different from one

another, drew attention to the strangeness of this disjunction and set it clearly in the context
of the war. We can then follow a connective thread from this literary digestion of the war to
that earlier part of Foucault's essay which draws attention to the relational arrangement of
sites. The conceptual germ of *Des Espaces Autres* is its proposition of relational space and this
is a self-sufficient concept which does not rely on the model of heterotopias. It is an idea which
offers a productive model of thinking about space and one which appears to parallel
developments in 1940s fiction.

Whether or not the emergent spatial imagination shaped by the war and exhibited in 1940s
writing has a common bond with Foucault's theory expressed two decades later, there is at
least one other, intermediate, historical movement with which it shares common features. In
1950s France, the Situationists also began to propose imaginative 'maps' of the city, especially
Paris, replacing geographic connections between different streets and districts with psychic
and affective links, with a view to reassembling the city in new patterns. While the Situationists
intended an avowedly active and political reworking of the 'given' geography of modern
material life rather than a literary response to it, the practices they espoused bear some
striking similarities with changing fictional treatment of cities in the years after the outbreak of
war. One of these similarities is a sense of fundamental disturbance in the ways that we
perceive and grasp the world's spatiality. In the proto-Situationist document, 'Formulary for a
New Urbanism', written in 1953, Ivan Chtcheglov served up a fleeting glimpse of a mobile
space to be actively pursued:

> Certain *shifting* angles, certain *receding* perspectives, allow us to glimpse original
> conceptions of space, but this vision remains fragmentary. It must be sought in the
> magical locales of fairy tales and surrealist writings, castles, endless walls, little
> forgotten bars, mammoth caverns, casino mirrors.[75]

Here is not only a very literary-sounding impulse to imaginative fabulation with which to
redraw the city, but also a summary of perception which suggests a specifically Husserlian

version of phenomenology.[76] These 'shifting angles' and 'receding perspectives' recall early

phenomenological account of objects captured only in a succession of facets and never as a

composite whole. The present work has argued that the damage of war opened up strange

angles and views which prompted some writers to share the phenomenologist's eye-view. This

novelty resurfaces in Chtcheglov's view of the city. Guy Debord also invokes the word

'phenomena' in the essay, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography' which proposes a

definition of psychogeography as the effect of the urban environment on the 'emotions and

behaviour of individuals.'[77] Recalling Merleau-Ponty's insistence on phenomena that are

grasped as a collective whole so that the qualities of objects cannot be disentangled from their

form, Debord insists on a kind of psychic saturation in places which will divide the city into

'zones' as surely as does the political partition of Vienna. As in *The Third Man*, the affective

atmosphere which clings to certain parts of the city will mark it off in qualitative relation or

separation from other parts:

> The sudden change of ambience in a street within the space of a few meters; the
> evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of least
> resistance that is automatically followed in aimless strolls (and which has no relation
> the physical contour of the terrain); the appealing or repelling character of certain
> places – these phenomena all seem to be neglected…People are quite aware that
> some neighbourhoods are gloomy and others pleasant. But they generally simply
> assume that elegant streets cause a feeling of satisfaction and that poor streets are
> depressing, and let it go at that. In fact…the slightest demystified investigation
> reveals that the qualitatively or quantitatively different influences of diverse urban
> decors cannot be determined solely on the basis of the historical period or
> architectural style, much less on the basis of housing conditions.[78]

Under the Situationist programme, *quartiers* of the city were to become imaginative zones,

differentiated by close attention to their psychic flavour. If the new 'science' of

psychogeography differed from literary creation in its methodical and willed attentiveness to

the qualities of spaces, 1940s British literature and 1950s French theorizing often seem to

share notable similarities; a dislocated perspective, an imaginative reconstruction of streets

and districts and -the outcome of this process - a re-assembly of urban places in arrangements that no longer corresponded to physical geography.

The Situationist desire to reimagine the topography of Paris took form in a series of maps, including Debord's 'The Naked City' which was a cut-up and re-assembly of Parisian tourist locales into new juxtapositions. Here were the results of Debord's theory of the *dérive*, the deliberately aimless wandering that would reveal the city in new forms and would show 'the distances that actually separate two regions of a city, distances that may have little relation with the physical distance between them.'[79] Like the distances between the Russian and British zones of Vienna, the gap between one part of a city and another may be imaginative rather than geographic. Drawing parallels between Situationist cartography and literary practice, Eric Bulson argues that the impulse to wilfully become 'lost' in the city has been an important, and overlooked, part of spatial representation in fiction. While a reader may automatically try to orient themselves in the landscape of a novel, the ways in which the author often baffles this aim have become part of literature's purpose: 'I am arguing for…a more nuanced understanding of the way the production and reception of space for the past 150 years and more has been influenced as much by a disorientation effect as it has by an orientation effect.'[80] The Situationist project then, included strands of thought that seemed to run parallel to those of some writers who also felt impelled to disrupt an assumed correspondence between the spaces of a map and the fictional spaces of urban description.

The increasing tendency of both writers and activists to re-imagine city spaces in the immediate post-war also needs to be set against the backdrop of urban planning, which saw a surge of activity in the same period. As we saw in the introduction, the re-planning of London and its environs led by Patrick Abercrombie also divided space into zones which were assigned a purpose, and therefore also a character. The suggested separation of industry, housing and leisure meant not only that different activities would take place in different areas, but also that

these areas would be designed to have a different feel and quality. One of Abercrombie's ambitions was to improve slums by separating out the urban entanglement of living, working and playing in the same area – of factories cheek-by-jowl with houses. In one sense then, this process may have encouraged a post-war tendency to think of a city in zonal parts rather than as a composite whole. Like the Vienna of *The Third Man*, the plan for London encouraged a view of a city carved into specific 'sites'. And the outline of Vienna's wheel can perhaps be glimpsed again in the four concentric circles around the English capital which formed the basis of Abercrombie's model. Planning is an imaginative as well as a technical process and Abercrombie's work called for a re-conceptualisation of the city. The preamble to the *Greater London Plan* opens with the quotation: 'All things are ready if our minds be so.'[81] As well as proposing a new zonal structure for London, Abercrombie had a vision of a re-discovering its ancient villages and communities as communitarian hubs where people would congregate within the new structure. Rather like the 'enislanded' blitz communities of Elizabeth Bowen's work, or the 'collection of small towns' glimpsed in the *Ministry of Fear*, Abercrombie's writing asked readers to think differently about the make-up of the city. To this extent then, the writer and the planner could both be seen proposing new conceptual models of how to assemble urban space in the aftermath of the war.

Yet the process of spatial management which is the logic of urban planning could equally be seen as the attempt to close down the possibility of re-imagining the city in new arrangements. This was certainly the Situationists' view. By reserving certain zones for particular activities, the planner was managing the socio-political possibilities of the city and restricting the way that citizens could think about it and act within it. The point of aimless wandering through the city, as proposed by the Situationists, was of course entirely to resist this goal-oriented process. Presumably the Situationists would have wished equally to apply this resistance to both Vienna's Allied zonal divisions and the proposed rings of Abercrombie's post-war London. For the literary treatment of space however, the two cities might seem to

yield different conclusions. The division of the Austrian capital in the 1940s, as we have seen,

suggested a rupture in the spatial principle of contiguity and the sequential ordering of spaces.

Abercrombie's zonal model, by contrast, could be seen as reinforcing the conceptual model of

contiguity because it proposed an individual moving through the zones in accordance with a

particular purpose. The resident of the suburbs (the second innermost ring) for example, might

travel into central London (the innermost ring) to work, to the green belt (the third ring) for

sports and leisure and to the outermost ring for the countryside. The concentric model was

conceived not just to control population density but as the structure around which almost

every aspect of life could be arranged. Abercrombie believed this arrangement would ensure

that:

> The natural evolution of disorderly growth can be shaped into some semblance of
> ordered design, both for population grouping, land use, transport and public services.
> But upon these faintly differentiated areas are to be imposed much more directive
> and corrective aims.[82]

These aims to direct and correct were intended as checks to sprawling growth and not, overtly

at least, to daily human activity. Indeed civic participation is seen as essential to the future

shape of London. But because it assigns particular activities to specific areas, the plan can be

read as a less benign blueprint for social management of space.

In *The Spiv and the Architect*, Richard Hornsey sees Abercrombie's work as part of a wider

post-war trend to order the circulation of people, a theoretical model which found physical

expression in the carefully controlled routes through major post-war public exhibitions like the

1951 Festival of Britain.

> The type of remodelled space here being offered contained two important
> mechanisms through which a future of social order and community cohesion might
> be pursued. On one level, their functional, accessible, and open designs were
> understood by their architects to clearly express a legible set of civic virtues that
> would instil in the viewer the required sensibility of wilful consensus. Yet, far less
> overtly, such sites were quietly being programmed with a more insidious form of
> strategic social management. Abercrombie's London plans, for instance, were

foundationally organized through the discrete spatialization of everyday activities separated out into a series of monological zones that were sequentially arranged according to the imagined routine of a generic Londoner.[83]

For Hornsey, even the structure of the atom, representations of which became an increasingly common sight after the war, served as a visual metaphor for structured and orderly civic circulation.

In London, the ways of resisting these imposed spatial templates which motivated the Situationists in Paris have taken a more distinctly literary direction. Iain Sinclair and others have adopted Debord's proposal for psychogeography but expanded the idea of fabulation which seemed implicit in it, and which Chtcheglov hints at. Psychogeography has been practised in London as an essentially literary activity: writing which makes the city's hidden connections visible and articulates its psychic resonances, produces an alternate London in different frames, both spatial and temporal. Sinclair's method is often conjunctive; drawing connections between different places, collapsing historical time frames, pointing out the random coincidences of names and recurrently placing the same character in multiple situations. This is, in his own phrase, a practice of 'compulsive associationism'[84] which discovers alternate configurations of a city from its heaped-up history. In spatial terms, this practice often entails drawing together different parts of the city, describing connections which link cartographically disparate areas through their qualitative similarities (even if at different moments in history):

> If you need to understand nineteenth-century Southwark, you must float downstream to Deptford. The old qualities migrate, drift like continental plates, move out from the centre: rings on a pond. The faces Dickens saw in Clerkenwell are lurking in Tilbury junkshops. De Quincey's Greek Street chemist is a Travel Agent in Petts Wood. Everything escapes from its original heat…But nothing is lost for ever. It slips further out, abdicates the strident exhibitionism of the present tense: lurks like a stray dog, somewhere beyond the circle of firelight.[85]

Here the migrating 'qualities' are relational similarities between scattered areas which, like Foucault and Debord before him, Sinclair perceives as capable of yoking them together. This is an approach which seems to suggest both an ahistorical view – with De Quincey lurking in the modern travel agents' – but also a temporal dimension revealed in the entropic cooling of the 'original heat' of a place's significance. It might be objected that this temporal vector – the shifting of qualities over time – puts Sinclair at odds with Foucault's thinking, since Foucault's diagnosis is of a new spatial age which has abandoned the previous 'great obsessions' with history. Where Debord and his followers drew new maps from a phenomenological, in-the-moment, assessment of the qualities of a *quartier*, it could be argued that Sinclair is tracing qualitative connections as much through historical residue as through immediate perception.

Yet this is perhaps to miss the essential *literariness* of Sinclair's project. Characteristics imbue a certain part of the city because they have been imaginatively inscribed there by innumerable, and continuing, literary mappings. Qualities clinging to different parts of London are seen to shift about with new fabulations of the city. If they escape their 'original heat' to recede from notice in one place, they may reappear, there or somewhere else, in different stories. Sinclair then is not an archaeologist digging up historical meanings from the city's layers. His vision is primarily a spatial one; he observes the city in the particularity of its current textual version. As one critic puts it: 'The text encourages a way of reading…which produces a constant stream of association on the horizontal plane of the text itself….Sinclair…gives us a city that is always already imagined.'[86] A literary approach allow new textual versions of London to redraw the map of associations across the city without assigning primacy to any moment in its chronology. Each version provides a shifted set of relational correspondences between places.

For Sinclair, this method means the role of writers is to attune themselves to the city, to notice its current manifestation. A book is 'the present articulation of an ineradicable benediction, the incarnation of the numinous on the ground of the city.'[87] Like the Situationists, Sinclair

believes in drifting through the city to 'haunt a particular territory, tune [oneself] to notice everything, every irregularity in the brickwork, every dip in the temperature.'[88] And, as for the Situationists, this process can constitute a form of resistance to the authorised arrangements of space, the controlled forms of habitation and circulation laid down for us. Beyond the Situationists however, Sinclair insists on the literary mode as the only one which can make sense of a city's cartography: 'We have to recognise the fundamental untrustworthiness of maps...They require a powerful dose of fiction to bring them to life.'[89] A literary investigation of a city then can be a meaningful effort to capture its spaces and show their inter-relation in a way that a map is not unless it is imbued with fictional energy. A writer attuned to the city can evade organisational structures through a subjective particularity which closely resembles the phenomenologist's determination to exclude everything beyond the immediate content of perception.

Sinclair also suggests that writers can 'own' parts of their city, in a territorial carve-up like the turf ownership of gangsters. This act of possession uses fiction to resist the prevailing narratives of planners or political apparatchiks:

> Writers, wishing to "rescue" dead ground, will have to wrest it from the grip of developers, clerks, clerics, eco freaks and ward bosses. We are all welcome to divide London according to our own anthologies: JG Ballard at Shepperton...Michael Moorcock at Notting Hill; Angela Carter south of the river, Battersea to Brixton, where she hands over to the poet Allen Fisher; Eric Mottram at Herne Hill, communing with the ghost of Ruskin.[90]

Sinclair's approach champions a diegetic web of continuous and multi-stranded story-telling over a sterile mimetic of map-making which he sees as the planner's favoured method for presenting the spaces of the city. This way of envisaging the districts of London has parallels with the literary exposition of cities and other spaces which we have seen, in several different ways, in 1940's fiction. In *The Third Man*, Holly Martins' literary imagination provides the 'powerful dose of fiction' to bring to life the spaces of Vienna; Elizabeth Bowen's vision of

archipelagic London, where citizens inhabit and understand their own islands, seems to anticipate Sinclair's plan of a city parcelled out among writers who stamp their interpretation on their own familiar districts. And in Henry Green's *Loving*, the baffling non-representational map hanging in Kinalty Castle as well as the letter addressed to a non-existent 'Peterboro, Yorks', suggest a distrust of places indicated by map-makers or gazetteers without, to use Sinclair's phrase, 'a powerful dose of fiction to bring them to life.'

These correspondences suggest that as writers of the 1940s became increasingly interested in the problematics of space they set out on lines of enquiry which have stayed relevant to the present day. Not only did they anticipate an alternative spatial view, later expressed by the Situationists and by Foucault, of places juxtaposed by similarity or difference rather than by geographical sequence, they also showed an awareness of how the relational qualities of these places might be illuminated from a specifically literary viewpoint, an idea essential to Iain Sinclair's contemporary spatial understanding. The new shapes into which European geography was broken by the Second World War opened the possibility of this alternative view. Unlike Sinclair and the Situationists, writers like Greene and Bowen were not primarily motivated by finding ways to resist authorised spatial narratives. But by starting to relate places by type rather than by position, they imagined ways of breaking the structural bonds that are assumed in the work of the city planner or the atomic scientist. This insight suggested a path of resistance which was later taken by Debord and assigned an individual literary method by Sinclair. Where the spatial innovations of these later movements and thinkers are increasingly acknowledged, those of writers from the 1940s have gone relatively unnoticed by contemporary critics. The war prompted British writers of the 1940s to envisage a new model for arranging the spaces of the city and the landscape. This model continues to resonate.

1 Masha Williams, *White Among the Reds* (London: Shepheard-Walwyn, 1980), p. 1

2 Michel Foucault, *Des Espaces Autres*
<http://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en.html > [accessed 13 July 2014]

3 Foucault

4 Foucault writes: 'Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogenous and empty space, but on the contrary a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well.' Foucault.

5 See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald-Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 4 and David Harvey, 'The Kantian Roots of Foucault's Dilemma', in *Space, Knowledge and Power*, eds. Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), p. 44-45

6 Shafquat Towheed, 'Territory, Space, Modernity: Elizabeth Bowen's "The Demon Lover and Other Stories" and wartime London' in Osborn, Susan ed. *Elizabeth Bowen: new critical perspectives* (Cork: Cork University Press 2009)

7 Giles MacDonogh, *After the Reich* (London: John Murray, 2007), p. 285

8 MacDonogh, p. 301

9 Telegram from Churchill to Roosevelt (June 1945), The National Archives, T.1099/5 in FO371 (C2935/G)

10 George Orwell, 'In Front of Your Nose', *The Collected Letters, Essays and Journalism of George Orwell,* ed. by Ian Amos and Sonia Orwell, 4 vols (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), iv, p. 9

11 Graham Greene, *The Third Man and The Fallen Idol* (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 6

12 *The Third Man*, dir. Carol Reed (StudioCanal, 1949)

13 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 11

14 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 11-12

15 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 80

16 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 28

17 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 80

18 Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene*, 3 vols (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), ii, p. 243

19 The National Archives, 'Vienna Intelligence Reports' 68-92 in FO1007/309

20 The National Archives, 'Vienna Intelligence Reports' 68-92 in FO1007/309

21 'Kidnappings in Austria', *The Times*, 17 September 1949, p. 3

22 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 83

23 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 12

24 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 82

25 Foucault

26 Elisabeth Ströker, *Investigations in Philosophy of Space*, trans. by Algis Mickunas (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987), p. 16

27 Ströker, p. 16. Italics in original.

28 Ströker, p. 19

29 Ströker, p. 20

30 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. xxxvi

31 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 7

32 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 7

33 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 84

34 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 84

35 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol,* p. 12

36 Charles Drazin, *In Search of the Third Man* (London: Methuen, 1991), p. 11

37 Alan Pryce-Jones, 'A Letter from Vienna', in *Horizon* 13 (1946), 194-205 (p. 197)

38 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 7

39 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 7

40 *The Third Man and the Fallen Reich*, p. 31

41 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 23

42 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 85

43 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 86

44 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 86

45 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 67

46 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 86

47 *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p.79-80

[48] Foucault

[49] Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p.107

[50] *Brighton Rock*, p. 234

[51] *Brighton Rock*, p. 188

[52] *Brighton Rock*, p. 109

[53] *Brighton Rock*, p. 109

[54] *Brighton Rock*, p. 178

[55] 'The imagination hadn't woken. That was his strength.' *Brighton Rock*, p. 52

[56] *Brighton Rock*, p. 161

[57] Lara Feigel, *The Love-charm of Bombs: Restless Lives in the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 372

[58] Ian Thomson, introduction to *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol* (London: Vintage, 2005) p. vii-viii

[59] Juliet Gardiner, *The Blitz: the British under attack* (London, Harper Press, 2010), p. 242

[60] Elizabeth Bowen, 'London 1940' in *The Mulberry Tree* ed. by Hermione Lee (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 22

[61] *The Mulberry Tree*, p. 23-24

[62] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (London: Vintage, 1998) p. 90-91

[63] Graham Greene, *The Ministry of Fear* (London: Vintage, 2001) p. 69

[64] *The Ministry of Fear*, p. 81

[65] Melitta Schmideberg, 'Some Observations on Individual Reactions to the Air Raids*', International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 23 (1942), 146-76 (p. 161)

[66] *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 93

[67] *The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*, p. 93-94

[68] *The Lasting Influence of the War on Postwar British Film*, Michael Boyce (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 111

[69] Schmideberg, p. 158

[70] Towheed, p. 120

[71] Foucault

[72] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald-Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 4

[73] David Harvey, 'The Kantian Roots of Foucault's Dilemma', in *Space, Knowledge and Power*, ed. by Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), p. 44-45

[74] Harvey, p. 45

[75] Ivan Chtcheglov, 'Formulary For a New Urbanism', in *Situationist International Anthology,* ed. and trans. *by* Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), p. 2. Emphases in original.

[76] Husserl wrote that: 'It is essentially impossible for the even the spatial shape of the physical thing to be given otherwise that in mere one-sided adumbrations.' Edmund Husserl, *Collected Works*, trans. Fred Kersten and others, 13 vols (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1983), ii, p. 9

[77] Guy Debord, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography, in Knabb, p. 8

[78] Guy Debord, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography', in Knabb, p. 10

[79] Guy Debord, 'Theory of the Dérive' in Knabb, p. 66

[80] Eric Bulson, *Novels, Maps, Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 120

[81] Patrick Abercrombie, *The Greater London Plan* (London; HMSO, 1944) p1. The quote is from Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

[82] Abercrombie, p. 7

[83] Richard Hornsey, *The Spiv and the Architect* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2010), p. 15

[84] Iain Sinclair, *Downriver* (London: Penguin, 2004) p. 238

[85] *Downriver*, p. 446

[86] Jennifer Bavidge, *The Representation of Urban Space in the Contemporary Novel* (PhD thesis, University of London, 2002), quoted in Robert G Hampson, 'Spatial Stories: Conrad and Iain Sinclair', in *Conradian* 31 (2006) 52-111 (p. 69)

[87] Iain Sinclair, *Lights Out for the Territory* (London: Granta, 1997), p. 144-145

[88] *Lights Out for the Territory*, p. 145

[89] *Lights Out for the Territory*, p. 145

[90] *Lights Out for the Territory*, p. 145-146

CONCLUSION

The hesitant waltz

Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* (1950) opens by weaving the novel's central character into his spatial environment. Titus Groan is seven and has become lord of the vast castle that dominates Peake's trilogy of novels: this is the second of the three and it unfolds with a display of the boy intertwined with Gormenghast castle, which provides 'his confines.'[1] The possibilities of his knowledge, language and physicality are all bound up with the spaces of the castle which inhabit him as surely as he inhabits them:

> He has learned an alphabet of arch and aisle: the language of dim stairs and moth-hung rafters. Great halls are his dim playgrounds: his fields are quadrangles: his trees are pillars.[2]

Peake uses metaphor to reinforce this commingling of human and architectural: Titus has 'for his ears, echoes, for his eyes, a labyrinth of stone' and the castle's rituals are inscribed as 'footprints ankle-deep in stone.'[3] For Titus, his home is not just familiar heritage, it is a space from which he is indivisible.

Part of Peake's purpose in this introduction is to recapitulate the events of the first book, *Titus Groan* (1946), for the reader. Yet he takes a very spatial approach to this narrative history by setting the ghosts of former characters free to move through the castle with Titus; he makes them not pallid or insubstantial ghosts but almost excessively physical. Like Titus, they inhabit Gormenghast's present fabric rather than haunting from its past. The former chef Abiatha Swelter 'wades in a slug-like illness of fat through the humid ground mists of the Great Kitchen',[4] Sourdust, the ex-Master of Ritual, is seen with his 'horny hands…working at the knots of his tangled beard'[5] and Flay, servant to Titus's father, is 'cadaverous and taciturn, his knee joints reporting his progress at every spider-like step.'[6] Flay is not a ghost in the same sense as the others: though banished from the castle in the first book he is still alive, but he

shares their ghostliness in that he is a presence from the first novel which persists in the substance of the castle, and therefore in Titus. The events of Titus's infant years, described in the first novel in which he is barely present, are given a spatial contemporaneity with his seven-year-old self so that they too are part of the architecture and environment fused from his body and the castle.

> These then, in thumbnail, the Lost Characters…The future hung on their activities. Titus himself is meaningless without them, for in his infancy he fed on foot-steps, on the patterns that figures made against high ceilings, their hazy outlines, their slow or rapid movements, their varying odours and voices.
>
> Nothing that stirs but has its repercussions, and it may well be that Titus will hear the echoes, when a man, of what was whispered then. For it was not static assembly of personalities into which Titus was launched – no mere pattern, but an arabesque in motion whose thoughts were action, or not, hung like bats from an attic rafter or veered between towers on leaf-like wings.[7]

The significance of these 'Lost Characters' as Peake calls them, adheres equally to the past, present and future of Titus and of Gormenghast castle; the spatial endurance of this world encompasses all its temporal divisions. Peake proposes the logic and coherence of his literary project as this 'arabesque in motion', a spatial plotting of characters and setting which seeks to present the mental, the bodily and the architectural as interleaved, mobile and mutually dependent. As with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, Peake's writing dwells in a world where 'thoughts were action'; that is, where physical disposition is inseparable from consciousness. This is literature focused on a moving body which actively constitutes its environment rather than being a passive adjunct to a Cartesian mind contemplating its surroundings. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: 'By considering the body in movement we can better see how it inhabits space…because movement is not limited to submitting passively to space and time, it actively assumes them.'[8] As with Henry Green's visions of a waltz in *Loving* and spirals of starlings in *Concluding*, discussed in chapter three, Peake is drawn to a dynamic interplay between animate and inanimate that marks his writing as predominantly spatial. And, like Elizabeth Bowen's surveys of war-torn London, Peake uses fantastic writing not

merely for stylistic effect but also for its power in describing spaces made unfamiliar and confusing by war.

For Titus Groan is a child of the war. He was born, as it were, in 1940 when Peake joined the British army and began drafting a novel which was to be published six years later as *Titus Groan*. Titus is seven at the opening of the second novel, *Gormenghast* (completed 1949; published 1950). His imaginative birth and infancy then, fit the decade almost precisely. Peake's settings are otherworldly, but the events and landscapes of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath clearly shaped the novels. Peake had worked in artillery and bomb disposal, suffered a nervous breakdown, left the army and visited the liberated concentration camp at Belsen as a reporter before settling on the Channel Island of Sark where he wrote *Gormenghast*.[9] These experiences meant the war was a powerful presence in the novels, despite their fantastic setting: Adam Piette for instance, has shown how the conflagrations of the Blitz, including a fire which destroyed warehoused copies of one of Peake's pre-war books, influenced the climactic 'Burning of the Books' section in *Titus Groan*, where the castle's library is set ablaze.[10] The war instilled in Peake, as in Green and Bowen, a new curiosity about spatial arrangements that found its expression in 1940s fiction. Titus, whose literary birth and development coincide with the war and the 1940s, can plausibly stand as the avatar of this new consciousness.

As I have discussed, to claim that the Second World War disrupted the ways we think about space means confronting several competing theories. The belief that there has been a 'turn to the spatial' in contemporary culture is widely held,[11] but the exact cause and the date of this change are contested. As we saw in chapter four, Foucault argued in the 1960s that we had entered a newly spatial age, superseding a previous era of temporal obsession. Fredric Jameson shares this diagnosis of a shift from temporal to spatial dominant but identifies the change more explicitly with the development of a postmodern experience. Postmodern

theory, Jameson notes, supposed a 'certain supplement of spatiality in the contemporary period'. which contrasted with the 'canonized rhetoric of temporality of the critics and theorists of high modernism.'[12] Jameson argues that the significant difference between the two eras, and therefore the cause of the turn to the spatial, is the differing state of capitalism at the start and end of the twentieth century. He suggests that spatial dominance is the inevitable cultural product of socio-economic forces which reached a transformative peak in the 1970s. Other critics have shared Jameson's broad conclusion whilst differing slightly over dates: Brian McHale for instance suggests 1966 as the pivotal year.[13] Edward Soja suggested in 1989 that the 'subordination of space to time'[14] in the twentieth century was only then beginning to be dissolved by new critical thinking which would rescue space from its 'post-Bergsonian treatment...as passive and lifeless' in contrast with time and historicity which meant 'richness, fecundity, dialectic.'[15]

By any of these accounts, the Second World War could not be considered the cause of a spatial turn. There are two reasons for this: first, to suggest the war as the turning point does not accord with the chronology of a late twentieth century escape from the constraints of a modernist privileging of the temporal; these theorists see no signs that the 1940s were much different from the earlier decades of the century in this respect. Second, the war was a relatively brief event and the Marxist approach shared by all these critics favours a long-run explanation of cultural change; the move from temporal to spatial dominant will (ironically perhaps) be the product of historical shifts in socio-economic conditions and not of brief interludes, even those as terrible and dramatic as the Second World War. As Jameson puts it:

> Neither space nor time is "natural" in the sense in which it might be metaphysically presupposed (as ontology or human nature alike): both are the consequence and projected afterimages of a certain state or structure of production and appropriation, of the social organization of productivity.[16]

A different approach to the cultural understanding of space and time is found in Stephen Kern's work which suggests this understanding is largely determined by technology. The shock of seeing the world in new ways because of inventions like the railway or the x-ray alters the ways in which the categories of time and space are conceived and described. Kern's method is phenomenological because it takes the content of perceptual experience as the material from which this transformed understanding can be deduced. As Kern writes in the preface to the 2003 edition of *The Culture of Time and Space*, postmodern theorists disagree with this approach because it implies ahistorical essences in human experience. Awareness of time and space, the postmodernist argues, is entirely culturally specific and not trans-historic. By contrast, Kern's analysis assumes that both accidents *and* essences - the events of history and a universal human condition - must be examined. By doing so, it is possible to see how an isolated material event or invention, from the development of the telephone to the bombing of a city, can alter a collective understanding of space or time. As Kern puts it:

> By centring on essential aspects of life and thought, my phenomenological approach offers a way of integrating interpretations of the historical significance of these material objects with abstract concepts such as time and space in literature and the arts in order to document broad generalizations about how an epoch experiences the conceptual foundations of life and thought.[17]

This method offers an alternative to the Marxist assumption that spatial awareness can develop only at the glacial pace of the movements of history and forces of production: Kern's approach therefore potentially removes one obstacle to seeing the Second World War as a cause of the turn to the spatial. But, Kern's study clearly locates the change in spatial thinking around the time of the First World War, not the Second. Far from seeing a shift from temporal to spatial dominant in the twentieth century, Kern suggests the cultural understanding of both categories was simultaneously transformed by the technological revolutions of the early century and the aesthetic changes which these triggered. To suggest the Second World War as a pivotal event in changing spatial awareness is to contest both Kern's and Jameson's

periodisation, which overlook 1945 in favour of 1918 and 1973 respectively. These influential

periodisations also leave 1940s writing stranded in the no-man's land between modernism and

postmodernism and encourage those who unjustly dismiss the decade's fiction as dull and

unadventurous.[18] The argument made throughout this thesis is that the war disrupted habitual

ways of thinking about space and made writers reconsider spatial description. If this argument

is persuasive, it raises the question of why it has been overlooked in critical practice.

A more recent development in spatial critical theory offers a different way of interpreting the

twentieth century and its literature. French critic Bertrand Westphal's theory of geocriticism,

points to 1945 as the crucial date at which a new cultural understanding of space and time

began to take hold. In one sense this understanding involved conceptual fragmentation

following the chaos of the Second World War. In *Geocriticsm: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2011),

Westphal argues that for all the advances in theoretical physics of the early twentieth century,

including Einstein's development of the general theory of relativity, it was not until the Second

World War that most people came to grasp the idea of spatiotemporality, the inter-

relatedness of space and time. This realisation overthrew the previous dominance of the

temporal. At the same time, this dominance was further undermined by a post-war recoil from

the structural idea that the movement of time entailed progress:

> In sum, neither the theory of relativity nor the theory of space-time revolutionized
> the relationship of space to time or of time to space…For many, Einstein was indeed
> the last great classical physicist. But for a new reading of time, and hence a different
> perception of space, there needed to occur an event powerful enough to engage all
> the people in the world, from Nobel Prize-winning physicists to anonymous citizens.
> This event, of course, was the Second World War. After that, in 1945, was it still
> possible, or even imaginable, to conflate chronological progression and the progress
> of mankind?[19]

The horrors of bombs and concentration camps destroyed faith in temporal progression just as

the scientific paradigm of relativity seized the general imagination. At the same time the

geographic world was being broken into new shapes by the war's victors (as we saw with the

Vienna described by Graham Greene) and by the waning of colonial power. Westphal argues

that the confluence of these factors in 1945 generated the conditions for a decisive rupture

from previous spatial thinking.

The result was not a comforting unity in the yoking together of space and time, but

incoherence and instability. Westphal describes this chaos in both ethical and cognitive terms;

for him 1945 was the point at which a grasp on structural certainties was loosened. After this

date, thinking about space became tentative and disoriented. We have seen how, in the fiction

of Bowen, Green and other 1940s writers, space can best be described as provisional because

of those writers' attentiveness to its polysensory mutability and because of the spatial anxiety

prevalent in their work. Westphal's analysis of the period sees the same disruptive

uncertainties at play:

> At the end of the war, the two coordinates of the plane of existence were in crisis,
> and with them all that exists. Time was deprived of its structuring metaphor. Space,
> dangerously concentrated, got lost between the barbed wire of the camps and the
> rapid fire over the trenches. The straight line was dead. Decolonization shattered the
> legitimacy of entire organizations of the world, organizations that had been carefully
> developed over decades and centuries and had been supported by an entire system
> of morality. Time and space suffered irreparable harm, a chronic and topical
> disruption. They at last found themselves in shared metaphors associating them with
> the point, the fragment, and the splinter: a kind of geometry of the vestige
> accompanied by a sense of vertigo in which one hovers over the depths of chaos
> rather than gazing down from the lofty heights of the Enlightenment worldview. At
> the height of this global crisis, postmodernism (as an aesthetic) and postmodernity
> (as a condition) found their epistemological and ontological foundations, if they may
> be so called…Hence, one might say that the spatiotemporal revolution took place
> around 1945. After the Second World War, time and space became less ambitious,
> more tentative: the instants do not flow together at the same duration; in the
> absence of hierarchy, durations multiply; the line is split into lines; time is here-after
> superficial. The perception of historical time was overtaken by the relative laws of
> space-time. After 1945, this view of time and space was brought home to people
> everywhere. The concept of temporality that had dominated the pre-war period had
> lost much of its legitimacy.[20]

The chaos described here has a particularly geometric quality too. In Westphal's allusion to

splinters, fragments and to lines which bend and bifurcate, we are reminded of the attention

bestowed on shape in descriptions of London's war-time transformation, of the non-linear and

apparently atemporal trajectories of the V2 and of the loosening of authoritarian attempts to

impose geographic order, as, for instance, over The Institute in Green's *Concluding*. The spiral

of starlings which erupts twice in *Concluding* is a literary exposition of this newly-splintered

geometry, bringing the significance of a curving and bending of spatial form to our notice. The

flights of birds, described as 'a thousand dots revolving on a wave'[21] and as a 'broad spiral...a

thickening curve,'[22] provide an image which captures the idea of a fluid spatiality superseding

the fixity of straight lines. The image also suggests, like the arc of the V2, something which

hovers between the solid and the ethereal and so involves a doubt in the nature of its

presence. The crisis in plotting the planes of existence that Westphal identifies has multiple

echoes in English fiction that emerged from the war.[23]

Westphal contends that the dissolution of pre-war temporal structures of experience, and the

accompanying sense of certainty that they permitted, was so fundamental that it produced a

pervasive 'weak ontology'[24] after 1945. This is a system in which the assumption of a bond

between what we experience and what exists is loosened, though not broken entirely. The

linearity of temporal flow and of spatial sequence give way to a spatiotemporal relativity which

betokens heterogeneity, fragments of experience without the underlying structure of one of

the planes of existence, neither space nor time. It is this weak ontology which Westphal takes

as the basis for his critical practice: 'The first premise of geocritical theory states that time and

space share a common plan, subject to an entirely oscillatory logic whereby the fragmentary

ceases to be oriented to a coherent whole.'[25] Here then is a possible explanation for the

spatial anxiety so widely seen in 1940s fiction: the perception of spaces as fragmented and not

anchored in a coherent spatial continuum is disturbing; ontological assumptions are under

interrogation. Indeed, *Geocriticism* takes space, after 1945, to be not only inherently

heterogeneous but also transgressive:

> It is not fixed, it fluctuates, and it is caught by forces (or generates dynamics) that
> cause (or are caused by) permanent flows. Perhaps this perpetual motion applies less
> to a transgression than to the inherent transgressivity of all spatiality and of every
> perception of place.[26]

This perpetual fluctuation of the spatial is the destabilising force at work in so much fiction written in the 1940s. It is this spatial instability that has been discussed throughout this thesis: we see it in Peake's 'arabesques in motion'; in the way London recomposes itself to the view in Bowen's war writing; in the metonymic revolution of Vienna's Prater wheel as described by Graham Greene, and in the revolving patterns found at the heart of Henry Green's 1940s novels. The waves of starlings in *Concluding* are one example of these patterns; another comes in *Loving* where, it will be remembered, Green provides the image of a waltz, reflected in a chandelier, with 'two girls, minute in purple, dancing multiplied to eternity in those trembling pears of glass.'[27] The image finds an echo in Westphal who uses the same dance to suggest perpetual motion as characteristic of the spatial imagination after 1945: reality, he suggests, is 'the hesitant waltz of a space that lies just out of sight.'[28] Westphal identifies an 'oscillatory logic' which fragments space and time; 1940s fiction exhibits the same tentative spatial logic because writers were repeatedly drawn to depict spaces as provisional, fluid and unanchored. Spatial coherence is not to be glimpsed or grasped but, to use Westphal's phrase, always 'lies just out of sight.'

In Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, spaces are necessarily unanchored. Space is revealed by our intentional acts, by specific bodily movements and postures, but it is always an instance of a specific spatial 'level' that is made clear to us rather than a complete structure. Our experience of the spatial then is of a series of layers, each of which rests ultimately on a primordial spatial horizon that is pre-personal and unseen:

> We cannot dissociate being from orientated being and there is no occasion to 'find a basis for space' or to ask what is the level of all levels. The primordial level is on the horizon of all our perceptions, but it is a horizon which cannot in principle ever be reached…Each of the levels in which we successively live makes its appearance when we cast anchor in some 'setting' which is offered to us.[29]

As expressed here in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Merleau-Ponty's position is that we possess an original spatial sense which structures our perception but that, for each of the

spatial levels or orientations that we discover, none of them can be 'a *certain* world, a *certain* spectacle'[30] since they ultimately rest on the mysterious and undiscoverable spatial horizon with which, according to Merleau-Ponty, we are endowed. The uncertainty of our spatial perception involves an ontological doubt. At bottom, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy requires an act of faith in a spatial continuum as he himself explicitly acknowledged with his development of the concept of a 'universal flesh' in his posthumous work *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964). Commentators have suggested it is only in this later work in which Merleau-Ponty's thinking takes an ontological turn,[31] yet such a clear division appears unwarranted as the earlier work clearly involves doubt over the nature of the foundations of perception, as well as its processes, and so begins to question what can be perceived. As such, Mearleau-Ponty's writing in *Phenomenology of Perception* sustains Westphal's thesis of a weakening ontology, just as a waning certainty about the properties of space appears in fictional depictions from this period. In Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* for example, London sometimes appears on the point of dissolving entirely. Bowen reimagines the city in fantastic forms but, more than this, she sometimes seems to contemplate its very spatial coherence draining away, as in this scene when Stella dines with Robert:

> Themselves in the friendly restaurant, they sat down; by this hour the place was emptying; outside their orbit lights were being put out, away in the distance in the penumbra waiters ghostly drew off the other cloths. The restaurant was waning, indifferently relaxing its illusion [...] She told him about her Mount Morris solitary suppers...how she had sat facing down the room to the door flitted through by Mary, the fire behind her back softly falling in on its own ash.[32]

Here the 'waning' of the restaurant, like the entropic image of a fire's ash falling in on itself, can be read as signs of an inherent philosophic doubt about perception and spatial forms. Bowen's fondness for ghostly and fantastic representations of places and landscapes has been widely observed, but moments like this seem to show spaces not charged with heightened imaginative power but rather drained of full authorial conviction in solidity and shape. Bowen appears not only to doubt specific places and scenes, but, like Peake, to pause and consider

structural assumptions about the spatial. As in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, literature exhibits an ontological doubt at this moment in history.

For Westphal, the emergence of a weak ontology has particular significance in the development of mimetic art, especially literature. The disconnection of spatiotemporal experience from a coherent structure entails philosophical instability, but it also enhances writers' potential to capture the new spatial heterogeneity of cultural experience. Westphal argues that weaker ontology 'is well adapted to the oscillations between image and reality, simulacrum and referent — a context where experience is always mediated.'[33] Writers are freed to propose and describe when they step back from the assumption of a connection between phenomenological experience and an object. Put more simply, it is liberating to abandon the axiomatic correspondence between simulacrum and referent. Unlike other disciplines, Westphal argues (quoting Paul Ricoeur), literature permits itself 'a little inebriation.'[34] It is not severed from theoretical discourse, but nor is it bound to it by an exhaustive or fully determinate ontology:

> Literature is a vector of assumed instability in a series of disciplinary landscapes traditionally characterized by stability and saturation. Determinism is the attempt to exhaust the world in the quest for absolute completeness: exactly what literature abhors. Inventing worlds and their perpetual re-enchantment are the imperatives of literature. But literature does more than that. Complemented by theory, it is able to propose representational models applicable to shifting contexts.[35]

In other words, literature carries the potential to project new versions of a world shaped by profound changes in cultural understanding. Applying this model in the context of the Second World War, the fiction of the 1940s can be read as not only the description of the effects of the conflict but, more than this, as the expression of a collective spatiotemporal understanding which was instilled by the terrible events of the war. In this act of expression, the putting forth of an imagined world, literature was establishing a model of an altered consciousness of space.

Westphal sees both phenomenology and postmodernism as essential components of his critical theory. Phenomenology was essential to the new model of representation which emerged after 1945 because it helped overthrow the existing hierarchical structure of thought. One reason for this change was that phenomenology attended to the spatiotemporal characteristics involved in the 'transmission' between the derivative, the simulacrum or mental image, and its source, the referent, which may be an object in the real world. For example, in the scene from *Loving* examined in chapter three, when Henry Green's lingers over the description of a ruined temple which suddenly appears as startlingly close to his characters, his writing calls attention to the process of 'transmission' between an instance of the world and its appearance. And, as Westphal points out, phenomenology also pays attention to the 'defamiliarizing or derealizing nature'[36] of the transmission between source and derivative. In literary terms, this defamiliarisation was already a feature of pre-World War II modernism which strove to exhibit the connection between physical objects and their re-construction in the mind. However, following Westphal's argument, this approach in itself was not sufficient to disrupt a hierarchical cultural model of the world in which the real can never be displaced by the fictional. Only after 1945, when writers were able to assimilate the new spatiotemporal understanding and to combine it with the insights of phenomenology, were they able to project a different model of the world. As Westphal puts it:

> Through the work of representation, the model enters an unstable, at times aleatory, environment. It is resimulated in a discourse that tends to adopt the contours of the imagination.[37]

Fictional representation, then, is able to 'resimulate' the structuring model of the world in accordance with a novel spatial imagination. This power to propose a new world puts representational writing in a dynamic relationship with reality; this allows literature to shape our cultural understanding of ontology, of what is in the world, rather than simply struggling to

describe what is already assumed to be there. And, for Westphal, this power is a distinctly postmodern feature:

> Reality engages literary discourse, which extends to all representational arts thought of as fictional, in a dizzying spiral. The relations between reality and fiction have been the subject of substantial consideration. In postmodernity, the gap between the world and the text has been significantly reduced, while taking a somewhat baffling form.[38]

In the aftermath of the Second World War, textual representations of space and its troubling heterogeneity are as likely to shape our conception of what is real as they are to reflect it. This understanding, for Westphal, is what establishes his critical model:

> The fictional representation of space is likely to exert an influence over the 'real', the 'reality' of which has been weakened in the postmodern era. In this context, geocriticism finds a place to be most original.[39]

The real and the imaginary become inseparable in literature; irrational and baffling geometries are permitted and writing partakes in the 'hesitant waltz' of reality. Spatial description in literature is not mere ornament but helps construct our experience of the world.

Westphal's theory is not without problematic aspects. To give just one example, he recommends a critical practice which studies literature by place rather than by individual writer to arrive at a cultural understanding of space. Yet at times Westphal seems to adopt a neo-Kantian view which defines the spatial as individually projected, rather than collectively. The apparent contradiction between these two positions leaves it unclear as to precisely how cultural spatial models might be constructed. Another question arises over his claim that only after 1945 was literature fully able to propose new worlds; many would argue this has always been one of its essential features. Even so, geocriticism offers an alternative way of understanding the turn to the spatial, one which combines Kern's model of a relatively sudden disruption to established models of spatial thinking with Jameson's identification of the postmodern sensibility as intimately associated with a renewed emphasis on the spatial.

Geocriticism also develops several arguments which support a thesis that, because of the Second World War, 1940s fiction took a new direction. These arguments include the identification of 1945 as a turning point in our cultural history; the proposition of 'weak ontology' as an explanatory factor for a looser and more fragmentary imaginative grasp of space; and, the suggestion that the emerging potential for literature to project a reality rather than simply to try and reflect one. Geocriticism thus offers a productive theoretical context for examining the writing of the 1940s afresh.

The significance of the changes in English fiction which occurred in the years after the war has been bafflingly overlooked. Writers who lived in war-time London absorbed those experiences in their fiction for years to come; the war had a profound and collective effect on their work. Yet critic studies have largely missed this effect; by failing to look for developments common to more than one author, or by ending their investigation in 1945, these studies have not detected the broader pattern of literary change. Above all, a real insight into 1940s English fiction must include an understanding of the spaces it reveals: conversely, any examination of a spatial turn in twentieth century culture cannot overlook the significance of literature in the years immediately after the Second World War. The events of the war drove writers to a new anxious fascination with the spatial and their work exhibits a transforming cultural understanding of space which incorporated developments in philosophy and science. Merleau-Ponty's insight that spaces are established in concert with physical action and deportment was a contemporary philosophical parallel to the literary developments of the 1940s; both are expressions of a cultural change springing to life in this decade in which the war played the major part. The 1940s represented neither the terminus of a previous literary period, nor the intermission before something new: the 1940s laid the foundations of our own age. From this point, writers envisaged space arranged in new geometries, trajectories, juxtapositions and fragments; they started to display the world in a newly unfamiliar form. The significance of the

transformation is that it helped establish a spatial model which, seventy years later, still holds

sway.

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[1] Mervyn Peake, *Gormenghast* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 1969), p. 7

[2] *Gormenghast*, p. 7

[3] *Gormenghast*, p. 7

[4] *Gormenghast*, p. 9

[5] *Gormenghast*, p. 10

[6] *Gormenghast*, p. 9

[7] *Gormenghast,* p. 11

[8] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 117

[9] Malcolm Yorke, *Mervyn Peake*: *My Eyes Mint Gold* (London: John Murray, 2000), p. 97-163

[10] Adam Piette, *Imagination at War* (London: Papermac, 1995), p. 51-54

[11] See for example, Robert Tally's assertion that 'Over the past few decades, spatiality has become a key concept for literary and cultural studies'. Robert T Tally Jr, *Spatiality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 3

[12] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 365

[13] Brian McHale, '1966 Nervous Breakdown; or, When Did Postmodernism Begin?', *Modern Language Quarterly* 69 (2008) 391-413

[14] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 15

[15] Soja p. 20

[16] Jameson, p. 367

[17] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 2003), p. *xxiii-xxiv*

[18] In 1945 Philip Toynbee argued that a golden age of English fiction had ended in 1932, since when writer had opted for 'only the easier territory.' Philip Toynbee, 'The Decline and Future of the English Novel', in *Penguin New Writing* 23, ed. by John Lehman (London: Penguin, 1945), p. 127-139. Almost 50 years later, Randall Stevenson made a similar charge against 1940s fiction for its retrospective caution. Randall Stevenson, *The Twentieth Century Novel in Britain* (Hemel Hempstead, Harvester, Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 87

[19] Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. by Robert T Tally Jr (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 11-12

[20] Westphal, p. 11-14

[21] Henry Green, *Concluding* (London: Hogarth, 1950), p. 19

[22] *Concluding*, p. 177

[23] A librarians' survey of public reading appetites in 1948 noted, among other things, an enthusiasm for 'the intricacies of modern space-time.' 'Books in Action', *The Times*, 24 April 1948, p. 5

[24] Westphal, p. 14

[25] Westphal, p. 37

[26] Westphal, p. 45

[27] Henry Green, *Loving, Living, Party Going* (London: Vintage, 2005) p. 62

[28] Westphal, p. 170

[29] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 295

[30] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 295

[31] Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor, 'The Value of Flesh: Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy and the Modernism/Postmodernism Debate', in Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (eds.), *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 9

[32] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (London: Vintage, 1998) p, 193-194

[33] Westphal, p. 14

[34] Westphal, p. 36

[35] Westphal, p. 35

[36] Westphal, p. 75
[37] Westphal, p. 75
[38] Westphal, p. 84
[39] Westphal, p. 112

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