ARCHITEXTURE: SPACE, FORM, AND THE LATE MODERNIST NOVEL

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

OCTOBER 2015

For Ma

ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to facilitate an interdisciplinary dialogue between literature and architecture by drawing specific connections between the architectural elements of the twentieth-century built environment and the literary representation of that environment in the late modernist novel. Focusing on the mid-century work of three modernist women writers – Elizabeth Bowen, Jean Rhys, and Virginia Woolf – I argue that the architectural spaces they negotiate, and their specific articulation of those spaces, offer important insights into modernity's crisis of home, belonging, and identity. Moreover, arguing that this crisis is exacerbated in the mid-century by the Second World War, I advance current understandings of 'late modernism'. In particular, I provide detailed evidence of how these writers collectively respond to the architectural instabilities of the mid-century by developing the anxious forms of high modernist urbanism. Each chapter comprises an extended author-specific case study that brings together critical and theoretical debates on space and place through close readings of pertinent architectural themes and forms: Bowen and architectural ruination, Rhys and the architectural uncanny, and Woolf and architectural ambivalence. Throughout these chapters I demonstrate how the late modernist novel complicates Martin Heidegger's conservative and mythic conception of the dwelling place through representing the built environment in terms of flux and interchange, thus playing an important role in (re)imagining and (re)constructing understandings of architectural space and place. Taking a literary geographic approach, but moving beyond the existing focus on 'textuality', I argue for an increased awareness of the immersive 'textures' of space and fiction. Developing literary geographic practice to take better account of architecture and affect, I thus establish a new vocabulary for elaborating the interdisciplinary connections between literature and architecture: what I term a 'critical literary architexture'.

Earlier versions of some of the ideas from Chapters One and Two of this thesis have been published as follows:

'"Always the same stairs, always the same room": The Uncanny Architecture of Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 38.4 (2015), 74-92

'A "tottering lace-like architecture of ruins": The Wartime Home in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*', *Literary Geographies*, 1.1 (2015), 42-61 <http://www.literarygeographies.net/index.php/LitGeogs/article/view/1-6>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the School of English at the University of Nottingham for their generous financial support, which has made this project possible. Enormous thanks must go to my supervisory team, both past and present. First and foremost, thank you to Dr Neal Alexander, whose warmth, humour, and generosity with time and knowledge has been of immeasurable value. This thesis would not have made it past the research proposal without him and I am extremely grateful for his investment in my ideas. Immense thanks to my current supervisors, Professor Dominic Head and Dr Nathan Waddell, who have patiently learnt my anxious ways, supplied an invaluable breadth of knowledge, and been endlessly perceptive and encouraging. Particular thanks also to Dr David James, whose insight and enthusiasm proved crucial in the planning and funding stages, and to Dr Leena Kore-Schröder, who provided instant inspiration and first said yes to my question of whether I could 'just study buildings'. The English Office has answered numerous questions and allayed countless fears: thanks especially to Lydia, Becs, Tracy, Stephen, and Jo. My fellow members of the Landscape, Space, Place Research Group have taught me infinite amounts and it has been a pleasure working with them all. I am incredibly grateful to my friends and all the familiar faces on C-floor, particularly Davide, Rossana, Xiaofan, Laura, and Ben for all the fun (and pies). Special thanks to my family: in particular, my grandma, Pamela Heaton, for her unshakable belief in my ability; my sister, Alexandra, for always cheering me on; and not forgetting Henry and Zubin, who have made home an even lovelier place to return to. Lo has been with me throughout and has made everything so much more bearable, in so many ways – I couldn't have done it without him. Final thanks are reserved for my mother, Diana Heaton, whose love, unstinting support, and fascination with the early twentieth century has got me here today: this is for you.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999)
BA	Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1941] 2011)
'BDT'	Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (1951), in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial, 2001), pp. 143-59
BT	Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, [1927] 1962)
D1-5	Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell, 5 vols (London: Penguin, 1977-84)
DH	Elizabeth Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* (London: Vintage, [1938] 2012)
GMM	Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (London: Penguin, [1939] 2000)
HD	Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (London: Vintage, [1949] 1998)
LS	Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (London: Vintage, [1929] 1998)
'MF'	Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction' (1925), in *The Common Reader* (London: Hogarth Press, 1968), pp. 184-95
MT	Elizabeth Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Hermione Lee (London: Virago, 1986)
'P'	Elizabeth Bowen, 'Postscript to *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*' (1945), in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Hermione Lee (London: Virago, 1986), pp. 94-99
'U'	Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 121-62

INTRODUCTION

1. ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURE

Any visitor entering the *Elements of Architecture* exhibition at the 2014 Venice Biennale will have noticed the textual Preface printed on the pavilion wall. Written by curator, Rem Koolhaas, this Preface sums up the motivations that lie behind the exhibition theme:

> In this exhibition, we examine micro-narratives revealed by focusing on the scale of the detail or the fragment. *Elements of Architecture* looks at the fundamentals of our buildings, used by any architect, anywhere, anytime: the floor, the wall, the ceiling, the roof, the door, the window, the façade, the balcony, the corridor, the fireplace, the toilet, the stair, the escalator, the elevator, the ramp…
>
> Architecture is a strange mix of persistence and flux, an amalgamation of elements […]. Only by looking at the elements of architecture under a microscope can we recognize the cultural preferences, forgotten symbolism, technological advances, mutations triggered by intensifying global exchange, climatic adaptations, political calculations, regulatory requirements, new digital regimes, and, somewhere in the mix, the ideas of the architect that constitute the practice of architecture today…[1]

Koolhaas's discussion of the importance of these elements to our understanding of architectural design and practice in the modern world offers a useful point of departure for this thesis, which seeks to draw connections between the manifold micro-narratives of the twentieth-century built environment and the literary representation of that environment in the late modernist novel.

[1] Rem Koolhaas, Excerpt from Preface to *Elements of Architecture*, Central Pavilion, 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale.

Focusing on the mid-twentieth-century work of three modernist writers – Elizabeth Bowen, Jean Rhys, and Virginia Woolf – I argue that the architectural spaces they negotiate, and their specific articulation of those spaces, offer important insights into modernity's crisis of home, belonging, and identity; a crisis that Martin Heidegger describes in 1949 as the condition of '*Homelessness* [which] is coming to be the destiny of the world'.[2] Arguing that this crisis is exacerbated in the mid-century by the violent fragmentation of the Second World War, I identify three novels that are significant representations of each author's late literary development, focusing in turn on key thematic and formal concerns of each narrative: home and architectural ruination in Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1949); marginality and the architectural uncanny in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939); and rurality and architectural ambivalence in Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941).

Following Koolhaas's pioneering anatomisation of architectural micro-structures, I have broken my author-specific chapters down into architectural-narrative elements, focusing attention on spaces and features as diverse as windows and doors, chairs and tables, domestic ruins and hotel stairs, shop windows, mirrors in public toilets, country house cesspools and cracked walls. As Koolhaas explains in a short media interview, his 'obsession with Elements' such as these stems from the fact that they 'have never really been incorporated into either the ideology or the theory of architecture'.[3] His exhibition thus aims to achieve 'a modernisation of the core of architecture and architectural thinking itself'.[4] It is only through close analysis of previously overlooked architectural details and fragments that new observations can be made about culture, technology, and politics at the level of everyday life.

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[2] Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism"' (1949), in *Pathmarks*, ed. by William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 239-76 (p. 258): emphasis added.
[3] Rem Koolhaas, Media Interview, *Dezeen* (6 June 2014) <http://www.dezeen.com/2014/06/06/rem-koolhaas-elements-of-architecture-exhibition-movie-venice-biennale-2014/> [accessed 29 September 2015].
[4] Ibid.

The 'everyday' is important here, because it aligns with the modernists' ambitions to find a literary form capable of representing the dynamic relationship between human consciousness and the material world. According to Woolf in her renowned essay, 'Modern Fiction' (1925), the modern novelist must '[e]xamine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day', so as to understand better 'the life of Monday or Tuesday' ('MF' 189). Like Koolhaas, who recognises an opportunity to redefine modern architectural thought and practice, Woolf, along with her modernist contemporaries, seeks to revise understandings of what is deemed important enough to be written about in fiction: 'Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small' ('MF' 190).[5]

In this thesis I maintain that home, belonging, and identity are all inextricably tied to everyday spaces and places in the material world. Although Heidegger's seminal philosophy of being and dwelling is central to the argument that follows, I do not subscribe to the distinction he makes between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' forms of existence. When, in *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger discusses the *a priori* human condition of 'Being-in-the-world', he employs the phrase '*average everydayness*' to describe how this condition 'is always fallen' and only ever a partial relation of the primordial '*whole*' of authentic existence (by which he means dwelling) (*BT* 225). By extension, he figures the everyday self as 'proxima[l] and for the most part inauthentic' (*BT* 225), suggesting, in contradistinction to the modernists, that human consciousness and daily experience provide no 'real' understanding of 'life itself' ('MF' 191, 192). This thesis challenges this idea. Although I am concerned with the 'dwelling plight' ('BDT' 159) that Heidegger identifies in the modern world, I certainly do not equate this crisis in domestic belonging with 'inauthentic' existence.

[5] On Woolf, modernism, and the everyday, see Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Lorraine Sim, *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

Nevertheless, Heidegger's foundational understanding of everyday 'things' remains important to my conception of architecture in the chapters that follow. According to Heidegger, things function as a profound material expression of being-in-the-world. As he suggests in his seminal essay, 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (1951), '[t]o say mortals *are* is to say that *in dwelling* they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations' ('BDT' 155). Heidegger's emphasis on persistence and sedentary belonging is problematic and in Chapter One I return to consider the notions of building and dwelling in more detail, complicating his conception of place and things. What is useful, however, is that Heidegger maintains that any 'built thing' ('BDT' 150), no matter how big or small, can be considered an important element within spatial experience. As I show in the following chapter, he not only thinks of the built environment in terms of Koolhaas's elements, such as bridges and walls, but also in terms of domestic objects more commonly associated with interior design. As Adam Sharr observes, 'the word "thing" in Heidegger's vocabulary describes life's paraphernalia immersed in experience and use', meaning that 'a building wasn't a different object to a table: both were things, […] helping people to orientate themselves in the world'.[6]

The anthropologist Tim Ingold has advanced this line of thinking through what he terms 'the *dwelling perspective*'.[7] Drawing on Heideggerian philosophy, Ingold maintains that 'the immersion of the organism-person in an environment or lifeworld' is 'an inescapable condition of existence. From this perspective, the world continually comes into being around the inhabitant, and its manifold constituents take on significance through their incorporation into a regular pattern of life activity'.[8] Developing a dynamic conception of being and dwelling within the everyday environment, Ingold's work helps to challenge Heidegger's problematic and conservative values of stasis, fixity, and

[6] Adam Sharr, *Heidegger For Architects* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 46.
[7] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 153.
[8] Ibid.

authenticity. Moreover, his concern 'with the meaning of architecture, or that part of the environment conventionally described as "built"', assists in rethinking the constituent elements of architectural space.[9] According to Ingold, the 'dwelling perspective' incorporates individual objects and even natural features of the material world into the 'built' environment: 'There can […] be no absolute distinction between "natural" and "artificial" structures. Buildings, like other environmental structures, are never complete but continually under construction, and have life-histories of involvement with both their human and non-human inhabitants'.[10] Such a conception of place and architectural space is crucial to my discussion of recent geographic understandings of social space and place in Section 3 of this Introduction, and particularly key in my consideration of Bowen's domestic objects in Chapter One and Woolf's ruralism in Chapter Three.

Starting out from a 'dwelling perspective', then, this thesis reconsiders how an architectural approach to literature deepens our understanding of socio-spatial history and literary craft. Maintaining that the interdisciplinary intersections between literature and architecture remain under-examined, under-researched, and under-theorised, I work towards a more comprehensive, and critical, account of what Ellen Eve Frank has termed 'literary architecture'.[11] I contend that re-reading texts such as *The Heat of the Day*, *Good Morning, Midnight*, and *Between the Acts*, through a specifically architectural lens, not only provides deep insight into the spatial, social, and psychological fragmentation of everyday life in the modern world, but also a detailed account of the innovative narrative strategies that Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf employ in order to convey the texture of such troubled experience in textual form.

Moreover, I consider how literature furthers our comprehension of the social and cultural politics of architectural space and theory. As I show in Chapter Two, for

[9] Ibid., p. 154.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ellen Eve Frank, *Literary Architecture: Essays Toward a Tradition: Walter Pater, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Marcel Proust, Henry James* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 3.

instance, Rhys's fascination with hotels and public toilets reveals the cultural politics of urban spaces that have persistently fallen under the radar of the social and spatial sciences. I thus seek to advance current interdisciplinary practices in literary studies; Andrew Thacker's 'critical literary geography', for example, remains orientated towards 'what literary and cultural critics can learn from a fuller engagement with theorists of space and geography, rather than the reverse'.[12] Fewer critics have followed Sara Blair in her questioning of what literary critics in turn 'have to contribute to new understandings of spatial practices, of the production of spatial and social differences, and of space, time, and nature as material frames for everyday life'.[13] Strengthening both sides of this two-way dialogue, this thesis not only asks what socio-spatial theory has to offer late modernism, but also how late modernism might shed light on those spatial elements that Koolhaas argues 'have never really been incorporated into either the ideology or the theory of architecture'.[14]

Overall, this thesis makes three central, and interlinked, contributions to the fields of literary modernism and spatial theory. Firstly, I show how a genuinely interdisciplinary approach to modernist representations of architectural space enriches our understanding of what is a deeply anxious period of literary and socio-spatial history. In particular, I place emphasis on the structural and stylistic properties of the texts in question, in order to address the dialectical interplay between the built environment and narrative form. Secondly, through advancing this interdisciplinary approach, I contribute to a more nuanced account of 'late modernism' itself, by drawing precise links between the aesthetic particularities of the authors' works and the concrete historical conditions of the mid-century. Thirdly, by focusing on the work of three women modernists, I expand the pre-existing parameters of literary architecture, which tends to be read as a

[12] Andrew Thacker, 'The Idea of a Critical Literary Geography', *New Formations*, 57 (2005), 56-73 (p. 56).
[13] Sara Blair, 'Cultural Geography and the Place of the Literary', *American Literary History*, 13.3 (1998), 544-67 (p. 549).
[14] Koolhaas, Media Interview.

predominantly male tradition.[15] Collectively, these contributions give primacy to textual form, rather than architectural content alone, and thus facilitate my development of what I define in Section 4 of this Introduction as a 'critical literary architexture'.

2. The Crisis of Belonging and Late Modernist Anxiety

This thesis identifies a shared anxiety in the mid-century work of Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf, which stems from the crisis of home, belonging, and identity in modernity, where 'modernity' is taken to refer to the social, cultural, and economic conditions of urban industrial society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[16] A good place to begin thinking about this crisis is Heidegger's discussion of the 'dwelling plight' ('BDT' 159). According to Heidegger, to be in the world is 'to dwell' ('BDT' 145), so that dwelling constitutes man's fundamental relationship with the world around him and his own sense of being in place in that world. In Chapter One, I take up this notion of dwelling in more detail, laying the theoretical groundwork for my questioning of home and identity in the chapters that follow. Here, however, the key point to acknowledge is Heidegger's claim that dwelling, in its authentic capacity, is not possible in the everyday spaces of the modern world.

For Heidegger, the majority of twentieth-century buildings simply 'house man' ('BDT' 144) and do not provide the physical and spiritual shelter associated with the traditional dwelling place. Such a place is epitomised by the Black Forest farmhouse, a vernacular building set into the German mountainside, which lets 'earth and heaven, divinities and mortals enter *in simple oneness* into things' ('BDT' 157). Heidegger's curious mysticism is very much bound up with his problematic social conservatism at this point in 'Building Dwelling Thinking', as he details the architectural features that once assisted

[15] Frank, *Literary Architecture*, p. 3.
[16] My understanding of modernity and its associated crisis closely aligns with David Spurr's in his study of architecture and modern literature, a work I discuss in more detail in Section 4 of this Introduction. See David Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), p. 3.

with authentic dwelling in the past, but that have now been lost in the present: fixity of place, a close human relationship with nature, architectural design in dialogue with the landscape, a communal centre within the domestic interior, and a sense of familial continuity (see 'BDT' 157-8).

Heidegger's nostalgic account of the farmhouse is not entirely lacking in historical awareness, however. Originally delivered as a lecture in Darmstadt in 1951 to a group of architects concerned with the postwar reconstruction of the city, Heidegger's essay is in fact acutely aware of the concrete realities of its time. Given the housing shortage in 1951, Heidegger maintains that 'today's houses' are more than necessary, especially those that are 'well planned, easy to keep, attractively cheap, open to air, light, and sun' ('BDT' 144). Nevertheless, his conception of the dwelling plight remains tied to the idea of everyday life equating to some form of inauthentic existence, for 'the *real plight of dwelling* does not lie merely in a lack of houses', but in man's eternal 'homelessness': 'mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling', 'they *must ever learn to dwell*' ('BDT' 159). For Heidegger, modernity marks the acute tip of a much larger existential crisis.

In *Minima Moralia* (1951), Theodor Adorno reveals a similar anxiety about dwelling, but communicates it in a very different register to Heidegger's conservative mysticism. According to Adorno, '[d]welling, in the proper sense, is now impossible' and, like Heidegger, he notices an impoverishment in modern housing; 'traditional residences' are now mere 'living-cases', meaning that the 'house is past' and that 'it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home'.[17] Rather than bemoaning a modern form of inauthentic dwelling, however, Adorno considers modern technology and politics to be the determining factors of modernity's dwelling plight. For him, global warfare is the ultimate 'executo[r]' of the long decided 'fate of houses'.[18] What is an existential dilemma

[17] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections From Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 38, 39.
[18] Ibid., p. 39.

for Heidegger is thus an inescapable social condition for Adorno. He simply would not agree with Heidegger's claim that man's consolation lies in his self-conscious acknowledgement of the dwelling plight: 'as soon as man *gives thought* to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer' ('BDT' 159). Likewise, this misery does not so easily cease in the modernist literary imagination; as in Adorno, the mid-century work of Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf reveals the sustained vexations that beset the writer who attempts to give thought to the modern human condition. As I show in the following three chapters, modernity's crisis of belonging remains an acute source of anxiety for these figures, one that manifests itself in both the content and form of their literary works.

It is precisely this form of anxiety that Anthony Vidler argues is a central tenet of high modernism's negotiation of urban space.[19] In 'Air War and Architecture' (2010), he discusses architectural modernism in particular, noting how Le Corbusier's famous urban plans of the 1920s and 1930s were conceived, in part, 'as effective defences' against future aerial bombing.[20] Such concerns proved to be well-founded, of course, when 'the technological advances used in the Second World War' turned the 'anxiety about being bombed into oblivion' into a palpably real and diurnal threat.[21] As a result, Vidler argues that 'one cannot help sensing anxiety' in the 'reconstruction plans' for cities across Europe between 1945 and 1950.[22] Following the violent destruction of the urban fabric during the war, Europe's bombsites became 'the ground on which a new practice of architecture had to be constructed': a practice that self-consciously sought to set up a stake against architectural oblivion.[23] Yet due to the sheer scale and incomprehensibility of urban destruction, society was struck by 'a strange, almost hallucinatory state of

[19] Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 1.
[20] Anthony Vidler, 'Air War and Architecture', in *Ruins of Modernity*, ed. by Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 29-39 (p. 35).
[21] Ibid., p. 32.
[22] Ibid., p. 30.
[23] Ibid., p. 33.

business as usual', which saw this purportedly 'new' practice of architecture largely based on Le Corbusier's 'grand prewar plans'.[24]

According to Vidler, the anxieties of architectural modernism are equally evident in the 'vocabularies of displacement and fracture, torquing and twisting, pressure and release' employed by avant-garde artists responding to the dislocating shocks of urban modernity.[25] The fragmented style of the high modernist novel is a prime example of how the literary modernists contributed to these warped artistic vocabularies. Yet, in contrast to the persistence of modernism in postwar architectural practice, the outbreak of the 'Second World War has remained', according to Leo Mellor, 'a persuasive end point' for literary modernism.[26] This fixed viewpoint is evident in Tyrus Miller's influential account of late modernism: whilst recognising the post-war 'second wind' of architectural modernism, he argues in sharp contrast that 'literary modernism peaked much earlier and […] much more feebly'.[27]

By extension, Miller figures late modernism as a dissociative movement in which writers, such as Samuel Beckett and Wyndham Lewis, pull away from their forebears through 'satiric and parodic strategies' that 'weake[n] the formal cohesion of the modernist novel'.[28] There is much to be admired in Miller's handling of interwar fiction, especially his analysis of the 'disruptive, deforming spell of laughter' that self-consciously cuts through high modernism's unifying aesthetic principles.[29] His discussion of the uncanniness of interwar society – 'a kind of all-pervasive, collective, and incurable shell-shock' – also warrants recognition and I will return to consider this idea in more depth in

[24] Ibid.
[25] Vidler, *Warped Space*, p. 1.
[26] Leo Mellor, *Reading the Ruins: Modernism, Bombsites and British Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 4.
[27] Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts Between the World Wars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 10.
[28] Ibid., p. 19.
[29] Ibid.

Chapter Two, when I analyse the uncanny narrative architecture of Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*.[30]

However, Miller's account offers only one particular, and fairly narrow, view of late modernism. By viewing it 'in tandem with', rather than part of, 'a still developing corpus of high modernism', he does not allow texts such as Woolf's *Between the Acts* to enter into the late modernist frame, but rather views them as a separate literary development altogether.[31] Taken alone, then, Miller's account of late modernism does not fully assist in my reassessment of the spatial anxieties that underpin the mid-century work of Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf. Although their work does at times align with the elements Miller discusses in relation to writers like Beckett and Lewis, each of the novels I discuss self-consciously employs and develops the warped vocabularies that Vidler argues are so central to the negotiation of architectural space in the earlier decades of the century.[32]

More recently, Anthony Mellors has challenged Miller's account by arguing that late modernism possesses a complex relationship with the literature of the earlier decades, being 'neither a simple continuation of modernist practice nor a decisive break with modernism's various idealisations of the aesthetic'.[33] Mellors does not dispute the fact that 'the onward march of modernity put increasing ideological pressure' on the modernists, yet, unlike Miller, he maintains that such pressure 'can hardly account for the decline of modernism since modernism is nothing if not a response *to* modernity and is therefore an effect *of* modernity'.[34] To this end, Mellors importantly revises the common misconception that the Second World War marks the demise of modernism, arguing that

[30] Ibid., p. 24.
[31] Ibid., p. 10.
[32] Vidler, *Warped Space*, p. 1.
[33] Anthony Mellors, *Late Modernist Poetics: From Pound to Prynne* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 3.
[34] Ibid., p. 20.

it 'continued to be the driving force of innovative art and literature in the post-war context'.[35]

Following Mellors, I thus view Miller's dissociative late modernism as one strand of a much more complex development in mid-century literary history. Focusing attention on novels published between 1939 and 1949, I build on the work of Marina MacKay and Leo Mellor, both of whom have drawn important connections between the war years and the self-conscious development of high modernism in the mid-century. MacKay's argument is grounded in the idea that 'we cannot just leave the war out' of late modernism and that it has profound effects on the way in which the modernists employed the 'fractured and estranging modes' of high modernism in their late work to reshape 'what counts as the literature of war in order to include authors who were not combatants and texts that are not "about" war in any straightforwardly mimetic way'.[36] Building on this idea, Mellor suggests that it is the 'ruined city' that not only provides the 'material' for writers in the mid-century, but also operates as 'the background and inescapable condition of possibility for late modernism itself'.[37]

The ruined city functions to differing extents in the works in question here; while the urban fabric has yet to be fractured in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, a novel in which fears of the impending devastation crystallise in the uncanny streets of Paris and London, the dust and debris of the blitzed city is all too apparent in Bowen's negotiation of wartime domestic space in *The Heat of the Day*. Woolf's *Between the Acts* offers yet another facet of the late modernist imagination, departing from the urban environment and relocating a specifically national consciousness in the rural contours of the English countryside. Jed Esty's work on this 'anthropological turn' of late modernism is important here, demonstrating as it does the literary reactivation of a more local and

[35] Ibid., p. 3.
[36] Marina MacKay, *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 17, 9, 6.
[37] Mellor, *Reading the Ruins*, p. 5.

particular national culture in the face of urban ruination and imperial decline.[38] In the proceeding chapters I return to the work of these critics, building upon their important accounts of late modernism to show that, taken together, the late work of Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf offers a fascinating, multifaceted picture of the mid-century literary imagination.

3. SPACE, PLACE, AND THEORY

Central to my understanding of literary representations of architecture are current conceptions of 'space' and 'place' in the field of cultural geography. Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974) marked a watershed in the development of this critical discipline, setting in motion the 'spatial turn' of social and cultural theory.[39] In this work, Lefebvre reconsiders the prevailing tendency to subordinate space to time; a tendency well summarised by Michel Foucault in his observation that '[s]pace was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic'.[40] Overturning this unproductive binary, Lefebvre reconceives space as something that is both produced by and constitutive of social relations, an idea later encapsulated by Edward Soja's notion of the 'socio-spatial dialectic', which maintains 'that social and spatial relations are dialectically inter-reactive, interdependent; that social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent'.[41] This foundational understanding of space as 'social' is central to this thesis, as it invests the

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[38] Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 2. Although he stresses the importance of understanding the modernists' Anglocentrism, Esty does register some scepticism about the political implications of the anthropological turn in Chapter 4, 'Becoming Minor', pp. 163-226. He acknowledges that the 'intellectual projections of English unity' do not necessarily equate to 'the social reality of those projections […]. If there was an Anglocentric and anthropological turn among intellectuals bent on remaking England into a knowable community, it was a largely discursive event, even a fantasy', pp. 164-65.

[39] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, [1974] 1991). See also Barney Warf and Santa Arias, eds, *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

[40] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon and others (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 63-77 (p. 70).

[41] Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), Chapter 3, 'The Socio-spatial Dialectic', pp. 76-93 (p. 81).

built environment with historical and political meaning, which in turn allows architecture to be seen as a concrete embodiment of cultural values and ideologies within the spaces of everyday life.

What is of particular interest in Lefebvre's conceptualisation of social space is the triad he sets out for classifying the different ways in which the built environment is created and experienced. Firstly, *spatial practice* refers to the 'perceived' shapes and rhythms of 'daily reality' and 'routine', whereby the various 'routes and networks' of built space are resolved into 'places set aside for work, "private" life and leisure'.[42] Secondly, *representations of space* refer to 'conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers', all of whom work together to produce a 'dominant', ideological formation of the city.[43] Thirdly, and perhaps most important to the present study, *representational spaces* constitute the '*lived*' space of individuals, the symbolic and imaginative side of everyday life that 'overlays physical space' and 'seeks to change and appropriate' the dominant ideologies of its design.[44]

According to Lefebvre, writers and artists play a key role in contributing to this 'lived' realm of social space, as they provide alternative spatial narratives to those endorsed by urban planners and designers. Like Koolhaas, who recognises the value of the micro-narratives of architectural elements, Lefebvre suggests that in drawing on and contributing to the 'imaginary and symbolic elements' of the material world, writers are able to articulate an everyday 'history of a people' and 'the history of each individual belonging to that people'.[45] Indeed, through their modernist focus on subjective experience, albeit through very different narrative modes, Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf each challenge and subvert a range of dominant architectural ideologies, including, for

[42] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 38.
[43] Ibid., pp. 38, 39.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., p. 41.

instance, the problematic hegemonies of the Anglo-Irish Big House, the gendered politics of the public toilet, and the insular vision of the English country house.

Moreover, Neal Alexander and David Cooper have recently pointed out that, besides enriching our understanding of social space, literature plays 'an important role in constructing and reconstructing the meanings of *place*'.[46] Indeed, cultural geographer Mike Crang observes that literature provides 'another set of geographical data' that reveals 'the richness of human experience of place' and consequently helps to shape 'people's geographical imaginations'.[47] As the following chapters demonstrate, Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf are all preoccupied with 'place' and their preference for this term in particular is not surprising, given its close association with Heidegger's conception of dwelling as being 'to remain, to stay in a place […]. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving*' ('BDT' 147). This relationship is in itself problematic, however, as it tends toward another unproductive binary, this time between space and place. In comparison to the dynamic and changing nature of social space, Heidegger's conception of place lags behind as something conservative, bounded, and immobile. For this very reason, place as a topic of study has been somewhat overshadowed by the critical discourse of social space.[48]

Edward S. Casey has made a tremendous effort to reassess this critical tendency to subordinate place to space. His aim in *The Fate of Place* (1997) 'is to thrust the very idea of place, so deeply dormant in modern Western thinking, once more into the daylight of philosophical discourse'.[49] Casey argues that, despite the overbearing dominance of space and indeed 'the long shadow cast by Heidegger's imposing work', a number of influential

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[46] Neal Alexander and David Cooper, 'Introduction: Poetry & Geography', in *Poetry & Geography: Space & Place in Post-War Poetry*, ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 1-18 (p. 1): emphasis added.
[47] Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 43, 44.
[48] See, for example, Nigel Thrift, *Spatial Formations* (London: Sage, 1996); Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005).
[49] Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical Enquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. xi.

thinkers have rediscovered 'that place itself is no fixed thing: it has no steadfast essence'.[50] Indeed, building on Lefebvre's conception of social space, Doreen Massey contends that 'a "place" is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location'.[51] Places are thus reinvested with the dialectical dynamism of social spaces, now understood as 'open and porous networks of social relations'.[52] Recognising the indivisibility of space and place in modern critical thinking, geographer Marcus Doel goes so far as to suggest the notion of '*splace*, taking splace – *splacing*', by way of stressing the equally fluid and changing nature of both space and place.[53]

It is precisely this dynamic conception of place that in fact emerges in the work of Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf. If these writers are preoccupied with the notion of place in modernity, it is precisely because they recognise the impossibility of its ever remaining a static and undisturbed anchor within the turbulent and changing social spaces of modern life. As Bowen suggests in 1953, just two years after Heidegger's Darmstadt lecture, '"Home" is no longer to be identified with a fixed set of physical surroundings': 'In fact, nothing in the home remains continuous but the *idea*, on which too great stress may therefore come to be laid. The idea may either harden into a fixation or degenerate into a fantasy, which as such offers itself to exploitation'.[54] Each of the fictional works I examine in this thesis reflects Bowen's observations about 'home', and thus helps to challenge Heidegger's conservative and mythic conception of the dwelling place. Together, the texts in question offer a more complex and unstable notion of being-in-the-world.

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[50] Ibid., p. 286.
[51] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 168.
[52] Ibid., p. 121.
[53] Marcus Doel, *Poststructuralist Geographies: The Diabolical Art of Spatial Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 9.
[54] Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Idea of the Home' (1953), in *Listening In: Broadcasts, Speeches, and Interviews by Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 162-74 (p. 169).

Crang's investment in the relationship between literature and geography is particularly resonant in light of the more recent questions raised in literary studies about the ways in which geographical practice likewise informs the interpretation of fictional texts. Thacker's 'critical literary geography' utilises interdisciplinary understandings of space and place to illuminate the significance of the spatial elements of literature: it 'brings texts […] back to the materiality of socially produced spaces: the "where" of texts is variously located in the brute matter of social space'.[55] Central to Thacker's approach is an emphasis on narrative form and style, which he sees as being fundamentally related to the materiality of the spaces negotiated at the level of content: '*Literary texts represent social spaces, but social space shapes literary forms*'.[56] Thacker adopts the term '*textual space*' to encapsulate this dynamic relationship, in which the concrete materiality of literature's social and historical moment is tied productively to the innovative literary strategies employed by authors responding to a specific cultural milieu.[57]

Literary geography is indebted to the resurgence of interest in materiality in cultural geography, a discipline which seeks to understand 'how cultures are spread over space but also how cultures make sense of space […]. Cultural geography looks at the way different processes come together in particular places and how those places develop meanings for people'.[58] Although cultural geographers have long been interested in the materiality of the everyday world, recent developments in the field have called for a reinvigorated, 'critical, theoretically informed approach' to understanding the role that physical matter plays in the formation of meaning in everyday life.[59] This revised approach to materiality has been hugely influential to the way in which literary critics, such as Franco Moretti in his study of the nineteenth century novel in *An Atlas of the*

[55] Thacker, 'The Idea of a Critical Literary Geography', p. 59.
[56] Ibid., p. 63.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Crang, *Cultural Geography*, pp. 2-3.
[59] Peter Jackson, 'Rematerializing Social and Cultural Geography', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 1 (2000), 9-14 (pp. 9-10).

European Novel, 1800-1900 (1998) and indeed Thacker in his more recent *Moving Through Modernity* (2003), have reconnected the representational spaces of fictional texts to the represented spaces of the built environment.[60]

Alongside this interest in materiality, cultural geographers have become increasingly concerned with the 'affective materialisms' of everyday life.[61] Moving away from a focus on meaning-making alone, this branch of cultural geography, now recognised under the name of non-representational theory, seeks to 'capture the "onflow" […] of everyday life' and is thus more concerned with the world of 'unreflexive' habit and 'pre-cognitive' experience.[62] Ingold's work on the 'textured surfaces' of the material world is particularly instructive, especially his reconceptualisation of geographical maps as *textural* networks of interconnected lines, rather than surface inscriptions: 'One could think of the gesturing hand, in mapping, as a weaving hand rather than a drawing hand, and of the result as something more akin to a cat's cradle than a graph. The lines of the map could be threads, wires or sticks'.[63] In a similar vein, Doel offers a concise definition of geography as a discipline that is concerned with the 'affective texturing' of everyday life. [64]

One of the key aims of non-representational theory is to give 'equal weight to the vast spillage of *things*' in the world.[65] In doing so, it repositions the human body as one of many relational material elements within what Nigel Thrift terms the 'hybrid

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[60] Franco Moretti, *An Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998); Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).
[61] Ben Anderson and John Wylie, 'On Geography and Materiality', *Environment and Planning A*, 41.2 (2009), 318-35 (p. 319). See also Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
[62] Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 5; Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison, 'The Promise of Non-Representational Theories', in *Taking-Place: Non-Representational Theories and Geography*, ed. by Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 1-34 (p. 7).
[63] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 239, 241.
[64] Doel, *Poststructuralist Geographies*, p. 124.
[65] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, p. 9.

assemblages' of everyday life.[66] Non-representational theory consequently foregrounds the '*turbulence*' of matter, reconceiving material things as vital agents that are constitutive of embodied human experience, rather than inert, passive objects ascribed meaning only through human thought and perception.[67] Such an idea underpins current thinking in the new materialisms, particularly the field of 'thing theory', which has worked hard to advance critical understanding of the 'thingly' nature of the Heideggerian world of things.[68] As Diana Coole and Samantha Frost observe, the new materialisms place 'emphasis on materialization as a complex, pluralistic, relatively open process', and insists that humans are 'recognized as thoroughly immersed within materiality's productive contingencies'.[69] I return to discuss this fast developing field of research in more detail in Chapters One and Three, when I negotiate Bowen's and Woolf's representation of the vitality of the non-human world.

Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell, and Robert Hudson argue that what makes non-representational theory stand out is 'its emphasis not on the grand narratives, but the small-scale, the ordinary, the everyday'.[70] Indeed, in its focus on ordinary things and the sensual, immersive experience of humans amongst those things, affective geography is directly preoccupied with the lived experience of representational spaces and how this mode of existence 'overlays' the official material organisation of represented spaces.[71] Returning to Lefebvre, we see that he anticipates this affective turn in his conceptualisation of representational space:

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Anderson and Wylie, 'On Geography and Materiality', p. 320.
[68] See Bill Brown, 'Thing Theory', *Critical Inquiry*, 28.1 (2001), 1-22; Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
[69] Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, 'Introducing the New Materialisms', in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1-43 (p. 7).
[70] Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell, and Robert Hudson, 'Introduction: Affective Landscapes', *Affective Landscapes in Literature, Art and Everyday Life: Memory, Place and the Senses*, ed. by Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell, and Robert Hudson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 1-17 (p. 2).
[71] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 39.

> Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an *affective* kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and […] it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic.[72]

Although literary geographers have been relatively slow to engage with the affective turn, especially in comparison to their burgeoning interest in material spaces, they are becoming more and more preoccupied with the ways in which writers are able to convey the immersive and sensual realm of spatial experience in textual form.[73]

In the chapters that follow, I contribute to this growing area of critical interest by providing a nuanced account of the affective materialities of late modernist texts. Through focusing among other things upon smell, aurality, emotion, corporeality, rhythm, and cognitive disorientation, I consider how the narrative style and structure of the late modernist novel reflects the immersive and sensual experiences of its fictional protagonists and, in turn, I reflect on how the novel form recreates similar affective responses for readers themselves. Opening up literary geography to theories of architecture and affect, I thus propose a reformulation of Thacker's 'textual space' to provide a vocabulary that better encapsulates a critical approach to this dialectical interrelation of affective architectural spaces and narrative forms: in short, the '*textural* space' of literature, as approached through a 'critical literary architexture'.

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[72] Ibid., p. 42: emphasis added.

[73] In a recent keynote address, Thacker discussed his current research on the city and affective geographies. Andrew Thacker, 'In Transit: Bryher, Berlin, and "Geographical Emotions"' (unpublished keynote address, *'There and back again': An Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Workshop on Travel*, The University of Nottingham, 22 June 2015). See also Andrew Thacker, *Modernism, Space and the City* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming). For other notable contributions on literary geography and affect, see Neal Alexander, 'Contemporary British Poetry and the Senses of Place', *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*, 2 (2014), 3-29; Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell, and Robert Hudson, eds, *Affective Landscapes*, esp. Part IV, 'Literature and Place', pp. 131-86.

4. LITERARY ARCHITEXTURE

Despite the burgeoning interest in the interdisciplinary dialogue between literary studies and the socio-spatial sciences, the critical gaze has been trained comparatively less on architecture than it has on geography. Although recent understandings of space and place do encompass the built environment, there remains considerable research to be done on the interrelation of architectural space and narrative form. A number of studies have emerged in recent decades concerning this topic, two of which are particularly worth mentioning given a number of significant overlaps with the ideas central to this thesis. In *Literary Architecture* (1979), Ellen Eve Frank argues that there 'exists as a convention in literature the habit of comparison between architecture and literature extending from Plato to Samuel Beckett and discovering particular expression late in the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth'.[74] She terms this convention the 'tradition of literary architecture' and provides a number of insightful readings of how architecture functions as an 'art analogue' in the work of Walter Pater, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Marcel Proust, and Henry James.[75]

Frank's study is arguably ahead of its time in anticipating a number of key ideas in Thacker's critical literary geography. Firstly, Frank recognises the dynamic and changing nature of space and place, arguing that 'a building is not an object (product) only; it is, importantly, an activity' that constitutes 'the nature of experience' and 'our activity of being in the world'.[76] Secondly, she emphasises the importance of connecting the 'internal architectural structures' of a literary work to the 'same or similar structures outside, in the physical, external world'.[77] Moreover, she stays aware of narrative form throughout her study, providing a particularly instructive analysis of syntax, which, she

[74] Frank, *Literary Architecture*, pp. 3-4.
[75] Ibid., p. 4.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., pp. 5, 6.

suggests, is the 'connective tissue of style', 'the space-place for artistic freedom'.[78] What Frank's study lacks, however, is any theoretical depth, given that spatial theory was still in its fledgling state in the 1970s when her work was published. As Frank puts it at the time, literary architecture 'does not constitute an academic field' and for this reason her book does not rely on any form of 'traditional research'.[79]

David Spurr's more recent monograph on *Architecture and Modern Literature* (2012) benefits from the theoretical rigour made possible by the spatial turn, which has gained significant momentum since the publication of Frank's study. Like Frank, Spurr notes that the dialogue between architecture and literature stems from a long literary and philosophical tradition, starting with the 'foundational myths of Babel and the house of Odysseus' and proceeding right through to the 'crisis of meaning common to the arts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.[80] Spurr's monograph has informed my understanding of the topic, starting out as it does from the idea that 'the relations between architecture and literature are symptomatic of modernity as a crisis of meaning', a problem that 'becomes that of narrative form itself as a mode of representation capable of describing and inscribing reality'.[81] Indeed, in asking how literary representations of architectural space provide deeper understanding of modernity's crisis of home, belonging, and identity this thesis shares many similar thematic, and formal, concerns with Spurr's work: for instance, the subject of dwelling, modern homelessness, ruin, fragmentation, and exile.

However, where my work departs decisively from both Frank's and Spurr's is in its specific focus on the late modernist work of three women writers. Although Frank motions towards the intensifying overlaps between architecture and literature in the twentieth century, she is not interested in the periodisation of modernism itself. Neither

[78] Ibid., p. 159.
[79] Ibid., p. 9.
[80] Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature*, p. ix.
[81] Ibid., pp. 6, 27.

does she mention a single female author in her study, taking it as read that literary architecture is a male tradition. Spurr is more attentive to the historical contours of modernism, although his handling of the period is fairly brief given that he provides a larger overview of literary history that extends right through to the contemporary novel. His focus is also predominantly male; although he does acknowledge the pertinence of Woolf's work, and briefly mentions Rhys when discussing Beckett's nihilism, he focuses for the most part on a long list of male writers and architects, including the Marquis de Sade, Charles Dickens, Franz Kafka, John Ruskin, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, J. G. Ballard, and Michel Houllebecq.

Furthermore, despite Spurr's extensive engagement with literary and architectural theory, he does not take a literary geographic approach, and theories of space and place from cultural geography do not enter the frame of his argument. In theorising a 'literary architexture', then, I wish to build on the strengths of these existing accounts of spatiality and fiction, while opening them up to consider how the interdisciplinary dialogue between literary studies and the socio-spatial sciences facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the intersections between literature and architecture in the late modernist period. Moreover, I contend that the existing tradition of literary architecture needs to be disrupted and expanded in order to encompass the literary innovations of women writers. In an age when women still make up only a fifth of the UK's population of registered architects, it seems both timely and necessary in a study of literary architecture to recuperate and elucidate the narrative history of the female literary architects who, in the words of Woolf, captured the dislocating shocks of twentieth-century 'life itself' ('MF' 191, 192).[82]

Given that I am expanding the practice of literary geography through arguing for the 'textural space' of a 'critical literary architexture' it is worth spending some time

[82] ARB (Architects Registration Board), 'Annual Report 2013' (2013) <http://2013.arb.org.uk/2013-facts-and-figures/registration-facts-and-figures/> [accessed 7 July 2015].

exploring the idea of 'texture' itself, and how it might serve to connect architecture with literature. The built environment has long been thought of as a complicated spatial 'text'.[83] As Paul Ricoeur observes of urban space, '[a] city brings together in the same space different ages, offering to our gaze a sedimented history of tastes and cultural forms. The city gives itself as both to be seen and to be read'.[84] Whilst emphasising the productivity of this textual metaphor, James Donald is careful to recognise its limitations, pointing out that the 'city-as-text analogy is comparatively weak […] when it comes to identifying and understanding the economic and political forces that determine the shape and rhythms of the city. It also risks underplaying the multi-layered and often contradictory *texture* of the city'.[85]

It is precisely for this reason that Lefebvre takes issue with the term 'text', arguing that it does not capture the full complexity and dynamism of social space. For him, any 'theory of space describes and analyses textures', because the built environment is constituted by a whole range of 'forms and structures'.[86] Describing the intersecting pathways that evolve through spatial practices, shaping the natural environment into various representations of space, Lefebvre emphasises that, at a representational level, these spaces contain a multitude of human (and animal) 'values' pertaining to 'danger, safety, waiting, promise'.[87] Such a complex amalgamation of material networks, social routines, personal values, and primitive instincts resists the notion of 'a text, or a message': 'it would make more sense to speak of texture rather than of texts'.[88] Anticipating Doel's 'affective texturing', then, Lefebvre's conception of socio-spatial 'texture' not only encompasses the material 'text' of the built environment (the

[83] See James Donald, 'Metropolis: The City as Text', in *Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity*, ed. by Robert Bocock and Kenneth Thompson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 417-70 (p. 423).
[84] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 151.
[85] Donald, 'Metropolis', p. 457.
[86] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 132.
[87] Ibid., p. 118.
[88] Ibid.

representation of space), but also the affective textural response to, and created by, that environment (the representational space).

Turning to consider architectural space in particular, Lefebvre maintains that 'it is helpful to think of architectures as "archi-textures", to treat each monument or building, viewed in its surroundings and context, in the populated area and associated networks in which it is set down, as part of a particular production of space'.[89] Jacques Derrida takes up this notion of architexture in his response to Bernard Tschumi's *Folies*, an experimental architectural installation in the Parc de la Vilette in Paris, in which Derrida was himself involved as a collaborator. Tschumi's design attempted to uncover the idea of architecture as an 'event', what Derrida describes as 'a writing of space, a mode of spacing which makes a place for the event'.[90] Like Lefebvre, who speaks of social space in terms of intersecting networks, Derrida describes moving through the grid-like construction of the *folies* as a 'crossing', which 'does not move through an already existing texture', but 'weaves this texture' as the crossing takes place.[91]

Recalling Ingold's conceptualisation of the geographer's map as a woven network of 'threads, wires or sticks' (see above in Section 3), Derrida describes the 'Architect-weaver', who 'plots grids, twining the threads of a chain, his writing holds out a net'.[92] This is an instructive analogy, which offers a link back to thinking about literary modernism; a period that Maud Ellmann has convincingly shown is entirely preoccupied with images of 'nets and networks'.[93] Indeed, though his reassessment of place, Casey observes that Derrida's theory of literary (inter)textuality 'meets architecture midway in the notion of *constructing*'.[94] This is evident in *Of Grammatology* (1967), where Derrida's

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[89] Ibid.
[90] Jacques Derrida, 'Point de Folie – Maintenant L'Architecture', trans. by Kate Linker, *AA Files*, 12 (1986), pp. 65-75 (p. 65, section 3).
[91] Ibid., p. 73, section 13.
[92] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, p. 241; Derrida, 'Point de Folie', p. 73, section 13.
[93] Maud Ellmann, *The Nets of Modernism: Henry James, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 1.
[94] Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 310.

notion of architecture as 'a writing of space, a mode of spacing' re-emerges in his description of '[s]pacing as writing'.[95] According to Derrida, the very act of writing does not befall 'an already constituted space', but in fact 'produc[es] the spatiality of space'.[96] Like architecture, writing is an event that constructs its own location; as Mark Wigley suggests, '[w]riting is not simply located "in" space. Rather, it is the production of space'.[97]

Derrida himself made this connection explicit in a public discussion that took place at Cooper's Union in New York in 1988:

> I have the feeling that when I…write, when I build certain texts, the law for me, or the rule, has to do with the spacing of the text. What interests me is not really the content but some distribution in the space, the way what I write is shaped, spatially shaped.[98]

Derrida here recalls Joseph Frank's influential discussion of 'spatial form' and modernist literature in an essay published in 1945.[99] Frank's essay is remarkably innovative, given that it begins to challenge – well in advance of the advent of spatial theory – the received idea in critical thinking of modernism being predominantly concerned with time and temporal experience.[100] Frank sets out to show that the modernist novel should be apprehended 'spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence', ultimately viewing spatial form as the 'structural scaffolding' of the modernist aesthetic.[101]

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[95] Derrida, 'Point de Folie', p. 65, section 3; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 69.
[96] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 290.
[97] Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, [1993] 2002), p. 69.
[98] Derrida, quoted in Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 310.
[99] Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature: An Essay in Two Parts', *The Sewanee Review*, 53.2 (1945), 221-40.
[100] On modernism and time, see Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, p. 2.
[101] Frank, 'Spatial Form', pp. 225, 240.

One problem with Frank's conception of spatial form, however, is his lack of regard for the material spaces that are represented in modernist texts. As Thacker observes, '[i]n Frank there is no real discussion of *social* space: the spaces of geographical analysis'.[102] In contrast, Derrida's conception of spatial form benefits from a more complex understanding of the connections between social spaces and written texts. In *Of Grammatology*, he explains that 'the place of writing is linked […] to the nature of social space, to the perceptive and dynamic organization of the technical, religious, economic and other such spaces'.[103] In effect, Derrida here describes the key focus of literary geography, and indeed literary architexture, in noticing the dynamic and productive connections between social space and narrative form.

Moreover, in his discussion of architectural and textual spacing, Derrida has inspired two key aims of this thesis. Firstly, despite the fact that his 'architect-weaver' is male – evident in his use of the masculine pronoun, 'he' – Derrida combines in this figure the masculine history of the architect and the feminine history of the weaver; a conceptual move that assists in my complication of the male tradition of literary architecture.[104] Bonnie Kime Scott has shown that there exists a rich history of webs, weaving, and spinning in the construction of literature and that 'woman is the usual weaver and her work is often problematic'.[105] Homer's Penelope, perhaps the most famous literary and mythical female weaver, is a case in point; relying on cunning and deceit, she wards off potential suitors by agreeing to pick one of them once she has finished weaving a burial shroud for Odysseus's elderly father, only to unravel at night the threads that she has woven by day, so as to prolong the process and remain faithful

[102] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, p. 4.
[103] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 290.
[104] Derrida, 'Point de Folie', p. 73, section 13.
[105] Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism*, 2 vols (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), I, pp. xv-xliii (pp. xvii-xviii).

to her husband until his return.[106] Tracing a more positive thread of female weaving in the twentieth century, Scott maintains that 'the modernist woman' is able 'to shape language into a substantially different web', because there is now more of a 'possibility of agency and selection for the weaver, within the structures of cultural and physical demands'.[107]

There is another component at work, however, in Scott's reappraisal of modernist form: that of 'scaffolding', a conceptual image that 'evokes architectonic male modernist designs'.[108] As her reading suggests, the division between weaving and scaffolding is a blurry one when it comes to the gendering of modernism, for many female modernists incorporate images of both into the content and form of their works. Indeed, all three of the modernist women I am concerned with in this thesis draw on architectural metaphors to conceptualise their literary craft. Woolf's pronouncements about the 'shapes' of books that 'hang in the mind' of the reader are well known, but Rhys similarly insists that 'a novel has to have a shape', and Bowen likewise argues that '[s]hape is possibly *the* most important thing'; fiction is like a building that 'has a structure'.[109]

Moreover, all three writers are acutely aware of the connections between the formal 'shape' of their work and the socio-spatial contexts in which they are writing. As Diana Athill observes, Rhys always 'started out from something that had happened' before moving on to consider carefully the 'shape' of her work.[110] Likewise, Bowen recognises that '[s]cene, being physical,' is 'generally a copy, or a composite copy' of 'real

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[106] For an excellent account of weaving, mythology, and literature, see Kathryn Sullivan Kruger, *Weaving the Word: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production* (London: Associated University Press, 2001).
[107] Scott, *Refiguring Modernism*, I, p. xx.
[108] Ibid., p. xxiv.
[109] Virginia Woolf, 'How Should One Read a Book?' (1926), in *Collected Essays*, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1966-67), II (1966), 1-11 (p. 9); Rhys, quoted in Diana Athill, 'Jean Rhys and her Autobiography: A Foreword by Diana Athill' (1979), in Jean Rhys, *Smile, Please: An Unfinished Autobiography* (Oxford: Isis, [1979] 1996), unnumbered; Elizabeth Bowen, 'Why Do I Write?' (1948), in *MT*, pp. 221-29 (p. 224); Bowen, quoted in Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 8.
[110] Athill, 'Jean Rhys and her Autobiography', unnumbered.

life', which is then put through a process of creative 'distortion'.[111] Woolf's seminal discussion of fiction in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) brings these ideas together, providing a pertinent link back to Derrida's 'architect-weaver'. Fiction, she claims, 'is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners'; 'these webs are not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in'.[112] It is these 'grossly material things' that form the basis of my textual analysis in the proceeding chapters. Reconceiving Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf as three exemplary late modernist architect-weavers, I argue that each takes inspiration from the affective materialities of modernity and wartime. Whether it is the disorientating narrative of architectural ruins in *The Heat of the Day*, the uncanny narrative architecture of *Good Morning, Midnight*, or else the ambivalent narrative that teeters between architectural unity and dispersal in *Between the Acts*, late modernist architexture can be thought of as a complex attempt to give narrative form to the deep vexations and turbulent textures of mid-twentieth century life.

5. BOWEN, RHYS, WOOLF, AND THE SPATIAL PARAMETERS OF LATE MODERNISM

Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf are, on the surface of things, three very different Anglophone writers. Anglo-Irish, Welsh-Dominican, and English, they each come from varied social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. In the context of this study, however, there are illuminating points of intersection and contrast to be made between each of them, both in terms of personal biography and writerly craft. First and foremost, they share a profound interest in architectural space and narrative form, employing both to articulate an intense preoccupation with modernity's crisis of home, belonging, and identity. Secondly, as I detail below, Bowen and Rhys each possess turbulent colonial histories,

[111] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Notes on Writing a Novel' (1945), in *MT*, pp. 35-48 (p. 40).
[112] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Penguin, [1928] 1945), p. 43.

having been uprooted from their childhood homes in Ireland and Dominica and sent to school in England. Such violent deracination had profound effects on their understanding of space, place, and belonging, and this is reflected in their fiction in their obsessive return to questions of dispossession. In contrast, Woolf lived in her native country from birth until death, relishing both the urban and rural landscapes of England. She was also deeply troubled, however, by her country's patriarchal and imperial ideologies, which prevented her from easily identifying with the political landscape of her native culture. Such contradictory feelings lend her work an acute architectural ambivalence, which becomes a central preoccupation in her late fiction. All three writers thus share a complex, often problematic, relationship with England, which manifests itself in their anxious fictional handling of architectural space and place.

Furthermore, while Woolf has long been an influential figure in literary modernism, Bowen and Rhys have held a much more contentious position in literary history. Despite considerable recuperative efforts on the part of a number of critics, both continue to be seen as 'semi-peripheral modernist writers'.[113] In 2012, when my research project began, Bowen and Rhys finally joined Woolf in receiving their deserved commemorative blue plaques from English Heritage at their former homes in London.[114] Woolf had already been awarded the first of hers (several, given her numerous London residences) almost four decades earlier in 1974, which in itself suggests a certain delay in the cultural recognition of Bowen and Rhys as important twentieth-century writers.

Indeed, for many years, Bowen's commitment to the domestic interior, material detail, and the omniscient narrator earned her a reputation as 'a lesser social or domestic

[113] Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 165.
[114] English Heritage, 'English Heritage Blue Plaques for Jean Rhys and Elizabeth Bowen', *English Heritage* (6 March 2012) <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about/news/rhysbowen/> [accessed 27 March 2013].

realist'.[115] Douglas Hewitt's response is fairly typical, describing Bowen as one of the 'minor' novelists of the mid-century, who, in choosing 'deliberately smaller subjects' than the high modernists, 'turned their backs on technical innovation'.[116] The 'ungainly' irregularities of Bowen's prose style have also attracted negative criticism.[117] Although critics have recognised that these irregularities help to disrupt conventional narrative form, Bowen's prose has been seen 'as an imperfect approximation of Woolf's'. [118] Other critics, however, have emphasised the productive overlaps between the work of Bowen and Woolf, arguing that both deploy a specifically modernist approach to domestic space and formal experimentation. Hermione Lee and Victoria Glendinning, for instance, suggest that Bowen's 'part in the modernist paradox – the application of elaborately formal methods to chaotic, inexpressible experience – is the precise charting of a period of loss' and for this reason she should be 'spoken of in the same breath as Virginia Woolf, on whom much more breath has been expended'.[119]

Precisely because of her contentious position in literary history, Bowen is a central figure in Nicola Humble's study of the feminine middlebrow novel. Setting out to redefine understandings of this typically derogatory category of fiction, Humble celebrates the 'hybrid form' of the middlebrow novel, arguing that it 'straddles the divide between the trashy romance or thriller on the one hand, and the philosophically or formally challenging novel on the other'.[120] Humble is not interested in the periodisation of modernism per se, however, but in fleshing out the contours of highbrow and

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[115] Susan Osborn, 'Introduction Elizabeth Bowen: New Directions For Critical Thinking', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 53.2 (2007), 225-37 (p. 227).
[116] Douglas Hewitt, *English Fiction of the Early Modern Period 1890-1940* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 196-97.
[117] Susan Osborn, 'Reconsidering Elizabeth Bowen', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 52.1 (2006), 187-97 (p. 192).
[118] Ibid.
[119] Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (London: Vision, 1981), p. 12; Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 1.
[120] Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 4, 11.

middlebrow culture as it was viewed by writers of the time.[121] Shifting focus back onto the fundamental relationship between modernism and domesticity as it is viewed today, I argue in this thesis that Bowen helps to elucidate the varying stylistic strategies writers were employing in the twentieth century in response to the increasing socio-spatial pressures of domestic life.

In comparison to Bowen's hotly contested style, Rhys's work has suffered from a dearth of critical attention altogether, having fallen into obscurity during the war years. All four of her interwar novels were out of print by the end of the Second World War and it was not until *Wide Sargasso Sea* was published in 1966 that she regained some popularity and her interwar novels were reprinted.[122] Such belated fame was a mixed blessing; as Helen Carr observes, 'for decades the fact that her fiction had first appeared in the context of modernist writing was forgotten'.[123] Moreover, her work continues to hold a less than weighty position within the literary marketplace. As Thacker has recently argued, decent scholarly editions of Rhys's work have yet to be produced, leaving much of the cultural and geographic complexity of her works unglossed and therefore unacknowledged (a point I return to in Section 4 of Chapter Two).[124]

Despite their controvertible literary histories, academic interest in Rhys and Bowen has grown in more recent years. This thesis aims to contribute to this body of work by placing Bowen and Rhys on an equal footing with Woolf, so as to expand, but also to particularise, the temporal, geographic, and aesthetic parameters of late modernist architexture. Of particular interest to me is the way in which Bowen and Rhys have been increasingly, and convincingly, recognised as significant modernist writers and important commentators on modernity and modern experience. Both appear, along with Woolf, in

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[121] Ibid., pp. 25-26.
[122] Thomas F. Staley, *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), pp. 18-19.
[123] Helen Carr, *Jean Rhys*, 2nd edn (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2012), p. 1.
[124] Andrew Thacker, 'Texts and Editions of Jean Rhys: Another Voyage in the Dark?', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 23.4 (2012), 510-24.

Deborah Parsons's influential account of female modernism, being discussed as modernist women 'for whom the city operates as not just a setting or image, but as a constituent of identity, and who translate the experience of urban space into their narrative form'.[125] Tackling the problematic figure of the urban *flâneuse*, Parsons traces the various narrative strategies that these writers use to articulate 'a female city consciousness alternative to that of the male'.[126] Her study takes account of their differing social, cultural, and economic backgrounds, nevertheless marking out their shared literary response to the shifting contours of urban modernity.

Esty has also brought Rhys and Bowen into dialogue with Woolf, challenging 'the idea of an old high modernism of the center and some new alternative modernisms of the periphery'.[127] His account of their work pays particular attention to their shared colonial histories, which, he argues, contribute to a 'profound, sometimes tragic, sense of dispossession', which in turn enables understanding of 'certain overlapping perspectives' in their fiction, despite 'patent stylistic differences'.[128] Esty's focus on the intersections between imperial and colonial geographies has helped to bring together previously bifurcated responses to Bowen and Rhys as modernist urban writers or Anglo-Irish/Caribbean writers.

Indeed, Bowen critics have tended to focus on her Anglo-Irish history in relation to her early Big House fiction, while considering her modernist impulses in the context of her later urban wartime work. As James F. Wurtz has noted, this split approach to Bowen's fiction 'tends to reinforce a false dichotomy between Bowen as an Ascendancy Big House novelist and Bowen as a literary modernist'.[129] Thacker has observed a similar

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[125] Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 7.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Esty, *Unseasonable Youth*, p. 165.
[128] Ibid., p. 162.
[129] James F. Wurtz, 'Elizabeth Bowen, Modernism, and the Spectre of Anglo-Ireland', *Estudios Irlandeses*, 5 (2010), 119-28 (p. 120).

tendency in Rhys criticism, suggesting that critics 'focus upon one of two geographies'; '*either* the metropolitan centres of Paris, London and Vienna, *or* the Caribbean influences upon her fiction'.[130] For both Rhys and Bowen, however, modern urban experience is always linked to colonial identity, something deeply rooted in their troubled personal histories.

Bowen was born into an Anglo-Irish family of Welsh descent in Dublin in 1899, and brought up in Bowen's Court, an imposing Big House in County Cork.[131] Following her father's breakdown when she was seven years old, she moved to the south coast of England with her mother, who later died there when Bowen turned thirteen. Although Bowen went on to live a very happy domestic life in England with her husband, Alan Cameron, also managing passionate affairs with Seán Ó Faoláin, Charles Ritchie, and May Sarton, this move had a profound effect on her understanding of home, belonging, and domestic architecture.[132] In her autobiography, she recounts how the Edwardian seaside villas that dotted the south coast came in 'a phantasmagoric variety' of shapes and sizes, standing out in sharp relief against the dull backdrop of '[r]epetitive eighteenth-century interiors' and 'the uniformity of façades' back in Ireland.[133]

Reflecting on her experience of this starkly contrasting architecture, Bowen suggests that 'it was England made [*sic*] me a novelist. At an early though conscious age, I was transplanted […]. From now on there was to be (as for any immigrant) a cleft between my heredity and my environment – the former remaining, in my case, the more powerful'.[134] Although the seaside villas were inspiring to her already spatial imagination – she grew up wanting to be an architect – this geographic cleft in Bowen's life and

[130] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, p. 193.
[131] For an excellent biographical account of Bowen's life, see Glendinning, *Bowen: Portrait*.
[132] Ibid., pp. 45-55, pp. 118-21, pp. 128-82, pp. 192-93.
[133] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Pictures and Conversations' (1975), in *MT*, pp. 265-98 (pp. 278, 279).
[134] Ibid., p. 276.

identity left her feeling like she did not quite belong in either England or Ireland.[135] As she explains in interview in 1959, 'I'm afraid I'm a hybrid' who is 'rather unstuck – I mean unlocated'.[136]

It is precisely this split in place and identity that Rhys experienced during her childhood and adolescent years. Born in Dominica in 1890 to a family of Welsh and Scottish descent, Rhys soon learnt the difficulties of being a white Creole belonging to the slave-owning class in the Caribbean.[137] In her autobiography she describes her childhood self as 'an outcast' who harboured intense feelings of 'envy', because she felt that the black natives 'were more alive, more part of the place' than she was.[138] Such isolation intensified when she was sent to school in England, where her West-Indian accent made her stand out uncomfortably from the rest of her peers. Unlike Bowen, who felt deeply inspired by the exhilarating variety of English seaside houses, Rhys was profoundly disappointed upon arrival by the dull, grey architecture of Southampton. Her disappointment continued when she travelled to London, a place she perceived to be 'all the same, long, straight, grey'.[139]

As an adult, Rhys's life continued to consist of upheavals, this time from a number of English and European towns and cities, following a failed acting career, a transient period working as a chorus girl, and three disastrous marriages. Her Creole identity remained an intensive pressure point in her experience of London and Paris in particular; being white, but retaining her West Indian accent, she defied categorisation as either English or Caribbean, and hence her social and national position within the

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[135] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Frankly Speaking: Interview, 1959', in *Listening In*, ed. by Hepburn, pp. 323-43 (p. 330).
[136] Ibid., pp. 324, 325.
[137] For a comprehensive biographical account of Rhys's life, see Carole Angier, *Jean Rhys: Life and Work* (London: André Deutsch, 1990).
[138] Rhys, *Smile, Please*, pp. 5, 36, 37.
[139] Ibid., p. 90.

imperial city was constantly unsettled.[140] The dull grey landscape of England deeply influenced Rhys's fictional work, and writing became the outlet for her troubled architectural imagination: 'Oh the relief of words. Always like a constant aching, no, an irritation, harsh, gritty, this feeling about England and the English'.[141] In Rhys's fiction, imperial architecture consequently operates as a stultifying or else deeply unsettling force in the lives of her protagonists, resolving itself into a mundane pattern of uniformity whilst also catalysing uncanny moments of fear and alienation.

Taking note of the intersecting European and Caribbean elements in Rhys's work is therefore important, as it enrichens our understanding of her complex literary response to modern urban female experience. As Anna Snaith suggests, Rhys's work is concerned with 'the discomfort not just of the single woman, but of the single *colonial* woman, who occupies a doubly transgressive position in the metropole'.[142] Building on studies that have begun to synthesise a dual geographic approach to Rhys's work, Chapter Two of this thesis thus considers the ways in which colonial identity complicates the vexed experience of Rhys's protagonist in *Good Morning, Midnight*, who is unable to belong within the uncanny architecture of the imperial city.[143] In Chapter One I discuss similar ideas in relation to Bowen's fiction, paying attention to how she too translates her personal feelings of 'unlocatedness' onto the metropolitan spaces her protagonists inhabit.

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[140] Angier suggests that it was Rhys's accent that prevented her from becoming an actress, as the theatre school doubted her ability to develop the British accent required for the profession. Angier, *Rhys: Life*, p. 49.

[141] Rhys, *Smile, Please*, p. 164.

[142] Anna Snaith, '"A Savage from the Cannibal islands"': Jean Rhys and London', in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 76-85 (p. 76).

[143] See, for example: Carol Dell'Amico, *Colonialism and the Modernist Moment in the Early Novels of Jean Rhys* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Esty, *Unseasonable Youth*, Chapter 6, 'Virgins of Empire: The Antidevelopmental Plot in Rhys and Bowen', pp. 160-94; Anna Snaith, *Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London, 1890-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), Chapter 5, 'Jean Rhys: "A Savage from the Cannibal Islands"', pp. 133-51.

In comparison to Rhys and Bowen, Woolf possesses a more straightforward relationship with England in terms of national identity. Born in London in 1882, Woolf took utter delight in the urban capital.[144] One need only glance at the more exuberant passages of 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' (1927) to understand Woolf's frequent relishing of the city: 'Passing, glimpsing, everything seems accidentally but miraculously sprinkled with beauty, as if the tide of trade which deposits its burden so punctually and prosaically upon the shores of Oxford Street had this night cast up nothing but treasure'.[145] In Chapter Three, however, I show that Woolf's relationship with England is more complex and ambivalent, as her equally strong distrust of patriarchy and imperialism complicates her more positive feelings about her native country.

Arguably one of her most ambivalent novels, Woolf's *Between the Acts* has triggered diverse and conflicting critical responses and it has been read variously as a novel of social dissolution, wartime anxiety, cultural salvage, and many things in-between.[146] As Patricia Laurence maintains: 'The structure of oppositions and the rhythm of alternation […] are often ignored in Woolf's work: one critic emphasizing the unity, another, the fragmentation; one highlighting the optimism, another the pessimism'.[147] In Chapter Three, I bring these polarised critical responses into dialogue with one another, arguing that ambivalence is key to Woolf's late modernism. In doing so, I step away from the well-rehearsed argument about Woolf's love for urban architecture, building instead

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144 Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 104.
145 Virginia Woolf, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' (1927), in *Selected Essays*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 177-87 (p. 181).
146 See, for example, Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), Chapter 11 , '*Between the Acts* and the Coming of War', pp. 302-55; MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, Chapter 1, 'Virginia Woolf and the Pastoral Patria', pp. 22-43; Steve Ellis, *British Writers and the Approach of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Chapter 5, 'Virginia Woolf and the Theatre of War', pp. 188-233; Esty, *Shrinking Island*, Chapter 2, 'Insular Rites: Virginia Woolf and the Late Modernist Pageant-Play', pp. 54-107.
147 Patricia Laurence, 'The Facts and Fugue of War: From *Three Guineas* to *Between the Acts*', in *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*, ed. by Mark Hussey (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), pp. 225-45 (p. 245).

on the more recent 'greening of modernism', which has shown that the rural landscape plays an equally important role in Woolf's aesthetic and cultural appreciation of England.[148] I thus return to the work of Esty, whose account of the late modernist 'anthropological turn' has informed my understanding of how the rural novel functions in the mid-century.[149] Arguing against Miller's claim that Woolf's *Between the Acts* belongs to 'a still developing corpus of high modernism', rather than the 'new generation of late modernist works', I contend that the novel exemplifies the late development of Woolf's modernist oeuvre, and that it can be seen as a fascinating counterpoint to the anxious urbanism of Rhys and Bowen.[150]

Three central, and interlinked, reasons thus inform my choice to focus on this trio of twentieth-century writers. Firstly, when read in dialogue, their work allows me to contribute to the critical reassessment of the temporal, geographical, and aesthetic parameters of late modernism. Secondly, they each possess a complex, often problematic, relationship with the modern built environment, which manifests itself in their fiction in ways that shed light on the thematic and formal developments of literature in the mid-century. Thirdly, and of particular interest to this thesis, they each conceive literature in architectural terms, inviting closer inspection of the stylistic and structural responses to modernity that shape the late modernist literary imagination.

6. A Structural Overview

The central chapters of this thesis take the form of extended author-specific case studies: Bowen and architectural ruins, Rhys and the architectural uncanny, Woolf and architectural ambivalence. To emphasise my methods of close reading and formal

[148] Bonnie Kime Scott, 'Regionalism, Nature, and the Environment', in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. by Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 243-53 (p. 243). Scott provides an excellent overview of the importance of nature in Woolf's writing, discussing in particular the influence of Woolf's family holidays in Cornwall and her father's and brother's keen interests in botany and natural history.
[149] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 2.
[150] Miller, *Late Modernism*, p. 10.

analysis, I have focused in depth on one novel in each of these chapters – *The Heat of the Day*, *Good Morning, Midnight*, and *Between the Acts*, respectively – whilst making reference to a constellation of other, primarily modernist texts where I feel there are productive connections to be made. All three of these novels are noticeably iconic and popular texts for analysis in the respective oeuvres of each author. My choice to retain focus on each of them is therefore intentional, as I wish to accentuate how a critical literary architextural approach enables a reassessment of the themes and forms in question.

Chapter One focuses on the ruination of the wartime home in Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*. I begin with an overview of critical responses to Bowen's representation of 'place', moving to outline my particular focus on affective materialities in relation to recent geographical theories of ruins. I then engage with historical and theoretical understandings of place and home, discussing the potential pitfalls of Heidegger's conception of dwelling. Turning to consider three central architectural elements in Bowen's novel, I focus on the Regency terrace, including rooms, doors, and windows; domestic things (as opposed to 'objects' – a distinction I discuss in further depth in Section 4 of Chapter One), focusing on tables, chairs, and possessions; and ruins, with particular emphasis on blitzed streets, ruined interiors, and linguistic negation.

Through my application of thing theory, I advance existing understandings of Bowen's 'literary animism', arguing that new materialist conceptions of physical matter shed light on what has been previously considered Bowen's peculiar and idiosyncratic belief in the vitality of the non-human world.[151] To this end, I argue that Bowen's use of the classic realist narrative enables her to construct a vital materialism that is entirely preoccupied with a modernist focus on the interrelation of space and self. Focusing also on linguistic negation, an under-developed area of interest in literary studies, I examine

[151] Elizabeth C. Inglesby, '"Expressive Objects": Elizabeth Bowen's Narrative Materializes', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 53.2 (2007), 306-33 (p. 306).

the ways in which Bowen's complex negative syntax shares cognitive affinities with ruined landscapes, and can thus be read as a language of ruination.

In Chapter Two, I move from the domestic interior to the marginal spaces of London and Paris in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, conducting an in-depth study of the novel's uncanny narrative architecture. Mary Lou Emery has recently suggested that 'the strange and uncanny' elements of Rhys's writing have often been missed and that closer examination of this 'strangeness' might 'illuminate the complexity of her work' and demonstrate its 'continuing impact on literary studies'.[152] Beginning with an architectural reinterpretation of Sigmund Freud's theory of the uncanny, I consequently analyse the strange events that occur in both the content and form of *Good Morning, Midnight*. I demonstrate their links to the transgressive position of the single, colonial woman living homelessly in the imperial cities of Paris and London in 1937, a condition made all the more difficult by the growing instability of the global politics of the time.

I focus in particular on the marginal spaces of the hotel, the city street, and the public toilet, analysing the uncanny events sparked by mirrors and windows, traumatic memories, and the imposing architecture of the 1937 Paris Exhibition. Through considering these spaces in detail, I illuminate not only the uncanniness of the novel and the socio-spatial world it depicts, but also the spatial theory itself. The hotel and, in particular, the public toilet, remain under-researched spaces of urban modernity. Through my analysis of *Good Morning, Midnight* I thus expand the scant cultural material on these spaces in anthropology and urban planning, by arguing that Rhys's novel offers a unique perspective on the historical and cultural realities of the space at the level of everyday experience and use.

Finally, in Chapter Three I consider Woolf's ambivalent engagement with architecture and everyday life in *Between the Acts*. Although she shares the deeply anxious

[152] Mary Lou Emery, 'Foreword', in *Rhys Matters: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Mary Wilson and Kerry L. Johnson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. xi-xiii (pp. xii, xiii).

wartime concerns of Bowen and Rhys, she remains committed to the idea that 'there will be a next generation, in spite of this war and whatever it brings'.[153] Building on the recently emerging critical interest in the more redemptive aspects of late modernism (its turn towards England and a reinvigorated sense of place and region), I thus suggest that *Between the Acts* offers a striking spatial imaginary for the future of everyday life in England, despite the fact that Woolf cannot translate this architectural vision into a material form that concretely exists within the fictional world of the novel.[154]

I begin by assessing the contentious position of the rural novel in twentieth-century literary history and Woolf's conflicting feelings about England during wartime. I then complicate what Alastair Bonnett refers to as the recent 'desire to cut nostalgia up into good and bad bits', by analysing the differing nostalgic impulses in the novel.[155] Firstly, I demonstrate how Woolf's ironic representation of Pointz Hall functions as a self-conscious strategy for tracking the decline of country house culture and critiquing the progression of architectural and technological modernity. Secondly, I consider the significance of nature and music in Woolf's representation of the pageant by returning to the new-materialist theories discussed in Chapter One and engaging with recent geographical understandings of sound and performance. Thirdly, I examine Pointz Hall's transformation into a primeval cave, arguing that this spatial imaginary encapsulates Woolf's architectural ambivalence through symbolising an annihilating return to pre-civilised barbarism and a redemptive process of regeneration and renewal.

Comparing Woolf's primitivist impulses to those of the avant-garde, I argue that *Between the Acts* can be located at the anthropological end of an expanded spectrum of modernist primitivism. Taking up Thrift's idea of 'contemplation', I suggest that the

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[153] Virginia Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower' (1940), in *The Moment and Other Essays*, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1947), pp. 105-25 (p. 121).
[154] See, for example, Esty, *Shrinking Island*; Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010).
[155] Alastair Bonnett, *Left in the Past: Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010), p. 38.

novel helps to develop understanding of the reactionary potential of modern nostalgia.[156] Through self-consciously attending to the vibrancy of the material world, Woolf activates a 'slow-down of perception' that ultimately resists the speed and progression of modernity.[157] Engaging also with Woolf's extensive commentaries on literary form, I assess the significance in her non-fictional oeuvre of the terms 'brick' and 'block', both of which she repeatedly employs when discussing narrative style and structure. I argue that this architectural vocabulary anticipates her late modernist formal innovations, which operate in *Between the Acts* in dialectical interrelation with her evolving conception of everyday life.

Throughout these chapters, I emphasise architectural elements that not only illuminate each author's thematic and formal response to modernity, but also deserve greater attention in and of themselves. In doing so, I have resisted the temptation to make the more obvious spatial connections between Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf. The hotel, for example, figures just as prominently in Bowen's fiction as it does in Rhys's, and so do uncanny events; likewise, Rhys and Woolf invite comparative readings of the urban street and female wandering; moreover, Woolf and Bowen share an interest in the middle-class domestic interior and the country house estate. Although I do touch upon some of these connections, I aim to activate a number of original dialogues between the more unexpected areas of their work. Rhys's Parisian toilets, for example, speak to Woolf's country house cesspool; Bowen's ruinous domestic interiors are just as unsettling as Rhys's transient hotel rooms; even Woolf's representation of the natural world intersects with Bowen's animate objects. Ultimately, I contend that what links each of these architectural elements and the varying narrative strategies in these authors' works is a shared preoccupation with a crisis of home, belonging, and identity. Bowen,

[156] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, p. 57.
[157] Ibid.

Rhys, and Woolf all strive in equally deft and complex ways to weave the dislocating shocks of modernity and wartime into a specifically late modernist architextural form.

CHAPTER ONE

A 'tottering lace-like architecture of ruins': The Wartime Home in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*

1. INTRODUCTION

In 'Pictures and Conversations' (1975), Bowen looks back on her writing career and asks whether she is 'not manifestly a writer for whom places loom large? As a reader, it is to the place-element that I react most strongly'.[1] Domestic place is particularly revealing in Bowen's fictional oeuvre, for it rarely intersects with the '*felicitous space*' that Gaston Bachelard associates with the poetic imagination of domesticity.[2] Rather, Bowen's domestic interiors are deeply problematic and frequently inhabited by displaced protagonists who tend to fit, as Neil Corcoran observes, into 'the paradigm of a character constant in Bowen, the restless or rootless transient'.[3] Bowen's fictional houses thus belong to Adorno's hopelessly damaged world of urban modernity, in which 'it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home'.[4] This condition of modern homelessness is felt potently in Bowen's wartime writing, in which she negotiates the violent ruination of home in London during the Second World War. In an interview with Seán Ó Faoláin in 1942, Bowen reveals her anxieties about the unprecedented scale of architectural

[1] Bowen, 'Pictures and Conversations', p. 282.
[2] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. xxxv.
[3] Neil Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 104.
[4] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 39.

destruction at this time, insisting that 'Place is *frightfully* important' in her fiction, particularly that set in wartime: 'Yes – the Place *is* frightfully important'.[5]

This acute preoccupation with wartime space and place is typified in *The Heat of the Day* (1949), Bowen's renowned mid-century novel. In this narrative, she weaves a plot of espionage and treason into a story of personal displacement and betrayal, demonstrating how the wider political arena of wartime infiltrates the domestic interior and exacerbates the condition of modern urban homelessness. The novel begins in September 1942 and ends just after the Normandy landings in 1944, with a chapter flashback to 1940 that details the protagonist Stella Rodney's blossoming romance amidst the ruins of the Blitz. Although direct depictions of the Blitz occupy a relatively small proportion of the novel, architectural ruins permeate the narrative throughout, as Bowen negotiates the ruined configurations of her characters' transient wartime lodgings.

In its attention to domestic experience during the war, Bowen's novel belongs to what MacKay describes as the 'non-combatant modernisms' of the mid-century.[6] As Thomas S. Davis observes, Bowen's wartime writing 'contain[s] very little of the actual war' and noticeably lacks 'typical characters such as civilian firefighters and air raid wardens; missing too are harrowing air raid scenes, enflamed buildings, and depictions of British resistance'.[7] In a Postscript to her celebrated collection of wartime short fiction, *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* (1945), Bowen confirms this avoidance of 'war action' as a deliberate artistic intention: 'These are all wartime, none of them *war*, stories […]. These are, more, studies of climate, war-climate, and of the strange growths it raised' ('P' 95). Rather than focusing on the war itself, Bowen is thus more concerned with the spatial and psychological implications of reconfigured wartime space.

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[5] Bowen, quoted in Seán Ó Faoláin (The Bellman), 'Meet Elizabeth Bowen', *Bell*, September 1942, pp. 420-26 (p. 424).
[6] MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, p. 6.
[7] Thomas S. Davis, 'Elizabeth Bowen's War Gothic', *Textual Practice*, 27.1 (2013), 29-47 (p. 30).

Moreover, Bowen's non-combatant modernism is strongly linked to her ethical wartime conscience. In her Postscript to *The Demon Lover*, she addresses the inherent problems associated with the artistic representation of ruins. Whereas '[p]ainters have painted, and photographers […] have photographed, the tottering lace-like architecture of ruins', Bowen argues that she 'cannot *render*' in her fiction, 'only [that she can] embrace' ('P' 99). As David James notes, Bowen here reminds us 'that war-photographers were prone to embroider the Blitz: zealously portraying, even fetishizing, shock-impressions'.[8] Instead of providing a romanticised spectacle or totalising documentary account of London's blitzed topography, Bowen consequently stresses that she attempts to offer only 'isolated' and 'particular' moments, through 'spot-lighting faces or cutting out gestures' ('P' 99). Aligning herself with a modernist mode that 'works indirectly and inwardly', as MacKay suggests, 'to expand the categories of what constitutes historical experience', Bowen paves an ethical pathway through the blitzed streets by providing fleeting impressions of wartime places and individuals.[9]

In this chapter, I am thus concerned with how the 'war-climate' of the mid-century relates to Bowen's late modernist thematic and formal representation of domestic architecture in *The Heat of the Day*. I begin with an overview of theoretical and historical understandings of dwelling and home, before moving on to analyse Bowen's textual representation of wartime domestic architecture, focusing in turn on the Regency Terrace, domestic things, and ruins. Paying particular attention to how Bowen's thematic preoccupation with modernity's crisis of belonging becomes an increasing formal concern during the war years, I argue that there are significant connections between her representation of architectural space and place and the strained, disjunctive style of the narrative – a style that, Bowen explains in interview with Jocelyn Brooke in 1950, 'was to a certain extent intended. I wanted […] a smashed up pattern with its fragments

[8] David James, 'The New Purism', *Textual Practice*, 21.4 (2007), 687-714 (p. 704).
[9] MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, p. 8.

invecting on one another'.[10] Demonstrating how this fragmented prose style 'enacts the homelessness it so often describes', as Lyndsey Stonebridge has put it, this chapter shows how Bowen textually (re)constructs out of the ruins a deeply unsettling portrait of the fractured domestic landscape of 1940s London.[11]

During her lifetime, however, Bowen felt that the impress of 'place' in her work went largely unacknowledged, complaining that '[t]hesis-writers, interviewers or individuals I encounter at parties all, but all, stick to the same track, which by-passes locality'.[12] Yet since her death in 1973, her handling of place has received considerable critical attention.[13] Early interpretations tended to view Bowen's places in thematic terms, something evident in Walter Sullivan's assertion that 'it is impossible to read Miss Bowen and not be aware of how architecture and topography give weight to her fiction and contribute actively to the development of plot and theme'.[14] More recently, critics such as Susan Osborn have begun to observe the striking connections between Bowen's representation of place and the 'strange materiality' of her prose form, arguing that its 'Braille-like tangibility' 'realizes itself not solely as a style to be looked *through* but as a style to be looked *at*'.[15] Such a development in extant criticism has helped to re-situate Bowen within literary history, establishing her work as an important contribution to modernist innovation. Whereas her reliance on classic realism (particularly her use of the omniscient narrator and material detail) was once considered retrogressive in relation to

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[10] Elizabeth Bowen, 'A Conversation between Elizabeth Bowen and Jocelyn Brooke' (1950), in *Listening In*, ed. by Hepburn, pp. 274-86 (p. 283).
[11] Lyndsey Stonebridge, *The Judicial Imagination: Writing After Nuremberg* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 119.
[12] Bowen, 'Pictures and Conversations', p. 281.
[13] For an excellent overview of the broad developments in Bowen criticism, see Osborn, 'Reconsidering Elizabeth Bowen'.
[14] Walter Sullivan, 'A Sense of Place: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of the Heart', *The Sewanee Review*, 84.1 (1976), 142-49 (p. 143).
[15] Osborn, 'Reconsidering Elizabeth Bowen', pp. 193, 194.

the 'technological innovation' of high modernism, it is now understood as a technique specifically linked to her modernist negotiation of space and human 'psychology'.[16]

In *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen self-consciously pushes the limits of narrative realism further than ever before, demonstrating the continuing legacy of modernist innovation in the later decades of the century. In particular, she experiments with omniscience and syntax in order to highlight the unsettling materiality of the wartime city. Elizabeth C. Inglesby has termed this experimental narrative materialism Bowen's 'literary animism', explaining that in Bowen's fiction the non-human world 'appears to have an independent existence with an integrity of its own'.[17] In addition to this literary animism, Bowen repeatedly disrupts the flow of her narrative in *The Heat of the Day* by creating complex negative linguistic constructions that help to foreground the violent reconfiguration of the wartime built environment.

If, as Pamela Thurschwell and Siân White observe, late modernism 'does not mark merely a formal difference or a developing modernity', but rather 'suggests a self-conscious engagement with, and an alteration of, the tenets set out in high modernism', then Bowen's narrative materialism deliberately foregrounds 'the vertiginous experience of *how* to read' when the '*what*' of the narrative is increasingly unstable.[18] Building on the work of Victoria Rosner, who argues that Woolf 'locates modernism's origins squarely in the spaces of private life', I posit that the ruined domestic interior in Bowen's fiction is an equally 'generative site for literary modernism' in the later decades of the twentieth century.[19]

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[16] Hewitt, *English Fiction of the Early Modern Period*, p. 197; Bonnie Kime Scott, 'Transforming the Novel', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers*, ed. by Maren Tova Linett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 17-32 (p. 29).
[17] Inglesby, '"Expressive Objects"', pp. 306, 326.
[18] Pamela Thurschwell and Siân White, 'Introduction to "Elizabeth Bowen and Textual Modernity: A Special Issue of Textual Practice"', *Textual Practice*, 27.1 (2013), 1-6 (p. 2).
[19] Victoria Rosner, *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 4, 2. On modernism and domesticity, see also Christopher Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, *Domestic Modernism, the Interwar Novel, and E. H. Young* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

In doing so, I deliberately step away from a current trend in Bowen criticism that sees the uncanniness of the urban environment in her wartime writing repeatedly foregrounded. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, for instance, note the 'uncannily dramatic qualities' of *The Heat of the Day*, qualities which, they argue, powerfully secure the novel within the genre of 'blitz-writing'.[20] Petra Rau likewise acknowledges the pertinence of the uncanny in Bowen's fiction, making links with the spatial and psychological symptoms of the war: 'War is uncanny not only because it literally opens up the home to the strange experience of public conflict, but because it reveals the Freudian *Unheimlichkeit* at the core of this home'.[21]

Such critical responses are not unfounded, given that Bowen witnessed the uncanniness of wartime whilst patrolling London's blitzed streets as an Air Raid Precautions warden for the Marylebone district.[22] In the Postscript to *The Demon Lover*, she comments on the sense of living 'with every pore open' at this time:

> It seems to me that during the war the overcharged subconsciousness of everybody overflowed and merged […]. Sometimes I hardly knew where I stopped and somebody else began. 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. ('P' 95)

Wartime London is, according to Bowen, a place in which people and spaces begin to overlap with one another. She thus diagnoses an uncanny blurring of boundaries – between self and other, inside and outside, private and public, familiar and unfamiliar – as the predominant spatial and psychological symptom of the Blitz. It is precisely this

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[20] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1995), pp. 84, 94.
[21] Petra Rau, *English Modernism, National Identity and the Germans, 1890-1950* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 184.
[22] Glendinning, *Bowen: Portrait*, p. 128.

uncanniness that is translated into the strange, and strained, events that characterise her wartime fiction.

Given that the uncanny has already been successfully employed as an interpretive lens in Bowen criticism, however, my aim in this chapter is to offer a complementary reading of Bowen's wartime work that embraces the uncanniness of *The Heat of the Day* whilst refocusing critical attention onto its narrative *materialities*. In Chapter Two, I return to consider the uncanny in architectural terms, providing an in-depth study of the concept in Rhys's interwar fiction. Yet in this chapter, I am more interested in engaging with Mellor's contention that '[r]eading – and writing – the ruins of war requires the *material* spaces cut violently into the city fabric to be acknowledged and understood'.[23] Indeed, as much as the above Postscript to *The Demon Lover* appeals to the uncanny, it also foregrounds London as a place of 'solid things' whose 'bulk and weight' might collapse into rubble at any time ('P' 95). It is precisely this anxiety about the unstable solidity of wartime architecture that characterises *The Heat of the Day*.

Noticeably, recent geographic scholarship on ruins has employed non-representational theories to foreground the ways in which processes of ruination expose the turbulent physicality of matter.[24] As Caitlin DeSilvey and Tim Edensor point out, a cultural geographic approach to ruins helps to complicate and challenge the alluring qualities of '[r]uin-gazing', which, since the eighteenth century, has become the 'preserve of an elevated aesthetic sensibility' and thus augmented a particularly romanticised view of the ruin.[25] Coining the term 'ruinophilia', Svetlana Boym acknowledges the twenty-first-century legacy of this strange fascination; but, crucially, reasserts that for all their

[23] Mellor, *Reading the Ruins*, p. 203: emphasis added.
[24] See Tim Edensor, 'The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23.6 (2005), 829-49; Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality* (Oxford: Berg, 2005); Tim Edensor, 'Waste Matter – The Debris of Industrial Ruins and the Disordering of the Material World', *Journal of Material Culture*, 10.3 (2005), 311-32; Caitlin DeSilvey, 'Observed Decay: Telling Stories with Mutable Things', *Journal of Material Culture*, 11.3 (2006), 318-38.
[25] Caitlin DeSilvey and Tim Edensor, 'Reckoning with Ruins', *Progress in Human Geography*, 37.4 (2012), 465-85 (p. 466).

alluring beauty ruins 'give us a shock of vanishing materiality'.[26] Boym's emphasis on the materiality of ruins is important; yet such sites do not necessarily represent a vanishing materiality but rather a violently changing one. As Edensor suggests, the 'material status of objects in ruins is transient, so that they are in a state of becoming something else'.[27] Ruins therefore offer new ways of interacting with and understanding the world; through their constant state of becoming they disrupt the 'predictable and regular distribution of objects in space'.[28]

Collectively, these recent theoretical reappraisals of ruined matter provide a useful critical apparatus for approaching and analysing Bowen's textual representation of ruined domestic materiality. Shifting attention onto the unreflexive and immersive realm of everyday experience in the 'thing-world', non-representational theory offers a new perspective on Bowen's attempt to capture the disorientating experience of ruined wartime space.[29] If, as Osborn observes, Bowen's prose form 'sometimes thwarts or at least hinders our search for deeper or hidden meaning', then it is precisely this noticeable affective quality of her writing that helps to convey the turbulent nature of the ruined thing-world.[30] I thus contend that applying thing theory and recent non-representational theories of ruination to *The Heat of the Day* enables the 'strange materiality' of Bowen's prose style to be reconsidered in direct relation to the formal innovations of late modernism.[31]

In particular, I demonstrate how reading Bowen's narrative materialism in light of Jane Bennett's recent work on vibrant materialism reinvigorates our comprehension of Bowen's often commented upon, but rarely theorised, 'literary animism'.[32] Likewise, I

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[26] Svetlana Boym, 'Ruins of the Avant-Garde: From Tatlin's Tower to Paper Architecture', in *Ruins of Modernity*, ed. by Hell and Schönle, pp. 58-85 (p. 58).
[27] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 319.
[28] Ibid., p. 311.
[29] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theories*, p. 10.
[30] Osborn, 'Reconsidering Elizabeth Bowen', p. 194.
[31] Ibid., p. 193.
[32] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Inglesby, '"Expressive Objects"', p. 306.

show how recent geographic understandings of the affective, sensual qualities of ruined spaces enable a greater appreciation of the cognitive effects of Bowen's use of complex linguistic negation. Ultimately, I argue that in drawing her artistic resources from the unstable architextures of wartime, Bowen's fictional work stands as an important commentary on the condition of urban space and psychology in 1940s London, and in turn exemplifies the self-conscious developments of modernism during, and after, the Second World War.

2. DWELLING AND HOME

According to Heidegger, dwelling is innate to human life, for 'the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Baun*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on earth as a mortal. It means to dwell' ('BDT' 145). Central to Heidegger's conception of being are the associated notions of fixity and rootedness, for the verb 'to dwell' means 'to remain, to stay in a place' ('BDT' 144). Place, for Heidegger, is 'the *where* of the belonging', and becomes meaningful when spaces are 'joined' and 'gathered' into a recognisable 'location' ('BDT' 152: emphasis added).[33] Heidegger terms this process 'building', which, 'by virtue of constructing locations, is a founding and joining of spaces' and 'a distinctive letting dwell' ('BDT' 156). Crucially, building and dwelling are not matters of cause and effect, for each presupposes the other: 'building is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling – to build is in itself already to dwell' ('BDT' 144). Building, then, does not simply equate to the construction of buildings, but also includes 'cultivating' and 'preserving' ('BDT' 149) the places in which man always already dwells.

For Heidegger, the dwelling place thus entails a lot more than brute architectural space, incorporating complex notions of preservation, cultivation, tradition, familiarity, and sedentary belonging. The dwelling place consequently helps to distinguish between

[33] Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. by Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, [1985] 1992), p. 226.

the 'house' and the 'home', two terms that Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei remind us are so 'often used interchangeably' and yet carry distinct, albeit closely related, meanings: '*house*, a physical, built dwelling for people in a fixed location' is necessarily different to 'the *home*', which 'may possess the material characteristic of a built dwelling', but also 'implies a space, a feeling, an idea'.[34] Nowhere is this 'idea' of home more apparent than in the domestic ideologies of Victorian Britain. In his momentous *Arcades Project* (c.1927-40), Walter Benjamin reflects on the separation of the home from the workplace in the nineteenth century, describing the Victorian domestic interior as 'a box in the theatre of the world', in which the 'private individual' considers him/herself removed from the social and economic pressures of public, commercial life (*AP* 8). Benjamin draws attention, however, to the 'illusions' of the bourgeois individual and the 'phantasmagorias of the interior' (*AP* 8, 9), indicating that the ideologies of home might not match up with the lived reality of the space.

In their comprehensive study of the 'separate spheres' of the nineteenth century, the social historians Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have challenged the idea of the Victorian home being a space entirely predicated on the division of inside and outside, private and public, feminine and masculine space.[35] Providing extensive evidence of the complex socio-spatial politics that operated within the domestic interior, they argue that the '[p]ublic was not really public and private not really private despite the potent imagery of "separate spheres". Both were ideological constructs with specific meaning which must be understood as products of a particular historical time'.[36] Building on their seminal study, Moira Donald emphasises that the Victorian home remained an

[34] Briganti and Mezei, *Domestic Modernism*, pp. 19-20.
[35] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[36] Ibid., p. 33.

industrious 'workplace' of household 'maintenance, cleaning and servicing'.[37] Moreover, regular streams of visitors, high rates of servant employment, and complex gendered divisions of space meant that, despite being 'elaborately segregated according to social status, age and gender', the Victorian home was a prime site for boundary crossing and social conflict.[38] Crucially, then, these social historians have redefined the home as both an ideological construct and a historically contingent place of intersecting social spaces. Complicating Heidegger's conception of the dwelling place as immobile and sedentary, their work helps to reconceive the home in light of more recent geographical understandings of place. No matter how heavily invested with emotions or moral values, the home, by Massey's definition of place, consists of 'open and porous networks of social relations'.[39]

Bowen's non-fictional writings likewise intersect with Heidegger's thinking in a number of significant ways. In 'The Idea of the Home' (1953), she picks up on the moral and emotional significance of the home, arguing that it refers to 'an institution which has a practical-economic base, but which tapers up towards a moral ideal: there is involved, when one speaks of "home," at least some notion of the ethics and the aesthetics of living'.[40] Like Heidegger's conception of the dwelling place, Bowen's definition of home relies heavily on the idea of 'location' and 'tradition', which both provide a 'frame' for '[i]dentity'.[41] Originally delivered as a speech at Barnard College in America just two years after the publication of 'Building Dwelling Thinking', Bowen's essay shares much of Heidegger's post-war conservatism. Paying attention to how the social and economic changes of modernity have disrupted traditional notions of home, Bowen argues that

[37] Moira Donald, 'Tranquil Havens? Critiquing the Idea of Home as the Middle-Class Sanctuary', in *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior*, ed. by Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 103-20 (p. 104).
[38] Ibid., p. 107.
[39] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, p. 121.
[40] Bowen, 'The Idea of the Home', p. 162.
[41] Ibid., p. 163.

urbanisation, mechanisation, and increased migration have led to a 'new environment – or, it may be, [a] succession of new environments' where 'one no longer expects to strike deep roots'.[42]

Bowen's reflection on modernity recalls Heidegger's discussion of the transient spaces of modern life, which, for him, are 'buildings but not dwellings': 'Bridges and hangars, stadiums and power stations […]; railway stations and highways, dams and market halls are built, but they are not dwelling places' ('BDT' 143). As I noted in the Introduction to this thesis, the Black Forest farmhouse stands in opposition to these examples of modern architecture, encapsulating Heidegger's conception of building and dwelling in their deepest senses. Nestled in the mountainside of Southern Germany and 'built some two hundred years ago by the dwelling of peasants', the farmhouse 'design[s] for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time' ('BDT' 157, 158). Heidegger admits that this remote and primitive form of dwelling cannot be returned to during the post-war housing shortage, for houses now need to be great in numbers, quick to build, and cheap to run. Nevertheless, he assigns great value to the tradition of the farmhouse, arguing that it 'illustrates by a dwelling that *has been* how *it* was able to build' ('BDT' 158). He maintains that fixity and rootedness are still ideals to work towards, even if they are no longer possible in the homeless terrain of modernity.

It is here that Bowen departs dramatically from Heidegger's thought, because her understanding of the modern home rejects his sustained aspirations toward preservation and sedentary belonging, coinciding instead with more recent geographical understandings of space and place. According to Bowen, domestic tradition is often 'adverse to modern life – by being too hypnotising or too binding'.[43] This idea of domestic tradition was one that she formed over the course of her displaced childhood;

[42] Ibid., p. 169.
[43] Ibid., p. 164.

the exhilarating variety of seaside houses she discovered on her move to England provided a 'heady' release from the strict traditions of her Anglo-Irish culture, which, she explains in her autobiography, 'bound my people either to inherited homes or homes they had inherited ideas about'.[44] As a consequence of this shift in her understanding of architecture and ideology, Bowen became highly critical of Big House architecture.[45]

Bowen's early novel, *The Last September* (1929), turns upon a stark critique of Ascendancy life and architecture during the Irish Troubles of 1919 to 1921. At the centre of the novel lies Danielstown, an imposing country estate modelled on Bowen's Court. From the opening of the novel this house stands out as a coercive force in the lives of its inhabitants. As the Naylors stand on the front steps greeting the Montmorencys, 'above, the vast façade of the house stared coldly over its mounting lawns' (*LS* 7). In this example, the house is the active subject of the sentence: it is not a house being looked at within the landscape, but rather a building itself doing the looking. Bowen's manipulation of the sentence structure here is typical of the novel as a whole, as Danielstown is repeatedly represented as an animate and dominating presence within the fictional world, a characteristic indicated in formal terms through Bowen's use of syntactic anthropomorphism.

Such a narrative technique is central to Bowen's critique of the Big House, as it represents the antagonistic cultural status of Ascendancy architecture in Irish political history. Big Houses were originally designed to promote the power and prestige of the Anglo-Irish class. Based on the classic Palladian style so revered in Britain, their grand,

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[44] Bowen, 'Pictures and Conversations', pp. 279, 278.

[45] Vera Kreilkamp has argued that Bowen moves 'to a far more conservative perception of Anglo-Irish Big House culture' during the war years, figuring it in *The Heat of the Day* as a welcome retreat from urban ruination. See Vera Kreilkamp, *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), pp. 144, 158-67. For an astute complication of Kreilkamp's reading, see Corcoran, *Bowen: Enforced Return*, pp. 19-38, 168-201. I would suggest, like Corcoran, that although there is evidence of a conservative turn in Bowen's representation of the Big House in her mid-century work, it remains a deeply problematic space that is certainly not presented as an ideal architectural space for domestic life.

rectilinear façades imposed themselves with force on the native Irish landscape.[46] In sharp contradistinction to Heidegger's farmhouse, which is nestled 'on the wind-sheltered mountain' ('BDT' 157), Bowen explains in 'The Big House' (1940) that these houses 'have made no natural growth from the soil – the idea that begot them was a purely social one'.[47] In being sharply demarcated in architectural, as well as geographic, social, political, and cultural terms, Big Houses ultimately symbolised, as Vera Kreilkamp puts it, 'division, not community'.[48] This is hardly a form of architecture that seeks to cultivate and preserve the natural contours of the Irish land.

For Bowen, the ideological design of Big Houses fostered a deeply problematic domestic psychology. In *Bowen's Court* (1942), a socio-political history of her Anglo-Irish ancestry, she describes the Big House as 'an island – and, like an island, a world', in which life is 'intense, centripetal' – each inhabitant bound to a strong 'sensation of living *here*'.[49] In her opinion, the Big House conditions and perpetuates a specifically Anglo-Irish mind-set, by breeding self-absorption and insularity into its occupants. It is for this reason that in the opening scene of *The Last September*, the Naylors and their guests appear impervious to Danielstown's cold glare. Trapped in the house's centripetal pattern of isolated living, it is for them simply a 'moment of happiness, of perfection' (*LS* 7), which confirms the long tradition of their culture as a sociable class.

However, untypical of her extended family, Lois Farquar, the central protagonist of the novel, is resistant to the roles and routines of Danielstown. As an outsider – she is an orphan and a temporary guest in her aunt's and uncle's home – she is aware of, and vulnerable to, the hostile materiality of the house. This vulnerability is particularly evident whenever Lois occupies the ante-room, a space which, for her, exacerbates complex and

[46] Vera Kreilkamp, 'The Novel of the Big House', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*, ed. by John Wilson Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 60-77 (p. 60).
[47] Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Big House' (1940), in *MT*, pp. 25-30 (p. 26).
[48] Kreilkamp, 'The Novel of the Big House', p. 60.
[49] Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court* (London: Longmans, Green, 1942), pp. 13-14.

ambivalent feelings: 'Personally, she liked the ante-room, though it wasn't the ideal place to read or talk. Four rooms opened off it; at any moment a door might be opened […]. People passed through it continually' (*LS* 9). The ante-room is a space in which style is disproportionate to function. It is essentially a through-space which connects the more important rooms in the house, but is elevated above a corridor by being designed as a coherent room in and of itself. It is thus a prime example of the ideological principles that underpin Ascendancy architecture. In 'The Big House', Bowen explains that the 'ornate, spacious parts of these buildings […] contributed to society [by] rais[ing] life above the exigencies of mere living to the plane of art'.[50] With function alone deemed too ordinary, it is instead style and sociability that predicates Big House design.

Yet, in the novel, Lois's reaction to the traditional structure of the ante-room poses a challenge to such an ideology. The ambiguity created by a space half-room, half-corridor results in an unsettling sense of paranoia and observation, for 'her life was very much complicated by not knowing how much of what she said had been overheard, or by whom, or how far it would go' (*LS* 9). Bowen therefore reveals Big House design to be detrimental to personal experience: the room exhibits itself at the expense of Lois's privacy. Indeed, through Lois, who is representative of an unconventional modern woman who aspires to life beyond the 'cocoon' (*LS* 49) of Ascendancy tradition, Bowen exposes the Big House as an architectural structure that stubbornly perpetuates a restrictive and outmoded form of domesticity – the only remedy for which is its dramatic burning on the final page of the novel.

Unlike Heidegger, then, Bowen does not view domestic tradition in *The Last September* as a sustaining resource in modern life. Similarly, in 'The Idea of the Home', she explores the more positive effects of change and contingency, arguing that '"Home" is no longer to be identified with a fixed set of physical surroundings' and that in modernity

[50] Bowen, 'The Big House', p. 26.

'nothing in the home remains continuous but the *idea*'.[51] She thus emphasises the 'flows' of modern urban life, describing the city as a place of 'social regroupings', which are now characterised by 'fluidity' and 'an unfixity as to surroundings'.[52] Where Heidegger sees a debilitating impoverishment of dwelling in modern urban life, Bowen recognises an opportunity to adapt domestic values and behaviour: 'The balances, the stresses of home life *have*, inevitably, been shifted by modern living conditions – shifted, but not necessarily fatally displaced. The essential is, [*sic*] to recognize what is happening. A new equilibrium must be sought for'.[53]

Bowen aligns this 'new equilibrium' with the idea of 'becoming nomad', a choice of terminology that resonates strongly with Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's conception of 'nomadism' in their seminal work, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980).[54] Arguing that dwelling is not entirely incompatible with modernity, they suggest that '[t]he nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another'.[55] Unlike the migrant, whose journey consists of a willed and voluntary succession of arrivals and departures, '[t]he life of the nomad is the intermezzo. Even the elements of his dwelling are conceived in terms of the trajectory that is forever mobilizing them'.[56] This reference to the 'intermezzo' rhythms of modern life is relevant to my analysis in Chapter Three of Woolf's use of musical rhythms in her reimagination of place and communal belonging in *Between the Acts* (see Section 4.3 of Chapter Three). In this instance, however, it draws attention to a shifted conception of being and dwelling; as Casey observes, 'dwelling is here accomplished in traveling. One does not move *to* a dwelling but *dwells by moving*, that

[51] Bowen, 'The Idea of the Home', p. 169.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., p. 170.
[54] Ibid., p. 169; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1987), Chapter 12, '1227: Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine', pp. 351-423.
[55] Ibid., p. 380.
[56] Ibid.

is, by transition from place to place'.[57] Like Bowen's 'new equilibrium', then, Deleuze's and Guattari's notion of 'intermezzo' dwelling embraces modernity's perpetual motions.

Writing in 1953, Bowen appears optimistic about this new form of nomadic life; yet, crucially, this optimism is a far cry from her anxious negotiation of home, belonging, and identity during the war years. In *The Heat of the Day*, the urban flows of modernity are problematised by the 'malarial' (*HD* 92) climate of wartime, which prevents the novel's protagonists from adapting to a nomadic way of life. In her discussion of the modern urban novel, Hannah Wirth-Nesher signals this anxious negotiation of domesticity as 'one of the boldest features of distinguishing the modern urban novel from urban fiction in earlier periods'.[58] She argues that in the traditional English novel, the home 'offers a refuge from the street' and although it is 'not immune to violent intrusion from without, […] intruders [are] eventually ousted or legitimized through marriage' and hence 'a resolution (even if ironic) to the plot' is ultimately provided.[59] In sharp contrast, '"home" is a shifting space' in the modern urban novel, 'a provisional setting, an intersection of public and private that is always in process'.[60] Through its depiction of home, *The Heat of the Day* is a novel that attests the difficulties of adapting to the intermezzo rhythms of nomadism. A closer look at the shifting spaces and places that Bowen negotiates thus illuminates the problematic condition of domestic life amidst the unstable architectural and political landscapes of the Second World War.

[57] Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 307.
[58] Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 18.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., p. 20.

3. THE REGENCY TERRACE

London's Regency architecture recurs throughout Bowen's fictional oeuvre, so much so that she has been nicknamed the 'doyenne of Regent's Park writers'.[61] In 1935, she and her husband moved to 2 Clarence Terrace, a house situated on the Outer Circle of Regent's Park.[62] This move not only provided Bowen with intimate knowledge of the Park's urban footprint, but it also marked a watershed in her conception of domestic architecture. Having previously lived with Cameron, Bowen had already experienced the feeling of belonging a family home could give her. In her author's Preface to *Early Stories* (1951), she describes moving into 73 Knight's Lane in Northampton in sharply contrasting terms to the transience of her childhood: 'I was now located, the mistress of a house; and the sensation of *living* anywhere, as apart from paying a succession of visits, was new to me'.[63] Yet, what Clarence Terrace provided, over and above this sense of belonging, was a profoundly important spatial dialogue between the architectural interior of the house and the greenery of the urban world outside. As Allan Hepburn observes, Clarence Terrace taught Bowen that the 'virtue of a house' was 'its connection to its environment: outdoors and indoors communicate with each other'.[64]

Writing to Woolf on 31 July 1935, Bowen describes the appeal of Clarence Terrace in terms of this dialogue between inside and outside space: 'The reason to take it is that it is, in a bare plain way, very lovely with green reflections inside from the trees'.[65] Bowen's letter recalls Woolf's memory of her liberating escape from the stifling Victorian structures of 22 Hyde Park Gate into the modern spatiality of Bloomsbury life at 46 Gordon Square; in 'Old Bloomsbury' (1921-22), she recalls how 'it was astonishing to

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[61] John Black, 'Bowen, Elizabeth', *Regent's Park & Primrose Hill in Literature and Music: A Bibliography* [n.d.] <http://www.regentsparklit.org.uk/authors_a_d.htm#Bowen> [accessed 7 May 2015].
[62] Glendinning, *Bowen: Portrait*, p. 92.
[63] Bowen, quoted in ibid, p. 51.
[64] Allan Hepburn, 'Architectural London: Elizabeth Bowen in Regent's Park', in *Irish Writing London*, ed. by Tom Herron, 2 vols (Huntingdon: Bloomsbury, 2012), I, 112-26 (pp. 113, 114).
[65] Elizabeth Bowen, Letter to Virginia Woolf, 31 July 1935, in *MT*, pp. 210-12 (p. 211).

stand at the drawing room window and look into all those trees'.[66] This dialogue between inside and outside space was a key objective for the architects who designed the Regency houses in which Bowen and Woolf lived. Clarence Terrace, for instance, was conceived by Decimus Burton, who was working under the direction of John Nash and his grand urban plan for London becoming 'a garden city' with 'charming panoramas showing a composition of alluring groves and elegant architecture'.[67] One way in which these architects achieved such a dialogue was through an increased use of glass. As Steven Parissien notes, already in the nineteenth century 'advances in glass technology' meant that windows could occupy 'more and more […] wall space' in the Regency terrace, so as to 'diminish the sense of division between the inside of the home and the outside'.[68]

In 'Regent's Park and St. John's Wood' (1949), Bowen reveals her awareness of this architectural history, which, she explains, she has read in the work of John Summerson, an influential architectural historian and biographer of Nash.[69] The 'proclaimed attraction' of Nash's redevelopment plan, she consequently recounts, was the 'twenty-six villas (in the Italian sense), each artfully set in the landscape of grass, water and trees'.[70] Bowen's interest in architectural history can be traced right back to her schooldays; in an interview in 1959, she explains that

> the profession I did want to have when I was at school was architecture – I wanted to be an architect – but I went no further. I certainly wouldn't have had a great career as an architect, and I realise that I was not mathematical.[71]

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[66] Virginia Woolf, 'Old Bloomsbury' (1921-22), in *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, ed. by Jeanne Schulkind (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976), pp. 159-79 (p. 162).
[67] John Summerson, *Georgian London*, 3rd edn (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1978), pp. 183, 178.
[68] Steven Parissien, *Regency Style* (London: Phaidon Press, 1992), pp. 51, 54.
[69] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Regent's Park and St. John's Wood' (1949), in *People, Places, Things: Essays by Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 100-05 (p. 101).
[70] Ibid.
[71] Bowen, 'Frankly Speaking', p. 330.

Such a profound interest in the profession evidently endures in her writing, although in 'Regent's Park and St. John's Wood' she pairs such architectural insight with a striking sense of the lived intimacy and comfort she associates with the domestic interiors of the houses Nash designed. She poignantly reflects on the feelings of loss and dispossession created by the architectural destruction of the Second World War: 'Ominously, lines of bomb-damaged villas are being left to rot' and '[o]ver these little cadavers it is impossible not to shed a tear – they were so smiling, gay, neat, compact, warm; so much what so many people want, above all, today'.[72]

Commissioned in 1949, the same year that *The Heat of the Day* was published, Bowen's essay shares much of the architectural anxiety found in her wartime novel. Her description of the 'bomb-damaged villas', for example, is paralleled in the Regency terraces that Louie Lewis and Robert Harrison see as they walk out of Regent's Park in the novel's opening:

> Ahead […] rose the tops of Regency terraces – these, in their semi-ruin, just less pale than the sky. They were shells: the indifference of their black vacant windows fell on the scene, the movement, the park, the evening they overlooked but did not seem to behold. (*HD* 21)

Such a description is something of a recurring motif in Bowen's fictional negotiation of domestic architecture. In her critical response to the Big House in *The Last September*, for instance, Danielstown is described as a 'cold shell' with a 'hollow-looking' interior (*LS* 87); whilst in *The Death of the Heart* the problematic upper-middle-class household is represented in the form of 'insipidly ornate, brittle, and cold' Regency terraces, which 'look hollow inside' (*DH* 9). For Bowen, the image of the hollow shell becomes a potent symbol for what is lacking in domestic life and architecture.

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[72] Bowen, 'Regent's Park and St. John's Wood', p. 105.

However, Bowen's recycling of this architectural motif in *The Heat of the Day* possesses a different function to that in her earlier novels. Rather than being a fierce point of architectural critique, the shell communicates her anxieties about the catastrophic effects of the Blitz and the problematised capacity to dwell in London during the war. As such, Bowen inverts the fundamental symbolism of the shell that is found in Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958). Discussing the natural evolution of a mollusc's shell, Bachelard suggests that the associated 'motto would be: one must live to build one's house, and not build one's house to live in'.[73] Closely echoing Heidegger's claim that '[w]e do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell' ('BDT' 146), Bachelard figures the shell as an organic expression of nature's being-in-the-world. Moreover, he sees nature's shell reflected in the literary imagination, arguing that it functions in poetry as an evocative symbol of home and dwelling.[74]

Although a generative starting point for considering the home in literature, Bachelard's account of the domestic interior is limiting. As Thacker notes, '[i]n its overwhelming focus upon "quite simple images of *felicitous space*" we find a conception of place as wholly benign, one which is unable to imagine conflict within the realms of intimate space'.[75] Indeed, Bachelard contends that 'an empty shell […] invites day-dreams of refuge', but this is starkly at odds with the blitzed 'shells' of the Regency terraces in *The Heat of the Day*.[76] Far from inviting refuge, the 'indifference of their black vacant windows' (*HD* 21) indicates the spatial and psychological traumas generated by war's incomprehensible architectural destruction; what Bowen refers to in the Postscript to *The Demon Lover* as the 'heady and disembodied' ('P' 95) climate of wartime. As victims of the Blitz, Bowen's Regency shells no longer sustain a positive dialogue between interior and exterior space; they simply fail to 'behold' (*HD* 21) the green vista of the park that lies

[73] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, p. 106.
[74] Ibid., p. 105.
[75] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, p. 16.
[76] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, p. 107.

before them. Thus, as I show below, Bowen's representation of the Regency Terrace in *The Heat of the Day* problematises the so-called 'refuge' of the domestic home.[77]

3.1 Rooms

What is immediately striking in the novel is the way in which Bowen apportions the Regency interior. We are told that Stella has 'given up the last of her own houses and stored her furniture when the war began' (*HD* 23) and is now living in a furnished flat in Weymouth Street, not far from Regent's Park. With her parents and ex-husband deceased, her two brothers killed in the First World War, and her son away fighting in the Second, Stella's transitory London lifestyle is initially conveyed by Bowen in terms of liberation from a weighted past. As I discuss in Section 4 of this chapter, Stella's feelings of liberation are complicated by the hostile materiality of the flat, which proves to be as coercive as it is impersonal. In this section, however, I want to concentrate on how Bowen ambivalently connects wartime liberation with the modernised architectural interior.

In *The System of Objects* (1968), Jean Baudrillard discusses the socio-spatial implications of the modern interior, arguing that in comparison to old-fashioned buildings, '[t]he rooms of the house themselves now transcend the traditional dividing-line of the wall'; they 'open into one another, everything communicates, and space is broken up into angles, diffuse areas and mobile sectors. Rooms, in short, have been liberalized'.[78] The main reason for this 'greater mobility, flexibility and convenience', he argues, is not down to 'free experiment' but rather due to 'an involuntary adaptation to a shortage of space'.[79] Baudrillard detects an underlying anxiety in the modern interior, for liberalised space is ultimately borne out of a lack of space. Although Stella's flat retains its internal walls and doors, it is unconventional in its modern layout: consisting of a

[77] Ibid.
[78] Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. by James Benedict (New York: Verso, 1996), p. 21.
[79] Ibid., p. 17.

kitchen, a bathroom, and two unnamed living spaces, it has been squeezed onto the top floor of a 'fairly old house […] otherwise in professional – doctors' and dentists' – occupation' (*HD* 23).

The traditional organisation of Windsor Terrace in Bowen's earlier novel, *The Death of the Heart*, serves as a useful comparison here, for in this text the house is problematised as a space still rigidly controlled by middle-class Victorian ideology. Central to this domestic ideology is a strict gendering of space. As Donald observes, '[t]he "male" areas' of the Victorian house 'included the library or study and the dining-room after dinner. There was no exclusively "female" terrain "upstairs", […] but the bedroom and drawing-room were the areas in which the women of the house could move most freely'.[80] In Windsor Terrace, Thomas and Anna Quayne indeed rarely occupy the same room. Whereas Anna entertains her visitors in the 'drawing-room' upstairs, Thomas remains hidden in his study, his 'own room', on the ground floor (*DH* 13, 23, 28). Ironically, this study is not a workspace, but a place of social pretension; it is 'called the study to suggest importance and quiet' (*DH* 28). Anna's drawing-room is similarly administered, being elaborately furnished with 'aquamarine curtains, [a] scrolled sofa and half-circle of yellow chairs, silk-shaded lamps' and 'Samarkand rugs' (*DH* 24). These rooms reveal a central paradox in Victorian domestic ideology: no matter how private the home is meant to be, it contains markedly 'public rooms', which are intentionally furnished to impressively reflect social status.[81]

In stark contrast, the main organising principle of Stella's flat is functionality. The modern 'kitchenette' is described as a 'glazed, surgical-looking cabinet' in which, 'between the electric stove, the sink, the refrigerator, there was room for one slender person to stand and turn; all other fitments had been constructed to hang above or fit underneath each other' (*HD* 47). This small functional space is fit for Stella alone; when

[80] Donald, 'Tranquil Havens?', p. 107.
[81] Ibid., pp. 105-06.

her son Roderick visits her whilst on leave from the army, he cannot join her in the kitchen as he wants to, but is left hovering in the doorway, 'admir[ing] the scene in which he could play no part' (*HD* 47). Through Roderick's response to the kitchen, Bowen celebrates the functionality of the space at the same time as doubting its ability to foster intimate familial relations.

Significantly, Baudrillard argues that this sort of 'restructuring of space […] must in the first instance be considered an impoverishment'.[82] Such an idea is reinforced through Roderick's further response to the modernised interior of Stella's flat. To him, it does 'not look like home; but it looked like something – possibly a story' (*HD* 47). The indeterminate language here helps intimate what is, for Roderick, a ruined space, for as Boym observes, a 'tour of ruins leads you into a labyrinth of ambivalent language […] that plays tricks with causality'.[83] Although not ruined per se, Stella's flat fails to offer a conventional and, for Roderick, comforting configuration of domestic space.

Cynthia L. White points out that wartime soldiers often returned home 'wanting to find things very much as they had left them', a desire that was not usually fulfilled.[84] Indeed, in *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen underscores the unsettling effects of Roderick's return to Stella's temporary accommodation. The narrator observes that '[i]n this flat, rooms had no names; there being only two, whichever you were not in was "the other room"' (*HD* 51). Such ambiguous spaces generate the disrupted causality Boym draws attention to: 'Proceeding into what *he* saw as the drawing-room', Roderick is 'confounded by there being no one right place to put down a tray' (*HD* 51, 52). Edensor suggests that the disrupted causality of ruined spaces provides an opening for behavioural innovation. Experiencing them can be 'highly disorientating but also extremely pleasurable' insofar as it 'offers opportunities to engage with the material world in a more playful, sensual

[82] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 17.
[83] Boym, 'Ruins of the Avant-Garde', p. 58.
[84] Cynthia L. White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London: Michael Joseph, 1970), p. 133.

fashion'.[85] Unfortunately, Roderick is unable to interact with Stella's flat in such creative terms, instead experiencing a complete failure of the imagination: 'He gave up, placed the tray on the floor and himself on the edge of the sofa' (*HD* 52). Negotiating an entirely different spatial milieu to Edensor's industrial ruins, Roderick reveals the limitations of bodily play in a space so heavily invested with desired notions of security and familiar routine.

Nevertheless, Baudrillard argues that the modern interior does have positive consequences, for rooms are 'now more supple in their uses and have ceased to exercise or symbolize moral constraint'.[86] As such, the modern interior invites 'a greater openness in […] social relationships'.[87] In *The Death of the Heart*, Bowen critiques Windsor Terrace precisely because it is an 'airtight' (*DH* 24) space of traditional upper-class decorum and restraint. Davidoff and Hall note that 'table manners were a test of status' in the Victorian home and this is evident in the novel when Portia takes 'drawing-room tea' with Anna and St Quentin (*DH* 23).[88] Initially ignored, she sits on a stool 'stoop[ing] half way to meet her cup' (*DH* 24-5). When Anna notices, however, and sharply questions why she is sitting on 'a stool without any back?', Portia becomes 'cautious, aware of the world in which she had to live' (*DH* 25, 27). When subsequently asked to go downstairs to Thomas's study, Portia is painfully aware of needing to walk demurely out of the room; although naturally 'loosely threaded together', she strains to contain her awkward body, 'holding herself so erect that she quivered' (*DH* 27, 26).

Portia's behaviour contrasts sharply with that of Roderick and Stella as they drink coffee together in *The Heat of the Day*. Wrapped in his mother's lover's dressing-gown and still wet from bathing, Roderick lies on the sofa, whilst Stella sits beside him commenting on the corns he has on his feet (*HD* 52). The Rodneys' liberalised behaviour is further

[85] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 325.
[86] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 17.
[87] Ibid., p. 18.
[88] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 399.

reflected in the unconventional layout of the flat, which flouts Victorian rules of 'cleanliness and order' in almost every respect.[89] As Davidoff and Hall observe, the kitchen in the Victorian home 'became ideally as remote as possible from the living rooms' and this is seen in *The Death of the Heart* in the kitchen and pantry that occupy the basement of Windsor Terrace, two floors down from the room in which afternoon tea is taken (*DH* 19-21, 23). Likewise, in comprising 'many floors and extended plumbing', the Quayne household is a place where 'the intimate life of Thomas was not noticeable' (*DH* 157). In comparison, the bathroom, kitchen, and living spaces are all in such proximity in Weymouth Street that, when Roderick takes a bath, Bowen's narrator describes the 'steam […] curling into the kitchen where Stella was' (*HD* 47). In *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen thus celebrates the liberalised socio-spatial relations brought about by architectural modernisation. At the same time, however, she draws attention to the unsettling effects such modernisation has on personal feelings of home and belonging – something she connects at this point in the novel to a specifically male consciousness, as it is Roderick, rather than Stella, who is unable to find comfort in the unconventional layout of the flat.

Bowen's attention to the architectural interior likewise serves as a commentary on wartime ruination and social class. In 'Britain in Autumn' (1940), Bowen explains that the war was a time of collapsing class boundaries, describing society as 'a commune. It is true that what we see, from day to day, acts as a leveller. All destructions make the same grey mess; rich homes, poor homes, the big store, the one-man shop make the same slipping rubble'.[90] In *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen represents this levelling of social class by employing a narrative structure that hinges on parallelism, a technique Parsons suggests is 'similar to that used by Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* with Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus

[89] Ibid., p. 383.
[90] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Britain in Autumn' (1940), in *People, Places, Things*, ed. by Hepburn, pp. 48-55 (p. 54).

Smith'.[91] Bowen's structural parallelism links together the two female protagonists of the novel, Stella and Louie, who, despite their class and economic differences, share a similar wartime identity.

Like Stella, Louie is 'a soul astray' (*HD* 248) in London, having been displaced from her childhood home in Seale-on-Sea to live in London with her now absent husband, Tom, who has been dispatched by the army to India. With no home to return to, following the death of her parents during the Battle of Britain, Louie has 'been left with no place to go to' (*HD* 16). Unlike Stella, Louie has remained in her 'married home, a double first-floor room in one of those little houses in Chilcombe Street' (*HD* 16). The narrator comments that Louie is unusually 'lucky' in this respect, for 'few wives of men called up remained placed as they were before' (*HD* 16). Louie, however, feels anything but lucky to remain in her flat, as for her 'the idea of Chilcombe Street's being home, which at the best of times had resided in Tom only, had been taken away by him to India' (*HD* 16). Like Stella, she searches for a way to liberate herself from the painful emotional weight of her absent family.

Louie begins this search for liberation by deviating from the normative behaviour associated with the wartime home. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's theory of the imagined community, which posits that a sense of national identity and culture is 'bolstered by members of a nation imagining that some of their daily routines are shared by others', Sara Wasson details two forms of 'ritual' behaviour that emerged during the war in order to help sustain a sense of domestic belonging.[92] Listening to the wireless and doing housework helped to forge a strong sense of a national collective.[93] Louie desperately wants to find her place within this imagined community, for she is dismayed by the 'silence left by the wireless' which is now 'dead out, finished' (*HD* 147). Yet,

[91] Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, p. 194.
[92] Sara Wasson, *Urban Gothic of the Second World War: Dark London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 107.
[93] Ibid., pp. 107-08.

because her flat is so inhospitable without Tom's comforting presence, she bitterly spurns housework, 'neglect[ing] rooms' so that 'the Turkey-patterned lino los[es] its gloss' and the 'big bed' is left 'slatternly; in revenge, perhaps, for its being so cold all night' (*HD* 17). Louie thus forfeits her chance of belonging in common with the rest of the nation, instead finding brief, if unsustainable, respite in the perilous city streets, which have 'some negative virtue in being outdoors' (*HD* 146).[94]

Despite their differing strategies for liberating themselves from the unsettling constraints of the domestic interior, both Louie and Stella create a new wartime identity, which, as Parsons observes, is no longer 'based around family and home'.[95] The blurring of class identities seen in their paralleled response to wartime displacement is also reflected in the structural interiors of Weymouth and Chilcombe Street. Although small and cramped, Stella's flat is a pointedly middle-class interior; a space that reflects her upper-middle-class status and affluent job in the government. The 'chintz' armchairs and 'fragile' escritoires (*HD* 24) stand in sharp contrast to the 'Turkey-patterned lino' and broken wireless found in Louie's working-class abode in Chilcombe Street (*HD* 17). However, in structural terms, Stella's flat, consisting of two unnamed rooms, bears an uncanny resemblance to Louie's, which likewise comprises two 'rooms – front and back, opening on one another through an arch across which Tom had fixed a curtain' (*HD* 17). Through her carefully constructed narrative parallelisms, Bowen is able to amplify the symbolic significance of these otherwise subtle architectural similarities, binding Stella and Louie together into a shared sense of wartime homelessness, a condition that transcends social class and economic differences.

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[94] For a discussion of Bowen's representation of female urban wandering in wartime, see Kristine A. Miller, *British Literature of the Blitz*, pp. 26-58; Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, Chapter 6, 'Wandering the London Wasteland', pp. 188-213.
[95] Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, p. 195.

3.2 Doors

Like rooms, doors and windows emerge as important symbolic elements in Bowen's negotiation of the Regency interior, which likewise serve to link Bowen's narrative to the material and political reality of wartime. In 'The Christmas Toast is "Home!"' (1942), Bowen draws a crucial distinction between the threshold capacity of each of these architectural elements:

> I like to think of my home as a thing of windows, not as a thing of doors. Doors […] are meant to be shut, and when shut they are impenetrable. Windows […] admit light and refreshing air; I look out through them; they frame for me pictures of the outside, ever-changing world.[96]

In her fiction, however, Bowen reveals the door (I deal with windows in more detail below in Section 3.3 of this chapter) to be a more complex threshold than she suggests it is here, for open doors and closed doors play very different roles in her representation of the domestic interior.

In 'Bridge and Door' (1909), Georg Simmel relates the door to dwelling through analysing it in relation to the bridge, an architectural element employed by Heidegger in 'Building Dwelling Thinking'.[97] According to Heidegger, the bridge is 'a built thing' that 'gathers' space into '*a location*' ('BDT' 151). Created from a desire to forge connections across space, the bridge ultimately signifies a strong sense of being-in-place. Building on this, Simmel argues that the door 'indicates how humankind […] separates the uniform, continuous unity of natural being'.[98] In other words, doors help to apportion the dwelling place, creating separate spaces for different daily activities. Simmel emphasises, however,

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[96] Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Christmas Toast is "Home!"', *Homes and Gardens*, December 1942, pp. 20-21, 76 (p. 21).
[97] Neil Leach, 'Georg Simmel', in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. by Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 65-79 (p. 65).
[98] Georg Simmel, 'Bridge and Door' (1909), in *Rethinking Architecture*, ed. by Leach, pp. 66-69 (p. 69).

that besides separating spaces, the door necessarily forms 'a linkage' between them and is therefore an architectural element that 'transcends the separation between the inner and the outer'.[99] Figuring the door as a significant threshold space that creates 'the possibility of a permanent interchange', Simmel complicates Bowen's rather reductive account of the 'shut' door in 'The Christmas Toast is "Home!"'.[100]

Emphasising the power structures associated with the door, Gillian Beer reminds us that in the right (or wrong) hands, the door can 'manifestly control' and 'police the threshold', becoming a prime weapon in the ordering of domestic space.[101] This is precisely how doors function in Bowen's *The Death of the Heart*, for Windsor Terrace is figured negatively as a house of rigidly closed doors. Sealed off from the outside world, its interior environment is 'queasy and cold' and Bowen condemns the Quaynes for this 'mistaken approach to life', criticising the way in which '[e]ach person at Windsor Terrace lived impaled upon a private obsession, however slight. The telephone, the door bell, the postman's knock were threatening intimations, though still far off. Crossing that springy door mat, the outside person suffered a sea change' (*DH* 188-9). Closing doors is thus a routine action that is rigidly enforced in Windsor Terrace, one that serves to incarcerate and alienate the house's occupants.

In *The Heat of the Day*, Weymouth Street is contrastingly characterised as a space of open doors. This shift in Bowen's fictional preoccupation with domestic architecture mirrors the changing social values associated with the home in the twentieth century. As Koolhaas observes, 'whereas isolation was once the desired condition', with the traditional door being an 'element once invested with physical heft', it is now 'movement, flow, transparency, accessibility' that is sought in modernity, meaning that the door has

[99] Ibid., p. 67.
[100] Ibid., p. 68.
[101] Gillian Beer, 'Windows: Looking in, Looking out, Breaking Through', in *Thinking on Thresholds: The Poetics of Transitive Spaces*, ed. by Subha Mukherji (London: Anthem Press, 2011), pp. 3-16 (pp. 5, 3).

become 'a dematerialized zone'.[102] Indeed, when Roderick takes a bath he leaves 'the bathroom door ajar' and, unlike the characters in *The Death of the Heart*, who are always seen on one side of a closed door, he is repeatedly positioned 'in the door', 'propped against the frame' (*HD* 47, 48). When he is unable to join Stella in the tiny kitchen, the open doorway helps to remedy the situation by providing a spatial compromise; although the threshold space of the doorway is not fully 'inside' the kitchen, it is neither fully 'outside'. As such, Roderick is afforded at least partial connection with his mother. Rather than always being policed thresholds, then, doors in *The Heat of the Day* also function as open thresholds that contribute to the fluidity of internal domestic space.

According to Adorno, modern technology has vanquished from the world the ability to 'close a door quietly and discretely'.[103] For him, the slamming movements encouraged by the doors of mechanical objects, such as refrigerators and cars, are invariably linked to the 'violent, hard-hitting, unresting jerkiness of Fascist maltreatment'.[104] Reflecting on this link between the door and twentieth-century politics, Koolhaas reminds us that '[o]ur behaviour around doors is inherently political'.[105] Indeed, in *The Heat of the Day*, doors also play a central role in Bowen's negotiation of the problematic spatial and social symptoms of wartime politics. When Stella first goes downstairs to greet Roderick at the main door of Weymouth Street, the narrator comments that it is 'a time of opening street doors conspiratorially: light must not escape on to steps. Roderick, considerably broadened by his equipment […] inched in round the door his mother held' (*HD* 46). This is hardly the scene of a warming welcome, as both mother and son strain to check themselves against the enforced regulations of the blackout.

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[102] Rem Koolhaas, *Door*, ed. by James Westcott and others, Elements Series (Venice: Marsilio Editori Spa, 2014), back cover blurb.
[103] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 40.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Koolhaas, *Door*, p. 3.

Bowen's reference to the conspiratorial nature of wartime, however, reaches further than the strict blackout regulations of the wartime city, revealing also the uneasy relationship between Stella and Harrison, a British counter-spy who is attempting to expose Stella's lover, Robert Kelway, who is a suspected German spy. Thoroughly immoral himself, Harrison attempts to bargain with Stella, offering to drop the charges against Kelway if she enters into a sexual relationship with him instead. During their encounters, the door becomes a profound symbolic resource for detailing how this political realm of wartime impinges uncomfortably on Stella's personal space and psychology.

In one instance, Stella nervously anticipates Harrison's arrival by fixating on the sound the door permits: 'Silence mounted the stairs, to enter her flat through the door ajar; silence came through the windows from the deserted street. In fact, the scene at this day and hour could not have been more set for violence' (*HD* 23). Reminiscent of her anthropomorphic representation of Danielstown, Bowen here ascribes agency to the eerie atmosphere of the building itself. Trapped in a political world of distrust and paranoia, Stella is struck by a sense of inevitability, feeling that 'no step could not be [Harrison's]' (*HD* 23) in the silence that surrounds her. Anna Teekell argues that this double negative helps to create 'a language of war by encoding distrust into the syntax of the novel'.[106] This is an instructive point and one that I return to in Section 5 of this chapter, when I extend Teekell's argument by re-assessing Bowen's use of linguistic negation in relation to the cognitive processing of ruined landscapes. Here, however, it suffices to say that the negatives formally reflect Stella's involuntary embroilment in the novel's web of deceit and betrayal.

Furthermore, the physical act of opening and closing doors serves as a metaphor for, and literal instance of, Stella's entrapment. Anticipating Harrison's arrival, Stella

[106] Anna Teekell, 'Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War', *New Hibernia Review*, 15.3 (2011), 61-79 (p. 63).

deliberately leaves the doors leading up to her flat 'unlatched' and 'ajar' (*HD* 23) to avoid welcoming him inside in person. Harrison swiftly undercuts this spatial act, however, by knowingly misinterpreting it as a sign of hospitality and pretending to feel 'touched' (*HD* 23) by such a welcome. Moreover, he closes each door behind him with intent, effectively trapping Stella within the flat with him. When leaving Weymouth Street he continues to play games with Stella, ignoring her request to leave the door 'on the latch' for her son who will soon be arriving: 'she had the irritation of hearing Harrison pause outside, to make sure the door *was* shut, before making off down Weymouth Street' (*HD* 46). During their encounters with one another, Stella and Harrison thus utilise the door as both a social and political weapon, with differing levels of success. As Bowen's narrator comments, Harrison's intrusion into Stella's domestic world has 'brought life to one of those passes when nothing is simple, not even opening a door' (*HD* 46). Through her contrasting negotiation of doors and doorways, then, Bowen directly connects the modern domestic interior to the wider political arena of the war.

3.3 Windows

It is not only doors that signify the corruption of wartime boundaries, however. As Beer observes, windows likewise 'suggest spying and seclusion' and this is certainly the case in *The Heat of the Day*.[107] Stella positions herself 'at the window of her flat' as she awaits Harrison, nervously 'playing with the blind-cord' (*HD* 22). The narrator observes that because she is 'too uneasy' about Harrison, feels 'too much reduced by the whole affair', she ignores the 'slipshod' appearance of the blackout blinds in front of her; one of which is 'pulled some way down, throwing a nightlike shadow across this end of the ceiling' and the other is 'right up' (*HD* 22). Besides 'providing wartime verisimilitude', as Teekell

[107] Beer, 'Windows', p. 3.

suggests, Bowen's attention to the state of these blinds links up with Stella's volatile psychological state.[108]

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have noted the profound symbolism of the act of opening a window in literary representations of female consciousness and the 'prison' of the domestic interior.[109] Such symbolism comes to the fore in *The Heat of the Day* when Stella talks to Kelway about the impossibility of his ever escaping from Harrison's intensifying pursuit. Feeling incarcerated in Weymouth Street, she makes an impulsive move toward the blackout blinds, crying out that she wants 'to crash the window open and blaze the lights on. To think of [Harrison] makes me angry' (*HD* 286). To open the window would, of course, be to reveal the whereabouts of her lover and to further implicate herself in his political deceit. The extremity of Stella's impulsive desire to open the window thus reveals the intensity of her psychological feelings of incarceration.

Just as there is a mismatch between Bowen's dismissal of doors in 'The Christmas Toast is "Home!"' and her complex representation of them in *The Heat of the Day*, so too is her idealisation of the window in this essay complicated by her negotiation of windows in the novel. According to Simmel, the window is a less significant architectural threshold than the door, due to its connection with an 'almost exclusively' one-directional gaze.[110] In contrast, Bowen argues in 'The Christmas Toast is "Home!"' that windows are more desirable than doors, because they encourage a two-directional dialogue between inside and outside space.[111] Recall, for instance, her letter to Woolf in 1935, in which she describes the virtue of Clarence Terrace in terms of the 'green reflections' that come 'inside', rather than the greenery of the trees that draws her gaze

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[108] Teekell, 'Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War', p. 75.
[109] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2000), p. 279.
[110] Simmel, 'Bridge and Door', p. 68.
[111] Bowen, 'The Christmas Toast is "Home!"', p. 21.

outside.[112] Such a complication of Simmel's theory is further confirmed in Baudrillard's discussion of the function of glass in the modern interior, which, he argues, allows 'the outside world, nature, landscape' to penetrate 'into the intimate or private realm inside, and there "pla[y] freely" as a component of atmosphere'.[113]

In *The Heat of the Day*, however, this domestic 'atmosphere' is far from the 'very lovely' interior of Clarence Terrace that Bowen describes in her letter to Woolf.[114] As Mellor observes, the wartime blackout 'removed the visual markers of modernity – gas and electric light in various forms – from the public sphere of the city, and instead submitted shades, shadows and glimpses', which dramatically altered the usual dialogue between inside and outside spaces.[115] According to Mellor, the 'optical potential of such a remade city, lit by moonlight and rendered alien', provided artists and writers with the means to engage with wartime ruination.[116] Such is evident in 'Mysterious Kôr' (1944), one of Bowen's wartime short stories that powerfully evokes the uncanny atmosphere of London during the Blitz. The city is described as 'the moon's capital – shallow, cratered, extinct'; a place of 'glassiness', 'ghostly reflection[s]', and 'synchronized bodies'.[117] As critics have noted, Bowen's depiction of the blitzed city in this story carries an apocalyptic, even dystopic air, as London is figured as a ghostly, mechanical space threatened by violent annihilation.[118]

The dystopic atmosphere of this short story seeps into *The Heat of the Day* through Bowen's negotiation of the blacked-out window in Weymouth Street. In Chapter Five of the novel (the Blitz flashback chapter), Bowen's narrator explains that by

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[112] Bowen, Letter to Woolf, 31 July 1935, p. 211.
[113] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 43.
[114] Bowen, Letter to Woolf, 31 July 1935, p. 211.
[115] Mellor, *Reading the Ruins*, pp. 139-40.
[116] Ibid., p. 140.
[117] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Mysterious Kôr' (1944), in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 728-40 (pp. 728, 729).
[118] See, for example, John Bayley, *The Short Story: Henry James to Elizabeth Bowen* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1988), p. 166; Jeslyn Medoff, '"There is no elsewhere": Elizabeth Bowen's Perceptions of War', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 30 (1984), 73-81 (p. 77); David Welsh, *Underground Writing: The London Tube from George Gissing to Virginia Woolf* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 224.

1942 the 'first generation of ruins' from 1940 'took their places as a norm of the scene', resulting in a 'deadening acclimatization' which sees the 'insidious echoless propriety of ruins' becoming 'malarial' (*HD* 92). Bowen translates this disease-like climate onto the architectural interior of Stella's flat by using the blackout curtain to negate the spatial and temporal parameters of the room:

> The room lacked one more thing: apprehension of time. Inside it the senses were cut off from hour and season; nothing spoke but the clock. The day had gone from the moment Stella had drawn down the fitted blinds and drawn across them the deadening curtains: now nothing took its place. Every crack was stopped; not a mote of darkness could enter – the room, sealed up in its artificial light, remained exaggerated and cerebral. (*HD* 56)

At first, the allusion to a lack of seasonal time suggests that Stella's room is safely insulated from the outside pressures of the war. Indeed, in 'The Idea of the Home', Bowen argues that 'inside the four walls' of the ideal home 'there should be *enough time*, temporal if not physical space'.[119] Reconsidering the above passage in conjunction with the temporal structuring of ruins, however, allows an alternative interpretation to emerge.

Christopher Woodward argues that '[i]n ruins movement is halted, and Time suspended', meaning that a ruin offers 'a still point' in a 'spinning world'.[120] Like Bowen, who supposedly figures the removal of outside time in Stella's room as a release from the anxieties of the unfolding war, Woodward figures a 'dilapidated bridge' as a welcoming 'refuge from a suburban time-clock'.[121] This relatively Romantic view of the ruin, however, is complicated by more recent geographic understandings of the turbulence of ruined matter. Despite arguing, like Woodward, that 'in the ruin the object enters a

[119] Bowen, 'The Idea of the Home', p. 173.
[120] Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 36.
[121] Ibid.

different temporality', Edensor stresses that decay and degeneration, if anything, emphasise the transience of ruined matter, which is forever 'in a state of becoming something else'.[122] Despite being 'cut off' (*HD* 56) from the outside world, then, Weymouth Street is anything but a welcoming retreat from the war. In drawing attention to the 'artificial' and 'exaggerated' (*HD* 56) quality of the room, Bowen emphasises that the blackout blind, although necessary for wartime safety, fundamentally disturbs the fluid dialogue the window would normally offer.[123] As a result, the domestic interior is an uncannily synthetic space. Stilting every sentence with a colon, semi-colon, or dash, Bowen generates an overwrought syntax of causality which, in comparison to the description of Roderick's entry into Stella's flat (see above in Section 3.1), now becomes threatening in its excess rather than its lack.

Moreover, Bowen inverts the protective function of the blackout blind through her repeated use of the morphological negative, 'nothing'; which reveals how, far from being impermeable, the room has already been infiltrated by the 'deadening' and 'insidious' (*HD* 92) character of the public city streets. The domestic interior is not a reassuring still point in the spinning world of war, but rather a space that has been consumed by the turbulent forces of wartime ruination and thus collapsed in on itself to create a 'malarial' (*HD* 92) void – what Teekell refers to as 'something blitz-riven: a no-place'.[124] As a central spatial element in Bowen's psychopathology of wartime, then, Weymouth Street, with its liberalised rooms and problematic windows and doors, contributes to the 'leaks' and 'porousness of architectural and psychic space' that Ellmann sees as characterising the novel as a whole.[125]

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[122] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', pp. 317, 219.
[123] Mellor, *Reading the Ruins*, p. 140.
[124] Teekell, 'Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War', p. 78.
[125] Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, p. 153.

4. DOMESTIC THINGS

When emphasising the importance of 'imperturbable *things*' to 'civilization', Bowen's narrator in *The Death of the Heart* concludes that 'the destruction of buildings and furniture is more palpably dreadful to the spirit than the destruction of human life' (*DH* 228, 229). In retrospect, the bombings of the Second World War render this statement strangely proleptic, as Bowen's narrator comments on what was to become a frightening material reality just one year after the novel's publication. As Lee observes, the 'sense of disinheritance' that is 'felt as a spiritual quality' in *The Death of the Heart* is consequently 'made brutally palpable' in *The Heat of the Day*.[126]

In his history of the domestic interior, Mario Praz provides a visceral account of the palpable ruins of the mid-century bombsites:

> wherever you looked, you could see only shattered, ruined buildings, the hollow orbits of windows, and fragments of walls, houses split in two, with the pathetic sight of some still furnished corner, dangling above the rubble, surrounded by ruin: pictures hanging on broken walls, a kitchen with the pots still on the stove and there, in what must have been a drawing room, a sofa.[127]

Out of this scene of domestic ruination Praz argues that 'houses will rise again, and men will furnish houses as long as there is breath in them'.[128] Commenting on the optimism of Praz's account, Charles Rice draws a connection to Heidegger by suggesting that Praz 'sees dwelling as an eternal condition which always finds its materialization in the

[126] Lee, *Bowen: An Estimation*, p. 157.
[127] Mario Praz, *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration: From Pompeii to Art Nouveau* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964), p. 13.
[128] Ibid., p. 18.

furnishing of an interior'.[129] Indeed, Praz recalls Heidegger's claim that '*in* dwelling [mortals] persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things' ('BDT' 155).

Heidegger's terminology likewise resonates with Bowen's use of the term '*things*' (*DH* 228) in *The Death of the Heart* and this is significant, because it suggests that Bowen shares Heidegger's conception of the material world as being more than geometric space. In 'The Thing' (1949), Heidegger makes an important distinction between an object and a thing, arguing that a thing 'may become an object if we place it before us, whether in immediate perception or by bringing it to mind in a recollective re-presentation. However, the thingly character of the thing does not consist in its being a represented object'.[130] For Heidegger, the 'thingness' of things pertains to an excess in the observable object; as thing-theorist Bill Brown suggests, things can be thought of 'as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects – their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems'.[131] This 'sensuous presence' of things is precisely what Bowen hints at when she reflects on her early literary intentions 'to register the hazy queerness' of 'places'.[132] As Heidegger reminds us, things indeed contribute to a sense of place by gathering spaces into '*a location*' ('BDT' 151) through their 'thinging'; a process that constitutes 'the nearing of the world'.[133]

Over the past decade, thing-theorists have sought to account better for the 'hazy queerness' of things in the everyday world. In his foundational essay on thing theory, Brown argues that while objects are 'looked *at*' and '*through*' in the practice of everyday life, things are contingent, fleeting, and only ever apprehended 'partially or obliquely'.[134]

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[129] Charles Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 21.
[130] Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing' (1949), in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 163-80 (p. 164-65).
[131] Ibid., p. 166; Brown, 'Thing Theory', p. 5.
[132] Bowen, quoted in Allan Hepburn, 'Introduction', in Bowen, *People, Places, Things*, ed. by Hepburn, pp. 1-23 (p. 1).
[133] Heidegger, 'The Thing', pp. 175, 179.
[134] Brown, 'Thing Theory', p. 5.

If, as Heidegger suggests, things draw the surrounding environment near to humans, then humans soon become habituated to this environment; as he explains, 'nearness conceals its own self and remains, in its own way, nearest of all'.[135] The more familiar things are, then, the less noticeable they are as 'thingly' things.[136] To this end, Brown argues that '[w]e begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us'.[137]

For non-representational theorists, Heidegger's notion of 'nearness' is substituted by that of '*distribution*', so as to de-centre the human body as 'the main geometer of the world' and reconceive space as something that is 'lived in and through' and is 'jam-packed with entities', both human and non-human.[138] Building on this idea, Edensor considers how ruins foreground the thingness of the material world insofar as they disrupt the 'regular distribution of objects in space'.[139] Unlike everyday spaces that are '[u]sually unreflexively apprehended' and 'consolidate a sense of being in place', 'objects in ruins are ideally placed to rebuke the normative assignations of things, foregrounding questions about materiality, value and the apprehension of the material world'.[140] Processes of ruination in the domestic environment therefore disrupt the habitual thinging and distribution of things, meaning that their thingly character becomes more noticeable, often to an unsettling degree for the humans experiencing the space. Despite noticing and wanting to register the 'hazy queerness' of things throughout her writing career, then, it is in Bowen's wartime fiction that she becomes increasingly concerned with confronting the malfunctioning world of ruined things.

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[135] Heidegger, 'The Thing', p. 175.
[136] Ibid., p. 165.
[137] Brown, 'Thing Theory', p. 5.
[138] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, p. 17.
[139] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 311.
[140] Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, p. 97.

Between the years of 1940 and 1944, Clarence Terrace was devastated twice when a time-bomb, and later a doodlebug, detonated nearby.[141] Writing on 5 January 1941 to Woolf, whose London flat at 52 Tavistock Square was also devastated by a bomb at this time, Bowen reveals a profound anxiety about the violently changing world of things: 'When your flat went did that mean all the things in it too? All my life I have said, "Whatever happens there will always be tables and chairs" – and what a mistake'.[142] Whereas Bowen once shared Praz's investment in the eternal nature of domestic furnishing, during the war she became increasingly aware that she could no longer take it for granted that the material world would endure.

In 'The Christmas Toast is "Home!"', Bowen consequently abandons the idea of home as a 'material thing – a house', suggesting that 'we must face it that this may be demolished at any time'.[143] Instead, she anticipates the future of the home as a social, rather than material, structure: 'Homes are much more than rooms and tables and chairs […]. Above all, home means people'.[144] There is something awry in Bowen's discussion of home in this essay, however, as her insistence upon its 'unrivalled power to refresh and to rest us, to reassure and to cheer' does not square with her frank acknowledgement of socio-spatial fragmentation in 'The Idea of the Home' (as discussed earlier in Section 2 of this chapter), or indeed with the anxious depiction of the wartime interior in *The Heat of the Day*.[145] The publication history of the essay helps to account for this stark discrepancy in authorial attitude. The essay originally appeared in the 1942 edition of popular women's magazine, *Homes and Gardens*, where the editor stresses that, despite the hardships of wartime, 'the Xmas message remains, eternal and enduring'.[146] Bowen's overly insistent tone of conservatism therefore evidences a strained attempt to espouse

[141] Glendinning, *Bowen: Portrait*, p. 128; Lee, *Bowen: An Estimation*, pp. 166-67.
[142] Elizabeth Bowen, Letter to Virginia Woolf, 5 January 1941, in *MT*, pp. 216-18 (pp. 216-17).
[143] Bowen, 'The Christmas Toast is "Home!"', p. 20.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., p. 76.
[146] The Editor, 'The Editor's Page', *Homes and Gardens*, December 1942, p. 9.

the publishing spirit of the time, which, as White confirms, aimed to provide 'buoyant cheerfulness' for periodical readerships.[147]

Despite illustrating some of Bowen's most cherished architectural principles – such as the threshold spaces of doors and windows – 'The Christmas Toast is "Home!"' reflects the writing style of a particularly ideological segment of the wartime literary marketplace, which sought to lift public morale at the risk of underplaying social reality. Unlike *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen's essay does not engage fully with the complexities of wartime domestic architecture in spatial, social, or psychological terms. In contrast, the representation of material things in *The Heat of the Day* is highly attuned to the effects of wartime ruination on spatial experience. Bowen's handling of materiality also facilitates a discussion of her late modernist prose style, for a good portion of her formal innovations are connected to her representation of unsettling wartime things, as I discuss in further detail below.

4.1 Tables

Since the publication of Ann Banfield's *The Phantom Table* (2000), tables have been seen to lie at the heart of modernist thinking and philosophy about the everyday.[148] The same could be said of the table in Heidegger's early twentieth-century theorisation of daily life. In 'The Hermeneutics of Factity', a lecture series given at the University of Freiburg in 1923, he argues that the 'purest everydayness' of domestic life can be found in an encounter with 'a table'.[149] Rather than simply describing the table as a perceivable geometric object, Heidegger emphasises its thingly nature, drawing attention to its 'role' and 'characteristic use' in 'the temporality of everydayness'.[150] Describing it as '*the* table (not "a" table among many other tables in other rooms and houses)', Heidegger draws

[147] White, *Women's Magazines*, p. 123.
[148] Ann Banfield, *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[149] Martin Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. by John can Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 68.
[150] Ibid., pp. 68, 69.

out the rich, thingly associations of the table in relation to domestic routine, social interactions, memory, and emotion.[151] In a later lecture series given in Marburg in 1925, Heidegger summarises his thinking by explaining that the 'dining-table at home is not a round top on a stand but a piece of furniture in a particular place, which itself has its particular places at which particular others are seated everyday'.[152]

In Heidegger's conception of the dining table, '*being-with*' (the condition of *Mitsein*; see *BT* 149), emerges as a central component in the practice of everyday life.[153] As Jeff Malpas suggests, 'an ordering of things and places' is always linked in Heidegger's conception of building and dwelling to 'a system of social interconnectedness'.[154] Such is evident in Heidegger's description of the Black Forest farmhouse, where the 'community table' ('BDT' 158) is a prominent feature of the space. As Sharr observes, in this sort of vernacular architecture, 'the largest room of the house is almost always a dining room, centred on the table called the *Familientisch* or *gemeindamer Tisch* where family and extended family met to eat'.[155] In short, the table 'announced the being of its diners'.[156]

The role of Heidegger's *Familientisch* could not be further removed from the function of tables in Bowen's fiction. Although tables are central to her negotiation of domestic space and belonging, they are never presented in her work as things that announce the being of those who sit at them. The main dining scene in *The Last September* has attracted considerable attention from critics such as Kreilkamp and Ellmann, who both argue that it powerfully conveys the detrimental effects of Big House history and

[151] The full passage reads as follows: 'Its standing-there in the room means: Playing this role in such and such characteristic use. This and that about it is "impractical," unsuitable. That part is damaged. It now stands in a better spot in the room than before – there's better lighting, for example. Where it stood before was not at all good (for…). Here and there it shows lines – the boys like to busy themselves at the table. These lines are not just interruptions in the paint, but rather: it was the boys and it still is. This side is not the east side, and this narrow side so many cm. shorter than the other, but rather the one at which my wife sits in the evening when she wants to stay up and read, there at the table we had such and such a discussion that time, there that decision was made with a *friend* that time, there that *work* written that time, there that *holiday* celebrated that time.' Ibid., p. 69.
[152] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 239.
[153] Ibid., p. 238.
[154] Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), p. 87.
[155] Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 66.
[156] Ibid., p. 69.

tradition on individual and social being.[157] Bowen's representation of tables in *The Heat of the Day*, however, has not been considered in such critical depth, despite the fact that it offers a useful route into thinking about the wartime dwelling plight.

As I have already discussed in Section 3.1 of this chapter, Roderick is deeply unsettled by there not being an obvious table on which to place the coffee tray in Stella's flat. He desperately thinks that 'between these chairs and tables must run the spoor of habit', but is dismayed to find his mother 'so completely alone' that she lives 'without any customs' (*HD* 52). Stella's transient way of life stands in sharp contrast to Roderick's traditional and conservative values, which are typical of the returning wartime soldier: his military friends are 'all for the authoritarianism of home life; the last thing they wished was Liberty Hall' (*HD* 52). Unable to adapt to his surroundings, Roderick places the tray on the floor, an action swiftly countered by Stella who 'tow[s] a stool into position beside the sofa' (*HD* 52). Stella's markedly modern tea-table behaviour is almost reminiscent here of the 'looseness' and 'freedom' that Woolf associates with 'eating one's dinner off a table anywhere' (*D3* 316) in the radical domestic interiors of Bloomsbury.

When Stella later travels to Holme Dene to visit Robert's family, however, her unconventional, makeshift lifestyle in London is thrown into sharp relief by the rigid dining-table routines of the Kelway household. As Kreilkamp has noted, Holme Dene stands in the novel as a critique of 'middle-class English vulgarity'.[158] With its gabled roof, half-timbered façade, and imitation oak beams, the house is a sham copy of a landed country estate. Its architectural interior – consisting of 'corridors, archways, recesses, half-landings, ledges, niches, and balustrades' (*HD* 256) – differs greatly from the rectilinear interior of the Anglo-Irish Big House, yet in terms of ideological design it proves to be just as problematic. Its twisting corridors are described as 'swastika-arms', packed full of 'repressions, doubts, fears, subterfuges, and fibs' (*HD* 258, 256). Ellmann

[157] Kreilkamp, *The Anglo-Irish Novel*, p. 153; Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, p. 58.
[158] Kreilkamp, *The Anglo-Irish Novel*, p. 160.

contends that such images insinuate that Robert's treason is 'imputed […] to the house itself': 'A crooked house creates a crooked mind'.[159] Bowen reverses the movement between the personal and political, showing that it is not always the politics of war that impinge upon the home, but that domestic ideology can have profound political implications.

The dining table consequently enables Bowen to crystallise this problematic dialectic between the personal and the political. Unlike Stella, whose 'footloose habits of living, in and out of restaurants' in London have 'kept from her many of the realities of the home front' (*HD* 111), the dining table in Holme Dene typifies the extremity of wartime rationing, a point made all the more uncomfortable by Mrs Kelway's tyrannical reign over the household:

> The children, Mrs Kelway, Robert, and Stella were seated round the mahogany table – whose bareness had been relieved by some mats, some plates, a japanned tray of tea things opposite Mrs Kelway, buns, a loaf, an uncut cake which had the look of being of long standing, and an inviting pot of damson jam […]. 'Dear me,' said Robert […], 'Mrs Rodney and I forgot about bringing our own butter.' This served to draw Stella's attention to the butter arrangements: each one of the family had his or her own ration placed before his or her own plate in a differently coloured china shell. (*HD* 111)

Sitting in prime position in front of the 'tea things', Mrs Kelway rules the table with authoritarian control. When Stella and Roderick first arrive at the house she is seen as a crooked inversion of Woolf's benevolent Mrs Ramsay; sitting in a 'strategic' armchair that 'command[s] all three windows' of the lounge, her 'crystal knitting needles […] flying along […] apparently under their own volition' (*HD* 108, 108-9). In this instance, she is

[159] Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, p. 160.

similarly positioned, strategically in front of the 'tea things', so she can oversee their distribution.

That food is scarce is certainly clear – if the stale cake does not immediately suggest wartime frugality, then the scant portions of butter certainly do. Despite admiring the butter portions for being 'fanciful, frank, and fair', however, Stella is struck by the feeling of them being 'seedy, shady' (*HD* 111). The shell shaped dishes indicate that the butter rations have been stringently distributed prior to the meal under the watchful eye, one presumes, of Mrs Kelway herself. There is no sense of familial warmth or communal sharing in this dining scene, but instead a cold and clinical division of food between separate individuals. Recalling the carefully portioned plates of 'clear soup' served at the dining table in *The Last September* – 'Six accurate spoonfuls, each with a pea in it' (*LS* 24) – the shells of butter here indicate a household run with extreme precision and fear, made all the more hostile by the impress of war.

Bowen's representation of the dining table thus departs dramatically from the communing function of Heidegger's farmhouse *Familientisch.* Mrs Kelway's 'psychic […] tea table' triggers Stella's recognition that 'at Holme Dene [she] felt every one of the anxieties, the uncertainties of the hybrid. She […] had come loose from her moorings' (*HD* 114). Through the symbolic and material significance of the table, Bowen reveals the complexities of Stella's wartime identity. In London, Stella suppresses the psychological effects of her deracination by justifying her transient existence as a welcome release from her troubled familial past. At Holme Dene, however, the stringent dining table routine unveils her insecurities about being a divorced woman at risk of losing her corrupt lover and soldier son. Stella may well have adapted to the modern interior of Weymouth Street, and her restaurant habits might have precluded wartime

rationing from her daily routine, but deep down she is a woman still in crisis, one who has not yet fully caught her stride in the 'intermezzo' rhythms of nomadic life.[160]

4.2 Chairs

If tables are things that powerfully convey the deracination of Bowen's protagonists, then chairs play an equally important role in dislodging secure notions of home, belonging, and identity in *The Heat of the Day*. Following his altercation with the non-existent tea table, Roderick sits on the sofa only to be struck by the feeling of being 'surrounded by what was lacking. Though this particular sofa backed on a wall and stood on a carpet, it was without environment' (*HD* 55). This description sharply recalls Heidegger's explanation of Dasein in *Being and Time*, which employs the image of a chair standing next to a wall to explicate the condition of '*Being-in-the-world*' (*BT* 78). Heidegger argues that 'in principle the chair can never touch the wall, even if the space between them should be equal to zero', because an entity can only 'be touched by another entity' if 'the latter entity has Being-in as its own kind of Being' (*BT* 81). This is a crucial statement in Heidegger's conception of being and dwelling. It reveals the extent to which he privileges human thought and perception over the materiality of the physical world. For Heidegger, material things play a central role in the practice of everyday life; but, crucially, they do not possess any agency of their own and, instead, are only rendered meaningful through human use and encounters.

Such thinking is initially evident in Roderick's reaction to the sofa, as he perceives it to be as wanting as the domestic objects in Praz's account of blitzed ruin; 'it might have been some derelict piece of furniture exposed on a pavement after an air raid' (*HD* 55). Chairs function in a similar manner in Louie's experience of the wartime home. As in Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922), where the protagonist's 'wicker armchair creaks, though no one sits there', Tom's empty chair serves as a profound reminder of the presence of

[160] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 380.

his absolute absence: 'here resided the fact of [Louie's] being of meaning only to an absent person' (*HD* 146).[161] As Daniel Miller observes in his ethnographic account of domestic spaces, chairs often 'come to stand for people and relationships' and thus 'take on a fetish quality' that endows them with an agency of their own.[162] Indeed, whereas before the war Louie 'had hour-long passively gazed at Tom' in his chair, now it is 'his chair that gazed at her' (*HD* 146).

The personified, anthropomorphic quality of Tom's chair is particularly significant, because it illustrates the often commented upon, but rarely theorised, 'literary animism' of Bowen's narrative materialism.[163] Bowen's wartime work is not unique in this respect; as Hepburn observes, throughout her fictional oeuvre, she 'is attracted to strangeness in physical entities, even prior to knowing what constitutes their uniqueness'.[164] From the cold stare of Danielstown in the opening of *The Last September*, to the furniture in *The Death of the Heart* that gives Matchett the housekeeper 'quite a look' (*DH* 85), to the penetrating gaze of Tom's chair in the quotation above, Bowen's fictionalised things embody the strange animacy of the material world. Moreover, in the context of war, Bowen's literary animism coincides with the concerns of other women writers. As Alison Light observes, many interwar novels written by women display a shift toward 'an increased consciousness of the materiality of domestic life' in which 'home

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[161] Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (London: Triad/Panther, 1976), p. 37.
[162] Daniel Miller, 'Possessions', in *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, ed. by Daniel Miller (Oxford: Berg, 2001), pp. 107-21 (p. 116).
[163] Inglesby, '"Expressive Objects"', p. 306. See also Carmen Concilio, 'Things That Do Speak in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*', in *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Epiphany*, ed. by Wim Tigges (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 279-92; Jacqueline Rose, 'Bizarre Objects: Mary Butts and Elizabeth Bowen', *Critical Quarterly*, 42.1 (2000), 75-85; Vicke Martina Plock, 'Sartorial Connections: Fashion, Clothes, and Character in Elizabeth Bowen's *To the North*', *Modernism/Modernity*, 19.2 (2012), 287-302 (p. 290); Rochelle Rives, *Modernist Impersonalities: Affect, Authority, and the Subject* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Chapter 5, 'A "Solicitude for Things": Elizabeth Bowen and the *Bildungsroman*', pp. 149-74.
[164] Hepburn, 'Introduction', p. 1.

takes on almost an independent character, often a negative one, and becomes a protagonist often warring with the heroine'.[165]

Where Bowen's literary animism departs from that of her contemporaries, however, is in its manifestation in the style and structure of her narrative forms. As Ellmann has argued, Bowen's 'addiction to personification creates the sense that every object has a psyche' and this is realised through her stylistic 'attribution of the passive mood to human agents, and of the active mood to lifeless objects'.[166] Bowen's wartime fiction thus exemplifies how the thematic shift toward the unruly thingness of things in interwar fiction extends into and beyond the war to become a matter also of literary form. This formal concern appears in the description of Louie's vexed altercation with Tom's chair: 'It directed something at her whichever way she pushed, pulled or turned it, in whatever direction she turned herself' (*HD* 146). Psychologically, the chair is the dominant thing in the room, because Louie desperately attempts to escape its penetrating gaze, which profoundly symbolises her husband's absence. Although Louie is the agent of physical movement (she is the one actually moving the chair about), grammatically, the chair is the subject of the sentence, and the agent of the psychological impact of the situation. Moreover, despite becoming both the subject and the agent in the second clause of the sentence ('in whatever direction she turned herself'), Louie remains subordinate to the unsettling agency of the chair. Failing to gain control of the situation by moving the chair, she is coerced into moving herself instead, becoming akin to a piece of furniture. In effect, the human/non-human roles have switched in both the room and the structure of the sentence. As Ellmann observes, '[e]verything in Bowen's prose

[165] Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 137-38.
[166] Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, pp. 6, 7.

conspires to efface the human subject' – her 'syntax mocks the notion that human beings can command their destiny'.[167]

The agency of Bowen's things, however, is not always directly linked to character consciousness in this way. Although things are personified and do possess anthropomorphic qualities to reflect a problematic human mind set, Bowen also emphasises that things possess agency and vitality independently from human thought and perception. In her discussion of Bowen's *The Little Girls* (1964), Inglesby draws attention to two pertinent aspects of material representation in the novel: firstly, the stylistic anthropomorphism of the drawing-room in Applegate, which 'appears to have an independent existence with an integrity of its own, regardless of the interference of people'; and secondly, Bowen's recognition of the connection between childhood perception and 'the morality, agency, and even feeling' of the material world.[168] It is these two characteristics of Bowen's representation of the material world that, Inglesby argues, combine to produce her 'literary animism'.[169]

What Inglesby describes here looks very similar to Bennett's more recent conception of vital materialism. In *Vibrant Matter* (2010), Bennett theorises the '[t]hing-power' of material objects, by which she means 'the strange ability of ordinary, man-made items to exceed their status as objects and to manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our own existence'.[170] Unlike Heidegger, who ascribes 'thingness' to the rich associations of objects involved in human use and encounter, Bennett posits that things have 'a certain effectivity of their own, a perhaps small but irreducible degree of independence from the words, images, and feelings they

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[167] Ibid., p. 67.
[168] Inglesby, "'Expressive Objects"', pp. 326, 309, 321. In 'The Cult of Nostalgia' (1951), Bowen argues that childhood perception offers a 'fresh, sharp and pure sensation' of the material world. Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Cult of Nostalgia' (1951), in *Listening In*, ed. by Hepburn, pp. 97-102 (p. 98).
[169] Inglesby, "'Expressive Objects"', p. 306.
[170] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. xvi.

provoke in us'.[171] Like Inglesby, she notes the affinity between '[*t*]*hing-power*' and 'a childhood sense of the world' and likewise comments upon the usefulness of anthropomorphism, which helps to 'uncover a whole world of resonances and resemblances': 'We at first may see only a world in our own image, but what appears next is a swarm of "talented" and vibrant materialities'.[172]

Such thinking helps to reinforce the idea that Bowen's use of anthropomorphism is not only linked to human thought and perception, but serves also to highlight the vitalism of the physical world itself. As Miller argues, new materialist thinking helps us 'to recognize that the attribution of power or agency to things may be a profound appreciation of a state of affairs and not simply some kind of cognitive or category mistake'.[173] Indeed, dismantling the binary opposition between the human and non-human, animate and inanimate, subject and object, Bennett posits 'the capacity of things […] not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own'.[174] By making such a claim, she acknowledges the efficacy and influence of material things in everyday life: 'my goal', she explains, 'is to theorize a materiality that is as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as much intensity as extension'.[175] The penetrating gaze of Tom's chair in Chilcombe Street nicely demonstrates what Bennett is referring to when she speaks of matter in terms of force, energy, and intensity. Not just a product of paranoia or psychological projection – although it could still be read in this way – the animacy of Bowen's fictional objects makes a direct appeal to the independent vitalism of ordinary things and the effect, or affect, that these things in turn have on humans.

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[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid., pp. 20, 99.
[173] Miller, 'Possessions', p. 119.
[174] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. viii.
[175] Ibid., p. 20.

It is therefore curious that literary critics have not engaged with the theoretical precepts of new materialist thinking when discussing Bowen's representation of the material world. Indeed, Bowen studies and thing theory have remained decisively separate, despite the fact that thing theory provides a powerful theoretical apparatus for re-approaching the relationship between modernism and materiality.[176] It is hardly insignificant that thing theorists themselves have drawn on the representation of the material world in modernist fiction – most notably that of Woolf – to help illustrate their ideas.[177] It seems to me that the new materialisms offer a natural theoretical progression in Bowen studies, particularly where architectural space is concerned. In turn, a theorised critical engagement with Bowen's literary animism raises wider questions about what modernism has to offer new materialist practice. Woolf is not the only literary figure who provides a discerning view of the material world; Bowen's unruly things are a rich and equally curious source of material thinking.[178]

In particular, it is Bowen's stylistic negotiation of the material world that demonstrates the artistic and socio-spatial capabilities of the modernist novel. As Ellmann remarks, material things in Bowen's fiction 'loom too large for the exigencies of realism'.[179] This is a crucial observation, which helps to dislodge the notion that Bowen's narrative materialism is an outmoded literary technique concerned, as Woolf suggests in 'Modern Fiction', with 'unimportant things' ('MF' 187). Woolf is renowned for her sharp dismissal of narrative materialism in relation to Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, and H. G. Wells. For her, these Edwardian writers misplaced 'life itself' ('MF' 191, 192) by training their narrative gaze too narrowly on external reality. She thus makes a direct

[176] One exception is Patrick W. Moran's essay on Bowen's representation of toys, which engages with Irish culture and thing theory. Moran does not, however, consider Bowen's representation of domestic objects more broadly and neither does he reflect upon the material forms of her literary aesthetic. See Patrick W. Moran, 'Elizabeth Bowen's Toys and the Imperatives of Play', *Éire-Ireland*, 46.1/2 (2011), 152-76.
[177] See Bill Brown, 'The Secret Life of Things (Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism)', *Modernism/Modernity*, 6.2 (1999), 1-28.
[178] See Concilio, 'Things That Do Speak', p. 281.
[179] Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, p. 8.

appeal to the practice of everyday life in the material world, calling for the modern novelist to attend to the complex interrelations between the exterior world of things and the interior world of the mind. Bowen herself was familiar with Woolf's critique of materialism and indeed the continuing importance of the material world in Woolf's experimental fiction.[180] In her 1960 Preface to Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), Bowen comments, for instance, on the significance of the 'bus, the lamp-post, the teacup – how formidable she found them, everyday things!'[181] Bowen's return to materialism, then, was not a naïve one, but a self-conscious development of Edwardian literary techniques for her own modernist narrative concerns.

When discussing the role of literary 'scene' in 'Notes on Writing a Novel' (1945), Bowen insists upon the indivisible link between the self and space: 'Nothing can happen nowhere. The locale of the happening always colours the happening, and often, to a degree, shapes it'.[182] Understanding that material description can, and should, carry more than objective weight, she argues that '[s]cene is only justified in the novel where it can be shown […] to act upon action and character'.[183] Moreover, she praises the 'categoricalness' of Arnold Bennett's work, arguing that it helps to convey 'a scene's material oppressiveness or its intrinsic authority'.[184] Returning to this idea in her autobiography in 1975, she insists that, despite the 'staticness of scene' being 'dead weight', 'one can exploit the staticness – underline it, dramatize it effectively'.[185] Bowen is thus more sympathetic to the experimental possibilities of materialism than Woolf, and remains deeply invested in its connection to the human mind.

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[180] Brook Miller, 'The Impersonal Personal: Value, Voice, and Agency in Elizabeth Bowen's Literary and Social Criticism', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 53.2 (2007), 351-69 (p. 354).
[181] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Preface to *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf' (1960), in *MT*, pp. 131-36 (pp. 135-36).
[182] Bowen, 'Notes on Writing a Novel', p. 39.
[183] Ibid., p. 40.
[184] Ibid., p. 48.
[185] Bowen, 'Pictures and Conversations', p. 284.

Indeed, in *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen's narrative materialism is linked to the construction of character psychology, even when the material things being described are not directly apprehended by her protagonists. In an extended description of Stella's flat in Weymouth Street, for instance, Bowen exploits the staticness of the interior scene to accentuate the claustrophobic, estranging nature of Stella's impersonal surroundings. The room is filled with innumerable objects and pieces of furniture: 'chintz […] armchairs', 'low tables', 'alabaster lamps', a 'fragile escritoire' (*HD* 24). Stella's transience is reflected in the verbs used to orientate her few authentic possessions that are squeezed amongst these impersonal furnishings: her books are '*wedged* among those not hers' and her photographs remain unframed and simply '[*p*]*ropped* on the chimneypiece' (*HD* 24: emphases added). Rather than a departure from negotiating the problematic psychology of the space, Bowen's turn to material detail plays an integral role in establishing Stella's transient wartime identity.

Absolutely central to Bowen's exploitation of material detail in the novel is her 'resurrection' of the omniscient narrator, which allows her to tap into the materiality of everyday things.[186] In 'Notes on Writing a Novel', Bowen reveals her self-conscious adaptation of realist techniques for modernist ends, explaining that, 'though appearing naïve,' omniscience allows fluid access to the 'memories, sensations and thought-processes' of multiple fictional characters, as well as the material 'surrounding of the subject', that a first-person or multi-focalised narrative would not.[187] Whilst recognising the inherent dangers of returning to a technique so strongly contested in the twentieth century, Bowen justifies omniscience as a flexible way to provide the narrative fluidity associated with Woolfian interior monologue and a negotiation of the coercive materiality of the non-human world. Unlike the 'unfamiliar and enigmatic' objects in Edensor's industrial ruins, which at times 'resonate with a powerful beauty' and become

[186] Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, p. 20.
[187] Bowen, 'Notes on Writing a Novel', p. 43.

'akin to pieces of sculpture' that create openings for spatial play, Bowen's wartime objects in *The Heat of the Day* are hostile and animate things that exist, at the level of narrative content and form, with an unsettling integrity of their own.[188]

4.3 Possessions

On Sunday, 20 October 1940, Woolf wrote in her diary of the '[e]xhilaration at losing possessions – save at times I want my books & chairs & carpets & beds […]. But its [*sic*] odd – the relief at losing possessions' (*D5* 331-2). As Ellmann observes, such a statement is a far cry from Bowen's once 'blind faith in the perseverance of tables and chairs'.[189] Indeed, in Bowen's fiction, a loss of possessions never resolves itself into a feeling of exhilaration or relief, but rather has greatly damaging effects on personal identity and belonging. In *The Heat of the Day*, we are told that Stella has taken her flat in Weymouth Street 'furnished' (*HD* 23). Stella thus problematises Praz's claim that 'man will save from the rubble a stool or a tree stump on which to rest from his labors', for although her flat is filled with innumerable objects, such furnishings are anything but a reflection of her dwelling.[190] The narrator comments that Stella 'had the irritation of being surrounded by somebody else's irreproachable taste': the room 'expressed her unexceptionably but wrongly' (*HD* 24). In Weymouth Street, then, Stella's so-called possessions bear no relation to her personal identity.

Elsewhere in Bowen's fiction, household possessions are heavily associated with personal memory and family history. In *The Death of the Heart*, the Quaynes' ancestral furniture directly attests to the past, for as Matchett explains, '[f]urniture's knowing all right. Not much gets past the things in a room, I daresay, and chairs and tables don't go to the grave so soon' (*DH* 85). In *On Longing* (1993), Susan Stewart draws a connection between antiques, souvenirs, and relics, suggesting that antiques function as souvenirs

[188] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 321.
[189] Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, p. 168.
[190] Praz, *Illustrated History*, p. 18.

insofar as they 'create a continuous and personal narrative of the past' through 'the transformation of materiality into meaning'.[191] Just as a miniature model of the Eiffel tower might conjure intense memories of a Parisian holiday, the antique 'bears the burden of nostalgia for experience impossibly distant in time'.[192] In contrast to souvenirs, relics 'disrupt and disclaim that continuity' between the past and the present through the 'transformation of meaning into materiality'.[193] Relics disrupt the linearity of time, punctuating the present with moments of the past in material form.

In *The Death of the Heart*, Bowen's representation of furniture challenges the way in which Stewart aligns the antique with the souvenir.[194] Rather than creating a continuous narrative of personal history through evoking memories of a distant familial past, the Quaynes' antique furniture disrupts time and continuity by standing out as a stark material embodiment of the past directly within the present environment of Windsor Terrace. Baudrillard's discussion of antiques proves instructive here, as he describes them in relic-like terms: 'The antique is always, in the strongest sense of the term, a "family portrait": the immemorialization, in the concrete form of an object, of a former being'.[195] Much the same point is articulated by Matchett in *The Death of the Heart*, who explains that 'furniture like we've got is too much for some that would rather not have the past' (*DH* 85). For this reason, furniture functions in Bowen's novel as a relic, transforming meaning into materiality, rather than carrying out the reverse process associated with the souvenir.

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[191] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 140.
[192] Ibid., p. 140. Eiffel Tower example on p. 136.
[193] Ibid., p. 140.
[194] See Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, p. 142.
[195] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 75.

Significantly, Baudrillard draws attention to the relic capacity of wood, a material strongly associated with the construction of antique furniture and, of particular interest here, the Regency interior.[196] According to Baudrillard:

> Wood draws its substance from the earth, it lives and breathes and 'labours'. It has its latent warmth; it does not merely reflect, like glass, but burns from within. Time is embedded in its very fibres, which makes it the perfect container […]. In short, it is a material that has *being*.[197]

The wooden antique thus stands as a material testament to the past, aging and evolving with time, but also carrying past time directly within its fibres. In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett argues that it is this 'evolutionary', rather than 'biographical', perspective of time that helps to uncover the 'vitality intrinsic to matter'.[198]

Nevertheless, in Bowen's fiction, evolutionary time links back to biographical time as the 'mineral efficacy' of wooden furniture helps capture the personal identity and history of those who use it.[199] When Hugo Montmorency sits in a chair in *The Last September*, for instance, the 'creaks' that run through its 'wicker' fibres are heard 'discussing him' (*LS* 29). Such a narrative detail corresponds with the telling 'creaks' in Jacob's 'wicker armchair' in Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, or indeed with Vanessa Bell's notorious paintings of Woolf herself. In Bell's portraits, the post-impressionist daubs of paint that foreground the materialism of the orange armchair and the striped deckchair say as much about the cosy everydayness and vibrant informality of the Bloomsbury domestic aesthetic as the blurred facial features say about the plurality of the modernist self.[200] As

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[196] See Parissien, *Regency Style*, pp. 193-200.
[197] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 37.
[198] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp. 11, 10.
[199] Ibid., p. 11.
[200] Woolf, *Jacob's Room*, p. 37. For a good introduction to Bell's post-impressionism, see Diane F. Gillespie, 'Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and Painting', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 121-39.

previously discussed in Section 4.2 of this chapter, these instances of modernist chair fetishism reappear in *The Heat of the Day* in Louie's vexed response to Tom's empty chair.

In the case of Weymouth Street, however, this relationship between personal history and the agency of domestic materiality is problematised, for Stella's flat is filled with someone else's possessions. As Miller has observed, the 'degree to which homes and their material culture may be regarded as possessing agency has been established by reference to their history', yet this does not necessarily mean that possessions do not operate as unruly forces in domestic environments no longer governed by history.[201] 'Even where one has little interest or concern with history', Miller explains, 'material culture may have a constraining impact upon what one feels one can do with possessions in such a manner that they may appear to possess their own agency which must be taken into account'.[202]

Indeed, Davis draws a link between the loss of material possessions in Bowen's wartime work and a loss of the self, arguing that 'dispossession' is repeatedly figured as 'subjective erasure'.[203] This is strongly evident in Roderick's return to Stella's flat, for only his pyjamas remain whilst '[e]verything else of his had gone into store, to limbo' (*HD* 49). Experiencing a profound sense of dispossession, Roderick relies heavily on his mother to establish a sense of being in place: 'each time he came back like this, he was at the beginning physically at a loss; until, by an imitation of [Stella's] attitudes he supplied himself with some way to behave, look, stand – even, you might say, *be*' (*HD* 48). Yet, despite Roderick's reliance on Stella, both characters remain at the mercy of the unruly things that surround them.

In a particularly arresting passage, Bowen's narrator reflects on the 'undue strain' set up between Roderick and Stella by the 'absence of every inanimate thing they had had

[201] Miller, 'Possessions', p. 112.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Davis, 'Bowen's War Gothic', p. 39.

in common' (*HD* 55). Rather than focusing on her characters' internal thoughts, Bowen concentrates on the unruly vibrancy of their material surroundings:

> Stella and Roderick were too intimate not each to extend to the other that sense of instinctive loss […]; it was a sign, in them, of an impoverishment of the world. There was not much left for either of them to say, and in this room in which they sat nothing spoke, either – a mysterious flutter, like that of a fire burning, which used to emanate from the minutes seemed to be at a stop. The actual fire's electric elements, vertical hot set lips, grinned away at the empty end of the room. At half-shadow level, some way above the lamplight, the photographs were two dark unliving squares. Outside the curtain-masked windows, down there in the street running into streets, the silence was black-out registered by the hearing. (*HD* 55-6)

In this passage, Stella and Roderick are, to borrow Coole's and Frost's phrase, 'thoroughly immersed within materiality's productive contingencies': 'nothing spoke' implies that it is not just they who stay silent but in fact every material thing in the room.[204] The electric fire stands out in particular, being personified in a similar manner to Tom's chair in Chilcombe Street; its 'vertical hot set lips' grin ominously of their own accord. Significantly, the shadow that the fire casts devours the two photographs on the mantelpiece above, one of which, we are told earlier on in the novel, depicts Roderick himself. Obliterating two of Stella's only remaining possessions, then, the fire transforms the photographs from representations of personal identity into symbols of the Rodneys' subjective erasure.

It is particularly significant that Bowen lights upon the fire as an important element of the domestic interior, for the hearth has long been seen as the archetypal

[204] Coole and Frost, 'Introducing the New Materialisms', p. 7.

image of bourgeois domesticity.[205] Moreover, Heidegger foregrounds the hearth as a central component of the dwelling place. In *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (1942), he describes the hearth as 'the site of being-homely', in which the fire 'essentially prevails as lighting, illuminating, warming, nourishing, purifying, refining, glowing': 'Through this fire, the hearth is the enduring ground and determinative middle – the site of all sites, as it were, the homestead pure and simple'.[206] Heidegger is avowedly conservative here, conceiving the dwelling place in similar terms to the Black Forest farmhouse. Accordingly, he employs a markedly archaic term, for, as Koolhaas observes, 'hearth' is 'rustic-sounding', and thus entirely in keeping with the peasant interior of the farmhouse.[207]

However, in Bowen's representation of the fire (notably a modern, electric one) she foregrounds the impoverishment of all that Heidegger describes. Importantly, the fire's animacy is not actively registered by either Stella or Roderick, instead appearing in the narrative with material integrity of its own; something reflected structurally in its being both the subject and agent of the sentence. The fire thus functions as an 'actant' – a term originally coined by Bruno Latour and used by Bennett to describe 'a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman […] which has efficacy, can *do* things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events'.[208] Although the reader can infer that the fire contributes to the Rodneys' feelings of unease, its hostility is not solely contingent on their perception of it. At both the level of content

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[205] This idea is extolled in John Ruskin's renowned lecture, 'Of Queens' Gardens': 'This is the true nature of home – it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division […]. But so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods, before whose faces none may come but those whom they can receive with love, – so far as it is this, and roof and fire are types only of a nobler shade and light, – shade as of the rock in a weary land, and light as of the Pharos in the stormy sea; – so far it vindicates the name, and fulfils the praise, of Home'. John Ruskin, 'Of Queens' Gardens' (1865), in *Selected Writings*, ed. by Dinah Birch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 154-74 (pp. 158-59).

[206] Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (1942), trans. by Willian McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 105.

[207] Rem Koolhaas, *Fireplace*, ed. by James Westcott and others, Elements Series (Venice: Marsilio Editori Spa, 2014), p. 10.

[208] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. viii.

and form, then, the fire powerfully, and independently, contributes to a sense of unruly wartime space, in which the flat is emphatically not a home.

To describe this newly conceptualised 'event-space' of everyday life, in which domestic things are necessarily relational to, but not entirely dependent on humans, Bennett draws upon Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of the 'assemblage'.[209] According to Bennett, assemblages are 'ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts', including 'humans and their (social, legal, linguistic) constructions' and also 'some very active and powerful nonhumans'.[210] Each of these elements, or actants, retains its own 'energetic pulse slightly "off" from that of the assemblage', meaning that as a whole the assemblage 'is never a stolid block but an open-ended collective'.[211] Reconceiving everyday space in terms of the assemblage thus reinforces recent sociological and geographical accounts of space and place. As Casey reminds us, both space and place are 'not entitative', 'but eventmental, something in process'.[212]

Reading Bowen's representation of Stella's flat through Bennett's theory thus contributes to a more nuanced understanding of space and place in terms of this open-ended spatial assemblage of both human and non-human actants. Importantly, the narrative telescopes out from the interior of the room in which Stella and Roderick sit, situating Weymouth Street within the wider space of the blacked-out city:

> It was imperfect silence, mere resistance to sound – as though the inner tension of London were being struck and struck on without breaking. Heard or unheard, the city at war ticked over – if from this quarter, from these immediate streets, the suction of cars in private movement was gone, there was all the time a jarring at the periphery, an unintermittent pumping of vital traffic through arterial streets

[209] Ibid., p. 23.
[210] Ibid., pp. 23, 24.
[211] Ibid., pp. 24.
[212] Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 337.

> into arterial roads. Nor was that quite all: once or twice across the foreground of hearing a taxi careered as though under fire. (*HD* 56)

Characteristically, Bowen relies on anthropomorphism to tap into the vital material energies of the city. Describing the 'pumping of vital traffic through arterial streets into arterial roads', she draws on a metaphor of the human body to suggest that the city runs on a mechanical and technological lifeblood. As with Stella and Roderick inside, Bowen emphasises that the city's vitality does not rely upon human thought and perception, for the streets continue pulsing irrespective of whether they are '[h]eard or unheard'. Human agency is likewise suppressed through the suggestion of cars moving under their own mechanical volition. It is not a human, then, who stands by and hears the careering taxi in this passage; rather, it is the taxi itself that careers 'across the foreground of hearing' of a physically absent, but just about discernible, human being. Throughout the passage, Bowen's imagery is strongly linked to warfare, with lexical choices such as 'struck', 'ticked', 'suction', and 'fire' all alluding to the violence of aerial attack. Overall, Bowen situates the domestic interior within the wider assemblage of London, drawing attention to the open-ended and shifting nature of urban space and place straining under the threat of wartime ruination.

5. RUINS

Due to the turbulence and unpredictability of ruined spaces, cultural geographers have become increasingly interested in ruins as sites for developing non-representational theory. As Edensor observes, ruins 'can provoke a sudden awareness of the ways in which we are affectively and sensually alienated from the material world'; moving through ruins, the 'body recoils or opens itself out to […] sensual stimuli, to the

abundant textures, sounds and smells' of the space.[213] What is particularly interesting in Edensor's work is his consideration of the problematic task of translating the sensual and affective qualities of experiencing ruins into narrative form. According to Edensor, the 'disparate fragments and traces' of ruins, 'and the uncanny impressions they provoke, cannot be woven into an eloquent narrative'.[214] In his ethnographic study of walking through ruins, he even contends that ruins help to challenge 'the much-mooted metaphorical relationship between walking and narration, suggesting that such parallels are overdrawn'.[215]

Significantly, this geographical viewpoint is reflected in the difficulties that Bowen had with writing *The Heat of the Day*. Although she had completed the first five chapters by mid-1944, she abandoned the novel until after the war was over, as she found the dislocating shocks of wartime ruination utterly incompatible with a continuous prose form.[216] Instead, she found that the short story, in its capacity for multiplicity and fragmentation, lent itself more readily to the intensity of wartime experience. In the Postscript to *The Demon Lover*, Bowen describes her stories as 'flying particles' and 'sparks from experience', which 'came through with force and rapidity, sometimes violence' ('P' 95, 94-5). Employing the language of warfare – or, as Kristine A. Miller puts it, the 'imagery of shrapnel' – Bowen emphasises the spontaneity of their production, finally reflecting that, at this time, 'it would have been impossible to have been writing only one book' ('P' 95).[217]

After the war was over, however, Bowen was able to return to the novel form. Just as the bombsites enabled urban planners in the 1930s to realise the pre-war plans of

[213] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', pp. 324, 326.
[214] Ibid., p. 330.
[215] Tim Edensor, 'Walking Through Ruins', in *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, ed. by Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 123-41 (p. 123).
[216] See Glendinning, *Bowen: Portrait*, p. 149; Phyllis Lassner, *Elizabeth Bowen* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 120.
[217] Miller, *British Literature of the Blitz*, p. 28.

the architectural modernists (see Section 2 of my Introduction to this thesis), so too did Bowen resume *The Heat of the Day*, taking inspiration from London's domestic detritus.[218] Such an undertaking was complex and arduous, however; she had to find a way to weave the intensity and fragmentary nature of both wartime and the short story form into a single, continuous narrative. The resultant style of the novel produces, as Osborn observes, 'a strange affinity between words and things'.[219] It is this relationship between words and things that is central to Bowen's modernist response to the ruins of war. Like Le Corbusier's tower blocks, the tangibility of Bowen's prose style in *The Heat of the Day* helps to foreground the legacy of modernism in the post-war period.

Returning to Edensor, we see a similar shift in his thinking about the narration of ruins. He admits that such spaces of disarray are not entirely averse to narration, suggesting that 'stories retrieved from ruins must be constructed out of a jumble of disconnected things'.[220] More recently, he and DeSilvey have argued that ruins provide a creative opening for narratives, one that 'invites the testing of playful and experimental methods which attempt to articulate their complexity'.[221] For DeSilvey and Edensor, however, such innovative methods lie in collaborative, field-work practices; such as the development of 'multi-sensory ethnographies', 'forms of action research' involving 'participating groups', and the composition of 'multivocal narratives'.[222] From a geographical standpoint, then, conventional literary narratives are an inadequate form of expression for ruin experience.

What I am interested in, however, is reversing this idea to consider instead how a writer like Bowen might push the textual boundaries of the literary narrative to articulate, as best she possibly can, the complexity of ruin experience. It is not a case of asking

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[218] Vidler, 'Air War and Architecture', p. 33.
[219] Osborn, 'Reconsidering Elizabeth Bowen', p. 194.
[220] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 330.
[221] DeSilvey and Edensor, 'Reckoning with Ruins', p. 15.
[222] Ibid.

whether this form of literary innovation is as effective as the collaborative ethnographies DeSilvey and Edensor discuss, but rather to assess the capabilities of the novel form itself. Throughout *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen uses complex forms of linguistic negation to disrupt the textual linearity of her narrative materialism. This aspect of her prose – its being 'contorted almost to the point of unintelligibility' – has received considerable, often conflicting, criticism.[223] I aim to counter the more negative of these accounts by exploring the specific effects of Bowen's negatives, arguing that they share striking cognitive affinities with the visual and affective characteristics of physical ruined spaces.

5.1 Blitzed Streets

In his ethnographic study of walking through ruins, Edensor considers the effects that ruined spaces have on human vision. He argues that the 'material excess' of ruins produces an 'alternative aesthetics' that can 'jolt the body out of any quiescent immersion in the process of walking'.[224] As such, ruined landscapes are not compatible with 'distanced visual apprehension', but instead invite closer inspection of the strange and surprising material details of which they are composed.[225] At the same time, ruins are spaces of complex and competing temporalities that further disrupt human vision and cognition. As Edensor suggests, the 'ghostly, enigmatic traces that remain' in ruins 'invite us to fill in the blanks'; a point reiterated by Boym who observes that the 'remainders and reminders' of ruins 'make us think of the past that could have been and the future that never took place'.[226] Ruins are thus spaces that generate profound imaginative possibilities.

Comparing these geographical accounts of ruins with studies of linguistic negation draws attention to the similarities between the cognitive processing of ruins and

[223] Teekell, 'Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War', p. 61.
[224] Edensor, 'Walking Through Ruins', p. 134.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 330; Boym, 'Ruins of the Avant-Garde', p. 58.

that of negation in a written text. Empirical studies in psycholinguistics have revealed that negation 'requires more time and energy' on the part of the reader due to the complex mental processes involved in the cognition of negative constructions of language.[227] As Nina Nørgaard explains, 'the decoding of negative propositions requires more mental operations than the decoding of their positive counterparts', as it 'involves not just the establishment of a proposition, but the establishment of a proposition *and* the cancellation of it'.[228] The difficulties involved in the cognitive processing of linguistic negation are therefore similar to those encountered when walking through ruins. Just as ruins slow walkers down, demand closer scrutiny, and trigger complex spatio-temporal imaginaries, linguistic negation disrupts the flow of the reading experience, is more difficult to decode, and generates multiple cognitive scenarios. Collectively, these geographical and linguistic accounts of ruination and negation offer new insights into the connections between wartime ruins and the stylistic complexities of *The Heat of the Day*.

According to Nørgaard, negation remains an underexplored linguistic feature in literary studies, despite being a 'significant meaning-making resource' in fictional texts.[229] When it is dealt with in literary analysis, the examples that are drawn upon tend to be 'fairly "poetic"'; 'constructions that "spring to the eye"'.[230] This is indeed the case in critical responses to *The Heat of the Day*. When critics comment on the overwhelming stylistic complexities of the novel, they tend to focus on the Blitz flashback in Chapter Five, which is characterised by unrelenting repetitions of negated words and phrases.[231] Analysing these negatives certainly reveals Bowen's response to the war, because it helps

[227] Nina Nørgaard, 'Disordered Collarettes and Uncovered Tables: Negative Polarity as a Stylistic Device in Joyce's "Two Gallants"', *Journal of Literary Semantics*, 36 (2007), 35-52 (p. 37).
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid., p. 35.
[230] Ibid., p. 41.
[231] Lee, *Bowen: An Estimation*, p. 166-68; W. J. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History Through Balzac, Sheridan, Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 224; Mellor, *Reading the Ruins*, pp. 157-58; Teekell, 'Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War', p. 67.

demonstrate how she ethically sidesteps the task of rendering the wartime dead by providing an oblique glance towards them:

> Absent from the routine which had been life, [the dead] stamped upon that routine their absence – not knowing who the dead were you could not know which might be the staircase somebody for the first time was not mounting this morning, or at which street corner the newsvendor missed a face, or which trains and buses in the homegoing rush were this evening lighter by at least one passenger. (*HD* 91-2)

Bowen invokes the image of normal daily routine, only to remove any possibility of it through sustained syntactic negation – her repeated use of 'not' intimates the emptiness of staircases and street corners, untrodden by absent persons. It is precisely this sort of complex negation that has divided critics in their response to Bowen's prose style. While Kreilkamp argues that this complexity is 'problematic – fulsome, vague, imprecise', W. J. McCormack insists that it is 'required to convey a quality of absence or negativity special in the novel and its theme'.[232] Lis Christensen is the only critic who picks up on the more complex workings of negation, suggesting that 'Bowen's much criticised double negatives […] in fact convey more nuances than the corresponding positive working'.[233]

Indeed, recalling Bowen's description of the 'strange growths' ('P' 95) of wartime, the accumulation of negatives in the above passage profoundly contributes to the novel's representation of London as an uncanny space of blurred boundaries: between self and other, the familiar and unfamiliar, the living and the dead. Edensor discusses the boundaries of ruined space in terms of the permeable body, noting that when moving through ruined spaces 'the body is rendered porous, open to the impacts of matter, is a

[232] Kreilkamp, *The Anglo-Irish Novel*, p. 165; McCormack, *Dissolute Characters*, p. 224.
[233] Lis Christensen, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Later Fiction* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2001), p. 103.

"threshold or passage", characterized by "multiple surfaces open to other surfaces" through which "strange substances" are able to "cross the subject's own boundaries"'.[234] In the above passage from Bowen's novel, the body is figured in this manner, as the multiple negatives call into question the integrity of corporeal existence by eroding the boundary between the living and the dead, the coherent and the spectral body. As Teekell observes, '[a]ll those negatives add up to a world that is defined by absence rather than presence. London becomes defined by unreality rather than reality'.[235] Not only, then, do Bowen's linguistic choices contribute to an ethical embrace of wartime, they also help to construct the city textually as an urban ruin, which is, by Edensor's definition, a 'haunted spac[e] replete with ghosts'.[236]

5.2 Ruined Interiors

Critics have paid less attention, however, to Bowen's use of negation in her representation of domestic space. As my discussion above in Section 3.3 of this chapter revealed, Bowen's use of 'nothing' (*HD* 56) when negating the spatio-temporality of Weymouth Street operates in a similar manner to her textual construction of the ghostly city, as it transforms the domestic interior into 'something blitz-riven: a no-place'.[237] Again, this instance of negation 'springs to the eye' and is an obvious example of how Bowen's prose calls attention to its own linguistic construction. Nørgaard contends, however, that 'less "poetic"' examples of negation are an important, albeit subtle, contribution to the construal of meaning in a literary text, and continue to be, in comparison to their more poetic counterparts, an understudied linguistic feature of literary texts.[238]

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[234] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 326.
[235] Teekell, 'Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War', p. 67.
[236] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 328.
[237] Teekell, 'Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War', p. 78.
[238] Nørgaard, 'Disordered Collarettes', p. 41.

It is in her representation of the home that Bowen employs subtle forms of negation to foreground the impoverished nature of dwelling during wartime and, hence, the ruined nature of the domestic interior. In Chapter Five of the novel, she uses morphological and inherent negatives to describe Stella's temporary accommodation during the Blitz: 'That autumn, she was living in lodgings in a house in a square: raising the sash of her bedroom window – which, glass*less* since two or three nights ago, ran up with a *phantom absence* of weight – she leaned out' (*HD* 93: emphases added). In particular, Bowen pays attention to the missing window of the Regency terrace, problematising its function as an architectural threshold. Discussing the transparency of glass, Baudrillard emphasises that besides 'facilitat[ing] faster communication between inside and outside', the glass window 'sets up an invisible but material caesura which prevents such communication from becoming a real opening onto the world'.[239] Glass therefore introduces a fluid spatial dialogue into the modern domestic interior at the same time as providing a protective barrier that keeps the architectural integrity of the home intact.

It is this protective barrier that is shattered in the novel. When Stella opens the 'glassless' sash window, Bowen attributes it with 'a phantom absence of weight' (*HD* 93). The missing pane of glass disrupts the threshold capacity of the window, as there is no longer any distinction between the window being open or closed. As Beer notes, the window 'ordinarily permits sight without touch' and yet when 'shattered back into its dangerous physical elements' it 'shows itself to be a precarious threshold with material as well as uncanny possibilities'.[240] This is indeed the case in Bowen's novel, because physically the shattered window allows the 'grit' that laces the outside air – the material residue of Blitz destruction – to 'drif[t] on to [Stella's] dressing-table'; whilst psychologically it allows into the room the 'hush of the square', which Stella conflates with the death-like imagery of a 'church-yard' (*HD* 93). Shattered into 'non-existence'

[239] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 42.
[240] Beer, 'Windows', p. 12.

(*HD* 93), the window no longer functions as a protective 'material caesura' and thus the horrors of war – both architectural and corporeal – penetrate the heart of Stella's bedroom.[241]

A parallel can be drawn here with the inherent negation Bowen employs to foreground Tom's absence in Chilcombe Street. Bowen's narrator comments on 'the *hollow* left by Tom's body' in Louie's marital bed and the '*silence*' that fills the flat because of the broken wireless (*HD* 17, 147: emphases added). As Nørgaard suggests, inherent negation is a 'fuzzy area of semantically determined categorisation' as it is not formally marked like syntactic or morphological negation.[242] Inherent negation is thus open to interpretation in both 'practical and theoretical' terms, as people can disagree about whether a word has a negative value when it is not formally marked.[243] It is because of this linguistic fuzziness that inherent negatives in literary texts have received comparatively little analytical attention.

Nevertheless, literary linguists are beginning to realise that inherent negatives can produce 'striking stylistic effects that are worthy of consideration', and this is an instructive point that helps develop my textual approach to Bowen's use of negation in her representation of ruined interior spaces.[244] Indeed, 'hollow' and 'silence' each draw attention to a profound absence of bodily form and comforting sound in Chilcombe Street, and therefore establish what is lacking from Louie's solitary wartime lifestyle. Moreover, in calling attention to their positive counterparts, these negatives have profound effects on Bowen's representation of personal psychology and ruined space. Firstly, they implicitly communicate Louie's suppressed memories of, and desire for, normal family life. The reader not only visualises the empty bed and the broken radio,

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[241] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 42.
[242] Nørgaard, 'Disordered Collarettes', p. 37
[243] Laura Hidalgo-Downing, *Negation, Text Worlds, and Discourse: The Pragmatics of Fiction* (Stamford: Ablex, 2000), pp. 43-44.
[244] Marcello Giovanelli, *Text World Theory and Keats' Poetry: The Cognitive Poetics of Desire, Dreams and Nightmares* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 133.

but also a distant scenario in which Tom still occupies the bed and the radio still works. In turn, this imagined positive scenario functions as an uncanny and ghostly double of what is in reality absent from Louie's home.

As with the city streets, then, Bowen's use of negation, albeit in a more subtle form, constructs a fictional world entirely predicated on the 'material traces of people'; what Edensor refers to as the 'object-presences' of ruined spaces that 'conjure up the absence of those who wore, wielded, utilized, and consumed them', and which 'cajole us into performing the past'.[245] Chilcombe Street, like Weymouth Street, and like Stella's anonymous lodgings in the Blitz flashback, are textual constructions of ruined spaces replete with repressed uncanny fears – a point to which I return in my discussion of Rhys's representation of the hotel room and uncanny memory in Chapter Two.

5.3 Textural Kaleidoscopes

In maintaining that spatial experience is immersive and affective, non-representational theory helps advance current understandings of linguistic negation as 'a significant meaning-making resource' in literary texts.[246] As Edensor stresses, the disruptions to vision and cognition that occur in ruined spaces lead to 'a deeper, non-cognitive sensual form of appreciation' of the landscape.[247] Returning to consider the Blitz passage from Chapter Five of Bowen's novel, or indeed any of the examples of uncanny domestic materiality discussed above, we see that the complexity and subtlety of Bowen's negatives often invite obliquity and confusion. As Teekell suggests, 'Bowen's syntax forces the […] reader […] to reread […] the sentences themselves for meaning': 'The reader must sift through the shape of the sentences to decode the information they present'.[248] While some of the negatives resolve themselves into clear meanings, others prevent this

[245] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', pp. 328, 329.
[246] Nørgaard, 'Disordered Collarettes', p. 35.
[247] Edensor, 'Walking Through Ruins', p. 132.
[248] Teekell, 'Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War', pp. 62, 67.

information from being fully grasped. Mary Ellmann comments on this eventuality, describing the 'pathological effect' of 'the intussusception of multiple phrases and clauses' in Bowen's prose: 'One loses hope of the sentence's recovery – how can it ever possibly, in this condition, deliver its content to a period?'[249]

Contrary to those critics who have interpreted Bowen's complex negatives as 'fulsome' and 'imprecise', I wish to suggest that the way in which these particular linguistic features disrupt the flow of conventional sentence construction (to the point of arresting the reader's attention and confusing his/her ability to interpret the scene or events being described) in fact contributes to Bowen's representation of the 'deeper, non-cognitive sensual form' of spatial experience that Edensor associates with ruins.[250] Linguistic negation, then, is not only 'a significant meaning-making resource' in literature, but also a stylistic resource that can be effectively deployed to deliberately withhold meaning and appeal to a more sensual appreciation of the prose form.[251]

If, as Edensor suggests, ruins are 'suffused with a kaleidoscope of intermingling thoughts, experiences and sensations', then it seems hardly coincidental that when asked by Brooke about her artistic intentions for *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen replied that she wanted her novel to resemble structurally 'the convulsive shaking of a kaleidoscope, a kaleidoscope also in which the inside reflector was cracked'.[252] Moreover, when challenged by her editor about the novel's unusual stylistic qualities, Bowen responded that 'I'd rather keep the jars, "jingles" and awkwardnesses […]. They do to my mind express something. In some cases I *want* the rhythm to jerk or jar – to an extent, even, which may displease the reader'.[253]

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[249] Mary Ellmann, 'Words, Words', *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1968, pp. 124-26 (p. 126).
[250] Kreilkamp, *The Anglo-Irish Novel*, p. 165; Edensor, 'Walking Through Ruins', p. 132.
[251] Nørgaard, 'Disordered Collarettes', p. 35.
[252] Edensor, 'Walking Through Ruins', p. 136; Bowen, 'A Conversation', p. 283.
[253] Bowen, quoted in Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, p. 166.

In her author's Preface to *Stories by Elizabeth Bowen* (1959), Bowen reflects on the difference between the short story and the novel form. To her mind, the short story is 'more concentrated' than the novel, because it 'revolves round one crisis only' and, for this reason, 'one might call it, almost, a crisis in itself'.[254] For any short story to retain this intense impact, there 'ought to be nothing […] which can weaken, detract from, or blur the central, single effect'.[255] In contrast, Bowen feels that novels 'legitimately have "slack" passages, which serve, like intermissions, to ease off the reader between crisis and crisis'.[256] In *The Heat of the Day*, however, Bowen puts this comparison to the test; the jerks and jars of her experimental prose form are meant to replicate the intensity of the short story, lessening the 'slack' passages of the novel form and instead contributing to the 'central, single effect' of seeing the architectural crisis of wartime as if through the cracked reflector of a kaleidoscope.

Through stitching together the multiple, concentrated crisis points of individual short stories, Bowen creates a fragmented novel form that bears witness to Deleuze's and Guattari's claim that we live 'in the age of partial objects, bricks that have been shattered to bits, and leftovers'.[257] Through her representation of the wartime dwelling place, she reveals the profoundly damaging effects that reconfigured interiors, animate things, and blitzed fragments have on the formation of home, belonging, and identity in the turbulent modern world. At the same time, she foregrounds the turbulence of the novel form itself. If, as Miller suggests, the 'literary structures' of late modernism 'tottered uneasily between vexed acknowledgment and anxious disavowal of social facts', then Bowen's late modernist form is typified by the 'tottering lace-like architecture of ruins'

[254] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Preface to *Stories by Elizabeth Bowen*' (1959), in *MT*, pp. 126-30 (p. 128).
[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1984), p. 42.

('P' 99) that (de)structured wartime London and indeed the prose style of *The Heat of the Day*.[258]

As Edensor suggests, ruins 'foreground the value of *in*articulacy, for disparate fragments, juxtapositions, traces, involuntary memories, uncanny impressions, and peculiar atmospheres cannot be woven into an eloquent narrative'.[259] Bowen's experimentation with narrative form paradoxically articulates the inarticulacy of ruined space, creating a literary texture as intricate and perforated as the 'lace-like' ('P' 95) socio-spatial fabric she perceives London to have during wartime. *The Heat of the Day* is certainly not a novel that evidences the failure of prose narratives to convey something of the disorientating and immersive experience of ruined space. In fact, it is a literary work that takes root in the creative opening produced by the peculiar spatial and psychological conditions of ruined space, which, Edensor reminds us, 'is not an impediment but rather an opportunity to construct narratives that are not contained by form or convention'.[260] Through her combined use of syntactic anthropomorphism, vibrant materialism, and complex linguistic negation, Bowen pushes the bounds of the realist narrative almost to breaking point, turning *The Heat of the Day* into a form of crisis in and of itself.

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have argued that *The Heat of the Day* exemplifies Bowen's complex prose response to the crisis of home, belonging, and identity during the Second World War. By foregrounding the tangible materiality of the novel's prose style, I have demonstrated how Bowen's negotiation of architectural space lays bare the shattering effects of the war on the spatial configurations, psychological understandings, and bodily sensations of the

[258] Miller, *Late Modernism*, p. 32.
[259] Edensor, 'The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins', p. 846: emphasis added.
[260] Ibid.

domestic home. For Bowen, place and dwelling never equate to the sedentary form of belonging extolled in the seminal works of Heidegger. Rather, home, belonging, and identity all become increasingly problematic for the wartime 'soul astray' (*HD* 248), who is never quite able to walk in step with the 'intermezzo' rhythms of nomadic life.[261]

Drawing on recent new materialist and non-representational theories, I have developed understanding of Bowen's 'literary animism' by arguing that her experimental narrative materialism and use of linguistic negation are profoundly connected to the social, spatial, psychological, and sensual symptoms of the ruinous urban landscape of 1940s London.[262] By deftly weaving this turbulent built environment into the contorted textural quality of her novel's prose form, Bowen (re)constructs a narrative architecture as anxious as the cultural milieu in which she is writing. *The Heat of the Day* can therefore be read as a deeply complex architextural response to the burgeoning materialities of wartime domestic ruins, as well as a prime example of late modernist innovation in the postwar period.

[261] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 380.
[262] Inglesby, "'Expressive Objects"', p. 306.

CHAPTER TWO

'Always the same stairs, always the same room': The Uncanny Architecture of Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*

1. INTRODUCTION

In her unfinished autobiography, Rhys expresses a deep, but ambivalent, interest in her surrounding architectural environment: 'The place I live in is terribly important to me, it always has been, but now it is all I have. The table, the chair, the tree outside, my bed upstairs, it is all I have'.[1] Like Bowen, Rhys draws attention to the importance of 'place' in her thinking, taking care to unsettle any secure notions of domestic belonging and identity. In this instance, 'place' refers to the temporary lodgings she occupied close to Maidstone prison during the 1940s, when her husband was serving time for theft and fraud.[2] The table, the chair, the tree, and the bed are all familiar things to Rhys, but each betrays a profound sense of impersonality and displacement. By deliberately avoiding the term 'home', Rhys thus associates 'place' with the anxious transience of her adult life.

In *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), her most experimental novel of the 1930s, Rhys typifies this crisis of home, belonging, and domestic identity through her fictional representation of the uncanny architecture of the interwar city. Sasha Jansen, the novel's deracinated narrating-protagonist, exists at the peripheries of Paris and London, perpetually journeying through a series of urban streets, hotels, cafés, and public toilets. With an ambiguous class identity, an unsteady financial income, and an estranged family,

[1] Rhys, *Smile, Please*, pp. 164-65.
[2] Angier, *Rhys: Life*, pp. 456-57.

Sasha has no choice but to inhabit these transient spaces, which all confuse secure notions of private and public, interior and exterior, homely and unhomely space.

Like Bowen's houses, Rhys's marginal urban spaces belong to a world in which the 'house is past'.[3] In Rhys's fiction, however, it is no longer a case of 'not [being] at home in one's home', for the home is already absent.[4] As Carole Angier notes, '[t]here are no homes left in [Rhys's fiction]; the whole world is cheap hotels'.[5] Benjamin draws attention to the implications of this spatial milieu, observing that 'dwelling has diminished' in the twentieth century 'through hotel rooms' (*AP* 221). Rhys's wandering protagonists, then, no more fit the 'intermezzo' rhythms of nomadic life than Bowen's troubled domestic characters.[6] As Casey suggests, nomadism is not 'a matter of the unhomely', for 'the nomad is perfectly at home': 'nothing is uncanny'.[7] Yet for Rhys's protagonists, everything is uncanny, especially the repetitive architecture of the modern city. As Sasha anxiously observes, it is '[a]lways the same stairs, always the same room': 'I don't belong anywhere' (*GMM* 28, 38).

Rhys's preoccupation with uncanny architecture and female deracination characterises her interwar oeuvre as a whole; *Quartet* (1929), *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1931), and *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) are equally striking in their frank depiction of single, marginalised women in Paris and London. Intersecting with, and complicating, this landscape of European modernity is a crisis of national identity and colonial exile. None of Rhys's female protagonists seems to be European – a crucial factor that intensifies their vexed relationship with the uncanny architecture of the imperial city. Arguably the most culturally ambiguous of Rhys's protagonists, Sasha is not overtly linked to the Caribbean in *Good Morning, Midnight*. Unlike Anna Morgan in *Voyage in the Dark*, a

[3] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 38.
[4] Ibid., p. 39.
[5] Angier, *Rhys: Life*, p. 407.
[6] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 380.
[7] Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 307.

character whose memories obsessively return to her childhood home in Dominica, the majority of Sasha's burgeoning memories are already located within the European metropole. Erica L. Johnson has noted, however, that Rhys does provide subtle clues that point towards Sasha's colonial past.[8] Moreover, as I discuss later in this chapter, Sasha vocalises her anxieties about cultural and national identity in a number of significant ways. Like all of Rhys's protagonists, then, Sasha's ambiguous cultural and national identity utterly compounds the homeless condition of her metropolitan life, and she emerges as Homi Bhabha's 'unhomely' colonial subject, for whom 'the borders between home and world become confused'.[9]

The striking repetition of Rhys's cycle of interwar novels has helped to divert critical attention away from *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), which has long dominated Rhys criticism and continues to be read by some as the most 'comprehensive expression of dislocation' in Rhys's oeuvre.[10] Angier emphasises how 'obsessive' and 'similar' Rhys's earlier interwar novels are, suggesting they are worthy of more considered attention: 'There is always the same heroine', 'always the same stasis', 'always the same sense of doom, of something hidden and waiting beneath the surface'.[11] These noticeable themes of repetition, repression, and return are central to Freud's seminal essay on 'The Uncanny' (1919). According to Freud, the uncanny is underpinned by 'something familiar' that 'has been repressed and then reappears' ('U' 152), and is intensified by the 'constant recurrence of the same thing', 'the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds' ('U' 142). Despite these decisive links, however, critics have not examined the productive dialogue between Freud's theory and Rhys's representation of uncanny urban experience. A couple of short studies have considered the 'unhomely' and

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[8] Erica L. Johnson, *Home, Maison, Casa: The Politics of Location in Works by Jean Rhys, Marguerite Duras, and Erminia Dell'Oro* (London: Associated University Press, 2003), pp. 39-62.
[9] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 9.
[10] Delia Caparoso Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms: Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 145.
[11] Angier, *Rhys: Life*, p. 404.

'the colonial uncanny' in *Voyage in the Dark*, but few have analysed these themes in *Good Morning, Midnight*, the most intensely uncanny novel of Rhys's interwar works.[12]

Significantly, the urban spaces that Sasha inhabits in *Good Morning, Midnight* function as powerful catalysts for complex and conflicting feelings of familiarity, estrangement, and fear: hotel rooms speak, streets are unsettlingly anthropomorphic, Sasha's doubles haunt shop windows and toilet mirrors, and her traumatic memories are violently ruptured and relived. In this chapter, I argue that such moments can be read as manifestations of the Freudian uncanny – as that 'realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread' ('U' 123). Rather than relating to the ghostly or the Gothic, these moments of uncanniness function in Rhys's novel as a salient feature of everyday life, during which the stable boundary between private and public space is confused and problematised and Sasha's sense of self is threatened.

In this chapter, I thus draw on Vidler's work on the 'architectural uncanny', because it demonstrates how Freud's theory can be mapped onto the everyday spaces of the modern city.[13] Vidler argues that 'architecture reveals the deep structure of the uncanny in a more than analogical way, demonstrating a disquieting slippage between what seems homely and what is definitively unhomely'.[14] Exacerbating problems of domestic identity and belonging, the architectural uncanny is a prime interpretive strategy for negotiating 'the relations between the psyche and the dwelling, the body and the house, the individual and the metropolis'.[15] According to Miller, it is 'in response to this new configuration of self and its boundaries that late modernism finds its contextual and affective basis'.[16] I thus contend that the uncanny events of *Good Morning, Midnight* are

[12] See Dell'Amico, *Colonialism and the Modernist Moment*, Chapter 2, '*Voyage in the Dark*: Unhomely', pp. 39-55; Cathleen Maslen, *Ferocious Things: Jean Rhys and the Politics of Women's Melancholia* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), Chapter 4, 'The Colonial Uncanny: *Voyage in the Dark*', pp. 153-83.
[13] Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), p. ix.
[14] Ibid., p. ix-x.
[15] Ibid., p. x.
[16] Miller, *Late Modernism*, p. 45.

central to Rhys's late modernist response to modernity's crisis of home, belonging, and identity, but, unlike Miller, I argue that there are profound connections between high modernist urbanism and the fragmented forms of Rhys's uncanny prose.

In reading the novel as the culmination of Rhys's uncanny cycle of interwar fiction, I do not wish to imply that it is simply an intense recapitulation of Rhys's earlier works. Each of the interwar novels negotiates distinctive social and economic conditions of urban life. In *Good Morning, Midnight*, then, Sasha must not be read as the generic 'Rhys woman', defined by Thomas Staley as 'the paradigmatic Rhys heroine, a figure who with only slight transmutation will appear in all her fiction of the 1930s'.[17] Whilst I draw points of comparison between *Good Morning, Midnight* and Rhys's earlier fiction, I also provide a nuanced account of the historical and aesthetic particularities of the novel in its own right.

Good Morning, Midnight is set with unusual specificity in 'late October, 1937' (*GMM* 78) and contains significant references to the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, which took place in Paris in the same year. Famous for its clashing fascist and communist pavilions, the Exhibition site concretises Rhys's anxious response to political conflict and global warfare.[18] In its anticipation of the Second World War, *Good Morning, Midnight* thus shares common ground with Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* and Woolf's *Between the Acts.* Like Bowen and Woolf, Rhys's late modernist prose form becomes increasingly self-conscious as it negotiates the looming violence of the mid-century. Characterised by first-person narration, the novel provides intimate, although frequently unreliable, insight into Sasha's psychological and bodily experiences of the uncanny city. Rhys's textual experimentation is overtly visual, as she disrupts temporal linearity and stylistically negotiates urban memory through distinct fragmented

[17] Carr, *Jean Rhys*, p. 4; Staley, *Rhys: Critical Study*, p. 37.
[18] James D. Herbert, *Paris 1937: Worlds on Exhibition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 14.

typography; including varying combinations of blank spaces, single sentence paragraphs, multiple section breaks, ellipses, and asterisks.

This chapter is structured around a trio of marginal spaces that demonstrate Rhys's thematic and formal preoccupation with the architectural uncanny: the hotel, the street, and the public toilet. Not only do my readings of these spaces foreground Rhys's late modernist response to the condition of modern urban homelessness, they also develop understanding of the spaces themselves as important sites of cultural value – sites that are always linked to problems of bodily, gender, class, and national identity. The hotel and the public toilet, in particular, are significantly under-researched across the arts, humanities, and the social and spatial sciences, and, in light of this, I contend that Rhys's novel offers a rich commentary on the social and cultural taboos so often deliberately overlooked across these varying disciplines. Throughout my analysis of these spaces, I consequently emphasise the material and affective qualities of Rhys's prose form, providing a nuanced account of the textural qualities of the novel's uncanny narrative architecture. As Angier suggests, Rhys's interwar cycle is 'like a tapestry woven in separate parts but to the same pattern', underpinned by a distinctive 'deep structure'.[19] In this chapter, I contend that this 'deep structure' is that of crisis; a crisis that is utterly debilitating for the urban individual living in the mid-century city, but full of creative potential for Rhys's late modernist literary form.

2. THE ARCHITECTURAL UNCANNY

According to Freud, the haunted house is a 'potent' architectural example of the uncanny, because it carries the symbolic associations so often connected with the concept; namely, 'death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts' ('U' 148). However, he points out that this defining image has its shortfalls, for 'here the uncanny is too much

[19] Angier, *Rhys: Life*, p. 212.

mixed up with the gruesome and partly overlaid by it' ('U' 148). The horror associated with the haunted house overshadows the crucial fact that within the uncanny moment the material and psychological integrity of the building is threatened. Moreover, the haunted house constrains the uncanny to the domestic home, failing to account for how the concept operates in alternate spaces of modernity – the hotel, for instance – as well as in narratives that are not supernatural in theme or form.

Rather than simply a product of the ghostly or the fearsome, then, the uncanny is generated by the disruption of familiar spatial and psychological boundaries: it is 'that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar' ('U' 124). In this definition, Freud draws attention to the curious slippage so crucial to understanding the uncanny: its ability to be something at once fearsome *and* familiar. Tracing the word's etymological roots, Freud reveals how these apparently contradictory terms come together. First, he notes how the German *unheimlich* – from which 'uncanny' is derived – is 'the opposite of *heimlich*', which is defined as 'belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, dear and intimate, homely' ('U' 124, 126). It follows, then, that *unheimlich* pertains to all that is strange, unfamiliar, and unhomely.

Secondly, Freud points out that *heimlich* can also be defined as that which is 'concealed, kept hidden' ('U' 129). This element of secrecy, far from being homely, means that *heimlich* 'becomes increasingly ambivalent, until it finally merges with its antonym *unheimlich*' ('U' 134). The uncanny, then, 'is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed'; it is 'something that should have remained hidden and has come into the open' ('U' 148). Rather than a concept linked only to the horrors of haunted houses, the uncanny is a salient feature of everyday life; one that is premised on the unsettling of important spatial and psychological binaries conventionally associated with, but not limited to, the domestic home: familiar/unfamiliar, interior/exterior, public/private.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger links the uncanny to the condition of anxiety that arises from a loss of place and dwelling: 'anxiety does not "see" any definite "here" or "yonder"', but is 'characterized by the fact that what threatens is *nowhere*' (*BT* 231). Anxiety is uncanny because it is all consuming, 'already "there"', and yet is hard to pin down, for 'it is nowhere' (*BT* 231). Heidegger consequently argues that, in the uncanny moment, '[e]veryday familiarity collapses' and 'Being-in enters into the existential "mode" of the "*not-at-home*"' (*BT* 233). The uncanny moment thus equates to a crisis of dwelling, in which notions of home, belonging, and identity are called into question.

In 'The Uncanny' Freud considers how this condition of anxiety arises in urban space. Offering a personal anecdote of getting lost in an unnamed 'small Italian town', he describes the uncanniness of the 'unfamiliar' streets:

> after wandering about for some time without asking the way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street […]. Once more I hurried away, only to return there again by a different route. I was now seized by a feeling that I can only describe as uncanny. ('U' 144)

Central to this uncanny experience is the 'factor of repetition', particularly that of 'unintentional return' ('U' 143, 144). Getting lost and inadvertently returning to the same street as before, Freud experiences a loss of volition. His anxiety consequently arises when the unfamiliar street becomes strangely familiar; a slippage that confuses his sense of being-at-home in the world.

In comparison to Freud's small Italian town, the teeming modern metropolis of Rhys's interwar fiction exacerbates anxiety and uncanniness on a much larger scale: Paris and London become key sites for exposing all those 'persons and things, […] impressions, processes and situations that can arouse an especially strong and distinct sense of the uncanny in us' ('U' 135). For Benjamin, the uncanniness of the modern city

can be traced back to the 'shattering of the interior' (*AP* 9) at the turn of the twentieth century, when the rise of architectural modernity made it harder for the Victorian 'ideological constructs' of privacy and shelter to be held in place.[20] As he observes, the 'domestic interior moves outside': 'The street becomes room and the room becomes street' (*AP* 406). In Heideggerian terms, the comfortable boundary between the 'here' and 'yonder' (*BT* 231) is disrupted in the modern city, collapsing any sense of a fixed dwelling place.

The twentieth century was thus newly defined as a space of 'porosity and transparency'; 'its tendency toward the well-lit and airy', Benjamin argues, put 'an end to dwelling in the old sense' (*AP* 221). New architectural spaces, such as the arcade and, later on, the department store and the hotel, intensified this spatial transformation. As Elizabeth Wilson argues, 'these were commodified spaces in which everything was for sale, and to which anyone was free to come, yet they endeavoured to create the atmosphere of the salon or the private house'.[21] New pioneering uses of glass in windows, walls, and ceilings intensified the blurred division between inside and outside space, creating complex networks of reflected and refracted urban gazes (*AP* 3-5).

Alongside this spatial transformation, the urban crowd that populated the city streets underwent dramatic social changes. As Raymond Williams argues, 'the metropolis of the second half of the nineteenth century and of the first half of the twentieth century moved into a quite new cultural dimension'.[22] As provincial people flocked to the urban centres and the British Empire boomed, imperial capitals across Europe became vibrant melting pots of economic wealth, political power, and socio-cultural diversity. Although the economy suffered as British imperialism went into terminal decline during the interwar years, the urban population continued to diversify well into the postwar period

[20] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 33.
[21] Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', in *New Left Review*, 191 (1992), 90-110 (p. 96).
[22] Raymond Williams, 'Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism', in *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, ed. by Tony Pinkney (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 37-48 (p. 44).

as colonial migrants from the Commonwealth and former colonies began to move to the imperial metropole.[23] As a result of this immigration, the streets of imperial capitals such as London and Paris became spaces of increasingly complex social relations.

Richard Sennett's definition of the city as a place 'in which strangers are likely to meet' helps to link the diversifying city streets of the twentieth century to Freud's concept of the uncanny.[24] Sennett argues that the urban crowd generates a complex system of social 'enactment' whereby strangers must act out their personal identity and interpret those of the unfamiliar people around them.[25] Sennett's argument recalls Benjamin's conception of the public world as a 'theatre' (*AP* 9), as he draws attention to the performative dimension of urban life. When such performativity adheres to the 'common code of believability', Sennett argues that '*a public geography is produced*', in which 'movement through diverse social circumstances and groups of strangers […] becomes comfortable'.[26] This public geography accords with Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*. According to Heidegger, 'being-with' others in the world necessitates a certain degree of avoidance, for no individual can ever interact with every other individual they encounter in everyday life: 'Avoiding' is thus 'a caring for and with one another in having nothing to do with one another' (*BT* 240). In effect, Heidegger describes, albeit in a very different register, the 'blasé attitude' that Georg Simmel has defined as the psychological condition of social life in the modern metropolis.[27]

Given the size and diversity of the modern city, however, such a blasé outlook is often hard to sustain. As Sennett suggests, 'problems of enactment' are 'likely to arise as

[23] Wendy Webster, 'The Empire Comes Home: Commonwealth Migration to Britain', in *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Andrew Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 122-60 (p. 123).
[24] Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 39.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., pp. 38, 39.
[27] Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903), in *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. by Donald N. Levine (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 324-39 (p. 329).

a matter of routine' in any public geography.[28] Strangers frequently misinterpret the social identities of those around them. As a result, the comfortable boundaries between self and other, known and unknown, familiar and unfamiliar become confused. In Freudian terms, this confusion is embodied in the uncanny figure of the double, for 'a person may identify himself with another and so become unsure of his true self; or he may substitute the other's self for his own. The self may thus be duplicated, divided and interchanged' ('U' 142). Social life in the modern metropolis is thus complicated by this process of uncanny doubling.

Freud's discussion of the uncanny also lends itself to considering the relationship between architectural space and memory; a crucial point given Sasha's obsession with remembering and forgetting in *Good Morning, Midnight*. Lewis Mumford's discussion of the city that 'lives by remembering' is useful here, as it draws attention to the competing temporalities at work in urban space: 'the city unites times past, times present, and times to come. Within the historic precincts of the city time clashes with time: time challenges time'.[29] In Sasha's case, much of the urban environment triggers memories of her repressed traumatic past, including a series of failed jobs, the death of her baby son, her disastrous marriage, and her consequent psychological breakdown and suicide attempt. Freud argues that when traumatic memories are repressed they are automatically 'converted into fear', meaning that when they rupture they become 'frightening' and 'uncanny' ('U' 147). For Sasha, then, the clashing temporalities of the city function as a deep source of anxiety.

Read in architectural terms, Freud's theorisation of the uncanny ultimately extends understandings of the concept beyond its origins in Gothic literature.[30] As Vidler suggests, the architectural uncanny captures the complexities of modern urban life and

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[28] Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, p. 39.
[29] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformation, and Its Prospects* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 118.
[30] Vidler, *Architectural Uncanny*, p. 3.

'allows for a rewriting' of 'categories such as imitation (the double), repetition, the symbolic, the sublime', so that '[q]uestions of gender and subject might be linked to the continuing discourse of estrangement and the Other, in the social and political context of racial, ethnic, and minority exclusion'.[31] This is an instructive point, for Rhys's representation of uncanny urban architecture is profoundly linked to Sasha's problematic colonial identity and, as Thacker has argued, the connections between metropolitan and colonial geographies in Rhys's fiction require further examination.[32]

Before moving on to an in-depth analysis of this expanded conception of the architectural uncanny in *Good Morning, Midnight*, I want to consider briefly the structural significance of 'The Uncanny' as a written text. As Nicholas Royle observes, 'the uncanny is a reading-effect', rather than simply being '*in*' texts 'as a theme'.[33] Considering the textual structure of Freud's essay is thus crucial to understanding the uncanny, for, as Sarah Kofman suggests, 'it is really the form of the narrative and not the theme in itself which plays the decisive role' in producing an uncanny effect.[34] Hélène Cixous began this line of thinking by suggesting that 'Freud's text may strike us to be less a discourse than a strange theoretical novel': 'The text proceeds as its own metaphor'.[35] Building on her argument, Samuel Weber reads this 'metaphor' as doubt itself, arguing that Freud's essay proceeds as 'a struggle against *doubt*', in which the destabilisation of space and self that occurs at the level of theme is recreated at the level of form.[36] Weber thus concludes that exploring the uncanny in a literary text involves scrutinising not only 'the mere contents

[31] Ibid., p. 12.
[32] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, p. 193.
[33] Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 44.
[34] Sara Kofman, *Freud and Fiction*, trans. by Sarah Wykes (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 137.
[35] Hélène Cixous, 'Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The "Uncanny")', trans. by Robert Dennomé, *New Literary History*, 7.3 (1976), 525-48, 619-45 (pp. 525, 526).
[36] Samuel Weber, 'The Sideshow, or: Remarks on a Canny Moment', *MLN*, 88.6 (1973), 1102-33 (p. 1107).

represented "in" or "by" texts' but also the "'formal," textual structure itself'.[37] As Susan Bernstein puts it, the uncanny 'demands *reading*'.[38]

Such formal complexities suggest why the uncanny is central to Rhys's literary negotiation of modern urban life. As Williams argues, there are important connections to be made between modernist innovation and the social developments of the modern city. While some writers responded to the new urban milieu by representing it as a 'liberating' source of 'vitality' and 'mobility', others mourned the loss of 'the ballast of familiar life' and translated this feeling into their work through the image of 'an individual lonely and isolated within the crowd'.[39] Nowhere is this latter image clearer, Williams suggests, than in the work of immigrant writers who were faced with the added pressure of negotiating their unfamiliar cultural and linguistic surroundings.[40] Significantly, Williams argues that the themes of 'strangeness and distance, indeed of alienation' function also 'at a deeper level' of narrative form and structure.[41] Using fiction as 'a medium that could be shaped and reshaped', immigrant writers were able to gain some sort of purchase in their new and turbulent surroundings.[42] By weaving the uncanny fragmentation of urban experience into the aesthetic texture of their work, they became some of the 'major innovators' of the modernist period.[43]

As a Dominican woman writing directly from the imperial city of London, Rhys was part of the immigrant community Williams describes. Indeed, Diana Athill points out that she was deeply aware of the malleable potential of the prose form:

> All her writing, she used to say, started out from something that had happened, and her first concern was to get it down as accurately as possible. But 'I like

[37] Ibid., p. 1115.
[38] Susan Bernstein, 'It Walks: The Ambulatory Uncanny', *MLN*, 118.5 (2003), 1111-39 (p. 1112).
[39] Williams, 'Metropolitan Perceptions', pp. 43, 40.
[40] Ibid., p. 45.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., p. 46.
[43] Ibid., p. 45.

shape very much' – and again, 'a novel has to have a shape, and life doesn't have any'.[44]

As both a thematic and structural concept inextricably bound to questions of home and architectural space, the uncanny offered Rhys an aesthetic mode with which she could respond to the unsettling conditions of urban modernity. Considering the complex and interwoven relationship between the uncanny as a dominating literary theme *and* a narrative form in *Good Morning, Midnight* thus helps to position Rhys as a major late modernist innovator and commentator on the modern urban condition of the single, colonial woman in the interwar period.

3. THE HOTEL

The hotel is a key space of modernity as it embodies the confusion of the private and public spheres that is so crucial to the development of the twentieth-century city. Not quite as intimate as the domestic home and never quite as exposed as the city street, the hotel is a liminal, in-between space that confuses secure notions of domestic identity and belonging. As Delia Caparoso Konzett suggests, 'as a modern site of transitory dwelling', the hotel 'becomes the paradigmatic location for the new century, in which migration and displacement will redefine the term "home" in a new variation of being at home in permanent homelessness'.[45] Yet despite being linked to the condition of modern urban homelessness, the hotel remains an underexplored space of urban modernity.[46]

The hotel lobby, as a localised space within the hotel, has received a degree of critical attention. In 'The Hotel Lobby' (1922-25), for instance, Siegfried Kracauer

[44] Athill, 'Jean Rhys and her Autobiography', unnumbered.
[45] Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms*, p. 3.
[46] For a good overview of the scant scholarly material on the hotel, see Emma Short, 'No Place Like Home: The Hotel in Modernist Women's Writing' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Newcastle University, 2011), p. 64. For another sophisticated account of the hotel in literature, see Joanna Pready, 'The Power of Place: Re-negotiating Identity in Hotel Fiction' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 2009).

describes the lobby as a space where people 'become detached from everyday life'.[47] For him, 'a sojourn in a hotel offers neither a perspective on nor an escape from the everyday', and as such the lobby becomes 'a mere gap'.[48] Overlooking the crucial blurring of spatial boundaries that the hotel engenders, Kracauer figures it as a space of absolute anonymity, rather than a potent site in which to explore the complications of domestic identity and belonging.

In contrast, Douglas Tallack draws attention to how the hotel lobby parallels the city street, arguing that in 'the heterogeneous crowd of the lobby – as in that of the city – the familiar and unfamiliar, the homely and unhomely mixture which Freud calls the uncanny is just about discernible'.[49] On the one hand, the lobby accords with Sennett's definition of the city as a place 'in which strangers are likely to meet', as it is a public space in which temporary hotel guests encounter one another.[50] Yet on the other, the lobby is considerably smaller and less exposed than the city streets, leading Tallack to define it as both 'semi-private and semi-public'.[51]

Tallack is less convincing, however, in his handling of the spaces beyond the hotel lobby, arguing that the lobby is 'a semi-public gateway to *private places*': to the '*private realm* of "upstairs"'; 'bedrooms, the site of exaggeratedly *private* acts'.[52] The hotel room certainly offers more privacy than the semi-public, semi-private lobby, but it should not be classed as an entirely private space. Not only is it less personal and intimate than the bedroom of the domestic home, it is entirely predicated on commodification. This is not to say that domestic space is not in itself commodifiable, but, as Mary Douglas suggests,

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[47] Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Hotel Lobby' (1922-25), in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 173-85 (p. 176).
[48] Ibid., pp. 177, 176.
[49] Douglas Tallack, '"Waiting, Waiting": The Hotel Lobby', *Irish Journal of American Studies*, 7 (1998), 1-20 (pp. 4-5).
[50] Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, p. 39.
[51] Tallack, '"Waiting, Waiting"', p. 9.
[52] Ibid., p. 6: emphases added.

the hotel stands apart from the home as a commodified extreme, 'where every comfort has to be paid for'.[53]

Although the hotel has been recognised as 'a paradigmatic space for modern homelessness' in Rhys's oeuvre, it tends not to be read as a specific example of uncanny architecture.[54] Reconsidering the hotel in *Good Morning, Midnight* in light of the architectural uncanny thus enables a new interpretation of Rhys's late modernist negotiation of urban experience in the interwar period. As Emma Short suggests, the hotel, as a liminal space, is 'uniquely positioned to provide insight into both spheres' – the private and the public – and thus opens up 'discussions of marginality, alienation and liberation by providing a necessary alternative to these spaces, which are so often presented as an unshifting binary'.[55] Read through the lens of the uncanny, which, we can recall, is as much 'a reading-effect' as a textual theme, the hotel thus facilitates a discussion of how Rhys also negotiates themes such as marginality and alienation at the level of narrative form.[56]

3.1 The Hotel Room

Immediately in *Good Morning, Midnight*, the hotel room is presented as an uncanny space:

> 'Quite like old times,' the room says. 'Yes? No?'
>
> There are two beds, a big one for madame and a smaller one on the opposite side for monsieur. The wash-basin is shut off by a curtain. It is a large room, the smell of cheap hotels faint, almost imperceptible. The street outside is narrow, cobble-stoned, going sharply uphill and ending in a flight of steps. What they call an impasse.

[53] Mary Douglas, 'The Idea of a Home', *Social Research*, 58.1 (1991), 287-307 (p. 300).
[54] Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms*, p. 164.
[55] Short, 'No Place Like Home', p. 65.
[56] Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 44

> I have been here five days. I have decided on a place to eat in at midday, a place to eat in at night, a place to have my drink in after dinner. I have arranged my little life. (*GMM* 9)

Kofman argues that 'to create an effect of uncanniness right from the beginning, this beginning must be striking, original and gripping'.[57] Rhys achieves this effect through her use of prosopopoeia; an instantly arresting narrative device that confuses the boundary between the animate and inanimate. As Freud suggests, the uncanny arises whenever there is 'doubt as to whether […] a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate' ('U' 135). Rhys thus invites this uncanny moment by making the hotel room speak in the opening line of the novel.

Heather Ingman observes, however, that 'nothing in [*Good Morning, Midnight*] is unambiguous'.[58] Indeed, it is initially unclear as to whether Rhys presents her reader with a room that really does speak – after all, it is marked as direct speech – or if this event is some sort of psychological projection. Once the reader gets to the third paragraph, the first-person narrative voice reveals that the novel overall conforms to a mode of psychological realism. This narrating-persona belongs to Sasha, who inhabits a naturalistic, albeit highly interiorised, world. Weber stresses the importance of 'the role of the narrator' in linking the uncanny to fiction, arguing that it 'provides the context for that movement of repetition and splitting which is constitutive for the uncanny'.[59] In retrospect, then, the opening line of the novel becomes an uncanny moment of paranoid fantasy and psychological projection. In contrast to Bowen, who ascribes agency to her anthropomorphic interiors, Rhys uses prosopopoeia to amplify her protagonist's psychological fears. Sasha is acutely aware of her deracinated condition and so upon

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[57] Kofman, *Freud and Fiction*, p. 137.
[58] Heather Ingman, 'Jean Rhys: The Empty Mirror', in *Women's Fiction Between the Wars: Mothers, Daughters and Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 107-24 (p. 118).
[59] Weber, 'The Sideshow', p. 1123.

entering the transient space of the hotel room, she projects her personal insecurities onto the space so that it uncannily vocalises her own thoughts.

In 'The Hotel Room' (1969), a rare essay on the topic, D. J. van Lennep describes the crisis of belonging commonly provoked by the transient nature of the space: 'My hotel room is my room […], but at the same time how little is this room *my* room'.[60] He argues that the particular qualities of the hotel experience (bell boys, luggage delivery, homogenous furniture) function as reminders that 'only a few hours before *my* room was someone else's room'.[61] The hotel room therefore confuses secure notions of possession and intimacy; it is simply a space '*for anybody* who can pay for a night's rest, and thus it is for noone'.[62] Sasha's initial response to the stark impersonality of her room is therefore unusual. Although the prosopopoeia evidences her internalised fears, the standardised materiality of the room does not outwardly appear to be a source of anxiety. In appropriating the generalising French nouns, 'madame' and 'monsieur', she provides a seemingly resigned view of a starkly gendered space: madame's bed is bigger than monsieur's, to ensure that he may 'visit' her whenever he pleases.

Rhys's attention to smell in the novel's opening is particularly significant, because it amplifies the affective uncanniness of the space.[63] As J. Douglas Porteous explains, smell is 'a very basic, emotional, arousing sense, unlike vision or sound, which tend to involve cognition'.[64] Van Lennep argues that the smell of a hotel room has a powerful, transformative power, which 'can give us the feeling of familiarity or of alienation'.[65] More often than not, it is a case of the latter, for the comforting and homely smell associated with familiar domestic spaces is absent: 'The room has been made up, the

[60] D. J. van Lennep, 'The Hotel Room' (1969), in *Phenomenological Psychology: The Dutch School*, ed. by Joseph J. Kockelmans (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), pp. 209-15 (p. 212).
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Interestingly, in an anecdote about a married couple who move into a new furnished flat, Freud connects 'an unbearable and highly characteristic smell' ('U' 151) to the uncanny events that occur.
[64] J. Douglas Porteous, 'Smellscape', *Progress in Human Geography*, 9 (1985), 356-78 (p. 357).
[65] Van Lennep, 'The Hotel Room', p. 210.

traces carefully removed'; 'there is no "smell"'.[66] In the cheap and shabby hotel rooms of Rhys's fiction, however, it is the smell of impersonal neglect that produces this feeling of alienation. In *Voyage in the Dark*, for instance, the young protagonist Anna is deeply unsettled by the 'cold, close smell' of her boarding-house room: 'It was like being in a small, dark box'.[67] As a relatively new incomer to London, Anna is vulnerable to the uncanny affective power of the smell, translating it into feelings of enclosure and entrapment. In contrast, the smell of Sasha's hotel room in *Good Morning, Midnight* is not a source of anxiety. As Porteous notes, the 'perceived intensity of a smell declines rapidly after one has been exposed to it for some time' and so although Sasha is still able to notice the unhomely smell of her room, the fact that it is 'faint, almost imperceptible' reveals that these 'cheap hotels' are her regular haunt (*GMM* 9).[68] Older and more experienced than Anna, Sasha has become habituated to the unhomely smell of the hotel room and is therefore less vulnerable to its uncanny potential.

Nevertheless, Sasha's apparent resignation towards the impersonality of the room is as much a product of her damaged psychological state as it is of her habituated condition of homelessness. She later admits that she has been '[s]aved, rescued, fished-up, half-drowned, out of the deep, dark river, dry clothes, hair shampooed and set' and that she is 'a bit of an automaton, but sane, surely – dry, cold and sane' (*GMM* 10). Such protestation indicates Sasha's strained attempts to ignore her recent psychological breakdown, although she does admit that it has left her a hollow shell of her former self. Maren Tova Linett suggests that Rhys's automaton imagery embodies the 'eerie feeling Freud describes trauma victims experiencing'.[69] Indeed, in 'The Uncanny', Freud argues that 'manifestations of insanity' can become uncanny when they 'arouse in the onlooker

[66] Ibid., p. 212.
[67] Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* (London: Penguin, [1934] 2000), p. 22.
[68] Porteous, 'Smellscape', p. 358.
[69] Maren Tova Linett, *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 151.

vague notions of automatic – mechanical – processes that may lie hidden behind the familiar image of a living person' ('U' 135). Whereas Sasha attempts to believe that her automaton-like tendencies are evidence of sane control, they in fact expose her damaged psychological state. Although she is susceptible to moments of shock and fear, she frequently feels numbed to her surrounding environment.

Furthermore, Linett proposes a connection between Rhys's use of the automaton and the pervasive theme of automatism that Miller identifies in late modernism.[70] According to Miller, everyone 'has a bit of the automaton about him or her' in the late modernist novel, because writers in the period were responding to technological advancements and increasing mass markets of commodification and consumption, both of which made the 'distinction between the vital and the mechanical […] less sharp in the interwar years'.[71] In *Good Morning, Midnight*, Rhys ties the automaton directly to these conditions of late modernity through Sasha's identification with 'a shop-window full of artificial limbs' in London and the 'beautifully dressed' mannequin dolls in a clothes shop she used to work in in Paris (*GMM* 11, 16). As Tim Armstrong observes, the prosthetic limbs in London are 'the product of the war' and help reveal how 'Sasha constantly experiences her body as a failure'.[72] Similarly, Sasha is acutely aware of her failure to live up to the Parisian commodity spectacle and thus obsesses over the differences between her physical appearance and those of the shop mannequins.

Carey James Mickalites notes how Rhys draws attention to the manufacturing technologies that revolutionised consumer advertising and exacerbated the uncanniness of the commodified body through describing Sasha's past employment in the fashion

[70] Ibid.
[71] Miller, *Late Modernism*, p. 24.
[72] Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 101.

sector.[73] Prior to working in the clothes shop with its inanimate 'dolls', she was a live 'mannequin' at the Maison Chose (*GMM* 16, 18). Sasha's shifted role in the consumer market reflects the radical modernisation of mannequin design and manufacture during the interwar period. Reducing the weight of each unit from 200 to 40 pounds, manufacturing technologies meant that mannequins were light and cheap enough to replace the live models widely employed prior to the First World War.[74] By the 1920s, then, manufactured mannequins had become a prime advertising tool. Testifying, as Bonnie Roos suggests, 'to the artistic, life-giving genius of the new commercially inspired artist, the window dresser', the modern mannequin helped construct a new and important space within the urban spectacle: that of the shop window display.[75]

Moreover, in representing both a 'vivification of the inanimate object' and 'a dehumanization of the human figure', the modern mannequin established the shop window as a deeply uncanny space.[76] As mannequins became more lifelike and women became increasingly uniform in their shared aspirations toward the perfect feminine ideal, the shop window set in motion what Rachel Bowlby suggests is an 'endless reflexive interplay of consumer and consumed', which 'both extends and reinforces the classical picture of the young girl gazing into the mirror in love with herself'.[77] Rhys complicates this 'classic picture' of female beauty through Sasha's ambivalent response to the 'charming and malicious oval faces' of the shop mannequins: 'I would feel as if I were drugged, sitting there, watching those damned dolls, thinking what a success they would have made of their lives if they had been women. Satin skin, silk hair, velvet eyes, sawdust heart – all complete' (*GMM* 16). Sasha buys into, and desires, their aesthetic

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[73] Carey James Mickalites, *Modernism and Market Fantasy: British Fictions of Capital, 1910-1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 177.
[74] Bonnie Roos, 'Oskar Kokoschka's Sex Toy: The Woman and the Doll Who Conceived the Artist', *Modernism/Modernity*, 12.2 (2005), 291-309 (pp. 293-94).
[75] Ibid., p. 294.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 17, 19.

perfection, but also condemns the loss of personality, affect, and autonomy this reproduced perfection would entail.

There is a significant parallel here between Sasha's response to the shop mannequins and a similar scene that occurs in Lewis's behaviourist satire, *Snooty Baronet* (1932). For Miller, Lewis is a prime late modernist. In this novel in particular, Lewis addresses the uncanniness of the automaton through his protagonist's encounter with a puppet in the window of a hat shop on the Strand in London. Staring at this 'automaton', with its 'intestines of sawdust' that recall the 'sawdust heart' (*GMM* 16) of Rhys's mannequins, Sir Michael Kell-Imrie, or Snooty as he is better known, thinks that it is impossible 'not to feel that [the puppet] was in some real sense *alive*'.[78] Possessing a fake limb himself, Snooty feels that he has switched places with the puppet, as his wooden leg attracts the attention of another spectator standing at the window: 'He was looking at *me*, instead of at the puppet'.[79] This uncanny interchange between automaton and protagonist illuminates Sasha's automaton identity in Rhys's novel. Although not physically disabled like Snooty, her aging, shabby appearance and her psychological instability are incapacitating forms of uncanny automatism.

Suffering from a loss of personality and affect, Sasha is an impoverished form of the shop mannequin. Returning to the opening passage of the novel, it is easier to spot her automaton persona in the controlled and economised sentences used to orient the hotel room. Elizabeth Abel argues that the first-person pronoun that introduces Sasha's narrating voice in the third paragraph of the novel's opening 'jars against the impression of a cold objective world' given in the previous orientating sentences.[80] To her, the novel operates in two otherwise distinct stylistic modes: a 'paratactic' style composed of 'short declarative sentences' that represents 'the fixity of physical reality'; and stylistic 'wordplay'

[78] Wyndham Lewis, *Snooty Baronet* (London: Cassell, 1932), pp. 161, 156.
[79] Ibid., p. 158.
[80] Elizabeth Abel, 'Women and Schizophrenia: The Fiction of Jean Rhys', *Contemporary Literature*, 20.2 (1979), 155-77 (p. 164).

that represents Sasha's subjective experiences of this reality.[81] Unlike Abel, I would argue that Rhys deliberately confuses these two stylistic modes in the opening of the novel to indicate Sasha's automaton-like tendencies. The material overview of the space is cold and objective precisely because it is Sasha who is narrating: as a damaged human being, her narrating voice is unsettlingly detached and indifferent to the uncanniness of her surrounding physical environment.

3.2 The Impasse

That Sasha links her perceptions of the hotel room interior to the architectural figuration of the 'impasse' (*GMM* 9) outside the window is important, because this feature of Parisian street architecture indicates the claustrophobic space of her cheap hotel room, and symbolises the heavily circumscribed nature of her life.[82] Denied the comfort and security of a domestic home, Sasha's life is rendered through a continual state of negation; as she puts it, 'I have no pride – no pride, no name, no face, no country. I don't belong anywhere. Too sad, too sad' (*GMM* 38). The architectural structure of the impasse – 'narrow, cobble-stoned, going sharply uphill and ending in a flight of steps' (*GMM* 9) – thus figuratively embodies Sasha's social and economic position within society, as the street leads to an enclosed and restricted space that is neither fully 'interior' nor 'exterior'; it either forces a dead-end retreat or else an uphill struggle by foot.

Likewise, Sasha has nowhere to belong and nowhere to go; she is simply doomed to wander in a perpetual loop from hotel room to street and street back to hotel room. Contemplating this continual repetition and unavoidable return, Sasha is acutely aware of the downtrodden nature of her daily routine:

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[81] Ibid.

[82] For an excellent discussion of the impasse in Rhys's work, see Rachel Bowlby, *Still Crazy After All These Years: Women, Writing, and Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), Chapter 2, 'The impasse: Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*', pp. 34-58; Chris GoGwilt, 'The Interior: Benjaminian Arcades, Conradian Passages, and the "Impasse" of Jean Rhys', in *Geographies of Modernism*, ed. by Brooker and Thacker, pp. 65-75.

> Eat. Drink. Walk. March. Back to the hotel. To the Hotel of Arrival, the Hotel of Departure, the Hotel of the Future, the Hotel of Martinique and the Universe. … Back to the hotel without a name in the street without a name. You press the button and the door opens. This is the Hotel Without-a-Name in the Street Without-a-Name, and the clients have no names, no faces. You go up the stairs. Always the same stairs, always the same room. (*GMM* 120)

The sharp staccato verbs that open this passage mimic the rigid structure of Sasha's life. Despite being a homeless wanderer, Sasha's path through the city is sharply defined by her attempt to forget; to 'have a programme, not to leave anything to chance – no gaps. No trailing around aimlessly […], no "Here this happened, here that happened"' (*GMM* 14). The short decisive sentences that describe Sasha's deliberate movements from street to room contrast with the longer, less structured sentences which communicate the blurred anonymity of the hotel itself. The hotels all lack personal or specific names and thus become indistinct and interchangeable. As the noun phrases spiral into repeated negation, the hotel becomes characterised only by its impersonal and repetitive uniformity, where people simply take on nameless, faceless identities.

Crucially, Sasha strongly desires and actively seeks the anonymity the hotel offers. Recalling her lodgings back in London, she embraces the death-like imagery of the room: 'Two-pound-ten every Tuesday and a room off the Gray's Inn Road. Saved, rescued and with my place to hide in – what more did I want? I crept in and hid. The lid of the coffin shut down with a bang' (*GMM* 37). As is so characteristic of Sasha, she here conflates contradictory metaphors of rescue and retreat with death and entombment. Although she desires the safety and enclosure of the private room, it is nevertheless figured as a dangerously annihilating space. Having now returned to Paris to seek respite from these competing tensions Sasha stakes the hotel room as a space in which to forget.

According to Kracauer, the hotel lobby is 'a negative church' where 'people appear […] as *guests*'.[83] Instead of creating a community, it 'accommodates all who go there to meet no one' and in doing so, 'has no function other than to encompass them'.[84] Kracauer's argument is certainly convincing in its alignment with Sasha's description of entering the hotel. Just as she observes that 'the clients have no names, no faces' (*GMM* 120), he argues that the inhabitants of the hotel lobby 'disappear behind the peripheral equality of social masks', thus morphing into 'mannequins' and 'ungraspable flat ghosts'.[85] This latter allusion to the ghostly figure recalls Sasha's description of the 'commis voyageur' (*GMM* 28) who occupies the hotel room next to hers; 'thin as a skeleton' and 'always wearing a dressing-gown', he is continually '[h]anging around', 'like the ghost of the landing' (*GMM* 13). At this point, however, applying Kracauer's theory of the hotel to Rhys's fiction becomes problematic, for her representation of the space complicates and challenges his otherwise persuasive account.

Kracauer argues that the hotel lobby is a voided space in which social relations 'drip down into the vacuum'.[86] Yet, in Rhys's fiction, the hotel is not a space of relation-less equality. As Short points out, the hotel room is a permeable space, open to 'intrusions', including 'the unavoidable (and occasionally intrusive) presence of other guests in adjoining rooms'.[87] Indeed, despite resembling one of Kracauer's ghosts, the commis repeatedly intrudes upon Sasha's privacy and ultimately becomes an uncanny symbol of patriarchal power: 'And there I am in this dim room with the bed for madame and the bed for monsieur and the narrow street outside (what they call an impasse), thinking of that white dressing-gown, like a priest's robes. Frightened as hell. A nightmare feeling. …' (*GMM* 31). Physical boundaries do not equate to psychological

[83] Kracauer, 'The Hotel Lobby', p. 175.
[84] Ibid., pp. 175, 175-76.
[85] Ibid., pp. 181, 183.
[86] Ibid., p. 176.
[87] Short, 'No Place Like Home', p. 66.

boundaries here, for Sasha cannot dissociate her fear of the commis from the constricting interior of her supposedly private room. She consequently experiences a form of uncanny doubling, which Rhys signals at the level of form by introducing a distal deictic marker into the narrative ('there'), which distances Sasha's physical and emotional body from her narrating consciousness. In effect, she is 'divided' ('U' 142) in two; one half a narrating observer, the other half narrated and observed.

Sasha's uncanny double is likewise triggered by the structural figuration of the cheap hotel. Located in a shabby Parisian backstreet, the hotel stands in disconcerting proximity to the building directly opposite it. Looking out of her window, Sasha sees a 'girl […] making-up at an open window immediately opposite. The street is so narrow that we are face to face' (*GMM* 30). Freud argues that uncanny doubling is 'intensified by the spontaneous transmission of mental processes from one of these persons to the other – what we would call telepathy – so that the one becomes co-owner of the other's knowledge, emotions and experience' ('U' 141-2). This telepathic interchange is evident in Sasha's abrupt realisation that she should stop staring at the girl, otherwise 'she will retaliate by staring at me when I do the same thing' (*GMM* 30). Through this process of uncanny doubling, Rhys challenges Kracauer's conception of the hotel as a space devoid of social relations. As an uncanny space, the hotel room exacerbates Sasha's vulnerability by preventing her from forgetting about her subordinated social and sexual position within the city.

3.3 The Palimpsest

Discussing the hotel lobby as a voided space, Kracauer strikingly anticipates anthropologist Marc Augé's more recent theory of 'non-place', which focuses on the 'transit points' and 'temporary abodes' of the modern city that 'are there to be passed

through'.[88] Along with a number of spaces associated with the 'air, rail and motorway routes' of the modern city, 'hotel chains' feature as a prime example of the non-place.[89] Although Augé's theory is based on a contemporary moment far later than Rhys's interwar society (that of late capitalism and what he terms 'supermodernity') his theory is nevertheless useful for thinking about how Sasha navigates the hotel, because it pays particular attention to the types of formal identification that unsettle Sasha's attempts at acquiring an anonymous identity in the novel.[90]

According to Augé, the user of the non-place is 'in contractual relations with it' and 'accedes to his anonymity only when he has given proof of his identity' by countersigning 'the contract'.[91] In terms of the hotel, this 'contract' comes in the form of the check-in desk and its associated formalities; a structural element of the lobby that was first developed in the early decades of the twentieth century as a means of policing 'interior pedestrian traffic' and checking for 'unregistered aliens'.[92] In Rhys's novel, Sasha's navigation of the hotel lobby is complicated by her encounter with the patron's 'bureau' (*GMM* 31), where she must confirm her identity by completing the check-in form:

> When I get downstairs the patron tells me that he wants to see my passport. I haven't put the number of the passport on the fiche, he says […].
>
> What's wrong with the fiche? I've filled it up all right, haven't I? Name So-and-so, nationality So-and-so. … Nationality – that's what has puzzled him. I ought to have put nationality by marriage. (*GMM* 13)

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[88] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London: Verso, 2008), p. 78.
[89] Ibid., p. 79.
[90] Ibid., p. 30.
[91] Ibid. pp. 101, 102.
[92] Marc Katz, 'The Hotel Kracauer', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 11.2 (1999), 134-52 (p. 140).

Sasha's ambiguous nationality is complicated by her marriage to and separation from her Dutch husband, Enno. Although she has kept his surname, she does not officially share his nationality. Her forename is equally ambiguous; she tells us that over ten years ago she changed her birth name, 'Sophia', to 'Sasha' in the hope that 'it might change [her] luck' (*GMM* 37, 11). As Jess Issacharoff notes, this latter name originates from Russia as 'a pet form of Alexander', which was 'particularly popular at the time among Jewish men'.[93] This forename therefore obscures Sasha's identity even more in both national and gendered terms.

Such contradictions in Sasha's identity are further compounded by the 'incongruity' (*GMM* 14) of her physical appearance, which complicates both her national and class identity. While her hat 'shouts "Anglaise"', her 'old fur coat' gets her mistaken for a member of the English bourgeoisie (*GMM* 14, 63). Sasha's ambiguous nationality and class identity is heavily ironised at this point in the novel, as René the gigolo (himself culturally ambiguous) assumes that she can help him obtain a fake passport: 'And you think I can help you to get a passport?', Sasha responds: 'I? Me? But who do you think I am?' (*GMM* 64).[94] Sasha is just as culturally ambiguous and economically unstable as René and for this reason she is unable to confirm her identity to the hotel patron.

Consequently, Sasha avoids signing the hotel 'fiche' by ignoring the patron's continued attempts to pin her down: '"Attends, attends, ma fille. Tu vas voir si je n'ose pas." […] His voice pursues me out into the street. "Attends, ma fille, attends. …"' (*GMM* 31). Flouting the contractual relations of the non-place might be seen as a defiant attempt to resist the political system of identification, but in reality it is Sasha's weak

[93] Jess Issacharoff, '"No Pride, No Name, No Face, No Country": Jewishness and National Identity in *Good Morning, Midnight*', in *Rhys Matters*, ed. by Wilson and Johnson, pp. 111-29 (p. 124).
[94] Although my focus is on Rhys's representation of female urban experience, it is important to note that the male characters in the novel – René (supposedly French Canadian), Serge Rubin (a Russian Jew), and Nicolas Delmar (Ukrainian, although mistaken for a Russian) – are just as culturally, nationally, and ethnically ambiguous and socially marginal as Sasha. As Kate Holden remarks, 'Rhys makes clear that the role of aggressor is not confined to men, nor the victim position reserved exclusively for women'. Kate Holden, 'Formations of Discipline and Manliness: Culture, Politics and 1930s Women's Writing', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 8.2 (1999), 141-57 (p. 150).

strategy of deferral; a desperate, but futile, attempt to forget about her marginalised urban identity. Through negotiating the official architectural organisation of the hotel lobby, Rhys emphasises that Sasha cannot achieve a state of recognised, legitimate citizenship. She is thus unable to accede to a state of anonymity. The temporary hotel identity that Sasha needs and desperately wants in order to supress both the awareness of her present deracinated condition, and the painful memories of her past, is consequently denied.

Accordingly, Rhys complicates the spatial politics of the hotel through her representation of memory. Augé argues that there 'is no room […] for history' in non-places, meaning that anonymity can 'be felt as liberation'.[95] Van Lennep concurs in his discussion of the hotel room, arguing that it is a space that is 'free from all historic meaning', a space where the individual relinquishes 'obligations and traditions'.[96] Theorised in these terms, the hotel room is a key site for forgetting, because its non-place status renders the guest an arbitrary figure who lives merely in the present. Again, however, Rhys challenges this conception of the hotel, for in *Good Morning, Midnight* Sasha's room becomes a space of burgeoning traumatic memories. In a series of narrative flashbacks, Rhys reveals that Sasha's married, supposedly domestic life consisted of endless journeys through a series of hotels in London, Amsterdam, Brussels, and Paris (*GMM* 95-121). Having spent her entire adult life moving in and out of these establishments, then, Sasha's intentions to forget the past by retreating to yet another hotel room are utterly flawed.

Indeed, as the novel progresses, Sasha's memories of traumatic events increasingly become the driving force of the narrative. Whereas she consciously recalls some of these memories, others irrupt unconsciously, manifesting themselves structurally as instances of narrative flashback. It is useful to think of these two forms of

[95] Augé, *Non-Places*, pp. 103, 101.
[96] Van Lennep, 'The Hotel Room', p. 213.

remembering in terms of voluntary and involuntary memory; two concepts that are powerfully evoked by Proust in *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-27). Proust equates voluntary memory with conscious recollection – it consists of 'facts' that preserve nothing of the past itself'.[97] In contrast, involuntary memory is linked to the unconscious rupturing of the past within the present, an occurrence that serves to 'immobilise' a 'fragment of time in the pure state'.[98] According to Proust, this latter form of remembering is a deeply pleasurable experience that results in 'immediate enjoyment' and 'happiness'.[99] Rhys problematises this claim, however, for involuntary memories are an intensely painful experience for Sasha, always being linked to the traumatic events of her past, such as her baby son's death. Even when she relives a comparatively stable period of her life, working as a 'receptionist' in the Parisian clothes shop, Sasha's involuntary memory concludes with her losing her job and being turned back out onto the street (*GMM* 18, 17-26).

According to Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), 'a compulsion to repeat' past trauma is a predisposition in all human beings.[100] This repetition in itself is not problematic but becomes so when 'the repressed material' (a traumatic memory) is repeated 'as a contemporary experience', instead of being remembered 'as something belonging to the past'.[101] This form of traumatic remembering is a deeply negative form of involuntary memory, which involves the uncanniness triggered by 'unintentional return' ('U' 144). This formulation of memory is a crucial one, for it helps to distinguish between Rhys's depiction of Sasha's voluntary acts of recollection and the more uncanny experience of involuntary memory and narrative flashback.

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[97] Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. by C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin, and Andreas Mayor, 3 vols (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981), I, 47
[98] Ibid., III, p. 905.
[99] Ibid., pp. 904-05.
[100] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), p. 25.
[101] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Despite Sasha's insistent attempts to forget, she cannot entirely resist recalling events from her past. Significantly, these voluntary memories are always narrated in the past tense:

> I can't sleep. Rolling from side to side. …
>
> Was it in 1923 or 1924 that we lived round the corner, in the Rue Victor-Cousin, and Enno bought me that Cossack cap and the imitation astrakhan coat […]?
>
> Was it in 1926 or 1927?
>
> I put the light on. The bottle of Evian on the bedtable, the tube of luminal, the two books, the clock ticking on the ledge, the red curtains. (*GMM* 11)

Drugged by luminal and alcohol, Sasha struggles for clarity of thought. Her uncertainty is apparent in the question-form her thoughts take along with the incongruity of the dates she remembers. She is successful, however, in separating these memories from her present reality. Not only does she narrate her memories in the past tense, but her uncertain questioning of the past contrasts sharply with her precise documentation of the material objects she perceives on her bedside table when she stops remembering. This 'aloofness', as Freud calls it, enables Sasha to 'recognize that what appears to be reality is in fact only a reflection of a forgotten past'.[102]

As the novel continues, Sasha finds it harder to sustain this 'aloofness' and begins to relive traumatic moments from her past through involuntary memories, which Rhys marks formally as narrative flashbacks. During these moments of narrative analepsis, Rhys narrates the past in the present tense, displacing both Sasha and the reader to a point in time and space prior to that of the primary diegesis of the novel. Anne B.

[102] Ibid., p. 19.

Simpson suggests that through this 'technical choice' to 'presen[t] a narrating protagonist who moves with apparent indiscrimination between past and present tenses', Rhys intends to 'provide the reader with the experience of blurred time; with a negation of time-as-process'.[103] Indeed, a number of Rhys's letters reveal that she was self-consciously developing a sense of blurred urban time in her interwar writing. In a letter to Evelyn Scott in 1935, she describes the 'big idea' of *Voyage in the Dark* as 'time being an illusion': 'I mean that the past exists – side by side with the present, not behind it'.[104] Similarly, in 1956, she reflects on the temporality of *Good Morning, Midnight* in a letter to Selma Vaz Dias, explaining that 'I wanted Sasha to enter the No time region there. "Everything is on the same plane"'.[105]

Significantly, then, Rhys's formal representation of blurred urban temporality in *Good Morning, Midnight* structurally reproduces, at the level of readerly affect, the uncanny slippage from voluntary to involuntary memory that Sasha experiences. In the following example, Sasha has just returned to her hotel room and begins to indulge in a voluntary memory:

> I get up into the room. I bolt the door. I lie down on the bed with my face in the pillow. Now I can rest before I go out again. What do I care about anything when I can lie back on the bed and pull the past over me like a blanket? Back, back, back. …
>
> … I had just come up the stairs and I had to go down them again.

[103] Anne B. Simpson, *Territories of the Psyche: The Fiction of Jean Rhys* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 94.
[104] Jean Rhys, Letter to Evelyn Scott, 18 February 1934, in *Jean Rhys Letters, 1931-1966*, ed. by Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly (London: André Deutsch, 1984), pp. 23-24 (p. 24).
[105] Jean Rhys, Letter to Selma Vaz Dias, 4 November 1956, in *Jean Rhys Letters*, ed. by Wyndham and Melly, pp. 138-39 (p. 138).

> 'No, no, your room's not ready. You must come back, come back. Come back between five and six.' 'What time is it now?' 'It's half-past ten.'
>
> […] I stop a taxi. The man looks at me and hesitates. Perhaps he is afraid I may have my baby in his nice new taxi. What a thing to happen! (*GMM* 48-9)

The use of ellipses and the line break here are typical of Rhys's fragmented typography that works to create, at a formal level, a sense of spatio-temporal disjunction and disorientation. For a moment, the reader is left suspended in a liminal space (both textual and cognitive), unsure of the co-ordinates of the present moment. The opening sentence of the following section is narrated in the past perfect tense, indicating that Sasha is still voluntarily recalling this event; a misleading stylistic feature, given that the preceding line break suggests the beginning of a flashback. The flashback actually begins, however, in the next sentence, when the direct speech and subsequent switch to a present-tense narrative voice signals a spatio-temporal jump.

As the memory continues, Rhys reveals that Sasha is reliving the traumatic events of childbirth – we later find out that she loses the baby. At the level of character, then, Sasha's memory becomes uncanny through involuntarily reliving this traumatic event. At the level of narrative form, Rhys stylistically represents this rupture of memory through disorientating tense switches that are never quite aligned with the fragmented typography, thereby creating an uncanny slippage into narrative flashback. As Simpson suggests, any reader 'who is unwilling or unable to tolerate this psychosis – who is intent on transforming the material into a linear sequence of coherent elements – will be unable to move through the labyrinths of this text'.[106] The more tolerant reader will persevere with the uncanny structure of the novel, in turn experiencing the disorientating effects, and affects, of traumatic memory.

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[106] Simpson, *Territories of the Psyche*, p. 89.

Andreas Huyssen's theory of the palimpsest further elucidates Rhys's representation of urban space and temporality. According to Huyssen, the palimpsest is 'an urban imaginary' that 'in its temporal reach may well put different things in one place: memories of what there was before, imagined alternatives to what there is'.[107] The formation of the urban palimpsest is both a physical and mental process in which 'strong marks of present space merge in the imaginary with traces of the past, erasures, losses, and heterotopias'.[108] Not only is this merging triggered by the 'visible markers of built space' – in Sasha's case the impersonal furniture of the hotel room and the impasse outside – it is also generated by 'images and memories repressed and ruptured by traumatic events' – as is clear in Rhys's disorientating representation of Sasha's compulsive remembering.[109] For Sasha, then, it is both the physical and psychological uncanniness of the hotel room that transforms it into an urban imaginary pregnant with her spatial and psychological past.

Simpson argues that the 'circular rather than linear patterning of time […] inscribed in the text […] resists any forward movement for Sasha', meaning that she 'is kept safe from a progression toward understanding'.[110] Although Sasha's movement in the novel is sharply curtailed, it is hard to agree that she is kept safe from comprehending her condition of urban homelessness. In a particularly revealing moment in the novel, Sasha is struck by the uncanny palimpsestic quality of her hotel room:

> This damned room – it's saturated with the past. … It's all the rooms I've ever slept in, all the streets I've ever walked in. Now the whole thing moves in an ordered, undulating procession past my eyes. Rooms, streets, streets, rooms. … (*GMM* 91)

[107] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 7.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid., p. 52.
[110] Simpson, *Territories of the Psyche*, p. 94.

The palimpsest is represented structurally in this passage through repeated syntax ('all the […] I've ever […] in), which effectively renders the room and the street interchangeable. The blurred boundaries of Sasha's spatial and temporal existence are finally concretised by the centripetal sentence structure of the passage, which ultimately compresses her life into a set of uncannily similar spaces, seen here in the mirroring of terms in the concluding list of nouns. Although the ellipsis fragments the passage to disrupt both temporal and narrative linearity, thus indicating the circular patterning of time Simpson observes, Sasha no longer entertains an idealistic notion of the hotel room as a welcoming retreat. She is bitterly frustrated by the 'saturated' nature of the space and such heightened awareness can hardly be interpreted as a position of unwitting safety as Simpson suggests.

Returning to Ricoeur's conception of the city as an urban 'text' (see Section 4 of my Introduction to this thesis), we see that history is 'more closely associated' with the city streets than it is with 'an isolated building'.[111] According to Ricoeur, the sheer scale of the city 'gives rise to more complex passions than does the house'.[112] Although he is right to stress this imbalance, the complex and profoundly symbolic nature of the hotel room in *Good Morning, Midnight* reveals how modern interior spaces, such as the hotel, nevertheless give rise to a significant amount of 'sedimented history' and 'complex passions'.[113] By foregrounding the hotel room as a space that is always connected to the outside world and is constantly shifting between the real and imaginary spaces of the past and the present, Rhys shows that the hotel can never assume the role of a static, anonymous container where social and historical responsibility is transcended. Sasha's socio-economic position, her fragile identity, and her entire history are thoroughly conditioned by, and relative to, the uncanny hotel room.

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[111] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 151.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.

4. THE STREET

Throughout Rhys's interwar fiction, the urban street is, like the hotel, a complex and contradictory space. At times, the streets of Paris and London are flat and meaningless in their anonymous repetition; the phrase 'all exactly alike' becomes something of a refrain as Rhys's protagonists reflect on their homogenous surroundings.[114] At other times, however, the streets are shown to be volatile spaces replete with haunting memories. Complicating this conflicting representation of the urban environment is the remarkable descriptive economy with which Rhys handles the city streets. According to Ford Madox Ford in 1927, the lack of 'descriptive matter' in Rhys's work makes it almost impossible, irritatingly for him, to recognise any 'sort of topography'.[115]

More recently, critics have challenged Ford's disparaging remarks, arguing that Rhys's engagement with urban topography is more sophisticated than he gives her credit for. Thacker contends, for instance, that Rhys's depiction of Paris and London is actually very precise, because she is 'always so particular about the names of streets, cafés, and restaurants'.[116] Indeed, when Sasha remembers getting lost while working as a tour guide in Paris the implicit irony of the scene hinges upon the street names themselves: 'Standing in the middle of the Place de l'Opéra, losing my head and not knowing the way to the Rue de la Paix. North, south, east, west – they have no meaning for me. …' (*GMM* 26). In actuality, the Place de l'Opéra and the Rue de la Paix are minutes away from one another on foot, meaning that Sasha's lapse in geographic knowledge is a symptom of her marginality within the city; she is no less a visitor than the tourists she is showing around. Rhys simply assumes that her reader is more familiar with Parisian geography than her protagonist.

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[114] Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark*, p. 152. See also Jean Rhys, *Quartet* (London: Penguin, [1928] 2000), p. 15; Jean Rhys, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (London: Penguin, [1931] 2000), p. 84.
[115] Ford Madox Ford, 'Preface to a Selection of Stories from *The Left Bank*', in Jean Rhys, *Tigers Are Better Looking: With a Selection from The Left Bank* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 137-39 (p. 139).
[116] Thacker, 'The Idea of a Critical Literary Geography', p. 69.

Indeed, David Armstrong has recently emphasised that Paris, as a 'culturally ubiquitous icon' of the twentieth century, is 'paramount in understanding [Rhys's] own artistic project'.[117] It was precisely because of the city's international fame at the time of her writing that Rhys was able to presume such geographic knowledge on the part of her reader. Today, then, Rhys's descriptive economy must be understood as 'a kind of shorthand', rather than a lack of engagement with urban topography.[118] This is a prime example of why readers would benefit from decent scholarly editions of Rhys's novels, for it is probable that today's reader does not share the same degree of topographic knowledge as Rhys's contemporaries. A simple gloss of the relational topography in the tour guide example above, for instance, would help to reveal the implicit irony of Sasha's geographical disorientation.[119] Closer examination of Rhys's topographical economy thus yields understanding of her formal engagement with the uncanny spatial politics of the interwar city.

4.1 The *Flâneuse*

Due to the amount of time Sasha spends walking through Paris, critics have likened her to the *flâneur*, the archetypal wandering figure described by Benjamin in his accounts of urban modernity (*AP* 416-55).[120] Sasha's experience of the palimpsest certainly aligns with Benjamin's conception of *flânerie*, during which 'far-off times and places interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment' (*AP* 419). Just as Sasha thinks of the city in terms of '[r]ooms, streets, streets, rooms' (*GMM* 91), so too does the *flâneur* perceive the city as being 'now a landscape, now a room' (*AP* 10). Any consideration of Sasha's *flâneuristic* tendencies, however, necessarily requires a discussion of gender

[117] David Armstrong, 'Reclaiming the Left Bank: Jean Rhys's "Topography" in *The Left Bank* and *Quartet*', in *Rhys Matters*, ed. by Wilson and Johnson, pp. 169-85 (pp. 174, 169).
[118] Ibid., p. 174.
[119] Scholarly editions would likewise improve understanding of the 'vast range of allusions, musical, visual, literary, factual' that make up the 'collage-like texture' of her work. Snaith, *Modernist Voyages*, p. 151.
[120] See, for example, Dell'Amico, *Colonialism and the Modernist Moment*, p. 16.

politics, for, as Massey observes, the *flâneur* has long been thought of as 'irretrievably male'.[121]

Feminist critics such as Janet Wolff and Griselda Pollock have rejected the notion of the female *flâneuse*, arguing that it is 'rendered impossible by the sexual divisions of the nineteenth century'.[122] More recently, critics have challenged this fixed viewpoint. Wilson, for instance, notes that women were 'emerging more and more into the public spaces of the city' at the turn of the century, meaning that binary distinctions between male/female and public/private space are no longer relevant for considering modern articulations of urban experience.[123] Contrary to Wolff's assertion that the 'literature of modernity describes the experience of men' only, Parsons similarly contends that women's twentieth-century fiction – and she here includes Rhys's work – offers prime evidence of the condition of female urban experience through the literary perspective of the '*flâneuse*'.[124]

A comparison with the intoxicating and liberating plunges into urban life seen in Woolf's work draws attention to the comparatively problematic *flâneuse* perspective in Rhys's fiction. For the narrator of Woolf's 'Street Haunting', 'the greatest pleasure of town life in winter' is 'rambling the streets of London'.[125] Such a statement recalls the similar pleasures of Baudelaire's *flâneur*, for whom 'it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite'.[126] Unlike Baudelaire's *flâneur*, however, who is a 'passionate

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[121] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, p. 234.
[122] Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2.3 (1985), 37-46 (p. 45). See also Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity', in *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 70-127.
[123] Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', p. 100.
[124] Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse', p. 37; Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, p. 7.
[125] Virginia Woolf, 'Street Haunting', p. 177.
[126] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), p. 9.

spectator', both aimless and detached in his wandering, Woolf's *flâneuse* journeys through London with the firm intention of purchasing herself 'a lead pencil'.[127]

Moreover, instead of being 'away from home' and yet feeling 'everywhere at home', Woolf's protagonist feels at home only when she returns to the familiarity of her 'own doorstep', at which point 'the self' is once more 'sheltered and enclosed'.[128] It is not simply 'a gender switch' that defines the *flâneuse* in Woolf's work, but, as Leslie Kathleen Hankins has suggested, 'a marked difference in role and historical time frame': 'freely occupying a street of one's own was impossible until one had a room of one's own'.[129] Woolf thus redefines the female urban wanderer as a 'striding feminist' who can comfortably occupy the urban streets, because she is safe in the knowledge of her return home.[130] This is a vital observation that pinpoints some key class and economic differences between Woolf's and Rhys's wandering protagonists. Unlike the narrator of 'Street Haunting', Sasha has no familiar domestic home to return to and lacks the financial independence of the comfortable middle-classes. She instead belongs to the 'declassé middle-classes', what Kraucauer terms the '*Angestellte*'.[131] This class of 'salaried employees' came into being at the turn of the century when women began to take up white collar occupations in the city.[132] As a class, the *Angestellte* occupied 'a tenuous middle position between the urban proletarian and the established middle classes'.[133]

Although unemployed in the primary diegesis of the novel, Sasha's *Angestellte* past is revealed through an uncanny memory sparked by her recognition of the Parisian streets. Emerging from a cinema on the Champs-Elysées, she suddenly remembers working as a receptionist in an upmarket clothes shop nearby:

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[127] Ibid.; Woolf, 'Street Haunting', p. 177.
[128] Baudelaire, *Painter of Modern Life*, p. 9; Woolf, 'Street Haunting', p. 187.
[129] Leslie Kathleen Hankins, 'Virginia Woolf and Walter Benjamin Selling Out(Siders)', in *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. by Pamela L. Caughie (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 3-35 (p. 19).
[130] Ibid., p. 20.
[131] Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms*, pp. 128, 154. See also Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, trans. by Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1998).
[132] Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms*, p. 154.
[133] Ibid.

> I walk along, remembering this, remembering that […].
>
> I used to work in a shop just off this street.
>
> I can see myself coming out of the Métro station at the Rond-Point every morning at half-past eight, walking along the Avenue Marigny, turning to the left and then to the right, putting my coat and hat into the cloak-room, going along a passage and starting in with: 'Good morning, madame. Has madame a vendeuse?' (*GMM* 15-6)

Sasha's self is here 'duplicated' ('U' 142) as she encounters her younger double who works in the commercial sector. For the reader, the narrative acquires an uncanny deictic duplicity as Sasha's past and present selves occupy the street simultaneously. On the one hand, the deictic centre of the narrative remains with Sasha's present self, who imagines her double walking to work. On the other, Rhys's use of asyndeton and present participles creates a sense of continuous action, inviting the reader to shift the deictic centre of the narrative onto Sasha's double. In this case, the reader follows the movements of Sasha's double along the Avenue Marigny and into the shop, despite the fact that Sasha, as narrator, is still walking along the Champs-Elysées.

Noting the class differences in Woolf and Rhys, Carr suggests that, in comparison to 'the modernist flâneuse' in Woolf, Sasha is a 'postmodernist migrant'.[134] Parsons takes issue with this distinction, arguing that Carr risks turning the migrant into 'a floating figure' no longer in contact with the physical topography of the urban street.[135] Parsons suggests instead that the migrant should be reconsidered as a 'subset of the *flâneur*; he is placeless but still has his feet on the ground, walking through particular cities'.[136] Parsons's emphasis on the grounded nature of *flânerie* is important, because it underscores how closely Rhys's representation of urban wandering is tied to the

[134] Carr, *Jean Rhys*, p. 56.
[135] Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, p. 136.
[136] Ibid.

materiality of the city. As the anthropologist Jo Lee Vergunst suggests, 'the actuality of walking' foregrounds 'the sheer presence of the body in the world', a world that is made up of innumerable 'textures'.[137] Vergunst suggests that a closer inspection of walking 'mishaps' illuminates the walker's relationship with the physical texture of the built environment.[138] Two of his examples, tripping and losing one's way, are particularly significant as they occur more than once in *Good Morning, Midnight*.

For Sasha, a 'trip' in the street is associated with a metaphorical 'fall into blackness', which confuses the relationship between past, present, and future: 'there is only this blackness, changing faintly, slowly, but always the same' (*GMM* 144). Whilst this instance of tripping is more psychological than physical, it reveals how a disruption in Sasha's walking rhythm jolts her into heightened recognition of her deracinated position within the city. As Vergunst suggests, this sort of mishap 'can engender fear in walkers'.[139] Although the fear he discusses is associated with physical injury, Rhys's novel reminds us of the equally powerful psychological effects borne out of such physical discomfort.

The complex texture of the city is further underscored through a flashback that occurs following Sasha's encounter with her double on the Champs-Elysées. In this flashback, Sasha's relives the events which lead to her dismissal from employment in the clothes shop. Significantly, the memory revolves around her losing her way in the labyrinthine underbelly of the commercial building. Vergunst argues that this type of walking mishap is profoundly linked to the walker's 'overall sense of self and personhood'.[140] Indeed, in Rhys's novel, Sasha's memory of losing her way reveals her anxieties about national identity and belonging. Suddenly plunged into the past, the

[137] Jo Lee Vergunst, 'Taking a Trip and Taking Care in Everyday Life', in *Ways of Walking*, ed. by Ingold and Vergunst, pp. 105-21 (p. 106).
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., p. 120.
[140] Ibid., p. 117.

narrative follows Sasha's double as she is asked to deliver a letter to the shop's cashier by her boss, an Englishman named Mr Blank. She is confounded by his mispronunciation of the French word 'la caisse' as 'the kise' (*GMM* 23, 22). Although we know that Sasha can speak English, French, and German to varying degrees of fluency, she here panics that 'kise' 'doesn't mean a thing to me' (*GMM* 22). Johnson argues that Sasha's 'fluid linguistic consciousness serves as a marker of her creolized identity, insofar as Creole languages, such as those spoken in the Caribbean, are composites of different languages'.[141] Indeed, in this instance, Sasha's failure to translate Mr Blank's mispronunciation into a recognisable word demonstrates her 'lack of a clear, monolithic national identity or language'.[142]

Sasha's crisis of linguistic meaning consequently translates itself into spatial form as she makes a futile attempt to locate the man whose name is written on the envelope. Struggling through the unfamiliar labyrinth of the shop building, Sasha loses her way in a manner reminiscent of Freud's foray into the Italian streets:

> I turn to the right, walk along another passage, down a flight of stairs. The workrooms […].
>
> I try another passage. It ends in a lavatory. The number of lavatories in this place, c'est inoui. … I turn the corner, find myself back in the original passage and collide with a strange young man. He gives me a nasty look […].
>
> After this it becomes a nightmare. I walk up stairs, past doors, along passages – all different, all exactly alike. (*GMM* 23)

Like Freud, whose journey becomes sinister as his continued return to the 'same street' begins to 'attract attention' ('U' 144), Sasha is unsettled by the 'nasty look' of the man she finds in the 'original passage' of her journey. As lavatories repeatedly forestall her

[141] Johnson, *Home, Maison, Casa*, p. 45.
[142] Ibid., p. 46.

progress (an important space I return to in Section 5 of this chapter), Sasha is struck by the uncanny repetition of her spatial existence. As Chris GoGwilt suggests, this description of the shop interior 'consolidates the image of the "impasse"'.[143] Indeed, Rhys's interwar refrain for the city streets resurfaces here, as Sasha perceives the architectural features of the uncanny interior to be 'all exactly alike' (*GMM* 23). Sasha's walking mishap consequently leads to a heightened awareness of 'the groundedness of ordinary walking'.[144] Momentarily unable to find or think her way out of the overwhelming uncanny architecture than surrounds her, she is struck by a profound feeling of corporeal and psychological incarceration.

Admitting defeat, she manages to return to Mr Blank's office and ask for permission to leave her job. Characteristically, Rhys does not explicitly mark the end of the flashback at this point, simply inserting a deictic marker that indicates a shift back to the primary diegesis of the novel, in which Sasha's self is once more duplicated: 'And *there* I am, out in the Avenue Marigny, with my month's pay' (*GMM* 26: emphasis added). This memory is crucial in establishing Sasha's vexed social, cultural, and economic position within the imperial city, as it demonstrates how her lack of a secure national identity has a profound impact on the way in which she experiences the complex textures of urban space. Moreover, by embedding this walking mishap within a moment of narrative analepsis, Rhys foregrounds the palimpsestic texture of the streets. For Sasha, Paris is, to recall Mumford, a city that 'lives by remembering'; a place where 'time clashes with time'.[145]

Through her protagonist, Rhys problematises the *flâneuse* figure by foregrounding the material, psychological, and sensual conditions of the homeless female urban wanderer. As Parsons suggests, Rhys's wanderers are not simply floating migrants, but

[143] GoGwilt, 'The Interior', p. 68.
[144] Vergunst, 'Taking a Trip', p. 119.
[145] Mumford, *City in History*, p. 118.

women who remain grounded in the urban environment, even when that groundedness is complicated by the uncanny mishaps that occur in the uneven textures of the palimpsestic city. In comparison to Woolf's confident, striding protagonist, Sasha can be thought of as what Johnson and Bowlby have respectively described as the 'failed' or 'negative' *flâneuse*.[146] Although Sasha's journey through Paris is not without purpose – recall her strict 'programme' (*GMM* 14) – she ultimately fails in her aim to avoid the places that are linked to her traumatic past.

Thus confined to the urban impasse, Sasha remains utterly vulnerable to the uncanny materiality of the streets that surround her. Whereas Woolf's protagonist is inspired by the commodified sprawl of Oxford Street to 'build up all the chambers of a vast imaginary house and furnish them at one's will with sofa, table, carpet', Sasha is struck by a profound sense of psychological fear and deracination:[147]

> Walking in the night with the dark houses over you, like monsters. If you have money and friends, houses are just houses with steps and a front-door – friendly houses where the door opens and somebody meets you, smiling. If you are quite secure and your roots are well struck in, they know. They stand back respectfully, waiting for the poor devil without any friends and without any money. Then they step forward, the waiting houses, to frown and crush. No hospitable doors, no lit windows, just frowning darkness. Frowning and leering and sneering, the houses, one after another. Tall cubes of darkness, with two lighted eyes at the top to sneer. And they know who to frown at. (*GMM* 28)

Using a conditional verb form ('If […], they know') to construct a hypothetical world of domestic security, Rhys describes the warm and comforting middle-class sphere in which Woolf's protagonist lives. In this world, there are clear boundaries between the animate

[146] Johnson, *Home, Maison, Casa*, p. 52; Bowlby, *Still Crazy*, p. 53.
[147] Woolf, 'Street Haunting', p. 181.

and the inanimate (the human 'somebody' versus the architectural 'houses'). In stark contrast, the world in which Sasha lives is intimidating and overbearing, where domestic houses are transformed into monstrous predators. During this moment of paranoid fantasy, the boundary between the animate and the inanimate collapses as Sasha is no longer an urban observer, but is herself observed. Rhys's selection of the second-person pronoun, 'you', is important here, as it triggers this moment of uncanny doubling. As Monika Fludernik observes, 'in passages of self-address', 'you' refers to the narrator, so that the narrating "'I" splits into two voices that interact dialogically'.[148] The second-person pronoun thus generates the 'divided' ('U' 142) self of Freud's uncanny double, demonstrating at the level of form how Sasha's narrating consciousness splits off, in sheer psychological turmoil, from her corporeal existence as a victimised body. Ultimately, Sasha lacks the stable social, cultural, and economic identity that makes *flânerie* a pleasurable experience in psychological, affective, and bodily terms.

4.2 The Shop Window

Rhys complicates Sasha's problematic *flâneuse* identity further by tying it to a critique of consumer culture. Rita Felski argues that 'the category of consumption situated femininity at the heart of the modern'.[149] The department store was a particularly crucial space of modernity, as it provided 'a new kind of urban public space which catered primarily to women' and, as Wilson notes, represented the 'high point of the nineteenth-century shopping revolution'.[150] In the department store, Wilson argues, *flânerie* was possible; it was a space that women could 'inhabit comfortably' and in which 'the pleasures of looking, socializing and simply strolling' could be enjoyed.[151] Felski draws attention, however, to the converse effects of consumer culture, noting that it was soon

[148] Monika Fludernik, 'Second-person Narrative as a Test Case for Narratology: The Limits of Realism', *Style*, 28.3 (1994), 445-79 (p. 450).
[149] Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 61.
[150] Ibid., p. 61; Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', p. 101.
[151] Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', p. 101.

viewed as 'largely synonymous with […] demonization'.[152] Not only a space of leisure, the department store was an environment shaped and determined by coercive and seductive ideologies, which threatened to transform women into 'buying machines'.[153]

In Rhys's novel, Sasha exemplifies these contradictions in consumer culture. As Cathleen Maslen notes, Sasha's 'avid consumer' tendencies are complicated by 'an ambivalent desire' to 'reject and embrace signifiers of affluence'.[154] Indeed, despite being aware of the seductive dangers of commodification (as is evident in her reaction to the shop mannequins, discussed above in Section 3.1 of this chapter) Sasha remains obsessed with clothes shopping, hairdressers, and her own mirror reflection. Collectively, these consumerist tendencies are an attempt to 'get on with the transformation act' (*GMM* 53) of turning herself into a respectable bourgeois woman. As a member of the *Angestellte* class, Sasha's behaviour is not unusual. According to Kracauer, the *Angestellte* is characterised in particular by 'its view of higher things. Not as substance but as glamour'.[155] Now unemployed, however, Sasha funds her 'transformation act' with money lent to her by a friend. As a result, Rhys often positions her at the shop window, looking in through the glass pane, rather than inside the shop itself.

According to Benjamin, glass window panes function as mirrors that 'belon[g] to the interweaving of spaces, to the spectacle by which the flâneur is ineluctably drawn' and nowhere is this spectacle more alluring than in Paris, 'the city of mirrors' (*AP* 537). Characteristically reductive in his handling of gender, Benjamin contends that the mirror amplifies female beauty; in Paris, women 'look at themselves more than elsewhere, and from this comes the distinctive beauty of the Parisienne' (*AP* 537). As a culturally ambiguous negative *flâneuse*, however, Sasha fails to experience the Parisian shop window

[152] Felski, *Gender of Modernity*, p. 62.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Maslen, *Ferocious Things*, pp. 124, 132.
[155] Kracauer, *Salaried Masses*, p. 88.

in the manner Benjamin describes. For her, it is anything but a space that amplifies her beauty or secures for her a sense of a coherent female, urban, or national self.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, Bowen, like Rhys, is a writer acutely aware of uncanny architecture and interestingly enough it is in one of her essays, 'Mirrors Are Magic' (1967), that the function of Rhys's shop windows is explicated: 'Mirrors can be uncanny', Bowen explains, particularly when 'self-encounters have been unsought, a matter of chance or accident […] in some unexpected mirror around a corner, in some shop window distant across the street'.[156] Indeed, one of Sasha's most telling encounters with the shop window is when she catches sight of an old woman trying on hats as she 'wander[s] aimlessly along a lot of back streets' in Paris: 'Her hair, half-dyed, half grey, is very dishevelled' and '[h]er expression is terrible – hungry, despairing, hopeful, quite crazy' (*GMM* 57-8). The longer Sasha stares at this woman, the more she is struck by an uncanny sense of looking at herself: 'Watching her, am I watching myself as I shall become?' (*GMM* 58). The old woman functions as Sasha's uncanny reflective double; as Freud reminds us, 'a person may identify himself with another and so become unsure of his true self; or he may substitute the other's self for his own' ('U' 142).

Consequently, when Sasha goes into a hat shop herself she no longer possesses an assured sense of self. Upon looking into the mirror, she sees 'the same demented expression as the woman up the street' (*GMM* 58). Sasha's reaction is here representative of the wider complexities of consumer culture. As I have already suggested in Section 3.1 of this chapter, the shop window in the twentieth century was, more than ever before, an uncanny space that opened up an often irreconcilable distance between the actual and the ideal self. Not only does the window offer the consumer 'another, altered self' to be obtained 'via the payment of a stipulated price', it also 'constitutes the looker as

[156] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Mirrors Are Magic' (1967), in *People, Places, Things*, ed. by Hepburn, pp. 201-05 (pp. 202, 205).

lacking'.[157] Despite her best attempts to purchase this altered self, then, Sasha's uncanny, reflected double exposes her aging and crazed appearance for what it really is.

Furthermore, Sasha's complex relationship with consumer culture is inextricably tied to her anxieties concerning national identity. When she sits in an anonymous 'tabac' (*GMM* 87) near the Panthéon on the left bank of the Seine, she reflects upon her inability to transform herself successfully into a European bourgeois consumer:

> I am trying so hard to be like you. I know I don't succeed, but look how hard I try. Three hours to choose a hat; every morning an hour and a half trying to make myself look like everybody else. Every word I say has chains round its ankles; every thought I think is weighted with heavy weights. Since I was born, hasn't every word I've said, every thought I've thought, everything I've done, been tied up, weighted, chained? (*GMM* 88)

It is significant that these anxieties emerge when Sasha is located in the Latin Quarter, rather than back across the river in the more fashionable eighth arrondissement. As Shari Benstock has shown, this area of the city gained fame in the twentieth century for being the domain of artists and writers, many of whom were foreigners.[158] Locating her protagonist in this culturally diverse yet nationally marginal space, Rhys thus accentuates Sasha's retreat from the uncanny shop windows of the Champs-Elysées; an area long associated with aristocratic fashion and middle-class *flânerie*.[159]

Importantly, Rhys's use of the second-person pronoun differs from how it functions in the passage describing Paris's monstrous houses (discussed above in Section 4.1 of this chapter), because at this point in the novel it serves to reinforce the divide between Sasha as a marginalised Creole and her projected conception of the European

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[157] Bowlby, *Just Looking*, p. 19.
[158] Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).
[159] H. Hazel Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian Modernity: Culture and Consumption in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 46.

mass consumer. The imagery of weights and chains powerfully evokes the violent history of slavery associated with Rhys's Caribbean island home. As Nagihan Haliloğlu observes, the words in this passage are what 'one expects a Martinican to speak'.[160] Indeed, like her uncanny memory of misunderstanding Mr Blank, this passage exemplifies Sasha's lack of a secure national identity and language. Co-opting the imagery of slavery into her personal experience of the imperial metropole, Sasha foregrounds her inability to adopt the common code of European dress and speech; in Sennett's terms, she remains an urban stranger.[161]

4.3 The Exhibition

Sasha's ambivalent response to the commodified body of the urban *flâneuse* arguably reaches an uncanny climax in her response to the 1937 Paris Exhibition. Originally intended to help 'relaun[ch] a stagnant global economy' by way of encouraging international peace, trade, and progress, the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* emerged in Paris as an 'all-encompassing commercial field of production and exchange'.[162] The site achieved its international reach through the inclusion of striking architectural pavilions that represented nations from across the globe. Most famous were the dominating German and Soviet pavilions that menacingly faced each other across the Champs de Mars. Although unintentional, the political aggression encoded in the architectural positioning of these buildings undercut the supposed pacifism of the Exhibition, earning the site an ironic reputation for its material prefiguration of imperial crisis and global warfare.

Having visited the Exhibition in 1937, Rhys was familiar with its layout.[163] Yet, despite the architectural prominence of the German and Soviet pavilions, she never

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[160] Nagihan Haliloğlu, *Narrating From the Margins: Self-Representation of Female and Colonial Subjectivities in Jean Rhys's Novels* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), p. 103.
[161] Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, pp. 38-39.
[162] Herbert, *Paris 1937*, p. 14.
[163] Angier, *Rhys: Life*, p. 365.

directly describes them in *Good Morning, Midnight*.[164] Instead, Sasha's anxieties about the global politics of the Exhibition emerge in an uncanny nightmare she has early on in the novel:

> I am in the passage of a tube station in London. Many people are in front of me; many people are behind me. Everywhere there are placards printed in red letters: This Way to the Exhibition, This Way to the Exhibition. But I don't want the way to the exhibition – I want the way out. There are passages to the right and passages to the left, but no exit sign. Everywhere the fingers point and the placards read: This Way to the Exhibition. …I touch the shoulder of the man walking in front of me. I say: 'I want the way out.' But he points to the placards and his hand is made of steel […]. The steel finger points along a long stone passage. This Way – This Way – This Way to the Exhibition. … (*GMM* 12)

In this nightmare, Rhys merges the urban architecture of Paris and London through locating the Exhibition outside a subterranean Tube station. As Christina Britzolakis suggests, this conflation of national spaces makes 'the time-space of the Exhibition seem total and inescapable'.[165] Furthermore, the Tube is directly linked to the impending global crisis of the Second World War, for, as Emery observes, the 'right' and the 'left' passages are highly suggestive of Europe's 'political oppositions […] to which there appear no alternatives'.[166]

What neither of these critics comments upon, however, is the acute uncanniness of Sasha's nightmare. During the nightmare, she experiences 'the helplessness' that Freud

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[164] For a detailed analysis of Rhys's economic handling of the Exhibition site, see Christina Britzolakis, '"This way to the exhibition": Genealogies of Urban Spectacle in Jean Rhys's Interwar Fiction', *Textual Practice*, 21.3 (2007), 457-82; Linda Camarasana, 'Exhibitions and Repetitions: Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* and the World of Paris, 1937', in *At Home and Abroad in the Empire: British Women Write the 1930s*, ed. by Robin Hackett, Freda S. Hauser, and Gay Wachman (Newark: University of Delaware, 2009), pp. 51-70.

[165] Britzolakis, '"This way to the exhibition"', p. 475.

[166] Mary Lou Emery, *Jean Rhys at "World's End": Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 147.

associates with 'certain dream-states', and which compounds the condition of 'unintentional return' ('U' 144). Sasha desperately wants to escape the claustrophobia of the subterranean Tube station, but the repeated signs reveal that the Exhibition is the only available route out. Once more, Sasha is trapped within the uncanny urban impasse, unable to find an escape route from the infernal nightmare of the imperial capital. The heavily constricted boundaries of her spatial and political existence are felt on a textual level in the obsessive capitalised references to the Exhibition signs; the final triad of which resonates with the persuasive 'lists of three' widely used in political rhetoric.[167]

Rhys's choice to locate Sasha's nightmare in the London underground is interesting, because it marks a sharp departure from the way in which her female modernist contemporaries were also using the space. As Dave Welsh points out, Bowen and Woolf respectively connect the London Tube with utopian retreat in wartime and the liberating speed of modernity.[168] In Bowen's 'Mysterious Kôr', the underground is figured as a reassuring rhythmic pulse in the blitzed ruins of London: 'Now and then under the streets and buildings the earth rumbled: the Underground sounded loudest at this time'.[169] The Tube becomes a compensatory space of hope and resistance in the story; human life and everyday routine endure below ground, even when on street level the barren landscape is but 'shallow, cratered, extinct'.[170] Likewise, in 'The Mark on the Wall' (1921), Woolf represents the Tube in positive terms. Her protagonist explains that 'if one wants to compare life to anything, one must liken it to being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour': 'Yes, that seems to express the rapidity of life'.[171] Woolf's fiction registers an ambivalent response to technological development, as I demonstrate

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[167] Max Atkinson, *Our Masters' Voices: The Language and Body Language of Politics* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 57.
[168] Welsh, *Underground Writing*, p. 10.
[169] Bowen, 'Mysterious Kôr', p. 728.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Virginia Woolf, 'The Mark on the Wall' (1921), in *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 43-52 (pp. 44-45).

in Chapter Three; nevertheless, in this short story she figures the Tube as an exhilarating addition to modern urban experience.

Contrastingly, in her representation of the Tube, Rhys invokes the Dantean underworld 'of impotence and despair' that Welsh identifies in the earlier works of George Gissing, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound.[172] The mechanical automaton reappears in Sasha's nightmare, for the pointing hand of the man she encounters in the underground is 'made of steel': 'The steel finger points along a long stone passage' (*GMM* 12). The underground is rendered an uncanny space where the division between human and non-human life is viscerally blurred; the man is still part human, but also part automaton, and points Sasha onwards, toward the political impasse of the Exhibition. The uncanniness of the automaton thus crystallises Sasha's anxieties about technological warfare and the impending global conflict.

This connection between urban space and technology is further realised in Rhys's representation of the optical spectacle of the Exhibition. Besides its focus on international peace and trade, the Exhibition had an 'overriding emphasis on "techniques appliqués"', which celebrated 'the triumph of technology'.[173] Architecturally, this triumph was seen in the *Pavillon de la Photo-Ciné-Phono*, a number of pavilions dedicated to celebrating 'new technologies, such as the commercialization of the neon tube'.[174] Rhys's anxieties about the acceleration of urban technology consequently appear in another dream that Sasha has towards the end of the novel:

> All that is left in the world is an enormous machine, made of white steel. It has innumerable flexible arms, made of steel. Long, thin arms. At the end of each arm is an eye, the eyelashes stiff with mascara. When I look more closely I see that only some of the arms have these eyes – others have lights. The arms that

[172] Welsh, *Underground Writing*, p. 9.
[173] Emery, *Jean Rhys at "World's End"*, p. 162.
[174] Britzolakis, '"This way to the exhibition"', p. 465.

> carry the eyes and the arms that carry the lights are all extraordinarily flexible and very beautiful. But the grey sky, which is the background, terrifies me. … (*GMM* 156)

In this dream, Rhys brings the automaton tendencies of the commodified body into direct dialogue with the accelerating political and technological advancements of Europe, as Sasha visualises the future of the world as a terrifying, yet strangely alluring, machine. No longer a mere body part, as in Sasha's previous nightmare, the steel now constitutes an all-encompassing being. Although this being is not 'explicitly gendered', it is connected to the commodified female body through the images of its slender arms and mascara-caked eyes.[175]

As Sasha finally checks herself against the dangerously alluring spectacle of the commodified machine of urban modernity, both she and the text falter into an elliptical state of oblivion. The ellipsis, so characteristic of Rhys's representation of Sasha's fraught psychological state, loops the narrative back to the enclosed space of the London underground, where the narrative was likewise disrupted by an elliptical rupture. For Sasha, there really is 'no way out' (*GMM* 12). She can but wander, in fits and starts, half waking, and half dreaming, through the uncanny spaces of the city. With no home to set out from or to return to, failed *flânerie* becomes the uncanny constant of Sasha's wandering life.

5. THE LAVABO

In 1907, Rhys learnt a sharp lesson in social taboos by taking a bath in the shared facilities of her boarding house in London and inadvertently using all the hot water,

[175] Nicole Flynn, 'Clockwork Women: Temporality and Form in Jean Rhys's Interwar Novels', in *Rhys Matters*, ed. by Wilson and Johnson, pp. 41-65 (p. 60).

much to the horror of her landlady.[176] Aged sixteen and having just travelled to England from Dominica, this public bathroom episode encapsulated the strangeness of her new, and intensely unfamiliar, cultural and architectural surroundings: 'English plumbing was a mystery to me', she recalls in her autobiography; 'indoor lavatories shocked me'.[177] The public toilet, or 'lavabo', as Sasha refers to it, is an equally vexing space in *Good Morning, Midnight*, and one Sasha repeatedly returns to during her 'programme' of negative *flânerie* (*GMM* 10, 14).[178] Like the impasse, the public toilets Sasha occupies represent her life in both a physical and metaphorical sense. As Angier comments, Sasha's 'movement' though the city not only incorporates the space of the toilet itself, but is also 'a squalid, shameful descent, as towards the lavatory'.[179]

Importantly for this thesis, the public toilet, like the hotel, is a pointedly underexplored space of urban modernity, despite being recognised as an 'icon of the twentieth century'.[180] Indeed, toilets are a central element of the Venice Biennale (see my Introduction to this thesis), and Koolhaas maintains that although '[n]o architectural treatise cites the toilet as the primordial element' of architecture, it 'might be the ultimate element': 'The toilet is the fundamental zone of interaction – on the most intimate level – between humans and architecture'.[181] Given that the toilet is a prime site for the consideration of humans and their surrounding material environment, it might come as

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[176] Angier, *Rhys: Life*, p. 38.
[177] Rhys, *Smile, Please*, p. 91.
[178] I am using Clara Greed's definition of 'public toilet' as that which comprises 'both traditional onstreet public toilets' and 'offstreet toilets to which the public has access', 'such as those in shopping malls, sports centres, and railway stations'. The 'word "toilet" is preferred to "lavatory" because it is understood internationally and encompasses all sorts of facilities'. Clara Greed, 'Public Toilets: The Need For Compulsory Provision', *Proceedings of the ICE – Municipal Engineer*, 157.2 (2004), 77-85 (p. 77). For a fascinating etymological overview of the multiple, contested terms used to refer to the toilet, see Naomi Stead, 'Avoidance: On Some Euphemisms for the "Smallest Room"', in *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender*, ed. by Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), pp. 126-32.
[179] Angier, *Rhys: Life*, p. 378.
[180] Margaret Morgan, 'The Plumbing of Modern Life', *Postcolonial Studies*, 5.2 (2002), 171-95 (p. 171).
[181] Rem Koolhaas, *Toilet*, ed. by James Westcott and others, Elements Series (Venice: Marsilio Editori Spa, 2014), p. 3.

little surprise that it is a strange fascination for the modern novelist. As John A. Clark observes, from Beckett to Joyce, Günter Grass to Eliot, '[t]oiletries' are 'everywhere'.[182]

Moreover, Ian Scott Todd has recently argued that there are decisive connections to be made between the modern flush toilet and the public convenience (both inventions of the twentieth century) and the proliferation of these spaces as sites of critique in the modernist novel.[183] Todd's central contribution to the field is recognising a fundamental imbalance in modernism studies. Whilst scatological accounts of the toilet have been 'seized on' by critics, less attention has been paid to the significance of the toilet as a cultural space inextricably linked to questions of bodily experience, gender politics, and national identity.[184]

Such a critical void is in part due to a much wider lack of engagement with the toilet in the social and spatial sciences. In a much-needed edited collection of essays dedicated to public toilets, the architectural historians Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner observe that the majority of existing studies in the field are 'largely anecdotal, documentary, or technical in nature', with architectural accounts tending in particular to 'emphasize aesthetic or formal issues over social or environmental ones'.[185] Despite there having been a steadily growing interest in what David Inglis terms the 'faecal realm' since the late decades of the twentieth century, only very recently has 'toilet studies' itself emerged as a serious and interdisciplinary field of academic study.[186]

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[182] John R. Clark, 'Bowl Games: Satire in the Toilet', *Modern Language Studies*, 4.2 (1974), 43-58 (p. 47).
[183] Ian Scott Todd, 'Dirty Books: Modernism and the Toilet', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 58.2 (2012), 191-213 (p. 191).
[184] Ibid.
[185] Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner, 'Introduction: The Private Life of Public Conveniences', in *Ladies and Gents*, ed. by Gershenson and Penner, pp. 1-32 (pp. 10-11). Gershenson and Penner provide an excellent overview of existing studies in the field. For more recent contributions, see Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén, eds, *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Sheila L. Cavanagh, *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Barbara Penner, *Bathroom* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013).
[186] David Inglis, 'Dirt and Denigration: The Faecal Imagery and Rhetorics of Abuse', *Postcolonial Studies*, 5.2 (2002), 207-21 (p. 207); Judith Plaskow, 'Foreword', in *Ladies and Gents*, ed. by Gershenson and Penner, pp. vii-x (p. ix).

This interdisciplinary approach to the public toilet has yet to fully emerge in literary studies, however, with Todd's 2012 article on literary modernism and the toilet being one of the few that engages exclusively with the topic. Another rare exception is Heather Levy's account of the literary evolution of an arresting toilet episode recorded by Woolf in her diary on Wednesday, 26 February 1941, in which she recalls sitting on the loo in the 'ladies lavatory at the Sussex Grill at Brighton', listening to a couple of lower-middle-class women gossiping: 'They were powdering & painting, these common little tarts, while I sat, behind a thin door, p—ing as quietly as I could' (D v 356, 357).[187] The frankness and immediacy of Woolf's account of sitting on the toilet is somewhat unexpected, reminiscent as it is of Leopold Bloom defecating in the outhouse and his wife, Molly, urinating in a chamber pot during her menstrual cycle in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922).[188] Woolf's outwardly derogatory handling of the lower-middle-class women in the Sussex Grill is not so surprising, however, given her renowned snobbery and upper-class taste. Nor, indeed, is the acute attention she pays to the thinness of the door that separates her from these women and their distasteful social and cultural values. Woolf, like Rhys, is ever the careful observer of the psychological significance of architectural space.

As Susan Dick has noted, a very similar toilet episode can be found in 'The Ladies Lavatory' (c. 1941) and 'The Watering Place' (c. 1941), two short story fragments that are quite possibly the last works of fiction that Woolf ever wrote.[189] The first story exists as an undated holograph draft in a book containing a number of Woolf's essay

[187] See Heather Levy, '"These Ghost Figures of Distorted Passion": Becoming Privy to Working-Class Desire in "The Watering Place" and "The Ladies Lavatory"', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 50.1 (2004), 31-57; Heather Levy, *The Servants of Desire in Virginia Woolf's Shorter Fiction* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), Chapter 4, '1929-1941 "Perversely Implicated": Dismantling Oscillations', pp. 149-73.
[188] See James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, [1922] 2008), pp. 66-67, 719.
[189] Susan Dick, 'Notes', in Virginia Woolf, *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Susan Dick (London: Hogarth Press, 1989), pp. 295-313 (pp. 311, 313).

drafts and a portion of the holograph of *Flush*.[190] The second story is an updated and refined typescript version, which Woolf typed on the verso side of pages from the later typescript of *Between the Acts*.[191] Each of these short story fragments has been widely overlooked by Woolf scholars and Levy is virtually alone in commenting upon the centrality of the public toilet location and the associated discourses of class and sexuality that run through both narratives – a point to which I return in greater detail in Section 3.2 of Chapter Three.

There is a similar lack of critical attention given to the representation of public toilets in Rhys's interwar fiction, despite their recurring significance in her work. As Todd notes, although critics have touched upon the toilet in Rhys's work, most 'have not considered [it] itself as a key space within Sasha's world or its symbolic meaning to [the novel] as a whole'.[192] Like Levy does with Woolf's short story fragments, Todd seeks to uncover the significance of Rhys's toilets, using her representation of the lavabo in *Good Morning, Midnight* as a productive starting point. Todd's analysis remains predominantly thematic, however, and to my mind does not give due consideration to Rhys's formal representation of the space. Re-approaching Rhys's representation of the public toilet through the lens of the architectural uncanny thus enables decisive connections to be made between the symbolic meaning and cultural import of the space and the architextural role it plays in the style and structure of the novel as a whole.

5.1 The Retreat

In her study of urban design, Clara Greed draws attention to 'a series of dualisms' that have 'shaped toilet policy'.[193] Extending far beyond the public/private and inside/outside divide, these dualisms include a whole range of ideas concerning cleanliness, gender,

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[190] The holograph version of 'The Ladies Lavatory' is reproduced in Levy, *The Servants of Desire*, 'Appendix A', pp. 197-99.
[191] 'The Watering Place' was published by Dick in 1985. See Virginia Woolf, 'The Watering Place' (c. 1941), in Woolf, *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. by Dick, pp. 291-292.
[192] Todd, 'Dirty Books', p. 205.
[193] Clara Greed, *Inclusive Urban Design: Public Toilets* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003), p. 28.

class, nationality, sexuality, religion, and disability, among other things.[194] Conceptually, such dualisms help construct and maintain strict boundaries between social order and disorder. As Douglas reminds us, 'dirt is essentially disorder'; it 'offends against order' and thus '[e]liminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment'.[195] In official representations of space, those by urban planners and authorities (see my discussion of Lefebvre in Section 3 of my Introduction to this thesis), public toilet design organises the city into a safe and clean environment. Moreover, because architecture 'is a practice that can make cultural separations concrete, literally', the built form of public toilets assists in the materialisation of these conceptualised boundaries within the physical spaces of the everyday world.[196]

Gershenson and Penner are quick to point out, however, that 'public toilets do not always represent "authorized" or regulatory discourses about civility, sanitation, and sexuality. The way they are used, experienced, and imagined can be equally transformative and transgressive'.[197] As representational spaces, used and imagined by ordinary people, writers, and artists alike (see Section 3 of my Introduction to this thesis), public toilets can thus disrupt and challenge, rather than reinforce, the dualisms underpinning official toilet policy and design. Indeed, at the level of the everyday, the public toilet is a site of abjection: urine, faeces, vomit, blood, semen are all expelled, as humans seek out a place in the city in which to perform the most intimate and basic of bodily functions. As Julia Kristeva suggests, abject fluids such as these disturb 'identity, system, order'; abjection itself is that which 'does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'.[198] The abject is what both constitutes

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[194] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[195] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 2.
[196] Ruth Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces: Separation, Concealment, and Shame in the Public Toilet', in *Toilet*, ed. by Molotch and Norén, pp. 25-41 (p. 29).
[197] Gershenson and Penner, 'Introduction', p. 10.
[198] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4.

and threatens a coherent sense of self and a coherent sense of society. Abjection is necessarily a part of the functional cycle of the human being and yet is something interminably cast out, as intolerable dirt. According to Kristeva, there is a 'massive, and sudden emergence of uncanniness' when bodily matter is expelled in this way, for all that we seek to eschew is suddenly exposed.[199]

The public toilet is thus an uncanny space, precisely because it exists to keep the abject 'secret, hidden away', but paradoxically invites it to 'come into the open' ('U' 132). It is, as Margaret Morgan suggestively puts it, an architectural 'marker of the repressed'.[200] Moreover, as Harvey Molotch observes, 'public' and 'toilet' simply 'do not sit well together'; the disconcertingly public nature of supposedly private acts intensifies the uncanniness of the space.[201] As a space filled with 'the ghosts and shadows' of other users and as 'one of the main locations' in the city 'where complete strangers mix', the public toilet is, like the hotel, a microcosm of Sennett's uncanny city of urban strangers.[202] The architectural interior of the public toilet further exacerbates this uncanniness. In the first instance, the particularities of the space (toilet seats, torn pieces of toilet paper, abject remnants in the toilet bowl) unsettle notions of privacy and intimacy, serving as 'proxies for the unknown others who use the space'.[203] Even the characteristic smooth surfaces of toilet interiors intensify this already unsettling experience. As Sheila L. Cavanagh observes, the usual combinations of glass and metal generate disorientating '[r]everberations' that invite 'auditory and visual confusion'.[204]

There is, then, an initial tension in *Good Morning, Midnight* between this uncanny architecture of the public toilet and Sasha's obsession with the lavabo as place of refuge

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[199] Ibid., p. 2.
[200] Morgan, 'The Plumbing of Modern Life', p. 179.
[201] Harvey Molotch, 'Introduction: Learning from the Loo', in *Toilet*, ed. by Molotch and Norén, pp. 1-20 (p. 1).
[202] Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces', p. 26; Clara Greed, 'The Role of the Public Toilet in Civic Life', in *Ladies and Gents*, ed. by Gershenson and Penner, pp. 35-47 (p. 38).
[203] Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces', p. 26.
[204] Cavanagh, *Queering Bathrooms*, p. 118.

from the threatening urban gaze. Recalling in the novel's opening how she burst into tears in a restaurant the previous evening, she describes retreating 'down into the lavabo. A familiar lavabo, and luckily empty. The old dame was outside near the telephone, talking to a girl' (*GMM* 10). Although the only other description of the space is that of 'the glass' (*GMM* 10) Sasha stares into, Rhys's passing reference to the female lavatory attendant is highly revealing in historical terms. As Wilson notes, the increasing numbers of the *Angestellte* class at the turn of the century created a new demand for 'eating establishments where women could go comfortably on their own'.[205] This changing population had important social and spatial repercussions, as various restaurants in Paris and London began to employ female waitresses and provide 'ladies' lavatories with female attendants'.[206] Although Sasha is served by a male waiter, the toilet arrangements suggest that the restaurant is a place where she is welcome to go unaccompanied by a man – something confirmed by the table next to hers being occupied also by a single woman 'of about forty, very well made-up' (*GMM* 9).

Far from being unproblematic, however, this restaurant is a place, like so many of those she occupies, that uncomfortably reminds Sasha of her troubled past. It turns out that the woman next to her is 'waiting for her friend' (*GMM* 9), an American man, whose arrival triggers Sasha's memory and causes her to cry. The profound effect this man has on Sasha is evident when she re-emerges from the lavabo, observing that 'the American and his friend had gone' (*GMM* 10-11); a telling reversal in which the man becomes the dominant figure in Sasha's consciousness, and the woman his subordinated friend. Given that Sasha has been abandoned by her husband and has failed to have a successful relationship since, she experiences the restaurant as a depressingly male environment. Even the waiter looks at her 'blankly' after she bursts into tears, 'not even bothering to laugh' (*GMM* 11). The underground lavabo, with its female attendant, is thus a

[205] Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', p. 100.
[206] Ibid., p. 101.

welcoming retreat from the male gaze that haunts Sasha in the public space of the restaurant.

Yet, as Ingman notes, 'there are good and bad sides to everything' in this novel and '[l]avatories' are as 'sordid' as much as they are 'places of refuge'.[207] Indeed, Rhys is careful to underscore the contingent nature of the lavabo through Sasha's observation of it being only 'luckily empty' (*GMM* 10). This detail immediately calls into question just how private the space really is. As social scientists have noted, the public toilet offers differing levels of privacy depending on which part of the space is being negotiated and according to the gender of the user.[208] Molotch argues, for instance, that due to the uneven provision of public facilities for men and women, the entrance to the toilet is a particularly difficult zone for women as more often than not they must queue, an event that carries 'special burdens of physical discomfort, social disadvantage, psychological anxiety'.[209] In 1930s Paris, the entrance to the female toilet, and the process of queuing, was a particularly uncomfortable affair, given the legacy of the Victorians' obsession with female privacy and propriety. From the birth of the modern flush toilet in 1851, when George Jennings installed public lavatories in the Crystal Palace for the Great Exhibition, deep feelings of anxiety and suspicion surrounded the women's public convenience.[210] As Gershenson and Penner point out, '[s]anctioning the women's lavatory effectively sanctioned the female presence in the streets, thus violating middle-class decorum and ideals of women as static and domestic'.[211] In the nineteenth century, then, very few female conveniences were provided in the city.

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[207] Ingman, 'Jean Rhys: The Empty Mirror', p. 118.
[208] See Harvey Molotch, 'The Rest Room and Equal Opportunity', *Sociological Forum*, 3.1 (1988), 128-32; Jan Schapper, 'The Writing is on the Wall: The Text(ure) of Women's Toilets in Australia', *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 19.4 (2012), 494-517; Beverley Skeggs, 'The Toilet Paper: Femininity, Class and Mis-Recognition', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 24.3/4 (2001), 295-307.
[209] Molotch, 'The Rest Room', p. 129.
[210] Lawrence Wright, *Clean and Decent: The History of the Bath and Loo and of Sundry Habits, Fashions & Accessories of the Toilet, Principally in Great Britain, France & America* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 138.
[211] Gershenson and Penner, 'Introduction', p. 5.

Towards the turn of the century, however, increasing pressures were put on the local authorities by women's groups, such as the Ladies Sanitary Association, to provide equal provisions for both men and women. Their campaign remains to this day, as the British Toilet Association (BTA) still calls 'for the provision of an adequate number of facilities for women, in relation to the number of facilities provided for men'.[212] Nevertheless, anxieties remained in the twentieth century and controversies sprang up across British cities, leading to stricter design regulations concerning the provision of women's toilets.[213] Solutions tended to involve convoluted entry systems that obscured the toilet entrance from view.[214] Another strategy was simply to locate the toilets underground, a spatial move helped along in London by the 1891 Public Health Act, which 'gave local authorities the power to use the subsoil of any road for the purpose of building public lavatories'.[215] Yet despite these convoluted architectural plans, the very anxiousness of the designs served to keep the public toilet squarely in the public consciousness. Such is evident in *Good Morning, Midnight*, for although Rhys never actually describes Sasha entering the lavabo, she does describe her having to go 'upstairs' or 'down' to reach it (*GMM* 10, 130, 142). Regardless of Sasha's attempts to be discrete – for example, when dining with René she excuses herself 'primly' (*GMM* 142) – the men she is with always know where she is going. As René complains, '"You're always disappearing into the lavabo, you. C'est agaçante' (*GMM* 142).

A further complication arises when Sasha reaches the supposed safety of the lavabo interior, for as I have already suggested, such spaces are rarely entirely private. Morgan draws attention to the unsatisfactory design of toilet cubicles, commenting on the 'gaps' often found in the flimsy walls and doors, which permit embarrassing sounds,

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[212] Ibid.; BTA (British Toilet Association), 'About Us', *BTA (British Toilet Association)* (2015) <http://www.britloos.co.uk/?page_id=7> [accessed 3 March 2015].
[213] See Barbara Penner, 'A World of Unmentionable Suffering: Women's Public Conveniences in Victorian London', *Journal of Design History*, 14.1 (2001), 35-51.
[214] Ibid., p. 46.
[215] Greed, *Inclusive Urban Design*, p. 43.

smells, shadows, and glimpses. The only way to entertain the illusion of the public toilet as a private space is to deliberately 'ignore the gaps' and the unsettling reminders of other users they permit.[216] Although Rhys does not engage directly with the idea of the toilet cubicle, she foregrounds Sasha's anxieties about the privacy of the lavabo through the value Sasha ascribes the space according to whether or not it is empty when she gets there. While the lavabo in the restaurant discussed above is only 'luckily' empty (*GMM* 10), the facilities at Pecanelli's bar – or the Pig and Lily as Sasha calls it – is attractive precisely because it is always empty: 'So clean and resplendent, so well lit, with plenty of looking-glasses and not a soul there to watch you' (*GMM* 130). It is therefore a space that allows Sasha to entertain the illusion of privacy and accordingly retreat from the threatening public gaze.

Moreover, offering 'good light' and being situated 'upstairs' (*GMM* 130), the Pig and Lily lavabo has an air of quality about it. Sasha describes the Parisian bar as being like 'an olde English tavern' (*GMM* 34), which is itself revealing when considered in relation to the establishment's toilet facilities. As Greed notes, English toilets have always been 'admired' for their leading modern design.[217] This viewpoint is evident in Adolf Loos's seminal manifesto, 'Plumbers' (1898), in which he argues that 'the English were the keepers and protectors of [plumbing] culture': 'Every English washbasin with its spigot and drain is a marvel of progress'.[218] Significantly, Loos observes that, in terms of toilet design, 'the English have been leading the French around by the nose for a long time'.[219] Although Pecanelli's bar is modelled on a medieval English tavern, then, the contrasting lightness and airiness of the toilet facilities appear to follow the progressive modernism of English toilet design.

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[216] Morgan, 'The Plumbing of Modern Life', p. 179. See also Cavanagh, *Queering Bathrooms*, p. 93.
[217] Greed, *Inclusive Urban Design*, p. 83.
[218] Adolf Loos, 'Plumbers' (1898), in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays, 1897-1900*, trans. by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), pp. 44-49 (pp. 45, 49).
[219] Ibid., p. 45.

Characteristically, however, even this most desirable of lavabos is not without its uncanny problems. As Barcan notes, public toilets are 'spaces of heightened affect and sensory charge'.[220] Smell is an obvious point of interest here, as the public toilet is prone to bad, or chemical, aromas – a problem worsened, as Greed suggests, by frequently poor ventilation design and inadequate cleaning standards.[221] It is therefore surprising that Sasha never comments on the smell of the lavabos she occupies, especially when we know that she is able to detect the 'smell of cheap hotels faint, almost imperceptible' (*GMM* 9). Part of the reason for this is because Sasha tends to associate the public toilet with the public urban gaze, rather than the faecal realm per se. Yet this is not to say that Rhys's negotiation of the toilet is any less powerful or disturbing than the scatological accounts found, for example, in Joyce's *Ulysses*.[222] The heightened affect and sensory charge of Rhys's lavabos instead stems from the uncanniness of the lavabo mirror, an object that Carr observes is something of a 'leitmotiv' in Rhys's work.[223]

5.2 The Lavabo Mirror

Through her representation of the lavabo mirror in *Good Morning, Midnight*, Rhys problematises the public toilet by revealing it to be yet another space filled with Sasha's repressed past. The mirror itself is a key architectural element here, for, as Beverley Skeggs observes, it turns public toilets into 'dangerous places where failed womanhood is reflected'.[224] Like Sasha's antagonistic relationship with the shop window, her reflected double in the lavabo mirror becomes a profound source of anxiety concerning her physical appearance and psychological state. Such anxiety is evident in the elliptical response to her reflection in the Pig and Lily lavabo: 'Am I looking all right? Not so bad. Surely, not so bad. …' (*GMM* 130). Just as the toilet cubicle requires the user to ignore

[220] Barcan, 'Dirty Spaces', pp. 26, 28.
[221] Greed, *Inclusive Urban Design*, p. 231.
[222] Todd, 'Dirty Books', p. 208.
[223] Carr, *Jean Rhys*, p. 63.
[224] Skeggs, 'The Toilet Paper', pp. 303, 304.

the presence of others to retain the private/public divide, Sasha must here ignore the troubled appearance of her reflected double in order to maintain her supposedly sane and respectable façade.

In 'The Uncanny', Freud links the mirror-image to the uncanny through an anecdote of mistaking his own 'unpleasant' reflection in the mirror of a train carriage for another man, suggesting that the displeasure he feels is connected to 'the archaic reaction to the "double" as something uncanny' ('U' 162). The double, he argues, 'belongs to a primitive phase in our mental development', meaning that a 'regression' occurs, when the mirror double is encountered, 'to times when the ego had not yet clearly set itself off against the world outside' ('U' 143). Freud here anticipates Jacques Lacan's theory of the 'mirror-stage'; a crucial period of childhood development in which infants construct an 'Ideal-I', which in turn leads to an anxious, but necessary, realisation of the imperfect nature of the human body.[225] The mirror double thus harks back to this period of human development, exposing the ultimate vulnerability and fragility of the self.

In *Good Morning, Midnight*, Sasha's uncanny mirror double indeed opens up an irreconcilable gap between her actual and her ideal self. This is evident in the Pig and Lily scene, for Sasha's vain protestations about looking 'not so bad. Surely, not so bad. …' (*GMM* 130) reinforce a sense that the female double she sees staring back at her looks anything but okay. This discrepancy between Sasha's ideal-I and her actual aging and harrowed appearance is reflected stylistically through Rhys's use of an ellipsis, which, as Esty observes, 'marks out a bitter joke that need not even reach its conclusion to hit its mark'.[226] Indeed, the textual gap that the ellipsis creates typographically represents the psychological gap between Sasha's actual and imagined appearance.

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[225] Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience', in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), pp. 3-9 (pp. 4, 6).
[226] Esty, *Unseasonable Youth*, p. 173.

Notably, Rhys's descriptive handling of Sasha's physical features is as economical as her negotiation of urban topography. As Johnson points out, she very rarely makes any direct reference 'to Sasha's actual features, expression, or appearance in the mirror', instead relying on punctuation and memories to intimate the particularities of Sasha's reflected 'I'.[227] These stylistic features are particularly noticeable in the opening of the novel, when Sasha retreats to the subterranean restaurant lavabo and stares into the mirror:

> What do I want to cry about? … On the contrary, it's when I am quite sane like this, when I have had a couple of extra drinks and am quite sane, that I realize how lucky I am. Saved, rescued, fished-up, half-drowned, out of the deep, dark river, dry clothes, hair shampooed and set. Nobody would know I had ever been in it. Except, of course, that there always remains something. Yes, there always remains something. … Never mind, here I am, sane and dry, with my place to hide in. What more do I want? … I'm a bit of an automaton, but sane, surely – dry, cold and sane. Now I have forgotten about dark streets, dark rivers, the pain, the struggle and the drowning. … (*GMM* 10)

Although Sasha wrestles at length with her mirror double, Rhys does not directly describe her facial features or her clothes as they exist in the present moment of the novel. In comparison to the episode in the Pig and Lily lavabo, Sasha is still relatively in control of herself at this early point in the text, not yet having succumbed to the traumatic weight of her involuntary memories. Rather than denying the reality of her damaged appearance, then, she is struck by the incongruity between the image of the woman she sees in front of her (the composed product of recent medical treatment back in London) and the unstable woman she still feels herself to be. Again, the ellipses

[227] Johnson, *Home, Maison, Casa*, p. 55.

expose the irony of Sasha's internal commentary, interrupting her rhetorical questioning that is so obviously at odds with her current anxious state.

The ellipses carry another structural function in the text, besides representing the uncanny gap between Sasha's real and ideal self. They also demonstrate how the mirror double can trigger the uncanny process of memory. Images of Sasha's dark, suicidal past intrude into the space of the lavabo, taking the place of her physical reflection. In a textual sense, the ellipses rupture the temporal linearity of the narrative and mark out the mirror as a space in which Sasha's suicidal history is revealed. Torn ambivalently between frank acknowledgment of her past and anxious denial of it, Sasha cannot help but self-consciously address the uncanniness of her mirror reflection: no matter how well she might have been rescued, patched up, and sent back out into the world, 'there always remains something' (*GMM* 10).

The uncanniness of the lavabo arguably intensifies as the novel progresses, in parallel with Sasha's steadily deteriorating mental and physical condition. Like the hotel room, the lavabo is an entirely familiar space to Sasha, constituting a number of her involuntary memories; such as that in which she leaves her job working for Mr Blank after stumbling into numerous 'lavatories', or else the memory in which she is sick in the 'lavatory at the station' before embarking to Calais with Enno (*GMM* 23, 101). As Todd notes, the public toilet therefore 'gradually acquires a sense of perverse familiarity for Sasha' as she becomes 'a kind of connoisseur of the public restroom'.[228] Sasha's familiarity with the public toilet is apparent towards the end of the novel when she enters the lavabo in the Deux Magots café:

> This is another lavatory that I know very well, another of the well-known mirrors.

[228] Todd, 'Dirty Books', p. 206.

> 'Well, well,' it says, 'last time you looked in here you were a bit different, weren't you? Would you believe that, of all the faces I see, I remember each one, that I keep a ghost to throw back at each one – lightly, like an echo – when it looks into me again?' All glasses in all lavabos do this. (*GMM* 142)

Like the hotel room, the lavabo mirror here uncannily vocalises Sasha's thoughts, as she anxiously projects her paranoia onto her spatial surroundings. Elaine Savory notes that '[g]hosts are a significant detail here: this ghost is of course a memory of better looks, a younger face, which haunts a woman who allows herself to become afraid of getting to look old'.[229] We know that the last time Sasha was in the Deux Magots was when she was celebrating the success of her ghost writing job for 'a very rich woman' in Antibes, having just come back to Paris 'very brown and on top of the world and with some money too' (*GMM* 139). We can therefore suppose that the mirror is snidely commenting upon the difference between Sasha's present self (aging and anxious) and that of her youth, prior to her breakdown, when she was a relatively, if briefly, successful working woman in the city.

The mirror itself thus becomes an uncanny 'third person', as Bowlby puts it, 'always present along with the face-to-face of the woman looking and her image'.[230] Despite being seen by some, then, as a 'non-place' that allows the user 'freedom to behave with anonymity and without licence', the lavabo is yet another space in Rhys's novel that complicates Augé's notion of there being 'no room […] for history' in these sorts of modern, 'temporary abodes'.[231] Calling up intense and conflicting feelings about Sasha's past and present selves, the mirror prevents the lavabo from ever functioning as an anonymous space through which Rhys's protagonist can journey at ease.

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[229] Elaine Savory, *Jean Rhys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 125.
[230] Bowlby, *Still Crazy*, p. 47.
[231] Morgan, 'The Plumbing of Modern Life', p. 176; Schapper, 'The Writing is on the Wall', p. 505; Augé, *Non-Places*, pp. 103, 78.

5.3 The Panopticon

More than a space simply associated with Sasha's personal history, the lavabo is also a prime location in the novel that is connected to social identity and national culture. Indeed, the public toilet is a space in which to confront and police bodily and social control not only in individual terms but also at the level of city, state, and nation. Such is clear in the way Gershenson and Penner link their discussion of the public toilet to Foucault's 'notion of "disciplining"', which posits the panoptic gaze as a method for conditioning "'docile" bodies' through creating forms of architecture that 'operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them'.[232] Crucially, Foucault scrutinises methods of disciplining 'a multiplicity of individuals', demonstrating how the powers of surveillance can operate throughout entire institutions and even cities.[233]

One example of architectural disciplining Foucault provides is that of the École Militaire in Paris, where the latrines were designed with 'half-doors so that the supervisor on duty could see the head and legs of the pupils, and also with side walls sufficiently high "that those inside cannot see one another"'.[234] Ensuring enough privacy to obscure any direct view of genitalia, but enough publicity to keep the students visible to the governing authorities, this stall arrangement 'se[ts] into motion a complex and coercive play of exposure and secrecy, repression and desire'.[235] An even more unsettling panoptic design can be found in the architectural layout of the toilets in the first Ford factory in America. As a worker once reported, "'there are no partitions at all, and when you enter these premises you see two rows of seats facing one another across the space of a few

[232] Gershenson and Penner, 'Introduction', p. 18; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), pp. 138, 172.
[233] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 205
[234] Ibid., p. 173.
[235] Gershenson and Penner, 'Introduction', p. 18.

metres'".[236] The Fordist ethos of mass production here takes on alarming physical form in the same vein as the École Militaire, as the factory workers' bodies are subjected to 'the same principle of regularized and visible production as the factory' itself.[237]

It is through the 'gaps' of public toilet cubicles that Cavanagh sees Foucault's notion of discipline translated onto the everyday space of the city, for the 'gaps enable feet to be seen, while the person inside cannot know when or by whom or to what end a look may be given'.[238] The cubicle thus becomes 'a centre of panoptic surveillance', in which people check themselves against the surreptitious glances of other users.[239] Rhys's response to the lavabo as a panoptic space is evident early on in *Good Morning, Midnight* when Sasha reflects on her intention to write a book about women's toilets:

> Lavabos. … What about that monograph on lavabos – toilets – ladies? … A London lavabo in black and white marble, fifteen women in a queue, each clutching her penny, not one bold spirit daring to dash out of her turn past the stern-faced attendant. That's what I call discipline. … The lavabo in Florence and the very pretty, fantastically dressed girl who rushed in, hugged and kissed the old dame tenderly and fed her with cakes out of a paper bag. The dancer-daughter? … That cosy little Paris lavabo, where the attendant peddled drugs – something to heal a wounded heart. (*GMM* 10)

This passage is heavily loaded in terms of national, social, and class identity and reveals the extent to which Rhys is fascinated by the lavabo as a powerful site of urban politics. Sasha remembers various lavabos she has visited in London, Florence, and Paris, emphasising the different social and spatial characteristics that each national location produces: the English lavabo is emblematic of order and restraint; the Florentine space

[236] Hyacinthe Dubreuil, quoted in Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body*, p. 65.
[237] Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body*, p. 65.
[238] Cavanagh, *Queering Bathrooms*, p. 93.
[239] Ibid.

represents style, spontaneity, and familial relations; while Sasha's Parisian haunt is associated with corrupt intimacy and retreat, made possible through illicit drug abuse.

In commenting upon Emery's use of this passage to demonstrate Rhys's complex narration, it is curious that Todd dismisses the connection she makes between space and prose form.[240] Emery finds it significant that the previous narrative shifts from 'the present moment and first-person narration' to the 'interior monologue' seen in the above passage.[241] She reads this shift as evidence of Rhys's '[i]solating and fracturing Sasha's perceptions' in order to represent her insecurities through 'varying degrees of split consciousness'.[242] Although Todd is right in noting that Emery does not extend her formal analysis to consider the socio-politics of the lavabo itself, he misses a productive opportunity to connect the two. Sasha's memories are voluntary at this point in the novel and remain 'aloof' through being narrated in the past tense.[243] Rather uncharacteristically, Sasha here assumes the role of critical observer, documenting from afar the socio-political inner-workings of the ladies' public lavatory.

Sasha's anthropological handling of national identity brings to mind Slavoj Žižek's comparison of toilet bowls in his discussion of national ideology. Whereas the 'hole is in the back' of the 'typical French lavatory', meaning that 'the shit is supposed to disappear as soon as possible', the 'Anglo-Saxon (English or American) lavatory presents' a basin 'full of water, so that the shit floats in it – visible, but not to be inspected'.[244] According to Žižek, these toilet designs reveal 'a certain ideological perception of how the subject should relate to the unpleasant excrement'.[245] For him, the French toilet bowl

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[240] Todd, 'Dirty Books', p. 211.
[241] Emery, *Jean Rhys at "World's End"*, p. 163.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 19.
[244] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 4.
[245] Ibid., p. 5.

betrays an anxious and 'hasty' efficiency in the disposal of bodily waste, while the English bowl is more measured, 'pragmatic', and reserved.[246]

There are key differences, however, between Žižek's characterisation of French and English ideology and those represented in Rhys's novel, which point to a crucial historical development in toilet design.[247] Whilst today, France pioneers some of the most modern and efficient toilet flushing mechanisms, the country lagged far behind English toilet design in the early twentieth century, as I have already suggested in my discussion of Loos's commentary on plumbing (see Section 5.1 of this chapter).[248] In Rhys's novel, then, Parisian toilets are far from the fast flushing modern systems Žižek describes, and are instead represented as sordid spaces of illicit drug abuse that are associated with the uncanny rupture of repressed, trauma-related fears.

Similarly, the London lavabo that Sasha describes is associated with the legacy of Victorian ideology, particularly social order and restraint, rather than the rational space of English society today. The image of each English woman 'clutching her penny' (*GMM* 10) alludes to the architectural disciplining of women's public conveniences in the interwar period. When Jennings installed the first flushing toilets at the 1851 Great Exhibition, he designed a 'penny in the slot' locking mechanism so that customers had to pay to use the facilities.[249] In 1936, a Public Health Act gave the local authorities in Britain the right to charge patrons a fee in a similar manner, although the penny charge was for the use of toilet cubicles only, not for urinals.[250] As Penner notes, this put women, particularly poor women, at a considerable disadvantage to men; whereas men could urinate for free, women had to pay to use a cubicle each time.[251]

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[246] Ibid.
[247] Morgan, 'The Plumbing of Modern Life', p. 179.
[248] The APC, or 'Superloo', and the Cleanomat 'no touch' system, are amongst those pioneering public convenience systems in use in France today. See Greed, *Inclusive Urban Design*, pp. 80-81.
[249] Ibid., p. 42.
[250] Ibid., p. 52.
[251] Penner, 'A World of Unmentionable Suffering', p. 42.

The penny charge, like the check-in desk in the hotel, consequently helped to police the female toilet by reducing the so-called '"promiscuous" mixing of working- and middle-class female bodies'.[252] This form of bodily class anxiety is strongly felt in Rhys's *Quartet* when the protagonist Marya Zelli queues to see her husband in prison, thinking of all the 'little arrangements' of life; 'prisons and drains and things, tucked away where nobody can see'.[253] Rhys's reference to drains here suggests a direct connection between Marya's experience of the prison queue and Sasha's observation of the line of women in the lavabo. Thinking of the queue of women, Marya is struck by the way in which 'they would edge forward mechanically and uselessly, pushing her as they edged. So that she was always forced to stand touching their musty clothes and their unwashed bodies'.[254] Sue Thomas argues that queuing in this manner leads Marya to experience a 'loss of individuality and contamination' as she projects 'her fears about her declining social status as a sense of being contaminated by class others'.[255]

In contrast, Sasha is already resigned to her declassé social status in *Good Morning, Midnight*, something indelibly bound up with her ambiguous colonial identity. As Katherine Streip has noted, Sasha tends to think of herself as being 'synonymous with waste', something confirmed when she sees the word 'merde' scrawled on 'a straight-backed wooden chair', which prompts her to consider whether it is the 'answer, the final answer, to everything?' (*GMM* 76).[256] Rather than being struck by an uncanny sense of bodily contamination, Sasha implicates herself directly within the discourse of 'faecal language' that emerged coextensively with the developing architectural infrastructure of the modern city.[257]

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[252] Ibid., p. 45.
[253] Rhys, *Quartet*, p. 44.
[254] Ibid., p. 58.
[255] Sue Thomas, *The Worlding of Jean Rhys* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 80.
[256] Katharine Streip, '"Just a Cérébrale": Jean Rhys, Women's Humor, and Ressentiment', *Representations*, 45 (1994), 117-44 (p. 134).
[257] Inglis, 'Dirt and Denigration', p. 208.

As Inglis observes, by the nineteenth century, faecal language had become a class-based form of derogation, used by the bourgeoisie to describe the proletariat, who they deemed to be '*dysfunctionally* filthy, in both moral and hygienic terms'.[258] Moving into the twentieth century, urban regeneration and sanitation reform brought toilets into the working-class home, meaning that 'the great faecal divide between bourgeoisie and proletariat was abolished and excremental abuse could no longer figure as an essential mode of bourgeois superiority'.[259] Faecal language was consequently targeted at the increasing numbers of immigrants in the city. As Anne McClintock suggests in her work on 'social abjection' and 'modern industrial imperialism', colonial immigrants were seen to embody 'the abject' and were thus 'expelled and obliged to inhabit the impossible edges of modernity'.[260] In *Good Morning, Midnight*, Sasha has internalised this form of social abjection, seen in her masochistic impulse to identify herself with shit. Remaining detached in her observations of the London lavabo queue, Sasha simply excludes herself from the 'fifteen' (*GMM* 10) middle-class women waiting in line. Likewise, she has no place in the Flemish toilet, where she assigns passion and emotion to the 'old dame' and her 'dancer-daughter' (*GMM* 10) who have a family of their own. The Parisian lavabo is the only space in which Sasha's observing self seems to stake a claim; it appears to be her own 'wounded heart' that the 'cosy', yet illicit, space accommodates (*GMM* 10).

All too aware of her marginalised position as a displaced colonial subject, disadvantaged by gender, money, and personal trauma, Sasha makes no attempt, as Marya does in *Quartet*, to disassociate herself from the 'little arrangements' of life.[261] Rather, Sasha ambivalently embraces the grimy underbelly of the Parisian city. Moreover, through her use of the first-person narrative voice, Rhys locates her protagonist,

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[258] Ibid., p. 217.
[259] Ibid., p. 218.
[260] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 72.
[261] Rhys, *Quartet*, p. 44.

linguistically and stylistically, within the uncanny confines of the city's public lavabos. If, as Todd contends, the public toilet 'not only fails to provide an exit from the labyrinth of modernity but also acts as one of its constituent elements, its building blocks, its barriers, and its sites of regulation', then Rhys's lavabo also constitutes an integral element and fundamental building block of the novel's uncanny architextural form.[262]

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have foregrounded the architectural uncanny as a central element in Rhys's late modernist representation of female urban experience. Through close textual analysis of three key spaces in her most experimental novel of the 1930s, I have shown how Rhys's negotiation of uncanny European architecture is linked to the psychological and affective experience of the increasingly turbulent socio-spatial structures of the interwar city. Placing particular emphasis on how the architectural elements of the hotel, the street, and the public toilet confuse comfortable spatial and psychological boundaries, I have demonstrated how Rhys's attention to the architectural uncanny opens up important questions about the crisis of home, belonging, and identity as experienced by the single, colonial woman living at the peripheries of the imperial city. Moreover, through analysing Rhys's fragmented typography and stylistic manipulation of narrative shifts of interior time in her protagonist, I have shown how the novel recreates the disorientating effects of the uneven textures of the uncanny city at the level of structure and readerly experience. It is this dynamic relation between the architextural form and content of *Good Morning, Midnight* that attests Rhys's late modernist innovations as a twentieth-century immigrant writer.

[262] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 72.

CHAPTER THREE

'Unity – Dispersity':

Architectural Ambivalence in Virginia Woolf's

Between the Acts

1. INTRODUCTION

Between the Acts (1941) is one of Woolf's most ambivalent novels, not least in its negotiation of place and dwelling on the eve of the Second World War. Described initially in her diary in 1938 as 'a complete whole' structured around 'Poyntzet Hall: a centre' (*D5* 133, 135), early versions of the novel show signs of being securely rooted to the domestic architecture of the English country house. At this time, Woolf also writes of the pressing need for '"I" rejected: "We" substituted' and, as a twentieth century cultural icon of organic community, this 'scenic old house' seems fit for purpose in developing a more inclusive narrative voice, and celebrating the 'English country' in the face of its imminent collapse (*D5* 135).

In the published version of the novel, however, Pointz Hall plays a far more ambivalent role, exacerbating what Esty refers to as Woolf's 'troubled half-love for England'.[1] Indeed, for all its nostalgic and 'homely' appeal, the house is finally represented as a space of vexed social politics and as an outmoded building that is 'brittle' and 'shell'-like in the rapidly changing world of architectural modernity (*BA* 5, 155). Much of the internal spatiality and cultural history of Pointz Hall is ironised, as

[1] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 93.

Woolf exposes the impossibility of the English country house ever enduring as a sustaining form of domestic architecture.

In *Between the Acts*, Woolf becomes increasingly preoccupied with the rural contours of the English landscape, taking up the tradition of English pageantry to reimagine an alternative, more inclusive form of everyday life that might just outlast the war. As she writes in her diary, she wants to 'call in all the cosmic immensities' and have 'all parts contributing', with '"We" … composed of many different things … we all life, all art, all waifs & strays – a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole' (*D5* 135). Nature, music, and performance become key players in renewing this sense of being in place in the world: animals, trees, the wind, and the rain, even the musical rhythms from Miss La Trobe's gramophone, help establish a feeling of communal identity and belonging.

In this chapter, I examine how the increasing threat of architectural annihilation during the interwar years sets in motion the 'anthropological turn' of Woolf's late modernism.[2] I suggest that the Second World War activates a sharp critique of the English country house and Woolf's self-conscious contemplation of how the primeval rhythms of the natural world might provide the foundations for a new form of architectural dwelling. In the extraordinary last scene of the novel, Pointz Hall is reconceived within the pageant's more inclusive vision of everyday life through a regenerative, albeit imaginative and ambiguous, process that sees it transformed from a brittle shell into a resilient primeval cave. While this return to the prehistoric world signals Woolf's deep concerns about the barbaric trajectory of contemporary history, it also reveals her profound investment in the English soil as a source of architectural regeneration and renewal.

[2] Ibid., p. 2.

Building on Beer's persuasive account of Woolf and prehistory, I argue that the primeval cave encapsulates much of Woolf's ambivalence in the novel, crystallising her conflicting desires to negotiate the damaging effects of change and progress in the modern world, at the same time as remaining committed to the belief that 'there will be a next generation, in spite of this war and whatever it brings'.[3] Like Bowen's preoccupation with ruined materiality and indeed Rhys's obsession with the architectural uncanny, Woolf's architectural ambivalence grapples with the uncertainties surrounding place and dwelling during the mid-century, marking a self-conscious response to the burgeoning social and political pressures of the Second World War. Yet, while the work of Bowen and Rhys self-consciously reactivates the fragmentary urbanism of high modernism, Woolf's turn to ruralism signals an alternative development in late modernist aesthetics. For all its anxiousness, *Between the Acts* is a novel that captures a fleetingly positive response to modernity's crisis of belonging, thus complicating Adorno's claim that, in modernity, the 'house is past'.[4] Despite negotiating the passing of the English country house, Woolf stakes a claim for architectural survival in the enduring contours of the primeval land; an act of narrative defiance that is all the more poignant given that she chose to end her life just a month after finishing the novel in February 1941.[5]

In this chapter, I thus follow Esty in arguing that it is 'worth taking stock' of these 'redemptive elements' in Woolf's late work.[6] Although, as Esty rightly points out, the late modernists' Anglocentric concerns do not necessarily match up with the social reality of the diversifying post-imperial nation, their 'projections of English unity' are central to 'the broadening definition of culture in the period' and indeed demonstrate the varying ways in which writers began to reimagine England 'outside the stream of

[3] Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), Chapter 1, 'Virginia Woolf and Prehistory', pp. 6-28; Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower', p. 121.
[4] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 39.
[5] Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, pp. 755-60.
[6] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 39.

worldwide modernization, detached from the headlong "progress" of the British state'.[7] Alexandra Harris's recent work in *Romantic Moderns* (2010) is useful here, for she detects a 'passionate' and 'exuberant' turn towards home amid the darker complexities of the period of literary history in question.[8] Commentators have been quick to point out the geo-political shortfalls of Harris's work, and there are undoubtable limitations in her labelling of *Between the Acts* as a 'joyous book' in which Pointz Hall remains 'a stable centre'.[9] Nevertheless, her account of the interwar 'English renaissance' is valuable insofar as it helps to place emphasis on the more redemptive aspects of late modernism.[10]

Extending Harris's line of enquiry, but taking care to complicate some of the more problematic and 'celebratory' claims that she makes, I suggest that the full complexity of Woolf's response to modernity's crisis of belonging in *Between the Acts* can be better appreciated only by acknowledging both sides of the novel's deep-set architectural ambivalences.[11] To this end, I draw the vast array of critical contentions surrounding the novel into dialogue with one another by foregrounding the ways in which Woolf's ambivalent representation of home, belonging, and (English) identity resists any categorical assumptions about everyday life leading up to, and beyond, the war. Importantly, the primeval cave remains an imaginary structure within the fictional world, not existing physically as Pointz Hall does. Despite functioning as a powerful resource for reimagining English life, then, it reveals the limitations of Woolf's ability to visualise the future of English domesticity in material terms. Building on Michele Pridmore-Brown's brief observation that *Between the Acts* 'resists closure and a completed architecture', I ultimately argue that Woolf not only 'thematizes "ambivalence"', as Laura

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[7] Ibid., p. 165, 39.
[8] Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, p. 10.
[9] Ibid., pp. 110, 113. For a critique of Harris's work, see Neal Alexander and James Moran, 'Introduction: Regional Modernisms', in *Regional Modernisms*, ed. by Neal Alexander and James Moran (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 1-21 (p. 5).
[10] Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, p. 10.
[11] Alexander and Moran, 'Introduction: Regional Modernisms', p. 5.

Marcus has put it, but also articulates such ambivalence within the architextural style and structure of the narrative itself.[12]

Particularly central to my argument are recent critical theories of nostalgia, a concept itself fraught with 'dilemmas', to borrow Bonnett's term, especially in the context of modernity.[13] Bonnett is critical of the recent 'desire to cut nostalgia up into good and bad bits' – to ignore its reactionary impulses and instead reshape it into a politically useful 'tool, or resource' fit for the 'progressive' thinking of modernity.[14] Although Bonnett's central focus on the radical imagination of the modern left is not directly relevant to my questioning of Woolf here, his wider aim to 'ope[n] up' such instrumental approaches to nostalgia, and consequently to acknowledge its 'ambivalent presence' and 'awkwardness' in modernity, is pertinent to Woolf's conflicted and nostalgic ruralism in *Between the Acts*.[15]

Given my concern with the natural world in this chapter, I consider architecture from what Ingold terms 'the "dwelling perspective"', which maintains that 'it is through being inhabited, rather than through its assimilation to a formal design specification, that the world becomes a meaningful environment for people'.[16] Following Heidegger, Ingold argues that a house is only relationally different from a tree, for both are intrinsically linked to the condition of being-in-the-world and thus to the processes of building and dwelling. Both house and tree are 'living organisms' with 'life histories' that 'consist in the unfolding of their relations with both human and non-human components of their environments'.[17] From this perspective, then, Woolf's negotiation of the outdoor

[12] Michelle Pridmore-Brown, '1939-40: Of Virginia Woolf, Gramophones, and Fascism', *PMLA*, 113.3 (1998), 408-21 (p. 420); Laura Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*, 2nd edn (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), p. 178. Although not directly relevant to the way in which I interpret Woolf's ambivalence, Marcus offers an interesting discussion of Freudian ambivalence, noting how Woolf was reading such theory at the time of writing *Between the Acts*. Steve Ellis also takes up this line of enquiry in *British Writers*, p. 190.
[13] Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, p. 7.
[14] Ibid., p. 38.
[15] Ibid., pp. 45, 47.
[16] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, p. 173.
[17] Ibid., p. 187.

performance space of the pageant is as much bound up with the 'built' environment as is her handling of Pointz Hall, a physical building.

Focusing in turn on Woolf's representation of Pointz Hall, the pageant, and the primeval cave, I consider how her engagement with these differing spaces tracks the decline of country house culture amidst the rapidly developing world of architectural and technological modernity. In particular, I consider Woolf's use of irony, showing how it functions as a self-conscious nostalgic strategy for exposing the historical contingencies of both the domestic interior and the rural landscape. Moving to consider the pageant, I argue that Woolf's non-ironic nostalgic impulses are equally powerful and reactionary in her critique of architectural modernity. Returning to the new materialist theories discussed in Chapter One, I take up Thrift's notion of nature and 'contemplation', suggesting that Woolf's engagement with animals, weather, flora and fauna, helps to resist the 'frenetic future-oriented quality' of modernity by producing 'an expansion of awareness of the present'.[18]

Moreover, I show how Woolf's representation of nature aligns with a vitalist conception of the material world, similar to that in Bowen, which helps to locate Woolf's primitivist concerns at the anthropological end of an expanded spectrum of modernist primitivism. Being no longer bound up with the 'animism' and superstitions of the colonies, Woolf's primitivism departs significantly from that of the avant-garde, which Bonnett sees as the apotheosis of radical nostalgia.[19] It is this self-conscious engagement with the vibrancy of the English landscape that proves to be the key to the reactionary potential of Woolf's nostalgic longing. Derek Ryan's persuasive new materialist study of Woolf's earlier fiction has been particularly useful in approaching this aspect of *Between the Acts*. Building on his use of theorists such as Bennett, Karen Barad, and Rosi

[18] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, p. 57.
[19] See Michael Bell, *Primitivism* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 11. See also Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, p. 30.

Braidotti, I extend the scope of his study by considering how Woolf's vitalism develops in her later work.[20]

Central to this line of argument is my analysis of the musical rhythms of Miss La Trobe's gramophone, which serves to reinforce the relational dynamics between man and nature, despite the apparent contradictions in Woolf's reliance on modern mechanical technology. Importantly, I draw on geographical understandings of music, affect, and emotion to link my discussion of rhythm back to ideas of space and place. In particular, I consider what geographers Nichola Wood and Susan J. Smith refer to as the 'emotional *geographies*' of musical performance, which, they argue, can create 'new kinds of spaces and identities'.[21] I then move to consider Woolf's use of prehistory, comparing the degeneration of Pointz Hall with Bowen's representation of domestic ruination in *The Heat of the Day*. I argue that Woolf capitalises on the idea of ruined matter being always 'in a state of becoming something else' so that, instead of tracking the annihilating effects of ruination by collapsing the domestic interior into 'nothing' (*HD* 56), as Bowen does, she sets in motion the idea of architectural regeneration and renewal.[22]

As in the preceding chapters, I foreground ideas of narrative form and style, drawing links with Woolf's late modernist concerns about place and dwelling. *Between the Acts* demonstrates how Woolf's modernist literary mode evolves during the interwar in dialectical relation to her more inclusive vision of everyday life, producing what J. Hillis Miller has suggestively described as an 'intrinsic, musical, architectural form'.[23] I argue that this innovative literary structure is moulded from malleable narrative 'blocks', rather than prefabricated narrative 'bricks'. Such terminology, I suggest, can be better understood through close readings of the recurring and developing architectural

[20] Derek Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).
[21] Nichola Wood and Susan J. Smith, 'Instrumental Routes to Emotional Geographies', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 5.4 (2004), 533-48 (pp. 534, 544).
[22] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 319.
[23] J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 209.

vocabulary that Woolf establishes in her diary entries and in essays such as 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' (1927). Ultimately, I demonstrate how an architectural reading of *Between the Acts* draws out the conflicting impulses at the heart of what is still considered to be Woolf's 'least understood' late modernist work.[24]

2. ARCHITECTURAL AMBIVALENCE

Woolf's ambivalent feelings about England during wartime are clearly recorded in her diary. On Monday, 28 August 1939, she writes that she has '[n]o feeling of patriotism. How to go on, through war? – that's the question' (*D5* 231). Capturing her dislike and distrust of England's 'patriarchal, imperialist, and class-ridden' structures, this diary entry reveals Woolf's pacifist tendencies and the difficulties she had in identifying with her country during wartime.[25] Yet just a little under six months later, she subsequently reflects on the following:

> Odd how often I think with what is love I suppose of the City: of the walk to the Tower: that is my England; I mean, if a bomb destroyed one of those little alleys with the brass bound curtains & the river smell & the old woman reading I should feel – well, what the patriots feel. (*D5* 263)

Problematic politics aside, the war inspired in Woolf a profound admiration for the architectural contours of England's capital city.

Such conflicting loyalties are symptomatic of the wider political shift that occurred in literary circles in the 1930s and 1940s. As Alex Zwerdling observes, a number of pacifist writers – Woolf, E. M. Forster, and George Orwell among them –

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[24] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 17.
[25] Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, p. 147. For a discussion of Woolf's pacifism, see Zwerdling, *Woolf and the Real World*, Chapter 10, 'Pacifism Without Hope', pp. 271-301.
[25] Marina MacKay, 'Putting the House in Order: Virginia Woolf and Blitz Modernism', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 66.2 (2005), 227-52 (p. 239).

became increasingly, albeit uncomfortably, complicit in the war.[26] Rather than demonstrating what Snaith describes as Woolf's 'commitment to pacifism' which 'allowed no oscillation', the conflicting feelings recorded in Woolf's diary suggest that the war forced her to reassess her 'priorities and thus to modify her previous seemingly inflexible stance'.[27] Compared to the brutal violence of the Fascist regime, England's problematic politics seemed the lesser of two evils.

Moreover, Zwerdling observes that besides the 'militant nationalism' of the war's supporters, this period of political unrest intensified 'a different kind of feeling for one's country – a love for its history, its idiosyncratic culture and traditions, a passionate attachment to the land itself'.[28] Wartime indeed amplified Woolf's love of the English landscape, as the above diary entry from 1940 suggests; however, it was not only the urban capital that stimulated such feelings. As Lee observes, the time Woolf spent living and walking in the Sussex countryside contributed to some of her 'deepest feelings for England and Englishness'.[29] Such is typified in Woolf's diary in 1932, when she recalls wandering the Sussex Downs and feeling how 'complete & holy was the old habitual beauty of England': 'It feeds me, rests me, satisfies me […]. This has a holiness. This will go on after I'm dead' (*D4* 124).

Woolf's investment in the longevity of England's rural landscape points up a key reason as to why rural and regional writing flourished during the interwar period. The increasing threat of social and architectural collapse was felt most potently in England's urban capital. As a consequence, a number of literary modernists anxiously sought to engage with the rural landscape and its associated history and traditions, in order to reassert a more local and particularist conception of national culture. Commentators have

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[26] Zwerdling, *Woolf and the Real World*, p. 311.
[27] Anna Snaith, *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 145, 146; Karen Schneider, 'Of Two Minds: Woolf, the War and *Between the Acts*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 16.1 (1989), 93-112 (p. 99).
[28] Zwerdling, *Woolf and the Real World*, pp. 228-29.
[29] Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 317.

long viewed this kind of shift in geographic attention with great suspicion, considering it to be a regressive literary form compared to the progressive urbanism of mainstream modernism. Such is evident in the charges levelled by Valentine Cunningham at the returning officer class of the First World War, whose ruralism, he suggests, 'was in political terms decidedly unprogressive'.[30]

Esty recognises a similar response to late modernist ruralism, suggesting that 'the idea persists that postimperial English writing, in becoming provincial and ex-centric, also became stale and wan'.[31] Nevertheless, as Neal Alexander and James Moran observe, recent reappraisals of late modernism have made a concerted 'critical effort to expand and refine the parameters of literary modernism' by attending to the social and political significance of this late turn to rural and regional fiction.[32] Indeed, MacKay and Esty have persuasively argued that beyond its 'superficially conservative appeal', the rural landscape plays a complex role in the work of the late modernists, who felt that 'the British crisis could be withstood, not just by defending England, but also by reimagining it' in more local and particularist terms.[33]

For Esty, this 'anthropological turn' is a direct political response to the end of imperialism and the contraction of empire.[34] Viewing the Second World War as 'the acute tip of a deeper catastrophe', he argues that *Between the Acts* should be 'read in light of a reluctant turn to cultural solidarity' as the novel 'confront[s] a national history increasingly cut free from its moorings in colonial modernity'.[35] As useful as his work is, however, Esty does little to emphasise the profound importance of the war in Woolf's preoccupation with the rural landscape; something that MacKay's more recent account

[30] Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 230.
[31] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 1.
[32] Alexander and Moran, 'Introduction: Regional Modernisms', p. 3.
[33] MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, p. 24; Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 49.
[34] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 2.
[35] Ibid., pp. 38, 17.

of 'Blitz modernism' has redressed.[36] According to MacKay, ideas of 'rootedness' already persist in early modernist texts, where 'the inheritance of a house in the English countryside' appears as a prime thematic and formal concern.[37] Rather than viewing the re-emergence of these preoccupations in the interwar period as a post-imperial product of the contracting empire, MacKay argues that it evidences 'the resurgence of a nonimperialist nationalism that never went away'.[38]

Indeed, from the end of the nineteenth century, the country house has figured in the literary imagination as a powerful symbol of English communal values.[39] As Richard Gill argues, it represents a specifically English 'attachment to the land', in being 'an ancestral home and family seat' and 'a social, economic, and cultural institution, inextricably linked with the surrounding landscape and profoundly affecting not only those living under its roof but those within its purview as well'.[40] Moreover, Leena Kore-Schröder draws attention to the 'cult status' of the country house in the early twentieth century, which was seen as a space of 'obscurity, unpretentious domesticity and time-mellowed quaintness'.[41] This view was bolstered in the 1920s by the heritage industry and boom in motor tourism, both of which served to keep the '*idea*', if not reality, 'of the landed estate as an organic community' alive.[42] By the beginning of the Second World War, the collapse of the landed classes was of course complete and the country house was no longer a centre of agricultural production.[43] Instead, houses across the country were being requisitioned for military purposes.[44] Nevertheless, the lingering cult status of

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[36] MacKay, 'Putting the House in Order', p. 251.
[37] Ibid., p. 229.
[38] Ibid., p. 251.
[39] Richard Gill, *Happy Rural Seat: The English Country House and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 14.
[40] Ibid., pp. 3, 4.
[41] Leena Kore-Schröder, '"The Lovely Wreckage of the Past": Virginia Woolf and the English Country House', *English*, 55 (2006), 255-80 (p. 261).
[42] Ibid., p. 258.
[43] See John Stevenson, *British Society 1914-45* (London: Penguin, 1984), Chapter 12, 'Wealth, Class and Elites', pp. 330-55.
[44] See John Martin Robinson, *The Country House at War* (London: Bodley Head, 1989), p. 8.

the country house became a powerful symbolic resource for writers of the time, and the building frequently functioned in the English novel as a 'surrogate for something missed'; 'the feeling of community that ha[d] been lost'.[45]

In Woolf's case, it was as early as 1903 through to 1906, when she holidayed at a number of 'notable' houses up and down the country, that she first began to formulate the idea of the country house as representing a 'very specific Englishness'.[46] Kore-Schröder has convincingly argued that in Woolf's journal entries from the time the portrayal of these houses is entirely in keeping with the cultural status of the country house in the early decades of the century, revealing a belief that 'modern-day England has grown out of a quiet history of domesticity and ordered cultivation as much as it has out of a political history of power and war'.[47] In *Between the Acts*, however, Woolf's return to this site of 'quiet domesticity' is complicated by her acute awareness of the obsolete position of the country house in wartime. Her nostalgic handling of Pointz Hall is ironised, as she shifts her questioning of home, belonging, and national identity into the performance space of Miss La Trobe's pageant.

Woolf's longing for place and community in *Between the Acts* is precisely the 'distinctly modern form' of nostalgia that Bonnett argues is conditioned in the twentieth century by 'the difficulty of dealing with sudden and massive social change'.[48] Tracking the uneasy relationship between nostalgia and the radical imagination, Bonnett observes how '[b]y the late nineteenth century, the damning of the past had become an expected facet of revolutionary rhetoric'.[49] Yet due to this 'marginalization', the nostalgic impulse soon became 'available to an emergent avant-garde as a forbidden and alluring, resource

[45] Gill, *Happy Rural Seat*, p. 16.
[46] Kore-Schröder, '"The Lovely Wreckage of the Past"', pp. 263, 258.
[47] Ibid., p. 259.
[48] Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, p. 20.
[49] Ibid., p. 23.

for cultural transgression'.[50] Bonnett views avant-garde primitivism as the apotheosis of this radical form of nostalgia in modern art, maintaining that 'the peasant and non-Western past were routinely employed and deployed to represent rebellious, spontaneous and irrational forces'; a strategy driven by the 'desire to rebel against civilization and celebrate the non-bourgeois and the primal'.[51]

Crucially, however, Woolf's Anglocentric concerns in *Between the Acts* dramatically revise such notions of radical nostalgia and modernist primitivism, shedding light on what Dominic Head suggests is 'a different order of primitivism', which begins to emerge with the anthropological concerns of the rural regional novel in the 1920s and 1930s.[52] Indeed, as Esty observes, 'rather than model art (or life) on ethnographic data collected from the colonies', the late modernists redirected attention onto 'England's insular contours' and thus 'sought inspiration in the island's own imagined past'.[53] Woolf's return to English pageantry locates itself at the other end of an expanded spectrum of modernist primitivism, offering up a very different kind of reactionary thinking.

Woolf's negotiation of nature in *Between the Acts* is a particular case in point. As Michael Bell observes, nature, including 'weather, animals, and vegetation', played a vital role in the way primitive man understood the world; he perceived nature as having 'a mentality somehow comparable to his own'.[54] Avant-garde primitivism is very much bound up with this sort of mythic superstition encountered at the colonial periphery; yet, this is very different from Woolf's animistic representation of nature in *Between the Acts*. Cows, birds, trees, the wind, the rain, and the primeval rhythms of the seasons instead contribute to a sense that the rural landscape is alive with all manner of vibrant

[50] Ibid., p. 30.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Dominic Head, 'Regionalism and Modernity: The Case of Leo Walmsley', in *Regional Modernisms*, ed. by Alexander and Moran, pp. 124-41 (p. 128).
[53] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 61.
[54] Bell, *Primitivism*, p. 9.

materialities; what Bennett refers to as 'the material agency or effectivity of nonhuman or not-quite-human things'.[55]

Aligning with this recent vitalist conception of the world, then, Woolf's nostalgic handling of nature is better understood through Thrift's idea of 'contemplation'.[56] According to Thrift, the 'cultural creation of speed itself depends upon the depiction of certain places, things and people as slow-moving, most particularly those places, things and people connected with nature' and 'the countryside'.[57] Challenging this view, however, Thrift observes that 'nature is actually very fast' and that contemplating such dynamism can lead to a heightened and reenergised awareness of the body's place in the world.[58] As a result, contemplation can activate a 'slow-down of perception' that challenges the speed and progress of modernity.[59] Seen as a form of 'contemplation', then, Woolf's late modernist primitivism poses a reactionary challenge to architectural and technological modernity. By tapping into the vibrant materialism of the natural world, Woolf gives thought to the fullness of everyday life within the present moment. Although uncontrollable and perpetually changing, the English landscape sustains itself through the enduring primeval rhythms of the seasons, the weather, and biological birth and death. As such, it becomes a powerful resource for human life and a sustaining foundation for a new form of architectural domesticity.

Despite this reactionary impulse in the novel, critics remain keen to repackage Woolf's nostalgia as a progressive concept. Referring to the 'sting' of longing that 'haunts' Woolf's writing, Helen Southworth splits the concept apart into old and new forms, arguing that '*Between the Acts* heralds a new kind of nostalgia, an alternative vision

[55] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. ix.
[56] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, p. 64.
[57] Ibid., p. 63.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., p. 65.

of home'.[60] This critical tendency is symptomatic of the overarching desire that Bonnett detects in theorisations of the concept 'to cut nostalgia up into good and bad bits, to reassemble it in a more familiar shape, such as a tool, or resource, whose worth is to measured by its utility for the progressive project'.[61] Such is evident in the distinction Boym makes between 'restorative' and 'reflective' longing.[62] Whilst the former is regarded negatively as a conservative attempt 'to rebuild the lost home' and view the past as a 'perfect snapshot', the latter is upheld as a useful tool concerned with 'historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude'.[63] Boym argues that this reflective 'meditation on history […] reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another': 'Nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective'.[64]

Central to Boym's understanding of reflective nostalgia is the role of irony; whereas restorative nostalgia 'takes itself dead seriously', the reflective kind tends to be 'ironic and humorous'.[65] For her, irony creates the critical distance needed for a self-conscious reflection on the past, present, and future. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf extensively employs this reflective strategy. As Beer observes, the narrative is 'sprung on […] contingent ironies', which enable Woolf to resist ahistoricising or idealising the country house and its surrounding rural landscape.[66] Woolf's anthropological primitivism is not entirely ironic, however. In fact, it is the non-ironic moments of nostalgic contemplation that strengthen the reactionary potential of the novel. Boym's theorisation of nostalgia is therefore problematic, because it privileges irony as a progressive tool for nostalgic thinking. Yet, as Bonnett contends, this 'instrumental' approach ultimately

[60] Helen Southworth, '"Mixed Virginia": Reconciling the "Stigma of Nationality" and the Sting of Nostalgia in Virginia Woolf's Later Fiction', *Woolf Studies Annual*, 11 (2005), 99-132 (pp. 99, 128).
[61] Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, p. 38.
[62] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 41.
[63] Ibid., pp. 41, 49.
[64] Ibid., pp. 49-50, xvi.
[65] Ibid., p. 49.
[66] Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, p. 126.

'underestimate[s] the intrinsic complexity of nostalgia', for not only does it empty the concept of its radical potential to act as a reactionary force against the progression of modernity, it also overlooks the fundamental condition of nostalgia being 'inherently reflexive: it presupposes a self-conscious relationship with history'.[67]

The self-reflexivity of Woolf's nostalgic thinking during wartime is evident in 'A Sketch of the Past' (1939):

> The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In those moments I find one of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am thinking of the past; but that it is then that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else […]. But to feel the present sliding over the depths of the past, peace is necessary. The present must be smooth, habitual. For this reason – that it destroys the fullness of life – any break […] causes me extreme distress; it breaks; it shallows; it turns the depth into hard thin splinters.[68]

Rather than an ironic and humorous negotiation of past, present, and future, Woolf's memoir reveals her earnest attempt 'to recover [her] sense of the present by getting the past to shadow [the] broken surface' of wartime.[69] Aligning herself with Bonnett's claim that nostalgia is inherently reflexive, Woolf is well aware that the pleasure gained from thinking about the past does not derive from 'the past itself' (which she knows is ultimately unobtainable), but from the feeling she subsequently gets of 'living most fully

[67] Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, p. 44.
[68] Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past' (1939), in *Moments of Being*, ed. by Schulkind, pp. 61-137 (p. 98).
[69] Ibid.

in the present'.[70] Nostalgic thinking is not, then, a matter of simply rebuilding a perfect snapshot of the past, but rather it enables Woolf to challenge the 'extreme distress' and 'hard thin splinters' created by the crisis of war.[71] In *Between the Acts*, she is able to gain some purchase in the turbulent world of modernity by activating a self-conscious form of anthropological primitivism, which ultimately helps recover a sense of 'fullness' in everyday life.

The form that this novelistic recovery of the past would take remained a point of contention for Woolf. Throughout her writing career, narrative experimentation was closely linked to her changing conception of the material world. She was, for instance, repeatedly struck by the question of whether life was 'very solid or shifting' (*D3* 218), an idea informed by scientific discoveries in the new physics of the early twentieth century, in particular Rutherford's detection of the porosity of the atom.[72] In her diary in 1918, Woolf describes the everyday world as 'an immense opaque block of material to be conveyed by me into its equivalent in language' (*D1* 214), later specifying in 'Modern Fiction' that this block-like reality consists of 'an incessant shower of innumerable atoms', rather than 'a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged' ('MF' 189). Yet simultaneously, Woolf felt averse to narrative confusion, explaining in 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' that '[t]umult is vile; confusion is hateful; everything in a work of art should be mastered and ordered'.[73] An ambivalent tension therefore exists in Woolf's conception of the novel, concerning the concurrent need for a new fluid malleability reflective of the porosity of life and a lingering desire for structural order and coherence.

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[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Michael Whitworth, 'Virginia Woolf and Modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Sue Roe and Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 146-63 (p. 151). For an excellent discussion of Woolf and the new physics, see Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, Chapter 6, 'Physics, Sound, and Substance: Later Woolf', pp. 112-24; Paul Tolliver Brown, 'Relativity, Quantum Physics, and Consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 32.3 (2009), 39-62.
[73] Virginia Woolf, 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' (1927), in *Collected Essays*, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), II (1966), 218-29 (p. 228).

No matter how adamantly Woolf argues in 'Modern Fiction' that the novelist must '[e]xamine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day' ('MF' 189), she never abandons the idea of the novel as a spatial and constructed narrative. As Sue Roe suggests, Woolf always '*blocked* her novels […] aligning subjective content with diagrammatic form'.[74] Indeed, whether it is the 'tunnelling process' and 'beautiful caves' (*D2* 272, 263) of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) or the 'two blocks joined by a corridor' that shape *To the Lighthouse* (1927), architectural structures repeatedly surface in Woolf's conception of her formal attempts to get at 'life itself' ('MF' 191, 192).[75] Even when she seemingly rejects architectural planning in *Jacob's Room* (1922) – 'no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen' (*D2* 13-4) – she later realises that 'I could have screwed Jacob up tighter' (*D2* 209-10).

In essays that span her writing career, Woolf details her thinking about the form of the novel extensively and voraciously. What is significant in these essays is Woolf's repeated use of the terms 'brick' and 'block'. Although much has been said about Woolf as a 'literary architect', particularly in relation to her famous debate about narrative materialism, few critics have considered the implications of these specific terms and the carefully selected contexts in which Woolf employs them.[76] Roe lights upon the significance of '*blocks*', arguing that they 'enabled [Woolf] to introduce formal discipline without relinquishing her resistance to authorial over-intrusion', but she does not elaborate on the term itself, or its relationship to Woolf's use of 'brick'.[77]

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[74] Sue Roe, *Writing and Gender: Virginia Woolf's Writing Practice* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), p. 25.
[75] Woolf, quoted in Ann Banfield, 'Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism, and Cambridge Time', *Poetics Today*, 24.3 (2003), 471-515 (p. 500).
[76] Victoria Rosner, 'Virginia Woolf and Monk's House', in *Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Humm, pp. 181-94 (p. 187). See also Roe, *Writing and Gender*, Part 1, 'Virginia Woolf's Writing Practice', pp. 13-59; Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*, Chapter 2, 'A Shape that Fits', pp. 7-40; Emily Blair, *Virginia Woolf and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), Chapter 2, 'The Etiquette of Fiction', pp. 41-70.
[77] Roe, *Writing and Gender*, p. 25.

It is actually very revealing that whenever Woolf dismisses the idea of architectural form in her fiction, she does so by using the term 'brick'. This is evident in 'How Should One Read a Book?' (1926), when she argues that the 'thirty-two chapters of a novel […] are an attempt to make something as formed and controlled as a building: but words are more impalpable than bricks'.[78] In an earlier draft version of this essay, Woolf's dismissal of the term is even more apparent, as she argues that '[b]ooks are not turned out of moulds, like bricks. Books are made of tiny little words, which a writer shapes, often with great difficulty, into sentences of different lengths, placing one on top of another'.[79] As Lee comments, the reader is here 'invited to think of the book not as a fixed object, but as a process'; something she connects to Woolf's experience of typesetting for The Hogarth Press, where she learnt the practicalities of moving words around to form typographic pages.[80]

For Woolf, then, the variable process of shaping language (a necessity for conveying the porosity of life) is incompatible with the architectural structure imposed by bricks. As a building material, brick consists of fired clay that is shaped using a pre-formed mould and, as James W. P. Campbell notes, it is precisely because of its 'uniformity' that it has been considered such a desirable building resource.[81] Although it has a long and developing history of architectural use (dating from between 10,000 BC and 8,000 BC), brick is most commonly associated with the Romans and with the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during which mechanisation technologies saw it 'become the standard material for industrial and commercial applications'.[82]

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[78] Virginia Woolf, 'How Should One Read a Book?', p. 2.
[79] Woolf, quoted in Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, pp. 373-74.
[80] Ibid., p. 374.
[81] 'brick, n.1.', *OED Online* (September 2014) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/23167?isAdvanced=false&result=1&rskey=A6NkSj&> [accessed 11 November 2014]; James W. P. Campbell, *Brick: A World History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), p. 15.
[82] Ibid., p. 13.

It is precisely because brick is a material associated with uniformity and the historical origins of empire, militarism, and patriarchy that Woolf attaches such a negative value to the term. Such negativity is evident in *The Waves* (1931), when Woolf ironises the linear construction of uniform narratives through Bernard's pronouncement that 'one cannot despise these phrases laid like Roman roads across the tumult of our lives, since they compel us to walk in step like civilised people with the slow and measured tread of policemen'.[83] Woolf's imagery here links to her discussion of words in 'Craftsmanship' (1937), where she expresses an increasing need for breaking with tradition and 'combin[ing] the old words in new orders so that they survive, so that they create beauty, so that they tell the truth'.[84] Combining words into new and creative forms allows Woolf to break the uniformity of brick-like constructions and free the novel from the ideological constraints of a masculinised history.

Such an idea accords with Braidotti's conception of words in *Transpositions* (2006), where she also equates linearity to masculine power structures:

> linearity may well be an ideal in phallocentric cultures […]; nonetheless it is both unachievable and undesirable. This is due to the dynamic nature of language, which is living matter: words grow, split and multiply, sprouting new roots or side branches and resonating with all kinds of echoes and musical variations.[85]

Braidotti's imagery of roots and branches provides a useful link back to thinking about Woolf's preference for the architectural term 'block'. Although this term is now used to refer to a number of different objects, its primary definition appears in the Oxford English Dictionary as a 'solid piece of wood': 'A log of wood; part of the trunk of a tree,

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[83] Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, ed. by Kate Flint (London: Penguin, [1931] 1992), p. 199.
[84] Virginia Woolf, 'Craftsmanship' (1937), in *Collected Essays*, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1966-67), II (1966), 245-51 (p. 249).
[85] Rosi Braidotti, *Transformations: On Nomadic Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p. 175.

a stump'.[86] Unlike bricks, which compress clay into uniform shapes, wooden blocks are not defined by their uniformity. Rather, they remain an organic and malleable building material, which, Baudrillard reminds us, 'draws its substance from the earth, it lives and breathes and "labours" […]. In short, it is a material that has *being*' (recall my discussion of the vibrancy of wooden furniture in Bowen's *The Death of the Heart* in Section 4.3 of Chapter One).[87]

Given the close ties between blocks and malleability, Woolf finds the architectural block a much more fitting conceptual image for her artistic craft than the constrictive prefabricated brick. In 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', she emphasises the role that blocks play in disrupting narrative linearity, describing the task of the modern novelist as being 'to generalize and split up. Instead of enumerating details he will mould blocks'.[88] Crucially, Woolf's novelistic ambitions reach beyond her critique of masculinised history, linking also to the porosity of matter in the everyday world. Like Bowen and Rhys, Woolf's formal innovations play a crucial role in representing space and place in terms of process and change. Indeed, Woolf's narrative 'blocks' capture what Braidotti refers to as the 'fluid flowing of becoming', a concept indebted to Deleuze's and Guattari's discussion of everyday life in *A Thousand Plateaus*.[89] According to them, to be in the world – 'to become' – does not equate to 'a correspondence between two relations'; nor does it simply mean 'to progress or regress along a series'.[90] Rather, 'becoming' relates to the generative nature of existence. What matters is the 'becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which

[86] 'block, n.', *OED Online* (September 2014) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/20347?rskey=NcZocP&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 11 November 2014].
[87] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 37.
[88] Woolf, 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', p. 228.
[89] Briadotti, *Transformations*, p. 9.
[90] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 237, 238.

becomes passes'.[91] The 'block of becoming' thus relates to the dynamism of being in place in what Casey refers to as an 'eventmental' world.[92]

Ryan has drawn attention to how Deleuze and Guattari use Woolf's *Orlando* to further illustrate their notion of 'becoming'.[93] According to the theorists, the novel operates 'by blocks, blocks of ages, blocks of epochs, blocks of the kingdoms of nature, blocks of sexes, forming so many becomings between things'.[94] Yet, what Ryan overlooks, rather surprisingly given his emphasis on the materiality of Woolf's fiction, are the implications that this specific term has for Woolf's conception of the novel form. Deleuze and Guattari make this connection explicit when referring to the 'architecture' of literary works, suggesting that it is 'no longer a question of imposing a form upon a matter but of elaborating an increasingly rich and consistent material, the better to tap increasingly intense forces'.[95] Nowhere are these forces more powerfully felt than in the 'blocks of becoming' that constitute the architexture of *Between the Acts*. If, as Emily Blair has suggested, 'the architecture of the house […] could be called the scaffold in Woolf's formalism', then Scott is right to stress that 'by 1939, the fragility of the scaffoldings' of modernism 'was all too obvious. Political forces were closing in, demanding new forms of response'.[96]

Woolf's diary reveals the increasing pressures she felt she was under to develop a novel form capable of responding to the political turbulence of the time. Swiftly moving from her initial conception of Pointz Hall as 'a centre', she grapples with the idea that the novel 'is to become in the end a play', with '[l]ots of little poems': 'A medley' (*D5* 135, 139, 180, 193). Finally finishing a complete draft on Saturday, 23 November 1940, Woolf feels satisfied that she has reached the end of 'an interesting attempt at a new method

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[91] Ibid., p. 238.
[92] Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 337.
[93] Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory*, p. 119.
[94] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 294.
[95] Ibid., p. 329.
[96] Blair, *Virginia Woolf and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel* , p. 42; Scott, *Refiguring Modernism*, II, p. xviii.

[…]. A richer pat' (*D5* 340). This 'richer pat' of fiction is precisely the 'increasingly rich and consistent material' of the novel that Deleuze and Guattari associate with the 'increasingly intense forces' of becoming in the modern world.[97] Indeed, for all its ambivalence and unresolved conflicts, *Between the Acts* is a novel that powerfully conveys the anxious condition of becoming in wartime and, as such, demonstrates the complexities of Woolf's late modernist narrative form. A detailed look at Woolf's representation of architecture in this novel thus pinpoints the ways in which both the content and form of her late modernist work encapsulates the vacillating hopes and fears of mid-century (literary) history.

3. POINTZ HALL

According to Esty, 'place' is central to the late modernist anthropological turn as it functions 'as a sign of cultural unity', which 'trumps social differences such as class, race, region, religion, or gender'.[98] It is hardly surprising, then, that Woolf first turns to Pointz Hall in her search for a more local and particularist notion of place. As Gill observes, the country house traditionally provides a 'definite unity of place' that 'augments the sense of other unities: the unity of past, present, and future; unity with nature; indeed, the unity of human experience'.[99] As I have already suggested, Pointz Hall does occupy a central, unifying position in early versions of *Between the Acts*. In his edited collection of Woolf's early and late typescripts, Mitchell A. Leaska shows that the novel's working title was provided by the house itself and that the narrative was originally structured by section headings relating to spaces within the house.[100] Such a structural feature suggests an obvious connection between the architecture of the house and the form of the novel as a whole.

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[97] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 329.
[98] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 49.
[99] Gill, *Happy Rural Seat*, p. 16.
[100] Mitchell Leaska, *Pointz Hall: The Early and Late Typescripts of Between the Acts* (New York: University Publications, 1983), pp. 3, 17. See also pp. 33-189.

In February 1941, however, Woolf made a last minute change to the title of her novel, noting in her diary that she had '[f]inished Pointz Hall, the Pageant: the Play – finally Between the Acts this morning' (*D5* 356). Realising that an important shift had taken place in her literary reimagination of England, Woolf saw fit to withdraw specific attention from the house and redirect it towards the interstices of the pageant, of human life, of artistic endeavour itself. As Leaska has revealed, this shift occurs also at the level of narrative form; in the later typescript, the architectural headings are replaced by Arabic numerals and a number of dots, whilst in the published version only blank spaces remain.[101] Critics, Gill and Harris included, have therefore been too quick to label Pointz Hall the architectural centre of the novel, for Woolf dismantles any easy assumptions that might be made about the house's ongoing unifying role within the published narrative.[102] Drawing attention to the ways in which Pointz Hall disrupts, rather than constructs, a unified sense of nature, time, and human experience, Woolf complicates the country house novel tradition and displaces the house from the centre of her cultural reimagination of home, place, and dwelling.

3.1 The Hollow

Throughout the novel, Woolf draws attention to the sunken position and North-facing aspect of Pointz Hall, confounding any notion of the country house providing 'unity with nature', as Gill suggests.[103] Although this position contributes visually to the 'homely' and 'desirable' character of the house, when Mrs Swithin asks Bart Oliver why 'they buil[t] the house in the hollow, facing north', he explains that it was '[o]bviously to escape from nature' (*BA* 6). Ironically, Pointz Hall remains vulnerable to the weather, being afflicted with 'damp in winter' (*BA* 50). Woolf emphasises the agency of nature by personifying 'winter' and its annual act of revenge: each year since the house has been

[101] Ibid., p. 17.
[102] Gill, *Happy Rural Seat*, p. 200; Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, p. 113.
[103] Gill, *Happy Rural Seat*, p. 16.

built, it has 'wept its damp upon the panes, and choked the gutters with dead leaves' (*BA* 6). Given this initial description, Pointz Hall is by all accounts a building that possesses an antagonistic, rather than unifying, relationship with nature.

Contributing to this critique of the house, Woolf underscores the fallibility of human architectural design. In particular, she criticises the architect's choice to ignore the offerings of the natural landscape:

> It was a pity that the man who had built Pointz Hall had pitched the house in a hollow, when beyond the flower garden and the vegetables there was this stretch of high ground. Nature had provided a site for the house; man had built his house in a hollow. (*BA* 8)

Woolf's use of a semi-colon in the final sentence of this quotation structurally amplifies the awkward and ironic connection between the natural landscape and the chosen position for the house, as it binds together two entirely conflicting clauses. Drawing attention to the unnatural positioning of Pointz Hall, Woolf critiques a method of country house planning that purposely resists and opposes the natural lie of the land.

In stark contrast, the performance space of the pageant represents a method of architectural planning that utilises the natural contours of the landscape, harmonising the relationship between man, nature, and architectural structure. Indeed, Miss La Trobe is an architect figure who possesses a keen eye for nature's spatial offering. When surveying the house's grounds, she happens upon

> 'The very place for a pageant!' The lawn was as flat as the floor of a theatre. The terrace, rising, made a natural stage. The trees barred the stage like pillars. And the human figure was seen to great advantage against a background of sky. (*BA* 55)

Whereas the chosen 'site' for Pointz Hall deliberately ignores the 'high ground' (*BA* 8), Miss La Trobe sees the potential of the rising terrace and the flat lawn for creating a suitable stage and auditorium area.

It is significant that Miss La Trobe comes across the space for the pageant on 'a winter's day' (*BA* 42), as this narrative detail invites a direct comparison with Pointz Hall at the same time of year. Although the 'dressing-room' she spots 'down among the bushes' is 'dark and damp in winter' like the house, the stage area strongly contrasts with the abject state of Pointz Hall's leaf-clogged gutters; it is, in contrast, surrounded by 'leafless' 'trees standing bare in the clear light of January' (*BA* 41, 42). Thinking forward to the summer when her performance will take place, La Trobe visualises the space in full bloom, picturing the stage surrounded by trees, which will function as natural scenery and wall-in the performance space, thereby recreating the architectural infrastructure of an indoor theatre. Ann Henley argues that in figuring the 'al fresco stage […] as an interior', Woolf invites an architectural comparison between the pageant and the house.[104] Yet, while she suggests that both are comparable to Heidegger's bridge – an archetypal space of human dwelling (see Section 3.2 of Chapter One) – I would argue that it is only the pageant, and not Pointz Hall, that successfully unites 'landscape, humans, and layers of time alike into a site in which each experiences the presence of the other'.[105]

Henley provides an interesting line of enquiry regarding this point in positing a connection between Miss La Trobe and Benjamin Henry Latrobe, a 'nineteenth-century architect who built, among other things, a manor house, like Pointz Hall, in Sussex'.[106] Although she does not elaborate upon this connection further, Holly Henry has since made a number of observations that reinforce the idea that Woolf took inspiration from

[104] Ann Henley, '"The Whole Building of A Book": Architectural Analogy in Virginia Woolf's Essays and Novels' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama, 1990), p. 469.
[105] Ibid., p. 464.
[106] Ibid., p. 16.

Latrobe and his work: both Woolf's character and Latrobe are distinguished by 'eclectic taste'; both achieve significant artistic works but retain comparatively obscure reputations; and both put the social collective at the heart of their designs.[107] Yet, what neither critic points out is the significance of one of Latrobe's most valued architectural principles – that of the south-facing aspect – which helps to emphasise how Pointz Hall and the pageant differ in their comparison to Heidegger's dwelling place.[108]

Although the south-facing aspect is widely accepted in architectural and layman's terms as a desirable design feature, and is therefore not unique to Latrobe alone, it is a principle that he foregrounded repeatedly in his work. As Edward C. Carter notes, Latrobe's most striking use of the south-facing façade appears in his architectural plans for urban redevelopment in America in 1804, where every street is 'laid out on a north-south and east-west axis', with the majority of houses 'oriented in a southerly direction'.[109] Latrobe's interest in south-facing buildings is equally apparent in his earlier design for Ashdown House in England in 1793. As Michael W. Fazio and Patrick A. Snadon observe, this country house in Sussex 'is sited on the crest of a hill, facing south' so that it can 'take advantage of the fine landscape views and the desirable southern exposure'; a feature reinforced by the majority of its windows that 'open principally to the south, east, and west'.[110] If, as Henley and Henry both suggest, there are sufficient connections to suppose that Miss La Trobe is modelled on Latrobe, then I would add that there are equally significant parallels to be made between Pointz Hall, the pageant, and Ashdown House.

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[107] Holly Henry, 'Science and Technology', in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. by Randall and Goldman, pp. 254-66 (pp. 259-60).
[108] Edward C. Carter, 'Benjamin Henry Latrobe and the Growth and Development of Washington, 1798-1818', *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.*, 71/72 (1971/72), 128-49 (p. 136).
[109] Ibid., pp. 135-36.
[110] Michael W. Fazio and Patrick A. Snadon, *The Domestic Architecture of Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp. 143, 148.

Like Latrobe's Ashdown House, which is of 'moderate size' for 'sustained domestic use', Woolf's Pointz Hall is 'middle-sized' and a 'homely' and 'desirable house to live in' (*BA* 5).[111] Yet in terms of light and aspect, Pointz Hall is a direct inversion of Ashdown House, being situated in a hollow facing north, as opposed to being sited on a hill facing south. Pointz Hall is thus an ironic challenge to Latrobe's architectural design principles, which ultimately sought to use natural light to the benefit of human 'health' and 'comfort'.[112] The damp-inflicted space of Pointz Hall, which was 'built north for shelter, not south for sun', is hardly fit for purpose in this respect, driving Mrs Swithin, a long-term guest in the Oliver household, to 'retir[e] to Hastings' every year when the winter comes (*BA* 50, 6).

Woolf herself valued large windows and light, airy rooms. 46 Gordon Square was, for instance, 'the most beautiful, the most exciting, the most romantic place in the world' for Woolf in 1904, precisely because of 'the drawing room window' that afforded a view of 'all those trees' outside, and indeed the 'light and the air' it provided 'after the rich red gloom of Hyde Park Gate'.[113] A similar appreciation comes through in her representation of the performance space for the pageant, which, in sharp contrast to Pointz Hall, is celebrated in terms of light, space, and elevation: on the raised terrace of the 'natural stage', the 'human figure was seen to great advantage against a background of sky' (*BA* 55). Flooding the human figure with natural light, the pageant stage fulfils Latrobe's favoured architectural principle in a way that Pointz Hall does not.

Ben Harker suggests that the manner in which the pageant spatially 'substitutes' the house is 'one of the text's running jokes'.[114] This shift from house to pageant is equally sincere, however, in terms of Woolf's architectural vision. In consolidating the

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[111] Ibid., pp. 148, 85.
[112] Carter, 'Benjamin Henry Latrobe', p. 135.
[113] Woolf, 'Old Bloomsbury', p. 162.
[114] Ben Harker, '"On different levels ourselves went forward": Pageantry, Class Politics and Narrative Form in Virginia Woolf's Late Writing', *ELH*, 78 (2011), 433-56 (p. 436).

relationship between man, nature, and architectural structure, the pageant becomes comparable to Heidegger's dwelling place and replaces Pointz Hall as 'the site of belonging' in the novel.[115] This is not to say that the pageant itself is an ideal model for home, for Woolf is certainly not proposing to relocate society to a rudimentary theatre in the woods. What is significant is that the unifying principles that underpin the natural architecture of Miss La Trobe's performance space help Woolf to reimagine a form of everyday life from a 'dwelling perspective', which enables a more organic understanding of 'built' space.[116] Viewing the rural landscape as a prime resource for rebuilding society, Woolf is able to look beyond the architectural destruction of the impending war – a point to which I return in Sections 4 and 5 of this chapter.

3.2 The Cesspool

From the opening line of the novel, Woolf signals the precarious position of Pointz Hall in the progressing built environment: 'It was a summer's night and they were talking, in the big room with the windows open to the garden, about the cesspool' (*BA* 3). Woolf consciously evokes what Kore-Schröder refers to as the characteristic 'mellow afternoon glow' of the country house novel, only to undercut the romance of her imagery with reference to a form of sanitation inextricably tied to human bodily waste.[117] Through this method of 'antiromantic deflation', to borrow Zwerdling's phrase, Woolf heavily ironises what Patrick Parrinder suggests might otherwise look 'like a recipe for complacent nostalgia'.[118] Indeed, far from evoking the country house as a rural retreat in wartime, Woolf exposes the historical contingencies of what is already in 1939 an outmoded form of domesticity.

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[115] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 226.
[116] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, p. 173.
[117] Kore-Schröder, '"The Lovely Wreckage of the Past"', p. 266.
[118] Zwerdling, *Woolf and the Real World*, p. 315; Patrick Parrinder, *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from Its Origins to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 310.

Just as Rhys links the public toilet to a particular moment of urban modernity, so too does Woolf associate the cesspool with modern architectural development. When, in 1919, she and Leonard bought Monk's House in Sussex it was by all accounts 'a primitive cottage', with no electricity or running water.[119] By 1925, they had set about renovating the dated interior, installing the first of what was to be a number of indoor bathrooms and lavatories. Victoria Rosner argues that these amenities, along with the 'new cesspool' that catered for the increased flow of water, 'symbolised a modernity that [Woolf] was eager to embrace'.[120] It is therefore hard to agree with Sara Crangle's contention that the cesspool is an 'antiquated, out-of-date' innovation that is deployed in *Between the Acts* as a symbol of 'regressive progression'.[121] Rather, the cesspool represents a progressing form of architectural modernity in which Pointz Hall lags behind.

A useful connection can be drawn between Woolf's use of the cesspool in *Between the Acts* and the function of the women's toilet in 'The Ladies Lavatory' and 'The Watering Place' – each an excellent example of the toilet modernism discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. As Heather Levy has emphasised, these critically neglected texts reveal Woolf's working through of 'the fricative interrelationships between class, lesbian desire, and the occupation of public and private space'.[122] It is debateable as to how central lesbian desire really is to Woolf's short story fragments, but there is no doubting that the toilet itself is an important site of social critique, and one that helps to unveil Woolf's response to the changing cultural milieu of the modern English seaside.

As Lara Feigel and Alexandra Harris observe, cheaper and more efficient rail links in the 1930s led to an increase in travel amongst the working- and lower-middle-

[119] Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 423.
[120] Rosner, 'Virginia Woolf and Monk's House', p. 184.
[121] Sara Crangle, 'Woolf's Cesspoolage: On Waste and Resignation', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 40.1 (2011), 1-20 (p. 2).
[122] Levy, '"These Ghost Figures of Distorted Passion"', p. 32.

classes, turning England's seaside towns into heaving pleasure beaches.[123] Although Woolf loved the English seaside, associating it with her childhood holidays in St. Ives, 'The Ladies Lavatory' and 'The Watering Place' reveal her anxieties about this modern moment of coastal change. Her distaste for the brash gossip of the women she encountered in the Brighton Grill in 1941 reappears in her derogatory representation of the towns inhabitants in 'The Watering Place', who are described as 'a frail shell fish population' with a 'shelly look', 'as if the real animal had been extracted on the point of a pin and only the shell remained'.[124] Whereas Bowen invokes the shell in *The Heat of the Day* as a potent symbol of what is lacking from domestic life in wartime, Woolf here alludes to the fake and 'frivolous' character of lower-middle-class society on the coast.[125]

Indeed, the men of the town in their 'gaiters' and 'riding breeches' are toy-like instead of looking like 'real sailors or real sportsmen', and the women, in 'trousers and their little high heeled shoes', totter about as commodified beings similar to the 'beautifully dressed' (*GMM* 16) mannequins in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*.[126] If the reader catches a whiff of Woolf's snobbery here, then this is reinforced by the 'smell of fish' that the narrator describes as pervading the town and its eating establishments.[127] The smell even finds its way into the ladies lavatory, mixing with the 'queer fishy smell' already found there.[128] According to Levy, this description is 'remarkably sexual' and serves to eroticise the story and charge the narrative with lesbian desire.[129] Although the lavatory attendant who appears in 'The Ladies Lavatory' is excised from 'The Watering Place', Levy argues that the narrator's observations of the women in the lavatory, and

[123] Lara Feigel and Alexandra Harris, 'Introduction', in *Modernism on Sea: Art and Culture at the British Seaside*, ed. by Lara Feigel and Alexandra Harris, 2nd edn (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 1-12 (p. 6).
[124] Woolf, 'The Watering Place', p. 291.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid., p. 292.
[129] Levy, '"These Ghost Figures of Distorted Passion"', p. 39.

indeed the intoxicating smell, are still filtered through the perspective of the attendant, who is invisible yet still present in the text.[130]

Calling attention to female bodily fluids, this 'queer fishy smell' of the lavatory indeed sexualises the space as Woolf alludes to the inner workings of the female genitals.[131] Yet surely this is not purely a matter of erotic desire as Levy suggests. The pungent smell of the lavatory in 'The Watering Place' is strongly linked to Woolf's class-based scorn, which she directs towards the lower-middle-class characters in the story. Such is discernible in the way she intersperses the fragments of gossip with the gushing and flushing of the toilet bowl: at this point in the story the three women who have entered the lavatory have finished using the cubicle and are now busying themselves at the mirror 'with their powder puffs and little red tablets'.[132] The reader can thus logically assume that the noises coming from the other side of the door are those made by the lavatory attendant as she cleans the facilities. Woolf's repeated allusions to this seemingly thorough cleaning routine thus suggest that the pungency of the lavatory has more to do with the lower-middle-class women who occupy it than with the bodily fluids expelled there.

Woolf's contempt for the lower-middle-classes is even more apparent in 'The Ladies Lavatory', when she describes the words spoken by the gossiping women as themselves having 'a strong savour of decaying fish', implying that their talk of Bert and his fornications with women is somewhat distasteful.[133] Although Woolf removes this description from 'The Watering Place', her criticism of these women remains through her carefully constructed narrative. Interspersing fragments of the women's conversation with the gushing and flushing sounds emerging from the cubicle, Woolf suggests that their gossiping is as central to the public lavatory soundscape as the toilet itself. Through

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[130] Ibid.
[131] Woolf, 'The Watering Place', p. 292.
[132] Ibid., p. 291.
[133] Woolf, 'The Ladies Lavatory', p. 199.

structuring the narrative in this way, Woolf essentially likens her characters' conversation to bodily waste.

Characteristically ambivalent, however, in her representation of social class – as I discuss further in Section 3.3 of this chapter – Woolf's denigration of the déclassé middle-classes is tempered in 'The Ladies Lavatory' by her attempt to negotiate the obscure working-class life of the female lavatory attendant. As the narrator remarks, 'nothing is known' of the 'private lives' of lavatory attendants and their 'memories […] have never been written'.[134] Woolf positions the lavatory attendant in a strikingly liminal space, describing her 'part' in life as being 'different from any other. It must be cut up: disconnected. […] The door must be always opening: and shutting'.[135] Just as doors function as important literal and figurative threshold spaces in Bowen's fiction, they here represent the marginal social status of the lavatory attendant. Although she is permitted free access in and out of the door that separates the 'two compartments' of the lavatory (the toilet cubicle and the wash basin area), she is never described as using the door that leads out of the lavatory and into the restaurant.[136] Like Sasha in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Woolf's lavatory attendant perpetually inhabits a semi-public, semi-private space and her life does not extend beyond the confines of its four walls.

Despite removing all the direct references to the lavatory attendant from the typescript of 'The Watering Place', Woolf does not withdraw entirely from her original attempt to uncover the obscure private life of this liminal social figure. As well as retaining the gushing and flushing sounds made by the invisible attendant as she goes about her work, Woolf also elaborates these portions of the text so that they take on a more lyrical and metaphorical significance. Whereas the gossiping women are interrupted in 'The Ladies Lavatory' by 'the climactic flush of water in one of the compartments', in

[134] Ibid., p. 198.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.

'The Watering Place' they are 'interrupted as by the surge of an indrawing tide'.[137] When the toilet next 'gushe[s]', this tide 'foam[s] and withdr[aws]', and when the final 'great gush of water' erupts, the narrator comments on how

> The tide in the watering place seems to be for ever drawing and withdrawing. It uncovers these little fish; it sluices over them. It withdraws, and there are the fish again, smelling very strong of some queer fishy smell that seems to permeate the whole watering place.[138]

Levy interprets this description as the lavatory attendant's 'sensual experience' of the public toilet – specifically her 'erotic absorption in the atmosphere and the women'.[139] There is indeed a sensual undertone in the image of the 'little fish' and the 'tide' that 'sluices over them', yet the extent to which this imagery is erotic is again a matter of contention.[140]

To my mind, the tidal imagery is more revealing in what it says about the cultural significance of the public toilet and the social identity of the lavatory attendant herself. As David Bradshaw suggests, the sea tends to function in Woolf's work 'as an emblem of the silenced and marginalised position of women'.[141] In 'The Ladies Lavatory', this function of the sea is more obvious, as Woolf describes the lavatory attendant as 'a piece of seaweed that floats […] this way, then that way'.[142] Unlike the tide of women who breeze in and then breeze out again, the lavatory attendant floats in an eddy, unable to leave the confines of the semi-public, semi-private space that defines her working-class life. By reading 'The Watering Place' as a palimpsestic reworking of 'The Ladies Lavatory', the tidal waves of the toilet bowl might be read as a sustained figurative

[137] Ibid.; Woolf, 'The Watering Place', p. 291.
[138] Woolf, 'The Watering Place', pp. 291, 292.
[139] Levy, '"These Ghost Figures of Distorted Passion"', p. 39.
[140] Woolf, 'The Watering Place', p. 292.
[141] David Bradshaw, '"The Purest Ecstasy": Virginia Woolf and the Sea', in *Modernism on Sea*, ed. by Feigel and Harris, pp. 101-115 (p. 101).
[142] Woolf, 'The Ladies Lavatory', p. 199.

allusion to the perpetual marginality of a woman whose life is spent amidst the social ebbs and flows of the public toilet. Although the lavatory attendant is herself invisible, the gushing and flushing of the toilet, and the imagery of advancing and receding waves, are repeated reminders of her necessary presence. Without her to keep the space clean and functional, the lower-middle-class women might not keep visiting the toilet to gossip and powder their noses before they return to the restaurant for their fish lunch.

Typed up on the verso side of the pages of the late typescript of *Between the Acts*, 'The Watering Place' reveals Woolf's continued fascination with toilet spaces and the fertile opportunities they provide for negotiating questions of class identity, bodily politics, and the history of the everyday. Although Levy points out that these literary works most likely share the same pieces of paper because of a wartime shortage of resources, it is highly fitting that they should do so, given their shared preoccupations with spaces linked to human bodily waste.[143] Just as Woolf utilises the seaside lavatory to interrogate interwar coastal change, so too does she employ the cesspool in *Between the Acts* as a means of commenting on the equally changing social and economic climate of the English countryside in the mid-century.

The cesspool is directly associated with the 'building of a car factory and of an aerodrome in the neighbourhood', which has brought with it an influx of 'new-comers' who are 'bringing the old houses up to date, adding bathrooms' (*BA* 55, 54). Although Woolf hints through her characters' preoccupations with the cesspool site that Pointz Hall will eventually be plumbed into this new sewerage system, she sets the house in strong contrast to the renovated houses with their modern indoor plumbing. With its 'crack[ed]' boiler and bedroom floors still marked with 'a white circle […] where the slop pail had stood by the washstand' (*BA* 141, 52), Pointz Hall is figured as an outmoded building that fails to keep up with architectural modernity.

[143] Levy, '"These Ghost Figures of Distorted Passion"', pp. 41-42.

The chosen site for the cesspool is even more revealing in the way it complicates Woolf's representation of the rural landscape and the house's position within it. As old Bart Oliver explains, the site is 'plainly marked, [with] the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough' (*BA* 3). Rather typical here is Woolf's repeated use of semi-colons, which helps foreground the different periods of history concentrated within the land. As Leaska suggests, Woolf is 'stylistically exceptional' in this respect, her use of semi-colons frequently carrying the function of '*deletion transformation*', whereby they indicate that 'the beginning part of the sentence has been deleted from its subsequent segments'.[144] In this instance, Woolf deletes repeated reference to the scars themselves so that the sentence as a whole becomes structured, like the land itself, through the accretion of different historical time periods.

Such a stylistic method helps to construct, at a textual level, a spatial palimpsest, which 'in its temporal reach may well put different things in one place: memories of what there was before'.[145] Bart Oliver's palimpsestic view of the cesspool site is formally reflected through Woolf's method of deletion transformation, which serves to emphasise the spatial and temporal progression of modernity. Whilst in Rhys's work the palimpsest appears as the 'urban imaginary' Huyssen describes, in Woolf's novel it is a specifically rural imaginary that is constructed.[146] Such a narrative mode looks very like Boym's reflective nostalgia, for Woolf's spatial palimpsest accordingly 'cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space'.[147] Moreover, her method of 'antiromantic deflation' parallels the 'ironic and humorous' nature of reflective nostalgia.[148] Just as Boym argues that it 'reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one

[144] Leaska, *Pointz Hall*, p. 20.
[145] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 7.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, p. 49.
[148] Zwerdling, *Woolf and the Real World*, p. 315; Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, p. 49.

another', so too does Woolf's irony call attention to her self-conscious disruption of the 'mellow afternoon glow' of the country house novel tradition.[149]

Consequently, Woolf emphasises that the country house is not a possible solution to the domestic crisis of wartime, particularly in the way she draws attention to the Olivers' 'new money' status.[150] Woolf belittles the family's position within Pointz Hall's genealogical history, underscoring their severed connection from the original landed classes: they have 'no connection with the Warings, the Elveys, the Mannerings or the Burnets', and have occupied the house for '[o]nly something over a hundred and twenty years' (*BA* 5). Woolf was well aware of the disrupted lineage of the landed classes. In her journal account of her holiday at Netherhampton House in 1903, she reflects on its current proprietors, the Furses, who bear no relation to the old Pembroke family, but who have thankfully 'done their decorating &c. in entire sympathy with the character of the place'.[151] Likewise, in her account of Blo' Norton Hall in 1906, she considers the damaging ramifications of this declining lineage, explaining that the Hall is now 'too inconsiderable to restore' and therefore 'go[es] on unheeded & untended'.[152]

Woolf draws attention to the deteriorating condition of country house culture in the twentieth century, a time when the landed classes bore the brunt of the agricultural depression that clouded the end of the nineteenth century and, confronted with higher taxation and increased death duties, were faced with economic ruin and thus forced to sell off their land.[153] Although Pointz Hall has not yet reached this point of financial ruin, Woolf emphasises that it is no longer a centre of agricultural production and instead holds onto its cultural status as a landed estate through Giles's income as a city 'stockbroker' (*BA* 4). Ironically, Giles is only ever at Pointz Hall 'for the week-end' and is

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[149] Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, p. 49; Kore-Schröder, '"The Lovely Wreckage of the Past"', p. 266.
[150] MacKay, 'Putting the House in Order', p. 244.
[151] Virginia Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals 1897-1909*, ed. by Mitchell A. Leaska (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), pp. 187-88.
[152] Ibid., p. 309.
[153] Stevenson, *British Society*, p. 332.

therefore no more a member of the landed classes than are the bathroom-building 'new-comers' to the area, or indeed the 'unattached floating residents' working at the car factory (*BA* 34, 54, 55).

Woolf further undermines the Olivers through her ironic representation of Pointz Hall's interior, where their dubious family history is at large: a portrait at the top of the main stairs displays only 'an ancestress of sorts' and a bullet in a glass display case is a reminder of the heroics carried out in the Battle of Waterloo, not by an Oliver, but rather '[t]he butler' who 'had married a lady's maid' (*BA* 6). Woolf likewise draws attention to the way in which the Olivers exploit the historical features of the house in an attempt to promote their social standing as country estate proprietors. This is most evident in her representation of the 'carved arch' (*BA* 24), a remaining feature of the pre-Reformation chapel that has since become the kitchen larder. The arch remains a prestigious symbol of Pointz Hall's antiquity and the Olivers frequently exploit its cultural value by making it a key destination for the house's visitors.[154] Even Mrs Manresa expects to be shown it, having promised William Dodge that the family would 'show him the – the – […] What is it all you learned gentlemen rave about? An arch? Norman? Saxon?' (*BA* 30).

Roe views such ironic representation of Pointz Hall's interior as a parody of Woolf's original intention to model the structure of the novel on the architecture of the house, suggesting that 'the house still functions as an "architectural" structure or container, but its architectural features have little to do with its interiors'.[155] Indeed, Woolf's irony points towards her 'awareness of change and the importance of the power of circumstance'.[156] Moreover, her self-conscious narrative method resists the temptations of restorative nostalgia, cutting through the attempt to 'rebuild the mythical

[154] Kore-Schröder, '"The Lovely Wreckage of the Past"', p. 269.
[155] Roe, *Writing and Gender*, p. 150.
[156] Snaith, *Woolf: Public and Private*, p. 144.

place called home' by instead providing an 'ironic, inconclusive and fragmentary' look into the architectural past.[157]

3.3 New Houses

Much of the ambivalence surrounding Woolf's representation of domestic architecture derives from her conflicting feelings about architectural modernisation and developing domestic technologies. Although she relished the additions of bathrooms and modern plumbing in Monk's House, she remains critical of the modernised and newly-built houses in *Between the Acts*. MacKay contends that in showing 'some anxiety about the values of the new postwar England, about the likely materialism of its manifestations of social justice', Woolf's novel is comparable to early modernist works like Forster's *Howards End* (1910).[158] Indeed, Woolf's disparaging remarks about '[t]hat hideous new house at Pyes corner! What an eyesore! And those bungalows! – have you seen 'em?' (*BA* 55), echo Forster's bemoaning of the 'old house[s]' in London being demolished and replaced by 'block[s] of flats, constructed with extreme cheapness'.[159]

Moreover, Forster's anxieties about the mechanisation of civilisation remain discernible in Woolf's vision of postwar domestic architecture, which shares Rhys's concerns about commodified technologies in *Good Morning, Midnight*. In Forster's chilling dystopian short story, 'The Machine Stops' (1909), the human race is living in a subterranean world where there are 'buttons and switches everywhere – buttons to call for food, for music, for clothing. There was the hot-bath button […]. There was the cold-bath button. There was the button that produced literature'.[160] This fear about technological mechanisation, which appears in Rhys's novel as the urban machine of Sasha's nightmare (see Section 4.3 of Chapter Two), reappears in the predictions of *The*

[157] Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, p. 50.
[158] MacKay, 'Putting the House in Order', p. 242.
[159] E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Penguin, [1910] 1989), p. 59.
[160] E. M. Forster, 'The Machine Stops' (1909), in *Collected Short Stories* (London: Penguin, 1954), pp. 109-46 (pp. 112-13).

Times newspaper in *Between the Acts*: 'Homes will be built. Each flat with its refrigerator, in the crannied wall. Each of us a free man; plates washed by machinery; not an aeroplane to vex us; all liberated; made whole. . . .' (*BA* 131). Yet what is seen as a dystopian extreme in Forster's work and an acute source of uncanniness in *Good Morning, Midnight*, is here ridiculed by Woolf, as she simply mocks the notion that a society founded on architectural uniformity and technological dependence could ever foster a substantive sense of communal belonging.

Despite finding the prospect of cheap flats, suburban bungalows, and increasing mechanisation just as unpalatable as Forster and Rhys, Woolf hesitates in her representation of these architectural structures. Not only are they situated out of sight from Pointz Hall – from in its hollow, the house looks out only at 'flat, field-parcelled land' (*BA* 38) – Woolf's narrator does not directly describe them. The car factory, aerodrome, modernised houses, and bungalows are only visible indirectly, either through the newspaper report of *The Times*, or else in the disparaging comments made by the pageant audience. Such narrative obfuscation implies Woolf's reticence to negotiate these sorts of buildings directly; as MacKay suggests, 'Woolf simply does not want to deal with the uglification and vulgarizing of the countryside'.[161] Crucially though, Woolf does not ignore the reality of such architectural development. As Parrinder notes, the undisturbed view afforded from Pointz Hall is ironic, given that it is only possible due to the house being located in the hollow, and is therefore linked to Woolf's critique of the house's architectural design.[162] As with Rhys's indirect negotiation of the dominating architectural pavilions of the Paris Exhibition (see Section 4.3 of Chapter Two), Woolf reflects narrative attention onto these vulgar forms of architectural modernity through her characters' responses to them, rather than representing their material forms directly within the narrative.

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[161] MacKay, 'Putting the House in Order', p. 245
[162] Parrinder, *Nation and Novel*, p. 310.

There is, therefore, a marked ambivalence in Woolf's negotiation of architectural and technological modernity. On the one hand, she welcomes the progressive technologies of indoor plumbing and sewerage and yet, on the other, she sharply dismisses 1930s architecture and its associated mechanical uniformity. Recently, critics have begun to question this aspect of Woolf's work, complicating past accounts that have tended to see her novels primarily in negative relation to technology.[163] Indeed, Woolf enjoyed the cultural benefits of a number of machines, finding motor cars, gramophones, and telephones to be liberating and convenient advancements in household technologies.[164]

In *Between the Acts*, Woolf reflects on the improvements such technologies have made to life in Pointz Hall through her representation of Mitchell's boy delivering by motorbike the fish that Isa orders for lunch over the telephone. The delivery boy's vehicle is represented by Woolf in terms of speed and efficiency; indeed, the narrator seems impressed by his 'increased' delivery route 'over the hill at Bickley' and 'round by Waythorn, Roddam, and Pyeminster', sharply contrasting these movements with the stasis of Mrs. Sands the cook, who 'ha[s] never in all her fifty years been over the hill, nor wanted to' (*BA* 23). Technology is shown to be an asset to the domestic routines of the house, allowing fresh fish to be easily ordered and delivered the same day.[165]

What thus seems to lie at the heart of Woolf's technological ambivalence is a problem of social class and taste. Woolf's love of motor cars, gramophones, and telephones was, of course, possible because she and Leonard were able to afford them.

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[163] See Bonnie Kime Scott, 'The Subversive Mechanics of Woolf's Gramophone in *Between the Acts*', in *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. Caughie, pp. 97-113 (p. 102).
[164] Ibid., pp. 101-02.
[165] This cultural appreciation of technology for the speed and efficiency it provides in daily routine is shared by some of Woolf's modernist contemporaries. For instance, in a letter to Constanza Fasola, Aldous Huxley describes his typewriter as a product of 'the ingenuity of civilised man' which allows him to 'write twice as fast, ten times as legibly and with a quarter of the fatigue' as do 'those barbarous and dirty instruments, pen and ink'. Aldous Huxley, Letter to Constanza Fasola, 21 October 1918, in *Selected Letters*, ed. by James Sexton (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007), p. 75. There are also obvious connections with Forster's ambivalent response to the motor car in *Howard's End*. See Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, Chapter 2, 'Through Modernity: Forster's Flux', pp. 46-79 (p. 73).

Moreover, the large volumes of classical music they played on their gramophone and the array of luxury cars they owned suggest a pointedly upper-middle-class way of life.[166] Reflecting on Woolf's ambivalent response to household technologies, Kore-Schröder contends that she was 'without doubt a snob', and such snobbery, like that directed towards the lower-middle-class women in 'The Ladies Lavatory' and 'The Watering Place', can indeed be felt in the disparaging comments about the 'hideous new house' and 'bungalows' (*BA* 55) in *Between the Acts*.[167]

Woolf's snobbery coincides with the growing critique of countryside development in England in the first half of the twentieth century. Between 1919 and 1939, Britain saw a 47 per cent increase in urban development, meaning that suburbanisation became an increasing threat to the countryside.[168] As Barry Goodchild observes, bungalows were seen as 'a particular villain' in the rural context, owing to their 'horizontal lines and tendency to consume more land'.[169] Yet, because many families actually 'aspired to this new style of life', it was the privileged few who voiced a 'critique of suburbia', which 'was often little more than an exercise in snobbery. It was an attack on the supposedly bad taste of the masses'.[170] Unlike the motor car and the gramophone, then, it is the technology associated with this suburbanisation – 'Each flat with its refrigerator, in the crannied wall' (*BA* 131) – that bears the brunt of Woolf's snobbish critique.

Woolf's ambivalent feelings about the technological future of English domesticity are further complicated by her conflicting desire for a less hierarchical postwar society. In 'The Leaning Tower' (1940), she describes a society with 'no more towers and no more

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[166] See Scott, 'The Subversive Mechanics of Woolf's Gramophone', p. 101; Leena Kore-Schröder, '"Reflections in a Motor Car": Virginia Woolf's Phenomenological Relations of Time and Space', in *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, ed. by Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 131-47 (pp. 133, 140).
[167] Kore-Schröder, '"The Lovely Wreckage of the Past"', p. 257.
[168] Barry Goodchild, *Homes, Cities and Neighbourhoods: Planning and the Residential Landscapes of Modern Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 54-55.
[169] Ibid., p. 55.
[170] Ibid.

classes' and where everyone will 'stand […] on the common ground': 'There will be no more upper classes; middle classes; lower classes. All classes will be merged in one class'.[171] Placing the public lending library at the centre of her societal vision, Woolf suggests that a classless society can be formed through the free circulation of books, whereby each individual can 'trespass freely and fearlessly' into the 'common ground' of literature.[172] Crucially, Woolf feels that this towerless society will have profound implications for the modern English novel, for the 'novel of a classless and towerless world should be a better novel than the old novel. The novelist will have more interesting people to describe'.[173] At the time of delivering this lecture in 1940, Woolf was well underway with *Between the Acts* and it is precisely this more inclusive form of society that she attempts to imagine in the performance space of Miss La Trobe's pageant-play.

4. THE PAGEANT

Faced with an impending future of catastrophic architectural destruction and postwar suburbanisation, Woolf is drawn in her representation of the pageant to an increasingly primitivist conception of being in place in the world. As Louise Westling suggests, 'it seems more and more that the only certainties' in the novel are the 'elemental rhythms of the nonhuman community – the primeval stability of returning seasons, the creative bubbling ooze of the cesspool or the mud in the lily pond, the return of the swallows each year from their southern migrations'.[174] Indeed, Woolf's questioning of modernity's crisis of home, belonging, and identity seeks to embrace the fullness of everyday life in the pageant, asking how a self-conscious awareness of the place of humanity within the larger assemblage of the material world might provide the stable foundations for a new form of English domesticity that will outlast the damages of war.

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[171] Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower', pp. 121-22.
[172] Ibid., p. 125.
[173] Ibid., p. 122.
[174] Louise Westling, 'Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World', *New Literary History*, 30.4 (1999), 855-75 (p. 867).

Esty's recent work on pageantry and late modernism has made important headway in renewing critical interest in this 'antiquarian, distinctly unmodernist genre'.[175] Tracking its origins back to the Elizabethan era, Esty proceeds to show how it is the 'distinctively new twentieth-century genre', founded and popularised by Louis Napoleon Parker in the Edwardian period, that is reappropriated in the likes of Forster's *England's Pleasant Land* (1940) and indeed in Woolf's *Between the Acts*.[176] Given their Anglocentric and anthropological concerns, however, these late modernists significantly revise the Parkerian model of English pageantry by severing the connection between the local and the international, the provincial and the imperial. Whereas Parker aimed to use 'local attachments' to inspire 'colonial action', the 'rehearsal of island history' in Woolf's pageant is instead 'a beginning and an end in itself'.[177]

What Woolf does preserve is Parker's original commitment to the public performance of civic rituals, his use of choral voices and an ensemble cast, and the pageant's outdoor locality, which generated a strong sense of place: all characteristic elements that help to reassert a sense of home, communal belonging, and English identity amid the unfolding crisis of the war. The dramatic form of the pageant likewise enables Woolf to push the textual limits of the novel, for the choral, musical, and natural elements of the performance space combine to provide a narrative energy akin to Braidotti's conception of words as elements that 'grow, split and multiply, sprouting new roots or side branches and resonating with all kinds of echoes and musical variations'.[178] Woolf is consequently able to open up a new narrative space – or 'textual location', as Esty puts it – in which to reimagine a more inclusive form of everyday life.[179]

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[175] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 17.
[176] Ibid., pp. 56-57.
[177] Ibid., pp. 59, 61.
[178] Braidotti, *Transformations*, p. 175.
[179] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 96.

4.1 Temporality

Not only does Woolf's anthropological primitivism collapse the connection between the local and the colonial, it also departs from the Parkerian model in its temporality. Parker was intent on the pageant not representing any era later than the mid-seventeenth century and was also committed to the idea that pageantry should resist modernity by presenting English history through 'a series of chronological episodes' that 'project the absence of change'.[180] Always aware of, and responding to, the contingencies of history, however, Woolf inverts these principles in *Between the Acts*, so as to emphasise the inevitability of change and progress. As Zwerdling notes, Miss La Trobe's playlets, which run from the Elizabethan era right through to the present day, 'emphasize the gradual but persistent decay of the sense of community'.[181] Woolf thus uses the pageant to engage directly with the developing history of crisis that lies behind the contemporary moment.

The scene that depicts the family home in the Victorian era demonstrates this point particularly well. Here, Mr. Budge, playing a Victorian policeman, conjures a picture of cosy domesticity:

> Don't I see the fire […] blazing ever higher? In kitchen; and nursery; drawing-room and library? That's the fire of 'Ome. And see! Our Jane has brought the tea. Now children where's the toys? Mama, your knitting, quick. For here […] comes the bread-winner, home from the city, home from the counter, home from the shop. 'Mama, a cup o' tea.' 'Children, gather round my knee. I will read aloud […]'. (*BA* 123-4)

Like Bowen's representation of the electric fire in *The Heat of the Day* (see Section 4.2 of Chapter One), Woolf here complicates Heidegger's notion of the family hearth as 'the

[180] Ibid., p. 59.
[181] Zwerdling, *Woolf and the Real World*, p. 317.

site of being-homely'.[182] Whereas Bowen represents the fire as an unruly agent of the wartime domestic interior, Woolf parodies the stereotypical ritual of nineteenth-century family life to expose what Davidoff and Hall refer to as the 'ideological constructs' of Victorian domesticity.[183]

Mrs Lynn Jones in the pageant audience is particularly captivated by Budge's benevolent tableau, but what she initially thinks of as 'beautiful' soon prompts her to consider whether there might be something '"unhygienic" about the Home?' (*BA* 124). Signalling attention to this particular term, itself 'a Victorian coinage', Woolf draws a link with the cultural paranoia of the age, manifest in the Victorians' moral obsession with health and hygiene.[184] Cutting through the idea of home as a spiritual and physical shelter, Mrs Jones ruminates on the inevitable nature of change and progress:

> Time went on and on like the hands of the kitchen clock […]. If they had met with no resistance, she mused, nothing wrong, they'd still be going round and round and round. The Home would have remained; […] Change had to come, she said to herself, or there'd have been yards and yards of Papa's beard, of Mama's knitting. Nowadays her son-in-law was clean shaven. Her daughter had a refrigerator… (*BA* 124-5)

The reference to the refrigerator here links to Woolf's anxiety about the vulgarity of postwar domestic technology. Not only dispelling the myth of the Victorian familial ideal, Mrs Jones highlights that change and technological development, no matter how necessary, do not always equate to social improvement. In the novel, the refrigerator does not represent, like the motor car or telephone, a better quality of life in terms of

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[182] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn*, p. 105.
[183] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 33.
[184] Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, p. 109. See José Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 54-60.

hygiene and efficiency; rather, it becomes a recurring symbol of social homogeneity and mechanical dependency.

Woolf's temporal reworking of the Parkerian pageant thus contributes to the ironic and critical tone of the novel. As Esty observes, while Woolf mines 'the resources of the insular literary tradition, she takes obvious delight in parodying its conventions'; a strategy that reaches its climax in the final stages of the play, when Miss La Trobe attempts to 'douche' her audience 'with present time: reality' (*BA* 129).[185] The audience is suddenly faced with an empty stage filled with an unsettling 'ten mins. of present time', which is then followed by a short scene in which 'Civilisation […] in ruins' is seemingly rebuilt out of bricks (*BA* 129, 130). Actors then appear onstage, bearing all manner of cracked and broken reflective objects in which 'the audience s[ees] themselves, not whole by any means, but at any rate sitting still' (*BA* 133). A mechanical voice subsequently emerges from the gramophone beseeching the audience to look at themselves 'and ask how's this wall, the great wall, which we call, perhaps miscall, civilisation, to be built by (here the mirrors flicked and flashed) orts, scraps and fragments like ourselves?' (*BA* 135).

This extraordinary combination of scenes is commonly read by critics as Miss La Trobe's attempt to unveil the fractured reality of twentieth-century life. Zwerdling, for instance, interprets them as the climax of Woolf's representation of disintegrating civilisation, contending that they compound 'the utter fragmentation of life in the modern period, in which the medieval sense of a human community has finally been shattered'.[186] Harris has more recently challenged this sort of reading by arguing that in being 'about a continuous English way of life that now threatens to break apart,' the pageant finally asks 'how it might be possible to hold the pieces together'.[187] Detecting a

[185] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 92.
[186] Zwerdling, *Woolf and the Real World*, p. 319.
[187] Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, p. 109.

more redemptive aspect in Woolf's representation of civilisation, Harris's observation is nevertheless misplaced as it suggests that Woolf is endorsing a continuation of English life in its current state.

Hillis Miller gets closer to unpacking the contradictory elements of these scenes in the pageant, suggesting that '*Between the Acts* dramatizes not so much the problem of interpreting a repetitive sequence which already exists as the problem of adding new elements to such a sequence'.[188] Indeed, part of the problem with Woolf's conflicted representation of England stems from her deep suspicions about the patriarchal and imperialist values that helped structure the British nation. In sifting through the scraps, orts, and fragments of this nation, then, she does not simply attempt to hold the fragments together, or indeed reassemble them into their previously problematic form. Rather, she looks to salvage the more sustaining aspects of English national culture and use them to rebuild the scraps, orts, and fragments of society into an entirely new form of 'towerless' society.[189]

4.2 Nature

Central to Woolf's reimagination of English life is her primitivist belief in the sustaining resources of the natural world. Throughout the novel, she underscores the need for social interaction and community, emphasising that although 'painful, it was essential. There must be society' (*BA* 27). Nature plays a key role in Woolf's vision of this society; birds, cows, trees, wind, and rain interact with the pageant audience and help to establish the Heideggerian condition of *Mitsein*, of 'being-with' (*BT* 149) in the world (see Section 4.1 of Chapter One). A number of eco-critical readings have focused attention on this vibrant intermingling of the human and non-human worlds in the novel.[190] Westling, for

[188] Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition*, p. 203.
[189] Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower', p. 122.
[190] See Louise Westling, 'Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World'; Isabel M. Andrés, '"O Let's Keep Together!": The Blurring of Individual Consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*', *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts*, 7.3 (2006)

instance, takes an eco-critical and phenomenological approach, emphasising that the characters in *Between the Acts* 'are part of an interwoven, participatory community that lives not just *on* the land but *within* it'.[191]

More recent developments in new materialist theory serve to enhance this sort of approach to Woolf's representation of nature by foregrounding the agential capacity of the non-human world. Bennett's theory of vital materialism is particularly useful as it enables 'a more radical displacement of the human subject' than phenomenology allows, by 'undo[ing] the conceit that humanity is the sole or ultimate wellspring of agency' in the world.[192] Approaching *Between the Acts* with this theoretical precept in mind helps to account better for the ways in which Woolf's late modernist turn to a novel 'rooted in the local ecology' resists, as Esty suggests, being a return to a 'prelapsarian point of origin', and instead reimagines everyday life in wartime by 'gather[ing] into one sustaining narrative the expressive capacities that she associates with her island home'.[193]

Moreover, Bennett provides a useful vocabulary for discussing Woolf's representation of everyday life. She argues that, '[i]f human culture is inextricably enmeshed with vibrant, nonhuman agencies […], then it seems that the appropriate unit of analysis for democratic theory is neither the individual human nor an exclusively human collective but the (ontologically heterogeneous) "public"'.[194] Bennett borrows this term from Barad, who uses it to describe the '"intra-action" of humans and nonhumans'.[195] By this, Barad means the '*mutual constitution of entangled agencies*. That is, in contrast to the usual "interaction," which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct

<https://blackboard.lincoln.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/users/dmeyerdinkgrafe/archive/andres.html> [accessed 04 November 2014].

[191] Westling, 'Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World', p. 866.

[192] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. 30.

[193] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 102.

[194] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. 108.

[195] Ibid., p. 152.

agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action'.[196] The 'public' is thus akin to Deleuze's and Guattari's 'assemblage' (see Section 4.2 of Chapter One), which consists of complex networks of mutually implicating human and non-human agencies.

Braidotti's concept of 'becoming' offers a useful starting point for interrogating this notion of the 'public' assemblage, for it describes the process of 'emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the "outside"'.[197] Significantly, Braidotti draws extensively on Woolf's work to demonstrate her theory, suggesting that Woolf is a writer 'of multiple and intransitive becomings, in-between ages, sexes, elements, characters. Woolf's texts enact a flow of positions, a crossing of boundaries, an overflowing into a plenitude of affects where life is asserted to its highest degree'.[198] Indeed, in *Between the Acts*, four natural elements in particular – cows, swallows, the wind, and the rain – enact these flows, crossings, and overflowings, helping to construct what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'blocks of becoming' of the world.[199]

During a scene change in the Restoration playlet, Woolf's narrator describes the swaying movement of the cows in the fields, which combines with the rhythm of the gramophone and the sinking sun to create a 'triple melody' that enfolds the audience who sit 'gazing; and beheld gently and approvingly without interrogation, for it seemed inevitable, a box tree in a green tub take the place of the ladies' dressing room' (*BA* 97). A number of critics have interpreted the cows as being symbolic of Freud's concept of the 'herd' or 'group' mentality, which Woolf saw at work in the tyrannical throes of fascism.[200] Valid as these readings are, nature can nevertheless be seen to play a more

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[196] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 33.
[197] Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 145.
[198] Ibid., p. 189.
[199] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 238.
[200] See Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 179.

positive role in helping to break down the barriers between Woolf's vision of society in the performance and the everyday world.

Indeed, Woolf emphasises the vital role that nature plays in initiating the intra-actions of 'public' life when the restoration playlet comes to an end and the transfixing 'illusion' generated by nature's triple melody 'peter[s] out' (*BA* 101). What is initially felt as a moment of dispelled unity is soon transformed by the active intervention of nature: calling out for a missing calf, the cows strike up a 'yearning bellow' (*BA* 101). Rather than rupturing the frame of the performance, this deep expression of animal longing blurs the gap between artifice and reality. Not only does it parallel the crisis of the human condition being depicted throughout the play, it also chimes directly with the shared communal suffering of the audience: 'The cows annihilated the gap; bridged the distance; filled the emptiness and continued the emotion' (*BA* 101-2). Man and nature are thus bound together through the intra-action of a shared 'primeval' suffering (*BA* 101).

The swallows likewise contribute to the 'becoming' of the pageant audience by actively constructing the performance space. Henley describes the birds as 'winged architects' who assist in collapsing the distinction between inside and outside space.[201] In the Victorian playlet, for example, the birds dip and dive across the rudimentary stage, helping to transform a painted sheet and set of green stakes into the lake and bulrushes that they represent: '"Look, Minnie! […] Those are real swallows!"' (*BA* 118). The wind likewise adds vitality to the play's dynamics, frequently blowing away the words of the actors (*BA* 59, 90, 91). As Pridmore-Brown suggests, this active intrusion of nature is not necessarily detrimental, as it makes the audience 'guess at' what the words might have been and 'therefore participate in the meaning of the play'.[202]

Lucio P. Ruotolo reads such interruptions of nature as a key source of 'a new and constantly shifting pattern' of life in Woolf's work, arguing that 'the unplanned intrusion

[201] Henley, '"The Whole Building of A Book"', p. 463.
[202] Pridmore-Brown, '1939-40: Of Virginia Woolf, Gramophones, and Fascism', p. 416.

of natural phenomena' in *Between the Acts* expands the boundaries of the text (both Miss La Trobe's script and the novel itself).[203] Indeed, the pageant is 'a place where swallows darting seemed, by the regularity of the trees, to make a pattern, dancing […], only not to music, but to the unheard rhythm of their own wild hearts' (*BA* 47). Through her representation of nature, Woolf is able to tap into the primeval rhythms of the English landscape. The reference to the 'pattern' the birds make resonates with Woolf's theory of everyday life in 'A Sketch of the Past'. In this essay, she connects 'moments of being' to a hidden 'pattern' of meaning that lies 'behind the cotton wool of daily life'.[204] Associating this pattern with the swallows in *Between the Acts*, Woolf suggests that the intra-actions of 'public' life (between humans, cows, swallows, and wind) are key to revealing the hidden pattern of 'becoming' in the world.

The climax of 'public' intra-action in the novel can be seen in the dramatic rain storm that coincides with Miss La Trobe's attempt to 'douche' (*BA* 129) her audience with present time. As she watches the audience fail to comprehend the empty stage, she fears that nature is distracting them and detracting from the impact of her artistic experiment: 'If only she'd a back-cloth to hang between the trees – to shut out cows, swallows, present time!' (*BA* 129). Yet, at this very moment, nature responds by delivering a 'sudden, profuse' (*BA* 129) deluge of rain. Woolf's punning use of the word 'douche' comes into full force here, as the reader realises that nature helps Miss La Trobe achieve what she could not do alone:

> Down it poured like all the people in the world weeping. Tears, Tears. Tears.
>
> 'O that our human pain could here have ending!' Isa murmured. Looking up she received two great blots of rain full in her face. They trickled down her cheeks as if they were her own tears. But they were all people's tears, weeping for

[203] Lucio P. Ruotolo, *The Interrupted Moment: A View of Woolf's Novels* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp. 1, 2.
[204] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', pp. 70, 72.

all people. Hands were raised. Here and there a parasol opened. The rain was sudden and universal. Then it stopped. From the grass rose a fresh earthly smell.

'That's done it,' sighed Miss La Trobe, wiping away the drops on her cheeks. Nature once more had taken her part. The risk she had run acting in the open air was justified. (*BA* 129-30)

The rain storm is key to Woolf's 'contemplation' of nature in the novel, exemplifying the way in which the non-human world 'pushes back in confirmation' of human becoming.[205] As Thrift suggests, 'nature speaks to us' during moments of contemplation, 'through the articulations and micro-articulations of the body-in-encounter, fixes "symbolic" thought as affect, mood, emotions and feelings': 'Nature observes and writes us, bumping intensities into our thought'.[206]

Indeed, wanting to unite her audience with a shared sense of their own being, Miss La Trobe ultimately finds success in nature's spontaneous offering. The sudden intensity of the rainstorm unites the audience in sheer corporeality, at once drenching their bodies and securing each and every person into a shared sense of the 'universal' (*BA* 129). Realising her false judgement about the supposedly distracting intrusions of nature in her play, Miss La Trobe ultimately gives thought to Woolf's conviction about the natural world, clarifying its vital and agential capacity to uncover the hidden pattern of meaning in the 'public' assemblage of everyday life. As Mrs Swithin similarly confirms, the world is '[s]heep, cows, grass, trees, ourselves – all are one. If discordant, producing harmony' (*BA* 125).

4.3 The Gramophone

The varying musical rhythms of 'Unity – Dispersity' (*BA* 144) provided by Miss La Trobe's gramophone strengthen Woolf's vision of 'public' intra-action in the novel by

[205] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, p. 68.
[206] Ibid.

reinforcing the audience's awareness of their place within the wider assemblage of everyday life. This apparent contradiction between Woolf's anthropological primitivism on the one hand, and her reliance on modern mechanical technology on the other, is a prime example of the conflicting impulses at the heart of the novel. Indeed, Woolf's representation of the gramophone has led some critics to interpret it, along with Miss La Trobe, as a symbol of authoritarian power, through which Woolf communicates her anxieties about fascist authority and group mentality.[207] A closer inspection of Woolf's representation of the music provided by the gramophone, however, illuminates the more redemptive role it plays in the pageant in helping to foster the multiple intra-actions of 'public' life.

Critical interest in Woolf and music has recently grown, following a significant period of its being 'eclipsed' by accounts of her work in relation to the visual, rather than the aural, arts.[208] As Emma Sutton points out, Melba Cuddy-Keane, Elicia Clements, and Angela Frattarolla have all developed invaluable critical vocabularies for studying the acoustics of Woolf's work.[209] Nevertheless, Sutton argues that there remains considerable work to be done on the influence of music on Woolf's politics, a point of focus which 'has the potential to illuminate her socio-political vision and formal aspects of her writing practice'.[210] Sutton's recent monograph on Woolf and classical music has convincingly developed this line of enquiry by elaborating the political and aesthetic influences of music on Woolf's literary modernism.[211]

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[207] See, for example, Pridmore-Brown, '1939-40: Of Virginia Woolf, Gramophones, and Fascism'.
[208] Emma Sutton, 'Music', in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. by Randall and Goldman, pp. 278-90 (p. 282). Interestingly, a similar interest is emerging in Bowen and Rhys studies. See Allan Hepburn, 'Acoustic Modernism: BBC Radio and *The Little Girls*', *Textual Practice*, 27.1 (2013), 143-62. Anna Snaith recently outlined her current research on Rhys and aurality in a conference paper on 'Jean Rhys and the Politics of Sound' (unpublished conference paper, *BAMS Modernism Now!*, Institute of English Studies, London, 26-28 June 2014).
[209] Sutton, 'Music', p. 284.
[210] Ibid., p. 287.
[211] Emma Sutton, *Virginia Woolf and Classical Music: Politics, Aesthetics, and Form* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

Opening up Sutton's important account to geographical understandings of music and sound has the advantage of refocusing critical attention onto the way in which Woolf's representation of music sheds light on her engagement with questions concerning home, belonging, and identity in architectural space. As Ben Anderson, Frances Morton, and George Revill observe, over the past ten years, geographers have shifted attention away from musical works as 'textual objects' and towards 'the manifold and unpredictable entanglements of music *practice and performance*' as they are 'lived', so as to 'foreground the relationships between the physical presence of sound and the flow of sensory impressions' that contribute to embodied experience.[212] This interdisciplinary approach to music enables a reassessment of the role of the gramophone in *Between the Acts*, as it helps to resituate the mechanical object within the wider affective dynamics of the performance space as a whole.

Geographers Wood and Smith have advanced non-representational theories of bodily affect in their study on the 'emotional *geographies*' of musical performance.[213] They maintain that musical performance 'is a "geographical" act' that constitutes 'an active, practical, sensory engagement with the making of the "now"'.[214] Not only is music 'actively contextualized' in the geographical space of the stage, its essence lies in its '*sociality*': what is 'felt' during a musical performance 'is not a thing, but a relationship. Emotional spaces are relational'.[215] It is precisely this affective realm of aural and spatial experience that Woolf negotiates in her representation of Miss La Trobe's gramophone. Although the gramophone is hidden off stage, 'in the bushes' (*BA* 56), the sound it makes is vital to the development and atmosphere of the performance.

[212] Ben Anderson, Frances Morton, and George Revill, 'Practices of Music and Sound', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 6.5 (2005), 639-44 (p. 640).
[213] Wood and Smith, 'Instrumental Routes', p. 534.
[214] Ibid., p. 535.
[215] Ibid., pp. 536, 537.

At a crucial stage in the narrative, Woolf self-consciously addresses this function of the gramophone through the collective recognition of her characters:

> Music wakes us. Music makes us see the hidden, join the broken. Look and listen. See the flowers, how they ray their redness, whiteness, silverness and blue. And the trees with their many-tongued much syllabling, their green and yellow leaves hustle us and shuffle us, and bid us, like the starlings, and the rooks, come together. (*BA* 87)

Woolf's allusion to joining 'the broken' recalls the way in which Rachel in *The Voyage Out* (1915) and Rhoda in *The Waves* visualise music in architectural terms.[216] When Rachel plays a Bach fugue, for instance, Woolf's narrator comments on 'an invisible line' which seems 'to string the notes together' and 'from which rose a shape, a building'.[217] Although the fugue is 'difficult', Rachel experiences 'complete absorption and anxious satisfaction' in the 'shape' of the notes she plays.[218] Similarly, Rhoda is able to console herself over Percival's recent death by taking comfort in the pattern of notes she hears during a lunchtime concert:

> There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside […]; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation.[219]

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[216] My observation is indebted to Lyndall Gordon, Henley, and Sutton, who each note the connections between music and architecture in *The Voyage Out* and *The Waves*. See Lyndall Gordon, *Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 213-14; Henley, '"The Whole Building of A Book"', p. 391-92; Emma Sutton, '"Within a Space of Tears": Music, Writing, and the Modern in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*', in *Music and Literary Modernism: Critical Essays and Comparative Studies*, ed. by Robert P. McParland (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2006), pp. 50-65 (p. 62).
[217] Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, ed. by Jane Wheare (London: Penguin [1915] 1992), p. 49.
[218] Ibid., pp. 48, 49.
[219] Woolf, *The Waves*, p. 123.

For both characters, visualising the music in architectural form enables them to consciously recognise the affective emotions generated by the sounds they hear.

Moreover, in *The Waves*, Woolf connects Rhoda's emotional response to music to the similar feeling she gets when looking at Christopher Wren's neo-classical design of Hampton Court Palace: 'Wren's palace, like the quartet […] makes an oblong. A square is stood upon the oblong and we say, "This is our dwelling-place. The structure is now visible. Very little is left outside"'.[220] Such a description recalls Braidotti's conception of 'becoming' in the world – that process by which the self opens out 'to possible encounters with the "outside"'.[221] Both music and architecture thus become for Rhoda a means of bridging gaps and forging connections between the self and this 'outside': in short, they reveal her own process of 'becoming'. Woolf's conception of music and architecture in these early novels thus anticipates her desire to have 'all parts contributing' (*D5* 135), and indeed connecting, in *Between the Acts*, for the music the pageant audience hears collectively 'wakes' them and 'makes [them] see the hidden' (*BA* 87).

In 'Impressions of Bayreuth' (1909), Woolf reflects on the profound ability of music to meditate between the individual and the communal within a particular spatial setting:

> We are led on to connect the beautiful sound with some experience of our own, or to make it symbolize some conception of a general nature. Perhaps music owes something of its astonishing power over us to this lack of definite

[220] Ibid., p. 175.
[221] Braidotti, *Transpositions*, pp. 9, 145.

> articulation; its statements have all the majesty of a generalization, and yet contain our private emotions.[222]

Appealing simultaneously to the private emotions and yet also to public reception, music is an art form that breaks down the boundary between self and other, directly appealing to the immersive, sensual, and emotional realm of shared spatial experience. As geographers Wood and Smith remind us, the '"public" setting' of a musical performance creates very real 'emotional geographies' that nurture 'relations of intimacy'.[223] The music from the gramophone enables the audience to 'see the hidden, join the broken' (*BA* 87): to recognise the '*sociality*' of the pageant and their 'relational' connection with one another and the 'flowers', 'trees', 'leaves', 'starlings', and 'rooks' that surround them (*BA* 87).[224]

Moreover, as Cuddy-Keane observes, unlike 'discursive prose', music operates as a 'counterlanguage' that 'avoids semantic closure'.[225] Such a comparison between prose and music is an instructive one, as it invites consideration of Woolf's experiments with narrative form. In 'Impressions at Bayreuth', Woolf addresses 'the difficulty of changing a musical impression into a literary one', suggesting that music's 'lack of definite articulation' necessarily resists textual form.[226] Just as Bowen struggled to translate the 'tottering lace-like architecture of ruins' into continuous prose, arguing that the novelist 'cannot *render*, […] only embrace' ('P' 99), Woolf bemoans how 'we are miserably aware of how little words can do to render music'.[227] Sutton has shown, however, that despite being 'acutely aware […] of words' (in)ability to represent or evoke music', many of

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[222] Virginia Woolf, 'Impressions at Bayreuth' (1909), in *Books and Portraits: Some Further Selections from the Literary and Biographical Writings of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Mary Lyon (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), pp. 18-22 (p. 21).
[223] Wood and Smith, 'Instrumental Routes', pp. 534, 539.
[224] Ibid., p. 537.
[225] Melba Cuddy-Keane, 'The Politics of Comic Modes in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*', *PMLA*, 105.2 (1990), 273-85 (p. 281).
[226] Woolf, 'Impressions at Bayreuth', p. 21.
[227] Ibid.

Woolf's 'formal innovations in narrative perspective, structure, and form' are nevertheless 'indebted to musical techniques and genres'.[228]

In *Between the Acts*, Woolf's attempt to reproduce the mechanical rhythms of the gramophone seems contradictory to her anthropological primitivism. Certainly, the 'jagged' rhythms of jazz it churns out suggest a progressive form of aural modernity that jolts the audience into confusion, something paralleled in Woolf's playful experimentation with rhyme and disjointed structural rhythms: 'So abrupt. And corrupt. Such an outrage; such an insult; and not plain. Very up to date, all the same. What is her game? To disrupt?' (*BA* 131). However, as Sutton observes, Woolf also saw music as 'an ancient art', 'instinctual, vigorous and intoxicating', and, as such, 'the source from which other arts would draw their modernity'.[229] Indeed, in 'Street Music' (1905), Woolf describes the musician as 'the minister of the wildest of all gods', arguing that writing is 'allied' to music, but 'is chiefly degenerate because it has forgotten [music's] existence'.[230] To her mind, modern writers should 'invent – or rather remember – the innumerable metres' of primitive musical forms, so as to 'restore both prose and poetry to the harmonies that the ancients heard and observed'.[231]

Sutton suggests that Woolf's characterisation of music in this essay aligns with 'the modernist vocabulary of neo-paganism', and she is right to draw such a connection, for the early primitivists shared a similar conception of rhythm.[232] Pericles Lewis observes how 'syncopated rhythms, like jazz music, seemed to offer access to the primitive', and led to the modernists' 'mixing of high and low styles'.[233] Woolf's use of jazz in *Between the Acts* thus serves to link the gramophone to the primitivist instinct,

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[228] Sutton, *Woolf and Classical Music*, pp. 14, 15.
[229] Sutton, "'Within a Space of Tears", p. 54.
[230] Virginia Woolf, 'Street Music' (1905), in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Andrew McNeilie, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1986-88), I (1986), 27-32 (pp. 29, 31).
[231] Ibid., p. 31.
[232] Sutton, "'Within a Space of Tears"', p. 54.
[233] Pericles Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 76, 77.

through the affective realm of existence she associates with the 'ancients'. Moreover, Scott contends that the repeated 'chuff[ing]', 'buzz[ing]', and 'tick[ing]' (*BA* 56, 57) of the gramophone indicates that it is 'portable and operated with a crank – a bit of an antique in 1939'.[234] Woolf's careful selection of this sort of outdated object thus reinforces the idea that she is attempting to rediscover the guttural rhythms of the 'ancients'. As Scott notes, these old wind-up machines 'produced an abundant sound' that required 'dampeners for indoor play'; the perfect piece of technology, then, for accentuating the rhythmic pulse of music in the outdoor setting of Miss La Trobe's pageant.[235]

Yet the question remains as to how Woolf actually goes about negotiating the problematic (in)ability of words to represent musical rhythms. To answer this question, it is useful to turn to Braidotti's theorisation of 'transposition', which, being neither metaphorical nor metonymic, is rather 'a style, in the sense of a form of conceptual creativity, like a sliding door, a choreographed slippage' that ultimately accounts for the 'fluid flowing of becoming' in the world:[236]

> The term 'transpositions' […] indicates an intertexual, cross-boundary or transversal transfer […]. It is not just a matter of weaving together different strands, variations on a theme (textual or musical), but rather of playing the positivity of difference as a specific theme of its own. As a term in music, transposition indicates variations and shift of scale in a discontinuous but harmonious pattern. It is thus created as an in-between space of zigzagging and of crossing: non-linear, but not chaotic; nomadic, yet accountable and

[234] Scott, 'The Subversive Mechanics of Woolf's Gramophone', p. 105.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 9.

> committed; creative but also cognitively valid; discursive and also materially embedded – it is coherent without falling into instrumental rationality.[237]

Transposition is a dynamic process predicated on the continual interplay of difference; of the intra-actions of multiple (and ontologically diverse) entities in the world. As such, it helps to enact at the level of artistic form and style – whether musical or textual – the process of 'becoming': indeed the opening out of the self onto the 'outside'.[238]

Noticing the cross-overs here with Woolf's representation of everyday life, Ryan suggests that *The Waves* epitomises Woolf's use of musical transposition.[239] This novel is widely regarded as Woolf's most musical work; not only did she listen to multiple works by Beethoven on her gramophone while composing it, she also describes in her diary the process of writing the novel 'to a rhythm not to a plot' (*D3* 316).[240] Patricia Laurence has drawn similar connections between the structural rhythm of *Between the Acts* and that of the musical fugue, arguing that 'Woolf creates a pattern of alternation, a network of differences from which meaning emerges'.[241] Yet what Braidotti's theory offers over and above this type of comparative reading, is a method of conceptualising this interplay of difference that is itself cross-disciplinary. Applying not only to music, but also to textual and even scientific structures, transposition provides deeper understanding of the (conflicting) ways in which Woolf brings music and architecture to bear on her literary craft.[242]

The image of the sliding door that Braidotti uses when defining the concept provides a link to Woolf's conception of the narrative style she was developing in *Between the Acts*. In January 1940, she notes in her diary that she thinks she has 'tapped something

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[237] Ibid., p. 5.
[238] Ibid., p. 145.
[239] Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory*, pp. 183-84.
[240] See Jane Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 70; Scott, *Refiguring Modernism*, II, p. 31.
[241] Laurence, 'The Facts and Fugue of War', p. 240.
[242] Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 5.

perhaps – a new combination of the raw & the lyrical; how to *slide* over' (*D5* 259: emphasis added). As a source of transposition, the rhythms of the gramophone enable this process of 'sliding over' by allowing Woolf to disrupt the linearity of conventional narrative form through fostering the continual zigzagging, non-linear movement that Braidotti describes. This transpositional zigzagging is evident in the novel's musical crescendo – a passage which Esty argues 'describes the one-making effect of music on the distracted spectators', something reflected in 'the grammar of Woolf's writing', which 'creates a pitch-perfect equivocation between a unity of the "whole population" and a unity of the single mind's "immense profundity":[243]

> Like quicksilver sliding, filings magnetized, the distracted united. The tune began; the first note meant a second; the second a third. Then down beneath a force was born in opposition; then another. On different levels they diverged. On different levels ourselves went forward; flower gathering some on the surface; others descending to wrestle with the meaning; but all comprehending; all enlisted. The whole population of the mind's immeasurable profundity came flocking; from the unprotected, the unskinned; and dawn rose; and azure; from chaos and cacophony measure […]: To part? No. Compelled from the ends of the horizon; recalled from the edge of appalling crevasses; they crashed; solved; united. (*BA* 135-6)

Initially, Woolf describes the music in a manner that recalls Rhoda's ordered squares and oblongs, for the 'first note' means 'a second' and 'the second a third'. As these notes advance, however, Woolf adds depth and complexity to the composition at both the level of content and form. In the fictional world, the music operates on multiple levels of pitch and intensity, each of which appeals to different members of the audience.

[243] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 99.

Particularly striking is the scientific imagery that Woolf employs to accentuate the varying dynamics of the scene. As Beer observes, the scientific language of the new physics in the 1920s and 1930s 'chimed with [Woolf's] search for rhythmic prose' and gave her 'new working freedoms'.[244] Interestingly, transposition is also a process that aligns with contemporary science; not only does Braidotti draw on the idea of genetics to explain the concept, she also discusses the 'dynamic' potential and 'volatile structure' of non-linear, transpositional linguistic patterns, which, she argues, make 'words into vehicles that transfer, convey and transform forces or energetic pulses'.[245] Woolf's image of sliding quicksilver thus yields a sense of the audience's changeable nature; something held in tension with their compulsion toward rigid uniformity in the contrasting image of magnetised filings. Transposing between these alternating states, the gramophone ultimately binds the audience into a shared sense of 'public' life, for, out of 'chaos and cacophony', they are 'crashed; solved; united' (*BA* 135, 136).

At the level of form, these vibrant musical dynamics enable Woolf to disrupt and 'split up' the linearity of her prose, so that instead of simply 'enumerating details' she can 'mould blocks'.[246] Crucial to this method is Woolf's reliance on the semi-colon (also noticeable in Braidotti's description of transposition); a punctuation mark that not only establishes a spatial palimpsest in the novel through the method of 'deletion transformation', but also helps to represent the 'transversal transfer' between musical rhythm and prose narrative.[247] Breaking the text up into 'discontinuous' units, but ensuring that each unit remains tightly bound to the next, the semi-colon reproduces the 'non-linear, but not chaotic' dynamics of the 'harmonious pattern' of transposition.[248]

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[244] Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, p. 124.
[245] Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 175.
[246] Woolf, 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', p. 228.
[247] Leaska, *Pointz Hall*, p. 20; Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 5.
[248] Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 5.

Furthermore, as Beer observes of *The Waves*, '[a]ssonance, overlap between words, iteration and internal rhyme all […] express the wave-like fluidity of a new imagined universe', and such literary techniques have similar effects in *Between the Acts*.[249] Woolf varies the sentence structure of the 'quicksilver' passage through her use of irregular phrasing and punctuation, generating half rhymes with assonance ('rose' and 'azure') and cacophonic alliteration ('chaos and cacophony'). Transposing musical rhythms and scientific imagery into textual form thus helps Woolf to disrupt the 'definite articulation' of prose and do away with brick-like textural structures, instead opening up the form of the novel to the 'blocks of becoming' that constitute the 'public' assemblage of everyday life.

The tension between opposition and unity that Woolf emphasises in this scene of musical crescendo is finally played out in the concluding sounds of the gramophone: 'Unity – Dispersity. It gurgled Un … dis … And ceased' (*BA* 144).[250] Terminating with one last act of transposition, the noise of the gramophone is suspended in the 'in-between space of zigzagging and of crossing' that Braidotti argues is so central to the fluidity of 'becoming'.[251] Contrary to a number of critics who have read this lack of finality as the gramophone's failure to unite the audience, and as an 'imploding verbal sign', Beer suggests that 'the elements of dispersed words skein together to produce a word of a different sense: *undeceased*'.[252] The double negation here carries a dual role, for not only does it reinforce a sense of complete annihilation, it paradoxically cancels itself out in such a way that suggests continuance. Leaving the gramophone in a state of transpositional flux, Woolf thus positions the pageant audience in a state of process: of continuing becoming that anticipates the architectural regeneration of Pointz Hall in the novel's closing scene.

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[249] Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, p. 121.
[250] Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 186.
[251] Braidotti, *Transpositions*, pp. 5, 9.
[252] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 98; Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, p. 131.

5. THE PRIMEVAL CAVE

If, in the English literary tradition, the country house functions as 'a great stage' that 'quite literally gathers people together and shows them meeting, separating, colliding, uniting', then it is now evident that Woolf sets out to disrupt this tradition in *Between the Acts* by replacing the 'great stage' of Pointz Hall with the 'public' performance space of the pageant.[253] Moreover, contrary to Gill's observation that the country house is 'unmistakably *there*' in the country house novel, Woolf tracks the cultural decline and material ruination of Pointz Hall in such a way that it becomes progressively less '*there*' in the narrative.[254] While a number of critics have read the novel's ending as a 'spatial withdrawal' that 'yields to the overpowering barbarism of contemporary history', few have taken Pointz Hall's transformation from a brittle domestic shell to a robust primeval cave as an ending that reactivates Woolf's determined attempt to reimagine life beyond the war.[255]

Building upon Harris's recent reassessment of late modernism's 'turn towards home', but complicating her reading of Pointz Hall as a continuing 'stable centre', I suggest that the primeval cave, as a form of architectural primitivism, not only represents Woolf's anxieties about the war instigating an annihilating return to pre-civilised barbarism, but also registers her profound belief in the regenerative potential of the English soil.[256] Boym's discussion of the restoration of the Sistine Chapel serves as a useful comparison here, for she describes the computer-assisted process of restoration the building underwent in the 1980s 'that made sure that historical time would no longer threaten the image of sacred creation'.[257] Boym views this project of 'total restoration' as

[253] Gill, *Happy Rural Seat*, p. 15.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Harker, '"On different levels ourselves went forward"', p. 451.
[256] Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, pp. 10, 113.
[257] Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, p. 45.

an extreme example of the restorative nostalgic impulse, which seeks to remove the 'patina, ruins, cracks, imperfections' that might disrupt the desired object of the past.[258]

In her return to the primeval cave, Woolf does not undertake this process of complete restoration, for the transformation of Pointz Hall from brittle shell to primeval cave instead sets in motion an astonishing imaginary process of domestic ruination. In a similar manner to Bowen's representation of Weymouth Street in *The Heat of the Day*, Woolf foregrounds the turbulence of ruined matter, which, as Edensor reminds us, is always 'in a state of becoming something else'.[259] Rather than reaching a point of complete crisis, however, and collapsing the domestic interior into 'nothing' (*HD* 56), as Bowen does, Woolf evolves Pointz Hall into a primeval cave, suggesting that the dust and debris of the ruined country house might yet regenerate into a new form of architecture.

5.1 Land

Beer has considerably advanced understanding of this aspect of Woolf's thinking about the regenerative potential of the English soil through her discussion of the natural world and 'prehistory'.[260] Like many of her twentieth-century contemporaries, such as Conrad and Eliot, Woolf initially associated the prehistoric world with the 'idea of origins' and the unconscious mind.[261] Yet, as Beer shows, this understanding of prehistory shifts in Woolf's later work so that 'the prehistoric is seen not simply as part of a remote past, but as contiguous, continuous, a part of ordinary present-day life'.[262] Consequently, prehistory provides Woolf with a profound belief in the longevity of the natural world. Just as she mused in her diary in 1932 that the 'holiness' of the Sussex Downs will 'go on after I'm dead' (*D4* 124: see also Section 2 of this chapter), Woolf's investment in the

[258] Ibid.
[259] Edensor, 'Waste Matter', p. 319.
[260] Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, Chapter 1, 'Virginia Woolf and Prehistory', pp. 6-28.
[261] Ibid., p. 6.
[262] Ibid., p. 9.

English soil is captured in *Between the Acts* in the reflective murmurings of Mrs Swithin as she looks out on the landscape surrounding Pointz Hall: "'It'll be there," she nodded at the strip of gauze laid upon the distant fields, "when we're not'" (*BA* 39).

In the opening scene of the pageant, Woolf directly links the prehistoric landscape to the architecture of civilisation through the chanted actions of Miss La Trobe's chorus: 'Cutting the roads … up to the hill top … we climbed. Down in the valley … saw wild boar, hog, rhinoceros, reindeer … Dug ourselves in to the hill top … Ground roots between stones' (*BA* 57). In so doing, she reveals the close ties between the natural contours of the land and the architectural structure of primitive dwellings, something later connected to the '[d]igging and delving' of the chorus who gradually uncover the ruined palaces of 'Babylon, Nineveh, Troy' (*BA* 100, 101). Although these magnificent structures lie in ruins, their remains function similarly to the 'scars' (*BA* 3) of the cesspool site, which are a palimpsestic reminder of civilisation's architectural evolution.

Henry suggests that Pointz Hall is linked into this long and continuous cycle of architectural development through its name, which might well be 'inspired in part by the prehistoric Pointz Pass in Ireland'.[263] She argues that the Lasnagade hillfort located near to this once dense and marshy piece of land bears an uncanny resemblance to the hill-top dwelling that the pageant chorus cut out of the hillside, and which later eventuates in the ancient palaces of civilisation.[264] What emerges in Henry's discussion is the dual function that the prehistoric landscape carries in Woolf's work; being at once a symbol of continuity and endurance, and a place of contingency and change. Beer addresses this conflicting stance drawing attention to the way in which Woolf's investment in the 'perpetual' land is always squared with an acute awareness of the 'perpetually changing'.[265]

[263] Henry, 'Science and Technology', p. 258.
[264] Ibid., p. 259.
[265] Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, p. 18.

Opening up understanding of this ambivalent relationship between the perpetual and the changing in Woolf's work consequently helps to dislodge the unhelpful binary between 'good' and 'bad' forms of longing that Bonnett argues has dominated critical accounts of nostalgia.[266]

In an often quoted passage of *Between the Acts*, Woolf trains her nostalgic gaze on the past as she draws attention to the continuities of the landscape visible from Pointz Hall. Referring to the fictional Figgis's Guide Book from 1833, the narrator observes that, historically,

> '[the house] commanded a fine view of the surrounding country. . . . The spire of Bolney Minster, Rough Norton woods, and on an eminence rather to the left, Hogben's Folly, so called because. . . .'
>
> The Guide Book still told the truth. 1833 was true in 1939. No houses had been built; no town had sprung up. Hogben's Folly was still eminent; the very flat, field-parcelled land had changed only in this – the tractor had to some extent superseded the plough. (*BA* 38)

The view from Pointz Hall is set in sharp contrast to that of the cesspool site, as the flattened sense of time evident in the fields differs from the rich layers of history and memory uncovered in the earth near the Roman road. Indeed, most critics read Woolf's description of Hogben's Folly as one that emphasises the timelessness of the rural landscape. Zwerdling observes, for instance, that '[t]ime seems to have stood still in this spot' and that Woolf's 'choice of this setting suggests a strong feeling of nostalgia for an older English culture – rural rather than industrial, feudal rather than democratic, simple rather than complex, and, above all, unified'.[267] In comparison to the cesspool site, which 'temporalizes space', this view of the landscape appears to 'conquer and spatialize time',

[266] Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, p. 38.
[267] Zwerdling, *Woolf and the Real World*, pp. 308-09.

and thus activates a nostalgic impulse that looks very much like Boym's restorative – or 'bad' – form of longing.[268]

However, a number of critics have pointed out that, despite the fact that 'the continuities' of the landscape 'are far more pronounced' in this section of the novel, Woolf in fact carefully acknowledges the changes that have taken place.[269] Her representation of Hogben's Folly is not outwardly ironic like her treatment of Pointz Hall's interior, yet Woolf still invites the reader to draw a connection between the presence of the tractor in the field and the numerous other motor vehicles that are seen throughout the novel. Moreover, Kore-Schröder has suggested that despite the narrator's seeming insistence that nothing has changed in the landscape, Hogben's Folly surely carries with it a wildly different cultural value in 1939 than it does in 1833.[270] The land is not worked by the Olivers and only remains undisturbed because Giles's city salary enables the family to resist the temptation of selling it off for development. It is precisely because the land remains untouched by developers that it is so 'desirable' (*BA* 5) to the moneyed urban holiday makers who motor by in their chauffeur-driven cars. Hogben's Folly is therefore as much a problematic cultural symbol of antiquity as is the pre-Reformation arch in the house's kitchen.

Representing the English landscape as both perpetual and perpetually changing, Woolf thus complicates the restorative impulse of nostalgia and exposes its inherent contradictions. Just because she does not use irony at this point in the novel to create the critical distance that Boym argues is necessary for a reflective form of nostalgic thinking does not mean that Woolf is attempting to 'return to the original stasis, to the prelapsarian moment' of the past.[271] It is not an idealised rural past that Woolf longs for here, but the closer, more intimate relationship between man and nature that she

[268] Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, p. 49.
[269] MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, p. 37.
[270] Kore-Schröder, '"Reflections in a Motor Car"', p. 143.
[271] Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, p. 49.

associates with it. That this relationship between man and nature has been lost is evident in the connection Woolf makes between the Oliver family and the new transient generations of the local area. Due to his work in the city, Giles is denied the opportunity to work on the land and is only ever in the countryside 'for the week-end', just like the 'unattached floating residents' and motoring tourists of the new industrial generation (*BA* 34, 55).[272] Woolf possesses an acute consciousness of the economic landscape that dominates the modern moment of rural experience she describes, suggesting that a close connection between man and nature has been lost to the detriment of everyday life.

Woolf's nostalgic handling of Hogben's Folly consequently indicates her belief that, in looking back to the rural past, man might be able to learn how to forge a new, closer connection with the landscape in the present, and thus avoid being coerced into an architectural future entirely predicated on uniform refrigerators set into crannied walls. In drawing attention to what Bonnett refers to as the 'inherently reflexive' nature of nostalgia, Woolf self-consciously contemplates a supposedly unselfconscious form of longing.[273] Complicating the binary thinking that Boym's theorisation of nostalgia encourages, Woolf demonstrates how a non-ironic form of nostalgia is an equally powerful and complex response to modernity's crisis of belonging.

Unable to fully resolve her nostalgic feelings, however, Woolf is simultaneously struck by the threat that war poses to this attempt to forge a closer connection with the land. In the novel, Giles unsettles Mrs Swithin's reverence for Hogben's Folly, when his internal preoccupations with the violent political movements on the continent rupture the narrative:

> over there – was bristling like. . . .He had no command of the metaphor. Only the ineffective word 'hedgehog' illustrated his vision of Europe, bristling with

[272] For an extended comparison of Giles and Ralph Manresa, see Kore-Schröder, '"The Lovely Wreckage of the Past"', p. 270.
[273] Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, p. 44.

> guns, poised with planes. At any moment guns would rake that land into furrows; planes splinter Bolney Minster into smithereens and blast the Folly. (*BA* 39)

Images of nature uncomfortably blur into those of political warfare as Woolf is unable to resolve her conflicting feelings about the English land at a time of impending violence and upheaval. Whereas the tiny hedgerow animal becomes the locus for pointed arms, guns become agricultural implements that plough the fields into neat lines.

The final sentence in the quotation above is particularly interesting given its shift in narrative tense. The first clause is narrated in the past future tense, as the aerial gun attack remains a future, albeit imminent, event in Giles's imagination. Yet in the second clause, the narrative changes abruptly into the present tense, as Giles is plunged directly into a projected future in which the aerial attack has already begun. The intensity of this imagined scene is heightened through the harshness of Woolf's repeated sibilant sounds – 'splinter', 'blast', and 'smithereens' (*BA* 39) – which cut through the previous set of merging images. Compelled to acknowledge the dramatic changes that the war will bring, whilst also emphasising the important role that nature might play in sustaining everyday life, Woolf here represents the landscape in terms of change, disruption, and violence.

5.2 A Brittle Shell

Woolf's investment in prehistory helps to explain the curious evolution of Pointz Hall in the closing scene of the novel, which is too commonly read as Woolf's failed attempt at sustaining the architectural vision of 'public' life supplied by the pageant. Harker argues that because the pageant 'dissolves to leave an upper-middle class domestic interior', the novel is returned to its 'starting point' – a shift that 'correlates with a formal retreat from a narrative in collaborative dialogue with public performance'.[274] The narrative does indeed return to the environs of Pointz Hall at the end of the novel, for once the pageant

[274] Harker, '"On different levels ourselves went forward"', p. 451.

is over, '[t]he line of the roof, the upright chimneys, rose hard and red against the blue of the evening. The house emerged; the house that had been obliterated' (*BA* 146). Here the house reasserts itself; its stark material outline challenging the exploratory, open-ended structure of the pageant.

However, as soon as 'the big room' (*BA* 154) of Pointz Hall reappears it becomes clear that the house is not as stable as is first supposed. In drawing attention to the 'usual sounds' that 'reverberat[e]' through the walls of the drawing room, Woolf does not reinstate a comforting sense of familiar domestic routine, but rather emphasises the empty, 'shell'-like quality of the space (*BA* 155). Much like Bowen, she here inverts Bachelard's symbol of felicitous dwelling – of the shell as an inviting 'refuge' – so that it becomes representative of a form of domestic life that is dramatically lacking in safety, security, and architectural integrity.[275] Recalling the tarnished image of the house that is briefly seen by the pageant audience – 'a crack in the boiler', 'a hole in the carpet' – the house now gives out 'little cracks as if it were very brittle, very dry' (*BA* 141, 156). Such infrastructural fragility seems very far from the 'beauty and solidity' of the geometric conchiform dwellings that Bachelard describes.[276]

Instead, the brittle structure of Pointz Hall looks similar to the abandoned Ramsay household in the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse*, which is 'left like a shell on a sandhill to fill with dry salt grains now that life had left it'.[277] Woolf signals the collapse of country house life in much the same way that she condenses her socio-political vision of wartime into the fibres of the Ramsays' seaside home. In 'Time Passes', she tracks the debilitating effects of the First World War through the abject degeneration of the house, focusing narrative attention on the 'ominous sounds like the measured blows of hammers dulled on felt' which, 'with their repeated shocks still further loosened

[275] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, p. 107.
[276] Ibid., p. 106.
[277] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, ed. by Stella McNichol (London: Penguin, [1927] 1992), p. 149.

the shawl and cracked the tea-cups'.[278] Similarly, in *Between the Acts* she registers the ultimate decline of the landed classes by peeling back the paper-thin layers of Pointz Hall's deteriorating walls, exposing the house's occupants to the cracked surface of the prehistoric earth:

> There in that hollow of the sun-baked field were congregated the grasshopper, the ant, and the beetle, rolling pebbles of sun-baked earth through the glistening stubble. In that rosy corner of the sun-baked field Bartholomew, Giles and Lucy polished and nibbled and broke off crumbs. (*BA* 156)

As the geographers DeSilvey and Edensor suggest, '[r]uination presents the possibility of renegotiating the porous border between social and ecological ontological orderings' and Woolf here tracks the degeneration of the country house so that she can negotiate a changed relation between man and nature.[279] Bolney Minster and the farmer's tractor are no longer present as the rural landscape is stripped back to its most basic parts. The house is seemingly absent from the 'hollow' in which it once sat and the Oliver family are rendered in similar terms to the insects that pick their way over the earth: half-exposed, half-sheltered in the 'corner' (*BA* 156) of the landscape, they are seen crouching and eating as pre-civilised apes might do.

The Olivers' primitive behaviour is paralleled in the description of 'Prehistoric man' that Lucy Swithin reads in her Outline of History: '"half human, half ape, [he] roused himself from his semi-crouching position and raised great stones"' (*BA* 157). As past and present merge into the same moment, Pointz Hall finally 'los[es] its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks' (*BA* 158). With this return to the rocky outcrops of the prehistoric world, Woolf signals the death of the country house once and

[278] Ibid., p. 145.
[279] DeSilvey and Edensor, 'Reckoning With Ruins', p. 13.

for all – its brittle domestic shell has degenerated to the point of domestic extinction and its surrounding landscape has regressed right back into the primeval past.

Referring to this extraordinary scene as Woolf's 'narrative nonvision of Pointz Hall beyond the human, and beyond rehabilitation', MacKay draws attention to the image of Isa and Giles poised to fight 'in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night' (*BA* 157).[280] Observing the allusion to Conrad's 1899 novella, she argues that the prehistoric world Woolf invokes symbolises the 'annihilating prospect' of the impending Nazi invasion.[281] Indeed, Woolf's reference to the darkness chimes with her experience of the all-consuming nature of the blackout during World War Two, which, Steve Ellis notes, is connected in her diary to the 'sense of civilisation returning to a primitive state'.[282] On the one hand, then, Woolf's imaginary return to prehistory crystallises her anxious fears about the increased dangers of wartime. As Beer has suggested, 'in this novel, as in no other', Woolf 'puts violence near the centre of meaning'.[283] Yet on the other hand, prehistory is significant in the novel because it provides Woolf with a means to reimagine the future of England in a way that does not support the progression, or indeed the progressive thinking, of modernity. Whilst I do not wish to dismiss the critical readings supplied by MacKay and Ellis, I do think it is necessary to foreground the salvaging potential of the prehistoric landscape in Woolf's novel.

Compared to the dry and cracking walls of Pointz Hall, the primeval cave is 'monumental': what was once a domestic window is now a cavernous mouth, a 'great square' that is 'only sky', inside of which primitive man shelters in 'enormous' and 'great hooded chairs' (*BA* 157). According to Linda Hutcheon, this sort of nostalgic return to an earlier form of architecture is only useful insofar as it is ironised. For her, the ironising

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[280] MacKay, 'Putting the House in Order', p. 247.
[281] Ibid., p. 248.
[282] Ellis, *British Writers*, p. 193. Consider, for example, the following entry from Sunday, 22 October 1939: 'You never escape the war in London […]. A reversion to the middle ages with all the space & silence of the country set in this forest of black houses' (*D5* 242).
[283] Beer, *Woolf: Common Ground*, p. 136.

spirit of postmodernism is a prime example of how a 'deliberate […] return to the history of the humanly-constructed environment' need not be 'a conservative – and therefore nostalgic – escape to an idealized, simpler era of "real" community values', but instead a direct reaction to 'modern architecture's ostentatious rejection of the past'.[284] In a similar vein to Boym, Hutcheon argues that it is only because irony 'creat[es] a small part of the distance necessary for reflective thought about the present as well as the past' that postmodern architecture can achieve this status as a critical, and therefore progressive, built form.[285]

In *Between the Acts*, however, Woolf does not ironise the primeval cave like she does the interior of Pointz Hall, or indeed the modern houses and bungalows in the surrounding area. As with the rural landscape of Bolney Minster, she peels back the layers of Pointz Hall to reveal a profound longing for the perpetuity of the English soil, and thus exposes all the 'patina, ruins, cracks, and imperfections' that Boym suggests have no place in restorative nostalgia.[286] Moreover, Woolf's emphasis upon the solidity and monumentality of the primeval cave reinforces the reactionary impulses of the novel, which hold out against the barbarism of war and the progression of architectural and technological modernity. Woolf's primitivism therefore complicates the binary thinking of Boym and Hutcheon and helps to re-theorise nostalgia by 'opening up' the concept to its internal conflicts and ambivalences.[287] Ellis suggests, however, that for all its complex ambivalences *Between the Acts* does not 'proclaim a way out of the "1939 state"'.[288] Certainly, Woolf's architectural vision is constrained by its imaginary limits, yet what it does do – perhaps more so than Ellis suggests – is to contemplate the availability of the

[284] Linda Hutcheon, 'Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern', University of Toronto English Library Criticism and Theory Resources (1998) <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/criticism/hutchinp.html> [accessed 10 November 2014] (para. 4 of 27).
[285] Ibid., para. 27 of 27.
[286] Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, p. 45.
[287] Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, pp. 45, 47.
[288] Ellis, *British Writers*, p. 220.

primeval landscape as a sustaining resource, one that might help civilisation to find a way out of the infernal nightmare of the war by encouraging a more organic form of architectural design.

5.3 Mud

While Woolf's architectural vision remains an imaginary one at the level of content, it successfully materialises at the level of narrative form. As with Bowen and Rhys, Woolf's self-conscious development of this late modernist style was complicated by the increasing social pressures of the mid-century. As Ellis observes, Woolf's ambivalent reimagining of England is indubitably connected to her own 'precarious' position as a writer during wartime.[289] Indeed, reflecting on the war in her diary, Woolf notes how it 'has taken away the outer wall of security. No echo comes back. I have no surroundings. I have so little sense of a public' (*D5* 299). Writing of herself in similar terms to the exposed interior of Pointz Hall, Woolf figures the loss of her readership in terms of a loss of structural walls.

This image recurs just over a month later in her diary, when she begins to conceive a way out of such writerly oblivion:

> All the walls, the protecting & reflecting walls, wear so terribly thin in this war. There's no standard to write for: no public to echo back: even the 'tradition' has become transparent. Hence a certain energy & recklessness – part good – part bad I daresay. But it's the only line to take, And perhaps the walls, if violently beaten against, will finally contain me. (*D5* 304)

As Marcus suggests, Woolf's beating against the walls here is not 'an attempted break-out but an attempt to establish limits, to create an echoing surround, and to mould the walls into a shape which could both hold and include ("contain") herself'.[290] Yet more than

[289] Ibid., p. 211.
[290] Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*, pp. 179-80.

this, Woolf's walls link to her changing conception of her artistic craft; just as she believes that everyday life needs to be broken down and rebuilt in order to endure the damages of war, Woolf here imagines that she must begin anew, working with energetic fervour, so as to mould the novel into a new shape around which her readership will eventually coalesce: what she would later come to realise was her successful 'attempt at a new method […]. A richer pat' (*D5* 340).

In her unfinished manuscript for 'Anon' (1941), an essay she began whilst working on *Between the Acts*, Woolf makes this connection between architecture and writing more explicit, explaining that '[o]nly when we put two and two together – two pencil strokes, two written words, two bricks […] do we overcome dissolution and set up some stake against oblivion'.[291] Her choice of the term 'brick' here sits uncomfortably with the way in which she usually designates it to all that she wishes to cast off in her search for a more inclusive novel form. Nevertheless, the term sets up a useful comparison between literature and architecture, revealing the extent to which both disciplines provide Woolf with a determined belief that building and dwelling will continue. By going back to the beginning to put two and two together, she is able to take a reactionary stand against the impending threat of war and reimagine English life beyond it.

Between the Acts consequently offers an alternative interpretation of the imagery of mud and grime that permeates a number of mid-century literary works. Orwell's *Coming Up For Air* (1939) is particularly noteworthy for its anxious fears about the Second World War and the inevitable progression of global modernity.[292] For Orwell's protagonist, George Bowling, the war cuts through his nostalgic longing for rural life in Lower Binfield, a place he initially associates with '[c]oming up for air'; an escape from the

[291] Virginia Woolf, '"Anon" and "The Reader": Virginia Woolf's Last Essays', ed. by Brenda Silver, *Twentieth Century Literature*, 25.3/4 (1979), 356-441 (p. 403).
[292] For an excellent discussion of this novel, see Ellis, *British Writers*, pp. 147-87.

ugliness of modern suburban life, where people are 'stifling at the bottom of a dustbin'.[293] Coming to realise, however, that 'the old life's finished', Bowling is struck by the fear of 'everything you've ever known […] going down, down, into the muck, with the machine-guns rattling all the time'.[294] Orwell's use of muck and grime is unambiguous in its association with barbaric modernity, of which war is an acute crisis point.

Although Woolf's ambivalent primitivism does intersect with this connection between muck and socio-spatial defilement, her profound investment in prehistory offers a striking counterpoint to such anxieties. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf locates her 'stake against oblivion' in the primeval swamps of the English land.[295] When Miss La Trobe packs up her suitcase, fearing that her artistic spectacle has failed, she looks out on the landscape surrounding Pointz Hall:

> It was growing dark. Since there were no clouds to trouble the sky, the blue was bluer, the green greener. There was no longer a view – no Folly, no spire of Bolney Minster. It was land merely, no land in particular. She put down her case and stood looking at the land. Then something rose to the surface. (*BA* 151)

Stripped back to its bare, earthen state, the land here anticipates the rocky outcrops of the novel's ending. The intensified hues of the sky and the grass – of 'land merely' – inspire the swirling undercurrents of Miss La Trobe's artistic vision and all of a sudden she conceives her next creative work, which will consist of 'two figures, half concealed by a rock' (*BA* 151).

Struggling to find the words that might advance this idea, Miss La Trobe retreats to the village pub, where she ensconces herself in a chair, brooding and surrounded by the 'acrid smell of stale beer' (*BA* 152). Her fetid surroundings once more stimulate her

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[293] George Orwell, *Coming Up for Air* (London: Penguin, [1939] 2000), p. 177.
[294] Ibid., pp. 237, 239.
[295] Woolf, '"Anon" and "The Reader"', p. 403.

creative imagination and the words she previously sought now flow forth: 'Words of one syllable sank down into the mud. She drowsed; she nodded. The mud became fertile. Words rose above the intolerably laden dumb oxen plodding through the mud. Words without meaning – wonderful words' (*BA* 152). Crangle views this passage as the summation of Miss La Trobe's stagnating creative labours, suggesting that the 'reference to fertility thus lies fallow: this is not an exalted state, nor a cyclical creativity', for her writing is mere 'cesspoolage; it is just waste'.[296] Crangle ultimately views *Between the Acts* as a novel that compounds Woolf's resignation to artistic failure and the banality of writing; 'it is not a nostalgic recovery of the regenerative qualities of the written word' or indeed waste itself, for Woolf 'does not mock or revere' waste, 'but merely acknowledges its ubiquity and inevitability'.[297]

Ubiquitous and inevitable waste might well be, but I find it hard to agree with the conclusion Crangle draws. The image of the 'dumb oxen plodding' (*BA* 152) in *Between the Acts* links back to Bernard's description of the 'slow and measured tread' of the Victorian policeman in *The Waves*, and thus to Woolf's critique of the linear narrative structures of the traditional English novel.[298] Here, however, Miss La Trobe's words rise 'above' the onward plod of the oxen, becoming 'fertile' (*BA* 152) and thus ready to 'grow, split and multiply' in the creative manner that Braidotti suggests they should in order to reflect the dynamic vitality of the world.[299] In *Between the Acts*, the waste of the primeval quagmire not only provides the foundations for a new spatial imaginary, but also for Woolf's innovative literary articulation of it. By linking Miss La Trobe's vision of her next work – of 'two figures, half concealed by a rock' (*BA* 151) – to the ending of the novel, where Isa and Giles sit in oversized armchairs in the gaping mouth of the primeval cave, Woolf suggests that this regenerative literary process has in fact already begun.

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[296] Crangle, 'Woolf's Cesspoolage', p. 16.
[297] Ibid, pp. 16, 19.
[298] Woolf, *The Waves*, p. 199.
[299] Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 175.

By evolving Pointz Hall into a primeval cave, Woolf finally complicates what some critics have read as her formal reinstatement of the country house and its associated novelistic tradition. For Esty, 'the narrative frame seems to contain and outflank the ritual scene' of the novel, ultimately closing down the more inclusive 'textual location' of the pageant.[300] Yet Woolf's return to the muddy depths of prehistory complicates such a categorical interpretation, and enables Pointz Hall's ambiguous architectural evolution to be read as a formal extension of the 'forestalling' role the pageant plays in the novel's narrative progress.[301] As a powerful reactionary impulse, the primeval cave arrests the momentum of the narrative in both thematic and formal terms, offering both an alternative architectural vision to the progressing suburban developments of modernity, and an extension of the pageant's more inclusive textual location. It thus crystallises the architectural ambivalences of *Between the Acts* as a whole and contributes directly to the open-ended narrative architexture of Woolf's late modernist reimagination of England.

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have developed understanding of late modernism's 'anthropological turn' by focusing attention on Woolf's nostalgic representation of the rural English landscape. Arguing that her ambivalence is key to understanding the architextural complexities of *Between the Acts*, I have complicated the binary approach to 'good' and 'bad' forms of nostalgia by foregrounding the 'intrinsic complexity' of modernist longing.[302] Through a detailed analysis of Pointz Hall, I have shown how Woolf's ironic narrative techniques facilitate a critique of country house culture and architectural and technological modernity. Moving to consider Woolf's use of English pageantry, I have

[300] Esty, *Shrinking Island*, pp. 96-97.
[301] Ibid., p. 96.
[302] Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, pp. 38, 44.

drawn on geographic understandings of nature and music to shed light on Woolf's reimagination of a more inclusive form of everyday life. Through close textual analysis, I have shown how Woolf's primitivist impulses align, like Bowen's 'literary animism', with a vitalist conception of the world; an affinity that helps to locate her nostalgic handling of the rural landscape at the anthropological end of an expanded spectrum of modernist primitivism. Concluding with a close reading of the primeval cave, I have argued that the redemptive, albeit conflicting, aspects of Woolf's questioning of modernity's crisis of home, belonging, and identity poignantly reveal modernism's attempt to reimagine English domesticity beyond the annihilating crisis of war. Chiming with, but also differing from, the anxious urbanism of Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* and Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Woolf's 'richer pat' (*D5* 340) of fiction in *Between the Acts* helps to illustrate the generative and variegated architextures of the late modernist novel.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the entrance wall of the central pavilion at the 2014 Venice Biennale, Koolhaas reminds us that '[a]rchitecture is a profession trained to put things together, not to take them apart'.[1] His aim to modernise architectural thinking and practice, however, disrupts this conventional notion of architecture, calling for a critical reassessment of the role constituent *elements* play in the formation, use, and experience of the built environment. Over the course of this thesis, I have extended Koolhaas's thinking across disciplines, demonstrating how it assists in developing a critical and theoretically-informed approach to literary representations of architectural space. Following Thacker's critical literary geography, I have departed from 'an effortless mapping' of represented architecture in literary texts, to instead 'raise more complex questions about space and power' and how space and architecture 'affect literary forms and styles'.[2]

Moving beyond Thacker's focus on 'the textuality of space and the spatiality of texts', however, I have argued for an increased awareness of the 'textural' characteristics of spatial experience and, by extension, the spatial 'texture' of literary works.[3] As Anderson and Wylie remind us, the everyday world is composed of innumerable '[m]aterialities', but also a multitude of 'entwined sensibilities'; what Thrift describes as the 'warp and weft' of immersive life in 'the thing world'.[4] Drawing on non-representational theories, I have thus developed literary geographic practice to take better account of architecture and affect, by foregrounding both the 'felt' qualities of being in architectural space and place, and the feelings in turn generated at the level of readerly experience by the style and structure of architectural narrative forms. This thesis has

[1] Koolhaas, Excerpt from Preface to *Elements of Architecture*.
[2] Thacker, 'The Idea of a Critical Literary Geography', p. 60.
[3] Ibid., p. 56.
[4] Anderson and Wylie, 'On Geography and Materiality', p. 327; Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, p. 10.

consequently established a new vocabulary for elaborating the interdisciplinary connections between literature and architecture: what I have termed a 'critical literary architexture'.

Taking the turbulent decades of the 1930s and 1940s as a point of focus, I have developed this critical literary architexture in specific relation to the late modernist Anglophone novel, although my approach would benefit from being applied to other literary forms and time periods, as I discuss in more detail below. For the purposes of this thesis, I have maintained that modernity's crisis of home, belonging, and identity – what Heidegger describes as the 'dwelling plight' ('BDT' 159) of modern life – can be better understood through closer examination of the architectural anxieties that characterise the late fictional work of the literary modernists. As Vidler suggests, modernist modes of representation are profoundly linked to 'the anxious visions of the modern subject caught in spatial systems beyond its control and attempting to make representational and architectural sense of its predicament'.[5]

Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf have served as exemplary late modernist figures in this respect, for their mid-century novels reveal an acute preoccupation with the built environment and an equally self-conscious concern with the novel form. In each of their works, there is an underlying anxiety concerning the uncertainties of twentieth century life and indeed their own position as writers within it. As Rhys stresses in her autobiography, 'I must write. If I stop writing my life will have been an abject failure': 'I must trust that out of that will come the pattern'.[6] Similarly, for Bowen, writing provides something she was 'born without – a so-called normal relation to society. My books *are* my relation to society'.[7] For Woolf, the Second World War made it increasingly difficult to glean this 'sense of a public' (*D5* 299). The only thing she could do in the face of such

[5] Vidler, *Warped Space*, p. 1.
[6] Rhys, *Smile, Please*, p. 162.
[7] Bowen, 'Why do I Write?', p. 223.

anxiety, like Rhys, was to keep on writing: 'Only when we put two and two together – two pencil strokes, two written words, two bricks […] do we overcome dissolution and set up some stake against oblivion'.[8] Together, then, these writers complicate Heidegger's contention that 'as soon as man *gives thought* to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer' ('BDT' 159). As I have shown in the preceding chapters, architectural ruins, the architectural uncanny, and architectural ambivalence remain intense pressure points in their late modernist oeuvres, revealing the profound anxieties that continue to beleaguer the modernist literary imagination well into the later decades of the twentieth century.

To this end, I have challenged Miller's suggestive account of late modernism, complicating his claims about the onset of the Second World War marking the demise of modernist innovation.[9] Building on MacKay's important account of 'Blitz modernism', I have instead shown how, in their late work, Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf collectively react to, and consequently develop, the fragmentary forms of high modernist urbanism in direct response to the increasing social, spatial, and political pressures of the war.[10] If, as Casey argues, place is understood in the social and spatial sciences 'as an undelimited, detotalized expansiveness', rather than 'an airtight, immobile, diaphanous limit', then the late modernist novels I have examined in the preceding chapters attest the important role literature plays in (re)imagining and (re)constructing the 'eventmental power of place'.[11]

Lefebvre provides a useful account of how something as apparently immobile as an architectural building assists in this understanding of place as 'no fixed thing':[12]

> Consider a house, and a street, for example. The house has six storeys and an air of stability about it. One might almost see it as the epitome of immovability, with its concrete and its stark, cold and rigid outlines […]. Now, a critical analysis

[8] Woolf, '"Anon" and "The Reader"', p. 403.
[9] Miller, *Late Modernism*, p. 10.
[10] MacKay, 'Putting the House in Order', p. 251.
[11] Casey, *Fate of Place*, pp. 336, 339, 336.
[12] Ibid., p. 286.

> would doubtless destroy the appearance of solidity of this house, stripping it, as it were, of its concrete slabs and its thin non-load-bearing walls, which are really glorified screens, and uncovering a very different picture. In the light of this imaginary analysis, our house would emerge as permeated from every direction by streams of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route.[13]

Anticipating Koolhaas's attempt to deconstruct the existing body of architectural theory and practice through a critical analysis of constituent architectural elements, Lefebvre here emphasises the need to rethink the spatial boundaries of architectural buildings. Aligning with Massey's more recent conception of place as 'open and porous networks of social relations', Lefebvre's critical analysis of this brutalist tower block reconceptualises architectural space as 'a complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits' through which 'streams of energy' run to keep life ticking over inside.[14]

As I have shown in the preceding chapters, architectural spaces are likewise represented in the late modernist novel in terms of flux and interchange. Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, discussed in Chapter Two, is a particular case in point, for the narrating-protagonist Sasha experiences the interwar city as an uncanny place of blurred spatial and psychological boundaries. Through my extended analysis of the architectural uncanny, I uncovered the 'glorified screens' that structure the marginalised interiors of Paris and London.[15] For Sasha, '[f]our walls, a roof and a bed' do not guarantee privacy, security, or an assured identity; the hotel room, the street, and the public toilet are, in the end, anything but 'a place where you hide from the wolves outside' (*GMM* 149, 33). Rhys's distinct stylistic and typographic fragmentation of the prose form of the novel recreates the complex and uneven textures of these unstable and interconnected urban

[13] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 92-93.
[14] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, p. 121; Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 93.
[15] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 93.

spaces, recreating at the level of form Sasha's affective sense of the city as 'an undulating procession' of '[r]ooms, streets, streets, rooms' (*GMM* 91).

In Chapter One, I likewise drew attention to how Bowen destabilises the architectural interior of the domestic home in wartime. Focusing primarily on the affective materialities of *The Heat of the Day*, I foregrounded the 'streams of energy' that permeate architectural spaces and help, as Lefebvre suggests, overturn the notion of buildings as immovable physical constructions.[16] Rather than attending to the flows of 'water, gas, electricity, telephone lines, radio and television signals' that Lefebvre describes, I drew attention to the vibrant materialities that permeate Bowen's novel.[17] Arguing that Bennett's new-materialist conception of 'thing-power' is acutely felt in the 'literary animism' and linguistic negation of *The Heat of the Day*, I analysed the ways in which Bowen's representation of domestic things and processes of ruination unsettles Heidegger's conservative claim that '*in* dwelling [mortals] persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations' ('BDT' 155).[18] The 'undue strain' (*HD* 55) felt by her dispossessed wartime protagonists is conveyed in the complex style and structure of Bowen's narrative materialism, which attempts to 'displease the reader' in such a way that reflects the disorientating, immersive experience of ruined domestic space.[19]

As Ingold contends, the 'built' environment must not only be thought of in terms of humanly-constructed buildings, like the one Lefebvre describes.[20] Rethinking architecture from Ingold's '*dwelling perspective*' thus assisted in my architectural approach in Chapter Three to late modernism's 'anthropological turn'.[21] Analysing Woolf's ambivalent representation of rural architecture in *Between the Acts*, I followed Ingold in contending that there is 'no absolute distinction between "natural" and "artificial"

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. 18.
[19] Bowen, quoted in Ellmann, *Bowen: Shadow Across*, p. 166.
[20] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, p. 154.
[21] Ibid., p. 153; Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 2.

structures' in the world, for both are 'continually under construction, and have life-histories of involvement with both their human and non-human inhabitants'.[22] Through my discussion of Woolf's anthropological primitivism and transpositional rhythmic prose, I revealed how she likewise thinks of the built environment in terms of '[s]heep, cows, grass, trees, ourselves': 'a place where swallows darting seemed, by the regularity of the trees, to make a pattern' (*BA* 125, 47). It is precisely this larger, more inclusive 'pattern' of being and dwelling in the architectural world that, she argues in 'A Sketch of the Past', gives meaning to the 'cotton wool of daily life'.[23]

Through drawing on a diverse range of spatial, architectural, non-representational, and new materialist theories, I have thus contributed to a nuanced understanding of how the social, political, and affective conditions of represented spaces inform not only the architectural content, but also the architectural forms, of the late modernist novel. Equally, and as importantly, I have demonstrated how Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf collectively illuminate what Lefebvre describes as the 'archi-textures' of the twentieth century built environment.[24] Not simply a 'text' that 'gives itself as both to be seen and to be read', as Ricoeur suggests, the built environment emerges in both the content and form of their late modernist works as Doel's 'affective texturing' that testifies to the multi-layered, everyday dynamics of representational spaces.[25]

My literary architextural approach to the late modernist novel has thus provided significant insight into the legacy of modernism's socio-spatial anxieties. If Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of 'nomadology' posits a new form of dwelling that is compatible with the mutable textures of modern spaces and places, then I have shown that the work of Bowen, Rhys, and Woolf reveals the extreme difficulties of achieving the 'intermezzo'

[22] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, p. 154.
[23] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', p. 72.
[24] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 118.
[25] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 151; Doel, *Poststructuralist Geographies*, p. 124.

rhythms of this settled transitivity.[26] Crucially, this legacy of modernist anxiety is ongoing; as Vidler observes, the modernist 'vocabularies of displacement and fracture, torqueing and twisting, pressure and release […] are still active today, deployed in work that seeks to reveal, if not critique, the conditions of a less than settled everyday life'.[27] If, as Crang suggests, literature is not just 'a mirror held up to the world but a complex web of meanings' that helps 'to create ways of seeing the world', then it seems to me that a critical literary architexture is all the more required at this time to illuminate the continuing condition of modern architectural crisis as articulated and rearticulated in the literary imagination.[28]

I wish to end this thesis by consequently anticipating the future development of critical literary architexture. As Alexander has recently argued, current literary geographies are necessarily pluralised, with 'theoretically eclectic' studies encompassing genres and periods as diverse as 'early modern drama, realist novels, modernist poetry, and contemporary science fiction', and 'synthesising ideas drawn from phenomenology, historical materialism, structuralism and poststructuralism, art history, urbanism, anthropology, and gender theory, as well as geography and literary studies'.[29] It is in this open-minded and pluralistic spirit that literary architexture should be developed, for the approach I have outlined in this thesis can only be strengthened, and indeed tested, by looking beyond the late modernist Anglophone novel. Phillippe Hamon's *Expositions: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century France* (1992) and Anne M. Myers's more recent *Literature and Architecture in Early Modern England* (2013) are two notable studies that already exemplify the productivity of exploring the connections between literature and

[26] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 380.
[27] Vidler, *Warped Space*, p. 1.
[28] Crang, *Cultural Geography*, p. 57.
[29] Neal Alexander, 'On Literary Geography', *Literary Geographies*, 1.1 (2015), 3-6 (p. 5) <http://www.literarygeographies.net/index.php/LitGeogs/article/view/1-2> [accessed 24 August 2015].

architecture outside of Anglophone and twentieth-century literary history.[30] Neither monograph engages with the spatial or affective turn, however, and this in itself demonstrates the need for advanced critical thinking on the topic.

In their recent edited collection of essays on *Poetry & Geography* (2013), Alexander and Cooper likewise recognise 'a pressing need to develop equally sophisticated evaluations of how poetic language and form are mobilised in contemporary representations of space'.[31] Frank has already lighted upon the connections between architecture and poetic form, suggesting that this interdisciplinary dialogue is strengthened through an 'analysis of the poem as a built structure'.[32] Moreover, as I touched upon in Chapter Three (Section 2), Woolf motions towards the malleability of poetic expression in her search for a literary form capable of responding to the spatial and affective realms of modernity. In 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', she argues that the modern novel can benefit from being 'a book full of poetry', as this will allow 'a different attitude, a different *rhythm*' to be established.[33]

Alexander's recent study of 'Contemporary British Poetry and the Senses of Place' (2014) takes up this idea of poetry 'offer[ing] a supple means of working through the relations between inside and outside, self and world', aptly demonstrating how insights from cultural geography can help illuminate the sensory perceptions enfolded in the poetic imagination of place.[34] Such thinking could be productively deployed in a literary architextural approach to poetry, where architectural theories would help to extend and deepen understandings of how poetic styles and forms intervene in both the making and perception of the built environment.

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[30] See Philippe Hamon, *Expositions: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. by Katia Sainson-Frank and Lisa Maguire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Anne M. Myers, *Literature and Architecture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
[31] Alexander and Cooper, 'Introduction: Poetry & Geography', p. 2.
[32] Frank, *Literary Architecture*, p. 62.
[33] Woolf, 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', p. 227: emphasis added.
[34] Alexander, 'Contemporary British Poetry and the Senses of Place', p. 3.

Furthermore, Bowen's discussion of the short story form in relation to spatial and psychological 'crisis' (see Section 5 of Chapter One) invites consideration of how architectural spaces and places might figure in short fiction, which necessarily demands, as Head has fundamentally argued, 'an interpretive methodology which acknowledges the interrelation between form and content'.[35] Renowned for his early contributions to the field of literary geography, geographer Marc Brousseau observes that 'virtually no work has been done on the short story', and questions whether this is because literary geographic practice is limited by the 'brevity' of this literary form.[36] He suggests that 'the short story can only afford to mention a very limited number of places and spaces' and there is certainly 'no room for lengthy description of place and its multiple meanings'.[37]

Despite these representational limitations, however, Brousseau argues that 'the particularities of the short story genre can foster an original interpretation of narrative space and place'.[38] Indeed, the concentrated intensity of the short story form makes the glimpses of space and place all the more striking and meaningful. Taking up this line of thinking, Sheila Hones has emphasised the significance of 'the micro-geographies of narrative style' in the short story, arguing that, in its brevity, the short story form facilitates 'the development of a more interactive, integrated and collaborative scholarly practice' through enabling 'the geographical analysis of narrative technique and reader engagement'.[39] The short story thus poses equally important questions in literary architexture, especially given the effects of this particular narrative form on the affective experiences of the reader.[40]

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[35] Bowen, 'Preface to *Stories by Elizabeth Bowen*', p. 128; Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 185.
[36] Marc Brousseau, 'The Traps: Bukowski as Interpreter of Cornered Lives', *Anglia – Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie*, 126.2 (2008), 380-96 (pp. 381, 382).
[37] Ibid., p. 382.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Sheila Hones, 'Literary Geography and the Short Story: Setting and Narrative Style', *Cultural Geographies*, 17.4 (2010), 473-85 (p. 474).
[40] In a forthcoming essay, Alexander provides an excellent overview of the connections between urban space and the short story form. See Neal Alexander, 'Metropolitan Modernity: Stories of London', in *The*

This brief overview of potential directions for future literary architextural practice is by no means exhaustive. I might have also considered, for example, whether an architextural approach to literary studies might have anything to offer to the current cultural geographic work being done on the spaces and places of drama and performance, or even magazines and bookshops.[41] At the same time, I have deliberately steered away from naming potential literary figures for future analysis, given the sheer number of writers whose works might proffer insight into architectural thinking and representation. What I hope I have demonstrated throughout the course of this thesis, however, is the profound relevance of architecture in the literary imagination and, in turn, the significance of literature in architectural thinking. It is this seemingly inexhaustible dialogue between literary studies and the built environment that inspired this project in the first place and which, I hope, will sustain and develop the textural vocabularies of literary architexture beyond the scope of this thesis.

Cambridge History of the English Short Story, ed. by Dominic Head (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), Chapter 16.

[41] See, for example, Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, eds, *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009-12).

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